



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

**WOMEN'S LABOUR & ISSUES OF
RECOGNITION**

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Context

- Women's labour remains vastly undercounted and undervalued, especially in unpaid care and domestic work.

Unpaid Care and Domestic Work: Invisible Backbone of the Economy

- Women disproportionately shoulder unpaid care and domestic work, which form the backbone of India's social and economic life, enabling the economy to function, but it remains **neither monetized nor formally recognized**.
- According to a **United Nations report (2023)**, **women spend 2.8 times more hours than men** on unpaid care and domestic tasks globally.
 - It includes cooking, cleaning, caregiving, and other household responsibilities that are essential for the functioning of society but are rarely acknowledged in economic statistics or policy frameworks.
- The **ILO** estimated that redistributing unpaid care work could raise female labor participation in India to **40% by 2030**, contributing an additional **USD 250 billion** to GDP.

Indian Aspects of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

- According to the **MoSPI's Time Use in India Report 2024**, **women spend an average of 314 minutes (5.2 hours) daily** on unpaid domestic and caregiving activities;
 - Men spend only 97 minutes**, showing negligible improvement from the 2019 survey;
 - Nearly **82% of women** aged 15–59 reported engaging in unpaid household work daily compared to **27% of men**'
- The **NITI Aayog 2025 Gender Index Report** reaffirmed the above gap, noting that unpaid work accounts for **63% of women's total working time**, effectively limiting participation in paid employment and entrepreneurship.
- According to a **2023 State Bank of India report**, unpaid work in India contributes approximately 22.7 lakh crore or about 7.5% of the country's GDP.
 - Women spend **about 36 hours per week** on such tasks compared to **just 16 hours for men**.
- Research indicates that enhancing women's participation in the labour force could boost India's GDP by as much as 27%.

Concerns & Issues Surrounding Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

- Persistent Invisibility of Women's Work:** Emotional and mental labour, vital for sustaining relationships and social harmony remains overlooked.
 - It underpins households and economies, but is **absent from economic indicators and policy**, reinforcing its invisibility despite its role in maintaining both production and social cohesion.
- Structural and Ideological Roots of Devaluation:** The **marginalisation of care work** stems from entrenched economic ideologies.
 - The privileging of male breadwinner employment and the narrow focus on **GDP growth** as a measure of progress exclude care work from the sphere of 'productive' activity.
 - Investment in **physical infrastructure like** roads, industries, technology continues to eclipse investment in **social infrastructure**, such as childcare, elder care, and mental health services.
- Gendered Division of Production and Reproduction:** The **biological aspects of reproduction** have historically been used to conceal the **social and economic dynamics** of gendered labour division.
 - The **separation of production (male-dominated)** and **social reproduction (female-dominated)** entrenched women's subordination and rendered their contributions invisible.

- This systematic exclusion of women's direct and indirect labour from formal recognition reflects a **continuation of patriarchal economic thinking**, where unpaid and emotional work is not seen as productive.

Global Legislative Efforts

- Some countries have begun to institutionalise the recognition of unpaid labour:
 - **Bolivia's Constitution (Article 338)** recognises domestic work as an economic activity that creates social welfare, entitling housewives to social security.
 - **Trinidad and Tobago's Counting Unremunerated Work Act (1996)** mandates the valuation and gender-based analysis of unpaid care work.
 - **Argentina** grants **pension credits** to women for unpaid care work, recognising their role in raising children.
- However, **no existing framework** fully acknowledges **emotional and mental labour**, which remains outside the purview of policy and compensation.

Policy and Institutional Developments in India

- The **Ministry of Women and Child Development (2025)**, under the revised *National Policy for Women*, proposed measures such as:
 - Developing a **National Framework for Valuing Unpaid Care Work**.
 - Expansion of **Anganwadi and crèche services** under the *Mission Shakti* initiative.
 - Incentivizing shared domestic responsibilities through awareness campaigns targeting men and youth.
- **NITI Aayog**'s Gender Budgeting Report 2025 called for integrating time-use data into fiscal planning, marking the first time unpaid work was explicitly mentioned as an indicator of women's economic status in India's national gender framework.
- The **Madras High Court**, in 2023, acknowledged a wife's household duties as a contribution to the family's economic assets, granting her an **equal share in property**.

Way Forward: Pathways for Change

- **Inclusion in GDP Accounting**: Integrate unpaid labor metrics into national income accounts through MoSPI.
- **Gender-Sensitive Labor Policies**: Paid family leave, flexible hours, and caregiver tax credits.
- **Infrastructure Investments**: Public childcare, eldercare centers, and rural support networks.
- **Behavioral Shifts**: Nationwide campaigns like '*Share the Load 2.0*' supported by the government and private sector.

Source: TH

Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] Discuss the various forms of women's labour that remain unrecognized in economic and policy frameworks. Why is it important to acknowledge and value these contributions?

