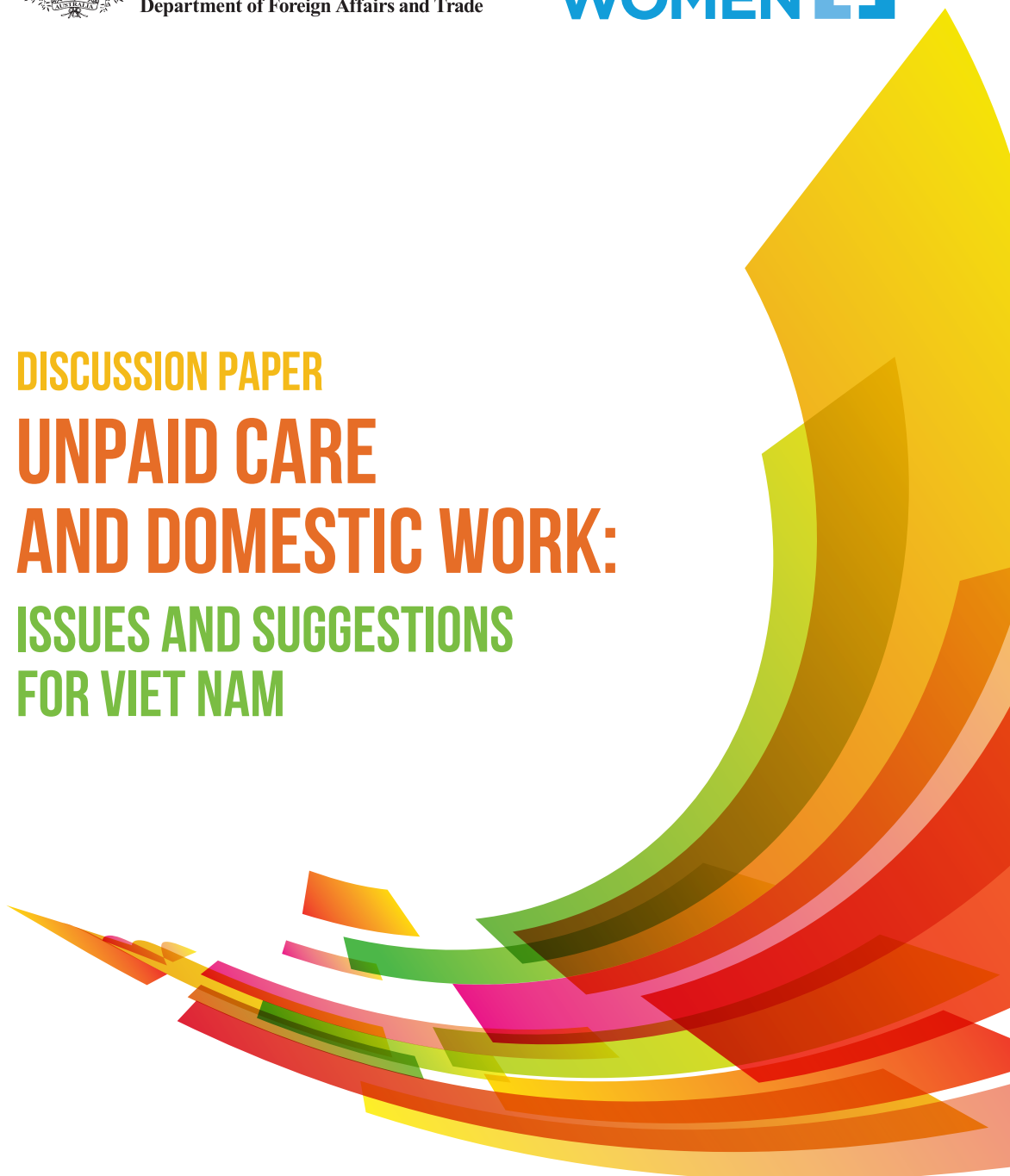




Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



DISCUSSION PAPER
UNPAID CARE
AND DOMESTIC WORK:
ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS
FOR VIET NAM



UN Women is the United Nations organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports Member States in setting global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services required to implement these standards. UN Women stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on the following priorities areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the United Nations system works in advancing gender equality.

**DISCUSSION PAPER:
UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK: ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR VIET NAM**

Published 2016

Copyright @ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

All rights reserved. Reproduction and dissemination of materials in this publication for education and non-commercial purposes are authorized without prior written permission from UN Women provided the source is fully acknowledged. Production of this publication for resale or other commercial purposes is prohibited without permission from UN Women.

Applications for permission may be addressed to registry.vietnam@unwomen.org



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)
Viet Nam Country Office
304 Kim Ma Street, Ba Dinh District, Hanoi, Viet Nam
Tel: +84 4 3850 0100
Fax: +84 4 3726 5520
[www://vietnam.unwomen.org](http://vietnam.unwomen.org)

The view expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of UN Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

FOREWORD

The cooking, cleaning, and caring for children, elderly and sick at home by family members, commonly known as unpaid care and domestic work, is often taken for granted although it is vital for both people's well-being and the functioning of the market-oriented economy. Globally, women work more than men: on average they perform at least two and a half times more unpaid care and domestic work than men. This implies that women, particularly the poorest and most disadvantaged women, have the double burden of both paid and unpaid work.

The profound impact that this unequal distribution of responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work has on women's empowerment and full participation in the society and the economy is increasingly being understood. In the 2030 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UN Member States have committed to "a world in which every woman and every girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed", and the stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment includes a specific target to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work. In Viet Nam, the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2011-2020 includes a target to "reduce women's time involvement in household duties by two times by 2015 and 1.5 times by 2020 as compared to men's" under its objective to ensure gender equality in family life. However, the understanding of the full societal and economic impacts of the uneven distribution of care work and measures to take are still limited in Viet Nam. Also, the absence of sound nationally representative time use data and other related indicators to date poses challenges in designing well targeted policies and programmes to address the issue as well as monitor progress on this target.

Unpaid care and domestic work was highlighted by UN Women as one of the many hindrances to women's right to decent and productive work in Progress of World's Women 2015-2016 Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights and Towards Gender Equality in Viet Nam: Making Inclusive Growth Work for Women. This discussion paper "Unpaid Care and Domestic Work: Issues and Suggestions for Viet Nam" is a follow-up piece developed specifically to help policymakers gain a better understanding of what unpaid care work is and how this affects women's participation in the social and economic life; and recommend policy measures that would help recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work.

We hope that this Discussion Paper will serve as a reference document for policymakers in Viet Nam and that it will encourage consideration of unpaid care and domestic work impacts across all Government policies and programmes.



Shoko Ishikawa
Country Representative, UN Women Viet Nam

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

UN Women would like to thank Ms Pham Thu Hien (Deputy Director of Center for Gender and Women's Leadership, Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics) for her dedicated research and writing of this discussion paper. We appreciate the comments and inputs from Ms. Amaia Perez Orozco (Consultant) and Mr. Khamsavath Chanthavysouk (Training Specialist) of UN Women Training Center.

UN Women would also like to thank the Government of Australia for its generous support to UN Women in Viet Nam, which has made the development of this paper possible.

Within UN Women, the Discussion Paper was coordinated by Ms. Nguyen Kim Lan under the guidance of Ms. Shoko Ishikawa and support of Ms. Vu Phuong Ly and Ms. Tran Thi Minh Nguyet.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	6
Proper understanding of unpaid care and domestic work.....	6
The disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work.....	8
Gender impacts of unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work.....	12
Discussion on challenges relating to unpaid care and domestic work in the Vietnamese context.....	15
Recommendations.....	21
Research, data and resource development.....	22
Advocacy, awareness raising and capacity building.....	22
Legal and policy change.....	23
Service delivery.....	24
References.....	25

INTRODUCTION

Unpaid care and domestic work are vital for people's well-being and the functioning of the market economy. Globally, the burden of combining productive and reproductive work has negative consequences on women's lives, including limiting economic opportunities and power within households. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action emphasizes unpaid care and domestic work as a constraint for the realization of women's rights. It recommended countries to recognize and make visible the full extent of the work of women and all their contributions to the national economy. One of its strategic objectives is to promote the harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men so that women can maximize their opportunities. CEDAW compels countries to provide necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular by promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities. One of the key targets of the Sustainable Development Goal 5 is to "recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibilities within the households and the family as nationally appropriate".

Viet Nam's National Strategy for Gender Equality 2011-2020 includes a target to reduce women's time involvement in household duties under its objective to ensure gender equality in family life.

This discussion paper aims to inform policy makers on the importance of paying attention to unpaid care and domestic work, women's burden and its impacts on gender equality, which would contribute to public debates on policy design in Viet Nam.

PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK

Different terms are used in international literature to describe and analyse unpaid care work. This paper uses the term "unpaid care and domestic work", as referred to in UN Women's Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 and UN Women's Policy Brief No. 5 on Redistributing unpaid care and sustaining quality care service.¹

Unpaid care and domestic work refers to work that is done in the home by family members for maintenance and well-being of family without pay. Unpaid care work also includes voluntary community work.

¹ in other documents, the term "unpaid care work" is used synonymously with "unpaid care and domestic work", i.e. the two terms are interchangeable.

What is unpaid care and domestic work?

- ✓ Domestic work: cooking and food preparation, cleaning, washing clothes, water and fuel collection.
- ✓ Direct care of persons: including children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and able-bodied adults.
- ✓ Unpaid care work may take place in the household or in the wider community.

Source: Gender and Development Network: Unpaid care: A priority for the post-2015 development goals and beyond. Briefing 6, July 2014.

Although unpaid care and domestic work are essential for maintaining the well-being of individuals and society, they remain invisible. Since these activities are ignored in the System of National Accounts, i.e. in national gross domestic product (GDP) calculation, there is no economic value attached to them despite their tremendous contribution to the economy and society. In many countries, they have been considered within the private/family sphere, generally under the responsibility of women and girls, rather than distributed among different actors in societies.

The general analysis points out gender-based distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, i.e. women and girls are the main caregivers. It is a global phenomenon with profound social and economic impacts. When basic amenities and public services are lacking, unpaid care and domestic work are more difficult to perform in the context of poverty, disability and HIV/AIDS. Hence, unpaid care and domestic work issue intersects with rural-urban and/or rich-poor inequalities, social status, ethnic, etc.

The first United Nations Development Fund for Women's (UNIFEM) Biennial Report "Progress of the World's Women 2000" reconceptualized the economy from a gender-aware perspective by changing the conventional view of the economy. It indicates the linkages and interdependencies between paid work and unpaid care and domestic work in three sectors – public, private and non-government. Unpaid care and domestic work have costs, both financial and emotional, that cross over the boundaries of the paid and unpaid economies (Daly and Lewis, 1998).

However, unpaid care and domestic work are usually invisible in policies and budgets because they are not part of the conventional definition and measurement of the economy (Sharp, 2003). The care economy has been discussed widely in recent years: within this context, care is one of the bases of the market economy as well as an economic activity;

economics is understood as the process of generating, distributing and consuming resources to sustain human life. Care, a critical dimension of well-being, require resources and should be recognized as a job to be performed. Thus, economic commodification is not possible without the existence of the economy of care (UN Women Training Centre, 2014). As part of the economy, care has the cost of caregiving, but contributes to the whole economy. As noted, “the care economy shifts the focus from the old emphasis on the costs of those giving care (women) to the new emphasis on the contributions made to the welfare of those receiving it” (Esquivel, 2011, cited in Enríquez, 2012).

In Viet Nam, the term, “unpaid care and domestic work” is not used in the official documents. Instead, the term “housework” (việc nhà) or “family work” (công việc gia đình) has been used widely in documents including the Marriage and Family Law, the Gender Equality Law and the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011-2020. By using this term, it is understood as “small chores”, which undermines the value of the work and the people who perform carry it out.

Awareness raising on the nature and significance of unpaid care and domestic work is the first step in the process of making them visible and changing how policy is designed.

Due to the misconception of unpaid care and domestic work, they remain invisible and their significance as a foundation of economic activities is undervalued; thus, the issue may be neglected in public policies. A proper understanding of the nature of unpaid care and domestic work is essential to promote actions for a change.

THE DISPROPORTIONATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK

Unpaid care and domestic work are primarily undertaken by women and girls throughout the world. As indicated, women perform around 75 per cent of the world’s total unpaid care and domestic work, which has been conservatively valued at 13 per cent of global GDP. Globally, women perform nearly 2.5 times as much of this work as men, with large gender disparities in time spent cooking, cleaning and caring for household members (IDS, 2016). Similar findings were revealed in the 2012 World Development Report and United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) 2015 Human Development Report. It is also reported that, if included in national accounts, the unpaid care economy would represent between 15 to over 50 percent of national GDP. The calculations vary depending on country and method (Budlender and Woolard, 2006, cited in UN Women, 2015).

Women perform around 75 per cent of the world's total unpaid care and domestic work, which have been conservatively valued at 13 per cent of global GDP.

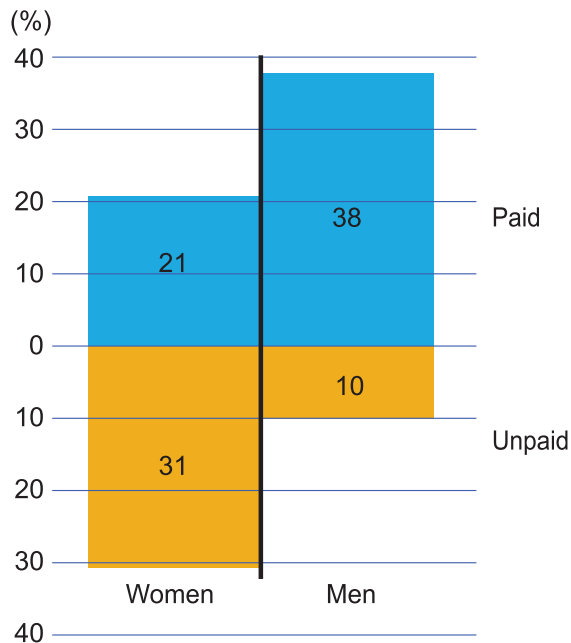
Source: IDS, 2016.

In 2015, it is estimated that unpaid care work contributes more than 20 per cent to the total GDP of Viet Nam.

Source: Action Aid (2016)

The imbalance in paid and unpaid work of women and men is pronounced in many countries. As indicated by a survey in 63 countries, women work more than men in terms of total hours worked, i.e. 52 percent of total work hours performed by women compared to 48 percent of worked hours by men. However, there is a difference in the types of work performed by women and men. While men engage more in paid work (out of a total 59 per cent of paid work, men's share is 38 per cent and women's share is 21 per cent), women perform three times more than men in terms of unpaid work (Figure 1). A recent UNICEF report revealed that the burden of domestic work falls on girls disproportionately from an early age. "Globally, girls aged 5–14 spend 550 million hours every day on household chores, 160 million more hours than boys their age spend" (UNICEF, 2016). As indicated in this report, girls aged 5–9 spend almost four hours per week and girls aged 10–14 spend nine hours per week on household chores.

Figure 1. Paid and unpaid work of women and men

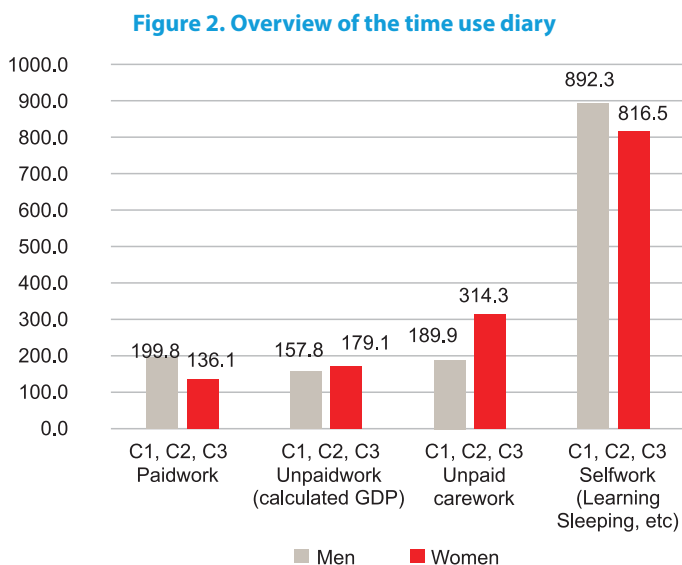


Note: Data are a female and male population-weighted average of 63 countries representing 69 percent of the world's adult (ages 15 and older) population.
 Source: Human Development Report Office calculations based on Charmes (2015).

Source: UNDP (2015:107).

As in other countries, housework remains the primary responsibility of Vietnamese women, as showed by Viet Nam's Household Living Standards Survey (VHLSS), which has been conducted every two years since 2002 by the General Statistics Office (GSO). According to VHLSS 2008, women and men spent 2.2 hours and 1.5 hours per day for housework, respectively (Rodgers, 2015). They are the only statistical data available at the national level. However, it should be noted that the term 'housework' defined by VHLSS includes cooking, cleaning, washing, shopping, collecting water and wood, and performing repair work in the house, but excludes care of the children, the elderly and the sick. The exclusion of care indicated a problem of the methodology. Traditionally, child care and raising is deemed by Viet Nam's society to be women's "innate task". Therefore, in fact, women devote more time to unpaid care and domestic work than the reported data. There was a question on 'hours of housework per day' in the VHLSS until 2008, but this has no longer been the case since 2010.

The time-use survey (TUS) is a tool for understanding the patterns of individuals' time use. It provides data and information on the time spent by women and men on specific activities. It is commonly used to measure the invisible contribution of unpaid care and domestic work of women. In Viet Nam, the first TUS was conducted in nine provinces in 2016 by ActionAid Viet Nam. Figure 2 indicates that on average, women spend 314 minutes and men spent 190 minutes per day on unpaid care and domestic work, and that there is little difference in the time spent on unpaid care work among women's groups with different education levels and marital status (ActionAid, 2016).



Source: Report on UCW, ActionAid Vietnam - 2016

Note: C1, C2, C3 are the arithmetical averages at three round of data collection of the research

It is important to note that the average number of hours of housework performed by men and women has changed very little over the years and the gender gap in hours of housework persists across generations in the face of rapid structural change in Viet Nam's economy (Sunhwa, 2006). A recent study on the social determinants of gender inequality in Viet Nam (ISDS, 2015) found that while progress has been made in many areas, the value of the role of family caregiver assigned to women is still firmly sustained in the minds and behaviour of Vietnamese men and women across all social strata. Here, there is a large gap in the balance of the gender division of labour, which a key factor influencing and maintaining gender inequality.

GENDER IMPACTS OF UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK

Unpaid care and domestic work have an opportunity cost, which is key in discussions on the impacts on women's development. This concerns the effective use of human resources as the most valuable resource of development. Its impacts are multidimensional throughout all spheres: education, employment, participation in political life and health. The impacts are greater on poor women who are not able to access expensive private services and technologies that would relieve their strenuous unpaid care and domestic work, especially in poor and remote areas underserved by public support. As indicated in the Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights of United Nation General Assembly, "unpaid care work is positioned as a major human rights issue" (UN General Assembly, 2013). Having no enjoyment or access to good health, education services and decent work with good pay due to the burden of unpaid care and domestic work, women's rights are violated. Thus, unpaid care and domestic work is an influencing factor on the realization of women's rights.

Impacts on education and training

The burden of unpaid care and domestic work has negative impacts on school attendance of girls and further education and training opportunities for women in their life. As indicated in the recent study in Viet Nam, nearly 20 per cent of the women surveyed and about 7 per cent of men surveyed reported having to help with household chores is one of the three top reasons for discontinuing education (ISDS, 2015). Gender inequality in education is partly caused by the prescribed caregiver role of women and girls in the family.

Impacts on labour force participation

Time constraints are barriers for women to participate in economic activities or labour markets. The higher the gender gaps in distribution of care responsibilities, the higher the gender gaps in labour force participation (ILO, 2009). There is coherence between female labour force rate and time spent for unpaid care and domestic work. "In countries where women spend an average of five hours on unpaid care activities, 50 per cent of women in the working age-population are active in the labour force, while in countries where women spend three hours on unpaid care work, 60 per cent of women are active" (OECD, 2014). Performing unpaid care and domestic work is one of the reasons for not being in the labour force, as reported by 25 per cent of women and 3 per cent of men in European countries (ILO, 2009).

More than 20 per cent of women did not work because of household chores, compared to 2 per cent of men.

Source: ISDS (2015: 11).

Viet Nam has a high rate of female labour force participation, although there is still a gap compared to men. According to the General Statistics Office (GSO), in 2015, women accounted for 48.3 per cent of the total labour force compared to 51.7 per cent for men (Economy and Forecast, 2015). However, more women than men are in vulnerable employment, mostly due to a much larger share of women in the category

of 'unpaid family workers'. Women are mainly engaged in low-paid, poor quality jobs and paid less than men for work of equal value. In 2014, wage employees made up 35.6 per cent of total employment, in which 58 per cent were male and 42 per cent, female. Female wage labour accounts for only 30.6 per cent of total female labour, compared to 40.4 per cent for male labour (UN Women Viet Nam, 2016b).

It is clear that unpaid care and domestic work are factors influencing the types of women's employment. As indicated by a recent study in Viet Nam, women aged 25 and older tend to choose employment that is close to home, which gives them more time for family (ISDS, 2015).

Impacts on earning

Persistent gender pay gaps are found in almost all labour markets. Globally, women on average are paid 24 per cent less than men. At the regional level, the pay gap ranges from 33 per cent in South Asia, to 14 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa. Overall, gender pay gaps have narrowed slightly in the last decade, but the pace of change has been slow and large gaps remain in most countries (UN Women, 2015).

Globally, women earn an average 24 per cent less than men (UN Women, POWW 2015-2016).

In Viet Nam, women earn 20 per cent less than men (VHLSS, 2012).

Income inequality is often interpreted by gender differences in education and type of employment, which are shaped by an environment where women are burdened with unpaid care and domestic work and stereotypes that cluster them into undervalued occupations including caregiving (UN Women, 2015). For instance, women may choose a part-time job or informal employment because they need to balance work and family. Thus, the time and opportunity cost restrict them from earning income from paid work and access to decent work, which contribute to gender wage gap.

Over approximately the last ten years, the gender wage gap has widened, with female wages increasing from 87 per cent of male wages in 2004 to 80 per cent of male earnings in 2012. The gender wage gap is explained by observable characteristics. Gender differences in time inputs also account for a substantial portion of the gap, especially with more women working part-time than men. The most likely explanation for women's relative scarcity in time for paid work is the time they spend on housework, childcare and unpaid work in household enterprises (Rodgers, 2015).

Impacts on political participation

Women's disproportional responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work contributes to persistent gender inequality in political participation including in community activities and leadership, which is evidenced by a number of studies on women's leadership in Viet Nam. Around 85 per cent of respondents agreed that the burden of unpaid care and domestic work is a major barrier for women's careers, and 93 per cent of women reported that family responsibility is the most significant constraint for women leaders (Oxfam, Care and Apheda, 2012). Men have greater representation in local authority's bodies, socio-political organizations and community's activities. One barrier for women's participation in socio-political organizations, among others, is related to their lack of time and their family responsibilities (ISDS, 2015). Pervasive gender stereotypes that "women's place in home and men's place in public sphere" have deprived women of opportunities for their engagement in the social and political life of the communities.

Impacts on health

The lack of time may also prevent women from accessing health services, and the workload of unpaid care and domestic work may cause stress and health problem. Care and domestic work can be arduous, emotionally stressful, and even dangerous, for example, through exposure to communicable diseases or fumes/burns from cooking stoves. Studies show that HIV/AIDS caregivers experience a negative impact on physical and mental health (Akindola, 2008, cited in Gender and Development Network, 2014).

Individuals performing unpaid care and domestic work are perceived to have a low social status. Gender stereotypes related to care work and family responsibilities have lowered

women's status in the family and society. These stereotypes can be met with emotional, verbal, physical and sexual violence against women (Gender and Development Network, 2014). The distribution of unpaid care and domestic work exacerbates the gendered power imbalances that render women vulnerable to violence. Caring responsibilities can also isolate women who experience domestic violence, constraining their access to services and support (Gender and Development Network, 2014).

DISCUSSION ON CHALLENGES RELATING TO UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK IN THE VIETNAMESE CONTEXT

Vietnam Gender Equality Law (2006) stipulates that sharing housework is the responsibility of both women and men; and the husband and wife use their leave time to take care of their sick children according to law. *The Law of Marriage and Family (2014)* stipulates that “[s]ettlement of property relations to ensure the rights and legitimate interests of women and children; housework and other tasks related to maintaining family's life are considered as labour income.” *Viet Nam's National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011-2020* includes a target to “reduce women's time involvement in housework by half by 2015 and by one and a half times by 2020 as compared to men's”. It is noted that, according to the strategy and laws, the distribution and reduction of housework is under the strategy's objective “gender equality in family”. However, the absence, to date, of sound, nationally representative time use data, analytical research and specific strategies for addressing the issue pose challenges to progress on this target. This section discusses the constraints in promoting actions for the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work.

Gender stereotypes and traditional norms

The traditional gender norm that “men work outside and women take care of the housework” is embedded in society's thinking and practices, even though, today, Vietnamese women have been involved in all economic activities, working outside home. Although the country has made significant progress in improving its population's well-being, in general, and reducing gender disparities, in particular in education, health and employment, stereotypes on the gender division of labour in the household has improved little over time. Hence, women continue to perform the bulk of unpaid care and domestic work. It is a root cause of gender inequality because gender stereotypes are expressed both at the individual and the institutional level where policies are developed. The challenging gender stereotype and gender norms require a comprehensive approach and consistent efforts from different actors.

Lack of conceptual understanding, data and evidence

In Viet Nam, instead of “unpaid care and domestic work”, the term “housework” (việc nhà) or “family work” (công việc gia đình) is used widely. The term can be interpreted in different ways. It is frequently considered a private issue of households when discussing gender equality in the family. This common interpretation does not recognize the link of unpaid care and domestic work and paid work or the connection of the unpaid care and development outcomes in general.

Although almost all research on gender equality in Viet Nam refer to women’s burden of family responsibilities as one of the barriers for women’s development, there is little analytical work on unpaid care and domestic work. There is a lack of research on the gender impacts of unpaid care and domestic work and its link to sectoral issues and development.

Lack of tools available for measuring the value and impacts

National TUSs have not been conducted in Viet Nam. VHLSS 2004, 2006 and 2008 included a question on the hours of housework per day, which was been removed in VHLSS 2010. There is a lack of underlying methodology of the TUS, e.g. VHLSS’s definition of housework includes cleaning, shopping, cooking, washing, collecting water and wood, and performing repair work in the house; i.e. caring for children, the elderly and sick is excluded in measurements. Indicators for measuring women’s time burden, tools and an analytical framework are unavailable for assessing the impacts of unpaid care and domestic work.

Reducing the burden of care not considered an objective in socio-economic policy and programmes and infrastructure investment decisions

Due to limited understanding of the broader impacts of unpaid care and domestic work on growth and development, this issue is ignored in policy discussions and public investments. Further, it has been generally ignored in policy design, which is in line with its interpretation as being within a private issue. Although the reduction of women’s time performing housework is identified is a target in Viet Nam’s National Strategy for Gender Equality, little action has been taken to approach it as a stand-alone issue, and no action in approaching it as a cross-cutting issue of all sectors.

Improving basic social services and infrastructure such as water and sanitation, electrification, health centres and education, especially the preschool network, can reduce women’s time in performing unpaid care and domestic work. In Viet Nam, in terms of infrastructure and basic public services, although there has been improvement in past years as a result of the Government’s investment in New Rural Development and Poverty Reduction programme and other programmes, in remote and poor, especially mountainous areas, there have still been challenges in access to the water system, electrification, roads and health care

services. Regarding early childhood education and care (ECEC), in government programmes, there appears to be a strong priority for providing services for relatively older children (in particular, children five years old and about to enter school), with limited support for children under three, and almost no services for children under 18 months. Data show that while enrolment rates for children in the 3-4 age bracket have increased from 69 per cent in 2008-2009 to 81 per cent in 2012-2013, enrolment rates for children in the 0-3 age bracket have remained almost unchanged over the same period, at about 13 per cent. Enrolment rates for children five years old are the highest and rising, from 91 per cent in 2008-2009 to 98 per cent in 2012-2013 (Pham Thu Hien, 2015). But it is when children are under three that the care burden on mothers is largest.

HOW POLICY CAN REDUCE UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK IN VIET NAM

In 2014, access to improved water sources became more widespread. However, while all households in the top quintile had access, only 74 per cent of households in the poorest quintile had access; only 11 per cent of households in rural areas had piped water in their own dwelling or yard compared to about 59 per cent of households in urban areas; and 68 per cent of households in the richest quintile were provided with piped water on premises, while only 6 per cent of households in the poorest quintile. The burden of water collection falls disproportionately on ethnic minority women and girls who are by far the main collectors in their communities. Water collection is a daily and time-consuming activity (at times requiring longer than 30 minutes per trip) in 20 per cent of ethnic minority households compared to the national average of less than 4 per cent households with a similar burden). Many of water sources still require time for collecting and treating water before domestic use. The investment policies and programmes in piped water on domestic premise would reduce women's time (UN Women, 2016).

Children's access to early childhood care and education services (ECEC) is limited, especially children under three years with enrolment of only 22.7 per cent as at national wide rate, but it is much lower in some regions such as Mekong River Delta (6.8 per cent) and Central Highland (6.2 per cent). Taking care of young children substantially contributed to women's time poverty. The Government has realized the importance of ECEC and made efforts to expand the network of pre-schools and teachers. However, the expansion of ECEC is mostly approached from the perspective of child development, i.e. without aiming to reduce women's burden of child care. However, through the expansion of the provision of ECE services and increasing the rate of enrolment for young children, women also benefit from this programme. There needs to be a shift to a more holistic/inclusive approach of child care and education; this is not only an issue of human capital contribution and development, but it should be also seen from gender perspective (Pham Thu Hien, 2015).

In addition to investment in social infrastructure, international experiences shows that reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work can be achieved through policies on maternity, paternity and parental leave. Within the maternity and paternity leave policy, women and men can take leave, respectively, whereas parental leave is granted to families where both parents could share the leave.

In Viet Nam, according to the Law of Social Insurance, maternity leave consists of six months with full pay for women. However, this entitlement is provided only for women in the formal sector; hence, the majority of women working in the informal sector do not benefit from this policy. The compliance with ILO's minimum standards is a challenge, as even the laws are in place, there are obstacles for women to access to this policy (ILO 2014, cited in UN Women, 2015).

ILO's Maternity Protection Convention provides that women in both formal and informal work are entitled to maternity leave. Argentina is an example of universal maternity protection. The maternity protection system in Argentina includes maternity protection in the workplace, contributory and non-contributory family allowances, and pensions for mothers with seven or more children, through both transfers in kind and in cash (Table 1) (ILO, 2016).

Table 1. Universal maternity protection in Argentina

Maternity protection in the workplace	Contributory programmes monthly income replacement equivalent to 100 per cent of the worker's salary.	Employees covered by the Law on work-related risks and Unemployment protection
Family allowances	Prenatal: Between ARS199 and 2,084 (US\$13-141) per month per birth: ARS1,125 (US\$76) per adoption: ARS6,748 (US\$456) per child: between ARS199 and 2,084 (US\$13-141) per month. School allowance: between ARS808 and 1,615 (US\$55- 109) per year	Same as above, plus beneficiaries of the pension system and non-contributory pension, up to a maximum monthly family income of ARS60,000 (US\$4,054), which is established by law.
Universal child allowance	Non-contributory programmes ARS966 (US\$65) per month per child, with conditions on health and education.	Beneficiaries of Monotax, unemployed persons, workers in the informal economy with income below minimum wage, and domestic wor
Pregnancy allowance	ARS966 (US\$65) per month from the 12th week of pregnancy through childbirth or interruption of pregnancy	
Pensions for mothers with seven or more children	Lifetime monthly amount equivalent to the minimum old-age pension of ARS4958.90 (US\$335) (ANSES, March 2016)	Mothers with seven or more children (own or adopted children)

Source: Decree 1141/2015 on Family Allowances granted from March 2016, cited in ILO (2016).

In Viet Nam, universal maternity leave or basic universal maternity cash benefits need to be discussed in the context of reforming Viet Nam's social insurance system and regulations, learning from examples such as Argentina

In 2013, provisions for paternity leave were in place in 80 countries and parental leave in 66 countries (UN Women 2015). Viet Nam does not have parental leave; however, the revised Law of Social Insurance of Viet Nam provides for paternity leave, which is effective from 1 January 2016, entitling men to 5 to 14-day paternity leave. It is too early to assess the impact that the policy may have on men's sharing unpaid care and domestic work, since no data and analysis on this issue are available.

In general, there is the challenge of gender stereotypes concerning the shared responsibility of childcare between women and men. In the countries where policies on paternity or parental leave are in place, the entitlements are limited, with just few days of unpaid leave and mothers still take the majority of this time (UN Women 2015).

Nordic countries have been known as the countries with effective policies to support women and men to balance work and family responsibilities. They provide good examples of how policy can make a difference in terms of shared responsibility, including the promotion of men's engagement.

Policy makes a difference

The Nordic countries provide comprehensive support for working parents including paid leave, flexible working options, and high quality public childcare service. Norway was the first country to pioneer 'daddy quotas', where portions of non-transferable leave are taken on a 'use-or-lose' basis. These quotas have since been replicated in several countries, and evidence shows that these measures make a difference in men's take-up of leave. In 2007, in Iceland, for example, 84 per cent of fathers took their full three-month quota of leave (Haas and Rostgaard, 2011, cited in UN Women 2015: 84, 88).

Compliance with the labour standards for paid domestic workers

As an important livelihood, paid domestic work has positive impacts on employing households by reducing women's time for care and domestic work, and providing them with more time for their productive and professional jobs. Paid domestic work enables women to maintain employment outside the home. It has been recognized that demand for paid domestic workers is increasing in Viet Nam. Paid domestic work is regulated for the first time in the country in the amended Labour Code, effective since 1 May 2013. The Labour Code implementation is supported by the guiding Government Decree No. 27 (2014) and the Ministry of Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs' (MOLISA) Circular No. 19 (2014), which defines key rights and entitlements for paid domestic workers. This guiding legislation also indicates the responsibility of the local authorities at all levels (communes, district and provincial/city) to communicate the contents related to domestic work, ensuring the laws' implementation and oversight, and periodical six-month reporting on the situation of domestic workers in the managed areas to the higher authorities. However, compliance with labour standards for paid domestic workers has been a challenge. A number of studies indicate that there has been a violation of paid domestic workers rights related to contract, working hours, insurance benefits, resting time, labour safety, among others. Therefore, the enforcement mechanism for implementing improved labour standards for paid domestic workers identified in the Labour Code is essential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

International experiences indicate that addressing the issues of unpaid care and domestic work requires a *four-fold objective 4Rs (Recognition, Reduction, Redistribution and Representation)* and a *two-pronged strategy* (UN Women Training Centre, 2016). *The 4Rs of care* are: (i) *recognition* of care as a need and a job that has social and economic value; (ii) *reduction* of drudgery and arduous forms of care work and dependency and increase people's autonomy to care for themselves; (iii) *redistribution* of caregiving tasks among different actors in households (women and men), state, private sector and community; and (iv) *representation* of care workers, persons of care dependency and women's organizations in process of decision-making. *A two-pronged strategy* includes promoting care public policies and interventions and mainstreaming the 4Rs into public policy and programmes/interventions.

Addressing unpaid care and domestic work should be based on:

- The country context: For the 2016-2020 period, Viet Nam is implementing important socio-economic development programmes including: (i) two major National Target Programmes (NTPs): NTP on New Rural Development 2016-2020 and NTP on Sustainable Poverty Reduction 2016-2020; (ii) the Programme on Poverty Reduction for 61 poor districts in the 2016-2020 period (Program 30A); (iii) the socio-economic development programme for communes in mountainous and ethnic minorities areas (Program 135);
- (iv) national and local socio-economic development plan; and (v) sectoral strategies and programmes. The mentioned challenges in the Vietnamese context: Gender stereotypes and traditional norms; lack of knowledge, data and evidence, and tools for measuring the value and impacts of unpaid care and domestic work; limited infrastructure and quality basic social services; and lack of recognition of unpaid care and domestic work in the design of socio-economic policy/programmes.

The following recommendation are entry points for designing multiple solutions to ensure that unpaid care and domestic work do not remain a barrier for women.

Research, data and resource development

- Conduct research on valuing and measuring unpaid care and domestic work; collect data and conduct an analysis on trends of care needs including care of people with disabilities, and the impact of Viet Nam's ageing population, migration, climate change and environmental issues on demand for care.
- Assess gender impacts of socio-economic policies such as labour and employment, tax policy and social protection policies in relation to unpaid care work .
- Review the current policies from a lens of unpaid care and domestic work and carry out an assessment on the roles and responsibilities of the relevant stakeholders in unpaid care work as an evidence base for suggestions on the redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work.
- Develop tools and a technical package to support TUSs (indicating the types of survey, methodological issues, conceptual clarity, indicators, etc.).
- Support the development of comprehensive analytical frameworks including time-use survey to monitor the impacts of public investment on gender equality in order to lay the basis for policy design.
- Conduct regular TUSs that should be institutionalized in the country's statistics system in the long term. These surveys can be integrated in Viet Nam's Labour and Employment Survey, or Vietnam's Household Living Standards Survey. Its results would be helpful for economic analyses, government and market and policy design.
- Gather data and analysis on domestic workers and assess compliance with regulations in the Labour Code related to domestic work.

Advocacy, awareness raising and capacity building

- Raise society's awareness of the value of unpaid care and domestic work, its significance and linkages to development through communication campaigns and engagement with media. Changing social norms is essential to promote shared responsibilities between women, girls and men and boys together with the other policy advocacy for reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work.
- Build capacity and expertise among researchers, economists and key government agencies such as General Statistics Office, Ministry of Planning and Investment, and MOLISA on how to apply the care lens to policy design.
- Organize policy dialogues with the Government, NGOs and development actors including women's organizations on policy measures needed to address the negative impact of unpaid care and domestic work for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Legal and policy change

Integrating the issue of unpaid care and domestic work in programmes and policies

- Integrate the 4Rs of unpaid care and domestic work in Viet Nam's Action Plan on the Implementation of Agenda 2030 as follows: (i) concretize national target and indicators related to the SGD 5 and the other SGDs based on the 4Rs of unpaid care and domestic work; (ii) provide technical support to ensure that appropriate measures and solutions to implement the 4Rs strategy are included in the Action Plan; and (iii) develop monitoring tools to track implementation of the 4Rs as part of Viet Nam's SDG monitoring.
- Consider and integrate aspects of unpaid care and domestic work in NTPs, national and local socio-economic development programmes and sectoral programmes. This may involve interventions such as action research on how to integrate the issue of unpaid care and domestic work in the above-mentioned programmes, the development of indicators including on time poverty in the multidimensional measurement of poverty, etc.

Policies for balancing family and work

- Review the implementation of the current maternity leave policy that is guaranteed under the Labour Code and Social Insurance Law to evaluate its effectiveness. Review and reform social insurance system and regulations to initiate universal maternity protection that will benefit all women, including those in informal sector. Promote the implementation of the paternity leave policy in Viet Nam's Social Insurance Law, including through communication campaigns with positive role models to create an enabling environment for men to benefit from the policy without being stigmatized.
- In a few years, assess the effectiveness of the paternity leave policy in transforming gender relations and promoting shared family responsibility among members of the household.

Promoting paid domestic work

- Review and assess implementation of key rights and entitlements for paid domestic workers identified in the Labour Code (2013) and Decree No. 27 (2014) to ensure decent work conditions.
- Disseminate information on the Labour Code's provisions on domestic workers to domestic workers, employers and relevant local authorities as widely as possible and promote and support initiatives aimed at organizing and representing domestic workers.

Service delivery

NTPs are implemented in all 63 provinces, while Programmes 30A and 135 are designed for the poor, mountainous and ethnic minority areas. In order to reduce the burden of care on women, particularly the poor, the following is recommended:

- Investment in gender-responsive infrastructure e.g. child care centres in the flood season in certain areas, small-scale infrastructure for environmental protection in rural areas that can create jobs for women, piped water, water and sanitation, village roads, etc.;
- Investment in technology to save time and reduce domestic work, especially for rural and mountainous areas;
- Investment in the ECEC network for pre-school children in rural and ethnic minority areas should be a priority of the local government, particularly for children under three;
- Investment in basic social services such as improved health care centres, especially at the grassroots level in the remote and poor regions; and the elder care centres or clubs/ advisory or consulting services as a pilot model, particularly in urban areas of Viet Nam where there are likely more needs for elder care due to the rise of nuclear families;
- The enhancement of women's participation in the planning, development and provision of basic social services.

REFERENCES

Action Aid. 2016. Make the house become home. Policy brief. Ha Noi, Viet Nam.

Akintola, A. 2008, 'Towards equal sharing of care responsibilities: Learning from Africa'. Paper prepared for UNDAW Expert Meeting. In Gender and Development Network, 2014. London

Budlender, D. and I. Woolard. 2006. The Impact of the South African Child Support and Old Age Grants on Children's Schooling and Work, International Labour Organization, Geneva.

Daly, M. & J. Lewis. 1998. Introduction: Conceptualizing social care in the context of welfare state, restructuring, p. 6. In Sharp, R. 2003: Budgeting for equity: gender budget initiatives within a framework. New York, UNIFEM.

Economy and Forecast 2015. Labor and Employment in Vietnam. Available from <http://kinhtevadubao.vn/chi-tiet/2-4925-lao-dong-viec-lam-o-viet-nam-2015--no-luc-nhung-chua-dat-ky-vong.html> (28 December 2015).

Esquivel, V. (coord.) 2011. La economía feminista desde América Latina: Una hoja de ruta sobre los debates actuales en la región, Santo Domingo. Gender and Macroeconomics Group of Latin American and Caribbean (gem-lac). In Rodríguez Enríquez, Corina. 2012. Care: the missing link in economic analysis? Cepal Review 106. April 2012.

Gender and Development Network. 2014 Unpaid Care: A Priority for the post-2015 Development Goals and Beyond, by Woodroffe, Jessica and Kate Donald. Briefing 6 July 2014. London.

IDS (Institute of Development Studies). 2016. Policy Briefings: Redistributing Unpaid Care Work – Why Tax Matters for Women's Rights. Issue 109. January.

ILO (International Labour Organization) 2009. The Unpaid Care Work - Paid Work Connection, by Rania Antonopoulos. Working Paper No. 86.

ILO. 2014. World Social Protection Report 2014-2015. Building Economic Recovery, Inclusive Development and Social Justice. Geneva.

ILO. 2016. Universal Maternity Protection. Building Social Protection Floors Country Note Series June 2016. ILO Social Protection Department.

ISDS (Institute for Social Development Studies). 2015. Social Determinants of Gender Inequality in Vietnam. Hong Duc Publisher.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). 2014: Unpaid Care Work: The Missing Link in the Analysis of Gender Gaps in Labour Outcomes by Gaëlle Ferrant, Luca Maria Pesando and Keiko Nowacka. Paris.

Oxfam, Care and Apheda. 2012. Gender Analysis and Operation of People Councils in Lao Cai, Dac Nong, Nghe An and Hai Duong. Viet Nam.

Pham Thu Hien. 2015: Background paper: Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care in Vietnam. Unpublished.

PyD. 2011. Analysis of Training Needs. Project on Women's Participation in Politics in Da Nang and Quang Nam, Viet Nam. Unpublished.

Rodgers. Y. 2015. Gender Differences in Socioeconomic Status: Evidence from the 2012 Viet Nam Household Living Standard Survey. Unpublished.

Rodríguez Enríquez, Corina. 2012. Care: the missing link in economic analysis? Cepal Review 106. April 2012

Sharp, R. 2003. Budgeting for Equity: Gender Budget Initiatives within a Framework of Performance Oriented Budgeting. New York, UN Women headquarters.

Sunhwa, L.L. 2006. A Gender Analysis of the 2004 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey. Unpublished.

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). 2015. Human Development Report.

UN General Assembly. 2013. Sixty-eighth session. 9 August 2013. Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. A/68/293.

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). 2016. Harnessing the Power of Data for Girls. Taking stock and looking ahead to 2030.

UN Women. 2015. Progress of World's Women 2015-2016.

UN Women Training Centre. 2014. Reading paper series on care economy.

UN Women Viet Nam. 2016a. Introductory Reading on Care Economy and Gender Equality in Viet Nam: Reading paper for the training on– 16 September 2016, Hai Phong City, Viet Nam. Unpublished

UN Women Viet Nam. 2016b. Presentation on Inclusive Development for Women in Viet Nam: Trends, Challenges and Recommendations for Gender Equality in Viet Nam. Training on Gender and Taxation, Hanoi, May 2016. Unpublished.



**United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and
the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)**

Viet Nam Country Office

The Green One UN House
304 Kim Mã – Ba Đình – Hà Nội
Tel: +84 4 38501000
Fax: +84 4 37265520
Website: <http://vietnam.unwomen.org>



9 786049 511455