

# Making **Care** Visible

Women's unpaid care work in Nepal, Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya



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## Contents

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| <b>Executive Summary</b>             | 4  |
| <b>Introduction</b>                  | 6  |
| <b>Understanding unpaid care</b>     | 8  |
| <b>Programme and research design</b> | 12 |
| <b>Findings</b>                      | 16 |
| <b>Conclusion</b>                    | 36 |

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## Executive summary

**Care is around us everywhere** – from the mother who takes care of her children, to the wife who cooks her family's meals, the eldest daughter who helps with the housework, and the widow who works in the community kitchen.

These different caring activities are essential to maintaining our societies and across the world are primarily done by women and girls. When this work is carried out in the person's own home and is unpaid, it is not reflected in national statistics or economic analyses, despite its centrality to our day-to-day wellbeing. It is perceived to be less valuable than paid work and it is ignored and not considered to be “work” even by the women and men who engage in and benefit directly from these activities. In part because it is invisible in national statistics and less valued, local and national authorities generally fail to design social and economic policies that can reduce women's primary responsibility for unpaid care work.

While all women regardless of class, race, caste and ethnicity are expected to provide care as part of their roles as mothers, wives, and daughters, women living in poverty are disproportionately affected by this responsibility. **Unpaid care is more difficult to do in the context of poverty** as basic amenities, and access to public services are lacking. Further, the income needed to purchase goods and services to undertake care work may not be available. Women must then rely on their own labour to provide the care that is required. Many women living in poverty carry the dual responsibilities for both unpaid care work and earning an income or subsistence farming. **Women's responsibility for care leads to the violation of their basic human rights** to an education, political participation, decent work and leisure. It contributes to persistent gender inequalities.



**A Pokot woman in Tangelbei, Kenya.**

PHOTO: DES WILLIE/ACTIONAID

**ActionAid designed a multi-country programme in Nepal, Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya focused on women's unpaid care work** to respond to these rights violations with the aim of making this work more visible and valued by women and men, community leaders and government. It is part of ActionAid's commitment outlined in the organisation's 2012-2017 strategy to make women's unpaid care work central to demands for quality public services financed through more progressive domestic resource mobilisation. The programme was inspired by the efforts of some national governments to measure time use and make visible women's overall workload including their work in their own households. National time use surveys are used to measure unpaid care work that is currently not included in the national accounts which underlie calculations of gross domestic product. ActionAid sought to transform

this statistical tool into a participatory time diary tool that could be completed by the women and men involved in the programme. The intention was that in using the tool women and men would begin to “see” the time and energy required to do unpaid care work and the effect this has on women’s wellbeing and fulfilment of their human rights.

**The data collected show that in poor rural and urban areas women work longer hours than men, spend more time on unpaid care work and subsistence agriculture, and have less time to engage in paid work and social and cultural activities.**

The process of filling out and reviewing the time diaries led the women involved to question their primary responsibility for unpaid care work. Some women used community discussions to push for men and leaders to recognise their unpaid care work and to demand that men become more involved in this work. In other communities women organised and took action to demand that local government allocate increased budgets for more public services that would support them in their unpaid care work. In its design the aim of the programme was to change perceptions and beliefs that unpaid care work is only women’s work. The programme was based on the understanding that **a more collective responsibility for care provision across numerous actors from women and men, the community and the government would help to respect, protect and fulfil women’s rights.**

It is impossible to identify a single policy change that will alone address all the issues related to

women’s unpaid care work. Indeed, care is so pivotal to our lives that it is reflected in a multitude of policies, including – but not restricted to – basic infrastructure, early childhood education, healthcare, and social protection. Although the report cannot do justice to any one of these policies, it highlights demands for national policy change that emerged from the women involved in the programme around access to water, childcare services and social protection schemes. In all four countries limited access to water brought on by seasonal droughts and floods, or due to a lack of piped water in urban areas, was a key issue. While each country has a policy on early childhood care, none of the governments are fully financing or implementing this policy. Social protection was only discussed in Nepal where there is a history of social protection schemes and civil society engagement to improve their design and implementation. The report describes policies from other countries that have effectively recognised, reduced and redistributed women’s unpaid care work to inspire policy change.

**By making unpaid care work visible we are pushing governments to rethink how they understand the economy and how they prioritise the allocation of public resources.**

Reallocating resources within current national budgets will not be enough to fund the kind of public services that will support women living in poverty who are currently carrying a far too heavy responsibility for unpaid care work. Additional domestic resource mobilisation, particularly taxation, can play an important role in filling this gap in the budget and raising revenue by closing tax loopholes and cutting back on harmful tax incentives.

This is a long-term strategy that can lead to the progressive realisation of women’s rights and is an important component to addressing inequality and poverty in all countries.



## Introduction

“This [**unpaid care work**] is the type of work where we do not earn money but do not have free time either. Our work is not seen but we are not free as well.”

– Woman in Patharkot, Nepal

Every day the majority of women spend time – and often very long hours – cooking, cleaning, and caring for children, the ill and the elderly. Yet this work is not captured in data, is not discussed in national debates, and is usually not considered when designing and implementing economic and social policies. It remains invisible even though care is a central human need and maintains every society. Further, when care work, including both domestic chores and caregiving activities, is carried out within one's household it is generally unpaid. In contrast, when it is done in other people's households or in public and private institutions – for example in the case of domestic workers, nurses and chefs – it is paid, although the pay may be low. Some of this paid care work will be captured in national statistics, but the unpaid care work women and girls do in their homes will not. Yet turning a blind eye to unpaid care work hampers efforts to address inequality and reduce poverty in all countries.

For women living in poverty, their disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work can prevent them from accessing other opportunities and enjoying their rights. People living in poverty who require care, such as the ill, those with disabilities and the elderly, may also not receive quality care due to a lack of resources and time on the part of other household members. As more and more women enter the labour market they have to juggle their unpaid care work with other activities such as subsistence agriculture or small-scale trading, to earn a living for themselves and their families. Care work is often shifted to other women and girls in the household as a result and has major



**Sumitra Thami, 34**, goes about her daily tasks in the mountainous Dolakha District, Nepal. Here she is inside her clay home shucking corn.

PHOTO: BRIAN SOKOL/ACTIONAID

implications for girls' education. Care is more difficult to do in poor communities as basic amenities are often lacking such as water and sanitation, while access to public services may be limited. Further, the income needed to purchase goods and services to undertake care work may not be available. The dual responsibilities – for both unpaid care work and earning an income – which many women must carry contribute to gender inequality. Time constraints mean women are less likely to continue their education when they are younger, to participate in political processes and contribute to local decision-making on the issues that affect them and their families, and to access full-time and decent work. There is also little time for rest given that care work must be done every day. Women's rights to an education, political participation, decent work and leisure therefore go unfulfilled.

Governments have a significant role to play in addressing the rights violations women face. For instance, unpaid care work can be reduced or redistributed through the provision of public services that support care provision. However, change must also happen at every level, from women's and men's perceptions of care work and their respective responsibilities, to shifts in public spending to allocate more resources towards care services that will benefit, in particular, those living in poverty.

The unpaid care work programme at ActionAid was piloted in Nepal, Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya and aimed to support women, their families and communities to recognise and value women's unpaid care work. The four country offices identified their interest in being part of this programme due to an organisation wide commitment outlined in ActionAid's 2012-2017 strategy, to make women's unpaid care work more visible and central to demands for quality public services financed through more progressive domestic resource mobilisation.<sup>1</sup>

The overall aim of the programme is to encourage greater collective responsibility and accountability for care provision between women, men, the community and government. The first component of the programme is to start changing women's and men's beliefs that unpaid care work is primarily the responsibility of women and girls and that it is

not as valuable as men's contribution through paid work. A second component is to demand acknowledgment of its value from communities and local leaders. The third component is for women to demand more public services from local and national authorities to fulfil their basic human rights and support their households to provide better quality care, while saving them time and energy to engage in other activities. Through this process the programme seeks to support women's individual and collective empowerment.

Despite decades of research on care it often remains invisible in the policies and programmes of both government and international development agencies.<sup>2</sup> We are trying to reverse this trend by highlighting women's and men's perspectives on unpaid care and their demands for improved service provision. This report may therefore be of interest to government officials particularly from the four countries involved as it presents data on women's time use in poor rural and urban communities. Civil society organisations and bilateral or multilateral institutions may find the programme design and participatory tools used to mobilise women around their unpaid care work useful for their own work.

The first section of this report will review the literature that underpins the programme design. The second section will discuss the methodology used for programme implementation and describe the time diary tool that was developed for women to track the time they spend on multiple activities. The data from these time diaries will be analysed in the third section highlighting the key findings of the programme. This section also includes an assessment of the impact the programme has had on women's empowerment and a review of four relevant national policy issues that can make a difference to women's unequal responsibility for unpaid care work.

## Understanding unpaid care

**In order to understand unpaid care work and why it remains invisible we need to question how we currently view and measure the economy and who, aside from women and girls, is responsible for unpaid care work.**

### Defining and measuring work and production

Most people probably think about factories and farms when they hear the word “production”. However, the work that is done on factories and farms accounts for only a small part of the work and production that is done in any country.

The “third person rule” can be used to distinguish what constitutes production if we want to appreciate the full scope of work and production. This rule is accepted in standard economic theory although, as discussed below, some economic measures are not fully in line with this rule. The rule says that any activity that one can theoretically pay someone else (i.e. a third party) to do is *work* and is therefore *production*.<sup>3</sup> Thus:

- Eating, sleeping and learning *are not* work because one cannot pay someone else to do them for you
- Growing vegetables *is* work
- Collecting water *is* work
- Caring for children and housework *are* work. These tasks constitute ‘unpaid care work’ if they are done unpaid in a person’s own home or for others in the community.

The *national accounts* are the statistical system that underlies calculation of the key economic measure of gross domestic product (GDP). GDP is commonly used as a measure of the economic “success” of a country, and informs important decisions – including on aid and investment – that strongly influence the prospects for a country and its people. The system of national accounts (SNA) contains the rules that state how GDP must be calculated. The SNA does this by specifying a *production boundary* which includes:

1. Production of all individual or collective goods or services that are supplied to units other than their producers. **[production for the market]**
2. The own-account production of all **goods** that are retained by their producers for their own final consumption or gross capital formation; **[subsistence production]**
3. The own-account production of housing services by owner-occupiers and of domestic and personal services produced by employing paid domestic staff. **[imputed rent and paid domestic work]**

The SNA recognises that own-account, unpaid production of services that are for “final consumption” by the producer’s own family or community constitute work. However, these activities are not included in calculation of GDP. It is these activities, which are not properly recognised by the SNA, that make up **unpaid care**. Not measuring women’s full contribution through unpaid care work means that policymakers do not have the statistical data to assess how this work impacts on the reproduction of the labour force and the market economy, but also on the overall wellbeing of a society.<sup>4</sup>

## Unpaid care work

### Box 1: Defining unpaid care work<sup>5</sup>

*“The term ‘unpaid’ differentiates this care from paid care provided by employees in the public and NGO (non-governmental organisation) sectors and employees and self-employed persons in the private sector.*

*The word ‘care’ indicates that the services provided nurture other people.*

*The word ‘work’ indicates that these activities are costly in time and energy and are undertaken as obligations (contractual or social).”*

- UN Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2000: UNIFEM Biennial Report*

Unpaid care work includes all those activities that go towards caring for a household such as **cooking, cleaning, collecting water and firewood,<sup>i</sup> and caring for the ill, elderly and children** when these activities are done by family members for no pay. Unpaid care work also includes **voluntary community work**.

In most societies cooking, cleaning, fetching firewood and water are seen as women's work regardless of women's social class and level of education. Caring for children, the ill and elderly and volunteer community work are also seen as women's work. The work consumes time and energy and can be a form of physical hardship. Women who can afford to hire domestic workers shift this responsibility to lower class women

who do this work for often low pay.<sup>6</sup> This in part helps solve the problem for wealthier women, but this solution is not available for women living in poverty. Without enough income to meet basic needs, women can rely only on their own labour and that of girls and other women in the household to provide the unpaid care work that they and their families need.

Reducing and shifting the responsibility for care provision by women is especially important because most women living in poverty do not do only unpaid care work. Even in societies where the common perception is that men are the main breadwinners, large numbers of women find themselves in the position of main breadwinner, additional household earners, single mothers, or for some other reason bearing major responsibility for their family's food security and other basic needs. Women living in poverty may also engage in production for the “market” (i.e. producing goods and services that will be sold to others) even if their work is unpaid (because they are seen as “helping” in a family business) or poorly paid for this work.

If they do not measure women's unpaid care work governments cannot assess the contribution made through this work, and cannot identify the impact this has on different segments of society. They can also not assess the impact of economic and social policies on the level and quality of unpaid care work that is provided in the household. Policy makers often assume that women's ability to provide care is infinite and ignore the effect that cuts to public services have on the amount of unpaid care work women and girls provide.<sup>7</sup> The solution to women's disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work is not to reduce the production of the services as they are essential for the functioning of society and for well-being and productivity. Instead, as this report demonstrates, there are other ways of ensuring that these services are provided, that the services are of good quality and available to all who need them, and that those who provide the services are compensated in some way and not unduly burdened.

<sup>i</sup> The SNA states that national accounts should include the value of unpaid collection of fuel and water. This means that in strict terms collection of fuel and water are not unpaid care work. However, many countries do not include these activities when estimating GDP. Further, most ordinary people see these tasks as part of housework. In line with this, the ActionAid programme considered them to be part of unpaid care work but recorded them separately from other unpaid care work.

## Who does care work?

There are a number of actors that play a role in care provision. They include women, girls, men and boys, government, the non-governmental sector and the market.<sup>8</sup> The different actors who provide care are themselves influenced by gender norms that define women's work versus men's work. Today unpaid care work is predominately seen as women's work not only by individuals, but also by government, the non-governmental sector, and the market. By ignoring unpaid care work in economic analyses, government and the market assume that unpaid care work is more a matter of concern for the household – and in particular for women in a household. The non-governmental sector often relies on women's voluntary work in their programmes such as community kitchens and community healthcare without enough consideration to the impact this work has on women's time. The responsibility for care provision is therefore not equitably shared among these multiple actors. Changing perceptions towards a more collective responsibility for care provision across these numerous actors from the household to the government is one of the main aims of the ActionAid unpaid care work programme.

There is a particular focus in the programme on the role of government because it is primarily responsible to protect, promote and fulfil basic human rights.



### Box 2: Human Rights and unpaid care work<sup>9</sup>

The four countries included in this report are signatory to human rights treaties and have ratified the *Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW). CEDAW explicitly recognises women's disproportionate responsibility for some aspects of care and the impact this has on their human rights:

*“The responsibilities that women have to bear and raise children will affect their right to access education, employment and other activities related to their personal development. They also impose inequitable burdens of work on women... Relieving women of some of the burdens of domestic work would allow them to engage more fully in the life of their communities. Women's economic dependence on men often prevents them from making important political decisions and from participating actively in public life.”*

Governments are therefore responsible for ensuring that the responsibility for care does not encroach on fulfilling women's rights, while also guaranteeing those in need of care can access good quality care provision. Many other internationally agreed human rights obligations are also relevant. For instance, governments have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil all the human rights contained in the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and *International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights* **‘without discrimination of any kind’**. This means that governments must ensure that women are able to fully enjoy rights such as the right to work, the right to political participation, the right to social security, the right to freedom of expression, the right to an adequate standard of living on **an equal basis with men**.

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## Three R's

There is not a single solution to address women's disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work. Instead, there is need for solutions to be tailored to the particular type of service and the situation in a particular country or community.

In general terms, however, the solutions can be categorised into the three **Rs**, as follows:<sup>10</sup>

- **Recognition** of unpaid care work means that the work done by (mainly) women is "seen" and acknowledged. It also means that it is recognised as being "work" and "production". Recognition can take several forms, including provision of compensation for the work, recognising it when determining other benefits, such as pension payments, or measuring unpaid care work in national statistics.
- **Reduction** of unpaid care work means that the burden is reduced for individual women and for the society more generally. This can happen through the service being provided in a different way. For example, women's childcare responsibility would be reduced if government provided accessible and affordable child care services. Similarly, unpaid care work would be reduced if services were provided closer to where people live and work so that less time is spent accessing health care and the like.
- **Redistribution** of unpaid care work means that the overall amount of unpaid care work remains the same, but it is more fairly shared among different people. One example of this is where male household members take on a greater share of housework and childcare. Another example is where government takes on a greater share of healthcare provision by setting up an effective public healthcare system.



**Pokot woman** collecting water from dried watering hole near Tangelbei, East Pokot, Kenya.  
PHOTO: DES WILLIE/ACTIONAID

## Programme and research design

**The programme** was inspired by a few governments' efforts to measure time use and make visible women's overall workload including their work in their own households.

National time use surveys, as explained below, are used to measure all activities done by individuals, including unpaid care work. ActionAid sought to transform this statistical tool into a time diary tool that could be completed by the women and men involved in the programme. The intention was that in using the tool women and men would begin to see the time and energy required to do unpaid care work and the effect this has on women's wellbeing and fulfilment of their human rights.

A total of **107 women in Kenya, 100 in Nepal, 42 in Nigeria and 84 in Uganda** filled out the time diaries. The programme was implemented in one rural and one urban or peri-urban community in each country except Nepal where the programme focused on rural communities. In Nigeria, though fewer women were involved in the time diary collection, the analysis from the diaries was shared with over 100 women involved in the programme. Women in the circles were of different ages including, for example, young women with small children and older women who were widowed. In all the households most women were in heterosexual relationships whether the men were present or not. In Nepal, some men from the communities had migrated for work, but women tended to remain in joint-family structures and were not solely responsible for both paid work and unpaid care work. In Bwaise, Uganda, the most urban setting of the study, more women in the group headed up their own households than in other countries. Most of these women were responsible for both unpaid care work and income earning activities. This might help to explain why in Bwaise participation in the ActionAid programme was far more irregular than in the other communities.

### Reflect

ActionAid has a long history of working with participatory methodologies in its programmes and research. Building on this experience, the unpaid care work programme adopted the Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowerment Community Technique, also known as *Reflect*.<sup>11</sup> The *Reflect* methodology is a participatory learning process which facilitates peoples' critical analysis of their environments and supports them in working out political solutions to the collective problems they face. It started in 1993 as a pilot project undertaken by ActionAid in three countries, Uganda, El Salvador and Bangladesh. Since then, the participatory methodology has been applied around the world by diverse organisations.<sup>12</sup>

*Reflect* was chosen as the most appropriate methodology for the unpaid care work programme in part because of its focus on literacy – a skill that many of the women in the targeted communities wanted to develop. Through *Reflect* participants learn basic literacy and numeracy skills that are grounded in their local context and in their own language. The process starts with the construction of graphics (which can be done on the ground) using facilitation techniques from participatory rural appraisal. These graphics are then transferred onto a large sheet of paper, and language and numeracy work are built around them.

A *Reflect* circle becomes a space where participants discuss their local context and the power inequalities that shape their realities. Such inequalities can be expressed, among others, through gender, race, class, ethnic, sexuality, age, and caste. For this reason, *Reflect* is a conducive methodology for women to analyse the gender norms that determine their responsibilities and work as women, mothers, wives, partners, sisters and daughters in relation to men's roles and responsibilities. *Reflect* circles are meant to become a space for women's empowerment both through literacy and by challenging unequal power relations.

The intention was for each community in the programme to start up a women-only *Reflect* circle of about 25 women. The circles were organised by a *Reflect* facilitator. These *Reflect* circles looked different, however, across the four countries as Uganda used existing circles that included a few men. In Nigeria, given the high illiteracy rates amongst women, *Reflect* facilitators from the community led the circles, and the government's Agency for Mass Education led complementary literacy courses to support the women. The women joined the *Reflect* circles voluntarily and determined the frequency and timing of their meetings based on their workloads at any given time.



**Reflect meeting.** A community REFLECT meeting in Bisnukantipur, Kailali.  
PHOTO: NAYANTARA GURUNG KAKSHAPATI/ACTIONAID

Across the four countries, *Reflect* facilitators began the discussion with women around their workloads by first discussing the numerous activities that women engaged in and identifying the public services and infrastructure they have nearby to

support this work. Here tools such as the community maps that highlight the different services were useful. It was only then that the facilitators introduced the time diary tool, which is described below. The time diary tool tracked women's time use and helped women to visualise the time that they spent on multiple activities. The women also came to understand the impact their workloads have on their well-being and see this as a problem that could be addressed rather than an unchangeable status quo. Alongside a number of other tools, the time diary tool also helped to enhance participants' literacy and numeracy skills. Other tools such as the problem and solution trees and power analysis exercises supported women to discuss solutions and the action they wanted to take.

In the second half of the programme a further comparative dimension was added by asking men to complete diaries. Many of the men, but not all, were from the same households as the women in the *Reflect* circles. The men's diaries were done both to allow comparison of how women and men used their time in the different sites, and to help raise awareness and understanding among men. Diary information was collected only once from men in each site, and the resultant analysis is thus less reliable than that for women. Further, the men were not engaged in the on-going *Reflect* circles in the same way as the women given the emphasis of the programme on women's empowerment.

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## What is a time use diary?

Time use surveys are used to measure the way different categories of people (women and men, rich and poor, rural and urban) use their time. They are useful because they can make visible activities – such as unpaid care work – that are commonly ignored. They can also be used to measure the differences in time spent on paid and unpaid activities, and the differences in time spent on non-work and leisure.

There are different ways of asking questions about time use, but the diary method generally performs better than other methods as the person is required to think about

what they did in every period of a specified day. This helps people remember activities that they might otherwise forget to mention or not think important enough to report. There are several different styles of diary. The most comprehensive approach is to ask the person to describe in their own words what they did in every period, and to post-code the reported activities into standard categories. This approach was not appropriate for the ActionAid work given the very limited writing abilities of most *Reflect* circle members. Instead, the ActionAid diaries used 11 pre-specified categories of activities. The diary day was depicted by a grid in which each row represented one hour of the day, and each column represented one of the 11 categories. The *Reflect* circle members then simply marked with an X the relevant activities for a particular hour from the previous day. Below is an example of a grid time diary with symbols developed by the Ugandan community groups. The grid diary below has the words in English, but the grid diaries used in the *Reflect* circles were written in Luganda and Lugwere in the versions used by the Bwaise and Pallisa groups.

The circle members were told that they must mark at least one activity for each hour. However, they could also mark multiple activities for a single hour, so as to allow for different activities done simultaneously or one after each other within that hour. Where multiple activities were reported for a single hour, the subsequent calculations divided the 60 minutes equally between all reported activities. This ensured that there were 24 hours of activities for each woman.

The 11 categories were agreed on through a group-based exercise in the first cross-country workshop of ActionAid's programme. Each of the groups worked independently, but the lists of activities that they drew up after discussing the typical day of a woman living in poverty in the relevant countries were remarkably similar. The lists were also remarkably similar to the high-level categories of the International Classification of Time Use Activities developed by the United Nations Statistical Division (ICATUS). As with ICATUS, the list of final agreed activities were categorised at a higher level into (a) work included in calculations of GDP, (b) unpaid care work, and (c) non-productive (non-work) activities.

### Grid diaries used by women to detail their activities

| TIME    | PAID WORK | UNPAID GDP WORK | COLLECTION OF FIREWOOD AND WATER | HOUSEWORK | CARE OF CHILDREN | CARE OF ADULTS | LEARNING | SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES | MASS MEDIA USE | SLEEPING | OTHER PERSONAL CARE |
|---------|-----------|-----------------|----------------------------------|-----------|------------------|----------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------------|----------|---------------------|
| SYMBOL  |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 4-5am   |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 5-6 am  |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 6-7am   |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 7-8am   |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 8-9am   |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 9-10am  |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 10-11am |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 11-12pm |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 12-1pm  |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 1-2pm   |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 2-3pm   |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 3-4pm   |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 4-5pm   |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 5-6pm   |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 6-7pm   |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 7-8pm   |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 8-9pm   |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 9-10pm  |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 10-11pm |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 11-12pm |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 12-1am  |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 1-2 am  |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 2-3 am  |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |
| 3-4am   |           |                 |                                  |           |                  |                |          |                                |                |          |                     |

Because of limited literacy skills, some *Reflect* circle participants had difficulties filling in even the simple grid format because they were not able to read the words for the 11 categories. Therefore in each country one of the early tasks done in *Reflect* circles was to develop agreed symbols for each of the 11 activities. These symbols were then included on the diaries together with the words describing the activity category. The hope was that over time, by seeing the words repeatedly, the women would learn to read them.

The three broad categories, and the related 11 categories used for the time use diaries, as well as typical examples of each category, are shown in the table below.

**Table of categories**

| Code                        | Activity category                  | Examples  |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Work included in GDP</b> |                                    |   |
| 1                           | <b>Paid GDP work</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing wage or salary work</li> <li>• Working in own/family small business</li> <li>• Small scale trading</li> </ul>  |
| 2                           | <b>Unpaid GDP work</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subsistence agriculture</li> <li>• Home-based carer</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Unpaid care work</b>     |                                    |   |
| 3                           | <b>Collection of fuel or water</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collecting firewood</li> <li>• Collecting water</li> </ul>   |
| 4                           | <b>Housework</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing food/cooking</li> <li>• Cleaning the house</li> <li>• Washing clothes</li> <li>• Shopping</li> </ul>   |
| 5                           | <b>Care of children</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeding a child</li> <li>• Bathing and dressing a child</li> <li>• Playing with a child</li> <li>• Helping a child with school work</li> <li>• Accompanying a child to school or clinic</li> <li>• Being in charge of a child</li> </ul> |
| 6                           | <b>Care of adults</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeding a disabled, old or sick adult</li> <li>• Bathing a disabled, old or sick adult</li> <li>• Accompanying an adult to health clinic or other public services</li> </ul>   |



| Code                             | Activity category          | Examples  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Non-productive activities</b> |                            |   |
| 7                                | <b>Learning</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending adult education class</li> <li>• Doing homework</li> </ul>   |
| 8                                | <b>Social and cultural</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socialising with friends and family</li> <li>• Praying</li> <li>• Attending ceremony (e.g. funeral)</li> <li>• Attending a sports event</li> </ul> |
| 9                                | <b>Mass media use</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watching television</li> <li>• Listening to radio</li> <li>• Reading newspapers</li> </ul>   |
| 10                               | <b>Sleeping</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sleeping</li> <li>• Resting in bed</li> </ul>  |
| 11                               | <b>Other self-care</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eating or drinking</li> <li>• Dressing oneself</li> <li>• Washing oneself</li> <li>• Receiving healthcare</li> </ul>                               |

## Findings

### Findings from the diary analysis

This section of the report illustrates the type of analysis that can be done using the data collected during the programme. As noted above, in each country the researcher compiled the data from the diaries, analysed the data using the tailored and automated spread sheets, and drew graphs to analyse the patterns. The analysis is not intended to be comprehensive in its coverage of the collected data. It is also not intended to illustrate all possible forms of analysis. In particular, the section does not include overly complicated analysis as the relatively small number of women covered by each country does not merit this. Complicated analysis would also run counter to one of the key objectives of the programme, namely to promote widespread understanding of unpaid care work among a wide range of stakeholders.

The diary information collected by the *Reflect* circles cannot be used to make definitive statements about the time use of women in the countries that participated in ActionAid's unpaid care work programme. The number of women involved and the number of sites covered are too small for such generalisations. However, in the absence of larger-scale, such as national, survey data in the various countries, analysis based on the repeated standardised collection of diary data in the selected programme sites provides a better basis for engagement in dialogue and advocacy than engagement based on assumption rather than evidence.

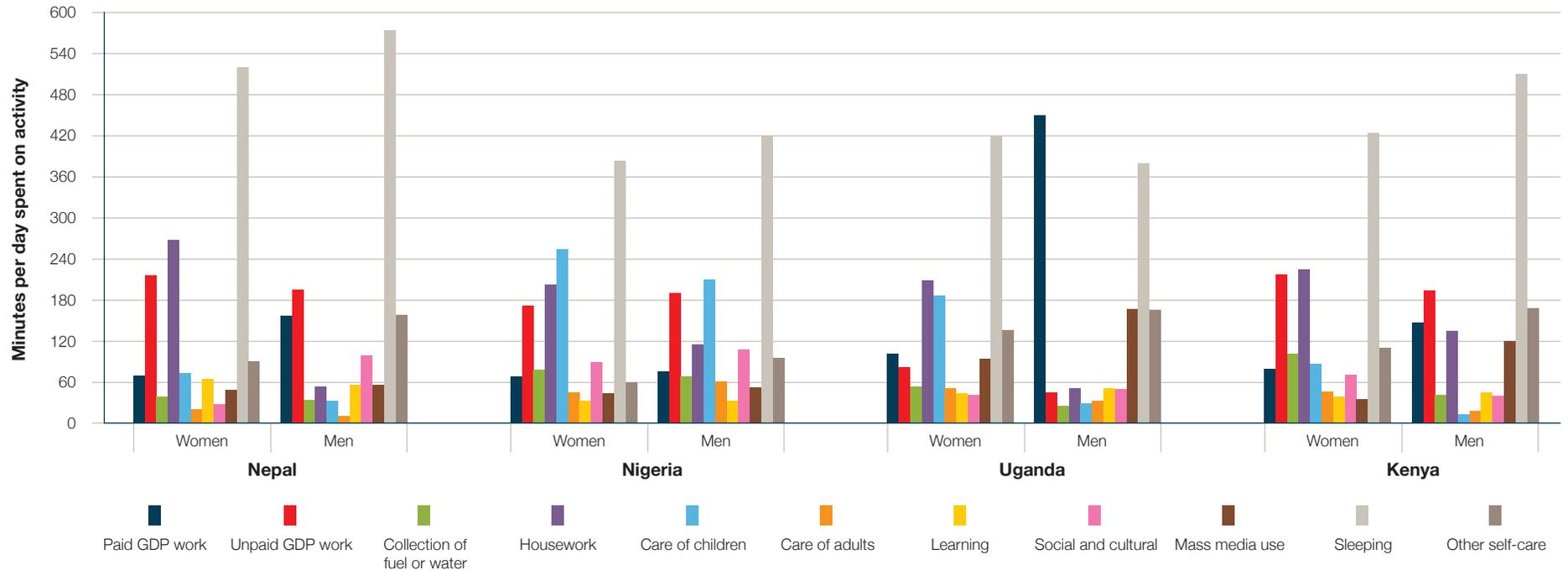
Further, the fact that the patterns of time use that emerged from the *Reflect* circles mirror those found in much larger time use exercises in developing countries inspires confidence in the reliability of the estimates. In particular, the same pattern of women spending longer total hours working than men is reported in all seven countries (Argentina, India, Japan, South Korea, India and South Africa) covered in a recent cross-country comparison. In all seven countries more than half of men's work was GDP work, while for women less than a quarter of the work was GDP work.<sup>13</sup>

The analysis draws on all diary collections with women in Nepal and Uganda, and five collections in Nigeria. In Kenya four collections are used for women in three of the four sites and three collections from the remaining site. The analysis also covers one diary collection from men in each of the four countries. In the case of Kenya, diaries were collected from men in only one of the four sites within peri-urban Bamburi.

The first set of graphs compares the time use of women and men in each country, averaged across the sites for each country. As in all the graphs that follow, the time is presented in minutes, with a total of 1,440 minutes in a day. The male-female comparison for Kenya here and further below must be treated with caution as the male data relates only to peri-urban men while the female data relates to both peri-urban and rural women.



**Figure 1.** Detailed time use of women and men by country

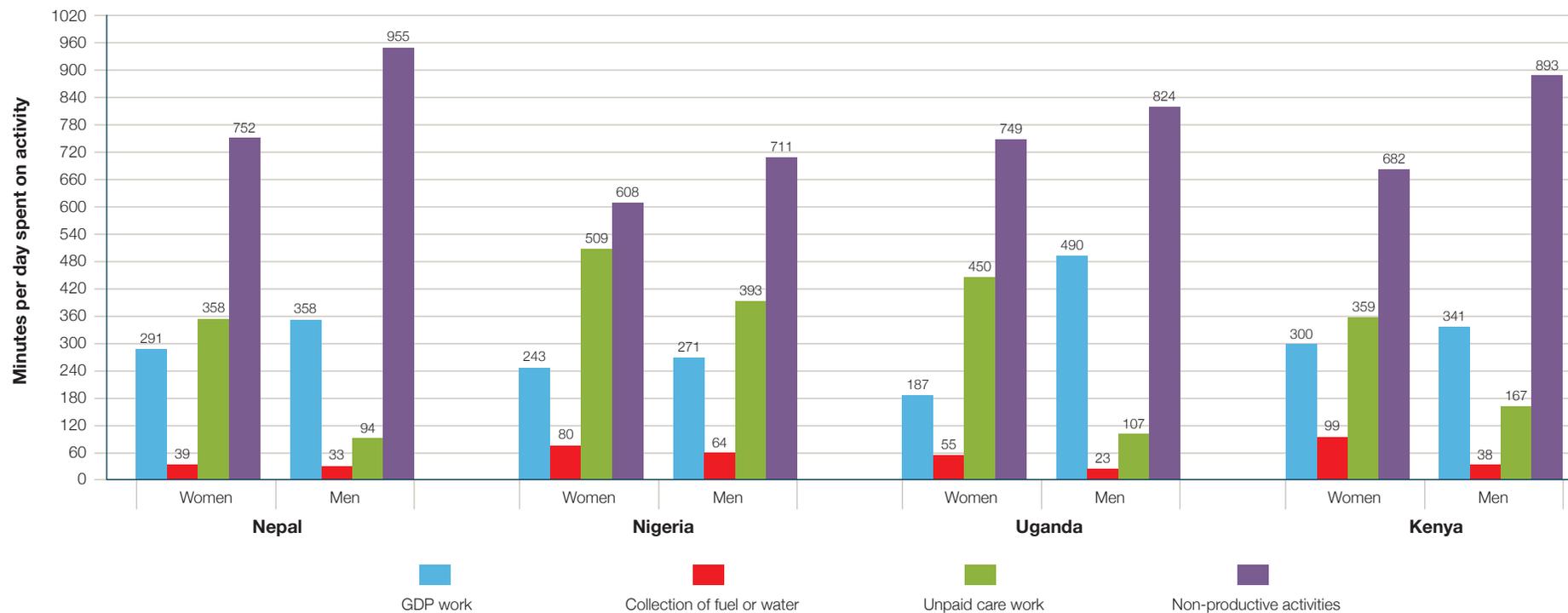


**Figure 1** presents the breakdown across the full 11 categories. What is most evident in the graphs is that sleeping (light gray) is the activity that accounts for the longest time in all cases except for men in Uganda. The latter report spending longer on GDP paid work than on sleeping. This unusual pattern can be explained by the fact that the men who filled in diaries included taxi drivers, motor cycle (*bodaboda*) riders, truck drivers and bar owners. All these types of work have long hours.

In Kenya, Nepal and Nigeria, on average women sleep shorter hours than men, while the opposite holds in Uganda. Apart from sleeping, across all countries housework

(purple) is the next most time-consuming activity for women, while either paid or unpaid GDP work (dark blue and red respectively) are the most time-consuming for men.

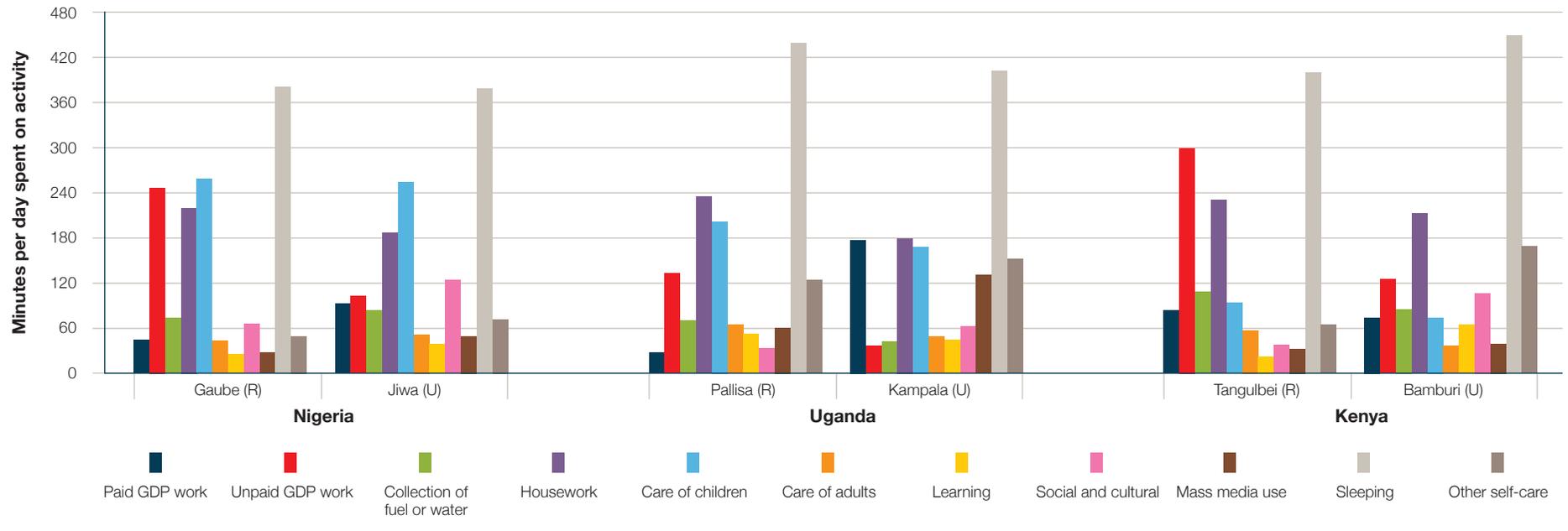
Excluding sleeping, men in all three countries spend longer than women on other forms of self-care (mid gray), social and cultural activities (pink) such as socialising with friends and mass media use (brown), including listening to radio. The pattern in respect of social and cultural activities and mass media use confirms the traditional male = public: female = private dichotomy. This division says that women's main area of operation is in the home, while men's main area is outside the home. This type of thinking contributes to men's domination of public decision-making.

**Figure 2.** Broad time use patterns of women and men by country

**Figure 2** simplifies the picture by grouping the 11 activities into four broad categories. The graph shows clearly that men tend to spend longer than women on GDP work (blue), while women tend to spend longer than men on both collection of fuel and water (red) and unpaid care work (green). For all countries, the gap between women's and men's unpaid care work is larger than the gap between men's and women's GDP work. In each of the three countries women's work time exceeds that of men when all types of work are included. In Nepal, women work a total of 688 hours per day

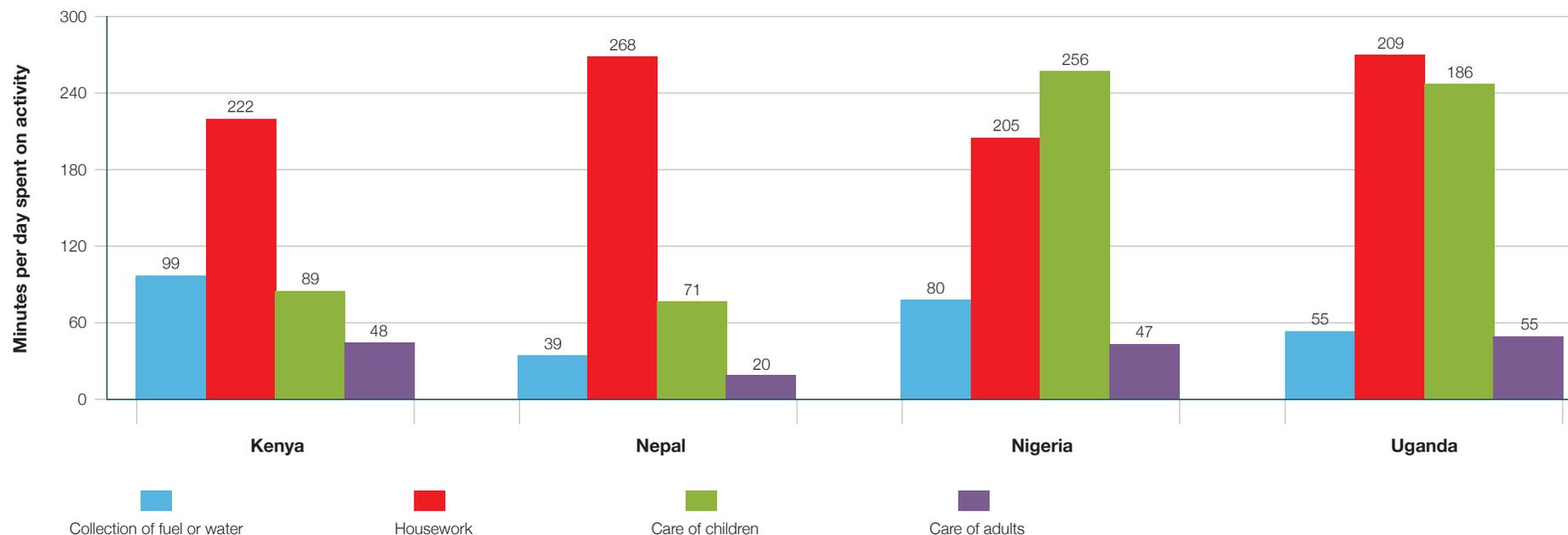
compared to only 485 hours for men. This means that, on average, Nepalese women work 1.4 hours for every one hour worked by Nepalese men. A similar ratio of 1.4: 1 is found for Kenya.

We can also explore differences in time use between the more rural areas of Pallisa in Uganda, Gaube in Nigeria and Tangulbei in Kenya, and the urban or peri-urban areas of Kampala, Jiwa and Bamburi in the three countries.

**Figure 3.** Time use of rural and urban women in Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya

**Figure 3** shows that, on average, rural women spend more time on housework (purple) than urban women. (In the figure, R indicates the rural areas and U the urban and peri-urban areas.) Rural women also spend longer than urban women on GDP work when paid and unpaid GDP work (dark blue and red respectively) are combined. However, a far larger proportion of rural women's GDP work is unpaid than that of urban women. In Uganda, for example, the women in rural Pallisa mainly work on their families' small plots of land, farming both food and cash crops. Some women may also look after livestock. All these types of work are generally unpaid. In contrast, the women in peri-urban Bwaise in Kampala may work as small scale traders, domestic workers and bar attendants. With a somewhat smaller workload overall, urban women are able to spend longer than rural women on social and cultural activities (pink) and mass media use (brown).

As can be expected, women in peri-urban areas spend less time collecting water and firewood than women in rural areas. Women in Bwaise spend less time collecting fuel and water than those in Pallisa (41 and 69 minutes respectively). Pallisa has too few boreholes and it is women who bear the main responsibility for collecting firewood for fuel. In contrast, women in the peri-urban Bwaise informal settlement in Kampala have easier access to water. A similar pattern is found between peri-urban Bamburi (85 minutes) and rural Tangulbei (111 minutes). In Nigeria, women in peri-urban Jiwa spend less time on this task than those in more rural Gaube (74 and 86 minutes respectively). However, the difference spent on water and fuel collection is less in Nigeria which reflects poor provision of infrastructure and related services in the peri-urban area of Jiwa where there is very limited access to piped water despite being close to Abuja, the federal capital.

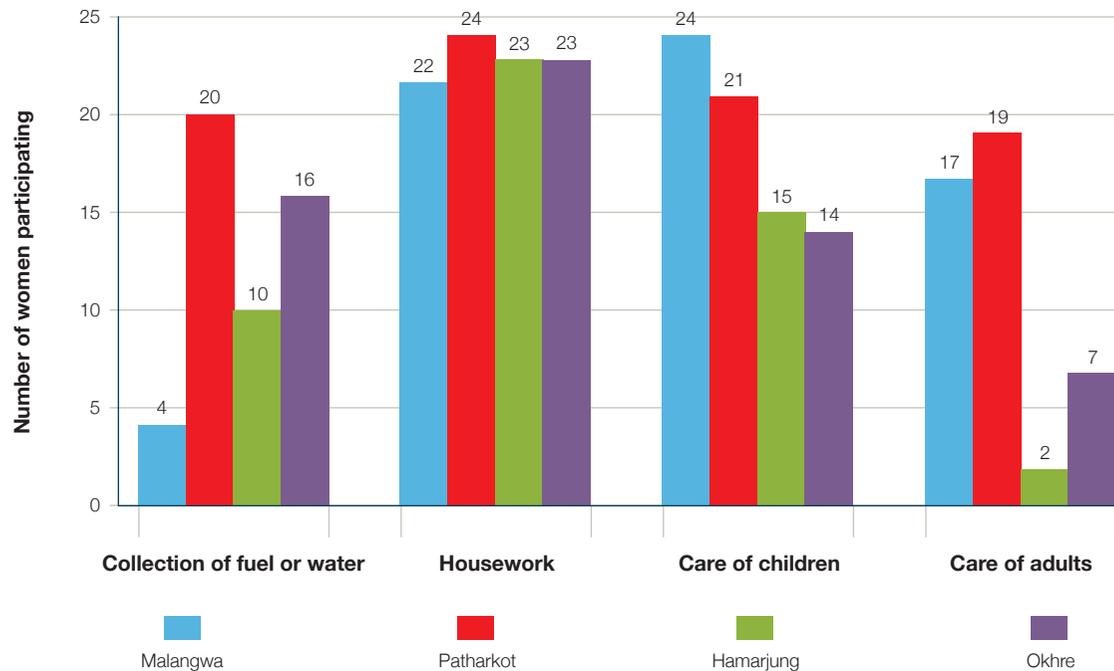
**Figure 4.** Time use of women on unpaid care work activities

**Figure 4** focuses on the time spent on collection of fuel or water and the three core unpaid care work activities so as to illustrate more clearly the patterns in respect of these. For three of the countries the time spent on care of adults is the lowest for the four activities, with time spent on collection of fuel and water the next lowest. Nevertheless, the actual time spent on these two activities varies widely across the three countries. For Uganda the same amount of time is spent on each of these two activities.

For the other two activities – housework and care of children – the relative time spent is dissimilar across the three countries. In all countries the women report an average

of more than 200 minutes per day on housework. It is the time spent on care of children that accounts for the relative differences. Time spent on childcare varies between 71 minutes (more than an hour) in Nepal and 256 minutes (more than four hours) in Nigeria. This difference could be the result of a range of different factors, including the profile of the women in terms of their own age and that of their children and the extent to which activities such as passive responsibility for children was recorded as child care. In Nigeria, for instance, many of the women included in the *Reflect* circles had large families and were still looking after young children. These and other factors will determine whether women spend any time on child care. When some women in a group do not do this work at all, the average across all participants in the group will fall.

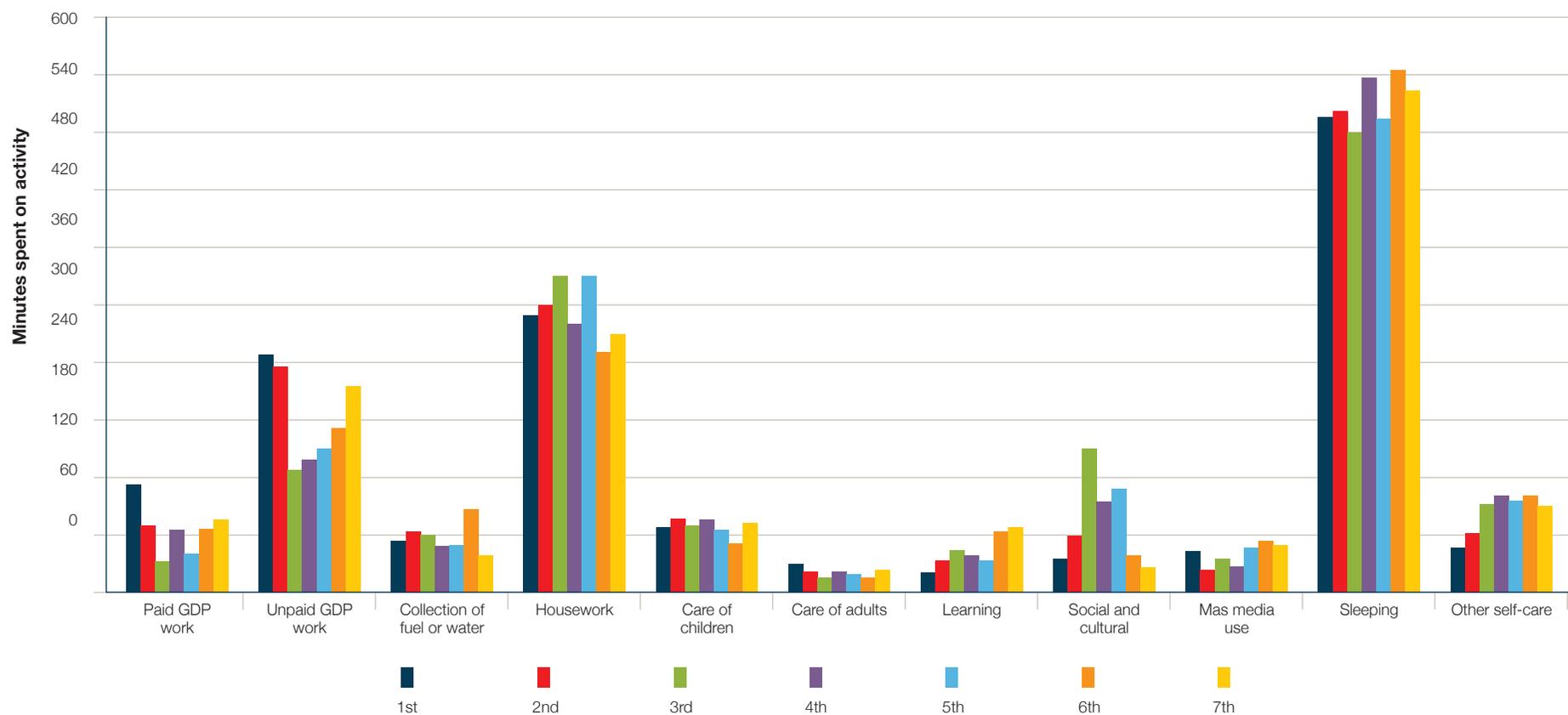
**Figure 5.** Participation in unpaid care work in Nepal by site



**Figure 5** explores this further by showing the participation rate in each of the unpaid care work activities in the four sites in Nepal. In each of these four sites there were between 24 and 25 women in the group who completed diaries. The participation rate reflects how many of these women reported at least some time spent on the specified activity. The figure shows that virtually all women reported some housework, but for the remaining three activities the participation rate varied. In respect of childcare, for example, all women in Malangwa reported some activity, while only 14 did so in Okhre.

Very few women in Malangwa reported time spent on collection of fuel or water. In this site all households have a hand pipe, which reduces the need to collect water. In addition, while firewood and cow dung are the main sources of fuel in Malangwa, households buy firewood from the local saw mill and collect cow dung from the cowshed or nearby pasture. This reduces the time needed for these tasks.

By collecting several diaries from the same women, the researcher and facilitator could enquire when the emerging patterns for a particular day did not match those of previous collections as illustrated in figure 6. In all such cases, the *Reflect* circle participants were able to give valid reasons for the deviation. One notable example was when there was a marriage in one of the Nepal sites, and all the women therefore reported an unusually large amount of time spent on social and cultural activities. In the following diary collection, the women again reported an important social event. While it could be pure coincidence that two of the diary collections happened on the day after a major social event, this finding could also highlight the fact that women's lives are more varied than often suggested, and that while there is much private drudge work in their lives, there are also important – and often joyous – social occasions that they celebrate together.

**Figure 6.** Time use patterns across seven diary collections in Nepal

The data constitute “indicative” data that can be used for discussion and advocacy where there are not yet reliable national-level data available. Uganda is the only one of the four countries currently included in this study that has national time survey data

available, and the Uganda national time use data are from 1992/93 and therefore out-of-date.

## Participants' reflections and action on the findings

As discussed earlier, one of the primary aims of this programme was to sow the seeds for women's empowerment by raising their awareness of the value of their unpaid care work, and encouraging them to act collectively to demand a more equitable redistribution of care responsibilities both within the household and in their communities. We have tried to capture in the quotes below both the changes that were reported and the resistance to change.

### Box 3: Women's Empowerment<sup>14</sup>

ActionAid draws on the Pathways of Women's Empowerment research that defines women's empowerment as encompassing their social, economic and political empowerment. Social empowerment refers to positive changes in women's status whereby they are increasingly free to make their own life choices. Economic empowerment is the extent to which women can equally benefit from economic activities and their full contribution is recognised and supported. Lastly, political empowerment is about women being able to express their demands in political processes that affect them directly. These three forms of empowerment are mutually reinforcing.

We are unlikely to see much change that resembles empowerment after just one year of the programme. Srilatha Batiwala's work defines empowerment as a long-term process towards changing ideologies that justify social inequalities, change patterns of access and control over resources, and transform the institutions and structures that reinforce and sustain existing power inequalities across all sites, ranging from the household and the family, to the market and the state.<sup>15</sup> Limited change is also expected given what Pearson describes as "the impressive resistance of men to an

equal involvement in domestic work."<sup>16</sup> In addition, public services to support unpaid care work require the structural and institutional changes that Batiwala mentions and will not appear overnight.

Despite the above caveats, while clear power inequalities between women and men are still visible, the change brought on by the programme is starting to result in some small but tangible differences in women's lives. We attribute this change not to the time diaries alone, but rather to the entire *Reflect* process with its focus on literacy and an analysis of unequal power relations.

Reported changes took several forms.

First, in all four countries women now speak about their unpaid care work as work, or at least as an activity that takes up their time and energy. At the start of the programme women in Nigeria spoke of their "*God-given role*" to provide care as though there was no way of changing this role and therefore little reason to discuss it as a group. The time and energy women spend on unpaid care work is thus not only invisible in national statistics, but also within communities. Women may themselves not recognise the important contribution they make through their unpaid care work.

A woman in Nigeria stated, "*Housework is not real work; it is what we must do every day.*"

The time diaries allowed women to start seeing the amount of time they spend on unpaid care work. After the first time diary collection in Hamarjung in Nepal, one woman noted,

*"Oh my! I did not know that I do 25 activities every day."*

Quantifying and visualising their own unpaid care work through the time diaries and the graphs was itself revealing. By the second time diary collection women could start identifying the patterns.



**Leya Chede 48.** Before joining ActionAid's adult literacy Reflect programme, Leya Chede would have been too lacking in confidence to even meet a stranger coming to her house. Now she is an elected local councillor, representing women's issue in local government.

PHOTO: JAMES AKENA/ACTIONAID

In Tangelbei, Kenya one woman said, *"The diaries have made it possible for women to see that they contribute more than they are given credit for."*

In Patharkot, Nepal a widow living in a joint family with her son said,

*"This [unpaid care work] is the type of work where we do not earn money but do not have free time either. Our work is not seen but we are not free as well."*

In all the *Reflect* circles across the four different countries women spoke about their unpaid care work and the impact this had on their wellbeing. Women complained of feeling exhausted after collecting water in Nigeria, or struggling to find time even to bathe in Pallisa, Uganda. One woman in Nigeria stated, *"women are suffering; they do not have time to rest. I am always doing one house chore after the other; there is too much work to do at home."* The time diaries highlighted how little time women have to spend on self-care, learning and even sleeping in urban areas like Bwaise in Uganda. This understanding then led women to question why women and girls are primarily responsible for this work.

### Literacy

*"Now, our community will change because we women have started reading and writing as well."* - Woman in Malangwa, Nepal

Improving women's literacy and numeracy was a core component of the programme and one of the main reasons women attended the *Reflect* circles on a regular basis. Over the course of the programme most women were able to recognise and write their own names. For some women this was the first time they had ever picked up a pen to write, so writing their own names is a big achievement in itself. Associating symbols with words in the time diaries was a useful way for women to start recognising words and learning how to spell and write them in their own language. Discussing the time diaries also brought up new vocabulary words that *Reflect* facilitators could spell out and review with the women. Some *Reflect* facilitators helped the women

count the different number of activities they did during each time slot and write the figure at the bottom of the time diary. Across the three countries it became easier over time for women to start filling out the time diaries on their own. Initially those women in the group who had some basic literacy and numeracy skills would help those who required additional support. By the end of the programme women said that they had learned to write new words, recognise numbers and knew how to count.



**Chebet Irene, 25 years**, from Uganda and her children David, 9 years; Lucius, 7 years; Barbara, 2 years; Carlos, 1 year.

PHOTO: HARRY FREELAND/ACTIONAID

In Bamburi, Kenya one woman explained how the time diaries have improved her literacy and also helped her to speak to her husband,

*"If it were not for the circle, I would not have known how to write my name... After attending the circle I usually sit with my husband to discuss how I have filled in the diary. He corrects me and in the process realises that he also contributes to my burden and therefore decides to help me."*

In Nigeria, as so few women in the communities were literate it was not possible to find *Reflect* facilitators to guide the circles and support women to read and write. Therefore, ActionAid Nigeria sought the assistance of government's Agency for Mass Education to re-establish literacy courses for women in these communities. As a result, many women are now participating in adult literacy classes in addition to the *Reflect* circles. The adult literacy classes in combination with the time diaries are improving women's literacy skills as some women are now able to complete the time diaries without assistance. Although this departs from the initial programme design, access to adult literacy classes funded by the government is having an important impact on women's empowerment in these communities.

Women's literacy will have to go beyond writing their names and filling in the time diaries to continue to be empowering for women. The *Reflect* circles and adult literacy classes will continue beyond this programme to further develop women's literacy so that they are able to read and write. The achievements so far are an initial indication of what women could achieve as the *Reflect* circles continue.

Even the basic literacy skills women gained in the *Reflect* circles became a source of pride not only for the women but also for other family members.

*"I am so happy that my mother can write her name. She hasn't shared anything with me but I know."*-Young man whose mother is a *Reflect* circle participant in Hamarjung, Nepal.

For some men, the literacy component justified women's participation in the *Reflect* circles. This eased conflicts in the household regarding women's participation and gave women greater freedom to attend the circles regularly even if it meant time away from their other household responsibilities.

## Men and changing attitudes

Figure 2 above shows how consistent gender roles are across all eight communities in four very different countries. Men are traditionally the primary breadwinners spending more time in paid and unpaid GDP work than women. In contrast, women are the primary caregivers and, although many engage in some GDP work, this is generally seen as secondary. Both the community discussions and the comparative time diary collection which included men and women contributed to changing some men's perspectives about care work. In communities in Uganda and Nigeria, women reported that men are now helping them with tasks in which they did not previously engage. For instance, in Pallisa in rural Uganda, some men are collecting water and carting it back to their homes on their bicycles. A woman in Pallisa explained,

*"I used to carry two hoes, one for myself and the other for my husband, whenever we would go and come back from the garden, but now he carries his own hoe and when we get back home he helps me take care of the children. For instance sometimes he bathes them and takes them to sleep as I do other housework like washing of dishes and cooking"*

Another woman in Nigeria shared that,

*"Before it was only me doing all the work but now there is some work in the house that is now my husband's responsibility."*

Men across the different communities also shared their perspectives in community discussions. A man in Jiwa, Nigeria stated,

*"I used to carry my child only for pleasure not because I saw it as my responsibility to do so, but having participated in this discussion, I now see that I have been unfair to my wife and I now make a commitment to take a more active part in caring for our children and doing other housework"*

These findings do not provide proof of a shift in power relations within the household. Although there may be exceptions, many men will still resist taking on these additional household responsibilities.



**Aminu Yahaya, 16**, helps his father who supports his family and puts his children through school by making firewood for sale.

PHOTO: CHRIS MORGAN/GCE/ACTIONAID

*"Women are meant to do the housework"* said one man in Hamarjung, Nepal.

The *IMAGES* and *Men Who Care* studies conducted by Instituto Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women found that men are more likely to take on care work that involves direct engagement with people than housework, as the latter is seen as demeaning, tedious and traditionally female.<sup>17</sup>

It is also important to note here the resistance that some women may themselves harbour against men taking up these roles. This was evident at the start of the programme in Nigeria, where a woman from Gaube said,

*“When a man is found cooking or caring for children, people will make fun; no woman will want to be ashamed of her husband.”*

Although the programme may not have changed this perspective entirely for all the Reflect participants, there are now some women who are willing for their husbands to take greater care of their children and do some housework. Just as men's identities are closely linked to their role as primary breadwinners, so too are women's identities shaped by their role as primary care providers.<sup>18</sup>

### Collective action

Empowerment is not only an individual experience, but also a collective process. As women began to value the time and energy taken up by unpaid care work and question their disproportionate responsibility for this work, they began to discuss ways in which they could change their situations through collective action. The *Reflect* circles became a space for this collective process of empowerment in that women met to prepare their demands ahead of the community discussions.

The community discussions were intended to be spaces where women could present their issues, and specifically seek recognition for their unpaid care work. This, in turn, contributed towards their political empowerment as more women became involved in local decision-making processes such as community discussions with local authorities. In Nepal, many women did not feel confident to speak directly to the men in their homes or their mothers-in-law about their discussions in the *Reflect* circles. Instead they preferred to voice their concerns through the community discussions which included local government officials and other men. Speaking in a public space as a group gave them a collective voice and made it more difficult for their ideas to be trivialised or ignored.

The community discussions also became spaces where alliances could be forged with other women and men in the community who were not part of the *Reflect* circle.

However, changing perceptions and gendered roles takes time and in many community discussions men and community leaders voiced their resistance. In the pastoralist community of Tangelbei in Northern Kenya for instance, the women gathered to discuss with men the need for family planning facilities as they explained that this could reduce the number of children they have and therefore their care responsibilities. The men out-rightly opposed women's demands for this service. In contrast, in Nigeria and Uganda women used the community discussions with some success as a space to change men's and women's attitudes towards a more equal division of unpaid care work as noted earlier. This initial change may mean men and community leaders are more likely to support women's demands for more public services at a later stage. In two specific cases, women from the *Reflect* circles have already been able to build solidarity with men and local authorities to support their demands for change. This happened in Nepal and Kenya, where the *Reflect* circles focused on making demands to local government for improved infrastructure and public service delivery.

#### **Box 4: Clean water in Patharkot, Nepal**

**In Patharkot, Nepal** women identified clean drinking water as a key input that would reduce their unpaid care work and also reduce diarrhoea amongst children and other family members. The women used their time diaries to show the amount of time that they spend collecting water. The diaries showed that on average women spend 99 minutes per day collecting water and firewood in Patharkot. Although there is a well in Patharkot it only provides enough water for the village during the rainy season. There is no drinking water supplied by government in this area. The suggestion from the *Reflect* circle was to collect some initial funds to start building a water tank that could store clean drinking water. The women introduced the idea at a community meeting and men got involved. Using the funds collected the women and men started building the tank, but there was not enough money to complete the tank. The women and men therefore called on the Village Development Committee to finish the construction using local government funds. The Village Development Committee eventually agreed to this demand.

### Box 5: Early childhood development centres in Bamburi, Kenya

In Bamburi, Kenya the women in the *Reflect* circles drew a public services map and identified that the early childhood development centre was too far away for them to use. They then discussed how accessing this centre could reduce their time spent on childcare and provide them with a safe place to leave their children while they worked in their fields. The women assessed whose obligation it was to fill this gap and decided to present their concerns to the local authorities who are responsible for building and maintaining the early childhood development centre. Four of the women volunteered to follow up with the Constituency Development Fund Committee to ask for resources to complete the structure for the early childhood development centre. One of the *Reflect* facilitators had a seat on the committee and she played an active role in pushing for additional funds. As a result of this advocacy, the centre will receive two million Kenya shillings (\$23,255) for construction of two classrooms to be used as the early childhood development centre.

### Access to and control over income

Across the four countries, women in the eight communities have very limited access to and control over natural resources and income. In Nepal, Kenya and Uganda, women expressed their desire for paid work to earn an independent income and for the recognition and social status that comes with paid work. Paid work could come in the form of new job opportunities or through greater control of the revenue generated from agricultural production. The programme addressed women's economic empowerment to the extent that it made visible and valued women's contribution through their unpaid care work. The programme also produced useful information and generated discussion about women's role in paid and unpaid GDP work. For instance, in Bwaise, Uganda one woman explained,

*"I can't believe my husband has changed to this extent. He used to not allow me to do any work. He was so furious about my demand to do something which can bring income to the family. Whenever I told him of doing something, he threatened to divorce me. I thank my mother-in-law for encouraging both of us to attend the Reflect meetings. Indeed these meetings have changed my husband's attitudes and behaviour towards our family. He even gave me a room in our house to get income from it. He even helps me with domestic work like caring for the children and fetching water for the family."*

Where this is a positive example it demonstrates how gender norms define women's and men's responsibilities in regards to who engages in paid work and unpaid care work. These roles have to be renegotiated with men in the household and the community for some women to enter into paid work.



**Indigenous Tharu people**  
harvest rice in Dang District,  
Nepal, 27 November 2008.  
PHOTO: BRIAN SOKOL/ACTIONAID

Women in the rural and urban communities that participated in the programme will find it difficult, if not impossible, to access formal or semi-formal paid work due to their low literacy skills and a lack of paid work opportunities for women. It is far more likely that if paid employment is available it will be in informal employment. Indeed, in Bwaise, Uganda the *Reflect* participants engage primarily in informal work as petty traders and bar attendants. Although this work is precarious and low paid; work in the public sphere can be empowering by giving women a greater sense of their individuality as separate from their identity in the home, greater mobility outside of the home and the possibility to engage with other women to claim their rights as workers.<sup>19</sup> Of course entering the labour market does not mean women abandon their unpaid care work. Instead, the expectation is that they will continue with both activities.<sup>20</sup> This suggests that there must be a focus on both women's unpaid care work and women's paid and unpaid work in future programmes. It is by recognising the interaction between the two that women's economic empowerment is possible.

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## National policy change

*'It is good that we have agreed on one thing without shouting...now we can say we have one voice; the government will hear us and know that what women need is help on childcare, schools and provision of water near our houses'* - Woman in Jiwa, Nigeria.

As part of the programme, women from the *Reflect* circles are linked to emerging national level platforms on care. In Nepal, Kenya and Nigeria several meetings were held with government officials, civil society organisations and the women from the *Reflect* circles to raise the visibility of care and begin to outline possible areas for national policy change. These national platforms are nascent and may become spaces for collective action. Bringing women and men from different classes, ethnicities and castes together to act in solidarity with women living in poverty and advocate for national level policy change can help to bring about the policy changes discussed below.

It is difficult to identify a single policy change that will address all the issues related to women's unpaid care work. Indeed, care is so pivotal to our lives that it is reflected

in a multitude of policies, including– but not restricted to – basic infrastructure, early childhood education, healthcare, and social protection. Although the report cannot do justice to anyone of these policies here, we will outline four national policy debates that are emerging from the *Reflect* circles and civil society partners across the four countries. There are a range of other possible national policy demands that could come from this kind of programme in different contexts, such as the need for health-care services or sustainable energy. Labour regulations, such as maternity leave or social security, are not addressed here because most of the women involved in the programme work in situations that are not covered by formal labour regulations. Given the breadth of national policies that could be discussed, the review below is limited to the issues and related policies raised by the women in the *Reflect* circles.

### Recognising unpaid care work

A first step in national advocacy is to raise the visibility of unpaid care work in policy spaces. Although national time use surveys have been conducted in various countries around the world, this information is rarely used to inform national policies. Moreover, most national labour surveys do not measure women's unpaid care work. Collecting data on all women's work, both paid and unpaid, is critical to improving the design of social policies and the allocation of resources to address poverty and inequality. In Kenya, Nigeria and Nepal civil society organisations are speaking with the national statistical bureau to put this on their agenda. What is also needed is greater public awareness of women's contribution in the effort to make this a human rights and social justice issue. Data alone will not change perceptions although it will contribute to valuing women's contribution through their unpaid care work.

In Nepal, ActionAid and partners such as Mahila Adhikar Manch, the rural women's network, are reaching out to women's groups and other civil society organisations using simple campaign tools such as flyers and cartoons. They are doing so in an attempt to make women's care work more visible while building new alliances and solidarity with groups. Awareness raising campaigns are important to change women's and men's perceptions about unpaid care work and gender inequality. The emerging national platforms also act as spaces to raise awareness amongst allies and build a dialogue between women living in poverty and government at the national level.

### Box 6: Kenya's National Women's Charter<sup>21,22</sup>

As a result of advocacy by ActionAid Kenya and partners, the Women's National Charter which was developed ahead of the 2013 elections mentions unpaid care work in regards to women's equal right to employment and demands that government:

*"Take legislative and policy measures to recognize, quantify and place equal economic value on the work of women in the home as that performed in the formal public sector. In so doing eliminate gender stereotyping and the categorization of work on the basis of sex and gender. Economic policy definitions of what constitutes economic activity must therefore include all women's work, including unpaid work. It must also provide adequate government subsidized facilities to ensure women are able to effectively undertake their economic activities outside the home"*

This is a first step towards recognising women's unpaid care work and the impact it has on women's paid work. The Kenyan constitution also makes specific reference to women's and men's "right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres." The constitution further notes the shared responsibility of both parents to care for their children. This opens the door for national advocacy by women's rights organisations to raise awareness and demand more public services to support care provision.

National Women's Leadership Platform for Action 2012. *Kenya Women's National Charter*. 2012

### Access to water

Across the four countries access to a sustainable source of water came up as a time-consuming activity for many women, particularly in rural areas. In Jiwa and Gaube in Nigeria, women spent on average 80 minutes (1.3 hours) on water and

firewood collection as a result of poor infrastructure. In Gaube women collect water from a stream which is a long walk away from the community and they may have to go twice a day.

In rural areas women use water for both domestic and agricultural activities, while men use water primarily for their agricultural work.<sup>23</sup> The need for water for domestic purposes increases when the need for care increases. For instance, research from Tanzania shows how women's demand for water increased as they cared for their family members living with HIV and AIDS.<sup>24</sup> The **right to water** is enshrined in a number of international human rights treaties and government remains the primary duty bearer ensuring the fulfilment of this right. However, some governments are opting to privatise water making it more difficult for women living in poverty to access this resource. Large-scale water privatisation pushes government and private companies to prioritise those areas where the demand for water is high and people are willing and able to pay.<sup>25</sup> This excludes those communities, particularly in rural areas, where the need for water may be great but the level of poverty is too high to allow many people to pay for water.

**Climate change** poses an immediate and future threat to women's ability to access and control water even where water sources are currently available. According to the United Nations around 1.2 billion people live in water scarce areas, and 500 million people are approaching this situation.<sup>26</sup> Of the four countries included in the programme, Uganda and Kenya are most likely to experience water scarcity in the coming years.<sup>27</sup> In Tangulbei, Kenya water scarcity is already a reality; women on average spend 111 minutes (1.8 hours) on water collection. As sources of water dry up women and girls, who traditionally collect water, are forced to travel further to find water. This means women spend more time and energy in water collection and this may expose them to violence.<sup>28</sup>

Finding sustainable solutions to meet women's multiple uses of water will be a challenge for many developing country governments. Yet improved access to water can reduce women's workloads significantly and make it easier for households to provide care when it is needed. Improved access to water is one part of the solution and will help **reduce** women's time spent on unpaid care work. However, these investments will most likely not **redistribute** responsibilities in the household between women and men.

**Pokot woman.** Pokot woman and cattle herder Tuwit, 10, collect water from dried watering hole near Tangulbei, East Pokot, Kenya  
PHOTO: DES WILLIE/ACTIONAID



### Childcare centres

In Nigeria, the women involved in the *Reflect* circles spend an average of 256 minutes or 4.2 hours a day on childcare, taking up more time than housework and the collection of water and firewood (Figure 5). In Kenya as described above, women in Bamburi demanded that local authorities implement the national policy on early childhood centres in their area. In all four countries there is an early childhood education policy, but it is targeted primarily at children who are 3-5 years old before they start primary education. It is not similarly targeted at children under three years of age. Further, although the policy exists, it is not widely implemented even for the children in the years immediately preceding formal schooling. In Nigeria, in contrast, the Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) Policy provides for care to be provided for children aged 0-5 while parents are at work.<sup>29</sup> The goal of the policy is to expand, universalise, and integrate interventions from various sectors in early childhood development and is linked to the National Policy on Education, Food and Nutrition, Health and the Child Rights Act. The Ministry of Education is responsible for ensuring that IECD centres are attached to public schools and do not charge fees. However, despite the policy most public schools do not provide these services because of a lack of classrooms and qualified caregivers; where services are available they are generally only for children who are 3-5 years old.

Across countries, having a young child in the house is one of the factors that most strongly influences the amount of time that household members – and particularly women – spend on unpaid care work. Having a young child in the house increases, in particular, the time spent on direct care activities, but it also increases the time spent on indirect care activities, such as housework, cooking and fetching water. The picture is especially stark when the children are under the age of entry to formal schooling. A recent World Bank publication estimated that the gross enrolment ratio at preschool level was only 12% in sub-Saharan Africa, and 36% for all developing countries combined.<sup>30</sup> Yet this is the age at which a child puts the greatest demand on families because younger children need the most intense care.

There is increasing recognition of the way in which a year of pre-school immediately before formal schooling can assist in preparing children for school and improving their

results, especially for those from poorer backgrounds. Policy makers often support this level of pre-school provisions because they see it as “efficient” as it reduces problems such as drop-out and repetition in later years. However, policy makers far less often recognise the other benefits of early childhood education both for the child, and for the mother or other primary caregiver. For the latter, early childhood education **reduces** the time spent on unpaid care work, freeing up time for income-earning or other purposes. If childcare services are provided by government then this also **redistributes** childcare provision from women to the state. It can also provide paid care work opportunities – especially for women – in developing countries that are struggling to create new jobs.<sup>31</sup>

#### **Box 7: Chile's early childhood education scheme<sup>32</sup>**

In Chile, the early childhood education scheme, *Chile Crece Contigo* (Chile grows with you), presents a useful model to consider. Chile's main aim has been to give equal opportunities for education to children from poor households. Government has not put as much emphasis on the impact this will have on women's employment. Nevertheless, Chile's programme gives children up to three years of age the right to attend a crèche and kindergarten and access is free for children from low-income families. For children in this age group, most of the centres provide full-day care. This makes it easier for the mothers to do paid work. Full-time care is, however, much less common for four - and five-year olds. As a result of the programme, the number of public crèches increased from 700 in March 2006 to more than 4,000 by the end of 2009. The number of places for children under one year of age increased from 14,000 in 2005 to 85,000 by March 2010.

The staff in Chilean facilities has professional qualifications, such as a university or technical degree in pre-school or early education. Nevertheless, the earnings of the Chilean staff are very low compared to other professionals.

### **Social protection**

In Nepal, multiple social protection schemes already exist, many of which provide social assistance to the most marginalised groups including widows, people living with disabilities, elderly people, and former combatants. Although these social grants are useful there is interest amongst women's rights organisations and Mahila Adhikar Manch for more broad-based social protection schemes that **recognise** and **redistribute** care responsibilities between women and the state. The following section will explore two forms of social protection, namely social assistance and labour market interventions such as public works programmes.

#### **Social assistance**

Social assistance is typically provided to those who are elderly, people with disabilities, and children. It is provided to these groups because they are seen as unable to earn sufficient money to provide for themselves. Social assistance is often targeted at the poor, on the basis that those who are not poor can provide for themselves. Unpaid care work is relevant because the vulnerable groups who are the targets of social assistance generally need not only money, but also care. The question then arises as to whether assistance is given to the carers as well as those who need the money or care. Since the turn of the century, there has been rapid expansion in the number of countries providing grants (or “transfers”) for children. Initially, most of these grants were found in Latin America, but the World Bank and others have encouraged their spread to other developing countries, including in Africa. The World Bank generally promotes conditional grants.<sup>33</sup> These are grants that are given only to parents and caregivers of children who fulfil certain behavioural conditions. The most common conditions relate to school attendance of children. Also common are conditions related to health, such as requiring that children are immunised.

These grants are usually given to the mother or another female caregiver of the child. This is done because internationally research again and again shows that money in the pocket of a woman is more likely than money in the pocket of a man to be spent in a way that benefits children.<sup>34</sup> In some cases, there are also behavioural requirements

for the grant recipient. For example, mothers are required to attend classes in which they learn about nutrition and other aspects of parenting, or mothers are required to contribute by doing community work in exchange for the grant. These conditions **exacerbate the unfair distribution** of unpaid care work.<sup>35</sup> The time spent attending classes or doing the community work reduces the amount of time available for the women to do other things, including income-earning and rest. The community work **adds further unpaid care work** to their existing workloads.<sup>36</sup> Complying with the conditions can also mean that women must spend extra time, for example taking children for medical check-ups and attending nutrition and health education sessions. Sarah Gammage finds that the amount of the grant can be less than the value of the extra time that women in Guatemala spend on unpaid care work in order to receive the grant.<sup>37</sup> The conditions exacerbate the unfair distribution not only between women and men, but also between different groups of women, as having a young child is one of the strongest factors influencing how much unpaid care work a woman does.

A child grant policy that recognised unpaid care work would impose no conditions. This is the case, for example, with South Africa's child support grant. This grant was introduced in 1998 for young children (under seven years) of poor caregivers – including mothers, grandmothers and anyone else who is the primary caregiver for the child. Today the grant is available to caregivers of children up to 18 years of age, and more than 10 million children benefit.<sup>38</sup> The extension of the grant happened as a result of on-going advocacy as well as research that showed that this grant, without conditions, achieved the same sorts of improvements in educational attendance and health as conditional grants in other countries.

A child grant policy that fully recognised unpaid care work would ensure that, alongside the money grant, government provided services such as early childhood education and health services that would **redistribute** the care work required to raise children.

Grants for the elderly and people with disabilities can also **recognise** unpaid care work if they include a component for the caregiver. In South Africa, for example, people who receive the old age or disability grant can also apply for the grant-in-aid if

they are not living in an institution subsidised by government and they require full-time care. The grant-in-aid is a small amount – much less than the main grant, and much less than it would take to hire a paid full-time carer. Nevertheless, the grant-in-aid **recognises** unpaid care work and may pay for a small portion of the carer's time or the resources needed for care provision.

### Labour market interventions

Social protection labour market interventions typically aim to provide work for people who are unemployed and provide skills that will make people more employable. The interventions have as their main objective increasing the earned income of people. As noted above, women are more likely than men not to be engaged in paid work. One reason for this is reluctance of employers to employ women because the employers think the women will take off time to have children or care for others in their family i.e. to do unpaid care work. Another linked, reason is the idea that the man is the breadwinner (while the woman is the caregiver) and men should therefore be prioritised if jobs are scarce.<sup>39</sup>

When women are employed, they are likely to earn less than men. While some people will think that this is because women have less skills and education, analysis will almost always show that women earn less than men with the same level of education. This happens even if a country has strict laws about equal pay for similar positions because women and men tend to do different jobs, and the industries and occupations in which women predominate tend to have lower earnings. In some cases, the lower earnings are themselves related to unpaid care work as the industry (such as social services) or occupations (such as social workers, cooks and nurses) are doing work that is similar to that done unpaid in the home.<sup>40</sup> Women also tend to work in the most precarious and low paid employment where labour regulations often do not apply.<sup>41</sup> Social protection labour market interventions, if well designed and targeted, can provide work with some basic protections and supports women to earn an income. India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is an example of such as labour market intervention:

### Box 8: India's National Rural Employment Guarantee<sup>42</sup>

**India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act** of 2005 introduced one of the largest social protection labour interventions in the world. The Act established a public works programme which guarantees 100 days of wage employment in manual work for all rural households who want work. The work must be provided within five kilometres of the worker's home and workers must be paid at least the minimum wage in the state. If government cannot provide work for a person in the household, it must instead provide an unemployment allowance equal to at least one-third of the minimum wage.

The Act says that workers on the Scheme must have access to facilities such as safe drinking water, shade for small children and for workers' rest periods, and crèche facilities for babies. All of these provisions **recognise, reduce** and/or **redistribute** unpaid care work. The safe drinking water means that women do not need to collect water from afar. The shade for small children and crèche facilities make it easier for women workers to combine unpaid care work and paid work on the scheme. These provisions are not always complied with, but they have helped in ensuring that large numbers of women benefit from the Act.

An Employment Guarantee Scheme could assist further in **reducing** the time spent on unpaid work if people were employed to produce infrastructure that reduces the time spent on unpaid care work. For example, time spent on activities such as care of children, the sick, the old, and the disabled members of the household could be reduced by constructing childcare centres, school facilities, midday meal kitchens, and health facilities. Time spent caring for family members who are ill could be reduced by building water schemes near where people live and by building government primary health centres where poor families can access free health services.

Social protection schemes, if well designed, can have a positive impact on women's empowerment. Moreover, advocating for public services and social protection

schemes where they are not provided can also be a source of collective empowerment for women if they are able to voice their own demands through organisations or platforms that represent their interests.<sup>43</sup>

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## Financing for public services

Drawing on women's experience in these poor peri-urban areas and isolated rural communities we understand that the problem with public sector provision is its deeply inadequate availability, accessibility and quality. By not providing accessible, high-quality public services in these areas governments are not only increasing women's responsibility for unpaid care work but also exacerbating poverty and social exclusion and violating human rights to healthcare and education. Moreover, living in poverty means women and men cannot afford to purchase the many goods required to provide care such as water, fuel, food and medicines.<sup>44</sup> The price of existing services, which may only be provided by the private sector, for healthcare and childcare are often unaffordable. Yet government budgets in developing countries and increasingly in developed countries are constrained by limited funds. The global economic crisis is pushing some governments to cut back on public services, while over the past decades the privatisation of public services has eroded government's capacity and willingness to provide public services.

The policies discussed above may seem to be yet another addition to the long list of demands on the government budget. Yet, in the four countries included in this programme, policies already exist regarding water provision, early childhood education and social protection. The examples discussed above describe policies that are more effective because they are designed to address women's multiple responsibilities including their unpaid care work. Although they will usually require additional government funds for their full implementation, changes can be made to the design of existing policies at no great cost to the budget. For instance, by not imposing conditions and by targeting primary carers, the South African government ensured that the child

support grant responded to the family structures and circumstances of those most in need, thus guaranteeing greater impact.

However, we cannot deny the commitment government will need to show in order to recognise, reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care work. It will require re-allocating existing government resources to support all households to provide care, while identifying new sources of revenue to scale up public provision. Reallocating government resources means shifting spending from one part of the national budget to another. Budget analysis might help reveal the extent to which the government spends money on services that support women and men living in poverty to meet their care needs and leads to a realisation of their rights.<sup>45</sup> Budget analysis might also indicate where cuts to specific budget items are likely to increase rather than decrease women's unpaid care work.

Donor aid can provide initial support in designing and implementing public services, but over the long term, developing country governments will increasingly have to rely on their own resources, particularly as the economic crisis in the developed countries deepens. Increasing the amount of domestic revenue to finance public services must be addressed. Each of the countries involved in ActionAid's programme is exploiting its wealth of natural resources, such as the large oil reserves in Nigeria, new oil reserves in Uganda and Kenya, along with hydropower in Nepal. Not only is the revenue from the sale of these natural resources substantial, but the corporate taxation and royalties if fully paid by extractive companies constitutes additional revenue that could be used for expanded public services.

Many countries have instituted tax breaks for companies in order to attract foreign direct investment. However, there are many other important factors that attract investors such as political stability, natural resources, and the quality of the labour force. While corporate tax incentives might increase investments in specific industries, they may not always be justified. Indeed there is little empirical evidence to confirm that such incentives are effective in attracting investment.<sup>46</sup> In Kenya for instance, the

government estimates that losses from trade-related tax incentives were at least 12 billion Kenyan shillings (US\$ 133 million) in 2007/08. These tax incentives include tax holidays that allow foreign companies to pay no corporate tax for up to 10 years.<sup>47</sup> Closing tax loopholes that allow multinational corporations to avoid their taxes is yet another way to retain greater tax revenue that can then be used to fund public services.<sup>48</sup> New rules and strategies are needed if developing countries are to raise more taxes to spend on public services that benefit women living in poverty.



**Laxmi Thapa, 45** takes part in agricultural activities in the mountainous Dolakha District, Nepal.  
PHOTO: BRIAN SOKOL/ACTIONAID

## Conclusion

**The participatory research presented here shows that women living in poverty carry heavier workloads than men in all four countries, across both rural and urban communities.** Their responsibility for unpaid care work means they have less time to take care of themselves, rest and engage in paid work or subsistence agriculture.

The data from the time diaries mirror findings from national time use surveys. Yet it is perhaps the realisation of this injustice by the women and some of the men in the communities that is the most significant outcome of the programme. This led many of the women participating in ActionAid's programme to demand greater responsibility for care provision by the men in their households and local government. The emerging national platforms can become spaces for these local initiatives to claim their rights to basic public services.

The initial empowerment that women spoke of came from the recognition that their unpaid care work was valuable and that they should not bear this responsibility alone. While the data presented here allows us to assess the time women spend on unpaid care work, it does not highlight the constraints women may face in providing quality care. Lack of resources, time and access to public services contribute to poor quality care and have repercussions on the wellbeing of both those who need care and those who provide care. There is scope to use other participatory tools and more rigorous research to assess the quality of care people think they can provide and understand the long-term impact of poor quality care in reproducing inequalities and poverty.



Finally, we cannot consider unpaid care without rethinking how governments understand the economy. The way in which governments allocate the national budget and raise and spend domestic revenue such as tax can impact either positively or negatively on women's unpaid care work. For government actions to have a positive impact they should **recognise** and assess the potential impact of their economic and social policies on women's unpaid care work. Governments can prioritise public spending that **reduces** the drudgery of unpaid care work and ensures more sustainable access to and control over water and energy for women. Governments can, by raising more revenue, take on greater responsibility for care provision and **redistribute** this work more equitably. These changes will not happen overnight and will require more research and analysis on the part of government and civil society on how policies can be adapted, implemented and financed. As this programme shows it will also require a change in perspectives and beliefs that will allow for a greater sense of collective responsibility for unpaid care work.

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**ActionAid** is a partnership between people in rich and poor countries, dedicated to ending poverty and injustice. We work with people all over the world to fight hunger and disease, seek justice and education for women, hold companies and governments accountable, and cope with emergencies in over 40 countries.

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