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# UNPAID CARE WORK IN MARKET SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT: MEASUREMENT PRACTICES FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

## INTRODUCTION

This technical brief documents emerging thought leadership on measurement practices for unpaid care work. More specifically, it presents a survey of current good practices, explores how practitioners can modify traditional tools and methodologies to complement the market systems approach, and identifies technical topics related to measuring unpaid care work that require further development.

The brief is supported by the Leveraging Economic Opportunities (LEO) project, which seeks to enhance USAID programs, projects, and activities focused on creating inclusive market systems.<sup>1</sup> The topic for the brief emerged from discussions with practitioners through the SEEP Network's Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group (WEEWG). Its audience is inclusive market systems development programs and practitioners.

## RATIONALE

Unpaid care work such as cleaning, cooking, and caring for the young, elderly and communities is critical for determining the wellbeing of our society. Around the world, women tend to spend two to ten times more hours on unpaid care work than men.<sup>2</sup> Also, many women living in poverty shoulder an even heavier responsibility (relative to men) for care-taking tasks as outsourcing activities, such as cleaning and cooking, are not affordable possibilities. Care provision is essential and is often viewed positively by women. What is problematic is its under-recognition and unequal distribution of the work. These unequal caring responsibilities can often exclude women from economic gains, access to decent work and participation in paid work activities. For example, the OECD reports that “in countries where women spend an average of five hours per day on unpaid care activities, 50% of women in the working-age population are active, i.e. employed or looking for a job. However, in countries where women spend three hours on unpaid care work, 60% of women are active in the labor force.”<sup>3</sup> These heavy and unequal, unpaid care responsibilities can negatively affects women health, education, leisure time, work, mobility and agency,<sup>4</sup> and has a compounding

### UNPAID CARE WORK AND LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

- The amount of time devoted to unpaid care work is negatively correlated with female labor force participation.
- A decrease in women's unpaid care work is related to a ten percentage point increase in women's labor force participation rate.

Source: Ferrant, Gaëlle and Luca Maria Pesando and Keiko Nowacka. *Unpaid Care Work: The Missing Link in the Analysis of Gender Gaps for Labor Outcomes*. OECD. 2014.

<sup>1</sup> LEO website: <https://www.microlinks.org/activities/leveraging-economic-opportunities-leo>. 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Ferrant, Gaëlle and Luca Maria Pesando and Keiko Nowacka. *Unpaid Care Work: The Missing Link in the Analysis of Gender Gaps for Labor Outcomes*. OECD. 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Thorpe, Jodie, Mar Maestre and Thalia Kidder. *Market Systems Approaches to Enabling Women's Economic Empowerment through Addressing Unpaid Care Work. Conceptual Framework*. Beam Exchange. 2016.

effect on “women’s ability to make use of economic opportunities.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the importance of addressing and measuring women’s economic empowerment in market systems programs, including unpaid care work, is critical to advancing inclusive market systems and poverty reduction.

The explicit focus on measurement practices for unpaid care work in market systems programs is intended to draw the attention of practitioners to its critical importance in spite of the very limited existing evidence base and to demystify its perceived complexity. Supporting practitioners adopting the key considerations below can help them understand the role unpaid care work has in markets, promote its visibility, and begin to build a case for why market actors should take unpaid care work seriously as a key aspect of economic empowerment and poverty reduction.

## OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of this brief is to identify and document good practices on measuring unpaid care work in market systems programs. Several key questions guided the research process, including:

- What are the key considerations in understanding and measuring changes to unpaid care work as related to market systems programming?
- Where should future work in measuring unpaid care work focus?

A literature review complemented by expert interviews provided the information for this brief. We selected publications for review based on their date of publication, applicability of findings to market systems approaches, program type and results demonstrated. Measuring unpaid care work in market systems programs is a new topic. Consequently, the key research limitation was the limited breadth of tools and methodologies employed by practitioners and results that are relevant to market systems work.

## FINDINGS

We found four key considerations for measuring changes to unpaid care work specifically for market systems programs. Practitioners can find detailed guidance on how a market systems approach can be used to diagnose constraints related to unpaid care and programmatic examples in a recent Building Effective and Accessible Markets (BEAM) Exchange report on unpaid care work.<sup>6</sup>

### KEY DEFINITIONS

**Market systems approach:** “A market system is a dynamic space—incorporating resources, roles, relationships, rules, and results—in which public and private actors collaborate and compete for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Market systems approaches focus on catalyzing a process that will result in a market system that is competitive, inclusive, resilient, and adaptive.”

Source: Markel, Erin and Lindsey Jones. *Women’s Economic Empowerment: Pushing the Frontiers of Inclusive Market Development*. USAID. 2014.

**Unpaid care work:** “includes all those activities that go towards the well-being of people, including caring for a household such as cooking, cleaning, collecting water and firewood, caring for the ill, elderly and children, and caring for the community when these activities are done for no pay.” Note that this “does not include unpaid work which is not care such as unpaid labor on family farms or in household enterprises.”

Sources: Budlender, Deborah and Rachel Moussié. *Making Care Work Visible*. ActionAid. 2013; Maestre, M. et al. *Understanding Unpaid Care Work to Empower Women in Market Systems Approaches*. BEAM Exchange. 2016

<sup>5</sup> Mainstreaming Women’s Economic Empowerment in Market Systems Development’, Practitioner Guidelines, Coffey International Development. Coffey. 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Maestre, M. et al. Understanding Unpaid Care Work to Empower Women in Market Systems Approaches. BEAM Exchange. 2016.

## A. KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR MEASURING CHANGES TO UNPAID CARE WORK FOR MARKET SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

1. **Use mixed methods to understand how women and men use their time.** When measuring how women and men use their time, it is important to use both quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation methods. Quantitative methods help programs to understand *what* women and men spend their time on. For example, how much time is spent on unpaid care work versus paid work. Yet, these quantitative measures are typically not enough to understand whether the time spent on certain tasks is actually empowering for women or not, and understanding the systems that surround them to support or constrain their empowerment. Qualitative methods can help programs to understand *why* women and men spend time on certain tasks, their perception of the task and their levels of satisfaction around time-use.

### Case Study: Mixed Measurement Methods in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Following an initial small scale qualitative study into the impact of improved cook stoves (ICS) conducted during the pilot, ÉLAN RDC, a private sector development program funded by DFID and implemented by Adam Smith International in the DRC, is developing a new and more robust survey instrument which combines quantitative and qualitative assessments to measure change as the pilot goes to scale. The measurement tool intends to test through a combination of household surveys and focus group discussions the program's hypothesis that the use of ICS will reduce women's unpaid care burden. The tool will capture data on a range of empowerment obstacles such as unpaid care work burden, time use, perceptions of change for women and other members of the household and contribution to other social outcomes or risks (e.g., increased confidence, increased/decreased respect; increased/decreased risk of sanctions). By using a more comprehensive survey tool, ÉLAN RDC hopes to deepen their understanding of the wider impact of the reduction in unpaid care work on poor women. This information will inform the program's understanding of what 'positive, neutral or negative change' as a result of a reduction in unpaid care may mean for women.

2. **Acknowledge that the implications of changes in care work are context- and person-specific.** The implications of changes to a woman's care work and responsibilities vary by context, making qualitative data collection particularly important for capturing these nuances. Qualitative assessments can include questions about how women, men and community members feel about the changes they have experienced in their paid and unpaid workload. For example, if a woman reduces her time spent on paid work to bear and raise children, this may represent greater or lesser levels of empowerment depending on the circumstances surrounding this change. Her level of empowerment depends on whether or not she had a say in the decision and how it affects competing claims on her time and resources. It cannot be judged solely on the fact that she is earning less or spending the same amount of time on unpaid care. On the other hand, earning additional income can give women enhanced decision-making power to ask for help. Moreover, change should not always be dichotomized in positive and negative terms. In some cases, it may more accurately reflect trade-offs. For example, women and men may choose to accept certain trade-offs between spending less time caring for their children or may be willing to risk sanctions from other household members if the economic or non-economic rewards (such as new skills, relationships, or opportunities developed outside of the home) are high enough.<sup>7</sup> Understanding these trade-offs and how they impact women's empowerment is important for an accurate interpretation of results.

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<sup>7</sup> Interview. Jordan, Sonia, Adam Smith International. 2016.

### Case Study: Rapid Qualitative Assessments for Understanding Change

A recent qualitative assessment of BMZ-funded, GIZ-implemented women's economic empowerment programming in Egypt and Morocco<sup>8</sup> highlights this important point. Women interviewed had widely varying experiences of: a) changes in their unpaid workload and b) how they experienced this change. Across the four projects included in the assessment, over three quarters of the married women interviewed saw no change in their unpaid care work when taking on new paid activities but expressed different perspectives as to whether this was positive or negative. For example, a woman participant in EntreElles in Morocco, a project which provides business training, coaching and networking for female entrepreneurs, experienced adverse health issues due to taking on too heavy an overall workload. Another woman from the same project described how the time spent on her business provided major psychological and social benefits for her, despite not having any reduction in her responsibility for unpaid care work at home. Several women from the same project also described being able to invest in labor-saving technologies thanks to new earned income. This allowed them to reduce time spent on certain tasks, representing a significant positive change for them.

### Case Study: Trade-Offs in Southwestern Bangladesh

A recent gender assessment<sup>9</sup> of the USAID-funded Program for Strengthening Household Access to Resources (PROSHAR) in Southwestern Bangladesh examined women's and men's time, mobility and decision making. The assessment of this ACIDI/VOCA-implemented project estimated PROSHAR's contribution to enhancing women's and men's increased mobility, decision-making and satisfaction with increased time spent on paid work. It uncovered an interesting lesson on measuring how women and men spend their time and how trade-offs play into the development of instruments and analysis. The assessment found that decreases in leisure time were not associated with a decline in women's empowerment. Findings suggested that women were comfortable with and happy about their increased workloads due to more paid work. Men and women noted that "although they are spending more time on PROSHAR activities, they are also making more money as a result." Women stated that they were happy to trade-off leisure time for increases in income. The findings suggest that a decrease in leisure time should not necessarily be interpreted as a decrease in women's empowerment. Thus, when using time as an indicator of empowerment, PROSHAR found it important to use qualitative research methods to further probe into women's and men's perceptions of trade-offs to better understand the effects on their empowerment.

- 3. Understand the relationship between social norms,<sup>10</sup> sanctions and unpaid care work to mitigate risks for women.** Constraints related to unpaid care work can present multiple barriers to women's economic empowerment as mentioned above. Social norms strongly influence the extent to which these barriers can be overcome. Since social norms are enforced by sanctions,<sup>11</sup> they shape the risks that different women face for changing their behavior. Measuring changes in social norms and sanctions, and how these affect different types of women (and men) and their unpaid care work, can reduce the risk of causing harm or expending resources on activities unlikely to generate behavior change due to highly entrenched norms.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Gettliffe, Emilie and Erin Markel. *Women's Economic Empowerment in the MENA Region: Rapid assessment of household level results*. GIZ. 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Sahlaney, Sarah. *Gender Impact Assessment of USAID's Program for Strengthening Household Access to Resources (PROSHAR)*. ACIDI/VOCA for USAID. 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Markel, Erin et al. *The Social Norms Factor: How gendered social norms influence how we empower women in market systems development*. BEAM Exchange. 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Social norm theory and practice shows us that negative sanctions by members of a reference group or community maintain social norms by reinforcing individual preferences and behaviors. Sanctions can include harassment, physical violence, name-calling, threats, peer pressure, etc.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

## Case Study: Gendered Social Norms in Sierra Leone

Research on gendered social norms undertaken by MarketShare Associates through LEO for Adam Smith International's DFID-funded Sierra Leone Opportunities for Business Action<sup>13</sup> showed that female farmers and female business owners faced very different social norms around unpaid care work, and therefore, faced different risks in seeking to change these roles. Female farmers reported being respected by their community for being “good housewives.” These women were concerned about changing their household role (especially around unpaid care work) due to possible sanctions from their in-laws or the broader community. These women commonly mentioned fearing shame tactics from the community such as people telling them that black magic, harm to their children and shame will come to their family and husbands if they do not follow common customs. However, this research showed that women who owned their own agricultural trade enterprises received support from adult family members or were offered paid assistance by family members to help with unpaid care tasks. It seemed that the female traders enjoyed more time flexibility in managing their household chores due to their better economic situation. The program in Sierra Leone is currently using this information to design programming strategies for female farmers, given their increased risk of facing social sanctions if their roles change. Understanding and measuring the implications of change as it relates to social norms and unpaid care work can help to mitigate programmatic risks around overburdening women with additional responsibilities and reduce social sanctions.

- 4. Use measurement methodologies and research outputs to facilitate ‘recognition’ about the impact of unpaid care work.** Drawing individuals, households and the broader community’s attention to the unequal and burdensome distribution of unpaid care work in developing countries through qualitative and quantitative measurement research is an important first step towards facilitating the longer term empowerment and equality goals of unpaid care work reduction and redistribution.<sup>14</sup> The lack of recognition of the importance, value (economic and socially) and impact by the household and community is a formidable obstacle to seeing positive change.<sup>15</sup> Many measurement tools and methodologies including Oxfam’s Rapid Care Analysis, ActionAid’s Participatory Time Use Survey, CARE’s Diamond and the Gender Action Learning System (GALS)<sup>16</sup> feature participatory and highly visual data collection and analysis steps that can create this recognition.

## Case Study: Rapid Care Analysis, Oxfam International

The Rapid Care Analysis (RCA) methodology is based on the premise that ‘we can make care work visible, show how it’s significant, make it everyone’s issue, and address it with simple steps.’<sup>17</sup> This approach makes the practice of measurement not only a vehicle for data collection but also social change. Through a series of mixed-sex group mapping exercises, the RCA methodology explores the relationships of care, unpaid and paid work activities of men and women. The tool is flexible and is designed to be tailored to the objectives of a specific program. Following the data collection phase, participants are guided through a discussion on gender roles, the challenges and problems around care – with the end goal of developing a set of actionable recommendations by participants to reduce and redistribute care work.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Miller, Emily and Erin Markel. *Examining Gendered Social Norms for Programme Design: A Case Study on the Sierra Leone Opportunities for Business Action (SOBA)*. BEAM Exchange. 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Elson, Diane. Recognition, Reduction, and Redistribution (the 3 Rs). <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/47565971.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Budlender, Deborah and Rachel Moussié. *Making Care Work Visible*. ActionAid. 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Kidder, Thalia and Carine Pionetti. *Rapid Care Analysis*. Oxfam. 2013; Mayoux, Linda. *Gender Action Learning System (GALS)*. Hivos. 2014; Gettliffe, Emilie, and Erin Markel. *Women's Economic Empowerment in the MENA Region: Rapid assessment of household level results*. GIZ. 2015; Budlender, Deborah and Rachel Moussié. *Making Care Visible*. ActionAid. 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Kidder, Thalia and Carine Pionetti. *Rapid Care Analysis*. Oxfam. 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## B. KEY CONSIDERATIONS MOVING FORWARD

1. **Adapting and creating measurement tools relevant to market systems programs.** Current tools for examining and measuring unpaid care work focus on collecting data from households and communities. To fit with a market systems approach, new tools must be oriented to collect data by (and/or through) market actors. This measurement tool should include methodologies that align with market actor's financial and human resources, with the benefits of better understanding unpaid care outweighing the costs of measurement (in the medium to long term).
2. **Using new evidence to develop the business case to address unpaid care work for market actors.** Demonstrating the relevance of unpaid care work to the bottom line would make it more likely that market actors, especially the private sector, factor in these considerations. Currently, the literature and case studies focus on macro-level data such as unpaid care work's influence on women's labor force participation, yet promoting the business case for unpaid care work to market actors remains largely anecdotal. Resourcing studies on the effects of addressing unpaid care work on women's empowerment and the private sector should be a key next step. Building an evidence base around this issue will help practitioners to prove the importance of unpaid care work to market actors and program partners.

## CONCLUSION

Unpaid care responsibilities significantly dictate the terms of women's participation in markets. This has led women's economic empowerment (WEE) and market systems practitioners to search for tools and methodologies well-suited to measuring change, particularly when employing a facilitative market systems approach. Working through market actors to facilitate a longer term interest in measuring and understanding the burden of unpaid care and promoting greater flexibility for women around care responsibilities is still relatively new. With greater understanding and technical facility in this area, market systems programs are likely to be more successful in achieving greater economic and empowerment outcomes for women across the developing world.

## KEY RESOURCES

Kidder, Thalia and Carine Pionetti. [Rapid Care Analysis](#). Oxfam. 2013. This resource provides a set of exercises for assessing unpaid care work in the household and community.

Maestre, M. and Thorpe, J. [Understanding Unpaid Care Work to Empower Women in Market Systems Approaches](#). The BEAM Exchange. May 2016.

Mayoux, Linda. [Gender Action Learning System \(GALS\)](#). Hivos. 2014. This resource documents the process of a community-led action-oriented methodology to inspire women and men to act.

Gettliffe, Emilie, and Erin Markel. [Women's Economic Empowerment in the MENA Region: Rapid assessment of household level results](#). GIZ. 2015. This publication discusses lessons learned in measuring women's economic empowerment including a qualitative tool for measuring a number of indicator categories such as women's perceptions around how they spend their time.

Budlender, Deborah and Rachel Moussié. [Making Care Visible](#). ActionAid. 2013. This resource documents the way different categories of people (women and men, rich and poor, rural and urban) use their time.

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