

## 7 Forward into advocacy

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The previous sections reveal that a lot of work needs to be done if we want to find the value of unpaid care work in a way that satisfies economists and policy makers. This amount of work is not worthwhile unless it can lead to changes in the lives of ordinary women and men. In this section we discuss some of the ways in which the idea of unpaid care work can be used in advocacy.

### 7.1 Broad areas of possible advocacy

Working in the 1980s, before the SNA was revised, Luisella Goldschmidt-Clermont used the terms 'non-market household activities/production/labour' to cover housework and care work as well as the production of commodities for own use. Our definition of unpaid care work excludes production of commodities because this should now be covered in the SNA.

Goldschmidt-Clermont lists nine ways in which household economy measures can be used:

- To fill a statistical gap and produce extended labour statistics and extended production accounts;
- To monitor changes in the allocation of extended labour resources and monitor actual economic growth;
- To ensure that government policies help non-market household production to be allocated an amount of productive resources which matches its economic significance;
- To identify the least productive activities and introduce more satisfactory technologies;
- To help formulate labour market policies and for labour market planning;
- To establish household income comparisons, measure standards of living and formulate welfare policies;

- To help ensure that unpaid household workers are granted the same social status and social benefits enjoyed by other workers;
- To help formulate population policies; and
- To promote appropriate legislation, protect women's economic status and assist courts in financial settlements (Quoted in Ironmonger, 1993 :12).

Marzia Fontana's work shows that measurements of unpaid care work can also be used to predict and monitor the effects of new policies on women and men and on women from different social groups.

Lourdies Beneria suggests that time-use data are needed from a policy perspective:

- To get more accurate data on which to base national and international policies and planning;
- To construct more comprehensive indicators of welfare;
- To do better human resource planning and estimates of potential output;
- To design better adjustment and stabilisation policies;
- To study savings and consumption patterns of women and men, household dynamics, etc; and
- To design policies around income distribution, social security, pay equity (Beneria, 1992).

These lists give some idea of the breadth of issues that can be addressed with the use of information on unpaid care work. In the next section we look at examples of where unpaid care work has been taken account of in policies or advocacy. We focus on examples where the change in policy affects people fairly directly. We do not discuss examples of the setting up of ways to monitor and measure unpaid care work, for example time use studies or compilation of satellite accounts. We choose to ignore these types of activity because we see them as means to an end rather than an end in themselves. Unless we know what we will fight for once we have the time use survey or the satellite accounts, it is not worthwhile to put too much effort into fighting for the survey and accounts.

The examples below show close links between advocacy around unpaid care work and gender budget work in many of the countries. For example, Canada, Israel, South Africa and the United Kingdom have all looked at the ways in which government budgets disadvantage women by not taking account of the unpaid care work that they do. This link provides particular opportunities in Southern Africa, because many of the countries in the region have already done some gender budget work. On the one hand, advocacy and

research on unpaid care work can build on the gender budget work. On the other hand, initiatives around unpaid care work can strengthen the gender budget work.

## 7.2 Examples of advocacy on unpaid care work

### Israel

The issue of unpaid care work has been used recently in advocacy by a policy research NGO, the Adva Centre, in Israel. In July 2002, the Israeli parliament voted to change benefits for single mothers. Up until then, single mothers with children under the age of seven were eligible for income support payments if their monthly income was below a minimum fixed by law. After the child reached age seven, the mother had to pass an employment test – she had to prove that she had worked or tried to find work. The mothers of children under seven years received the payments whether or not they worked, as the payments were intended to give them the choice of taking a full-time job or taking care of their own young children. In total, about 50 000 single mothers received these payments.

The Finance Ministry tried to portray the single mothers as ‘free-loaders’ who refused to work. Adva Centre’s arguments in favour of retaining the benefit included the following:

- 40% of single mothers receiving benefits were working outside the home;
- Their low standard of living should not be cut any lower;
- Women of young children who stay home full or part time are doing work in caring for their children – the next generation. They should be given the option of staying home and doing that work.

Unfortunately, the last Israel time use survey was conducted in 1991, and the data were out of date. If more recent time use data were available, Adva would have calculated the value of the time spent by single mothers taking care of young children. They would then have argued that the Finance Ministry was probably saving money by allowing mothers to take care of their children.

The Israel budget was finally passed in December 2002. It contained a compromise solution that income support would be paid to single mothers until their child was two years old without their having to prove that they had worked or tried to find work. This was worse for women than the previous seven years, but better than the three months suggested by Cabinet.

The Adva Centre is interested in working further on unpaid care work, and collected many of the other examples in this sub-section of ways in which time use surveys can be used for social policy.

## Australia

In the past, the Australian government conducted time use surveys every five years – in 1987, 1992 and 1997. The next time use survey is planned for 2005 or 2006.

During the period that the surveys were conducted, they helped in making policy makers aware of the unpaid care work issue. Policy changes introduced as a result of this awareness included subsidised child care services and job training schemes to encourage women's involvement in paid employment. The government also began to provide incentives such as tax relief and parenting allowances so that parents (mainly mothers) of young children could stay at home and look after them. These measures were relatively successful. But government was less successful in influencing behaviour in the home and family. Each new time use survey showed that women in Australia continue to do the bulk of unpaid care work.

Within the state of Victoria, the Office of Women's Affairs looked at the time spent by individuals caring for elderly and disabled people. The Office suggested several strategies to help the carers. One strategy was to provide payment for home care. This was not implemented. Another strategy, which was implemented, was to replace a tax rebate for dependent spouses paid primarily to men with a cash payment for home child care to the full-time child care givers, who were mainly women.

Despite these advances, time use data has not been used as much as it could. A statistician of the Australian Bureau of Statistics writes as follows:

*In some areas, such as gender equity, information collected in time use surveys in Australia has had a direct bearing on public policy. In other respects, time use data are more or less untapped resources which have the potential to inform social and economic policy. To a large extent, time use data appears to be the province of statistical agencies and specialist researchers. Our task is to communicate the informative power of the data to a wider audience of policy makers... (Webster, 1999: 1)*

Andrew Webster's words are important. They remind us that producing statistics or satellite accounts is not enough. We need to find ways to bring them to the attention of policy makers.

## Canada

Canada is another country that has conducted regular time use surveys. It is in a fortunate position in that, because telephones are widespread, it is able to conduct these surveys telephonically. It also includes questions on time use in its national census.

Canada's national pension plan includes a provision that ensure that the pensions of parents are not reduced as a result of their being out of the paid workforce for a period to care for young children. Further, in 1998, after lobbying on the basis of time use statistics, the Canada's federal budget included a tax credit for unpaid work by caregivers.

## Korea

The activity around unpaid care work in Korea is part of a broader initiative in that region. Over the last few years, the Statistics Division of United Nations Eastern, Southern and Central Asian and the Pacific (UNESCAP) has coordinated work around a guidebook on collection, analysis and use of statistics on unpaid work so as to inform policy making. The guidebook is narrower than this one in that it focuses on statistics. It is broader than this one in that it includes other types of unpaid work beyond unpaid care work. The UNESCAP guidebook is also different from this one in that it provides much more technical detail on things that are only described in broad brush-strokes in this guidebook. The UNESCAP manual will be important background reading for those who want to take work in this area forward. It is available on the web at:

[http://unescap.org/stat/meet/wipuw/wipuw\\_guidebook.htm](http://unescap.org/stat/meet/wipuw/wipuw_guidebook.htm)

The final section of the UNESCAP manual consists of country case studies of how countries have, or intend, to take forward advocacy. Many of the countries are focused on getting statistics on unpaid labour included in national accounts and other systems. As discussed above, this is about establishing the means to address unpaid care work. The Korean case study gives more practical examples of how they see valuation of unpaid work affecting the lives of ordinary women (and men).

The objectives of the Korean advocacy are to have:

- An 'economic rating' of the monetary value of unpaid work, and in particular the value of full-time housework. This rating could then be the basis for insurance and social security, taxation, and property division in cases of divorce. The document suggests that government should

play a lead role in publicising a socially agreed upon 'household labour value method' for calculating a monetary wage per hour for household labour so that public sector and government – particularly the Ministry of Gender Equality – can use it to make recommendations to the private sector.

- Accident compensation paid equitably between paid and unpaid workers, for example compensation for full-time housewives should be equitable with that of working women who also perform housework.
- Men increase their participation in housework. The advocates note that this could reduce men's involvement and perhaps productivity in paid work, but will greatly increase women's involvement and productivity in paid work.

Advocacy began in 1998 when the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs promoted time use data collection, analysis, valuation, and utilisation for decision-making. In February 2002, the President instructed the Commission to find ways of including the value of unpaid housework in the country's national accounts. Currently the Ministry which replaced the Commission is pushing for three major policy reforms:

- Insurance for full-time housewives calculated on the basis of the value of their household labour;
- Family friendly policies in the areas of family support, child care, after school care, and others; and
- Equality of compensation at work and sharing of marital assets in case of divorce.

## Mongolia

Mongolia was also part of the broad UNESCAP initiative around statistics on unpaid work. In Mongolia, participants came up with advocacy points in relation to labour and employment statistics, workers in the informal economy, child work and education, as well as unpaid care work.

On unpaid care work, as well as adding the household economy to national accounts, participants recommended the following:

- Introduction of programmes to ease the domestic burden, especially that of young women;
- Improvement of social protection laws to cover people doing unpaid care work;
- Development of paid work skills among women;

- Promotion of a campaign among women to learn about information technology; and
- Promotion of positive images of the role of women and men through mass media.

## Netherlands

The Working Hours Act of 1996 allowed shops to stay open later in the evening and on Sundays. The 2000 time use survey showed that more Dutch women have entered the paid work force than in 1995 and that Dutch men are doing more of the unpaid household labour – although still not as much as women. It is possible that the Working Hours Act contributed to this change.

## Norway

Norway has conducted four time use surveys, the last one in 2000. In 1992, Norway introduced ‘care credits’ for social security entitlements. These credits were intended to compensate for the paid work time lost by individuals who cared for family members. The credits were available in respect of care for children under seven years of age, care for the elderly, and care for ill persons if the work prevented the carer from doing paid work.

## South Africa

During the apartheid years, government created institutions to care for vulnerable groups among the white population – for orphans, for old people, for those who were disabled. After 1994, the government did not have the money to expand these institutions to cater for people from all race groups. Instead, the government’s Budget Review of 1998 argued that ‘communities themselves are often able to provide more appropriate social services than institutions . . . community care is also usually a more cost efficient alternative to institutionalization’. The Women’s Budget Initiative pointed out that in using the word ‘efficient’, the government was thinking only about the costs that appear in money accounts. They were not thinking about unpaid labour, the costs that this imposes, and who bears the costs. The Initiative has called for government to assist community carers in some way – financial or otherwise – to do the work that relieves government of tasks it would otherwise have to perform.

In 2000, South Africa became the first sub-Saharan country to conduct a national time use survey. As expected, the survey revealed the time spent by women and others collecting water. It also revealed another hidden time cost for households without running water and electricity. Already in the piloting before the main survey, interviewers reported an activity not included in the international codes – the time needed to light fires to heat the water for bathing and washing once it was fetched. This activity shows the interlinkages between different policies – that provision of water has some benefit, but the benefit is vastly increased if it goes together with provision of electricity.

Unpaid labour of a different sort has come up in the area of housing. South Africa has a huge housing backlog. To address this backlog, it introduced housing subsidies for poorer households. After a few years, the policy was changed and households were required to make some contribution of their own to qualify for the subsidy. Government recognised that some households were too poor to make this contribution in cash. Instead, they allowed households to make the contribution in ‘sweat equity’, by working on building the house.

In an economist’s terms, this policy recognises that the ‘opportunity cost’ of the time of household members is low relative to the ‘opportunity cost’ of other assets, such as money. The opportunity cost of their labour is low because of the high unemployment rates, so that there are few opportunities to earn money. The acceptance of the unpaid household labour of the household instead of money recognises that unpaid labour has value. What we are asking in this guidebook is that unpaid care work is recognised in the same way.

## United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, the Women’s Budget Group has used arguments around unpaid care work in its interaction with the British Treasury. In March 2002, the Chancellor announced that the child tax credit would, from 2003, be paid to the main caregiver. In practice, then, it would usually be paid to the woman. The Treasury was mainly convinced by arguments of efficiency – that money paid to a woman is more likely to be used to the benefit of the child than money paid to a man (St Hill, 2002).



### 7.3 Where to from here?

The examples above are mainly from developed countries. Many of the policies and advocacy revolve around ways of compensating women for the unpaid work they do. In many of the developed countries this compensation works through the tax system. In particular, people who do unpaid care work are given credits which mean that they pay less tax.

These policies provide ideas for developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa, but are not very useful in terms of detail. In particular, relatively few people in our countries pay personal income tax, so tax credits would not be much use. Instead we have to find ways of compensating unpaid care work, or relieving the burden, in other ways.

Some of the non-tax issues raised in the country examples are relevant in sub-Saharan countries, at least for some groups of women. We could, for example, think about how unpaid care work should affect policies on retirement benefits, and occupational health and safety.

One problem is that in many of these policies, the payout provided to the person is dependent on how much the person was earning before. Such payouts have gender bias both because men tend to earn more than women, and because women are more likely to take time out of the paid workforce to do unpaid care work. Further, even when they are employed in paid work, women are usually less able to do overtime because of their unpaid care work responsibilities.

A second problem is that payouts that are based on earnings from paid work ignore the losses and associated costs related to unpaid care work. For example, a woman who loses an arm in an accident at the factory will lose her money earnings. She will also be less able to do her household tasks and perhaps have to pay someone else to assist.

The Korean example suggests that unpaid care work can be considered when determining how assets are split between the woman and man on divorce. Unpaid care work can also be considered when determining how much the non-custodial parent should pay when the child lives, and is cared for, by only one of them (usually the mother).

Research on divorce cases in South Africa (Budlender, 1996) suggests that the courts are prepared to consider unpaid care work in some cases where wealthy women are involved, but are less prepared to do so when it is poorer women. For example, courts sometimes award 'spousal maintenance' to wealthier women who have not worked at any time in the marriage. The maintenance is awarded both in recognition of her contribution (in unpaid care work) to the marriage, and on the assumption that she is unable to provide for herself.

Poorer women do not have the option of staying at home – they are forced to go out and find money in some way. The court assumes she is better able to provide for herself than a wealthier woman, and/or that she has less needs. For example, in one case of a woman with a two-month old baby, the husband asserted that she 'is a healthy young woman and has made absolutely no attempt to find gainful employment'. However, because women have often taken some time off to have babies and look after the family, and because they generally earn less than men, when the woman and man each have to rely on their separate incomes after divorce, the woman is likely to be hit harder. The bias in favour of wealthy women is ironic, in that most will have passed much of their unpaid care work on to domestic workers.

In respect of child support (maintenance), where the child lives with only one parent, laws generally provide that both parents should contribute to the (money) costs of bringing up the child in proportion to their ability. In practice, even this is often not achieved, either because the non-custodian parent (usually the man) cannot be found, or because they refuse to pay. Timothy Smeeding suggests that calculations based only on money do not take unpaid care work into account. Instead, he suggests that the calculations should involve both time (hours requirement of support by absent parent) and money (normal child support) (1997: 21).

There are also some issues which are relevant in sub-Saharan Africa but would not be relevant in most developed countries. Provision of water and electricity to avoid women and children walking long distances and spend long hours to collect them would be one of these.

Overall, the burden of unpaid care work has always probably been greater in sub-Saharan Africa than in most developed countries. This is so because there are fewer opportunities for buying household-type services on the market. People also generally have less money to buy the services even where they are available.

In recent years the relative burden of unpaid care work has increased because of the HIV and AIDS pandemic and the way it has hit our region.

Governments do not have the resources to provide all the services that are needed to care for those who are ill. Instead, most governments are promoting 'home-based care', where household members are encouraged to care for those who are ill rather than relying on clinics and hospitals.

The responsibility of care for those with HIV and AIDS affects the amount of unpaid care work in other areas. Thus Noeleen Heyzer notes that it takes 24 buckets of water a day to care for a person living with HIV and AIDS. This water is necessary to clean soiled sheets, to bathe the ill person several times a day, to wash dishes and prepare food (Christian Science Monitor, July 18, 2002). This amount of water is roughly equivalent to the amount that goes into a swimming pool every month in wealthy areas of Johannesburg. However, the month's worth of water for the swimming pool is obtained with minimal effort by the owner, while the 24 buckets are often collected from a long distance and by women.

Groups in several countries have been quick to point out that home-based care is yet another form of unpaid care work. The Tanzanian Gender Network Programme includes in its campaign to 'return resources back to the people' the call for recognition that women at the household level need resources to compensate their unpaid labour especially in looking after those who are ill with an AIDS related disease. The Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre Network has a research-cum-advocacy project on HIV and AIDS which includes a focus on home-based care.

#### 7.4 In conclusion

Those who oppose advocacy around unpaid care work sometimes do so because they think that advocates are asking for 'wages for housework'. There are a few groups who are asking for wages for housework. However, most groups are not asking for this.

The UNDP's Human Development Report of 1995 has a special focus on unpaid care work. The conclusion to the chapter argues that giving a value to unpaid care work is a question of justice. Proper valuation of unpaid care work would show that in many countries women are the main breadwinners if we look at the number of hours worked rather than money earned.

If society, families and individuals accepted this, it could bring big changes in society. It would mean that each working person in a household – whether doing paid or unpaid work – is entitled to a share of income generated by the paid work. It would mean that husbands must share income with their wives

as ‘an act of entitlement rather than benevolence’ (UNPD, 1995: 98). This, in turn, would bring about changes in rights to property and inheritance, access to credit, entitlement to social security benefits, and so on. Some of the ways in which this could happen are illustrated in the case studies above. The task ahead is to find new ways of recognising unpaid care work in the specific ways it happens in the countries of Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean States covered by UNIFEM’s office.