

Research Article

Urgency for Recognition: An Estimate of Women Domestic Work in Bangladesh

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Abstract

This article attempts to estimate the unpaid domestic work of women in Bangladesh. This study determined that the total unpaid work per year was equivalent to BDT 1115914.8 million which is equivalent to 10.75 percent of the country's total GDP for the fiscal year 2012-13. As part of this study, we conducted a nation-wide survey of 520 women chosen randomly across seven districts in seven administrative divisions. We used two recognized methods to estimate the monetary value of the unpaid household work by women in the country; (1) the opportunity cost and (2) the market replacement cost methods. We determined from our research that the economic value of unpaid domestic work by women would have been much higher if the wages of women in Bangladesh were not comparatively low and the wage differential between men and women was not so high. To address the issue of unpaid work of women in Bangladesh, the article calls for recognition of the embedded institutional rigidities that reproduce the system, formulate comprehensive social policy and institute a holistic social security system.

Introduction

This article attempts to monetise the unpaid family work of women in Bangladesh. The issue has received very little consideration in Bangladesh. With the existing institutional barriers coupled with the hurdles of patriarchal society, women are generally deprived of the traditional means of making a livelihood and at the same time their housework is not valued or counted as a part of the economy. The option for women to make choices and to claim rights to a decent living has remained elusive in the context of survival and hence has been subjected to violence, injustice and dispossession (Titumir, 2013).

Like elsewhere, in Bangladesh, the typical thinking is that men are responsible for 'outside' work and women for housework and child care. As the stereo-type goes, income earning is usually the responsibility of males whereas women are economically dependent and thus are given no choice but to live in this dependent condition. This is primarily due to a patriarchal social structure, instrumentalised through tangible variables such as comparatively lower education levels and fewer marketable skills for women. Women who have paid employment continue to bear the responsibilities for housework, despite the rising share of women in the labour force. The feminisation of labour has been accelerated by the growing need and decline of familial support along with the ever increasing pressures to sustain has pushed women especially to engage in income generating activities (Titumir, 2013).

The crucial contributions of women are often invisible and are usually provided without assurance of economic return. The invisibility of much of the work done by women in the home and the fields add to their low status and the ill treatment from which they suffer. Their unpaid work are neither officially recognised by policy-makers, nor recognised as true work (Keklik, 2006).

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The foundation of the economy of a nation largely depends on work, whether paid or unpaid. But the fact is that paid work is counted as part of the economy and unpaid work is neglected. Unpaid workers are not considered part of the labour force and their work is not counted as national income. Unpaid workers thus fail to get the attention they deserve. Women bear major responsibilities for unpaid work which includes cooking, washing clothes, cleaning, taking care of children and the sick and the elderly, tutoring children and so on. Usually they start working early in the morning and work until midnight in comparison to other members of the family. In most cases, their work is invisible (Rollins, 1985), even though unpaid work is essential to the development of human capabilities and well-being. However, women working in certain segments and sectors - for example in care work – still experience inefficient wages (see Grimshaw and Rubery, 1995; Akerlof and Yellen, 1986; Bulow and Summers, 1986; Shapiro and Stiglitz, 1984, Yellen, 1984).

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, urged countries to develop “suitable statistical means to recognise and make visible the full content of the work of women and all their contributions to the national economy including their contribution in the unremunerated and domestic sector” (United Nations 1996). In spite of the essential role of domestic workers in maintaining households, they are often under paid, sometimes ill-treated, and frequently undervalued for the work they perform. Undervaluation is certainly part of a historical legacy, reflecting the low status of women at the time the jobs became associated with the labour of women (Rau and Wazienski, 1999).

The contributions of the unpaid work done by women have always been invisible and are not considered in economic and social policies. As a society, it should be recognised that women are doing the bulk of the work (cooking, cleaning, child and elder care etc.) and are not being financially rewarded for doing so. To a certain extent, they are often deprived of equal access to health care, capital, and decision making in and outside the family. Measurement of unpaid household work is therefore important to better understand the income distribution as well as to achieve more comprehensive estimates of the level of economic activity while giving visibility to their work (Aslaksen and Koren, 1996). Valuation of their work would likely establish them as an important player on the economic scene, and have multiplier effects for improving their overall contribution and participation in economic and other activities. The main purpose of this study is to quantify the economic value of unpaid work of women in and around the home as well as to raise attention to this serious but neglected issue in Bangladesh.

Methodology

This study uses both the opportunity cost method and the market replacement cost method. For the market replacement cost method, the study determines the monthly income of domestic workers because most of the housework is performed by them. The calculation is done in the following way:

Let, I equal the monthly average income for women in the labour market and W equal average time (hours) spent on the labour market for their job per month. We then calculate the average income per person per hour as:

$$DI = I/W$$

If the average time spent for household work (unpaid) of the respondents is HW per person per year, the average annual income per person is calculated as: $AI = DI \times HW$

So that, if P_i is the total unpaid population of a country (where, $i= 1,2,3.....n$), then the average amount of unpaid work per year can be calculated as:

$$AYI = (P_1 \times AI) + (P_2 \times AI) + (P_3 \times AI) + \dots + (P_n \times AI)$$

$$\therefore AYI = \sum_{i=1}^n P_i \times AI$$

For opportunity cost method, *AI* is calculated on the basis of income for the same activities in the labour market. A Multistage Stratified Sampling (MSS) has been adopted for this survey. The study compiled the data collected from 7 administrative divisions in Bangladesh. The sample is stratified and selected in multiple stages. The 7 administrative divisions of Bangladesh are stratified into 7 strata. From each stratum, 1 district is randomly selected: Dhaka from Dhaka division, Noakhali from Chittagong division, Rajshahi from Rajshahi division, Khulna from Khulna division, Sylhet from Sylhet division, Barisal from Barisal division, and Dinajpur from Rangpur division. It is assumed that the socio-economic conditions of all the districts from each division are unique. The number of households at each division is calculated by using a Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) method. A total of 520 women were interviewed from 10 November to 5 December, 2013. In order to perform the above task, first, a pilot survey was conducted to identify respondents, and then the information was collected from those respondents.

Assumptions

The socio-economic conditions of all the districts in each division are unique. All the households in a sample area are uniform.

Calculation of Sample Size

The calculation of necessary sample size is,

$$n = \{t^2 * \sigma^2 (1 - \sigma)\} / e^2$$

Where, n = Sample size

σ^2 = Standard deviation

t = 95% Confidence Interval for large scale sampling

e = Error term

Here, $\sigma = 0.5$ (Since we haven't actually administered our survey yet 0.5 is the most forgiving number and ensures that the sample will be large enough).

t = 1.96 (95% Z scores)

e = 0.05 (Marginal error)

Therefore, $n = \{(1.96^2 * 0.5 * (1 - 0.5)) / 0.05^2\} = 384.16$

That is, in the case of large scale sampling more than 384 samples statistically represent a population at 5% level of significance. In this study, the number of sample size is considered as 520.

Calculation of Error Term

The calculation of error term is, $e = \sqrt{\{t^2 * \sigma^2 (1 - \sigma)\} / n}$

Here, $\sigma = 0.5$, t = 1.96 and n = 520, Therefore, $e = \sqrt{\{(1.96^2 * 0.5 * (1 - 0.5)) / 520\}} = 0.043$

The main instruments for data collection were well-structured questionnaires administered to the respondents by the trained enumerators. The data were edited, compiled, processed, and analyzed by using SPSS 16.0 programme. Information from the secondary source (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics) is also used in this study.

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

This section provides information on the demographic profile of the respondents such as type of family, marital status, number of family members and household head. It also includes socio-economic characteristics such as education status, occupation status, daily time spent on paid and unpaid work and monthly income.

Type of Family of the Respondents

The traditional joint family structure in Bangladesh has deteriorated over last few decades due to poverty, attitudes of self-interest, quarrels, and maladjustment and is gradually being replaced by nuclear families (UNESCO, 1992). This study reveals that most of the respondents (81.9 percent) are living in a nuclear family whereas only 18.1 percent are living in a joint family (Table 1). The study further shows that 25 percent of the respondents in Dhaka division are living in a nuclear family followed by Chittagong (14 percent), Rajshahi (12.3 percent) and Khulna (11.2 percent).

Marital Status

The study consists of only married women. As seen in Table 1, the majority of the respondents (91.7 percent) are married followed by divorced (6.2 percent) and divorced/separated (2.1 percent). Among the respondents, 28.5 percent married women are from Dhaka division, 14.8 percent from Chittagong, 13.8 percent from Rajshahi, 11.8 percent from Khulna, 10.8 percent from Rangpur and 6 percent from both Sylhet and Barisal division.

Number of Family Members

The household size is generally large in Bangladesh. It is found that 67.5 percent of the respondents have 3-5 members in their family while 24.4 percent have 6 or more. Only 8.1 percent have 1-2 members in their family. In Dhaka division, 21.2 percent of the respondents have the family members of 3-5 followed by Rajshahi (11.5 percent), Chittagong (11.3 percent), Rangpur (7.9 percent), Khulna (7.1 percent), Barisal (4.4 percent) and Sylhet division (4 percent). Table 1 presents the composition of the respondents in terms of family members.

Household Head

Generally, patriarchal tradition dominates in Bangladesh where a male heads the household. It is observed that 91.2 percent of households are headed by a male and remaining 8.8 percent are headed by a female. Higher percentage of the households headed by a male are found in Dhaka division (29.2 percent) followed by Chittagong (14.8 percent), Rajshahi (14.6 percent), Khulna (11.7 percent), Rangpur (11.2 percent), Barisal (5.6 percent) and Sylhet (4 percent). The female-headed households contain a lower percentage in all the divisions (Table 1).

Educational Status

Bangladesh has achieved moderate progress in education especially in female education over the years. Table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents (28.3 percent) have completed class VI-X followed by higher education (26.7 percent), completed class I-V (19.6 percent), no education (14.4 percent) and completed class XI-XII (11.0 percent). The average year of schooling among all respondents is 8.83 years. In Dhaka division, a majority of the respondents have higher education and a similar result is found for the Rajshahi and Khulna divisions. In Barisal and Rangpur division, a majority of the respondents have completed their education of class VI-X. In the Chittagong division, a majority of the respondents have completed class I-V while in Sylhet division a majority of the respondents have no formal education. Considering average years of schooling, respondents from Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna, Chittagong, Sylhet, Barisal and Rangpur division have average years of schooling of 11.52, 8.62, 12.4, 6.67, 1.42, 8.44 and 9.32 years respectively.

Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section of the study highlights the economic characteristics of the respondents (the economic information like occupational status, daily working hours, monthly income etc.).

Occupational Status

Table 2 confirms that the highest numbers of the respondents (39.4 percent) only engage in household work as homemakers. At the same time, 32.1 percent, 2.5 percent, 6.7 percent, 2.1 percent and 17.1 percent of respondents are engaged in either service, business, handicraft, day labour and domestic work respectively along with their household work. To be specific, it is observed that, majority of the respondents from Rajshahi and Dhaka division are engaged in service while in Sylhet,

majority of the respondents are engaged in domestic work. In Khulna, Chittagong, Barisal, and Rangpur division, a majority of the respondents are engaged in household work only.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents by division

Variable	Division							Total
	Rajshahi	Dhaka	Khulna	Chittagong	Sylhet	Barisal	Rangpur	
Types of Family								
Nuclear	64(12.3)	128(24.6)	58(11.2)	73 (14)	31 (6)	30(5.8)	42 (8.1)	426 (81.9)
Joint	16(3.1)	37 (7.1)	4 (0.8)	15 (2.9)	0 (0)	2 (0.4)	20 (3.8)	94 (18.1)
Total	80 (15.4)	165 (31.7)	62 (11.9)	88(16.9)	31(6.0)	32(6.2)	62 (11.9)	520 (100)
Marital Status								
Married	72 (13.8)	148 (28.5)	62 (11.9)	77 (14.8)	31 (6.0)	31 (6.0)	56 (10.8)	477 (91.7)
Widow	6 (1.2)	11 (2.1)	0 (0.0)	10 (1.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)	4 (0.8)	32 (6.2)
Others	2 (0.4)	6 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.4)	11 (2.1)
Total	80 (15.4)	165 (31.7)	62 (11.9)	88(16.9)	31(6.0)	32(6.2)	62 (11.9)	520 (100)
No. of Family Member								
1-2	5 (1)	18 (3.5)	8 (1.5)	6 (1.2)	2 (0.4)	0 (0)	3 (0.6)	42 (8.1)
3-5	60(11.5)	110(21.2)	37 (7.1)	59 (11.3)	21 (4)	23(4.4)	41 (7.5)	351 (67.5)
6+	15 (2.9)	37 (7.1)	17 (3.3)	23 (4.4)	8 (1.5)	9 (1.7)	18 (3.5)	127 (24.4)
Total	80 (15.4)	165 (31.7)	62 (11.9)	88(16.9)	31(6.0)	32(6.2)	62 (11.9)	520 (100)
Household Head								
Male	76(14.6)	152(29.9)	61(11.7)	77 (14.8)	21 (4)	29(5.6)	58 (11.2)	474 (91.2)
Female	4 (0.8)	13 (2.5)	1 (0.2)	11 (2.1)	10(1.9)	3 (0.6)	4 (0.8)	46 (8.8)
Total	80 (15.4)	165 (31.7)	62 (11.9)	88(16.9)	31(6.0)	32(6.2)	62 (11.9)	520 (100)
Education Status								
No education	8 (1.5)	32 (6.2)	1 (0.2)	10 (1.9)	22(4.2)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.4)	75 (14.4)
Completed class I-V	4 (0.8)	36 (6.9)	2 (0.4)	26 (5)	8 (1.5)	11(2.1)	15 (2.9)	102 (19.6)
Completed Class VI-X	18 (3.5)	36 (6.9)	13 (2.5)	42 (8.1)	0 (0)	14(2.7)	24 (4.6)	147 (28.3)
Completed Class XI-XII	9 (1.7)	15 (2.9)	18 (3.5)	5 (1.0)	0 (0)	4 (0.8)	6 (1.2)	57 (11.0)
Higher Education	41 (7.9)	46 (8.8)	28 (5.4)	5 (1.0)	1 (0.2)	3 (0.6)	15 (2.9)	139 (26.7)
Total	80 (15.4)	165 (31.7)	62 (11.9)	88(16.9)	31(6.0)	32(6.2)	62 (11.9)	520 (100)

Note: Figure in parenthesis indicates percentage

Table 2: Occupational status of the respondents by division

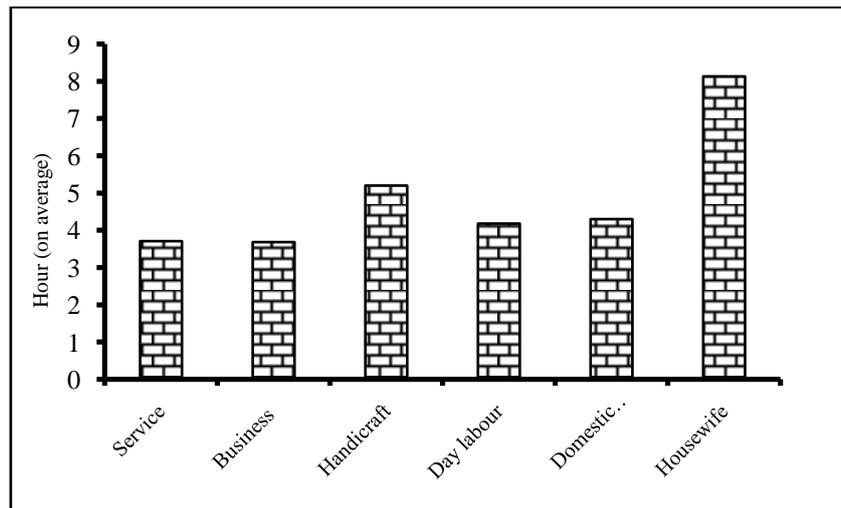
Variable	Division							Total
	Rajshahi	Dhaka	Khulna	Chittagong	Sylhet	Barisal	Rangpur	
Occupation Status								
Professional Service	41(7.9)	82(15.8)	17(3.3)	6 (1.2)	1 (0.2)	3 (0.6)	17 (3.3)	167(32.1)
Business	0 (0)	3 (0.6)	0 (0)	7 (1.3)	0 (0)	1 (0.2)	2 (0.4)	13 (2.5)
Handicraft	3 (0.6)	10 (1.9)	0 (0)	18 (3.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (0.8)	35 (6.7)
Wage labourer	3 (0.6)	4 (0.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.2)	3 (0.6)	11 (2.1)
Others	4 (0.8)	42 (8.1)	0 (0)	8 (1.5)	30(5.8)	0 (0)	5 (1)	89 (17.1)
Only house work	29 (5.6)	24 (4.6)	45 (8.7)	49 (9.4)	0 (0)	27(5.2)	31 (6.0)	205(39.4)
Total	80(15.4)	165(31.7)	62(11.9)	88(16.9)	31(6.0)	32(6.2)	62(11.9)	520(100)

Note: Figure in parenthesis indicates percentage

Daily Time Spent on Family Work (Unpaid)

Respondents have engaged themselves in different types of occupations beside household work as stated in earlier sections. The analysis shows that respondents in different types of professional services spent an average of 3.71 hours daily on household work. Women, engaged in business and handcraft, spent an average of 3.69 hours and 5.2 hours respectively per day for household work. Additionally, the study shows that on average, the wage labourers and the domestic workers spent 4.8 hours and 4.3 hours daily for their household work respectively. One of the main findings of the study is that, those who are housewives spent 8.13 hours daily on household work (Figure 1).

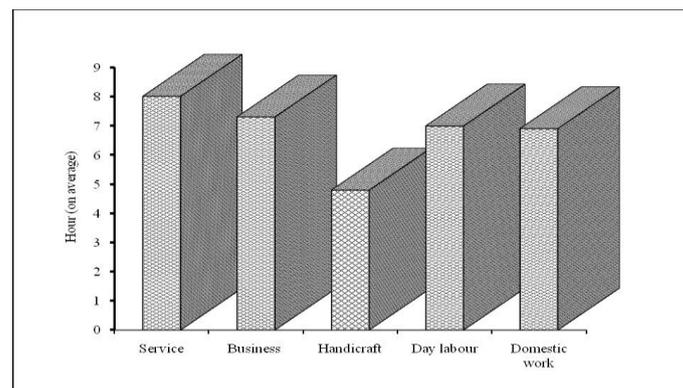
Figure 1: Daily time spent on family work (unvalued) by occupation (on average hour)



Daily Time Spent on Paid Work (Occupation)

Different types of professional service holder respondents spent an average of 8.02 hours per day for the purpose of their service. Respondents who are engaged with business spent an average of 7.3 hours daily in their work place. Wage labourer respondents spent an average of 7 hours daily for their work while domestic workers spent an average of 6.91 hours per day and those who are engaged in handcraft spent an average of 4.8 hours for their work per day (Figure 2). More specifically, women engaged in different types of occupations except household work spent an average of 7.29 hours per day for their occupation.

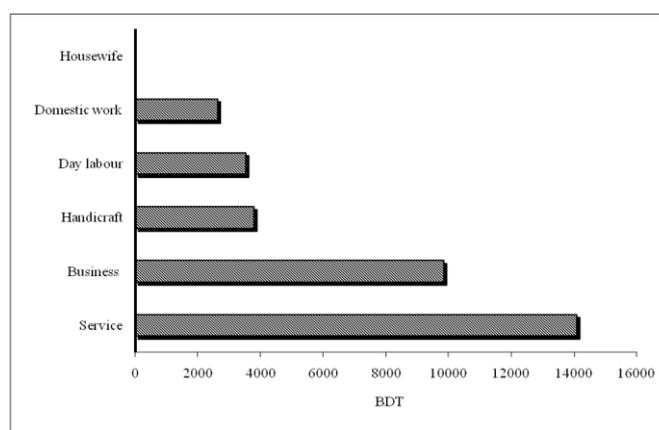
Figure 2: Daily time spent on occupation (on average hour)



Monthly Income

Women are largely influenced by the push and pull factors which are characteristic of being engaged in various income generating activities. In the context of growing needs and decline of familial supports along with the ever increasing pressure to sustain, women have been pushed to engage in income generating activities (Rahman, 2013). The monthly average income of the service holder respondents is BDT 14101 and BDT 9846 for those in business. The average monthly income for those engaged in handicraft, day labour, and domestic work is BDT 3791, BDT 3527, and BDT 2622 respectively (Figure 3). In addition, this study reveals that the average monthly income of the respondents engaged in different types of occupation (including all the service categories) is BDT 9167.

Figure 3: Monthly income from occupation (in BDT)



Measuring the Economic Value of Household Work

It should be noted that no one method is perfect; no method can provide an exact measurement of the economic value of unpaid household work done by women. Nevertheless, the point is to get a reasonable estimate of the value of something that is by its very nature uncountable. This section provides the estimated value of unpaid domestic work of women.

Opportunity Cost Method

The patriarchal societal structure reproduces itself by acknowledging and considering men's work to be economically productive, while women engaged in full time housework are not classified like that. The opportunity cost method estimates the amount that women would have earned if they were in the paid labour market instead of doing unpaid work. This method measures the value of unpaid work by setting it equal to the income that the persons performing the unpaid work could have earned in the labour market if they had performed paid work rather than unpaid work. For the employed individuals, the opportunity cost of unpaid work is equal to the market wage rate they earn while the individuals who are non-employed, the opportunity cost for the non-employed is estimated by either their "potential wages" (that is, the average wage of an employed person with the same observed market characteristics) or by their "reservation wage" (that is, the wage rate at which a typical individual with the same market characteristics would be indifferent between a unit of time assigned to paid work and a unit of time assigned to unpaid work) (Sousa-Poza et al. 2001). One drawback of the opportunity cost method is that it places a higher value on the domestic work of individuals whose market productivity is higher. One way to minimise this discrepancy is to use the average wage for all people (or all people of a particular sex) in the economy instead of the actual or predicted wage of the person who performed the unpaid work (Sousa-Poza et al. 1999; Budlender, 2010).

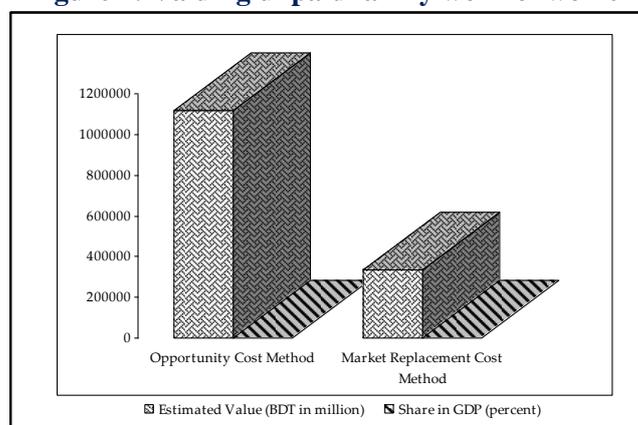
As shown in the earlier section, the respondents (housewives) spent an average of 8.13 hours per day for their household work. On the other hand, the respondents engaged in different types of

paid work spent on average 7.29 hours per day and their monthly average earning was BDT 9167. If we make a calculation we can observe that the respondents earn BDT 41.9 per hour from their paid work. Based upon this calculation, respondents, who are fully engaged in unpaid domestic work might be equivalent to BDT 0.123 million per person per year. In addition, there are 9.1 million unpaid workers in Bangladesh (BBS, 2013). By making a broader calculation, it can be said that the total unpaid work might equivalent to BDT 1115914.8 million (USD 14.45 billion) per year. Moreover, this amount is equivalent to 10.75 percent of the GDP for the fiscal year 2012-13. Considering full time employment, another interesting finding is that the total engagement of the unpaid workers in Bangladesh might be equivalent to 9.3 million full-time employments per year.

Market Replacement Cost Method

Market replacement cost is another model of valuation of domestic labour. Users of this method presuppose that the time a household member spends on unpaid activities can be valued at the earnings level of other people who are engaged in similar activities in the market sector. In this method, it is assumed that household members and their “replacements” are equally productive and responsible. The replacement cost method calculates the value of unpaid work by computing what it would cost to hire someone to do the same work. The quality and productivity of the substitute hired from the market may differ from the quality and productivity of the unpaid worker and thus remains the vital concern about the replacement cost method. On the one hand, the substitute from the market might be more productive as a result of having received special training. Conversely, the market replacement method may fail to capture the value of “personal and emotional care” in unpaid domestic work (for example, the care one provides to one’s own children), thus yielding values of unpaid work that are too low (Folbre and Nelson 2000). Another apprehension about the method is that it may breed a downward bias because the average earnings of domestic workers tend to be lower than the wages of most other occupations. Despite the shortcomings of this approach, however, the replacement cost method using the wages of generalist workers as the standard is generally preferred to other input- based methods because it requires lesser data and its results are more consistent (Varjonen et. al.1999). Based upon the market replacement cost method, the monthly average earnings of the respondents engaged in housework is BDT 2622 for which they have spent an average time of 6.91 hours. In case of monetary value, it is estimated that the total annual engagement of unpaid workers in Bangladesh might be equal to BDT 336918.58 million or USD 4.36 billion. Specifically, the amount is equal to 3.25 percent of the GDP for the fiscal year 2012-13.

Figure 4: Valuing unpaid family work of women



Comparison of Unpaid Family Work of Women Between Different Countries

The value of unpaid work obtained by the opportunity cost method is typically higher than the value obtained by the replacement cost method using generalists’ wages, because the opportunity cost method takes into account all occupations and the replacement cost method considers only domestic workers who, typically earn lower wages (Dong and Xinli, 2012). An estimate of the unpaid work of

women in household in Bangladesh indicates that this amount is equivalent to 10.75 percent of the GDP for the fiscal year 2012-13. Other calculations and studies suggest that the economic value of unpaid work contributes substantially to GDP. For example, depending on the method used, the value assigned to unpaid work varies from 25 to 32 per cent of China's official GDP (Dong and Xinli, 2012). From a comparative perspective, the estimates of the relative size of unpaid work to GDP for China are lower than those for developed countries in the west (for instance, 32 to 62 per cent for the United States, 44 percent for France and 31 to 46 per cent for Canada) but similar to the estimates for Japan (20 to 31 percent) and South Korea (19 to 29 percent) – two developed countries in East Asia.² The valuation of unpaid work for developing countries typically displays large variation as per the alternative methods. For instance, the value of unpaid work is estimated to be between 27 to 63 percent for India and 11 to 30 per cent for South Africa (Budlender 2010). The total yearly value of unpaid family care work equals to 8.29 and 67.06 billion Euros, which corresponds to 4.3 per cent and 4.5 per cent of GDP in Poland and Italy respectively (Francavilla, et al., 2011). With the opportunity cost approach, the values of unpaid work and unpaid family care work are 2655 and 470 billion Euros respectively, summing up to 3125 billion Euros for the whole European domestic activities. This value corresponds to 27.1 percent of GDP of EU for the year 2006 (Eurostat 2006).

The percentage of unpaid work as it relates to the share of GDP in Bangladesh remains low as compared to other countries due to the lower wage structure in different occupations in Bangladesh as compared to the other countries mentioned. The economic value of unpaid housework of women would have been much higher if the wage of women in Bangladesh were not comparatively low and the wage differential between men and women would prevail. In terms of hourly wages, the largest gender gap is in construction, where the average hourly wage for women is approximately 60 per cent that of men; followed by hotels and restaurants (69 per cent); financial intermediation (71 per cent) and manufacturing (76 per cent). The smallest gaps are observed in the service industries such as education, health and social work and other services industries in which women have a fairly high share of employment.

Table 3: Wage differential by sex

Industry	Hourly wage		
	Male	Female	Female as % male
Manufacturing	15.2	11.5	75.7
Electricity, gas and water supply	27.0	-	-
Construction	18.8	11.2	59.6
Wholesale and retail trade	13.2	-	-
Hotels and restaurants	12.3	8.5	69.1
Transport, storage and communications	17.8	-	-
Financial intermediation	40.0	28.3	70.8
Education	15.6	13.2	84.6
Health and social work	17.4	14.0	80.5
Other services	20.1	16.9	84.1

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 2007

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study monetised the unpaid work of women using the survey data. Domestic work of women has historically been identified as undignified and “dirty” work. This work further divides women by race and class by defining domestic workers as “dirty” and defining the women who are benefited from their labor as “clean” (Palmer 1989). Women remain invisible and unpaid though they are contributing to society as well as the state. Household work is perceived as the main work of women and they typically spend a significant amount of time, labor, and devotion to maintain the household. All these efforts are not recognised rather are devaluated to continue the traditional

²The estimates are from Sousa-Poza et al. (1999) for the United States and Canada, Fouquet and Chadeau (1981) for France, and Budlender (2010) for Japan and South Korea.

domination and power structure in the household. Women are putting longer work hours into family and housework and their contribution is not visualised or counted in the GDP. Despite the progress that has been made, women are still facing significant barriers. The institutional barriers along with the hurdles of patriarchal society have slowed the desired levels of progress of women. The possibilities for women are limited by their traditional role imposed by society (Titumir, 2013).

The results of this study suggests that the total contribution of women to the economy in Bangladesh through their unpaid work is roughly USD14.45 billion or 10.75 percent of GDP for FY 2012-2013. Another interesting finding is that the total engagement for unpaid work in Bangladesh might be equivalent to 9.3 million full-employments per year. Measurement of unpaid work of women in terms of monetary value is very complex. It might be impossible to generate a precise, accurate value of unpaid work of women. Thus, the main point of this study is not to arrive at the appropriate figure, rather to give a sense of the magnitude of contributions made by women by presenting a reasonable range of estimates. The extent of which will vary considerably depending on whether we continue undervaluing work performed by women or begin to assign it value based on its essential nature to the functioning of society. It is anticipated that research on the family work of women without pay will raise attention to the vital role played by women and to the continuing need to work towards a higher status for women. Learning to value women is one of the vital steps that must be taken to create more humane, healthy, balanced, and caring societies. Acknowledging the value of the work carried out by women for their families could be an important start.

The household work of women is considered normal or natural which contributes to the notion that it should be unpaid. Their contribution is overlooked just because patriarchy claims that they cannot contribute directly to the national economy. Capitalist patriarchy is unable to understand that homemakers are separate but sectors are equal and they are very closely integrated to the national economy. Without changing this view, it is difficult to ensure equal rights. Moreover, there is no strong or active Domestic Workers Union in Bangladesh while in New York, in the 1960s, a nationwide domestic workers' rights movement lobbied for dignity, professionalisation, and greater legal protections (Boris and Nadasen 2008, Nadasen 2010, Cobble 2004, Beck 2001).

In general, any work that receives little pay is considered unimportant and is labeled as "women's work", despite the fact that such work actually brings tangible economic benefits to the family. If women were ever to go on strike, we would understand more fully the full worth and importance of their work. In fact, families would cease to function if women did not work, which is the precise reason why women cannot go on strike (Efroymson, et.al, 2007). It is important to accomplish qualitative change in the attitudes, values and outlooks of policymakers and the general public regarding household work. Valuing household work is essential to a nation and ultimately benefits all. To address the issue of unpaid work in Bangladesh, some major changes are required. To address the issue of unpaid work in Bangladesh, urgent recognition of the embedded institutional rigidities that reproduces the system, formulate comprehensive social policy and institute holistic social security systems is needed. Unless and until such realities are recognised and addressed with appropriate policies, institutional structures and monetary instruments, it will be for a barrier to achieving real equality in the society.

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