Workshop Report

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### Acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
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<td>AAB</td>
<td>ActionAid Bangladesh</td>
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<td>BBS</td>
<td>Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<td>BDI</td>
<td>BRAC Development Institute</td>
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<td>BNPS</td>
<td>Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention of Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<td>CGST</td>
<td>Center for Gender and Social Transformation</td>
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<td>GJD</td>
<td>Gender Justice and Diversity Division, BRAC</td>
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<td>IDS</td>
<td>Institute of Development Studies</td>
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<td>Manusher Jonno Foundation</td>
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<td>MoWCA</td>
<td>Ministry of Women and Children Affair</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-government Organization</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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Acknowledgement

This report is based on the workshop on “Unpaid Care Work: Situating it in Research and Policy Context in Bangladesh” organized by CGST of BRAC Development Institute (BDI), BRAC University. We deeply appreciate the role played by the participants in making the workshop a success. We also thank Sida for funding the workshop. Iqbal Ehsan, Research Associate of CGST, BDI acted as the rapporteur, and wrote the workshop report. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance provided by Marufa Akter, Kabita Chowdhury, Sahidul Islam Shagor and Arafat Hassan in organizing the event. Roushan Jahan copyedited the report. Dr. Sohela Nazneen supervised the production of the report.
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Executive Summary

In Bangladesh ‘unpaid care work’ is practically synonymous with women’s work. With the focus in policies on getting women into paid work, improving their access to education, health and the public sphere; ‘unpaid care work’s central role contributing towards societal and human well-being and the economy has not been brought to the policy table. The Center for Gender and Social Transformation (CGST) based at the BRAC Development Institute (BDI), BRAC University, is collaborating with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK on a Sida funded project which aims to develop ‘policy asks’ around unpaid care and create alliances to promote unpaid care in policy spaces. CGST organized a workshop. About 25 participants from different women’s organizations, government ministries, development agencies and research institutes participated in the workshop.

Unpaid care work is rarely highlighted and integrated in policy development and analysis in Bangladesh though policy success in many sectors depends on and in various ways affect unpaid care work. For example, water management policies affect women’s time spent in water collection; early childhood education provision may reduce women’s child care responsibilities and enable them to participate in economic activities; various safety net policies for disabled and elderly care may reduce and redistribute the care responsibilities undertaken by family members. Much of the success in many policy areas depends on women taking on the responsibility for the care work that allows development interventions to work. For Bangladesh, integrating unpaid care work into policy and addressing the needs of different groups around this issue are imperative given the different social changes that are taking place. As the demography of Bangladesh is changing and the number of elderly people is increasing, the demand for unpaid care will increase. Given that the household structures are changing in rural and urban areas to a more nuclear form and rapid urbanization is leading to high levels of internal migration, the provision of unpaid care for the children, the elderly and the disabled population by family members will be increasingly difficult. The increased participation of women in formal and informal sectors is creating the need for state and community support for unpaid care. In addition, to sustain the gains on women’s economic empowerment through labor force participation, attention has to be given to
the unpaid care work burdens that women bear. The literature review by CGST on the research and policy documents in Bangladesh highlights that unpaid care work is yet to emerge as a development issue and concern.

The review took stock of the existing policies and research on unpaid care work in the Bangladesh context and examined whether and to what extent unpaid care work was addressed and policy initiatives were taken to reduce or redistribute unpaid care work done by women. The findings from the review revealed the following about existing policy and state programs: a) in policy documents women’s unpaid care work is mentioned in explaining gender roles in Bangladesh but specific policy prescriptions for reduction and redistribution of care work are few; b) existing Labor Acts focus on women in formal sector employment and their child care needs but ignore other care needs or needs of women in informal sector employment; c) only one or two policies on education and safety net specifically prescribe policy and programmatic support for women’s reproductive work; d) the emphasis on unpaid care work has decreased over time in various government plans and policy documents related to women; e) some spaces may be opening up at policy levels for including unpaid care (e.g. National Action Plan for Women) and consultative processes are important to keep the focus on unpaid care. The review also highlights the following about existing research on unpaid care. First, researchers have largely focused on counting women’s contribution to GDP through including unpaid care in GDP calculations. Second, they have also conducted time use studies to calculate the burden of unpaid care but have rarely discussed redistribution of the care burden. Third, how unpaid care work can be integrated in different policy areas and sectors requires a careful identification of the nature of ‘care needs’ in those specific sectors such as education, safety net, labor, water management etc.

After the presentation of the findings from the review there was a short discussion on the research collaborations that CGST has with ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB) and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) to generate knowledge on patterns of care responsibilities and needs of different social groups. With ActionAid Bangladesh, CGST is assisting in developing a time-diary tool for gathering time-use data from women’s collectives in the North-West. CGST is collaborating with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics to analyze
various data sets including a recent pilot survey of 4000 respondents on time-use.

A discussion session allowed the participants to provide their comments on the presentations and also give their suggestions on: a) what could be the “policy asks” around unpaid care; b) how to build partnerships around this policy asks; c) and how to advocate for these policy demands at different national fora. Various suggestions were made on how different development programs could begin to address unpaid care work e.g. programs on education, employment, health and sanitation. It was pointed out that redistribution of unpaid care work was not limited to the issue of redistribution of the care burden from women to men but it also involved a transfer of care responsibilities from the individual/or families to the community and the state. Discussion on redistribution should incorporate a specific emphasis in policies on how poor household’s burden of care work can be reduced. Participants also debated whether monetization was the best means of ensuring recognition or not of unpaid care. It was also suggested that women’s own perceptions of the importance of their various roles also needs to be taken into account when developing awareness raising strategies (e.g. the importance given to motherhood roles). Participants also highlighted the importance of taking small steps for addressing needs around unpaid care, such as creating community centers in urban slums for child care, incorporating the issue of unpaid care in existing programs, meeting transportation needs of women and families with small children. The participants also stressed the importance of a class based analysis of the needs around unpaid care and focusing on how the needs of poorer households could be addressed while developing policy prescriptions. They also stressed the need to develop programs and policies to meet the care needs of female migrant workers and informal sector workers, including those in agriculture.
**Background**

In Bangladesh ‘unpaid care work’ is practically synonymous with women’s work. With the focus in policies on getting women into paid work and improving their access to education, health -- ‘unpaid care work’s central role in contributing towards societal and human well-being and the economy has not been brought to the policy table. The lack of recognition of unpaid care work in policies means that women’s contribution to national development and people’s wellbeing from unpaid care activities goes unacknowledged and unrewarded. Women’s empowerment strategies largely ignore the effort and time involved in unpaid care work and thus opportunities to advance gender equality and women’s rights, and to strengthen social policy and social protection, particularly in a time of economic crisis, are lost.

The Centre for Gender and Social Transformation (CGST) based at BRAC Development Institute (BDI), BRAC University is collaborating with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) on a Sida funded project which aims to develop ‘policy asks’ around unpaid care and create alliances to promote unpaid care in policy spaces. To present a literature review of existing research and policy on unpaid care work in Bangladesh and discuss policy implications CGST organized a workshop on the 17th of September at the BRAC Centre. Participants from national and international NGOs, Ministry of Women’s and Children’s Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics attended the workshop.

**First session: Situating Unpaid Care in Research and Policy Context in Bangladesh**

The workshop started with a short presentation by Dr. Sohela Nazneen, Lead Researcher of CGST, BDI. The presentation focused on situating unpaid care work in the research and policy context in Bangladesh. She explained that the research and policy work on unpaid care work, mostly performed by women in Bangladesh, can be analyzed using three interrelated aspects: recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care. Dr. Nazneen also highlighted how the changing demographic pattern, household structure and rapid urbanization have changed the provision of unpaid care in families and created new demands...
and a policy imperative to focus on this issue. She also pointed out that as extended family structure and support is diminishing in both urban and rural areas and women’s labor force participation is increasing, provision of child care outside the family will be a significant policy issue. In addition, due to rapid urbanization, rise of nuclear households and increase in life expectancy in Bangladesh, the number of elderly people needing care provided by extra household means will rise in Bangladesh. These changes will also affect care for disabled persons which are currently provided by family members, mostly women. Though there are some policies, including some social protection policies in Bangladesh that make provisions for the elderly and the disabled, these are not sufficient. Dr. Nazneen pointed out that most of the research and policy work in Bangladesh have focused on unpaid care while discussing women’s role and work in Bangladesh. But most of the programs and policies for empowering women have largely focused on getting women into paid work in formal and informal sectors and have not investigated or created measures for addressing women’s ‘double burden’ or creating community and state support for reducing the workload. She pointed out that in order to sustain the gains Bangladesh has made on women’s labor force participation and economic empowerment it is crucial to pay attention to unpaid care work.
BOX 1. Why focus on unpaid care in policy?

- Given the demographic changes in Bangladesh, by 2035 there will be a sizable aging population which means that the demand and need for unpaid care will increase.

- Increase in nuclear households in rural and urban areas would mean that extended family members will not be present to provide unpaid care.

- Rapid urbanization coupled with changes in family structure will lead to an increased demand for care work for the-children, the elderly, and the disabled.

- Increased migration by women and their labor force participation in formal and informal sector translate into women having less time for unpaid care work at home.

- Increased labor force participation of women from poorer households without community and state support for unpaid care translates into the young girls at home having to take up care responsibilities. This may reduce the young girls’ ability to attend school and participate in other capacity building activities.

- In order to sustain the gains of women’s economic empowerment through participation in formal and informal sector economy their care needs have to be addressed.

- Women’s unpaid care work burden increases during times of economic crisis as families and poor households try to sustain themselves through expenditure saving measures. These measures largely stretch women’s unpaid care work burden. Meeting the needs of socially vulnerable groups during crisis requires a focus and comprehensive strategy around unpaid care.
The Literature Review - Exploring the Context

An extensive literature review carried out by Lopita Huq, Research Fellow, CGST, BDI in collaboration with Iqbal Ehsan, Research Associate, CGST, BDI was presented during the first session. The purpose of the review was the following: a) to take stock of existing policies and research on unpaid care work in the Bangladesh context; b) to examine whether and to what extent unpaid care work was addressed in state policies and whether any measures and initiatives were taken to reduce or redistribute unpaid care work. Ms. Huq explained how the literature review had defined unpaid care: “The term ‘unpaid’ differentiates this care from paid care provided by employees of the public and NGO sector and employees and self-employed persons in the private sector.” The word ‘care’ indicates that the services are provided to nurture other people. The word ‘work’ indicates that these activities are costly in terms of time and energy and are undertaken as contractual or social obligations (Budlender and Moussie, 2013). Unpaid care work therefore involves cooking, cleaning, collecting fuel and water, providing care to children, elderly and the sick. It also includes voluntary community work (Budlender and Moussie 2013). It is important to notice that caring not only involves providing for the material needs of the recipients but also their emotional needs. In other words, it refers to a responsibility and a set of activities “meeting the material and/or developmental, emotional and spiritual needs of one or more other persons with whom one is in a direct personal relationship” (Eyben and Fontana, 2011).

Ms. Huq pointed out that the review focused on those government policies and plans that can be reasonably expected to include ‘unpaid care work’ as a part of policies/initiatives seeking to reduce gender disparities in key sectors and address women’s rights. Among the selected policies and plans were those that manifest the development agenda of the government, such as the recent Five Year Plans, Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the National Women’s Development Policy of 2011. All of these are based on, among other things, the principles of the Constitution of Bangladesh and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Bangladesh has ratified the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and as such, government’s as
well as citizen’s initiative’s submissions to the UN CEDAW Committee have also been included in this review. In terms of existing laws, this review specifically looks at the Labor Act (2006) to examine whether there are any aspects that addresses ‘unpaid care work’. Two sets of policies, namely Early Childhood Development and Social Protection policies were deliberately excluded from this review as they have been elaborately examined in another review (Chopra 2013)¹. This review examined whether and to what extent these selected policies, plans and law refer to unpaid care work, and irrespective of whether they specifically mention ‘unpaid care work’, if they refer to any measures or initiatives that can be seen to redistribute or reduce it. The other focus of this review was to look specifically at research on ‘unpaid care work’ in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh made enormous gains in gender equality in some key social development areas. Successive governments have pushed policies and increased expenditures that have resulted in halving total fertility rates; reducing maternal mortality, infant and child mortality; closing the gender gap in child mortality; and closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education, where girls enrollment now outnumber boys (Nazneen et al. 2011; Kabeer et al. 2013). There has been a sustained increase in women’s labor force participation from 4% in 1974 to 8% in 1984 to 23.9% in 1999-2000 to 31.5% in 2009-2010, although labor force surveys continue to under report women’s economic activities (Mahmud and Tasneem, 2011).

Ms. Huq pointed out that given the pre-occupation with these issues it is likely that ‘unpaid care work’ has been placed at the sidelines in policy development. With the focus on getting women out of their homes, improving their mobility, improving their access to education, health and paid work, valuing ‘unpaid care work’ for its central importance to societal and human well-being (Eyben 2013) or as a contribution to the economy and not simply a burden, is a perspective that has not been brought to the policy table. The valuation of ‘unpaid care work’ however does not negate the validity of the constraint it puts on women’s choices. Responsibility for the bulk of care work and the time consuming nature

¹ This review found provision for maternity leave in the Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA) and consideration of other household and reproductive responsibilities in their programme for promoting women’s participation in project activities. The Primary Education Development Programme II (PEDP II) was found to recognize the care work provided by older siblings to younger ones and set up “baby classes” to address the issue.
of care work for most women, particularly rural and poor women means that they have to be in or near their household all the time. The care responsibilities may circumscribe women’s mobility, their time available or the ability to take up opportunities outside of her household, or make choices, which may have debilitating implications for economic empowerment.

The overall examination of government policies, plans and reports suggest that while, women’s household responsibilities, unpaid labour and even ‘sex stereotyping’ is acknowledged, it did not necessarily translate into a discourse on ‘unpaid care work’. There has been no focus on assessing the contribution of women’s unpaid care work to the economy or its central role in promoting social well being. The presentation concluded that some spaces have opened up at policy levels and consultative processes are important to keep the focus on unpaid care. It also stressed that highlighting the value and redistribution of unpaid care work in policy and research is crucial. Ms. Huq also pointed out that how unpaid care work could be integrated in development work will depend on the nature of the particular sector such as education, safety net, labor, water management for which policies are being developed.
BOX 2: Key findings from the review on research and policy in Bangladesh on unpaid care

- Unpaid care work, particularly women’s double burden and sex stereotyping, is mentioned in various policy documents and government plans and laws.
- In the selected government policies, plans and laws reviewed no specific policy prescriptions are provided to recognize, reduce or redistribute unpaid care.
- Only a few sectoral programs, for example early childhood development or some rural employment generation schemes consider women’s reproductive work and care needs.
- In various Labor Acts the focus is on the child care needs of women in formal sector employment. These leave out other forms of unpaid care needs of women and the needs of women in informal sector.
- In government policies and programs the discussion on unpaid care work performed by women has decreased in recent times.
- Researches in Bangladesh largely focus on recognition of unpaid care mostly through counting women’s contribution in national accounts and time use studies.
- There are some policy spaces opening up for creating an alternative discourse on unpaid care and focus on reduction and redistribution of care work.

Policy implications and framing the issue

Following the presentation on the literature review there was a short presentation on integrating unpaid care in policy development and analysis by Dr. Sohela Nazneen. She stated that in Bangladesh, there is a lack of comprehensive policy focus on unpaid care provided by women and the support women need for performing these responsibilities. For example, international migration has created income opportunities for Bangladeshi women. There is a lot of demand for female labor but when the women migrate to a foreign country for work they leave their families at home. The state or development and policy agencies have not focused on how the unpaid care responsibilities will be fulfilled during the absence of these female migrants. She stressed that unpaid care responsibilities of migrant women are seen as problems faced by
individual families; however these unfulfilled needs have a wider social impact and should be addressed through different community and state initiatives.

In her presentation, Dr. Nazneen discussed the challenges in integrating unpaid care work in policy. She pointed out that most of the research work on unpaid care in the Bangladesh has focused on time use and calculating the contribution of women’s unpaid care to national accounts. While these provide data for highlighting the importance of unpaid care and help in moving the agenda for recognition of women’s work, it is important to move beyond demanding the recognition of unpaid care work and strategize around redistribution and reduction of unpaid care. This would require a focus on redistribution from: a) individual to community and the state; b) from women to men. The discussion on redistribution will require an emphasis on how poor household’s burden of care work can be reduced. Dr. Nazneen also pointed out that strategies for linking unpaid care to policy formulation and implementation for different policy areas and sectors would vary. There are some policy areas that fall under safety nets or elderly care or disabled care where the unpaid care needs, and how it can be reduced or redistributed at the individual level is easily identifiable. In Bangladesh, family is the main institution which care for their elders and disabled members and this care is mainly provided by the female members of the family. The focus can be on how community and state initiatives could support individual families. Water and Sanitation policies can also be easily examined using an unpaid care lens given women’s role in water collection or sanitation. However, there are areas and policy sectors where the role played by women’s unpaid care work may not be obvious, but links can be made. For example, energy policies - on piped gas supplies, development of bio gas projects may reduce the care burden on women and time used for fuel collection.

Dr. Nazneen drew attention to the point that the unpaid care needs of women (and also of other household members) should be identified using a class based analysis as the needs of poor women, both in rural and urban areas, would be different from those of middle-class women or women belonging to upper income groups. For example, poor women living in urban slums face difficult
conditions in accessing piped water supply and their needs and time used for water collection are different compared to women in middle class households in urban areas and their needs. Technological development around energy and transport sectors such as solar powered machines, stoves etc., can significantly reduce the workload of women inside the household. Proper infrastructure and scientific inventions can reduce unpaid care burden of women in many ways but generally the funding strategy in these areas do not encourage scientists and others to develop the tools to address unpaid care needs of women.

Dr. Nazneen, argued that redistribution of unpaid care work is a political issue as it challenges the dominant gender norms of the society. Redistribution of unpaid care through policy and programmatic support is more challenging than recognition and reduction of unpaid care. The dialogue on redistribution should include the role of the State, community and the market/private sector actors. Effective negotiation strategies have to be developed to create a constituency and to generate demands related to redistribution of unpaid care work. A key area in creating demand would be to work on: a) changing attitudes on women’s care work at home and b) using a care lens when developing programs and policies. Another strategy is to create partnerships and alliances for promoting care issues in different fora. Dr. Nazneen pointed out that this workshop was one such step for developing partnerships. One of the main objectives of the workshop was raising the issue in front of government and leading national and international NGOs of Bangladesh who work for women’s development.
Box-3: Moving the Discussion on Unpaid Care Forward

I. On Recognition

‑ Taking stock of what we know on unpaid care needs and patterns.
‑ Creating demand for using existing data and demonstrating to the government and other agencies that there is a need for continuing research and policy work on unpaid care.
‑ Not valorizing traditional femininity while demanding recognition for care.
‑ Creating an alternative discourse around care work and care needs.

II. On Reduction

‑ Making links using a care lens when conducting various policy analysis. Asking what does a care lens add? How can unpaid care needs be addressed by developing infrastructure, energy, agricultural processing mechanisms and other sectoral area policies?
‑ Moving beyond the usual policy focus in care discussions and entering policy debates on technology and innovation.
‑ Prioritizing which policy areas to target for reduction of care burden and identifying how costs of reduction would be borne.

III. On Redistribution

‑ Packaging and developing policy angles that show that both men and women have unpaid care needs.
‑ Developing alliances and solidarity partnerships in promoting unpaid care in different fora.
‑ Demonstrating a clear constituency around unpaid care.
‑ Including and creating pressure on private sector actors and making a business case for care (i.e, why addressing care issues make sense)
Second session: Building Partnerships and Moving Forward

Existing Collaborations

Collaborations among different partners is an important step for highlighting the demand for policies addressing unpaid care to policy makers. Ms. Maheen Sultan, Deputy Coordinator, CGST and Lead Researcher of BDI, BRAC University gave a short presentation on CGST’s ongoing research work on unpaid care work where CGST is collaborating with ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB). This is a multi country project with an overall objective to support poor women’s social and economic empowerment and right to ‘decent work’ in Bangladesh. The project aims to increase women’s equal access to and control over their incomes that will make an important contribution to women’s social and economic empowerment within their households, communities and decision-making structures at the local and national government levels.

CGST research collaboration on women’s unpaid care work with AAB aims to generate knowledge on the different perceptions of women and men on gender division of labor and gender norms around women’s role in the economy outside the home. CGST and AAB have developed a time diary, a participatory research tool that will be used by women and men from extreme poor households keeping a record of the use of their time to gain an understanding of how gender roles play out. Data collection will be done by the partner NGOs of AAB. Compiling and analyzing time use diaries will provide a platform for grassroots women in the collectives with whom AAB works, to negotiate unequal gender divisions of labor in the household and lobby for support from policy makers. In the time diary there are distinctions between the three broad categories of women’s work-- productive work (i.e. work included in GDP), non-productive activities and unpaid care work). There are ten sub-categories under three broad categories and the sub-categories are - cooking, housework, child care, care of others/adults, livestock rearing, work for self consumption, income generating work, self care, leisure/entertainment and social/cultural activities. A data entry software has been developed by BDI to analyze the time use data.
Ms. Simeen Mahmud, Coordinator, CGST and Lead Researcher BDI, BRAC University discussed the collaboration with BBS where the focus is on analyzing various data sets including a recent pilot survey of 4000 respondents on time-use by BBS. She said this collaboration will allow us to understand the broader context of unpaid care work in Bangladesh. It will provide a large data set to analyze the time use of both men and women, which would be very useful for contextualizing the research finding from CGST and AAB study.

**Discussion and recommendations**

A discussion session allowed the participants to provide their comments on the presentations and also to suggest what could be the “policy asks”, how to build partnerships around these and how to advocate for these in different fora. There was a consensus on the importance of working together on the issue. Various suggestions were made on how different development programs could begin to address unpaid care work e.g. programs on education, agriculture, employment, health and sanitation.

Ms. Rokeya Kabir, Executive Director of Bangladesh Nari Progoti Sangha (BNPS) said that unpaid care work issue is closely linked with gender equality concerns and women’s empowerment. She pointed out that academic studies such as this literature review will be very useful for development practitioners in formulating policy demands related to unpaid care work. She shared her previous work experiences in the early 80s on time budgeting where she studied rural women’s contribution to subsistence economy, including both agricultural productive work and unpaid care work. She stressed that in developing strategies around the recognition of unpaid care work, social construction of women’s role as mothers, daughter in laws, wives and how these social relationships create duties and obligations for women in everyday lives need to be taken into account.
Ms. Sheepa Hafiza, Director, Gender Justice and Diversity Programme at brac emphasized the need for studying care needs of migrant women workers who were moving to urban areas and abroad. She stressed that advocacy by brac’s Gender Quality Action Learning Program (GQAL) had an impact on changing the gender division of labor around child care in brac member households. She added that programs such as this could move the agenda on recognition forward.

Dr. Julia Ahmed, from Women’s Leadership and Transformation program (WTL), at OXFAM stressed the importance of building linkages between the unpaid care work and sexual and reproductive health of women. She also stressed the need for creating ‘solidarity-based alliances’ around care. She said- “the inclusion of unpaid care work issue in the policy arena would be difficult if we failed to build strong collaboration between us”. OXFAM would like to integrate the findings from of the study on time diary tools conducted by CGST/AAB into their gender awareness training and program- said Ms. Ahmed.

Dr. Tania Haque, Associate Professor of the Department of Women and Gender Studies, University of Dhaka shared her PhD research experience which was on women’s unpaid care work in Bangladesh. Dr. Haque argued that there should be only one definition of ‘work’ which will include both paid and unpaid work of women. The socio-cultural construction of the concept of ‘housewife’ and ‘house work (barir kaj)’ creates an adverse situation when demands for recognition of unpaid care work are raised since ‘house work’ is not seen as work that requires skills or is linked to income generation. How policy makers and other actors will address this and change people’s perceptions is a difficult challenge. She also raised questions about who will pay for women’s care work when it came to redistribution of care responsibilities and having the state or community play a stronger role. Dr. Huq also questioned whether the monitory value of care work could be measured effectively when it came to counting women’s contribution.
to household and national accounts. She pointed out that in this context class differences become important as middle class, upper middle class and affluent women can reduce their unpaid care responsibilities by hiring domestic workers or by using labor reducing machines. Poor women do not have these alternatives. Poor women have to manage both unpaid care work and subsistence activities simultaneously. Based on her fieldwork experiences in Bangladesh, she claimed that no woman whether poor and affluent, is prepared to take wages for their care work from her husband. Women argue that if they are paid for their reproductive work it will create a rigid hierarchical relationship between husband and wife (employer-employee), which the women feel would adversely affect conjugal life.

Dr. Seema Moslem, from Bangladesh Mohila Parishad (BMP) pointed out that BMP has been working to organize female farmers. They are collecting information on women’s contribution in the agriculture sector as well as their household activities. This information can be shared with CGST and other actors. She emphasized that research needs to be carried out to gauge women’s perception about their unpaid care needs. The research findings will be helpful in formulating advocacy and awareness programs, and also in building a constituency for demanding the recognition of care work- said Moslem.

Ms. Ishita Rony, Assistant Secretary from the Ministry of Women’s and Children’s Affairs (MoWCA) stressed on the importance of establishing measure that are easily understood by the people and that highlight the monitory value of women’s care work. She said that as households place a higher premium on monetary or financial contribution and the income earning members have more say in the household decision making process it is important to highlight women’s contribution in monetary terms. She argued that though it has been claimed that Bangladesh made impressive gains in women’s empowerment, working women carry out most of unpaid care duties at home and this creates pressure on women as they have less time and energy to engage in other extra household activities or
enjoy leisure time. This double burden also creates a lot of stress. Highlighting women’s contribution to the household in monetary terms may change people’s perception about women’s/household work and also allow women to make claims in family decision making process.

Mr. Fayzur Rahman from the Gender Justice and Diversity program of brac said that GQAL has successfully ran an advocacy program around gender division of labor. He stressed that programs run by large NGOs such as brac could also usefully take on the issues such as recognition and redistribution of unpaid care work. Many men are involved in household work and he believed that gradually care work would be distributed among the household member equally.

Mr. Anwarul Huq, Director of the Extreme Poverty Program from CARE - Bangladesh pointed out that the role of rural women in agriculture sector is changing as male migration from rural to urban area increases, especially in North Bengal. As the nature of women’s involvement changed in agricultural labor their needs around care and also the gender gap in wages have to be taken into account in agriculture policy discussion. He emphasized that NGOs working in agriculture need to focus on unpaid care needs of women agricultural workers and also build a strong constituency for demanding relevant policy change.

Ms. Rina Roy, Director of Human Rights and Advocacy program from Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) informed that they are conducting a research project in collaboration with Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD) on uncounted work of women where both care work and agricultural work are considered. They plan to carry out a nationwide survey, media campaign and an advocacy campaign. She stated that MJF is looking forward to sharing their research findings with the CGST/AAB in the future.
Ms. Sonia Sarder from UNDP, Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR) emphasized the need to link unpaid care work with the broader term expenditure saving work. She said ‘if we link unpaid care work with the expenditure saving work then we will be able to portray the contribution of women in the national economy’. The UPPR project builds community centers in urban slums which provide services to the poor women. She suggested that the project should try to address women’s unpaid care needs through these community centers. She also believes that it is important to influence the State to ensure services for the poor women that reduces their care burden.

Md. Nazrul Islam from BBS explained the importance of including women’s contribution through unpaid care into national accounts. He emphasized on the role played by unpaid care in reproducing and nurturing the next generation of workers and human resource for the whole planet. He pointed out that generally Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics did not conduct time use studies for capturing women’s unpaid care work in the labor force survey. However in 2013, the labor force survey has counted time use by women. The time use method employed by BBS traces the time spent on ten different household works at home. BBS has agreed to share this data with CGST for detailed analysis. He hoped that time-use would be a regular component of labor force surveys.

**Concluding Session**

After the open discussion session, Ms. Simeen Mahumud, Coordinator of CGST thanked all the participants for their contributions. She pointed out that as follow-up measures of the workshop, CGST would circulate the workshop report, the literature review and create a mailing list. It will also circulate the website address where materials on unpaid care could be accessed by the participants. The participants hoped that this workshop would be the beginning of creating alliances and partnerships around care work issues in Bangladesh.
References


## Annex

### Participant List

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Power Point Presentation by Dr. Sohela Nazneen, first session

1. **Situating Unpaid Care: Research and Policy Context**
   - Sohela Nazneen, PhD
   - Professor
   - Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka
   - Lead Researcher, CGST, BRAC Development Institute (BD), BRAC University

2. **What is this about?**
   - To develop policy asks on unpaid care in Bangladesh
   - To build partnerships around these
   - To advocate for these at different forums

3. **Who are we working with?**
   - IDS based at the University of Sussex
   - SMERU, Indonesia
   - *In Bangladesh, Partnerships with:*
     - ActionAid: extreme poor women in collectives in North Bengal
     - Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics: time-use

4. **Why Unpaid Care?**
   - Unpaid care sidelined with our focus to get women into paid work
   - Key issues: recognition, reduction, redistribution;
   - Various policies have implications on unpaid care: water management (on time use/burden); early childhood education; safety nets; disabled/elderly care policies; agriculture policies (crop processing etc)
   - Conversely, policy success also depends on unpaid care in these areas

5. **Why now?**
   - Demographic changes in Bangladesh (elderly)
   - Household structure change (nuclear)
   - Rapid urbanization
   - Thinking cohesively about poverty reduction
   - Sustaining the gains on women’s economic empowerment (labor force participation)
   - Enduring crisis: financial/fiscal—hidden costs of resilience
   - Population whose needs are not addressed (disabled)

6. **What have we been doing?**
   - We started in 2012
   - Key area: research; partnership building; advocacy/awareness
   - Inception-scoping (report available)
   - Literature Review
   - Getting unpaid care into national action plan
   - Talking with others: MJF
   - Action aid—research on extreme poor women
   - BBS-time use
   - Taking it to the UN Special Rapportuer’s forum
Presentation on Literature review by Lopita Huq, first session

1. Unpaid Care Work Literature Review

   Lopita Huq
   Research Fellow
   Center for Gender and Social Transformation (CGST)
   BRAC Development Institute, BRAC University

   Rationale for focusing on unpaid care
   • Demographic change
   • Women in informal economy
   • Female migration
   • Shocks/crises particularly rising food prices
   • Inadequate social protection and safety net programmes

2. Purpose and Scope of Review

   • Purpose: taking stock of existing policies and research on “unpaid care work changes in Bangladesh context
   • Scope
     - Bangladesh government policies and plans
     - Research on Bangladeshi women’s work
   • Questions
     - Whether and to what extent “unpaid care work is addressed
     - Measures and initiatives to reduce or redistribute “unpaid care work”

3. Bangladesh Context

   • What has changed for women?
     - Decline in fertility, maternal and child mortality
     - Closing gender gap in education
     - Increase in labour force participation and expansion of economic activities
     - Changes in traditional bias towards son preference
     - Increased migration (internal/ international)
   • Policy response of GoB
     - Attempts at mainstreaming of gender equality and women’s rights issues in development policies
     - Social protection and safety net schemes
     - Laws for protecting women and children
     - National policies for women

4. Methodology

   • Conceptualizing unpaid care: how did we look at it?
   • What did we include-
     - Government policies and plans: relating to development and reduction in gender disparities
     - Research literature: mainly in terms of 1) calculating women’s economic contribution through unpaid labour; 2) time use studies that focus or comment on women’s unpaid labour; and 3) studies on women’s work that refer to negotiations around unpaid care work.

5. Findings from Policy level documents (general)

   • No mention of unpaid care generally (national action plan on women exception)
   • Where mentioned, mainly as background or contextual issue
   • Politics of international agenda effects what gets included: unpaid care work featured initially
   • In sectors where unpaid care work is vital— it may still be missing; for e.g., early childhood development; social protection policies (only REOPA)
Findings from development plans

- Mention of women’s household responsibilities, unpaid labour, sex stereotyping, equal sharing of household responsibilities, but does not translate into valuation of unpaid care
- Some policy measures childcare, crèche, elderly home etc.
- However the way these measures are justified is around how these would free up women to engage in paid work
- And does not discuss how unpaid care work plays a central role in sustaining societal wellbeing or concerns with redistribution of the workload perhaps because it may be politically sensitive
- Initiative to generate sex disaggregated data important for measurement of women’s contribution through unpaid care

Findings from policies on gender

What about policies on gender?

- Mixed picture
- Periodic report to CEDAW recognizes unpaid care—used to have a stronger focus now watered down
- Alternate CEDAW report by CSO to committee highlights issues related to unpaid care (focus on older women’s need for care)
- National women’s development policy: scope for bringing in unpaid care work comes in through policy’s focus on supportive services policies for working women (paid employment); disability support; women’s contribution to formal/informal economy; addressing sex stereotyping around gender division of labour
- But unpaid care work is not specifically mention (redistribution is not being touched)
- National action plan (current version; still undergoing consultations with involved ministries): unpaid care work comes in

Findings from Policy documents- cont’d

- MDGs- though addressing unpaid care work is crucial in attaining these goals but none of the plans for attaining/ monitoring MDGs clearly recognize the role played by unpaid care; it is not systematically monitored
- For example, target of reducing proportion of own account and contributing family workers in total employment (MDG1), increasing share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural sector (MDG3)

Findings from Research on Bangladesh

- How to count unpaid care work in national accounting
- Housewives not counted as part of female labour force (so most of the unpaid carers are not counted)
- Key findings from Hamid: GDP would change if it was counted
- What is understood as work by BBS?
- Women do not recognize the work they do as economic activity

Findings from Labour Law

- Labour Law 2006: does not recognize paid or unpaid care work
  - Domestic work left out (mostly girls)
- Focuses on the formal sector (crèche, working hours, maternity leave, benefit)
- Leaves out informal sector work where most women are
- Outcome: value of care work not recognized

Findings from research on Bangladesh

- Time use studies
  - Women’s time absorbed by unpaid care for which women are exclusively responsible (cooking)
  - Time spent on unpaid care work increases with improved socio-economic status for women, but declines for men
  - Trade off between child care time and income earning time is most pronounced among the poor
  - Child care time, income earning time and total work time greater for women with infants whether rich or poor.
  - Life cycle variations show total work time greatest for daughters in law compared to mothers in law and mothers (early studies)
  - According to time use statistics in Bangladesh Decent Work Profile report, if unpaid household work is added, women found to work 8.1 hours more than men
Negotiations around Unpaid Care

- Empowerment/women's work studies—unpaid care work comes in as a part of women's engagement in paid work (burden/ constraint)
- **Mostly qualitative data which shows:**
  - Shows that it is mainly women's responsibility
  - In poorer families the burden of unpaid care work are more likely to be shared
  - Men may share child care duties but less inclined to share household work
  - Double burden is a source of stress for women who work
  - Other female members/female outsiders carry the burden if possible (older women) rather than men

Conclusions

- Some spaces have opened up in policy—the government is not unresponsive (data on women's work)
- International policy discourse/reporting can create scope
- Consultative process are important to keep the focus on unpaid care
- Changes in demography/economy/society—will force our hand
- Highlighting the value and redistribution of unpaid care work in policy and research is crucial
- How do we integrate it in our work on different issues as unpaid care work is effected by/or effect issues related to demography, education, safety net, labour, water etc.
- Question is how do we get there?

Negotiations cont’d

- Elderly care support (practical and emotional) still provided by women
- Fear of care crisis when this generation becomes older given migration/smaller families
- NGO intervention around changing norms has its limits (GQAL-BRAC)
- Cultural norms play a key role in determining whether redistribution is possible

Unpaid Care Work: Integration in Policy

What are the challenges in integrating unpaid care work in policy?

- Redistribution: political issue—as gender roles/power is linked to this.
  - How do we get a conversation started/and ensure effective negotiation?
  - Who does the burden shift to and how do we bear the cost?
  - How do we change attitudes?
  Angle/packaging
### What conclusions can we on unpaid care in development policy context?
- It lacks significant and a comprehensive focus
- Piecemeal work
- Among the three ‘R’s to get unpaid care work into policy agenda: some work on recognition/ not much done on reduction/redistribution
- In some policies despite unpaid care work featuring in the contextualization of policies – missing in the actual policy prescriptions
- There are some spaces for discussion/to push this issue as the international discourse changes/and other national changes force our hand

### Opportunities
- Imperative – the changes highlighted implies we will face a ‘care crisis’
- Current shifts has opened up spaces

### What are the challenges in integrating unpaid care work in policy?
- Recognition
  - What do we know?: good contextual and disaggregated data (not just by gender) missing
  - How do we create demand for using these data (expensive/who uses it? How?)
  - How do we not fall into the trap of valorizing femininity when we demand recognition?
  - How do we change the discourse?

### Baby steps
- Opportunistic: scope for work
- Linking up with others
- Gathering data
- Generating demand/showing demand
- Awareness raising: debates/conversation

### What are the challenges in integrating unpaid care work in policy?
- Reduction of care burden
  - How do we integrate a focus on unpaid care in policy areas where the value of/ link with unpaid is not apparent? For example, technology policies/ transport policies/ energy policies?
  - How do we enter into policy debates where people are aware about its linked with unpaid care – such as water/sanitation?
  - How do we move beyond the usual focus in policies where unpaid care comes in, for example child care, creche in labour policies etc, to other issues
  - Which do we prioritize?
  - How do we bear the cost?
Influencing Policies to Support the Empowerment of Women and Girls research programme

The research programme “Influencing Policies to Support the Empowerment of Women and Girls” is a collaborative research programme with a number of leading research partners across the globe, led by the Institute of Development Studies funded by DFID and Sida. The research is being undertaken in twelve countries between 2012 and 2016. It focuses on collaborative research between IDS and a range of global partners on three gender-related themes: effective organised activism against gender-based violence, the health of women and girls in low income urban settings and the visibility of unpaid care work in public policy. In Bangladesh, BRAC Development Institute, BRAC University is the working partner to develop policy asks on unpaid care in Bangladesh and advocate for these at different strategic forums.

For more detail please visit http://interactions.eldis.org/