

# CARE WORK- ANALYSING THE INDIAN UNPAID CARE ECONOMY

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Business Line, Care work and care economy is a system of activities in relationships involved in meeting the physical, emotional, and psychological aspects of care. Care work can be direct or indirect, paid or unpaid, short term or long term. This kind of work is not restricted to any particular field as well. Paid work like nannies for small children and housemaids etc. or caretaker of disabled people and the elderly come under long term as well as short term work and is dominated by the female population.

On the other hand, unpaid care work consists of work done by an individual relating to the care of other individuals, which in no way is accounted for and they are definitely not paid for it. This kind of work is mostly seen to be done in the households, and again, is predominantly done by the women in the households.

Even outside the house, in the agriculture sector or labour-intensive areas, significant work is done by a woman which is not accounted for and they don't get any payment for it. A stark difference is noted here, between the jobs done by men in similar fields as women outside the household, for which they are paid. Moreover, that job is considered to be work. It should be noted that globally, women do 3.2 times more unpaid work than men.

## 2. HISTORY OF UNPAID WORK

All over the world, after economists James Meade and Richard Stone came up with national income accounting which later came to be known as a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a problem was discovered in this system as it did not include the economic value of preparing and cooking food, collecting firewood, cleaning the household, taking care of children, etc. This was pointed out at the time by a woman named Phyllis Deane, hired by Meade and Stone themselves. This was mainly because all these jobs were commonly viewed as women's work.

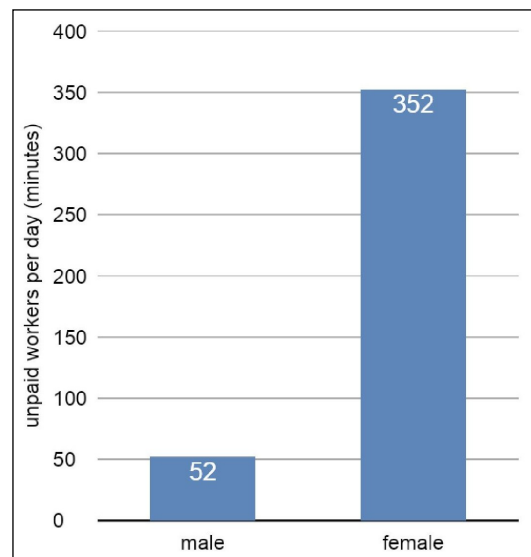
Nearly 80 years later, we have still chosen to not include these activities in our National Income Accounts. Various

South Asian and African nations where women do a lot of work in the fields and their houses do not get proper representation for their work.

## 3. INDIA

India has a large labour force consisting of both men and women. Apart from being in the paid labour force, a very large number of these women are not represented for the work that they do, as mentioned earlier. These women work in the household for a major portion of their day and are not acknowledged for the same.

**Figure 1:** Unpaid work per day done by women in comparison to men



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

This is the case for both working and non-working women. A study conducted by A. Sengupta for both rural and urban households in a district of West Bengal shows how the unpaid labour hours for women exceeds that of men by a large number. The female unpaid work hours for both rural and urban are very high as compared to their male counterparts. This shows how education, as well as employment, do not play a definitive role in the portion of unpaid work done by women in a household.

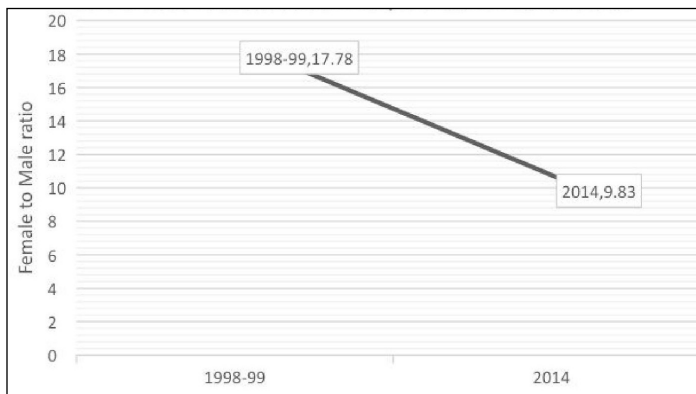
The major reason behind this would be the increasing gender inequality and deep-rooted patriarchal system of our society. It is believed that men are not supposed to contribute to the household work as they are the primary breadwinners. Despite the importance of a woman's role in household work, she is not considered to be working. This leads to a fall in productivity of women as well. Their economic development is not taken into consideration, and they remain unrepresented.

According to ILO, women do four times more unpaid care work than men in Asia. In India, men only perform 31 minutes of unpaid care work, amongst the lowest in the world.

#### 4. COMPARISON: THEN AND NOW

In 1998-99, when the first and only Time-use Survey until now was conducted for India, the ratio of female to male unpaid work hours was 17.78. Average hours spent by women on total work is 69.03 hours, and that of men is 62.71 hours per week.

**Figure 2:** Female to male ratio of unpaid care work hours



Source: Data by OECD and National TUS Survey

Women's unpaid work hours including all household work and care activities of children and the elderly added up to 33.43 hours a week. And the same for men was merely 1.88 hours. This shows the vast disparity between men and women during the time. Even with the advancement of our economy in the many years after this, the situation has not improved much. Men are still not sharing the burden of this unpaid work with women. Women continue to work more than men, due to the additional unpaid work which is so much more than the paid as well as the unpaid work done by men. As shown above, the female to male ratio for unpaid work hours in 2014 is 9.83. Per 100 hours of unpaid work done by men, women do 980 hours of unpaid work. Furthermore, the average hours worked by women at home in both rural and urban households according to the research of a particular area, that is a district in West Bengal, in 2016, according to the survey done by A. Sengupta, give us a glimpse into how

this inequality still persists. It also shows that educational qualifications do not affect the number of hours spent doing unpaid work by women. The difference is minimal. This comparison brings to light that the decline in female work hours in unpaid work is not as much as it should have been in the last sixteen years. The position of women has not changed much since then in our country.

#### 5. UNPAID WORK AND GDP

The amount of unpaid work done by women is so much that a parallel cannot be drawn between it and the same work done by men. But the huge amount of hours that have been given by the women in the country can help our economy develop in a better way than before. This is because almost a major part of the unpaid labour force makes up women and these women also make up an important part of the country as well as the economy. In recent times, the importance of care work has increased. It is expected that by 2030, 2.3 billion people would need care work in the world. At this rate, we need to start investing more in the care economy and since it already is a major portion of the labour force, it will boost our economic development.. The value of unpaid work globally is 9% of the global GDP. It becomes all the more important for us to divert our focus on these labour hours. Countries will soon have to invest more in this sector, this shows how important a role it plays, and the fact that it has been ignored for too long.

#### 6. A STEP TOWARDS CHANGE: URUGUAY

In Uruguay, South America, the government came up with its Care Act in 2016. It has been stated as a model for care work in the future, according to ILO news. The UN Women and UNFPA conducted surveys in the country which showed the difference between men and women's share of paid and unpaid work in a week. It showed how only one-third of the week is given to paid work by women and two-third of it to unpaid work.

The main aim for this was to promote childcare and help the elderly, via which more women can be entered into the labour market. An in-depth analysis of this inclusion led to a conclusion that this may lead to the betterment of those who are already better off, but in turn, it also prevents the middle class to opt out of the public services. Moreover, a lot of unemployed women could start working in a manner comfortable to them. This has helped in creating new services in the care sector.

The rise of care services and the loss of work hours of women propelled this change in the care sector. Women have been given a chance to work in the care sector with paid jobs and this can lead to a better chance for them to

support their living and give themselves representation.

Similarly, in Costa Rica, an integrated care system in their healthcare sector is present.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In the coming years, an investment in the GDP of our economy by 2 per cent of our GDP could create 11 million jobs and 32.5 per cent of these jobs would be done by women, as mentioned in a report by International Trade Union Confederation, 2019. Such large implications to our economy should not be ignored for long. The government of India is working towards this aim as well, with a planned Time-use survey in 2019, with its first report coming out in May-June, 2020. This would give us a plethora of information and updates on the condition of paid and unpaid labour in the country.

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The demand for care work in the world is going to surge by 2030 and the world could soon face a care crisis. This calls for a more active response by countries, like Uruguay, which has already taken steps to facilitate the growth of the care economy and reduce the unpaid labour hours of women.

Adding unpaid labour hours spent by women in the GDP of our country would not only give them representation in the economy but also bridge the gap between males and females in work disparity. It would lead to an advancement of women's economic as well as social standing. It would also result in a change in the societal perspective of women. Men would be encouraged to help in household work, and this would allow more women to invest in their development, thus strengthening the public policy of a county.