

# MONETISATION OF WOMEN'S UNPAID WORK AND TIME USE SURVEY IN GAIRSAIN BLOCK OF GARHWAL HIMALAYAS<sup>1</sup>

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## **Introduction:**

Women's work remains unrecognized and in unorganized sector of economy (much of) despite the fact that their contribution to family is vital. In many cases they are breadwinners, working for longer hours than men (HDR 1995). This disparity in responsibilities and income share has lead to her lower status in family, locality; no or very less say in family decision making has received ample attention in Human Development Report, 1995 has drawn our attention to it: 'Men received lion's share of income and recognition for their economic contribution, while most of women's work remains unpaid, unrecognized and undervalued' (HDR 1995: 93) because of faulty concept of labor force participation. Household or domestic work is not considered as economic activity, mainly because of its use value than exchange value (Debra 1999), this indicates reason behind neglect of women's economic contribution to household<sup>1</sup> in particular and society in general. The most striking characteristic of household labor is that, whether employed or not, women continue to do the majority of house work<sup>2</sup> (Shelton & John 1996). Women in Nepal wake up before dawn to fetch water and

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firewood (HDR 1995). They are usually the first in the family to rise and last to rest. Women in poor household work more hours than men and the poorer the household the longer women work (Buvinic 1999). 'All women spent more time on house work, have more responsibility for child rearing, have less access to many social and material resources, have less access to public spaces and public power' (Krishnaraj 2006: 4441). Geographical space is also engendered as different bodies experience different access to space depending on class, caste, age, sexuality and physical ability because space is conditioned more by socio-cultural factor rather than purely economic factors (Ranade 2007).

Gender<sup>3</sup> bias in intra-household allocation of resources, participation in decision making, time spent within and outside house needs to be probed further. When probed deeper we found gendered division of work within and outside household; the basic nature of work performed by women falls in non-market economic activity<sup>4</sup> in rural areas. Women perform seasonal work, raising children, cattle work (milking, feeding and cleaning cow sheds), daily house hold duties (cooking, cleaning, feeding, washing cloths), fetching water, fuel wood and fodder etc. However, due to greater task specificity of agricultural work (women are mostly concentrated in transplanting, weeding and harvesting), they face sharper seasonal fluctuation in employment and earning than men (Agarwal 1997). These activities are often not counted as economic activities or undervalued and are typically excluded from economic analysis (Shelton & John 1996).

The study area under consideration is geographically important due to its location on the junction of Garhwal and Kumaon regions of newly formed state of Uttarakhand. Gairsain development block (administrative unit) is politically sensitive and currently proposed as

future capital region for the state of Uttarakhand. Another striking feature of this area from women's perspective is that women are politically active and have vigorously participated in "Uttarakhand Movement". Gairsain development block is characterized by rugged terrain with average height varying from 4500 to 6000 feet, physically less accessible, with poor and shallow soil, low agricultural productivity, poor quality of animal husbandry, lack of infrastructure (Road, water, electricity, telecommunication), depleting forest (quality and quantity) and water resources. All these factors have resulted in male selective out migration and have left women folk in worse condition as they have to toil hard for sustenance. This calls for further probe into the matter.

**Objective and Hypothesis:**

The objectives of the paper are to examine time spent by men and women on different activities. Along with this we also measure and value the economic contribution by women to household economic security. Finally we also explore gender division of labour.

In the paper we have hypothesized that freedom of mobility outside the house enjoyed by women in the study area is bargained by women folk through their hard work and contribution to economic security of household. Women work for more hours compared to men and contribute substantially to household income in more than one way.

**Methodology:**

In the present study Time Use Survey (TUS) has been used for the purpose of data collection because this data provides a good measure to capture economic contribution by women in household. In TUS cultural bias is reduced because information is gathered without imposing pre-defined concept of "work". Time Use (TU) data provides deep

insights on women's daily life, nature of work, leisure time, say in decision making at household level and professional health hazards. The data was collected through personal in-depth interviews in the local dialect, i.e. Garhwali using semi-structured questionnaire. Prevailing mass illiteracy prevented us from using dairy method in the study area. We selected 29 census villages in according to their location viz. on top of ridge, on river site, on high terrace (locally known as 'Malli'). From each village we chose 8 households, systematically, depending on the number of household in a village. From each village we selected interviewees according to sex and social status (for women only). From each village we interviewed two each male, daughters, daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, with this we covered 232 houses with response rate of 70 percentages. We interviewed 50 men, 45 daughters, 29 daughter-in-laws and 41 mother-in-laws. The data collected on daily recall basis are more accurate. Since we are not covering all four seasons we collected data for the previous seven days from date of personal in-depth interviews.

**Gender Division of Household Work in Gairsain Development Block:**

Gendered division of labour within household is evident when we look at the daily tasks performed by family members. Apart from paid work outside household male members perform certain tasks such as; implanting fields, market related work, dropping children to school, grazing cattle and major repair work at home. On the other hand women work in and out household for most of the day and round the year, activities performed by them are; feeding family thrice a day, cleaning-mopping, washing utensils, cloths and up keeping house, looking after children, fetching water, fuel wood and fodder, livestock activities (feeding, milking cattle and cleaning cowshed), weaving and stitching, preservation of food stuff for lean season in the form of pickles, making squash, juices,

preparation of field for farming- removing weeds, leveling and dividing field in to pieces for irrigation purpose, harvesting, transporting, thrashing and storing food grains etc.

Fig 1 shows the gendered division of work in Gairsain Development Block. Looking at aforementioned classification of activities, it is evident that women shoulder greater responsibilities within the household but these activities falls in non market category and doesn't fetch money to family. Primarily women work is not performed at formal work place and fails direct generation of cash income, this in turn results in their subjugation and no say in decision making within the household (Messias et. al. 1997).

### **Daily Time Use Analysis:**

Work hours and nature of work for women depend on their social status viz. daughter, daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. When cross tabulated with independent variables such as; caste, religion and class (economic status), there was not much differences in term of daily work hours but marked difference prevails according to their social status. Newly married women (daughter-in-law) have to work longer hours than their mother-in-laws and unmarried girls to prove themselves as ideal daughter-in-law and thus they work for 17 hours a day. Hence we can not take women as single generic entity in our study. Daughter in laws carryout all the heavy work of fetching water, fuel wood and fodder along with agricultural activities, while daughters performs lighter tasks such as cleaning pots, cutting vegetables, assistance to their mother in kitchen gardening. Hence daughters have plenty of time for recreation and visiting friends generally within the village and occasionally outside the village. On the other hand mother-in-law enjoys all the privileges and performs much lighter work and work fewer hours (7 hours). They

work in kitchen gardens, make breakfast and food distribution, looking after grand children. When asked about her daily activities, a 60 year old women responded; *'I don't do anything as I can't work any more.....my daughter-in-law performs all the work.'* Moreover, in this rugged terrain of Himalayas daughter-in-laws carry 35-40 kg of head load for 5 km for almost two to three hours (in some cases forests are located more than 8 km from the village). One young married woman expressed her woes; *'mother-in-law scolds me when I am late returning from work but this is not fair because after working for so long and too hard I get all these.....do I deserve this?'*

Impact of terrain can be explained by Fig 2 which reveals the dimensions and multiplicity of women work. These dimension are; linear distance, height, time and weight. When we look simply at the average distance traveled to fetch fuel wood we ignore the impact exerted by terrain and headload which results in joint pain, back pain, deformation of bones, scars on back and shoulders etc. In the process of collection fuel wood women climb trees, stroll for several kilometers within the forest. The quality of forest is fast degrading due to increasing human activities along with reduction in areal spread and this is adding to the woes of women as they have to spent more time in forests at the expense of their leisure time.

When we look at table no. 1, it is evident that collection of fuel wood and fodder is entirely done by women in general and daughter-in-laws in particular. When we look at leisure time as an indicator of human welfare (Kaur 2004), women, specifically married young women have hardly any time for recreation (watching television, personnel care and rest in between work hours and this is calculated in this paper to be one hour).

Agriculturally this season (August end to September, when the study was conducted) was lean period and this is clear when we look at average time spent on farm. However, this does not mean that women have plenty of leisure time in agriculturally lean seasons. They invest this extra time in collection of wood for energy needs of household for winter season and fodder for cattle for recurrent and future needs along with preservation of food stuff which results in contribution to economic security of household.

Male members are engaged in paid activities in government jobs (armed forces are the main job provider), private sector and in unorganized sector as daily wage labourers and do not work on field other than sowing operations, enjoys greater amount of free time for playing indoor games and gossips at market place. As reported by 32 year old married man of Gair village; *“My work is to plough the land and rest of the work is done by my wife (stated with a sense of superiority).”* In the evening they go for drinks (liquor). We were told by one man who works as a daily wage earner on construction site at the block headquarter: *“After coming from site I play cards, drink tea and before going home I take drink (alcohol)...”* When asked about household activities and agriculture and crops one unmarried youth replied; *“I don’t know anything about these, my family members must know about it.....I go home to eat and sleep otherwise I roam in the market.”* Elder male members do take care of cattle grazing and taking them to river site for water and devote little time for household works such as maintenance and cutting wood for fuel and fire at home.

It is quite apparent that those male who are currently working do not participate in household work, agriculture and collection activities. We were informed by the men that they are working and earning livelihood for family and can’t work at both the places

(home and outside). Market related activities are solely done by male members of household (exceptionally in few houses women perform this because all the adult male members have migrated). Thus it is quite evident that women specifically daughter-in-laws are engaged throughout the day and round the year within the household and outside with little or no respite at all.

Fig 3 shows the women's contribution to household economic security. Women contribute to household income in many ways by indulging in activities such as agriculture, livestock farming, collection of fuel wood, fodder and water etc. These results in direct or indirect contribution to economic security in the form of supply of animal protein, energy security, agricultural productivity, work in unpaid activities within the household. This proves our hypothesis that, women's freedom in conditional and bargained by shouldering huge responsibilities. Women are significant contributors to household economic security and in some cases bread winners.

#### **Monetisation of Women's Work:**

Women work is unpaid, for own consumption and not traded in market even then women are working actively and contributing significantly to household food and financial security through activities mentioned in earlier sections of current study. The value of these goods and services are neither counted as a part of household income nor in GDP (Kulshreshtha and Singh 1999). These goods and services should be valued at the basic price at which they could be sold if offered for sale in the market. By imputing value of these goods and services we can estimate the contribution of women to household income and can compare with male contribution to household income (HDR 1995). Economists have argued against imputation and measurement of the women's unpaid activities



because of problems of measurement and imputed income does not have the same significance as monetary value. However in principal these problems associated with measurement can be wiped out.

For measurement and imputing the value of women's unpaid activities we have two principal methods: Input Method and Output Method (Swiebel 1999). Input method measures the time spent in unpaid economic activities and assigns a price to it. This again can be done in two ways.

- a. The Opportunity cost method values individuals' time spent in unpaid work by taking hourly wage rate for men and women and then multiplying it with hours spent everyday.
- b. The market replacement cost method, this again have two approaches: Global Substitutes (performs all tasks of homemaker) and Specialised Substitutes (different persons professionally trained would take over different household tasks).

However specialised substitutes would result in over estimation because of higher productivity than global substitutes. On the contrary the output method tries to measure goods and services produced by assigning a price. Theoretically this method is superior but has problems of identifying physical units of production and owing to this limitation output method is rarely used in its original form. This paper used opportunity cost method and output method (with its limitations) for measuring and imputation of women's unpaid work. In first method we also looked in to gender discrimination in wage rate and found that there is no visible discrimination based on gender but women's participation in paid wage labourer is negligible.

When interviewed about how many days they go to collect fuel wood and fodder, for fuel wood they reported that twice in a week from April to mid of December and daily for the remaining part of the year. In case of fodder they bring two bundles of green grass daily in monsoon season and on drying 10 bundles make one. During dry season they collect one bundle (dry grass) every day and this makes minimum of 120 bundle of 30-35 kg each. Details of imputation are available in table 2.

Derived imputation is not reflective of real contribution by women to household because of host of factors such as; lack of reliable data on crop production (as it is not traded in market), exact quantities of vegetables and fruits produced in kitchen garden, there are seasonal variation in price of fodder and fuel wood due to fluctuation in demand and supply (we have taken average price), did not imputed the value of dairy products such as milk, butter and curd etc to avoid the problem of double counting because fodder is used to feed the cattle but in the process we have lost the value addition in the form of milk, butter and curd etc. For water we have taken government rate of piped water supply for the drinking and domestic purpose in rural areas (department charge on lump sum basis). We have not included the time spent on child and elderly care, cooking (includes pre and post cooking preparations) etc. The average monthly income of women is worked out to be Rs. 2847 and annual income Rs. 34168 and this is more than Uttarakhand's per capita income (Economic Survey 2004-05).

Imputation clearly reveals the magnitude of economic contribution by women in the hill society. In many cases they are bread winner for the household and vital for sustenance of household as in study area men consume major chunk of their income in boozing and fagging (as reported during this survey) which is negative and does not lead to human

welfare and personal in nature, on the contrary women's income is utilized for collective welfare of family. This is different from commonly prevailing perception that male are the only earning members of household. When asked whether they are working or not, 81% women reported that they are working. Women doing household work perceive themselves as working women. Inclusion of women's unpaid work as economic activity and in Gross national Product will lead to empowerment of women as is cited in Kaur's work, 'what is not counted is usually not noticed' (Kaur 2004: 185). Our findings correspond with the findings of HDR 1995 as it states, '*...value of non-SNA (Standard National Accounts) production is...at least half of gross domestic product, and it accounts for more than half of private consumption*' (HDR 1995: 97).

In second method we have taken prevailing market wage rates for 7hrs a day. Wage rates are different for government and private work and these are Rs. 73 and Rs. 100 respectively. Table 3 provides us the details of monetization based on daily wage rates.

This provides a very clear portrait of reality. Women (young married) are earning much more than what men are earning. When hours spent daily converted in to income women are earning 1.8 times more than their male counterparts. One thing is worth mentioning is that their work is relentless irrespective of other things as meals must be prepared thrice a day and child and elderly care have to be met immediately. On the other hand male members of household don't work on public and national holidays and this gap in earning will further amplify if we extrapolate for complete year.

What this paper has failed to capture is multitasking performed by women. For example while cooking she is also looking after her children. In current paper we haven't looked into seasonality of work. Women face greater seasonal fluctuations in nature of tasks she

performs but it was not possible for us to cover all four seasons because of time, financial and human resource constraints. In this study we could only see the distance traveled by these women with head load but could not capture the altitude they have to traverse for collection activities.

### **Findings and Policy Measures:**

In the survey area women use more than 50 % of their time in collection activities viz. collection of fuel wood, drinking water and fodder for cattle. Apart from this women produce goods and service for households that would be produced by the market in developed countries (UNDP 2005). Women are bread winner for many households against the common perception which prevails here that they are economically dependent on their male counterpart. When their unpaid economic work is translated in monetary terms they are earning 1.8 times more than men. Women are working primarily in non market household production activities, while men are engaged in paid market activities. Gendered division of labor is evident as entire task of fetching water, fodder, wood, cooking food, washing cloths, looking after children and adults is performed by women in general and young married women in particular which is primarily unpaid in nature. 'This undermines the status of women in society and reflected in lack of recognition of their contribution' (HDR 1995: 97) despite the fact that unpaid work is substantial.

Policies aiming to target women folk of study area in particular and hill women in particular should be designed by grass root approach which is inclusive in nature rather than top down approach. Policies should address the specific problems of this area because of physically demanding, exerts significant influence on time spent in collection

of wood and fodder. This area has witnessed dual problems of mounting population pressure (humans and animals) and degradation in quality and quantity of forest cover. This resulted in greater demand for fuel and fodder on one side and increased time in collection on other side. Paper suggests few policy measures to improve the quality of life in the study area:

Survey area has huge potential for bio gas production and by doing this we can solve problem of indoor pollution which leads to health hazard. Bio gas is a clean and cheap source of energy that can be used for the purpose of lighting, cooking and heating. This will reduce the dependence on forests for fuel and will save on time and distance traveled to collect wood.

Other than monsoon season survey area has ample sunlight and this can be utilized for the purpose of water heating and cooking. So far there is very limited usage of solar energy.

Third major problem is connectivity as there are hardly any roads. Few women reported carrying LPG gas cylinder and other articles of domestic usage on their head for more than 5 Kms. For this government must built web of rope ways and village roads.

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<sup>1</sup> A person living alone or two or more persons living together as a single domestic unit who make common provision for food and other essentials for living and occupy the whole or part of one dwelling unit (Ironmonger; 1999).

<sup>2</sup> House work most often refers to unpaid work done to maintain family members and/or home, such as emotional work and other invisible work.

<sup>3</sup> Gender refers to the sociological context. Gender differences generally favor men because they are the result of women's disadvantaged position in society (Buvinic, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Non-market activities are the production for own consumption of primary products including own account processing of primary products and own account production of fixed assets (pp. 4, NSS Report no. 465).