

Home Makers: Unpaid Domestic Workers

Munmun Roy

*PhD, Department of Geography, University of Calcutta
Kolkata, India*

Date of Submission: 01-03-2023

Date of Acceptance: 10-03-2023

ABSTRACT: This article is about the unpaid home maker. House wives wakes up before the sun does and sleeps after the moon is on its brink. They cook, clean and repair without asking anything in return. She waits at the table for everyone to eat and serves herself with the last, overcooked roti. They take care of everyone in the family, in sick and in health, but never rest a day. Be it the master of the house, the kid or the oldies, no one can survive if they quit her job. This is the story of every homemaker who devotes her life selflessly for the welfare of others. But unfortunately, their effort is neither recognised nor paid for. Rather they are taken for granted as if being confined in home and kitchen is the essential duty of a woman and duty receives no pay. Why housework is considered the essence of womanhood?

KEYWORDS: Home maker, unpaid, house wives.

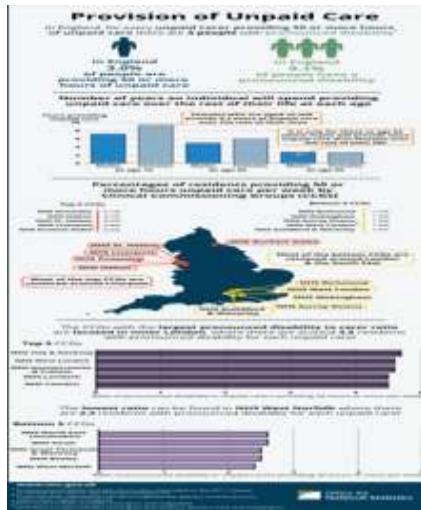
I. INTRODUCTION:

Unpaid labour or unpaid work is defined as labour or work that does not receive any direct remuneration. This is a form of non-market work which can fall into one of two categories: (1) unpaid work that is placed within the production boundary of the System of National Accounts (SNA), such as gross domestic product (GDP); and (2) unpaid work that falls outside of the production boundary (non-SNA work), such as domestic labour that occurs inside households for their consumption. Unpaid labour is visible in many forms and isn't limited to activities within a household. Other types of unpaid labour activities include volunteering as a form of charity work and interning as a form of unpaid employment. In a lot of countries, unpaid domestic work in the household is typically performed by women, due to gender inequality and gender norms, which can result in high-stress levels in women attempting to balance unpaid work and paid employment. In poorer countries, this work is sometimes performed by children. Women spend 352 minutes a day in domestic work while men invest only 51.8 minutes. Yet another report of the year 2020 stated that women spend around 84 per cent of their working hours in unpaid domestic

work while men spend 80 per cent of the same on paid work. per cent of India's GDP. 49 per cent of the women contribute to the country's GDP through housework but are never counted.

Firstly, Homemakers support the economy by caring for those who work in it. It is an undeniable fact that without a homemaker's support, a man who is part of the workforce cannot perform well. From waking up and sleeping on time to preparing nutritious food for them, everything is taken care of by a homemaker.

Secondly valuing the unpaid labour of women, such as housework, can increase their participation in the workforce. It is true that most of the homemakers are women. And it is also true that women's labour force participation is very low. Most of the women spend their time and energy performing unpaid domestic work. But if start paying and valuing the domestic work and they start filing the income taxes, women's participation in the workforce will increase which will ultimately lead to an increase in the GDP of the country by 30 per cent. The production boundary is the name given by economists to the imaginary line between unpaid work, which is not counted directly in the gross domestic product, and paid work that the GDP does count. Production boundary includes goods or services that are supplied to units other producers, including the production of goods or services used up in the process of producing such goods or services; and the "own-account production of housing services by owner-occupiers and of domestic and personal services produced by employing paid domestic staff", according to the 2001 OECD Economist Diane Coyle described how the digital revolution and the COVID-19 pandemic has increased debates on establishing the production boundary, which involves measuring 'true' productivity. Millions of volunteer hours of unpaid work contribute to free services that others consume via social media and Wikipedia in a new parallel economy. This unpaid work contributes a real monetary value to the digital platforms' owners that is included in the GDP, while all the unpaid work is on the wrong side of the production boundary and is therefore not counted.



Info graphic of statistics on unpaid care in England

Unpaid care work" typically specifically contains everyday activities, such as self construction, self repairing, home tech shopping, barbecuing, vacations planning, child amusing, cooking, washing, cleaning, shopping for own household, as well as care of children, the elderly, the sick, and the disabled. The term "unpaid care work" is primarily defined as care work for family members, but it is important to note that other types of unpaid SNA work exist that address 'productive activities', which include types of labour such as "growing food for own consumption, and collecting water and fuel", Reproductive labours not completely biological, reproductive labour (partially) is. Debra Satz believes that reproductive labour is "a special kind of labour that should not be treated according to market norms"; it includes childbearing and raising/taking care of children and other family members. Childbearing is an act that only those who possess female reproductive organs can perform, making it irreversibly a biological-female's job. Married women, single mothers, or other female family members (such as elder siblings, aunts, etc.) are expected to be the primary actors of this unpaid reproductive labour in their personal lives, on top of the economic necessity of entering the productive, paid labour force. Child-rearing falls under both reproductive and care labour, so, after breastfeeding, any member of the household can take on the job.

The role of women and men within their households is deeply rooted in gender norms and cultural values that have been reinforced over time by colonization and imperialism. For example, as seen in Patricia Grimshaw's research in Hawaii: New England missionaries assumed the roles of

imperialists and colonialists by preaching their Christian values to the native Hawaiian population, who, before the missionary women arrived, practiced polygamy (high class-status allowing) and did not trouble themselves with domestic tasks like ironing. The Christian women, in particular, saw it as their responsibility to teach the native women notions of femininity that consisted of remaining inside the home to care for the family and to remain submissive to their husbands. Historically, a woman's position in the home was seen as a prerequisite to being a "good" wife and mother. Since the 1960s, however, the spread of globalization has given rise to new opportunities for women to participate in market work that has challenged the assumption their primary adult role as that of caretaker for the family and home. The spread of globalization has created more opportunities for women to enter paid employment, but has not relieved them of their time spent on unpaid labour. While participating in the labour market, women who secure paid employment undertake what is known as the "double burden" of labour. Finding the optimal balance of paid and unpaid labour, or work-life balance, is a constant struggle for women trying to create careers for themselves while raising children or caring for elderly family members. Women have to constantly decide where to allocate time and financial resources, which impacts their ability to develop their own capabilities. In turn, this decision impacts their family's relative standard of living as measured by national income accounting statistics .Because of social norms and expectations, the burden of unpaid work primarily falls on the female members of the household. Even if the male members of the household are available to perform the care labour after they return home from their paid job, it is more often seen that the women are taking on the bulk of the care labour after they return home.

The traditional view of a family involves a woman in unpaid domestic labour supporting the household; however, under trends of dual earner couples and a gradually aging population, the commercialization of housework and domestic care has become inevitable. Arguments have been made that the value of unpaid domestic labour must always be considered to prevent the exploitation of unpaid workers, and thus should be seen as legitimate employment. There are also arguments that a "caregiver allowance" should be provided to unpaid domestic workers to protect the labour value of their work. Regardless of the methodology used, a variety of studies have shown that the division of household labour results in a

disproportionate burden falling on the wives in married couples' households. While this is the case, it has also been shown that the disparity between men and women in married households has been shrinking to some degree. For example, during the Great Recession of the 2000s, low income men increased their contributions to their households by completing more hours of unpaid domestic work.

The "feminine quality" of unpaid care work:

Globally, the expectation of women being the main providers of 'unpaid care' labour has been socially constructed and enforced by gender norms. Even when women are employed full-time outside the house, they may perform a greater share of household chores and childcare activities. As a result of globalization, women have increasingly been expected to take on jobs in both the paid and unpaid sectors, contributing to family income while still being the main providers of unpaid labour. This inequality emphasizes the gender division of labour and how it has changed with globalization's shifts in employment patterns. Furthermore, it illuminates how socially constructed gender norms have created a system that encourages women to continue to carry the 'double burden' of care services. The 'double burden' structure has contributed tremendously to the economic vulnerability of women, as women in financial crises are more likely to be poor, unemployed, ill in health, and uneducated. Women often suffer more during financial crises because they tend to be more generally disadvantaged than men.

Double burden:

A double burden, otherwise known as a double day, is the phenomenon that a woman holds a paying job in the labour market and then must come home and work a full day's worth of unpaid domestic work within the home. Due to societal norms and expectations, the burden of unpaid work primarily falls on the female in the household even if she and her husband work the same hours in the labour market.

Effect on women:

Balancing paid and unpaid work obligations is taxing on women. Reports of increased stress levels are not uncommon. In fact, women report higher levels of symptoms related to depression and anxiety, including low life satisfaction and subjective well-being. As women increase their paid work time, they do not achieve a corresponding reduction in their unpaid work hours. Nor have men increased their share of

unpaid work at the same rate that women have increased their share of paid work. The Human Development Report of 2015 reports that, in 63 countries, 31 percent of women's time is spent doing unpaid work, as compared to men who dedicate only 10 percent of their time to unpaid work. The double-burden is intensified when women are subjected to poverty and live in communities that lack basic infrastructure. In areas that lack easy access to food and water, household duties are even more time consuming.

The most commonly used method for measuring unpaid domestic labour is through the collection of time-use surveys. These surveys attempt to evaluate how much time is spent providing different services, such as time spent in the workforce versus time spent on unpaid domestic work, such as cooking. Sarah Gammage conducted time use surveys in Guatemala to measure time spent doing unpaid domestic work within households and between family members. In this study, Gammage found women completed approximately 70% of all unpaid domestic work within a household. Similarly, Debbie Budlenger conducted time use surveys across six countries and found women in each country conducted the majority of the unpaid domestic work each day. The results of her findings are summarized in the chart below:

Minutes Per Day Spent Doing Unpaid Household Work	Per Day Spent	
	Men	women
Argentina	101	293
India	36	354
Republic of Korea	38	224
Nicaragua	66	318
South Africa	91	273
Tanzania	44	262

In a different time use survey, Liangshu Qi and Xiao-yuan Dong found that, in China men complete an average of 58 minutes of unpaid work a day compared to the 139 minutes of unpaid work a day that women complete.

Time-series data collected by the United Nations Statistics Division from 2000 to 2015 directly support the claim that women undertake more than half of household domestic labour all over the world. The largest discrepancy between female and male time-use is in developing countries. The data was collected through a 24-hour

diary and then averaged over seven days across 80 countries. In the top ten are three Scandinavian countries (in order from lowest discrepancy in time-use to highest): Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands and Finland. Out of all the countries included in the data set, Sweden had the smallest discrepancy between female and male time use with a difference of 3.33 hours out of a full day/ In comparison, Algeria, Tunisia, Mexico, Iraq and Guatemala each had female-to-male time-use discrepancies that exceeded 18+ hours of work per day. For both Mexico and Guatemala, the proportion of domestic work that women do exceeded the number of hours in a day by about three hours. Women possibly had some days when they performed more housework than usual, which may have skewed the average. Mathematically, the average of spending four hours per day seven days a week on domestic household labour equates to 672 hours per week or 28 hours per week as an approximation.

Examining only male participation in domestic household labour, the latest data available for Malawi shows that the amount of housework that men do per day is approximately 1.25 hours, and that is the same length of time that Cambodian men spent on household labour in 2004. Other nations with poor male participation in the division of household labour include Pakistan (males:1.81; 18.06 hours discrepancy), Mali (males: 2.50; 17.92 hours discrepancy), Japan (males: 2.92; 12.01 hours discrepancy) and Palestine (males: 3.06; 16.11 hours discrepancy). On the other hand, the minimum number of hours that women spend on average occupied by domestic tasks 8.68 hours per week in Malawi. In the United States, the latest available data from 2014 shows that women undertake 14.58 hours per week on household labour. The trend in the division of household domestic labour in countries that have more than one year's worth of data show that, for 14 out of the 35 countries and between a range of 0.99 to 12.99 hours, women's proportion of unpaid labour on average diminished.

Gender and unpaid work: the gender division:

Socially constructed gender roles are prescribed as ideal or proper behaviours for specific categories of male and female. Societies have socially constructed women's roles because women are primarily financially dependent on men as is defined through a 'sexual contract', thus deeming them a "private responsibility of individual men". This construction has resulted in women being domesticated because their primary access to economic support was through marriage

to a man. This gender division has made women's needs and rights invisible, which allows men to "continue to dominate women and define them as dependent" and conceals the needed dependency between men and women. This ignored 'dual dependency' highlights the fact that men are dependent on women's "domestic and reproductive labour" just as women are dependent on the income of men.

In many societies the socially constructed role of women includes "giving birth, caring for children, the elderly, and disabled, preparing food and clothing and collecting water, and firework, among others". Furthermore, women's gender roles are socially constructed within the economy as well, because their economic contributions can be easily replaced for men through remarriage or by paying for care services; care work can be bought and sold, but the vast majority of care work is unpaid and is not formally accounted for. The socially constructed gender roles of men being the breadwinners who women depend on and women as members of the domestic sphere have thus been reinforced through economic motives that pose gender relations between men and women as an exchange of support for service. This configuration is based on 'patriarchal control', which is proclaimed to be linked to the "socialization processes where women are raised to be relational" care takers and family structure supports, while men are more 'individualistic' since their role is only tied to providing money. In other words, men provide the money and women are to provide 'unpaid labour'. Consequently, in the field of "unpaid care work" men typically take on far less responsibility than women due to the socially constructed 'gender division of labour' which assigns the obligation of 'caring labour' to women.

Effects:

The disproportionate division of household unpaid labour that falls on women negatively impacts their ability to navigate life outside their homes. Their undertaking of unpaid labour is a barrier to entry into the paid employment sector or in the case of those women who enter paid labour they still are left with a "double-burden" of labour.

The UNDP Women and Development Report of 1995 conducted a time-use study that analyzed the amount of time women and men spend on paid and unpaid household and community work in thirty-one countries across the world, including countries classified as 'industrial, 'developing' and 'transition economies. It is found that in almost every country studied women

worked longer hours than men but received fewer economic rewards. The study found that in both the 'developing' and 'industrialized world', men received the "lion's share of income and recognition" for their economic inputs, while women's work remained "unpaid, unrecognized, and undervalued." moreover, in the case of paid and unpaid work hours, the study concluded that within 'industrial countries' women spent "two-thirds" of their total work burden on unpaid activities and "one-third on paid activities" (shares were reversed for men), while in 'developing' countries women spent "two-thirds" of their total work on unpaid labour but "less than one-quarter of the men's" total work was spent on unpaid labour. Additionally, scholar Ruth Pearson argues that women in developing countries tend to shoulder a majority of the unpaid work due to the fact that men refuse to undertake "women's work" because "women as a gender have obligations of others that men as a gender do not bear." The uneven distribution of unpaid care labour amongst the sexes is thus demonstrated globally, although particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria and Ecuador, where women redistribute increased unpaid care labour to females from extended family instead of procuring male participation.

Effects of unpaid domestic work on women:

Time use surveys show that women spend far more time doing unpaid work than men. With women spending more time providing unpaid domestic work than men, women are also spending less time in the workforce and, therefore, bringing in lower incomes to the household. Because women are traditionally believed to bring in less income than men, women are discouraged from investing in education and skills cerates gender inequality. This form of gender inequality feeds into the dynamic of 'gender risks', which explains why it is women and girls that are most disadvantaged, as well as why it is more likely for increased poverty to affect women more than men. Even if women do enter the workforce, they are usually still held accountable for the majority of the domestic unpaid work at home. This phenomenon of having to work a full day in the workforce and then come home and complete a full day of unpaid domestic work is known as the double burden. The double burden negatively affects women because it gives them less time to spend in the workforce, resulting in men dedicating more time to the workforce, and, therefore, likely getting promoted over women. The double burden also negatively affects women's personal wellbeing because it means women have less time for taking care of themselves and

sleeping. This can also negatively affect their job performance in the workforce, encouraging male promotion over female.



Older child caring for younger child as a form of unpaid care work

Effects of unpaid domestic work on children:

Statistics show that many children, particularly in poorer countries and households, are forced to contribute to the unpaid domestic work of a household. Because unpaid domestic work is traditionally the role of women in many societies, the burden of unpaid domestic work falls particularly on young girls who are forced to drop out of school to assist with the unpaid work within their households.

Effects of unpaid domestic work on the economy:

Some economists argue that unpaid domestic work should be included as economic contributions. The economic value of women's unpaid labour is not included in gross domestic product (GDP) or national income accounting indicators. For this reason, the invisibility of women's work makes analyzing the relationship between households and labour markets difficult. In addition, measures of economic output are largely inaccurate. If unpaid work were incorporated when measuring GDP, it would have raised the GDP by 26 percent in 2010. Unpaid work contributes to the economy by producing important goods and services such as meals and cleanliness of the home. This allows other household members, as well as the women who deal with the double burden (considering the fact that they need care labour to survive, too), to enter the workforce and contribute to the overall economy via paying jobs. For this reason, Indira Hirway argues that unpaid domestic work should be considered economic production rather than consumption. Hirway also notes that unpaid domestic work has the attributes of a standard economic good because it is neither free nor unlimited. Unpaid work also affects the labour supply of the economy because fewer women are

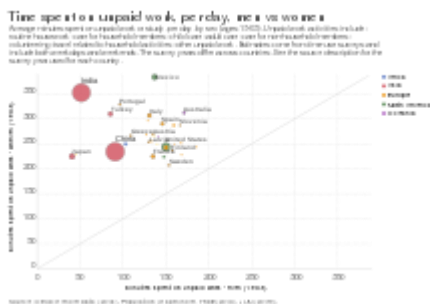
entering into the workforce due to their domestic unpaid work duties.

Effects of unpaid domestic work on the state:

Unpaid domestic work has a positive effect on a state's budget. Unpaid domestic work is typically the type of work that a state would provide for its citizens if family members were not already providing for their family. This includes things like child care, elder care, medical care, and nutrition. Because these things are being provided by an unpaid domestic worker, the state does not need to expend resources to provide its citizens with these services. Therefore, unpaid domestic work can decrease the amount of money a state must spend to otherwise provide these services. Note, however, that when a state cuts care services for the young, elderly, sick and disabled, the burden of this care is generally placed on female family members, meaning decreases in a state's spending on care can have a negative effect on female participation in the workforce. As noted by Aslanbeigui and Summerfield, when cuts to social expenditures are experienced women and children suffer the most, particularly during financial crises. They argue that cuts to healthcare, education and income disadvantage women in the long-term and push them further into poverty and therefore more reliant on the state.

Relationship to the economy and the paid labour market:

Unpaid care labour is necessary to maintain order in our global market economy. According to Henderson's Cake Model, reproductive labour and care labour are "key to the functioning of all economies."



Time spent on unpaid work, per day, men vs. women, OWID

Care labour maintains the well-being, and thereby fosters the productivity, of those who are performing paid work. Productivity—along with its ability to be used for personal gain by individuals within the system—is used to produce capital.

There are two types of capital: financial capital, which maintains the world's capitalist practices by placing monetary value on everything that can be deemed "valuable," and human capital, which is "the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual or population, viewed in terms of their value or cost to an organization or country;" economists consider "expenditures on education, training, medical care, and so on as investments in human capital" because they foster health and well-being in those who work towards producing financial capital. Human capital, however, is typically valued less than financial capital because the labour done to contribute to human capital is heavily feminized. Since it has become increasingly necessary for more than one individual in a household to join the paid labour force, care labour (especially cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing in the forms of chefs, maids/cleaning staffs, and day-care workers) has become marketized "Workers in [care] sectors are often among the most exploited, receiving low pay and working under precarious conditions."

There are three ways to measure the value of unpaid domestic work: the opportunity cost method, the replacement cost method, and the input/out cost method.

Opportunity cost method:

The opportunity cost method measures the value of unpaid domestic work by calculating the amount of money unpaid domestic workers could be making if instead of doing unpaid work they were working in the labour market. For example, if a former female attorney is now a stay-at-home mother conducting unpaid domestic work, the value of an hour of unpaid domestic work is the hourly rate she could make if she were working as an attorney. The major flaw with this method is that two unpaid domestic workers can do the same job at the same proficiency level, but the value of the work will fluctuate based on the workers' prior education and skill level. It is also a problem for women who never held a job, because it is unclear how much money they would be making if they were participating in the work force, rather than working unpaid at home.

Market replacement cost method:

The replacement cost method measures the value of unpaid domestic work by calculating the monetary cost of purchasing that service instead. For example, to value unpaid child care, look at the cost of hiring a nanny, or to value the cost of cooking a meal, look at the cost of eating a similar meal at a restaurant. The flaw with this

method is that it cannot account for the added sentimental value of having a mother stay at home with her children rather than a stranger.

Input/output cost method:

The input/output cost method measures the value of unpaid domestic work by calculating the monetary value of the economic goods and services produced by unpaid domestic work and how much these goods and services would sell for in the open market.

Policy solutions:

Dynamic policy solutions that emphasize the value of unpaid labour contributions at the macro level and redistribute unpaid labour within households are essential for gender equality. The following section outlines potential policy solutions that have been put forth by other academics.

Requiring data collection at the national and state level:

The quality and availability of data at the micro and macro levels is an area in need of improvement for the purpose of studying how policies impact the division of labour within households and for calculating the value unpaid labour. Organizations, such as the United Nations Statistics Division, capture quantitative data on the number of hours women and men spend on paid, unpaid and total work hours. Collecting more qualitative data would be additionally useful for determining how to calculate the value unpaid labour, particularly for the market replacement cost method.

Investment into public infrastructure:

Policies aimed at channelling public funds towards investment projects that create more efficient accessibility to resources are essential for lessening the burden of unpaid labour, particularly in developing countries. As noted by Koolwal and van de Walle (2013), women in rural and developing countries spend a considerable amount of time collecting water. In their study which look at countries in the Middle East, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia they found that when access to water increased as a result of infrastructure investment women didn't enter into more paid employment, but their overall time spent on unpaid labour did diminish.

Subsidized child, elder and care services:

The state's role in providing quality affordable care services should not be overlooked. Since free childcare would be ineffective at

generating income for workers, the services need to be subsidized to ensure that workers are compensated for their labour and that families can afford to use their services. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 also advocates for the provision of public service, infrastructure, and social protection policies in recognition of unpaid work.

Subsidized energy (non-reliant on fossil fuels):

To reduce the amount of time spent collecting fuel for household energy demands, central governments and states should sponsor renewable energy sources for the purpose of reducing the amount of time women spend of fetching fuel wood. In addition, an alternative is investing in biogas production which is a better alternative to standard forms of household fuel given that it is pollution-free leading to a reduction in indoor air pollution that will benefit all members of a household.

Family-friendly workplace policies:

Shortened work weeks, flexible paid leave, flexitime, and remote work are possible solutions that would facilitate the redistribution of unpaid labour within households. In Nancy Fraser's article, "After the Family Wage: Gender Equity and the Welfare State" from 1994, she suggests that in two partner households a reduced work week is the most efficient vehicle for assuring gender equality. At the same time, it's essential that policy makers are aware of household dynamics that aren't limited to dual income earning households to ensure that single parents aren't left more vulnerable economically.

Varsha Rani, who has done her MA in economics and teaches economics for more than 28 years, told SheThePeople, "women's labour, be it paid domestic labour or unpaid, is never counted under India's economy and GDP. Every effort of the woman is taken for granted, be it washing the clothes or stitching them. Are these not labours? Do they not require energy and effort? Then why is it not considered as paid jobs of the economy? She further says, "We can never get the accurate amount of the GDP and national income because essential work like housework is never taken into consideration. Our economy is divided into three sectors- primary, secondary and tertiary. All the sectors' income is counted under GDP but women's domestic work has not been recognised in any of the sectors."

Moreover, in an interview with SheThePeople, UK based financial journalist Katerine Marcel says that digitalisation will give us

an opportunity to reassess the economy and account for the unpaid care work done by women. “What if the machine age will mean that a lot of men become unemployed and parts of the economy where there will be demand for human labour are things that are traditionally associated with women or termed as female skills is a development which could happen through technological forces.” Marcel points out that unpaid care work has always been rendered feminine and hence less valuable and important. But it will gain importance through digitalisation and humans, and not women alone, will be specialising in care work.

So it is high time that we start realising the effort that women put into domestic work. Without domestic work, the country cannot run. And we need to keep this in mind before sidelining women’s efforts as the duty of their gender. One day if homemakers stop doing the housework, even Prime Minister won’t be able to reach his office on time. So you can imagine how the entire country will function.



It's Time We Start Valuing Women's Household Work by Paying Homemakers

Shashi Tharoor tweeted on January 5, 2021, “I welcome @ikamalhasan’s idea of recognising housework as a salaried profession, w/the state govt paying a monthly wage to homemakers. This will recognise & monetise the services of women homemakers in society, enhance their power & autonomy & create near-universal basic income.” Last December, Kamal Haasan promised a salary to homemakers, as part of his poll promises in his seven-point governance and economic agenda, if his party, Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM), is voted to power in the 2021 Tamil Nadu assembly elections.

Tharoor responded, “I agree w/@Kangana Team that there are so many things in a homemaker’s life that are beyond price. But this is not about those things: it’s about recognising the value of unpaid work & also ensuring a basic income to every woman. I’d like

all Indian women to be as empowered as you!” Don’t put a price tag on sex we have with our love, don’t pay us for mothering our own, we don’t need salary for being the Queens of our own little kingdom our home, stop seeing everything as business. Surrender to your woman she needs all of you not just your love/respect/salary.

MNM noted in their agenda, “The MNM government will take steps to realise Bharatiyaar’s dream of ‘Pudhumai penn’ through education, employment and entrepreneurship for women. Women will break through established glass ceilings by the equal opportunities provided to them by our MNM government. Homemakers will get their due recognition through payment for their work at home which hitherto has been unrecognised and unmonitored, thus raising the dignity of our womenfolk.” A few weeks ago, a member of MNM sought the opinion of economists on this issue. This led to a flurry of articles in various dailies. Thus, the matter gained prominence, and not wanting to miss the bus, all the major parties in the fray for the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections in April 2021 are now stealing the thunder of Kamal Haasan by making payment of salaries to home makers’ part of their election manifestos.

DMK chief M.K. Stalin announced on March 7 that if his party is voted to power, they would give Rs 1,000 per month to every homemaker in the state. Kamal Haasan was quick to accuse the DMK of copying many of its promises in its election manifesto, including providing a monthly salary to homemakers. Following DMK’s announcement, the very next day, on March 8, the chief minister of Tamil Nadu, E.K. Palaniswami, announced a monthly allowance of Rs 1,500 to homemakers as part of the AIADMK’s manifesto, saying that the DMK had got wind of it and announced it hurriedly a day earlier. Of course, Kamal Haasan’s party has not indicated how much they would pay the homemakers. Moreover, it is not clear at this stage how these parties are proposing to source the funds needed for this and other freebies they are promising in their manifestos.

Thus, the battle lines seem clearly drawn on this issue. According to a recent government economic survey, 60% of women in the “productive age group” of 15 to 59 were engaged in full-time housework. Note that nearly 84% of women’s working hours are spent on activities they do not get paid for, while the reverse is true for men – 80% of their work time is spent on paid work. These gender disparities begin early. The

average boy spends more time on leisure and learning than his sisters, while the average girl spends more time on household work than her brothers. Boys participate less in regular household chores, such as cooking, cleaning and washing.

A typical woman's day starts at about 5 am and ends after 9 pm. Thus, women have little time for themselves. It is estimated that the value of women's unpaid household work amounts to nearly 40% of India's current GDP (globally, it is 13% of the economy). Although the Indian constitution grants men and women equal rights, a strong patriarchal system shapes the lives of women with traditions going back many millennia. Manusmriti, compiled around 200 BC, lays down how a woman's life is to be regulated: "In childhood, a female is subject to her father, in her youth to her husband, and when her 'lord' is dead then to her sons." Parents see daughters as liabilities and make them feel inferior to their brothers.

This strong patriarchal tradition makes it difficult to remove the gender disparities. These disparities include sex-selective abortions, dowry deaths, low educational levels and high illiteracy in women, in addition to gender disparities in employment opportunities and wages. Unless these disparities are addressed by respecting the rights of girls and women India cannot become a developed nation. It is rather ironic that the Census of India classifies as "non-workers" all household workers — all those attending to household chores like cooking, cleaning of utensils, looking after children, fetching water and collecting firewood. Hence, over 400 million women in India, nearly 65% of all females, constitute nearly 75% of those listed as non-workers in India. This categorisation has negative consequences in policies and programmes aimed at women.

Recently, the Supreme Court of India, in a motor accident claim case, observed, "The sheer amount of time and effort that is dedicated to household work by individuals, who are more likely to be women than men, is not surprising when one considers the plethora of activities a house maker undertakes ... A house maker often prepares food for the entire family, manages the procurement of groceries and other household shopping needs, cleans and manages the house and its surroundings, undertakes decoration, repairs and maintenance work, looks after the needs of the children and any aged member of the household, manages budgets and so much more."

"... In rural households, they often also assist in the sowing, harvesting and transplanting activities in the field, apart from tending cattle... However, despite all the above, the conception that house makers do not 'work' or that they do not add economic value to the household is a problematic idea that has persisted for many years and must be overcome. ... Fixing a notional income for a homemaker ... is a step towards the constitutional vision of social equality and ensuring dignity of life to all individuals."

Campaigns in support of wages for 'housework':

In 1972, Selma James started the International Wages for Housework Campaign (IWFHC) in Manchester as a grassroots women's network campaigning for recognition and payment for all caring work, in the home and outside. They wanted to change the situation of dependency of women, reverse the relations of power, and redistribute the wealth that they produced. Because the demand was for a wage 'for housework,' for any individual who performed it, and not a wage 'for housewives,' it was in a position to destabilise the socio-sexual division of labour. The "Statement of the International Feminist Collective" issued in 1972 in Italy, rejected a separation between unwaged work in the home and waged work in the factory, pronouncing housework as a critical terrain in the class struggle against capitalism.

Throughout the 80s and 90s, the IWFHC lobbied the United Nations Conferences on Women on unpaid work, and got the UN to pass resolutions that recognised the unwaged caring work that women do in the home, on the land and in the community. On March 8, 2000, women from over 60 countries around the world participated in the Global Women's Strike (GWS). This strike was called for by the Wages for Housework Campaign, demanding among other things, "Payment for all caring work – in wages, pensions, land and other resources."

In a 2018 interview to the Boston Review, Silvia Federici noted, "The politics of wages for housework was shaped by women who had an understanding of capitalism, imperialism and the anti-colonial struggle. Thus we could not accept that women's liberation could be a struggle for 'equality with men' or that it could be limited to equal pay for equal work. We saw that in the same way as the radicalisation of Black men and women had served to justify slavery, so had gender-based discrimination served to exploit women as unpaid workers in the

home.” Thus, it is time we started valuing women’s household work. Paying salaries to women for housework can give women respect, recognition, dignity and empowerment. The question then is who will pay for it? Can the government take on this additional burden? It is time we started working out the logistics to implement this idea whose time has come. In fact, in 2012, the UPA government was seriously considering a proposal to make it mandatory for men to share a certain percentage of their income with their wives for doing household chores. The feminist slogan of the 1970s – “The personal is political” – is coming to roost. Majority of women is classified as ‘unproductive’ labour. The very term ‘housewife’ connotes a woman who doesn’t work outside (capitalist marketplace), rendering her 24/7 domestic work invisible. Also paradoxically, any working woman in a heterosexual family is unconsciously compelled to perform the ‘second shift’ of housework inadvertently making them all a housewife.

Domestic Work is a Masked Form of Productive Labour:

Housework is a complex, undefined and unrecognised category of work which is not just limited to house chores. It is a reproduction of social labour. The Wages for Housework as part of International Feminist Collective (IFC) in 1977 described housework as “servicing the wage earner physically, emotionally, sexually getting ready to work day after day for the wages... This means that behind every factory, behind every school, every office or mine is the hidden work of millions of women who have consumed their life, their labour power, in producing labour power that works in that factory, school, office or mine”. Recent demand for the wages against domestic work as the election manifesto by actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan’s political party, Makkal Needhi Maiam in Tamil Nadu has rekindled an old debate and a long overdue especially in the times of pandemic, when many women are struggling to meet the growing demands of the family in the absence of domestic help and increased care work with respect to children and elders. The idea of monetising domestic work does seem to qualify the household chores as productive labour. It stands to demystify the belief that housework is not real work. Unfortunately, Kangana reinforces the mystification of the household work as divine and sacred duty for women and by using a collective pronoun, she universalises domestic work as not only natural and desirable but what

Federici would call it “an aspiration, supposedly coming from the depth of our female character.”

However, in a society where women are made to work out of love and religious duty towards the family, demanding wages for the work is not only unfathomable but also deeply disrespectful to many who take pride in being the queen of the kitchen. Case in point would be actress Kangana Ranaut’s recent tweet opposing the demand for wages in a warped patriarchal logic. “Don’t put a price tag on sex we have with our love, don’t pay us for mothering our own, we don’t need salary for being the Queens of our own little kingdom our home, stop seeing everything as business. Surrender to your woman she needs all of you not just your love/respect/salary,”; she further adds “it’s like you want to pay God for this creation.” Unfortunately, Kangana reinforces the mystification of the household work as divine and sacred duty for women and by using a collective pronoun, she universalises domestic work as not only natural and desirable but what Federici would call it “an aspiration, supposedly coming from the depth of our female character.” Kangana’s flawed rhetoric of “don’t put a price tag” is the real question here—the apparent gracelessness of women is ludicrous when most women in Indian families have no control or say in the family finances. As Kangana’s self deification works in divesting female agency in maintaining the skewed gender status quo, the long sustained demand of the campaign for the wages as part of the International Feminist Collective runs the risk of turning into political Twitter one gunmanship.

‘I am not trash anymore!’

Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One’s Own* painstakingly shows the plight of Shakespeare’s fictitious sister called Judith Shakespeare. Judith, presumably as talented as Shakespeare, ends in utter misery. Spurned by the society due to her unwanted pregnancy and suffocated with the mundane menial domestic duties, she ends her life. The tragic plight of an imagined character who was potentially as creative as Shakespeare but unable to follow her passion of writing, argues for financial freedom as a prerequisite for intellectual freedom. A woman who is obliged to take care of the entire house fails to call a room her own. As Woolf asserts “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.” The ‘room’ denotes physical and psychological space and freedom to pursue interest and passion outside the daily drudgery of domestic work. Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second*

Sex examine gender as a social, economic and cultural construct framing housework as a necessary condition to conform to the patriarchal norms of femininity.

According to the latest data, India has the second lowest female labour participation rate in South Asia. Despite a significant rise in the education attainment among women, the LFPR (Labour Force Participation Rate) in females has steadily declined especially in the case of married women, who instead of joining the labour force equipped with the necessary qualifications, still choose to remain at home subsumed under marital household obligations and incessant child care work. Feminist economist like Marilyn Waring rightly addresses these lacunae by calling out the sexist policies and methodology of calculating the national income (drafted by men) which excludes the non-market activities (child care and house work) that are disproportionately undertaken by women in her groundbreaking book *If Women Counted*. According to Oxfam and Institute for Women's policy research, the unpaid care work is estimated to be around \$11 trillion an year. This most certainly calls for the re-evaluation of productive vs. unproductive labour in assessing the national income of the country. According to the Oxfam India report 'It is not your job', unpaid care work by women accounts for 35% of India's GDP. Engendering macroeconomic theories and tools of measurement is essential in calculating the national income for social justice. According to the Oxfam India report 'It is not your job', unpaid care work by women accounts for 35% of India's GDP. Engendering macroeconomic theories and tools of measurement is essential in calculating the national income for social justice.

Why Wages for Housework may not be the Way Forward?

Electorally appealing, wages for housework may not be an essential road map towards equality. While wages for housework emerged as a strong campaign through International Feminist Collective of the 70's and was instrumental in crediting the productive value of the housework, it could not ride the current of the time. Not surprisingly, the idea of wages was not subscribed by the women's liberation movement. The second wave of feminism instead focused on women's participation in the labour market, better working conditions and the creation of community social services like day care centres to enable women to move out of their houses. There was a growing concern that the demand for the housework wages could be counterproductive

as it may force women to go back to their houses and resume their traditional roles of being homemakers. It can potentially disrupt the notion of household work as a shared responsibility. There has been a steady cut in the government public spending on health and care facilities increasing the burden on women as primary caregivers. The wages for housework can also transfer the state's responsibility of community services to the ill waged wives which can in effect be detrimental to the women's emancipation. And how it may impact the marital relationship in an Indian family system where women are expected to fulfil the needs of the family as part of her religious duties (as a wife) remains to be seen, it can be easily vilified as commoditisation of love.

Another problem is how to account and what value to put on the domestic work? Being an unskilled category, housework would always be devalued as it does not ostensibly create surplus wealth in the capitalist economy. Furthermore, what would be the terms of the salary and how would a working woman be placed in wage entitlement? Amidst these confounding questions, the idea of Universal Basic Income and direct transfer to women of low income groups is more feasible. Also, most important is to re-assess the paid domestic work which is largely an informal sector, most exploited and underpaid. This alone can restore the dignity of housework as a valued and indispensable form of labour for the market economy.

What is a homemaker worth?

The Supreme Court has recently objected to the census listing homemakers as 'non-workers' on par with beggars, prostitutes and prisoners, and called for laws to quantify their contribution to the economy. "This approach betrays a totally insensitive and callous attitude towards the dignity of labour and also strongly suggests a gender bias against women," said a two-judge bench on July 22. The judges added as a suggestive that this be corrected in the ongoing census. In its discussion of "Economic Activity", the 2001 Census states that "an adult woman engaged in household duties but not doing any productive work to augment the family resources was considered a non-worker. Persons like beggars, pensioners, etc., who received income without doing any work were regarded as non-workers." However, it goes on to say, "A public or social service worker who was actively engaged in public service activity or a political worker who was actively engaged in furthering the political activity of his part was regarded as a 'worker'!" (Exclamation added).

The company to pay 6 per cent interest on the amount owed. The husband will get another Rs.50, 000 as legal costs. By tradition and by law, the housewife - or, in its new nomenclature, the 'homemaker' - is not taken to be an economically productive person. The reward that she - and it is almost always a she - gets for the real and concrete services she renders is solely in emotional terms, including the satisfaction her services bring to the other members of the family. In other words, though her services are direct, the rewards are vicarious. Lenin defined housework as, "The most unproductive, the most barbarous and the most arduous work a woman can do. It is exceptionally petty and does not include anything that would in any way promote the development of the woman.. The Workforce Participation Rate, defined as the percentage of total workers to the total population, is 39.3 per cent. While the WPR for males is 51.9 per cent for females it is 25.7 per cent. The gap is almost entirely the result of women's work within homes being classified



This ideology sustains today, as the census indicators have proved. Margery Spring Rice, a researcher who conducted a study of British housewives during the Great Depression wrote, "In the large majority of homes, the woman is the slave without whose labour the whole structure of the family tends to collapse."The irony of the homemaker's job being labelled a 'non-working' one is that the market economy has an analogy for every item of housework that falls in the usual course of a homemaker's everyday chores. Meals at a restaurant or street corner dhaba offer an analogy for good preparation, cooking and serving of meals. Dryers and cleaners provide the analogy for washing and laundering services. Housecleaning can be done by professional housekeepers while taking care of small children, the sick and the ageing, is done by ayahs and nurses. Indeed, there are well-off families that hire such professions - albeit of various skills - to perform these tasks within their home itself! If these professional service-providers are included in

the computation of the Gross National Product, why not homemakers engaged in these same tasks? The answer is simple - because they are not paid for their work! By a self-perpetuating and false logic, the homemaker's 'free' services are not computed in the country's GNP, whereupon it is decided that housework is uneconomic and unproductive! Whereas an International Labour Organisation source (Recommendation 123: Concerning the Employment of Women with Family Responsibilities, 49th Session, June, 1965) reported that if the value of housework is calculated as equivalent to paid services performed by cooks, cleaners, housekeepers and nurses, it would contribute to half the GNP in many countries.

II. RECOMMENDATION & CONCLUSION:

There is little doubt that a homemaker creates evident surplus value through her labour. True, she is not paid for her services. But her total consumption of goods and services she has helped create by her labour is less than the total amount of goods and services she has produced. Instead of the fruits of her labour being exclusively available to her, they are shared among the members of her family, and in many cases in patriarchal societies the benefits are disproportionately appropriated by male heads. Even in desperately poor families, homemakers go hungry at least once a day, and the surplus value they create is consumed by the rest of the family. Housework has no fixed hours, no holiday and no pay. It is done almost exclusively by the homemaker with some professional help for those households which can afford it. According to environmentalist Rashmi Mayur, "The kitchen environment is the most crucial in victimizing women ... almost all women in India spend a considerable amount of their life in the kitchen. On an average, a woman spends 73,000 hours in the kitchen. "The average Indian woman spends about 3401 days of her life, or 8.33 years in the kitchen. Assuming that the average life-span of an Indian woman is 50 years, this means that she spends 16.66 per cent of her entire life and four hours per day in the kitchen. These, however, are not accurate figures because they are based on the actual work of cooking. These do not include other processes involved such as chopping vegetables, grinding the spices, kneading the flour, cleaning the rice and pulses etc. Add to this the out-of-kitchen activities like marketing, serving food, setting and cleaning the table or eating space, budgeting, etc .Even a mechanistic and quantitative analysis does not indicate, much less measure the real cost of the homemaker's labour on her physical well-being, in

the form of nutrition during working age or the loss of strength in old age.

Homemakers' work is interpreted and calculated as 'non-work' based on the assumption that "household" and "workplace" is mutually exclusive spheres. This distorts our perception of women's economic roles. In the real world, the division between these two is neither rigid nor real. Many women who fill up forms describing themselves as "full-time housewife" are engaged in various income-generating activities to support the family. There are many home-based activities which do not fall strictly within the periphery of private service for the family members. But as these are either ignored completely or considered 'marginal' in a market economy, they do not produce surplus value and are therefore not considered 'public' production. The work-home dichotomy also implies that there is an essential contradiction between women's private roles as household managers and child-bearers, and their public roles as wage-earners. The evidence that women can balance these two roles very successfully has not yet led to the overthrow of this myth.

REFERENCES:

- [1]. She ThePeople Why Is Housework Considered The Essence of Being A Woman? RUDRANI GUPTA Updated On March 26, 2022 The Hindu
- [2]. <https://www.shethepeople.tv/top-stories/opinion/housework-indian-women/>
- [3]. Shoma Chatterji india together 15 August 2010 –
- [4]. Hirway, Indira (March 2015). "Unpaid Work and the Economy: Linkages and Their Implications" (PDF). *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*. 58 (1): 1–21. doi:10.1007/s41027-015-0010-3. hdl:10419/146966. S2CID 154848656.
- [5]. Coyle, Diane (June 28, 2020). "Why did it take a pandemic to show how much unpaid work women do?". *New York Times*. Retrieved April 5, 2022.
- [6]. Coyle, Diane (October 1, 2019). *Do-It-Yourself Digital: The Production Boundary, the Productivity Puzzle and Economic Welfare*. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. Retrieved April 5, 2022.
- [7]. "OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms - Production boundary Definition". September 25, 2001. Retrieved April 5, 2022.
- [8]. Folbre, Nancy (July 2006). "Measuring Care: Gender, Empowerment, and the Care Economy". *Journal of Human Development*. 7 (2): 183–199. doi:10.1080/14649880600768512. S2CID 17350027.
- [9]. Satz, Debra (1992). "Markets in Women's Reproductive Labour". *Philosophy & Public Affairs*. 21: 107–131.
- [10]. Olmsted, Jennifer C. "Development and Reproductive Rights: Placing Social Sustainability at the Center of the Agenda." 2016, pp. 1-21.
- [11]. Heilman, Madeline E.; Chen, Julie J. (2005). "Same Behavior, Different Consequences: Reactions to Men's and Women's Altruistic Citizenship Behavior". *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 90 (3): 431–441. CiteSeerX 10.1.1.522.5035. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.90.3.431. PMID 15910140
- [12]. Grimshaw, Patricia (1989). *New England missionary wives, Hawaiian women, and "The Cult of True Womanhood"*. *Family and gender in the Pacific: domestic contradictions and the colonial impact*. pp. 19–44.
- [13]. Sayer, Liana C. (2005). "Gender, time and inequality: Trends in women's and men's paid work, unpaid work and free time". *Social Forces*. 84 (1): 285–303. doi:10.1353/sof.2005.0126. S2CID 145197174.
- [14]. Pearson, Ruth (2000). "All change? Men, women and reproductive work in the global economy". *The European Journal of Development Research*. 12 (2): 219–237. doi:10.1080/09578810008426773. S2CID 153869428.
- [15]. UNIFEM: *Progress for the World's Women 2005* (PDF), 2005, pp. 58–73
- [16]. Sirianni, Carmen; Negrey, Cynthia (2000). "Working Time as Gendered Time". *Feminist Economics*. 6: 59–76. doi:10.1080/135457000337679. S2CID 154879132.
- [17]. Khitarishvili, Tamar; Kim, Kijong (2015). "The Great Recession and Unpaid Work Time in the United States - Does Poverty Matter?". *International Journal of Time Use Research*. 12 (1): 19–48. doi:10.13085/eIJTUR.12.1.19-48. hdl:10419/109996
- [18]. Worldbankiudresearchgroup (1995). "WHO special programme for research, development and research training in

- human reproduction, World Bank: IUD Research Group. The TCu380A IUD and the frameless "FlexiGard", interim three-year data from an international multicenter trial". *Contraception*. 52 (2): 77–83. doi:10.1016/s0010-7824(95)00140-9. PMID 8536451.
- [19]. Aslanbeigui, Nahid; Summerfield, Gale (2001). "Risk, gender, and development in the 21st century". *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*. 15 (1): 7–26. doi:10.1023/a:1011184220863. S2CID 151161776.
- [20]. MacDonald, Martha; Phipps, Shelley; Lethbridge, Lynn (March 2005). "Takings Its Toll: The Influence of Paid and Unpaid Work on Women's Well-Being". *Feminist Economics*. 11 (1): 63–94. doi:10.1080/1354570042000332597. S2CID 154432458.
- [21]. Gammage, Sarah (September 9, 2010). "Time Pressed and Time Poor: Unpaid Household Work in Guatemala". *Feminist Economics*. 16 (3): 79–112. doi:10.1080/13545701.2010.498571. S2CID 154932871.
- [22]. "Human Development Report 2015" (PDF). 2015.
- [23]. Budlender, Debbie (December 2008). "The Statistical Evidence on Care and Non-Care Work across Six Countries" (PDF). United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
- [24]. Liangshu, Qi; Dong, Xiao-yuan (May 8, 2015). "Unpaid Care Work's Interference with Paid Work and the Gender Earnings Gap in China". *Feminist Economics*. 22 (2): 143–167. doi:10.1080/13545701.2015.1025803. S2CID 153328825.
- [25]. Statistics, Commodity Trade, and Statistics Branch. "United Nations Statistics Division." New York (2012).
- [26]. Olmsted, Jennifer C. (2005). "Is paid work the (only) answer? Neoliberalism, Arab women's well-being, and the social contract". *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*. 1 (2): 112–139. doi:10.1215/15525864-2005-2005. S2CID 145343658.
- [27]. "Human development report 1999". New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Online. Internet. 13 Oct. 2016.
- [28]. Marphatia, Akanksha; Moussie, Rachel (2013). "A question of gender justice: Exploring the linkages between women's unpaid care work, education, and gender equality". *International Journal of Educational Development*. 33 (6): 585–594. doi:10.1016/j.ijedudev.2013.05.005.
- [29]. Benjamin Bridgman; Andrew Dugan; Mikhael Lal; Matthew Osborne & Shaunda Villones (2012), *Accounting for Household Production in the National Accounts* (PDF), p. 23
- [30]. Wood, Ellen Meiksins (2002). *The origin of capitalism: a longer view*. Verso.
- [31]. Becker, Gary S. (2008). "Human Capital". *The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*. Library of Economics and Liberty.
- [32]. Folbre, Nancy. "Caring Labour." Transcription by Oliver Ressler. 2003, UMass Amherst. Video.
- [33]. Luxton, Meg (June 1997). "The UN, women, and household labour: Measuring and valuing unpaid work". *Women's Studies International Forum*. 20 (3): 431–439. doi:10.1016/s0277-5395(97)00026-5.
- [34]. Koolwal, van de Walle, Gayatri and Dominique (2013). "Access to Water, Women's Work, and Child Outcomes" (PDF). *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. 61 (2): 369–405. doi:10.1086/668280. hdl:10986/3789. S2CID 14329000.
- [35]. Olmsted, Jennifer (2016). "Development and Reproductive Rights: Placing Social Sustainability at the Centre of the UN's Agenda". *Feminist Economics*. In Review.
- [36]. "Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender equality". UN Women. Retrieved 2020-09-23.
- [37]. Sidh, Basu, Shiv, Sharmistha (2011). "Women's Contribution to Household Food and Economic Security: A Study in the Garhwal Himalayas, India". *Mountain Research and Development*. 31 (2): 102–111. doi:10.1659/mrd-journal-d-10-00010.1.
- [38]. Fraser, Nancy (1994). "After the Family Wage: Gender Equity and the Welfare State". *Political Theory*. 22 (4): 591–618. doi:10.1177/0090591794022004003. S2CID 145797094.