

Women, Work, and Money: Studying the Economic Value of Women's Unpaid Work and Using the Results for Advocacy



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Table of Contents

PART I: SETTING THE STAGE.....	1
Background and Rationale.....	1
Weaknesses of national accounting systems.....	5
The value of unpaid work.....	8
Valuing women's work: calculations.....	13
Definition of household labour.....	14
Gender and work stereotypes and the division of labour....	16
Valuing people.....	19
PART II: CALCULATING THE VALUE OF WOMEN'S UNPAID WORK.....	22
Quantitative Methods.....	24
Surveys.....	24
Qualitative Methods.....	25
Focus group discussions (FGD).....	26
In-depth interviews (IDI).....	26
Case studies.....	26
Calculating the economic value of women's work.....	28
Calculating the value of women's work: other notes.....	31
Sample calculations: value by task.....	33
Sample calculations: average task method.....	38
Sample calculations: comparison with typical male salary.....	39
Key findings from five country-based studies.....	39
PART III: HOW TO USE THE RESULTS FOR ADVOCACY....	42
Fixing GDP.....	42
Recommendations to government: policy reforms.....	44
Recommendations to government: health and education....	45
Recommendations to government: economic sector and employment policies.....	45
Recommendations to NGOs/INGOs and women's organizations.....	46
Recommendations to research institutions.....	49
Other issues.....	50
PART IV: CONCLUSION.....	53

REFERENCES	55
APPENDIX 1: POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PAPER (PRSP).....	57
APPENDIX 2: LIST OF TASKS REGULARLY PERFORMED BY WOMEN...58	
APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE SURVEY.....	61

List of Tables

TABLE 1: Estimate of value of women’s work (rural women, full-time housework), in Bangladeshi taka.....	33
TABLE 2: Estimate of value of women’s work (urban women, full-time housework), in Bangladeshi taka.....	35
TABLE 3: Total calculation of women’s contribution through unpaid work, by tasks completed, all women, in millions of taka/US\$.....	37
TABLE 4: Calculation of women’s wages (India).....	38

Summary

With gender inequality remaining a serious issue around the world, new approaches to resolving it are needed. This report and the project from which it evolved are based on the assumption that the low perceived value of women and of the work they do are key factors resulting in women’s low status; this causal relationship also helps to explain the lack of government action (around the world) to protect women’s rights and to work towards improving their status. Such low perceived value is shared by women themselves, who fail to give importance to their own daily work and thus to themselves. HealthBridge believes that by raising the profile of the work carried out by women without pay for the betterment of families and societies, the perceived value of women may also rise and provide an incentive to address the various forms of inequality that persist throughout the world.

In order to contribute to the knowledge base of the estimated value of women’s household work and to test various methods of calculating it, HealthBridge worked with local organizations to undertake five individual country studies on the economic value of the unpaid household work¹ regularly performed by women. The research in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Vietnam was enabled by technical assistance from HealthBridge and financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) as part of a larger program aimed at increasing the perceived value of women and the positive involvement of men in household tasks and

¹ Throughout this report, household work is used to include work in and around the house, including vegetable growing, caring for small animals, cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, caring for children and other family members, etc.

reproductive health. The results of the research in each country are available as individual reports on the HealthBridge website (www.healthbridge.ca).

This report addresses three issues:

- ❖ Why it is important to conduct research on the economic value of the unpaid work performed by women;
- ❖ How to calculate the value of women's unpaid work;
- ❖ How to use the results to advocate for improved rights for women and more equal sharing of responsibility with men.



PART I: SETTING THE STAGE

Background and Rationale

Gender inequality persists throughout the world, taking a particularly serious form in much of South and Southeast Asia. Problems include sex-selective abortion (common in Vietnam as well as South Asia); different feeding and caring practices and thus survival rates between male and female children; different rates of attendance at school; fewer career opportunities for women or even the chance to leave the home freely; arranged marriages of girl children, often against their will; and violence against women. While such problems may be rooted in culture and society, the under-valuing of the domestic work done by women seems to be a potential contributor to their maltreatment and abuse.

Research in Bangladesh (Efroymsen et al. 2006) on causes of violence against women found that “since women usually did not hold a paying job and inherited little or no land, they were considered weak and worthless. Men felt that since they earned a living, women should always be subservient to them.” Calculating and acknowledging the economic value of women's unpaid work could thus contribute to efforts to prevent violence against women.

Work done for pay and work done for free, as well as “formal” and “informal” work, are treated quite differently by individuals, society, and governments. Rather than assign value to work based on its utility to people, value is assigned based on financial remuneration and formality. As a result, the contribution of formal businesses and industries to the

economy are recognized; those of informal work and household work are not. This leads to discrimination against informal workers and those mainly responsible for household work: women. But the formality of a job tells us nothing about its social usefulness, and household activities such as cooking, cleaning, washing, child rearing, and caring for the sick and elderly are vital to human existence and serve as the foundation of the entire economy.

Underlying this research is a common misperception about economic activity – that only activities for which people receive direct payment benefit the economy, while other activities are economically meaningless or insignificant. It takes little reflection to see that this is not the case. When the same activity can be done in one setting for pay and in another for free, how is one to determine whether that activity is economically productive or not? Cooking, clothes washing, cleaning, taking care of children and the sick and the elderly, tutoring children and so on, are all activities commonly performed by women for free — but are also activities that are given economic value when they are performed outside the family for pay.

A significant portion of the paid male workforce is enabled to go to work each day by the fact that a woman stays in the home and provides him with meals, clean clothes, a clean home, and childcare – a fact all too clear to the many women who must juggle these tasks in addition to their paid work. In that analysis, housewives subsidize men through their unpaid work, as otherwise the men would have to pay someone to engage in all the domestic work that enables their participation in the paid workforce. Such activities performed on a daily basis, usually by women and usually without pay, represent in one sense a subsidy of all paid work, as such paid work would

be impossible without the “invisible” support of women.

The question is not whether women, including those who do not engage in any work for pay, contribute to their nation’s economy, but the extent to which their contributions are overlooked. The point is not to determine an appropriate wage for household work or the caring of others, and then to demand that men pay it to their wives and daughters. Such a suggestion contradicts the essential point that activities are valuable even when not monetized. Rather, this study seeks to raise attention to a serious and neglected issue: that the work done by women without pay, in the home as well as in the fields, is indeed work, does indeed have value, and should indeed count as part of national income.

The purpose of this research is to fill the gap in knowledge about how to quantify the work that women do and the amount of time they spend working, estimate the economic value of that work, and thereby assess the contributions women make to the country’s social development through their unpaid work. Women who work full-time in their homes are often categorized as economically unproductive, and it becomes easy to avoid enacting or enforcing any serious policy meant to improve their conditions. In order to improve women’s lives, the perceived value of women must change. It is hoped that this research will contribute to increasing the understanding among policymakers and the general public of the economic contribution that women make through their unpaid work, and thus lead to greater gender equality around the world.

Why is it important to understand the value of women’s unpaid work? Among other reasons, because:

- ❖ When men feel that women make no contributions to their household — that women are, essentially, useless creatures who are a net loss in terms of the money that is needed to feed, clothe, and shelter them — then it is easier for men to mistreat women. That is, in the same way that people generally will kick a dog but not a cow, because the former has no economic value while the latter does, so the perception that women make no economic contribution may be an underlying factor in men's violence against women.
- ❖ Governments tend to underestimate the value of women's unpaid work, thereby excluding most of women's work from GDP and other measures of national wealth. As a result, women appear to be a net drain on the economy rather than serving as important contributors to other economic activities. Smaller salaries are paid to men than would be possible if men in turn had to pay women for all the domestic work they do. In that sense, women could thus be seen as *subsidizing* salaries throughout the workforce, by contributing their domestic work for free rather than demanding a wage. Changing the perceived value of women could change the way policymakers approach programs to help women. It is hoped that in future they would treat such programs as a small return on what women contribute rather than as a charitable handout.
- ❖ If women's work is given an economic value, then women themselves would be likely to gain self-esteem and to have a more positive attitude towards their work and their role in society.

- ❖ In terms of both society and government, if women's work was given value, men would have a better understanding of women's value and importance, and would be likely to treat them with more respect. It would thus be easier to create happier, mutually respectful, violence-free families.

Weaknesses of national accounting systems

Many important decisions about resource allocations are made based on economic calculations. If there are significant problems with those calculations, the basis for the decision-making may also be called into question. Yet there is a deep and generally ignored problem with all national economic calculations of GDP, the most widely-used measure of national well-being.² The guidelines used internationally to calculate GDP — the United Nations System of National Accounts (UNSNA) — contains many biases that, whether or not deliberately, result in the exclusion of most of the work done by women around the world (Waring 1998).

Under the UNSNA guidelines, women's labour is generally only included in national accounts if it takes place in the paid workforce, be it in a factory, on a farm, or in an office. If a

² There are actually *several* problems with calculations of GDP, such as the fact that it also ignores the environment and natural resources, and since it is measured per capita, does not distinguish between countries with fairly equal divisions of income and those with strong disparities. Amartya Sen (cited in Farmer 2005) has repeatedly pointed out to his fellow economists that income is a means to an end, not an end in itself, and it is livelihood, not income, that should be of paramount importance. This paper, however, focuses on women's issues, rather than on a broader critique of GDP.

woman works but is not paid, then her labour does not count for anything in terms of national measurements of wealth. According to the 1953 UNSNA definition, production totals include “all primary production, whether exchanged or not” (Waring 1998). As former New Zealand Member of Parliament and economist Marilyn Waring explains, if a man grows vegetables as his primary occupation then those vegetables are registered as part of national wealth, even those that are consumed at his home rather than sold on the market. But if a woman grows vegetables for home consumption, they do not count unless she is growing them as her primary occupation.

It is very difficult for most women to explain exactly *which* of their many occupations (raising children, taking care of the house, doing farm work, helping their husbands with other income-generating work, and so on) is their primary occupation. Once a woman becomes a mother, and usually prior to that, she has so many occupations that it is impossible to label any one as “primary”. But national statistics do not include “non-primary” occupations, and thus essentially eliminate any calculation of most of the work done by women.

“It is likely that our failure to assign a price for the services of the homemaker has tended to convey the impression that they are valueless rather than priceless.” --economists Marianne Ferber and Bonnie Birnbaum (cited in Waring 1998)

Thus if a woman states that her primary occupation is housework, she is considered as contributing nothing to the economy. Housework, meanwhile, is on the long list of activities (mostly traditionally performed by women, including carrying water, weeding, collecting firewood, and subsistence crop production) which is not included in calculations of GDP.

To quote Philippine economist Solita Collas-Monsod, “One can only appreciate the irony of a United Nations which on the one hand is at the forefront of efforts to eliminate discrimination against women and ‘mainstreaming’ them and towards gender equality; and on the other hand has laid down, through the use of narrow, inadequate, erroneous definitions, the basis for women’s economic invisibility – and ultimately the discrimination against them. In the process, they have unwittingly loaded the dice in favor of ‘emerging markets’, in the sense that the growth rates of the latter are overestimated: as household production enters the market, GDP, by SNA standards, increases, even if the production was always there – it just was not counted” (Collas-Monsod 2007).



The value of unpaid work

Over the past decades, the issue of women's economic contribution through their unpaid work has been raised repeatedly by scholars, activists, and others³. As a result, researchers have devoted some attention to the issue and investigated the scale and estimated value for women's unpaid work, particularly in the domestic sphere. The United Nations' International Labour Organization (ILO) has also recommended that such research and estimations be carried out, a recommendation corroborated by the Government of Bangladesh in its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) (see Appendix 1).

When such calculations are made, the figures are impressive. To cite just two examples: UNPAC (UN Platform for Action Committee Manitoba) estimates that the total value of unpaid work, most of which is performed by women, in the global economy is US\$11 trillion.

An online survey of 18,000 women conducted by Salary.com found that mothers' unpaid work, if paid at the rate of similar work conducted for pay, would give the average mother an annual salary of Cdn\$126,593 — the equivalent of the salary of a top advertising executive, marketing director, or judge. Women working outside the home would earn a further Cdn\$74,101 on top of their actual wages for her housework. The calculations were made based on the ten key household-related jobs that women perform and their equivalent market wages if carried out by someone hired from outside the family.

³ See, for example, Mothers are Women, Ekins, Waring, and Collas-Monsod. (<http://www.mothersarewomen.com>)

The study found that employed mothers work on average 44 hours/week at paid jobs and a further 49.8 hours at home, while the “unemployed” work 91.6 hours/week (CBC News).

Policymakers and others may wish to see more and more women entering the formal economy, but they often forget that women who take on a paid job are actually required to do a double day's duty as they typically remain the sole or main person responsible for domestic tasks. While society recognizes women's role in the economy when they participate in the paid labour force, women remain hidden and unacknowledged when they do not, and thus the double burden on women is often not addressed.

As economics professor Nancy Folbre explains, when more women take on paid jobs, they decrease the amount of time they spend on unpaid work. Men typically do not make up that slack. As a result, living standards are actually lower than GDP would suggest, as more income is spent on “*purchasing food away from home, housekeeping, child care and elder care services that were once provided outside the market.*” Living standards and economic welfare depend not just on family income but on the amount of time people have to devote to unpaid work.

Writes Folbre, “Take a household consisting of one full-time wage earner, one stay-at-home parent, and two children, relying on an after-tax income of \$50,000. Compare this to a similar household in which both parents work full-time for pay, each bringing home about \$25,000 in after-tax income. A stay-at-home parent typically provides more than 40 hours a week of time devoted to housework and child care. ... we ignore the fact that working for pay actually costs money — the money required to purchase substitutes for family care” (Folbre September 21, 2009).

While the work done by men is widely acknowledged and most men are considered as economically productive, women who are engaged in full-time household work are commonly viewed as not working. Such prejudices exist at all levels, from the common distinction between “working women” and “housewives” to government classifications. For example, the Government of India considers full-time housewives as economically unproductive. The Census of India (2001) contains a chapter titled “Non-workers”, comprising the following categories:

- Students of all kinds and levels.
- Household workers — all those attending to household chores like cooking, cleaning of utensils, looking after children, fetching water, and collecting firewood.
- Dependents, disabled, children not going to school, the elderly.
- Pensioners, widows not receiving pension.
- Beggars, prostitutes and others not engaged in economically productive work.
- Others including convicts in jail and inmates of mental or charitable institutions.

As a result, over 367 million women – or 32% of the entire population and 65% of all females – in India have been classified by the Census of India as non-workers, placed in the same category as beggars, prostitutes, and prisoners. Of the total of those listed as non-workers in India, 74.3% are women. Such a categorization of the majority of women cannot fail to have consequences in policies and programs aimed at women.

A note on careers versus jobs: This study did not examine the reasons women chose a career or whether it would have been better for women to be housewives or to work for pay. Women expressed mixed feelings, appreciating the recognition that comes with a paid job and the sense of contributing financially to the family, but regretting the time lost that they would like to spend caring for their family members. Perhaps a combination of work for pay and unpaid work for the family would be ideal, for both men and women. If men contributed more of a role to household and family in terms of domestic work and not just income, it would not only lessen the burden on women but also provide the entire family with the psycho-social benefits of male involvement.

There is also an enormous difference between a career — generally the luxury of the upper middle class and rich — and a job to help make ends meet. A career suggests a challenging, intellectually engaging path that would alleviate a woman’s isolation in the home, give her social and mental stimulation, and increase her self-esteem, while also providing additional financial resources for the family and helping the woman achieve financial independence. For many women, however, a job is mostly grinding and repetitive labour that is endured for the sake of earning extra money. It represents a further burden on top of the work of caring for home and family.

Even in the United States, stories abound of women suffering from work-related illnesses and injuries and inhumane working conditions (including lack of bathroom breaks and extremely boring, repetitive, mindless jobs) and of working for so little money that they are never free from worry about the possibility of becoming homeless. There are women who must report to work every day despite having a child in the hospital.

For these women, the “choice of a career” is a hollow and even cruel phrase. Getting more women out of the home and into the workplace, in such conditions, is likely to simply mean employers finding even lower-paid labourers than they previously employed, and children suffering from more neglect (Heymann and Beem 2005).

When considering such questions as whether women who work for pay are getting only monetary benefits or also experience psychological and social benefits, and how women’s participation in the paid labour force will affect the wellbeing of the family and society, it is thus important to distinguish between careers and jobs, and between good and bad jobs.



Valuing women’s work: calculations

Attempts to place a price tag on the unpaid work done by women raises various objections, including the potential of under-valuing such work through under-estimates and of belittling the nature of important work by assuming that everything can be measured in financial terms. While it is true that much work is priceless, it is equally true that by putting no price on the work, the value is estimated at zero rather than infinity. An estimate of monetary value is meant not to demonstrate conclusively what such work is worth and certainly not to demand a wage in return. Rather, it is meant to demonstrate the magnitude of the value of the work women do without pay, in order to put into perspective various sectors of the economy and to gain women the recognition they deserve for their contributions.

Waring and others have suggested ways to calculate the economic value of the work women do without pay by assigning market rates to the various tasks that women perform, or opportunity costs for the time spent. In brief, the first approach looks at what household tasks women engage in and what it would cost to hire someone else to do that work. The second approach is to look at what women could have earned if the time they spent on household work were spent instead on paid employment.

Either calculation involves a range of technical difficulties. For instance, women commonly perform several tasks simultaneously (holding a baby while cooking and tending to elderly relatives), and their days may be so long as to challenge reasonable calculations. There is the question of the definition of “work”, as many tasks, such as caring for children, are not

considered by the women themselves, or many others, as involving work.

Problems with the opportunity cost method are well illustrated in the Vietnamese paper in this series, which shows that by using foregone earnings, the small quantities of time invested by men in household work appear to have far greater value than the larger quantities spent by women earning much lower incomes. That is, the opportunity cost method simply reflects inequalities in earnings rather than any intrinsic value of the household work.

Given that women normally receive lower wages even for work similar to that carried out by men, and the lowest-paying jobs are those traditionally performed by women, estimates using either method are likely to represent an under-valuing of women, as such calculations simply reflect the current under-valuation of domestic and other work typically performed by women. That is, the non-valuing of women is likely to be replaced by an under-valuing, and some might argue that if such figures are widely accepted they may further institutionalize women's low status. However, again it is likely that even an under-valuing may represent a significant improvement over the existing non-valuation.

Definition of household labour

Statistics Canada⁴ divides unpaid work into three categories: housework, care of children, and care and assistance to seniors. Voluntary work with community or charity organizations is not included. While this definition is limited, it

⁴ <http://www.unpac.ca/economy/unpaidwork.html>

is a significant step towards measuring and recognizing women's unpaid work.

Household labour in this research is considered to include the main housework activities as well as tasks performed by women in and around the home, including farming activities and small businesses. For a sample list of tasks, see Appendix Two. Some tasks, because they comprise many individual steps, have been broken down into more components; for instance "cooking" can require hours a day and include laborious cleaning of vegetables, meat, and fish. The main groups of tasks include housework (shopping, cleaning, meal preparation/cooking, washing), growing food, raising animals, small business handicrafts (sewing, making various products), and caring for family members.



Gender and work stereotypes and the division of labour

In country after country, men and women are paid differently (or men are paid and women are not) to engage in similar work. Similarly, cooking in a restaurant or teaching children in a school is considered productive while cooking or teaching children at home is not. These beliefs are reflected in stereotypes about the essential differences between men and women, about what constitutes work, and about who should perform which tasks.

Men also of course engage in household work without pay, but they usually invest far less time in it than women, are likely to consider such work as “helping their wives” rather than contributing to the household, and define themselves by their paid work (with household work being additional and perhaps insignificant). In the west, a man may even call taking care of his own children “babysitting”, and in few households would a dirty home or poorly-cooked meal be considered the fault of the man. While it is no doubt true that some of the social distinctions between women and men are based on biological differences, it is equally true that such distinctions are vastly over-stated and used to justify extreme differentials in the treatment of the sexes.

In addition to stereotypes about which work is whose responsibility are all the fixed notions about work itself. Common conceptions about work include that it is an unpleasant obligation to be borne rather than enjoyed, that it fits into a neatly-defined work day, that it involves pay, and that it is done outside the home. Many of these assumptions have little relevance to the daily reality of women’s lives.

Most women’s work is not structured into work days and certainly not work weeks, but instead is intermingled with socializing and creates little or no chance for rest and vacation. Women do many things simultaneously and often have trouble stating which activities constitute work and which do not. Some tasks, such as playing with children or tending a garden, are normally enjoyable and thus may not be seen as work. As well, much of the work performed by women is done within the house, remains unpaid, and occurs beyond the typical workday of 9 to 5.

When “housewives” are asked if they work, they may respond “no”, just as women in the west taking time off from paid employment to care for a newborn baby may be asked if they are “working”, as if caring for a helpless infant is pure play. The extent to which the above stereotypes about work form part of one’s consciousness is difficult to overstate, just as many women, however highly regarded in the professional world, may continue to judge themselves by their ability to perform household tasks well.

An assumption underlying this research is that not only women and children but men as well would benefit from a more equitable division of household work and a higher valuation of such work. Gender stereotypes cause misery and injustice in the world, and challenging them effectively could resolve many pressing problems, while also relieving undue stress on men and women and increasing harmony between the sexes in the home.

This research is not “just” about the economic value of women’s work, but also about the role of women in society. Women are too often viewed as mere help-mates, beings of low

education and few skills incapable of making significant contributions. Yet evidence abounds that the contrary is true.

For instance, consider that a pragmatic, efficiency-based argument for women's participation in decision-making and leadership starts from recognition that women and men have different needs, interests, and priorities arising from their specific roles and situations. Even when men are aware of and seek to address this difference, they lack information in the same way that decision-makers are often unable to capture the perspectives and needs of minority cultures or the poor.

This failure to incorporate women's concerns into decision-making represents a major loss for society as a whole. Women's needs, interests, and concerns are not just those of women themselves, but reflect their primary roles as mothers, wives, and caregivers. Therefore, incorporating a woman's perspective into decision-making should result in better decisions that more adequately reflect the needs and interests of children and families (including the males).

If women were more involved in household decision-making and had more control over financial resources, they would be more likely to use health services and, hence, to have better health outcomes. Women understand the home and family members in a different way than men, and make contributions that are qualitatively different from those of men. Simply put, a society cannot thrive while ignoring the value and contributions of half of its members.

Valuing people

In general, any work that receives little pay is considered unimportant and labelled as “women’s work”, despite the fact that such work actually brings tangible economic benefits to the family. Since housework and childcare are unpaid and are carried out almost exclusively by women, they are considered to be without monetary value. Further, there exists the perception that women innately “know” how to cook, clean, raise children, and manage a household. These abilities are not considered skills or talents that women work hard to learn, but are rather considered trivial, unskilled tasks. This attitude towards women’s unpaid work belittles women’s status in the family, society, and the nation.

The institutional neglect of women’s work in national measures of income is an important issue affecting daily life, with repercussions on the daily treatment of women by their spouses, various institutions, and governments. The belief that work done without pay has no value, and paid work is valuable regardless of how low the pay, how unpleasant the working conditions, and how unessential the activities carried out, result in policies that, for example, encourage women to work for a dollar a day in a factory rather than to stay at home caring for her children or elderly relatives. It is difficult to understand how such a belief, and the policies it encourages, lead to healthier and happier societies.

The undervaluing of women also means that their contribution remains nearly invisible in national economies, which results in denying women their right to education, health care, and pension plans. This discussion is not meant to suggest that all women should stay at home and avoid entry into the paid

economy; rather, it represents an attempt to achieve a balance in which the work of caring for the home and for others is considered at least as important as the work of earning an income — and thus both men and women are encouraged to participate in both, rather than relegating most paid (and valued) work to one sex and virtually all unpaid (and undervalued) work to the other.⁵

Giving priority to useless or harmful economic activity over social activity has an effect on society; perhaps this goes a long way towards explaining current crises in terms of the heavy burdens placed on working families to meet their needs to earn an income *and* take care of family members. After all, with only income earning valued by society, society will offer no assistance to carry out other duties, and the difficulties faced by families which receive little or no support from employers or the State to balance work and family responsibilities is well-documented, e.g. by Heymann and Beem (2005).

Paul Farmer (2005) refers to the global obsession with generation of wealth rather than with meeting one's basic needs (that is, ensuring human rights for all) as “structural violence”, and graphically shows the way such biases generate suffering for the poor around the world. A number of other writers, including Schumacher, Korten and Galbraith, and a collection of essays edited by British economist Paul Ekins observe the deep societal problems that ensue from misplaced economic valuations of useless and harmful activities, while

⁵ In an ideal world, both women and men might work perhaps 20-35 hours a week for pay, giving them ample opportunity to spend time with family members and on other pursuits, and potentially reducing unemployment as well.

failing to value the activities that are at the foundation of a healthy and functional society.

The studies in this series can only provide one small step towards a solution by attempting to show the magnitude of the value of the household work performed daily by women without pay. In addition to their utility in the individual countries represented, it is hoped that the information provided through these studies will contribute to the global discussion about alternatives to GDP, about the need to value household work, and the importance of acknowledging the many irreplaceable contributions women make daily to their families, to society, and to the nation. Finally, it is hoped that this research will contribute to efforts to ensure that economics prioritizes people, health, and the environment and that we can move towards disentangling the difference between price and value, between what is genuinely productive and enhancing of well-being and what simply produces money at whatever cost.



PART II: CALCULATING THE VALUE OF WOMEN'S UNPAID WORK

There is a very good reason why little research appears to have been conducted to date to estimate the value of women's unpaid household work: the research is far from simple. Each step reveals various complications, from the concept itself through the various stages of its application. Or as Philippine economist Solitas Collas-Monsod writes, “*Undoubtedly, the valuation of unpaid work is difficult – but that is par for the course in national income accounting, or for that matter in any endeavor where measurement is involved*” (Collas-Monsod 2007).

In brief:

- Such research is an attempt to measure the immeasurable. There is no specific value for work performed in the household. All measurements involve guess work and reasonable estimates, as opposed to identifying an actual existing monetary value.
- It is extremely difficult to gain an accurate picture of the household work carried out by women without pay. Women themselves tend to underestimate both the amount of time they spend and the volume of that work. If a full-time housewife is asked whether she works, she will typically respond, “No.” If she is asked how much time she spends on housework, she is unlikely to know – because they do not track it. Women who work for pay similarly will be unable to give a reasonable estimate for their time. Methods to count such time, such as asking women to fill out diaries or hiring researchers to observe

women and take notes on how they spend their days, involve a series of biases and difficulties that may not substantially increase the accuracy of the results.

- Women often engage in many tasks simultaneously – should we therefore ignore one of the tasks or double the time it took for both to be done?
- Much of the work done by women in the household – such as caring for children and elderly parents – is outside the realm of the paid economy and it would be insulting and demeaning to assign it a monetary value.
- Much of the work done by women is paid at some of the lowest rates on the pay scale, so that calculating a reasonable salary is extremely difficult.

The ease with which a task can be completed is not an indication of its lack of importance. The same applies to this research quandary. It is important and worthwhile to overcome the inherent difficulties in performing such a calculation to arrive – at the very least – at a reasonable estimate for the purpose of contributing to a dialogue on the issue. This section discusses the approaches used by five countries (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Vietnam) and offers suggestions for conducting similar research elsewhere.

Quantitative Methods

Surveys

A survey is used for gathering information from or about a population sample. The *size* of the sample need not necessarily be huge: one consistent finding across the five countries in this series is that while the specific tasks engaged in by women in urban areas is quite different from those carried out by women in rural areas, the total amount of time spent varies little between the two. Similarly, the nature of the tasks varies little between urban areas across the country and likewise for rural areas.

Depending upon the researcher's interests and needs, the survey can be very focused on the value of women's work, thus primarily collecting information on the amount of time women spend on different tasks and potential valuations of those tasks. Or it can include other information that would assist with advocacy or contribute to campaigns that would, for instance, encourage the involvement of men in household work. Examples of survey questions are given in Appendix 3.

Basic information that should be collected includes:

- ❖ Profile of participants (male/female, age, marital status, profession, educational level, rural/urban residence...)

For most of the following, the information collected needs to be disaggregated by rural/urban:

- ❖ Which tasks men and women commonly perform (daily, occasionally, never)
- ❖ How much time women spend on various tasks

- ❖ Whether women get any help with their household work (from a servant, husband, other person)
- ❖ Who makes household decisions (husband and/or wife, others)
- ❖ Time men and women get up and go to sleep
- ❖ Leisure time, vacations
- ❖ Attitudes towards household work (whether it should be done by women, men, both....) and compare statements for cross-validity (see the Vietnam study in this series for an example)

Qualitative Methods

In addition to surveys, it is useful to carry out qualitative research to gain a more in-depth understanding of how women (and possibly men) spend their days, the nature of their free time and holidays, how they themselves feel about the value of household work, and so on. Potential in-depth questions to explore include:

- ❖ Existence/use of leisure time, holidays
- ❖ Tasks women and their maids perform and what an appropriate "price" for those tasks might be
- ❖ Feelings about household work and its value/importance
- ❖ Whether decisions are shared between husband and wife and if so which ones
- ❖ Who is the head of the household

Focus group discussions (FGD)

Focus group discussions bring together a similar group of people and allow the interactions and discussion to reveal issues that may be difficult to obtain from one-on-one or smaller group interviews. In this case they can be an interesting way to obtain some typical ways of talking about women's work and its value. Given peer influence, however, the findings may represent the way that such issues are typically discussed than the deeper feelings of the participants.

In-depth interviews (IDI)

In-depth interviews can be used to collect case studies as well as to gain further insight into the issues raised by surveys or focus group discussions. In particular, IDIs can be helpful to gain a better sense of the time required to carry out various tasks and the range of tasks women perform.

Case studies

A case study is based on an in-depth investigation of a single individual, group, or event to explore causation in order to find underlying principles. Case studies can serve as useful illustrations of the survey results or of the in-depth interviews for a few "typical" individuals. They provide colour and an individual touch which help bring otherwise "dry" results into perspective. Case studies can give a brief profile of a woman's average day: when she wakes in the morning and when she goes to bed at night and the main activities that she is engaged in throughout the day. Such case studies may helpfully include the woman's own comments about her day or her work and possibly observations from a researcher, particularly where the woman's account of her day differs

markedly from what is observed.

Warnings: Women are likely to underestimate the amount of time they spend on household work. In the case of Pakistan the under-estimate appears to be about half, as women distinguish between "major" and "supplemental" tasks, with the former occupying about 8 hours a day and the total 16 hours. IDIs can be helpful here, either by asking a series of detailed questions about a woman's typical day (what time she gets up, what time she goes to bed, and what occupies her throughout her waking hours) if possible supplemented by direct observation, with explicit notes to the note-taker about what to record and how (e.g. including provisions for making note of multiple tasks engaged in simultaneously, and including all tasks related to the care of home and family).

Simple "yes" and "no" answers often tell very little. For instance, "Are men involved with housework" tells nothing about the regularity or extent of such work, and should be followed up with "What kinds of housework do they do and how often?" Similarly, "Is household work of value?" does not tell us how much it is valued.



Calculating the economic value of women's work

When looking for an appropriate way to assign monetary value, many questions arise in terms of what price to assign to different tasks, how to deal with tasks that women engage in simultaneously, or whether to assign women a wage based on the number of hours they work, and in that case, using which wage as a baseline.

In addition, there are several methods that could be used to calculate the monetary value of women's unpaid work; each of these is based on different assumptions and puts emphasis on different aspects of economic value. These methods are outlined below.

Opportunity costs: this addresses what women could earn if they performed paid work during the time they spend on housework. This method proves highly unreliable and misleading in practice, telling far more about the differential wage rates for traditionally male and female work, and urban and rural work, than about the actual value of household work. When using this method in Vietnam, the results suggested that the relatively smaller amounts of time spent by men in household work are of far greater value than the larger amounts of time spent by women because of men's higher wage rates; this unfortunately seemed to suggest at first that men should, presumably, be exempted from such work because the opportunity cost was too high! Since the point of this research is to examine the actual utility of the tasks typically performed by women without pay, rather than to replicate existing biases and prejudices, such a method is strongly discouraged.

Comparison with salaries for hired household help: This addresses the cost of paying household help to do the tasks otherwise performed by housewives. It is important here to remember two things. First, most household help performs only some tasks; the woman hiring such help typically still must engage in household management, assigning and supervision of work, and often carrying out various tasks that are considered beyond the skills of household help, such as cooking and much of the care and education of children. Thus it is not accurate simply to assign the average salary for a maid to all women engaged in household work. Second, maids are normally very much underpaid, so that the salary of a maid is more a reflection of the societal undervaluation of household work generally than an accurate reflection of that work's value.

Labour input: This calculation method looks at a wage/benefit average of the lowest paid and highest paid tasks performed by women, multiplied by the hours spent on each task. This is a first attempt at applying something more like market rates to the work done by women, as opposed to simply replicating the low salaries typically paid to anyone carrying out household work. The difficulty here is in determining the amount of time spent on, and a suitable market wage for, each task, as the wages (for instance for cooking, cleaning, or managing accounts) depend very much on the location in which such work is performed.

Market value: This calculation method looks at the cost of attaining the services performed by housewives on the market; that is, of washing clothes at a laundry, eating in a restaurant, hiring a tutor for one's children, etc. This method makes an attempt to provide something closer to market rates for domestic work and again faces the difficulty of requiring an

estimate of the amount of time spent on such tasks and a reasonable comparison salary, e.g. the class of restaurant in which someone is a cook. The task is further complicated by the extremely broad range of tasks performed by women: depending on the extent of task sub-division, the list can easily range from nine to 45 or more tasks, making such a calculation unnecessarily complicated and unwieldy.

Output method: Using this approach, the household would be seen as a producer. Its production would be counted by pieces of work completed. For example, the number of rooms cleaned, the clothes washed, and children cared for would be counted and priced. This would include the informal market, such as cottage industries. Again, this is beset by difficulties in terms of coming up with such figures, and it is difficult as well to estimate “prices” for the results.

Comparison salaries for work traditionally done by men: In order to overcome the bias towards lower pay for any job traditionally performed by women, one could calculate a wage using the salary received by men for a fairly standard job, prorated according to the number of hours full-time housewives typically work each year. Such a method benefits from great simplicity, and it could be argued that as women’s household work includes some of the most essential tasks for daily survival, it is worth at least a mid-range wage in terms of what men are typically paid.

Pay equity: Jobs would be evaluated in terms of skill, responsibility, effort, and working conditions. This would allow for inclusion of the management and counselling aspects of a homemaker. This focuses on the work done rather than the person doing it. Unfortunately, it also suffers from extreme

methodological difficulties.

It should be noted that each of the above-mentioned methods of assigning an economic value to women’s unpaid work has advantages and disadvantages. No one method is perfect; no method can provide an accurate answer of something that is by its very nature uncountable. (Most workers would agree that, to a large extent, wages do not reflect the actual value of the work performed. Consider that farmers, who provide an absolutely essential service, are paid very little, while advertisers, who perform an essentially unnecessary and often socially negative job, are paid quite well. More examples could be given of the gross disparity between the social value of much work and the payment received — consider athletes, models, and tobacco industry executives versus child care workers, social workers, and teachers, etc.)⁶

It is important to remember that the point of making the calculation is not to arrive at an “accurate” figure of the value of women’s work, as no such figure can or does exist. Rather, the purpose is to arrive at a reasonable estimate or range of the contribution women make through their unpaid work. Using market figures or opportunity costs will likely result in undervaluing since those figures are based on current ideas that women’s work is less valuable than that done by men.

Calculating the value of women’s work: other notes

Choosing an age range for women: typically the age range chosen is 15 and above or 15-65. The age range selected will

⁶ A writer in the collection edited by Heymann and Beem mentions a child care worker whose friend suggests that she work instead taking care of people’s pets, as it pays better than caring for children.

depend on the statistics available for the female population and also on what the research might indicate about the age at which women start engaging in serious levels of housework and the age at which their involvement sharply declines.

Separating urban and rural women: the types of work done by women may vary little within the country *except* as between urban and rural women. It can be useful to calculate separate wages for these groups based on a local market equivalent for women’s work. Of course, doing so perpetuates the bias that agricultural work is less important than industrial work, so such a distinction may be avoided on philosophical grounds.

Separating part- and full-time housewives: Women who work outside the home for pay will typically have less time available for household work than those who do not⁷. Interviews or surveys should provide a reasonable estimate of the amount of time spent by these two main categories of women (it is unlikely to be possible to calculate anything as complicated as the time spent on housework by part-time workers, and in any case, many women compensate for their paid working time by working extra hours on nights and weekends to “catch up” on household work). The “salary” for a full-time housewife can then be used to calculate one for part-time housewives, e.g. at half the rate if she is putting in roughly half the hours.

⁷ It is important to note that many women involved in paid work do not actually receive any salary. For example, women may contribute to a family business, or their husbands may take in work – and keep the earnings from the work – that the wife performs.

Sample calculations: value by task

How such calculations might look are briefly illustrated below; for more information see the summary country reports available on HealthBridge’s website.⁸ Table 1 provides an example using fourteen groups of tasks, the estimated hours per day spent on each, the value per hour, and resultant daily value. The value per day can then be multiplied across all rural women for a full year to calculate their annual contribution.

TABLE 1: Estimate of value of women’s work (rural women, full-time housework), in Bangladeshi taka

Work done by rural women		Hrs./day	Value/hr ⁹	Value/day
1	Cooking (3 times/day)	6	10	60
2	Clothes washing / ironing	1	10	10
3	Animal nursing	1	10	10
4	Raising chickens, etc .	0.5	10	5
5	Educating children	0.5	75	37.5
6	Sewing, mending clothes	2	2.5	5
7	Vegetable gardening	1	10	10
8	Washing dishes	0.5	10	5
9	Cleaning house and yard	0.5	10	5
10	Nursing the sick	0.5	81.3	40.6
11	Child care	0.5	10	5
12	Fuel collection	0.5	10	5
13	Water collection	0.5	10	5
14	Working in the fields	1	10	10
Total		16	268.75	213.13

⁸ www.healthbridge.ca

⁹ Exchange rate roughly 68 taka to US\$1.

Table 2 presents similar information in a slightly more complicated form for urban women, again in Bangladesh, this time for ten major types of tasks. The hours per day by task can be collected from a survey or, more accurately, from in-depth interviews. Value per month is based on market wages for such work. Hours per year is simply the hours per day times 365 (it may be argued that women occasionally have a day off, but vacations are rare for most women). Value per hour is calculated based on an estimate of how much time a typical wage earner engaged in such a task must work to earn the amount given in the value per month column. That value per hour is then multiplied by the hours per year to arrive at a value per year.



TABLE 2: Estimate of value of women's work (urban women, full-time housework), in Bangladeshi taka

Work done by urban women		Hrs./day	Value/month	Hrs./year	Value/hour	Value/year ¹⁰
1	Cooking (3 times/day, including preparation)	6	600	2,190	3.13	6,844
2	Clothes washing and ironing	0.5	1,680	182.5	13.81	2,520
3	Taking children to and from school	1	600	365	15.00	5,475
4	Educating children (help in homework, etc.)	2	2,500	730	83.33	60,833
5	Child care	2	1,500	730	6.16	4,500
6	Sewing, mending clothes	1	250	365	8.22	3,000
7	Washing dishes (usually 3 times/day)	1	200	365	6.57	2,400
8	House cleaning	0.5	200	182.5	3.29	600
9	Nursing	0.5	19,773	182.5	81.25	14,828
10	Gardening, shopping	1.5	3,500	547.5	38.35	20,998
Total		16	30,403	5840	259.11	121,996

Table 3 shows how different values can be combined to arrive at a national figure. Typically a separation will be made for urban and rural work, as well as for part-time and full-time housewives. Full-time housewives are those who do not have an additional paying job; part-time housewives are women who also work for pay, whether in or out of the home. Since

¹⁰ Numbers are rounded so total does not entirely match.

part-time housewives are typically also expected to bear full responsibility for work within the home, but devote less time to it than full-time housewives, an estimate based on the surveys or in-depth interviews can be arrived at in terms of the ratio of time spent and thus of rough value. In this case, it is estimated (based on the research) that full-time women spent 16 hours a day on household work and part-time housewives 8 hours. The calculation of wages for each type of women can then be multiplied by the number of women in that category, assuming that such information is available (e.g. formal labour involvement by women in urban and rural areas), then added to create a national estimate.



TABLE 3: Total calculation of women’s contribution through unpaid work, by tasks completed, all women, in millions of taka/US\$

Category	(a) Value per year	(b) # of women (millions)	(c) Value of work in taka (millions) (a*b)	(d)¹¹ Value of work in US\$ (millions)
Full-time rural housewives	77,792 ¹²	18.8	1,462,464	\$20,892
Full-time urban housewives	121,996	24.5	2,988,914	\$42,699
Formally employed rural women	38,896 ¹³	7.3	283,936	\$4,056
Formally employed urban women	60,998 ¹⁴	2.5	152,496	\$2,179
Total			4,887,809	\$69,826

¹¹ Numbers are rounded so total does not entirely match.
¹² Daily value of 213.13 given above times 365 days a year.
¹³ Half of the full-time value.
¹⁴ Half of the full-time value.

Sample calculations: average task method

Given the complications of the above method and the difficulty of applying it in other countries, a shortcut method may be attempted. The simpler calculation can be made by taking one of the many tasks performed by women, estimating a reasonable wage for it, then multiplying that wage by the number of tasks women perform. Even though it is simpler, however, a number of challenges still remain. How does one choose which task to use?¹⁵ How is one to determine the number of tasks women perform? Is caring for children one task, or a range depending on the children's age and number? Is cooking one task or several (including preparing the raw materials and serving)? There is no right answer; the only possible approach is to assess the resulting figure for reasonability. For instance, \$99 a month, as shown below for Indian women, would be outrageously low for western women; it does, however, appear reasonable for Asia.

TABLE 4: Calculation of women's wages (India)

Total pop'n	Female Pop'n aged 15- 64	Value of unpaid work by women/month for 33 tasks (US Dollars)		Average value	Total unpaid contribution of women/year
1.027 billion	340 million	Rural Women	\$3*33 = \$ 99 Rs.4950	150*12= \$1,800 Rs.90,000	\$612,756,000,000 (\$612.8 billion) 29.5346797 trillion Indian Rupees
		Urban Women	\$6.1*33= \$ 201.3 Rs.10,065		

¹⁵ Preferably one would choose to use a low or middle -range task in terms of wage and not, for instance, tutoring children, caring for the sick, or managing household accounts.

Sample calculations: comparison with typical male salary

In the interests of both expediency and fairness, it might be appropriate to use a government salary to calculate the value of women's work. This approach assumes that, given the vital nature of housework and childcare for the functioning of society, it should be paid not at the low rates currently paid for most work done by women but at a rate for work that is considered more valuable. Of course, this ignores the fact that most women work more hours per day and more days per year than government workers, which would help balance considerations about an exaggeration of wage for skilled government workers versus "unskilled" housewives¹⁶.

Key findings from five country-based studies

There are major similarities as well as differences in the findings of the individual country studies in this series. For instance, the studies found that in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan women work 16-hour days, while the days were shorter in Nepal (10-13 hours) and Vietnam. In all countries, most of the household work is done by women with little if any help from men or servants. Calculations of the value of that work also range widely but generally account for a significant portion of GDP. The difference in the calculations has less to do with variations in the amount of work that women do or its importance, but rather in the method used to

¹⁶ Housework involves a wide range of skills that women begin to learn as small girls and only master through extensive practice. Housework is no more "unskilled" or housewives "uneducated" than farming and farmers.

derive a monetary value for it (comparing it to the lowest-paid workers or using a more generous comparison to calculate its worth).

In India and Bangladesh, the typical working day for women lasts for 16 hours, leaving them little or no leisure time. Women bear most responsibility for household work including many tasks related to income generation. Most women, even if they have a servant, do their own cooking, and women generally assume full responsibility for tutoring and helping children with school work. Rural women perform a wider variety of tasks than do urban women. While both men and women recognize that women's household activities constitute important work, they do not grasp the extent of its economic value. Yet the value of unpaid household work performed by housewives is approximately US\$69.8 to \$91 billion per year in Bangladesh, depending on the economic value assigned to the tasks women perform daily; that value in India is upwards of US\$612.8 billion.

Nepal: In addition to the work they do for pay, rural women report spending 13 hours a day on household work, while urban women report spending nearly 10 hours. The total value of that unpaid household work performed by women is about US\$11.25 billion, or about 91.3% of the country's GDP.

Pakistan: As in India and Bangladesh, women typically work 16 hours a day. Most of the women have no leisure time and typically utilize their "spare time" to complete household activities. If such household tasks as cooking, cleaning, and sewing were out-sourced, it would cost about US\$800 annually per household in urban and US\$430 annually per household in rural areas, leading to a national figure for the monetary value of women's household work of US\$37.55 billion.

Vietnam: Although women seem to work far fewer hours in the home, and men to play a larger role, than in the South Asian countries, the burden of household work still falls mostly on

women. Rhetoric about the need to have gender equality in division of household work is not matched by the reality, and many explanations continue to be made about why women are "more appropriate" for carrying out household work. While a calculation based on opportunity costs leads to figures based more on unequal wages than the value of work, other measures looking at the market value of the work performed yield a national figure for women's unpaid household work of US\$46.1 billion, amounting to 51.3% of GDP.



PART III: HOW TO USE THE RESULTS FOR ADVOCACY

Once one has calculated a reasonable estimate or range for the economic value of women's unpaid household work, what next? How can one use the figures?

The family is the basic unit of society, and women play a critical role by contributing to its welfare and to the development of the society as a whole. However, the importance of women's role in the family and society is neither fully recognized nor appreciated. Women in many countries, particularly but not limited to South Asia, lack basic rights to education, health care, essential nutrition, and, as adults, to decision making within the family and community. Much could be done to improve the situation; only a few suggestions are touched on here.

Fixing GDP

There is urgent need to review the current conventional methodological practices related to the System of National Accounting (SNA). Current practices fail to recognize women's tremendous contribution to the economy. Further, it is important to achieve qualitative change in the attitudes, values, and outlooks of policymakers and the general public regarding household work. Valuing the caring and household work that are essential to a nation can only bring benefits to all.

Calculating the economic value of the unpaid work performed by women and adding that value to measures of national wealth such as GDP would not only significantly increase the

sum represented by GDP, but would also increase the value or meaning of GDP by including a long-neglected element – the unpaid work of women. In order to improve women's lives, the perceived value of women must change. Economic decisions are made on the basis of GDP, and the relative worth or value of different segments of society are reflected in economic figures. When full-time housewives are categorized as economically unproductive, putting them in the same category as beggars and prisoners, it is easy to avoid enacting or enforcing any serious policy meant to improve their lives.

In order to advance the status of women, it may be helpful to conduct research and advocacy activities to, for example:

- ❖ Raise people's and policymakers' awareness of the importance of women's contribution and that spending money on women is an investment in the economic wellbeing of the country rather than an expense;
- ❖ Convince government officials to include women's work in national economic measurements (such as GDP) and to incorporate an understanding of women's value when looking at programs to assist women (such programs representing a tiny return on women's contribution to society rather than a net cost);
- ❖ Encourage greater involvement of men in domestic tasks so as to reduce the burden on women and increase overall family well-being;

Messages about the value of women's domestic work to families and the nation could be included in work with the media, in direct advocacy with policymakers, in networking activities, and in capacity building. This research study could also be replicated in other countries to broaden international

understanding of the issue in different contexts.

The following recommendations are taken mainly from the five country studies. Recommendations from the research may be addressed to different sectors such as government, INGOs/NGOs, research institutions and women's organizations, with a view to enable them to change the policies, laws, and conventional mindset related to all forms of gender discrimination and non-recognition of the economic value of women's unpaid work.

Recommendations to government: policy reforms

- Introduce appropriate policy reforms aimed at changing the methodology and practices related to the System of National Accounting (SNA) with the objective of incorporating women's household work into calculations of GDP.
- Ensure due attention is paid to ending all kinds of gender discrimination and inequality. Treat such work as a necessity not a luxury.
- Ensure effective implementation and enforcement of existing rights (make sure such rights do not exist on paper only), including economic, political, and social rights of women in rural and urban areas, among those with and without formal employment, for women of all ages, abilities, and income groups.
- Enable and ensure full participation of women in the policy-making process.

Recommendations to government: health and education

- Provide women and girls access to quality health care services, to enjoy full health, including reproductive and mental health.
- Education is an essential tool for change. Educated women are better able to care for their families and family finances, experience more opportunities in decision-making, and make better home managers. In addition to improving education and females' access to it, the educational curriculum should be restructured in order to emphasize gender equality rather than reinforcing gender stereotypes.

Recommendations to government: economic sector and employment policies

- Recognize, count, and make visible women's real economic contributions in both formal and informal sectors of the economy.
- Remove inequities and imbalances in all sectors of socio-economic development and focus on women's equal access to all development, benefits, and social services. Access to and control over production and market resources (access to training, credit, employment, technical skills, entrepreneurship, etc.) by women should be increased while recognizing that the goal is not to burden women with two full-time jobs.
- Set the minimum wage at a level sufficient to allow workers to escape from the poverty trap.

- Establish a benefits system which recognizes women's diverse roles in society and offers adequate support for families and children. As one aspect of this, possibly require companies to pay into nationalized systems of education, health care, and pensions, so that they return some portion of what they have gained to the workforce and those who enable others to work outside the home. Ensure affordable and adequate childcare and family-friendly employment policies which allow parents to reconcile caring and work.
- Bring full- and part-time household workers into existing social security systems and benefit programs, and expand opportunities to work part-time and to have more flexible time in order to allow both sexes to devote more time and attention to their household, family, and the community.
- Address the gender-related problems of unemployment (allocation of financial resources, entrepreneurship, legality of various types of informal work, etc.) to liberate women from their financial dependence on men, particularly for widows, women in abusive relationships, and other particularly vulnerable women.
- Develop strategies that address women's access to resources in the agriculture, fisheries, environment, and other sectors.

Recommendations to NGOs/INGOs and women's organizations

- Adequate recognition should be given to the unpaid contributions of women so as to increase their self-

esteem and to improve their position in the family and society at large. A series of seminars and workshops on the economic valuation of women's domestic work should be organized to sensitize planners, policymakers, NGO and government officials, and academics so that they are able to integrate this issue in the government's plans, programs, and financial accounting and calculations.

- Women are paid less than men for the same work. NGOs and INGOs could work to address discrimination in pay and other areas, to encourage men to play an important role in household work, and to raise the perceived value of women.
- Women's organizations should give priority to implementing strategies and programs that promote the economic value of women's unpaid work. This could include providing special programs on women's legal rights and women's issues, in addition to regular programs such as literacy, income generation, and agriculture, to enhance women's knowledge and confidence.
- Women's organizations can play a key role in highlighting the importance of the household work performed by women and the need to acknowledge its economic value in national decision-making.
- The existence of a normative social expectation that women have to work to generate income and to take care of domestic work, while there has been no mechanism to encourage men to share in household tasks, has made the objective of gender equality hard to realise.

Therefore, it is important to encourage both men and women to engage fully in their responsibilities in the household.

- Engage in positive campaigns that encourage men to take a more significant role in the family — and highlight the advantages that would accrue to men as a result. Greater involvement of men in domestic tasks would decrease the heavy load on women, raise men's understanding and compassion for domestic matters, and increase their involvement with their children.
- More emphasis needs to be placed on the recognition that domestic labour is on par with paid employment, and as such requires investment, training, supporting services and ultimately the inclusion of its production in GDP measurements. It is necessary to either develop or complement a national system of statistical data in terms of time use, paying specific attention to time used for housework and childcare, as well as the indicators for measuring those tasks' monetary value. To this end, housework should be identified as a separate job in the list of jobs and occupations employed in national statistical research programmes.
- Media practitioners, planners, and programmers/producers could be trained on the vital role of household work in the maintenance of a nation; that is, while work for pay is vital, so too are the daily tasks of cooking, cleaning, and caring for others. It should not be assumed that work for pay has more value to society than the work of caring for others.
- Programmes could be introduced to decrease the

workload of housewives, such as constructing drinking water taps and schools closer to settlements. These innovations are likely to help in saving both the time and workload of housewives.

- The role of the media can be enhanced as a means of information and education about women's issues and for a more positive portrayal of women. Awareness campaigns can be initiated in the media and in schools to promote the positive benefits of a more equal sharing of responsibilities, decision-making, and power between women and men inside and outside of the home. This in turn could begin a transformation to more gender-sensitive men and caring fathers and husbands, and women more capable and confident in assuming new responsibilities.

Recommendations to research institutions

- Many men believe that women have little value and are just a burden for which they have to provide food, clothing, shelter, and security. Similar views may be held by government officials in determining budgets for so-called women's issues. It is vital that officials and others recognize that expenditures on women — whether in the home or at the national level — are not a drain or expense, but rather an investment in the economic and social welfare of the country. Additional research should be conducted in this regard to raise people's awareness that women contribute to national wealth by taking care of their homes, saving their family money, giving free care service, and supporting their husbands and others in a multitude of ways.

- Calculating the value of domestic labour is new in terms of both theories and practice, especially the measurement approaches. More research efforts are needed to address deficiencies in the existing theoretical system of measuring domestic labour. Research in this area could helpfully contribute lessons and techniques in terms of how to conduct such studies, contributing to the pool of knowledge in this area.

Other issues

- Raising children more equally: Daughters should have the opportunity to develop their decision-making skills and leadership capacities, and sons must be trained to respect their sisters as equals. In particular, daughters must be ensured equal access to the same quantity, quality, and type of food, education, and health care as sons.
- In order to benefit from the more family-oriented perspective of women in policymaking and other leadership positions, immediate steps must be taken to place more women in decision-making and leadership positions and, at the same time, provide them with the necessary catch-up training and experience in order to be effective. However, as the experience of capable women decision-makers has demonstrated, these measures alone will not be sufficient. The institutional context of decision-making and leadership must be addressed to create more women- and family-friendly institutions and organizational cultures.
- It is vital that there be women in senior positions able to

act as role models and mentors for young women and women's networks that can support women in the same way that conventional male-dominated networks support the career development and promotions of men. In addition, institutions need to re-examine their organizational culture and work practices.

- Not all women can or wish to work for pay. The work performed in the house by women is vital to people's wellbeing, and attempts to ensure that all women work outside the home or work for pay will have negative effects on those dependent on the tasks traditionally performed by women. It is important to remember that for many women this is their job, and one that would yield much satisfaction if it also entailed similar benefits and respect as do paid jobs. Recognizing the importance of household work — including but by no means limited to childcare and care of the elderly — would help to raise the status of women and to address the poverty and dependency faced by many full-time housewives. A society that respects and values the work of caring for others would also be far more humane than one that only values paying jobs.
- Regarding paid work, women's capacity to earn can be increased by improving the availability of opportunities for women in remunerated employment. Equal remuneration for men and women for equal or similar work should be ensured. A job outside the home can present an attractive alternative to dependence on others, giving the woman a sense of purpose and identity separate from her role as wife and mother.

- Measures can be taken to make the workplace conducive for the women workers, so that more females can join paid work and enjoy mental and psychological wellbeing, while still valuing women who do not work outside the home. Significantly, this should be a choice for those with the luxury to decide, rather than a decision forced on women by family or society.
- Special entrepreneurial skills-building courses can be conducted for women to assist them to establish their own small-scale enterprises, either at home or outside the home. An important caveat here is about the danger of burdening women — a burden many might happily accept in return for greater job opportunities, but one which takes its toll on women and families.
- As women enter the formal workforce in larger numbers, a more equal sharing of household responsibilities will become even more important. The system in some European countries of a maximum 36-hour workweek for everyone could be a model, encouraging both women and men to spend sufficient time with their families as well as to enjoy the benefits of the formal working world.



PART IV: CONCLUSION

Whether women work exclusively in the home or elsewhere as well, they labour hard from dawn to dark. As a basic human rights issue, their prevailing conditions should be improved and measures taken to make apparent their “invisible” work and the contribution they render for the betterment of family and country. Their rights should be protected regarding access to education, health care, fair pay, respect, and decision-making in the family and community. Opportunities should be made available to them for development of their skills and potential in all spheres of life, especially social, economic, and personal. Like all human beings, women require rest, vacation, and free time to partake in leisure activities and thus enjoy physical and mental health. Women also deserve respect as fully contributing, valuable citizens without whom no nation could survive.

It is hoped that research on the importance and value of the household work carried out by women without pay will raise attention to the vital role played by women and to the continuing need to work towards a higher status for women. Learning to value women is one of the vital steps that must be taken to create more humane, healthy, balanced, and caring societies. Acknowledging the value of the work carried out by women for their families could be an important start.

Calculating the economic value of the unpaid work performed by women, and adding that value to measures of national wealth such as GDP, would not only significantly increase the sum represented by GDP but would increase the *value* or meaning of the figure, by including a long-neglected element – the unpaid work of women. It would also contribute to making

visible the currently invisible work performed by women. As a result, the status of women would likely increase and the treatment of women by their family members and by officials would likely improve, contributing to more gender-equal societies as well as wealthier nations. It would also help people to understand that government's expenditures on women are not an expense but in fact an *investment*, resulting in significant financial as well as other yields to individuals, families, society and the nation.

Replicating this research in other countries and sharing the findings both in terms of the value estimated and the methods used would contribute to the pool of knowledge in this area and, it is hoped, to the status of women worldwide.



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Appendix 1: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)

The importance of women's unpaid work is mentioned in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) of many countries. In Bangladesh, under the Policy Matrix "Women's Advancement and Rights (Mainstreaming economic activities)", the following appears:

Strategic goal: "Improve women's efficiency (reduce time use) in household & reproductive roles"

Key Targets: "Raise awareness to improve men's contribution in household activities; Attempt to calculate women's household contribution in National Income Accounting by 2007."

Actions Taken/Underway: "Social auditing initiatives"

PRSP Policy Agenda: "...Include women's contribution in the National Income Accounting by developing mechanism of shadow price/opportunity cost analysis; Promote equal sharing of household and productive works..."

That is, government policy may state directly, as in Bangladesh, that it is necessary to include women's contribution through household work in national income estimates. Goals of increasing men's contribution to household activities can be addressed by highlighting the large number of tasks which women undertake, to suggest specific areas in which further sharing could occur. Here again, the greater enjoyment of leisure time by men than women highlights the need, as already stated in government policy, for men to assume more household tasks to reduce women's burden.

Appendix 2: List of tasks regularly performed by women

Note: Although we mention 45 tasks, the figure is somewhat arbitrary, as various tasks can be further sub-divided. Naturally, not all women engage in all tasks, and tasks involving childcare of course vary by the age of the child. It is mostly rural women who engage in agriculture-related tasks and animal husbandry, and some of the handicrafts are performed more commonly by rural than urban women. Some tasks are seasonal or occasional, including certain agriculture work and taking care of the sick; some tasks take far longer than others, e.g. cooking is one of the longest. The figure of 45 tasks is thus a rough estimate.

Agriculture-related

1. Preparing soil, planting seedlings, weeding, etc. for rice paddy
2. Managing daily workers for rice paddy
3. Preparing plot, etc. for vegetable gardening
4. Growing vegetables (watering, weeding, etc.)
5. Managing daily workers for gardening
6. Harvesting
7. Food processing
8. Collecting and drying seeds

Animal husbandry

9. Caring for ducks and chickens (cleaning, feeding, etc.)
10. Medical care of small animals
11. Collecting and selling eggs
12. Caring for larger animals (cows, goats): cleaning, feeding, etc.
13. Milking cows

14. Taking milk to market

Handicrafts

15. Making baskets, mats, nets, holders to hang pots, pottery
16. Embroidery
17. Making clothes
18. Mending clothes

Housework

19. Cleaning the home (sweeping, washing the floors, dusting, putting things away)
20. Cleaning around the home
21. Tending mud floors to keep out dust
22. Making beds, hanging and taking down mosquito nets
23. Washing dishes (3-4 times/day)
24. Hand-washing clothes; hanging clothes out to dry
25. Ironing, folding, and putting clothes away
26. Preparing food for cooking: cleaning rice, preparing and washing vegetables, grinding spices, cleaning fish, etc.¹⁷
27. Cooking, making bread (3-4 times/day)
28. Tending to and lighting lamps
29. Collecting firewood or other materials for fuel
30. Making fuel from cow dung

¹⁷ These activities are very labour-intensive. Cleaning the rice involves sifting it for small stones, then washing it. Many green leafy vegetables require painstakingly peeling strings off the stalks and pulling off the leaves, sorting through for leaves that are spoiled. Chickens and fish generally begin in the whole state; chickens must be killed, plucked, etc., and fish must be scaled. All spices are ground in the home, and everyday this involves cleaning and smashing garlic and ginger as well as grinding spices with a mortar and pestle or a board and sort of rolling pin.

31. Carrying water
32. Supervising household help
33. Helping with family business, piecemeal work
34. Preparing various foods for sale (puffed rice, pounded rice, etc.)

Caring for family members

35. Caring for children (bathing, dressing, tending, feeding, putting to bed, etc.)
36. Caring for the sick
37. Caring for husband
38. Teaching children, helping with homework
39. Taking children to and from school
40. Feeding, looking after guests
41. Paying bills
42. Shopping for food
43. Shopping for clothes and other household items
44. Managing the household (organizing activities and expenses)
45. Taking the ill to the doctor

APPENDIX 3: Sample Survey

***Note:** the tasks performed by women can be further subdivided. Not all women engage in all tasks, and tasks involving childcare varies with the age of the child. It is mostly rural women who engage in agriculture-related tasks and animal husbandry, and some of the handicrafts are performed more commonly by rural than urban women .the duration of the tasks performed by women vary. Some tasks are seasonal or occasional.*

Questionnaire

To assess the Women’s Economic Contribution through their Unpaid Work

If you can’t answer questions exactly please provide approximate data. Thank you very much for your co-operation.

TIME SPENT ON PAID WORK, EXTENDED PAID WORK, UNPAID WORK

- At what time do you get up in the morning?
- Do you engage in paid work?
- How much time you spend in a day for your paid work? How many days in a week?
- Do you do any voluntary (unpaid) community work?
- Do you regularly do these tasks? (Yes/daily; no; occasionally/yes but not daily)

HOUSEWORK

- Cleaning the house (Sweeping, washing floors,

dusting, etc)

- Cleaning around the home
- Tending mud floors to keep out dust
- Making beds, hanging and taking out mosquito nets etc.

GROWING FOOD

- Growing vegetables (watering, preparing and applying manure, weeding, etc.)
- Harvesting and related works
- Managing daily workers for gardening (urban areas)
- Food processing
- Collecting and drying seeds
- Storage
- Others

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

- Caring for chickens, ducks (Cleaning, feeding etc)
- Medical care for small animals
- Caring for larger animals (Cow, goat, buffalo etc.)
Cleaning , feeding etc.
- Milking cows
- Selling the products in the market
- Others

HANDICRAFTS

- Making baskets, mats, holders, pots, pottery etc.
- Embroidery
- Making and mending clothes
- Others

CARING FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

- Caring for children (bathing, feeding, tending, putting to bed etc.)
- Caring for sick
- Teaching children school-related subjects, helping with homework
- Teaching children home-based work
- Inculcating values in children
- Taking children to and from school
- Caring for sick
- Caring for husband/ wife
- Feeding looking after guests
- Paying bills
- Shopping for food
- Shopping for clothes and other household items
- Managing the household (Organizing activities, expenses etc)
- Taking the sick to the doctor

LEISURE ACTIVITIES

- Gossiping
- Watching TV
- Listening to radio
- Reading
- Visiting friends or family
- Resting (Afternoon naps, late morning naps etc.)
- Sewing
- Finishing unfinished work
- Personal tasks (Bathing, dressing, personal care, praying, studying etc.)
- Attending community events (Wedding, funerals etc.)
- Participating in community events (Ladies' meetings, community celebrations, religious events, etc.)

Interview schedule

- Do your career demands raise constraints for your role as a mother and wife?
- Have you felt guilty that you are unable to spend adequate time with your family, especially children?
- Can you explain your pre-office time activities at home on an average day?
- Can you explain your post-office time activities at home on an average day?
- Can you explain to us about your husband's morning

activities?

- Can you explain your husbands post-office activities at home on an average day?
- Does your husband get up along with you? Who usually gets up first?
- How do you manage the household chores and children?: • Help of maid servant (full time / part time / live in); • Parents, in-laws; • Relatives; • Friends; • Elder children; • Crèche; • Any other
- What do you do on the days when you get a weekly holiday?
- What does your husband do on the days when he gets a weekly holiday?
- Does your spouse take part in household chores? Yes No
- If yes, how does he help you?
- How much time do you spend for household work and kids in a day?
- How much time does your husband spend on it?
- Do you think that your husband should help you with the household work? Yes No
- If (yes) what in your opinion is the ideal support of the husband in the unpaid work of the family?
- What in your opinion is an ideal support or contribution of the husband in the unpaid activities of a family?
- Do you go for a morning walk? Or do you take some time to pray and plan for the day in the morning?

- Does your husband go for a walk in the morning?
- How much leisure time do you get at your work place?
- What are your favourite leisure time activities? How often do you get time for them?
- When was your last vacation as a family?
- When was your last vacation? When was your husband's last vacation?
- If you stay in a joint family, do you think it has a positive or negative influence on husbands' involvement in the unpaid activities of the family?
- Have you ever felt guilty that you are not able to spend adequate time with your family, especially children?
- Who gets up first at your home? • Self/wife, • Self / husband, • Parents/in-laws, • Children; • Other
- When you get up in the morning what do you do first?
- What does your husband do when he gets up in the morning?
- How much free time do you have in a day?
- What do you do in your free time?

Perceptions about housework (Female/Male Agree/Disagree)

- ✓ It is women's proclivity to do housework.
- ✓ Men are responsible for the "important" work while women are responsible for "trivial" work.
- ✓ Men are those who decide the "important" business in

- the family.
- ✓ Housework should be equally shared between husband and wife.
- ✓ In the family, wives often work more than their husbands.
- ✓ Men often cook when they feel like it while women have to do so regardless of the fact that they like it or not.
- ✓ Anyone can do the domestic work regardless of his/her sex.
- ✓ An ideal wife is the one who can earn much money and be good at the housework.
- ✓ Housework is invisible and time-consuming.
- ✓ Housework has no economic value.
- ✓ Housework educates and develops people.
- ✓ Housework contributes to producing material goods for the family.
- ✓ I do not expect any of the male members to do any domestic work.
- ✓ Men are the major decision makers in my family.
- ✓ The opinion of a woman is important in any decisions made in the family.
- ✓ Domestic work does not carry any monetary value.

Questions for IDI

3.1	Can you estimate the economic value of the work that you do?	Yes No	
3.2	Do you have a maid servant or any other helper (driver, gardener etc.)?	Yes No	
3.3	How much do you pay the maid? (Calculate per task)		
3.4	What are the tasks that you pay her for?	a. Task	b. Amount
1	Washing Clothes		
2	Washing dishes		
3	Cleaning the house		
4	Helping with food preparation and cooking		
5	Cleaning around the house		
6	Feeding children		
7	Taking children to & from school		
8	Tending to children		
9	Collecting fuel		
10	Others		