

# MEASURING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

TIME USE DATA  
AND GENDER INEQUALITY

---

OECD DEVELOPMENT  
POLICY PAPERS

February 2019 **No. 16**



OECD Development Policy Papers  
February 2019 – No. 16

# **Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Time Use Data and Gender Inequality**

By Gaelle Ferrant and Annelise Thim

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the OECD, its Development Centre or of their member countries.

This document, and any map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

This document was authorised for publication by Mario Pezzini, Director of the Development Centre and Special Advisor to the OECD Secretary-General on Development and Jorge Moreira da Silva, Director of the Development Co-operation Directorate.

The authors would like to thank Carlotta Balestra and Anil Alpman (OECD, Statistics and Data Directorate) for their input and support.

Keywords: Unpaid care work, gender equality, women's economic empowerment, gender gaps, time use

JEL classification: J16, J18, J22, 018

## *Abstract*

This policy paper is an output of the OECD Policy Dialogue on Women's Economic Empowerment, co-ordinated jointly by the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate, the Development Centre and the Statistics and Data Directorate. The initiative aims to identify policy and programme solutions to promote women's economic empowerment by recognising, reducing and redistributing women's unpaid care work. This paper presents new analysis of time use data and unpaid care work from Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and South Africa as well as comparisons with OECD countries. It provides recommendations for policy makers, donors and development practitioners to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, drawing on learning from the Social Institutions and Gender Index and in-country research by the OECD Policy Dialogue on Women's Economic Empowerment. Specifically, the recommendations focus on how to recognise unpaid care work by measuring and valuing it, reduce time spent on drudgery by the provision of quality infrastructure and redistribute unpaid care tasks more equally between men and women by transforming gender stereotypes.

## Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Time Use Data and Gender Inequality

This policy paper aims to strengthen the evidence base on the gender gaps in unpaid care work and explores different policy responses. The paper presents new analysis of time use data from Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and South Africa as well as comparisons with OECD countries. It provides recommendations for policy makers, donors and development practitioners to support the achievement of SDG 5.4 based on the “3Rs” framework - recognise, reduce and redistribute - to address unpaid care.

### Key findings

- Measuring unpaid care work with time use surveys to **recognise** and value it reveals the significant share it represents of countries' GDP, for example, 14% in South Africa and Canada, 23% in Argentina, France and New Zealand, and 33% in China.
- Education does not guarantee a **reduction** in unpaid care work for women: primary school education does not have a significant impact on the time women spend on routine housework, and, in some cases, is associated with an increase. Only women with higher education are likely to see a decrease in routine housework, due to increasing income and opportunities to substitute these responsibilities with market services.
- Economic growth is associated with a reduction in unpaid care work for women, in particular a reduction in the physically- and time-intensive tasks of unpaid care work (such as collecting water or fuel), leaving women with more time for paid work and study as well as leisure and personal care.
- Higher levels of economic development do not automatically lead to a more equal **redistribution** of unpaid care work between women and men, due to the persistence of restrictive gender norms which place the responsibility for domestic work and child care on women.
- Gender gaps in unpaid care work begin at an early age for girls and boys, increasing for women at marriage and childbirth. For men, however, marriage may actually decrease their time spent on unpaid care work: married men spend less time on routine housework than single men do, if all other factors stay the same (e.g. number of children, location, age).

## Introduction

Policy makers and development partners have placed women's economic empowerment at the top of the global agenda. More than two decades after the landmark 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing and, more recently, with the consensus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the global commitment to women's economic empowerment has never been stronger (UN, 2015). At the same time, evidence continues to mount on how increasing women's labour force participation and economic opportunities can drive sustainable and inclusive growth: eliminating discriminatory social institutions could benefit women's education and labour force participation and add USD 12 trillion to the global economy, representing 16% of the global GDP in 2011 (Ferrant and Kolev, 2016).

Despite an increased focus on women's economic empowerment, women continue to see poorer economic outcomes than men do. Globally, women's labour force participation rate was 54% compared to 81% for men (World Bank, 2017). For OECD countries, there remains a gender pay gap of almost 14% on average (OECD, 2018), while in developing countries, women are overrepresented among informal workers and as paid family labourers (ILO, 2018). Gender gaps related to women's economic participation build up over their life course: the global gender pensions gap ranges between 30-40%. As this rate, it is estimated to take over 200 years to achieve gender equality in the labour market (WEF, 2018).

**Unpaid care work** refers to all unpaid services provided within a household for its members (by women, primarily, but also to varying degrees by girls, men and boys), including direct care of persons and housework and voluntary community work (Elson, 2000). These activities are considered work, because theoretically one could pay a third person to perform them. However, they are typically not included in the System of National Accounts or – in the case of activities like fetching water/ fuel - are theoretically included but often not well documented or accounted for (Folbre, 2018). In this paper, unpaid care work will be used to refer to unpaid care and domestic work.

Women's greater share of unpaid care work partially explains the slow and uneven progress toward gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Globally, women spend three times longer on unpaid care work than men, ranging from 1.5 times longer in North American countries to 6.7 times longer in South Asian countries (see Figure 1). Research using the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI, see Box 1) finds that this unequal distribution of caring responsibilities is deeply embedded in social norms that view unpaid care work as a female prerogative (Ferrant, Pesando and Nowacka, 2014). This has a direct impact on their ability to participate fully in the paid economy: in Latin America and Caribbean countries, over 50% of "inactive" women aged 20–24 cited their domestic responsibilities as a reason for not working (Alfers, 2015). In the Philippines and Guatemala, 20% and 40% of informal working mothers, respectively, cited a lack of childcare as a key reason for not taking formal employment.

### Box 1. Measuring discriminatory social norms: The SIGI

The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) measures gender-based discrimination in social institutions, i.e. formal and informal laws, social norms and practices across 180 countries. The SIGI comprises country profiles (information on laws, policies and

action plans promoting gender equality and women's empowerment), a database (with indicators on levels of discrimination in legal framework, social norms and practices) and a cross-country ranking.

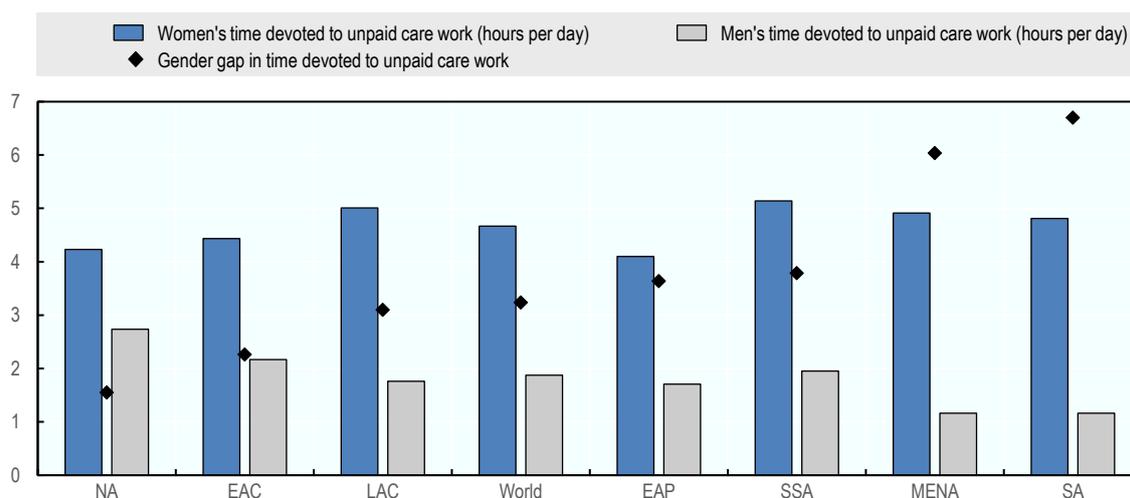
The SIGI covers four dimensions, spanning major socio-economic areas that affect the women and girls across their life course: discrimination within the family, restricted physical integrity, restricted access to financial and productive resources, and restricted civil liberties. These dimensions look at the gaps that legislation, prevalence and attitudes and practices create between women and men in terms of rights and opportunities.

The SIGI serves as a research, advocacy and evidence-based policy tool for policy makers and the development community. The SIGI is one of the official data sources for monitoring Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 5.1.1 on “Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor gender equality and women's empowerment.”

For more information: [www.genderindex.org](http://www.genderindex.org).

Yet, Policies and programmes for women's economic empowerment often ignore women's disproportionate share of the world's unpaid care work, seeing it as a “private” issue best managed within the household. Instead, traditional approaches to economic empowerment tend to focus on structural barriers, such as access to finance and physical resources, and training or educational programmes. As analysis from the OECD Policy Dialogue on Women's Economic Empowerment shows, policies and programmes rarely aim to address unpaid care work, even when they have a direct or indirect impact on women's time use (OECD, 2019 forthcoming). This “one-size-fits-all” approach to economic empowerment assumes that women and men face the same constraints in their home and public life. This is beginning to change, as the need to address unpaid care work gains traction on the global policy agenda (see Box 2). However, policy makers are constrained by a lack of understanding of both the issue and policy and programme solutions that work to address it.

**Figure 1. Regional gender gaps in unpaid care work**



*Note:* This graph shows regional gender gaps in time devoted in unpaid care work. NA stands for North America, ECA for Europe and Central Asia, LAC for Latin America and the Caribbean, EAP for East Asia and the Pacific, SSA for Sub-Saharan Africa, MENA for Middle East and North Africa, SA for South Asia.

*Source:* OECD Gender Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB), 2019, [oecd.stat.org](http://oecd.stat.org).

### **Box 2. Unpaid care work in the global agenda and OECD Policy Dialogue on Women’s Economic Empowerment**

Today, research and advocacy-linking women’s time use and economic empowerment have put unpaid care work on the global development agenda. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has made addressing unpaid care work a global priority by incorporating it as a Target under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. SDG Target 5.4 commits governments to “recognize and value unpaid care work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate”. More recently, the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment identified “recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work” as one of the seven drivers of women’s economic empowerment. Despite these commitments, data and knowledge on “what works” to address unpaid care work is scarce. That is why the OECD is investing in both, to strengthen the evidence base, in close collaboration with the UN and other key development partners, including bi-lateral donors, CSOs, the private sector and foundations.

The OECD Policy Dialogue on Women’s Economic Empowerment was launched to support countries’ efforts to achieve women’s economic empowerment and the SDG gender commitments. The Policy Dialogue initiative is co-ordinated jointly by the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate, the Development Centre and Statistics Directorate, bringing together their unique expertise and networks. The initiative aims to identify policy and programme solutions to promote women’s economic empowerment, including by recognising, reducing and redistributing women’s unpaid care work. The initiative focuses on producing new analysis and policy recommendations to address unpaid care work combined with inclusive dialogues at the regional and global levels.

For more information: <https://www.oecd.org/development/womens-economic-empowerment.htm>

### **An unbalanced workload: Analysis of time use data from Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and South Africa**

Time use surveys and modules, the main statistical tools to measure time-use, provide a window into women and men’s allocation of time to different tasks. Data is collected through stylised questions or time-use diaries where the respondent self-records how they spent their time over a set period. Time use diaries typically cover 24 hours of a day or 7 days of a week. The scope and quality of time-use data differs significantly from one survey or module to the next making comparability across countries difficult. While some time-use surveys and modules are nationally representative, others may be more limited in scope, for example, only capturing rural or urban areas. The range and classification of activities covered as well as the level of detail varies between surveys (e.g. whether a time-use diary captures 15 minute or 30 minute time slots).

Another conceptual concern when collecting time use data is how to capture and measure simultaneous activities or multi-tasking. While some surveys allow respondents to report both primary and secondary activities, secondary activities are not consistently reported or analysed. This is especially important when measuring women’s time use as their time spent on paid and unpaid tasks often overlap. Research conducted by the Institute of

Development Studies (IDS) in India, Nepal, Rwanda and Tanzania found that women multi-task over 11 hours on average throughout the day combining child care with different household tasks such as cleaning and cooking and paid work (Chopra and Zambelli, 2017). Despite the importance of capturing multi-tasking to capture the intensity of how women's time is spent, there is no international standard on how to measure simultaneous activities.

The OECD Time Use database aims to improve comparability between OECD countries (see Box 3). Based on this methodology, the OECD has undertaken analysis on four additional countries to explore the impacts of unpaid care work in low and middle-income contexts: South Africa, Peru, Ethiopia and Bangladesh (see Annex A).

### Box 3. Comparing time use in OECD countries

The OECD time-use database includes information on the average time spent per day in different activities for 28 OECD member countries and 3 emerging economies (China, India and South Africa). The database is updated annually, on the occasion of International Women's Day, and its estimates are sourced from national time-use surveys, based on nationally representative samples of between 4 000 and 20 000 people.

To improve the comparison of time use data across countries, the samples in the OECD time-use database are restricted to populations aged 15-64, and activities are aggregated into five main categories: (1) Unpaid work; (2) Paid work or study; (3) Personal care; (4) Leisure; and (5) Other time use. For each of the categories only primary activities are taken into account, while simultaneous or secondary activities are excluded to improve comparability across countries.

- “Unpaid work” includes activities like routine household work (e.g. cooking, cleaning, and gardening), caring for children and other family and nonfamily members, volunteering, and shopping.
- “Paid work or study” covers full-time and part-time jobs, unpaid work in family business/farm, breaks in the workplace, time spent looking for work, time spent in education, and homework.
- “Personal care” covers sleep, eating and drinking, and other household, medical, and personal services (hygiene, grooming, visits to the doctor, etc.).
- “Leisure” includes hobbies, watching television, computer use, sports, socialising with friends and family, attending cultural events, and so on.
- “Other” contains religious activities and civic obligations, as well as unspecified time use.

A top-level overview of the data is available and live at [http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=TIME\\_USE](http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=TIME_USE), while the full database can be accessed at: [http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/OECD\\_1564\\_TUSupdatePortal.xlsx](http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/OECD_1564_TUSupdatePortal.xlsx).

#### *a. Economic growth and trends in unpaid care work*

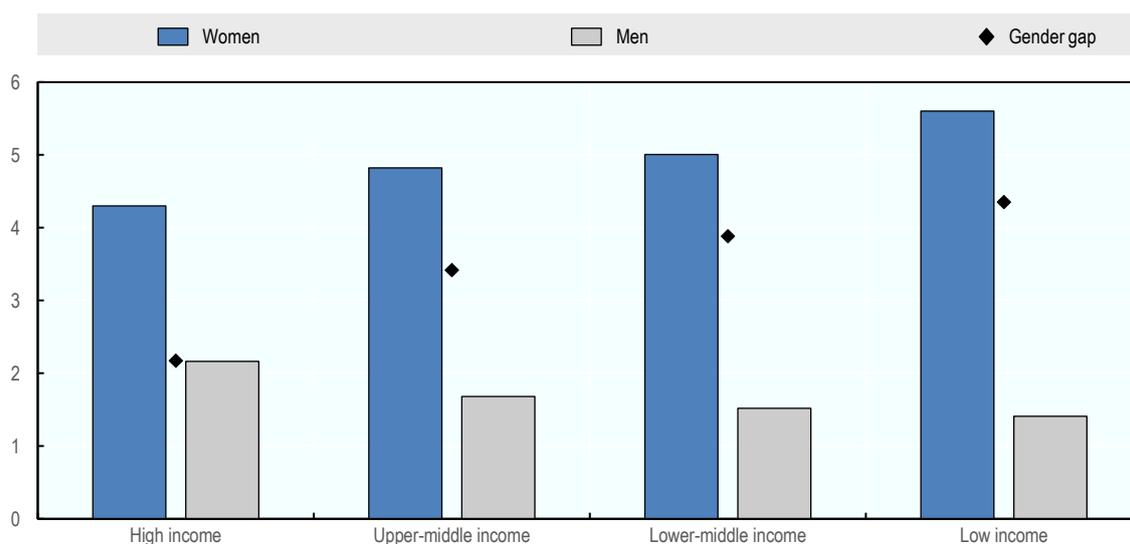
Data for Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and South Africa confirm what previous analysis of time use data revealed: men spend more time in paid work or study than women do, while women undertake the bulk of unpaid care work (OECD, forthcoming Working Paper). In Ethiopia, for example, men spend almost twice as long on paid work or study than

women, while the opposite is true for unpaid care work. Overall, women spend over an hour longer on unpaid and paid work combined than men – the “double burden” – leaving them with less time for personal care (including sleeping) and leisure. Similar to OECD countries, women have around 40 to 50 minutes less leisure time than men do in all countries, with the exception of Bangladesh.

The bulk of women’s time spent on unpaid care work is dedicated to routine housework, followed by caring responsibilities, but this evolves according to a country’s level of economic development. As GDP increases, the time women and men spend on unpaid care work decreases. Thus, in Bangladesh, where the GDP per capita is USD 1 156, women allocate 56% of their time to unpaid care work when awake, compared to 40% in Peru and 33% in South Africa where the GDP per capita is USD 6 572 and USD 6 161 respectively (World Bank, 2017). As a country’s GDP increases, infrastructure is likely to improve and access to services increase, thus decreasing the time women spend on domestic and care tasks, such as cooking or traveling to health centres. As a result, women have more time for paid work and study as well as leisure and personal care, as South Africa and Peru demonstrate.

While time spent in unpaid care work decreases as a country’s GDP increases, the gender gap in unpaid care work remains. Globally, the gender gap in time spent in unpaid care work has declined by only seven minutes between 1997 and 2002, despite economic growth. The ILO estimates that at this rate, it will take 210 years for to close the gender gap in unpaid care work (ILO, 2018). The reduction in the gender gap is driven largely by a reduction in unpaid care work for women (Figure 2). On the other hand, men’s share of unpaid care work increases only slightly even as GDP increases. This suggests that as GDP increases, a reduction in the physically and time-intensive tasks of unpaid care work (such as collecting water or fuel) can be observed for (mainly) women, but this does not lead automatically to a more equitable distribution among household members (Ferrant, Pesando and Nowacka, 2014).

**Figure 2. Gender gaps in unpaid care work by income groups**



*Note:* This graph shows gender gaps in time devoted in unpaid care work by income group. For a definition of income groups see <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>.

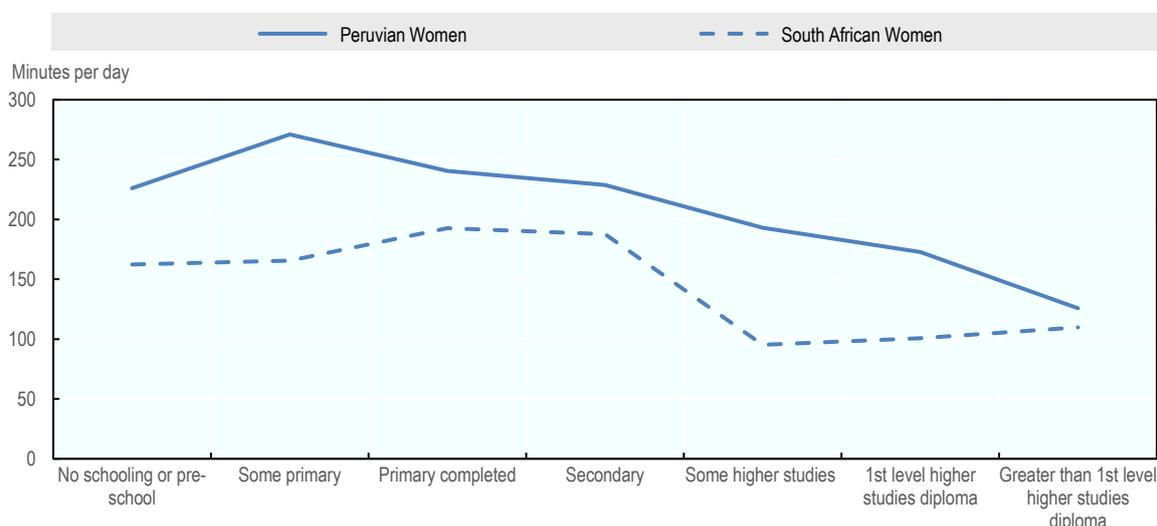
*Source:* OECD Gender Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB), 2019, <https://stats.oecd.org/>.

### b. Unpaid care work throughout a women's life course

Starting from an early age, girls and boys are tasked differently with domestic and care activities. In Ethiopia, Peru and South Africa time use data is available for girls and boys from age ten, revealing that ten-year-old girls spend on average 44 minutes in unpaid care work compared to 24 minutes for boys of the same age. In Peru, 15-year-old girls spend on average around two hours, while boys of the same age spend a little over one hour. Research by Plan International (2017) found similar results: in their study, girls aged 5-9 spend 30% more time on household tasks than boys the same age. The gap widens to 50% for girls aged 10-14. The girls in the study reported that they were often expected to take on additional care and household tasks, negatively affecting their ability to attend school (Plan International, 2017).

While education is essential for women and their children to live healthy and productive lives, it is not a silver bullet for helping alleviate the unpaid care work burden. Data for the four countries shows that primary school education does not have a significant impact on the time women spend on routine housework, and, in some cases, it is associated with more housework (see Figure 3). Secondary school has a mixed impact, leading to 25 more minutes of routine housework for women in South Africa, 28 fewer minutes in Bangladesh and no change in Ethiopia and Peru. However, women and men with education higher than secondary school perform less routine housework in all of the selected countries. This ranges from 32 minutes to 2 hours, possibly due to increasing income and opportunities to substitute these responsibilities with market services. At the same time, there does not seem to be a correlation between the amount of time women spend on childcare and education level.

**Figure 3. Predicted values of women's time-use in routine housework by education levels**



Source: Peru Encuesta Nacional de Uso del Tiempo 2010; A Survey of Time Use (South Africa, 2010).

Throughout their life course, women's domestic and care burden evolves, with a notable increase in unpaid care work when they marry and become a mother. Marriage increases women's time allocated to routine housework by 24 minutes in Peru and Ethiopia and 32 minutes in South Africa. In the same vein, becoming a mother is associated with an increase in time spent on childcare and routine housework. In Ethiopia, South Africa and

Peru, having a child is associated with 17, 46 and 14 more minutes of childcare a day for women. This has a negative impact on mother's economic outcomes, known as the "motherhood employment penalty": across the globe, mothers with children 5 years old and younger see the lowest employment rates (48%) (ILO, 2018). Across the four countries, the time needed for routine housework generally increases for women with age until around 40 years, when it slowly starts decreasing. This may be due to older children supporting their mothers with household tasks or having fewer children in the home to care for as they grow and move out.

In contrast to women, marriage and parenthood are linked to a decrease men's time spent on unpaid care work. If all other factors stay the same (e.g. children, location, age), married men spend less time on routine housework than single men: 9 minutes less in Ethiopia, 20 minutes in Peru, and 40 minutes in South Africa. While becoming a father is associated with an increase in time spent on childcare, men's time spent on routine housework actually decreases when a baby arrives, possibly related to an increase in tasks taken up by the mother who may be at home with the child. Unlike women, men's share of unpaid care work remains relatively stable across age groups, slightly increasing later in life.

### Policy responses to address unpaid care work: Recognise, reduce and redistribute

Recognising, Reducing and Redistributing unpaid care work (the "3Rs") provide a policy framework for identifying entry points to address the unequal distribution of caring responsibilities between women and men. Developed by Diane Elson, the "3Rs" framework has helped to shape the policy agenda around unpaid care work advocating for a basic level of services and infrastructure while acknowledging that care is essential to society's well-being. The following three sections present policy options within the "3Rs" framework.

#### *a. Recognise: Making unpaid care work visible through measurement and valuing*

Time use data is an indispensable tool for the recognition of unpaid care work. It is crucial to design policies and programmes that empower women and men to spend their time in more fulfilling and productive ways, such as paid work or study, quality time with their families, participating in their communities or resting. Yet, globally, time use data remains limited, in particular for developing countries, due to the significant costs and capacities needed to undertake a time use survey. Reporting on SDG Target 5.4 requires regularly collected time-use data disaggregated by sex, age group and location. However, to date, only 83 countries have ever conducted time-use surveys, and only 24% of those were conducted after 2010 (UN Women, 2018). Of the 47 least developed countries, only 8 have collected time-use data.

Unpaid care work is both an important aspect of economic activity and an indispensable factor contributing to the well-being of individuals, their families and societies (UN Women, 2018). Until recently, unpaid care work was not considered an "economic activity", and unpaid goods and services produced by household members for their own consumption were excluded from GDP.<sup>1</sup> However, excluding unpaid care work can lead

---

<sup>1</sup> Production of goods for own final consumption (e.g. Production of farm products for self-consumption) are included.

to ineffective policymaking that does not account for the constraints individuals, particularly women, face when pursuing different economic and social activities. It can also lead to incorrect inferences about an individuals' well-being and the value of time (Ferrant, et al., 2014). Feminist economists and women's rights advocates have fought for many decades for unpaid care work to be valued in national accounts using time use, labour force and income survey data. Recently, countries have made strong commitments to data collection and valuation related to unpaid care work, even going as far as legislation (See Box 4).

#### **Box 4. Measuring time use to recognise unpaid care work in Latin American countries**

Costa Rica's Ley de Contabilización del aporte del trabajo doméstico no remunerado (law n° 9325 accounting the contribution of unpaid housework to the national economy) measures and recognises the economic and time value of unpaid housework. The legislation establishes:

1. Periodic time use surveys, at least every three years;
2. The estimation of a satellite account of unpaid housework using the data collected through the surveys;
3. And its inclusion in the System of National Accounts.

The text sets out definitions that are central to domestic care and unpaid work, providing a list of activities that are considered and included in the System of National Accounts. This law aims to give visibility to women's unpaid housework, counterbalances the discrimination and invalidation they are subject to, and challenges the "women as non-providers" stereotype.

In Mexico, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) has developed a Household Satellite Account since 2011. The initiative aims to provide information about the economic value of unpaid care work (own-use production work of services). In 2016, INEGI found that women worked 3.1 million hours per week in unpaid care work compared to men's 2.6 hours. Unpaid care work represents 65% of women's total working time in Mexico, compared to only 24% of men's working time. The total time spent on unpaid care work by men and women amounts to 23.2% of the country's GDP, with care and support, such as childcare, representing the largest share.

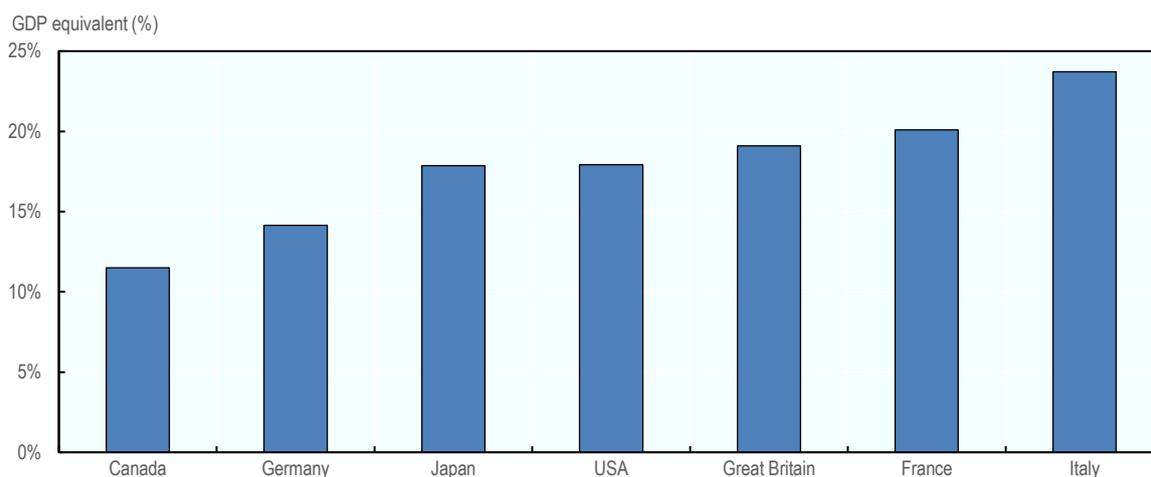
The results of the Household Satellite Account have informed public policy related to gender equality, care services and household expenditure and consumption. Specifically, the results have been used to design development indicators for national policy. For example, the National Program for Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Against Women 2013-2018, included the "estimate of women's contribution to GDP by the economic value of unpaid household work".

*Sources:* UNECE (2017), *Guide on Valuing Unpaid Household Service Work*, United Nations, Geneva.

Unpaid care work represents a significant share of countries' GDP. Globally, the ILO estimates unpaid care work to be around USD 11 trillion, or 9% of global GDP, when using hourly minimum wage (ILO, 2018). In the UK, for example, the "extended GDP" (home produced services plus GDP) grew at an average annual rate of 3.8% per year between 2005 and 2014, compared to 3.5% using the standard GDP computation. In some

countries, unpaid care work may represent an even greater share of GDP, for example, 14% in South Africa and Canada, 23% in Argentina, France and New Zealand, and 33% in China (Figure 3).<sup>2</sup> As women perform more than 75% of household productive activities, these calculations provide a more realistic estimate of women's contribution to the national economy, challenging the traditional view of men's greater economic productivity.

**Figure 4. Unpaid care work's contribution to GDP in OECD countries**



*Note:* This graph presents unpaid care work's contribution to GDP, as percentage of GDP. The method used is based on replacement cost. CAN stand for Canada, DEU for Germany, JPN for Japan, USA for the United States of America, GBR for the United Kingdom, FRA for France and ITA for Italy. Data on time use are based on the latest available time use surveys: Canada (2015); France (2009-10); Germany (2012-13); Italy (2013-14); Japan (2016); United Kingdom (2014-15); and United States (2016). Data refer to the population aged 10 and over for Germany and Japan; to the population aged 11 and over for France, Italy, and the United Kingdom; and to the population aged 15 and over for Canada and the United States.

*Source:* OECD Time Use Database: [http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TIME\\_USE](http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TIME_USE); Gross Domestic Product: [http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=SNA\\_TABLE1](http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=SNA_TABLE1); Taxing Wages: <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=AWCOU>.

For more information see van de Ven, P., J. Zwijnenburg and M. De Queljoe (2018), "Including unpaid household activities: An estimate of its impact on macro-economic indicators in the G7 economies and the way forward", *OECD Statistics Working Papers*, No. 2018/04, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/bc9d30dc-en>.

### ***b. Reduce: Investing in quality water and energy infrastructure***

Quality infrastructure is essential to reduce the amount of time and drudgery of unpaid care work, and thus increase an individual's productivity. Issues of quality infrastructure are particularly pertinent in developing countries, which see in general lower levels of access to clean drinking water and fuel, safe transportation, and electricity. The work related poor infrastructure, such as collecting water and firewood, is some of the most physically intensive and time-consuming, and this disproportionately falls on women. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, women and girls are responsible for over 70% of water collection (UN Women, 2012). Lack of clean cooking facilities takes on average

<sup>2</sup> These estimations are based on the replacement cost method: the value imputed to time spent to unpaid care and domestic cost is based on the average hourly wage of domestic workers.

1.4 hours of work a day plus several additional hours of cooking, carrying heavy loads and working in enclosed spaces without proper ventilation (IEA, 2017).

Rural women, in particular, acutely feel the negative impacts of poor infrastructure in their day-to-day lives. In Ethiopia, Peru, and South Africa, rural women spend more time on routine housework than women in urban areas do (39, 42 and 24 minutes respectively). Research by the OECD Development Centre in Burkina Faso (2018) found that rural women spend around seven hours per week on average collecting water and firewood, more than twice the amount of time urban women spend. This gap is mainly explained by the distance to basic services: on average urban households in Burkina Faso are within 20 minutes of a fuel source compared to 60 minutes in rural areas. For the most remote areas, accessing water and fuel requires walking five hours (OECD Development Centre, 2018).

Investing in quality infrastructure has the potential to free up women's time to pursue economic opportunities. Analysis of time use data from Ghana finds that women who have access to electricity in their house dedicate over an hour more to income generating activities. Women with access to piped water in the household allocate over an hour more to income generating activities and almost two hours to learning compared to women who only have access to surface water. Other studies have found similar results: in Pakistan, water sources closer to home were associated with decreased time devoted to housework and increased female employment (Ilahi and Grimard, 2000); rural electrification in South Africa has been linked to a decrease in women's housework and a 9% increase in the female labour participation (Dinkelman, 2011). However, increased time does not guarantee women's ability to pursue economic opportunities but also depends on social and gender norms and existing paid work opportunities. Thus, even if women have more time to dedicate to paid work, it may not be social acceptable for them to pursue employment opportunities outside the home or there may not be sufficient opportunities in the labour market.

Analysis for the OECD Policy Dialogue on Women's Economic Empowerment, found that infrastructure projects rarely incorporate unpaid care work as a primary programme or policy objective (OECD, 2019 forthcoming). However, programmes in Nepal by Helvetas and the Asian Development Bank showed how infrastructure programmes can reduce women's unpaid care work and challenge existing discriminatory gender norms. This was done through women's representation (considered a fourth "R" in the 3Rs framework by the ILO [2018]) in the programme design phase and/or decision-making processes (see Box 5). The initiatives incorporated elements of empowerment, through participatory action learning (Helvetas) and women's groups (ADB) to encourage women's voice and participation outside the home while also improving energy and water infrastructure.

#### **Box 5. Designing infrastructure investments with unpaid care work in mind**

The Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women Project was implemented by Asian Development Bank and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare of Nepal between 2009 and 2013. The project aimed to promote rural women's economic empowerment, through increased income, assets and employment opportunities, and their social empowerment, which involved addressing women's time constraints and improving opportunities for rural women to pursue both "personal and community development" (ADB, 2015). Women's groups and cooperatives were instrumental in the

design and implementation of the project. As the Monitoring and Evaluation report stated, “The project accepted that the process of empowerment begins with individuals, but that the key catalyst to change is participation in collective activities.”

Over the course of five years, over 3 500 small community infrastructure projects ranging from access to water, sanitation, transportation and time and labour-saving technologies were carried out. The introduction of water taps have been particularly beneficial for women, reducing the amount of time spent on these tasks by 41 minutes per day on average. This has had positive spill over effects for households, of which 67% reported dedicating the time saved to income-generating activities.

The project also had a positive impact on women’s status within their homes and communities. Participating in women’s groups and collectives, a reduction in women’s unpaid care work burden and increased income all contributed to improving relationships between women and men. As one female respondent said, “We can do things ourselves; we are not dependent on men. In the past, saying the names of our husband and mother-in-law was social taboo, but such restriction does not exist anymore.”

Asian Development Bank (2016), *Gender Equality Results case Study: Nepal Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women Project*, ADB, Manila Philippines, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/185563/nepal-gender-equality-and-empowerment-women-project.pdf>.

### *c. Redistribute: Getting men and boys involved in unpaid care work*

Despite their positive impact on gender equality, income growth, access to basic infrastructure and urbanisation will not deliver greater gender equality in terms of unpaid care work by themselves. As shown by Figure 2, gender gaps in caring responsibilities persist in high-income countries. While, men’s involvement in unpaid care activities is greater in higher income countries, it is not enough to achieve gender equality. The shrinking gender gap is mainly due to a decrease in women’s time devoted to unpaid care work related to better access to infrastructure such as electricity, timesaving technology, decreasing fertility rates and increased access to childcare.

While not all unpaid care work can or should be reduced, it can be redistributed more evenly among families and society. The redistribution of unpaid care work involves a range of actors, forming a “care diamond”, made of the family, the state, the market and the not-for-profit sector (Razavi, 2007). There is a range of policy options to redistribute it from the household to the state, private or non-profit sectors: family-friendly working policies and provision of basic services, including childcare, are first steps for public and private actors to support a better work/life balance and unlock women’s economic potential. However, implementation and uptake of services has proved more difficult, due to resistance from both outside and within the home where strict gender norms are often deeply entrenched.

Promoting an equal distribution of caring responsibilities within the household calls for a strong commitment by policy-makers and women’s rights advocates to challenge deeply entrenched discriminatory social norms in both the public and private spheres. Social norms dictate what behaviours are deemed acceptable for women and men, influencing their roles in the household and community, including the distribution of domestic and care tasks. Gendered social norms view unpaid care work as a female prerogative and prevent men from assuming equal responsibilities, whatever the regions, socio-economic classes and cultures. In Uganda, two-thirds of the population define unpaid care and

domestic work as a woman's responsibility, while one-third rejects the idea of an equal division of unpaid care work between household members, even when both are working outside the home for pay. This is reflected in the division of domestic tasks: women remain responsible for the vast majority of household and care tasks, including 85% of cooking, 92% of collecting water and 78% of childcare (see Box 7).

The gender gap in unpaid care work in the household continues to curtail women's economic empowerment even as other barriers, such as poor infrastructure or access to markets, are addressed: in Burkina Faso, for example, where 71% of men are in paid labour compared to 45% of women, undertaking domestic or care tasks reduces the likelihood of participating in paid work by 26%. This is reflected across the world: Figure 4 shows that higher levels of gender-based discrimination in social norms, as measured by the SIGI (see Box 1), higher gender time use gaps. In a country where women face very high levels of discrimination in social norms, they devote over five times longer than men do to unpaid care and domestic activities, compared to twice in countries with very low levels of discrimination. This is explained by both a decrease in women's unpaid care work and an increase in men's. Unfortunately, very little is known on how to challenge discriminatory social norms, although innovative programmes are proving that it is possible (see Box 6).

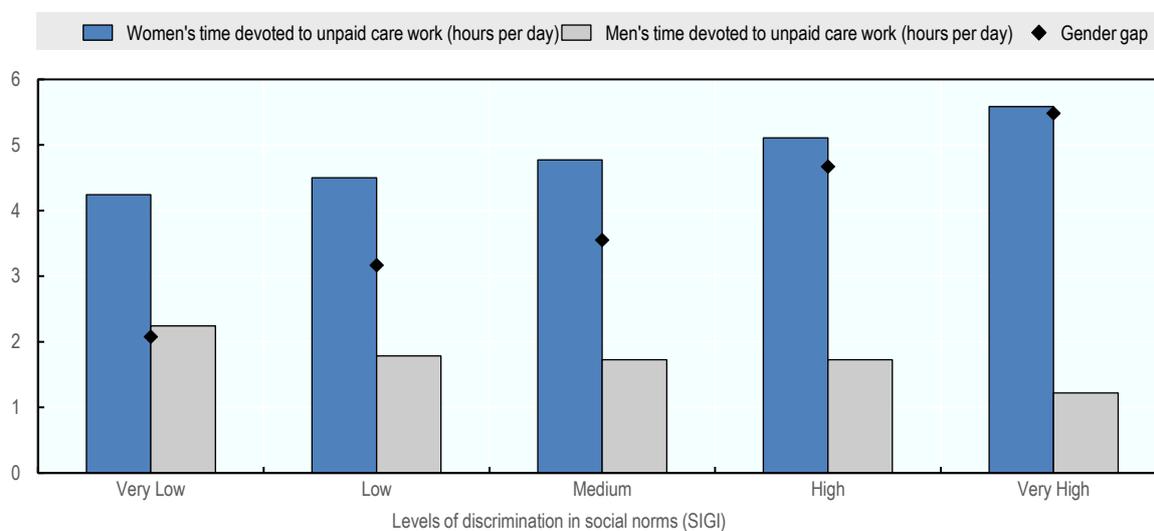
#### **Box 6. Making room for men in the kitchen**

In Mozambique, the Hopem Men for Change Network brings together 25 NGOs and human rights defenders and activists working to affirm the human rights of men, women, and children. Their main purpose is to raise awareness among men around issues of gender inequality and negative masculinities and advocate for working with men and boys to be considered a priority in gender policies and plans.

Hopem uses dialogue and reflection on gender-related topics combined with workshops on nutrition, education, agro-processing and preparation of meals to challenge constructions (or concepts) of masculinity and femininity and change power relationships within the home. Through their "Men in the Kitchen," programme, Hopem encourages men, particularly young men, to participate more actively in maintaining the household. The organisation uses a mobile kitchen to engage with communities, as well as initiating debates on gender equality issues. Hopem has also introduced a television show focusing on issues previously identified in focus groups by men as not having opportunities to support actively women and girls. "Men in the Kitchen" is an opportunity for them to develop their own skills and assume household responsibilities.

Hopem has found that encouraging men's involvement in unpaid care work also requires working with women and girls, to create space for men and boys in a traditionally feminine space. Women and girls may be reluctant to have men and boys engage in housework, for fear of losing the limited responsibility they have in the home. Women and girls can also internalise gender stereotypes on which tasks are socially acceptable for women or men, making them resistant to change. Thus, as Hopem's experience shows, real redistribution of domestic responsibilities requires rethinking restrictive gender roles by and for both women and men.

*Source:* UN Women, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/7/men-in-the-kitchen>.

**Figure 5. Gender gaps in unpaid care work by levels of discrimination in social institutions**

*Note:* This graph shows gender gaps in time devoted in unpaid care and domestic work by levels of discrimination in social institutions, as measured by the SIGI.

*Source:* OECD Gender Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB), 2019, <https://stats.oecd.org/>.

#### Box 7. SIGI Country studies in Burkina Faso and Uganda

The SIGI country studies in Burkina Faso and Uganda provide policy makers, civil society and the development community with comprehensive data, analysis and recommendations as well as capacity building activities on effective gender-responsive policies and interventions, in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

In both countries, time use and attitudinal data indicate that (i) despite disparities among women related to income, education and access to infrastructure and public services, women bear over three-fourths of the unpaid care and domestic workload; (ii) the unequal distribution of care responsibilities is transmitted across generations; (iii) and gender bias is deeply embedded in social norms preventing men from doing domestic chores, such as cooking, laundry and cleaning, that are viewed as women's responsibilities. As a result, social stigma toward men involved in unpaid care and domestic activities is high, as well as for women who pursue paid work rather than care and reproductive roles.

More information on SIGI Country Study in Burkina Faso and Uganda available here: <https://www.genderindex.org/country-studies/>

### Policy recommendations

**Recognising** unpaid care work makes visible the often-invisible contribution of women to a country's well-being and economic growth. This will require greater investments in time use data and a commitment to valuing unpaid care work.

- Regularly collected time use data is a first step understand the amount of time individuals devote to unpaid care activities and allows for greater understanding of the inequalities between women and men and between different groups of

women. By agreeing to the 2030 Agenda, governments have signed up to report on women and men's time use to track progress on SDG Target 5.4. Following international guidelines and standards, such as ICATUS, allows time use data to be comparable across countries and over time. Costa Rica, for example, has committed to produce time use survey every three years (See Box 2).

- In addition, assigning a monetary value to unpaid care work demonstrates its productive nature and value for national economies and challenges traditional views of wealth and notions of women's contribution to the economy. The UK has produced household satellite accounts from 2005 to 2014 measuring the value of adult and childcare, household housing services, nutrition, clothing and laundry, transport and volunteering.

**Reducing** unpaid care work through investments in quality infrastructure can help support the most arduous and harmful tasks women are responsible for, such as collecting water and fuel or cooking.

- Involving women in programme and policy design and implementation enables them to identify issues that may not be otherwise considered, including unpaid care work. As Box 3 shows from the Asian Development Bank's experience, women's representation in programme decision making can ensure that their needs are adequately addressed in infrastructure investments while at the same time promoting their voice and participation in the community.
- While many infrastructure projects have the potential to reduce unpaid care work whether or not it is specified, making the reduction of unpaid care work an explicit objective could catalyse even greater change. Pre-programme assessments and diagnostics should include issues related to unpaid care work, such as childcare or domestic tasks, to identifying entry points to address unpaid care work. It could also allow for the measurement of impact on unpaid care work and contribute to strengthening the knowledge base on what works to inform future infrastructure investments.

**Redistribution** of care and domestic tasks can be achieved by promoting shared responsibility within the household, as called for in SDG 5.4. Very few policies and programmes currently aim to do this, although innovative approaches are proving that it is possible.

- Paternity leave is one of the only proven policy options for governments to promote an equal redistribution of unpaid care work within the household (OECD, 2017). However, paternity leave on its own is not enough, but must be adequately paid with a work culture that supports it. In addition, non-transferable parental leave can encourage father's involvement as their children grow and support more gender equal sharing of care responsibilities after birth. Media campaigns promoting fathers' caregiving is one way to promote uptake of paternity and parental leaves. Private sector actors should also be involved, to ensure that they understand the benefit of paternity and parental leaves and promote a workplace culture that supports men who take leave.
- Social norms change should be at the centre of gender equality strategies and policies. A gender transformative approach challenging social expectations of men and women's roles within the family can create catalytic change. For this to take place, care policies should be accompanied by awareness-raising campaigns and programmes involving multiple stakeholders. Moreover, more research is

needed on how policies and programmes can positively influence gender norms and the distribution of unpaid care work between household members. This should be supported by exploring new ways to measure social norms at both national and sub-regional levels. The Social Institutions and Gender Index and its country studies (Uganda, Burkina Faso and Tanzania –forthcoming), for example, provide attitudinal data related to women and men’s responsibilities within the household.

## References

- Alfers, L. (2015), “WIEGO Child Care Initiative Literature Review”, Cambridge, MA: WIEGO.
- Chopra, D. and E. Zambelli (2017), “No Time to Rest: Women’s Lived Experiences of Balancing Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work”, Brighton, International Development Studies.
- Dinkelman, T. (2011), “The Effects of Rural Electrification on Employment: New Evidence from South Africa”, *American Economic Review*, Vol. 101, No. 7, (pp. 3078–3108).
- Ferrant G and A. Kolev (2016), “The economic cost of gender-based discrimination in social institutions”, *Issues Paper*, OECD Development Centre, Paris.
- Ferrant, G., L.M. Pesando and K. Nowacka (2014), “Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes”, OECD Development Centre Policy Brief, [https://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Unpaid\\_care\\_work.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Unpaid_care_work.pdf).
- Folbre, N. (2018), “Developing Care: Recent research on the care economy and economic development”, International Development Research Centre, Canada.
- Ilahi, N and F. Frimard (2000), “Public Infrastructure and Private Costs: Water Supply and Time Allocation of Women in Rural Pakistan”, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 2000, vol. 49, issue 1, 45 – 76.
- ILO (2018), *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*, International Labour Organization (ILO), [http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_633135/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_633135/lang--en/index.htm).
- OECD (2017), *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264281318-en>.
- OECD (2018), *Gender Wage Gap Database*, OECD Data, <https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/gender-wage-gap.htm>.
- OECD (2019, forthcoming), “Breaking down barriers to women’s economic empowerment”, *Development Policy Paper*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD Development Centre (2018), *Social Institutions and gender index Country Study Burkina Faso*, OECD Development Centre, Paris.
- Plan International UK (2017), “Real Choices, Real Lives: Girls’ Burden of Unpaid Care”, Plan International UK, London, <https://plan-uk.org/file/real-choices-real-lives-girls-burden-of-unpaid-care/download?token=RN0mltZH>.
- Razavi, S. (2007), “The Political and Social Economy of Care in a Development Context: Conceptual Issues, Research Questions and Policy Options”, *Programme Paper*, Number 3,

United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Gender and Development, June 2007,  
[http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/\(httpAuxPages\)/2DBE6A93350A7783C12573240036D5A0](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpAuxPages)/2DBE6A93350A7783C12573240036D5A0).

UN general Assembly (2015), “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, A/RES/70/1,  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.

UN Women (2018a), *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, UN Women, New York,  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/2/gender-equality-in-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development-2018>.

UN Women (2018b), “Promoting Women’s Economic Empowerment: Recognising and Investing in the Care Economy”, *UN Women Issue Paper*, New York.

UN Women (2012), “The Millennium Development Goals Report: Gender Chart 2012.” UN Women, New York.

WEF (2017), *The Global Gender Gap Report 2017*, World Economic Forum, Geneva,  
<https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017>.

World Bank (2017), *World Bank Development Indicators*,  
<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=World-Development-Indicators>.

## Annex A. Selected time-use surveys

**Table A.1. Summary description of the selected time-use surveys**

Country	Survey name	Year	Sampled population	Activity classification (number)	Simultaneity	Time reported by interviewees covers:	The survey has been conducted over:	Age range	Number of household members interview
Bangladesh	Feed the Future	2011/12	Rural areas only	Other (24)	Yes	24 hours (1 day)	Oct - Nov 2011 and Feb 2012	Adults	2 adults (1 women and 1 men)
Ethiopia	Ethiopia Time Use Survey 2013 (ETUS)	2013	National	ICATUS (see note)	(see notes)	24 hours (1 day)	February	10 and plus	All members
Peru	Encuesta Nacional de Uso del Tiempo	2010	National	Similar to CAUTAL and ICATUS (110+)	No	The last week	15th of Nov - 30th of Dec	12 and plus	All members
South Africa	A Survey of Time Use	2010	National	ICATUS (90+)	Yes	24 hours (1 day)	Oct - Dec	10 and plus	2 members per household

*Note:* Access to the ETUS micro dataset was limited, thus the number of activities available was slightly more than 20. Moreover, while the complete ETUS includes information about simultaneous activities, this was not the case for the data used in this paper.

Table A.2. Average time (in minutes) allocated to daily activities

	Ethiopia			Bangladesh			Peru			South Africa		
	2013			2011			2010			2010		
	15-64			18-64			15-64			15-64		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
<b>1.0 Paid work or study</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>196</b>
1.1 paid work (all jobs)	44	63	26	104	285	20	276	364	187	154	197	117
1.2 travel to and from work/study	(included in 1.1 and 1.3/1.4)			15	28	8	38	48	28	36	44	29
1.3 time in school or classes	40	48	33	4	4	4	40	40	39	25	29	22
1.4 research/homework	.	.	.	(homework is included in 1.3)			15	15	15	13	13	13
1.5 job search	.	.	.	.	.	.	8	10	6	.	.	.
1.6 other paid work or study-related	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	13	11	15
<b>D Paid informal work or unpaid work in production activities</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	.	.	.
D1 Primary and non-primary production activities	159	184	137	33	93	5	.	.	.	.	.	.
D1.1 Selling /purchasing outputs of primary and non-primary production activities	1	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
D2 work for household in construction activities	12	21	3	1	3	0	.	.	.	.	.	.
D3 work for household providing services for income	43	48	37	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<b>2.0 Unpaid work</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>249</b>
2.1 routine housework	141	57	217	339	137	434	150	76	225	130	68	183
2.2 shopping	7	5	9	12	35	1	22	17	27	9	8	11
2.3 care for household members	42	8	73	39	10	53	48	25	70	18	3	30
2.3.1 child care	41	7	72	.	.	.	44	23	66	17	3	29
2.3.2 adult care	1	1	1	.	.	.	3	2	5	1	0	1
2.4 care for non-household members	7	9	4	.	.	.	6	4	9	1	0	1
2.5 volunteering	(included in 2.7)			.	.	.	3	4	2	2	2	2
2.6 travel related to household activities	19	18	19	.	.	.	9	6	12	9	8	10
2.7 other unpaid	17	26	10	.	.	.	.	.	.	13	14	13
<b>3.0 Personal care</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>755</b>	<b>743</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>756</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>694</b>
3.1 sleeping	.	.	.	564	560	566	454	450	458	553	549	556
3.2 eating & drinking	.	.	.	102	84	110	70	69	70	72	76	69
3.3 personal, household, and medical services + travel related to personal care	.	.	.	77	71	80	45	41	49	69	70	69
<b>4.0 Leisure</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>282</b>
4.1 sports	3	6	1	2	3	2	9	12	5	5	9	2
4.2 participating / attending events	2	3	2	.	.	.	6	6	6	5	6	5
4.3 visiting or entertaining friends	85	98	74	80	56	92	69	73	65	82	91	74
4.4 TV or radio at home	26	32	21	18	26	14	129	133	125	131	138	125
4.5 Other leisure activities	21	25	17	8	7	8	30	36	24	82	88	76
<b>5.0 Other</b>	.	.	.	<b>41</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>
5.1 religious / spiritual activities and civic obligations	.	.	.	28	19	32	7	6	9	16	13	19
5.2 other (no categories)	.	.	.	5	7	3	.	.	.	0	0	0
5.3 Travel time other than commute (when disaggregating travel time is not possible)	.	.	.	9	9	8	.	.	.	.	.	.
<b>T Total</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>1440</b>

Source: Ethiopia Time Use Survey 2013, Feed the Future Bangladesh 2011/12, Peru Encuesta Nacional de Uso del Tiempo 2010, A Survey of Time Use (South Africa, 2010).