

## Economics: Paid and Unpaid Work

It is difficult to compare women's economic contributions to men because the unpaid work that women perform has not been taken into consideration. Women everywhere have almost total responsibility for housework and childcare. When assessing the productive contribution of societies it is important to factor Unpaid Work into the equation as it is absolutely necessary for the functioning of the rest of society,

- ⇒ When unpaid housework is taken into account than it becomes apparent that women work an equal or greater amount than men.
- ⇒ If given economic value, unpaid labor of women in the household would add an estimated one-third
- ⇒ UN Study of women worldwide do 75% of work, receive 10% of the pay and own 1% of property.
- ⇒ In Canada a 1994 study done by Stats Canada found that women still do 2/3 of the unpaid housework whether or not they work outside the home. In dual income families over half of the women 52% were shown to have all the responsibility for daily housework—only 10% of dual income couples shared the house work equally—in 10% of men had all or most of the responsibility.
- ⇒ Of the 828 Million women officially estimated to be economically active 56% live in Asia
- ⇒ Within the industrial and services sector, the gap ranges between 53% and 97% with an average of 78%.( UNIFEM Biennial Report. Progress of the World's Women, 2000.)

### In Canada:

While women make up nearly 40% of the global paid workforce, they earn only 26% of the world's income.<sup>1</sup> In Canada, women earn an average of 72 cents for every dollar that a man earns. Female-dominated professions in general are valued much lower than male-dominated professions. Child care workers are paid on par with parking lot attendants, plumbers earn more than nurses. Men outnumber women in each of the ten highest paid occupations in Canada while women outnumber men in all but one of the ten lowest paid occupations in Canada. In both the highest and lowest paid occupations in Canada, women in these occupations earn less than men in the same occupation. For example, female food and beverage servers earn 76% of what male servers earn while female dentists earn 66% of what male dentists earn.

In Canada unpaid work is estimated to be worth up to \$319 in the economy or 41% of [GDP](#); globally the numbers skyrocket to \$11 trillion US.

Source: <http://unpac.ca/economy/paidwork.html>

### Statistics Canada States:

Women tend to do more unpaid work than men, most of it around the house. In 1998, women spent 15.2 hours on unpaid housework per week—almost twice as much time as did men (8.3 hours). Parenthood can add significantly more time to a woman's unpaid work schedule: mothers aged 25 to 44 who were working full time spent nearly 35 hours a week at unpaid work. Statistics Canada - [http://142.206.72.67/02/02d/02d\\_004\\_e.htm](http://142.206.72.67/02/02d/02d_004_e.htm)

## Two unpaid working women

Let's meet two "typical" women:

### Tendai

Consider Tendai, a young girl in the Lowveld, in Zimbabwe. Her day starts at 4 a.m. when, to fetch water, she carries a thirty litre tin to a borehole about eleven kilometres from her home. She walks barefoot and is home by 9 a.m. She eats a little and proceeds to fetch firewood until midday. She cleans the utensils from the family's morning meal and sits preparing a lunch of sadza for the family. After lunch and the cleaning of the dishes, she wanders in the hot sun until early evening, fetching wild vegetables for supper before making the evening trip for water. Her day ends at 9 p.m., after she has prepared supper and put her younger brothers and sisters to sleep. Tendai is considered unproductive, unoccupied, and economically inactive. According to the international economic system, Tendai does not work and is not part of the labour force.

- Marilyn Waring

### Cathy

Cathy, a young, middle-class North American housewife, spends her days preparing food, setting the table, serving meals, clearing food and dishes from the table, washing dishes, dressing her children, disciplining children, taking the children to day-care or school, disposing of garbage, dusting, gathering clothes for washing, doing the laundry, going to the gas station and the supermarket, repairing household items, ironing, keeping an eye on or playing with the children, making beds, paying bills, caring for pets and plants, putting away toys, books, and clothes, sewing or mending or knitting, talking with door-to-door salespeople, answering the telephone, vacuuming, sweeping and washing floors, cutting the grass, weeding and shovelling snow, cleaning the bathroom and the kitchen, and putting her children to bed. Cathy has to face that fact that she fills her time in a *totally* unproductive manner. She...is economically inactive, and economists record her as unoccupied. - Marilyn Waring

## Putting it into Perspective: Quotable Quotes

"Productivity, viewed from the perspective of survival, differs sharply from the dominant view of the productivity of labour as defined for processes of capital accumulation. 'Productive' man, producing commodities, using some of nature's wealth and women's work as raw material and dispensing with the rest as waste, becomes the only legitimate category of work, wealth and production. Nature and women working to produce and reproduce life are declared 'unproductive.'"

- Vandana Shiva



Roma, Lesotho, Africa  
Photo by Jennifer deGroot.



Lesotho, Africa  
Photo by Jennifer deGroot.

"Although girls may indeed rule in North America, they are still sweating in Asia and Latin America, making t-shirts with the 'Girls Rule' slogan on them and Nike running shoes that will finally let girls into the game."

Naomi Klein, No Logo



*"They don't count women's work, but they count on women's work."*

