

Women's working hours and valuation of their unpaid care work



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Women's empowerment requires that women contribute to the society and the economy and it is also important for these contributions to be adequately recognised.

Generation of necessary data and development of appropriate conceptual framework for gender disaggregated analysis are prerequisites for this.

The important steps forward in this respect have been the research on inclusion of the value of women's unpaid family service in the national GDP estimates.

During the last few decades there have been extensive research on estimation of the value of women's domestic activities and care activities for family.

It has been estimated that its addition to GDP is likely to raise the total GDP value in the ranges of 20 to 80 per cent in some of the developing countries of Asia.

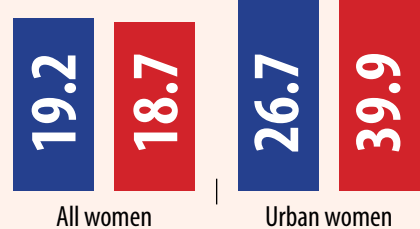
It is not surprising that the official GDP estimation method remains unchanged. There are a number of reasons behind the absence of any significant initiative to change it in response to the recent thinking on inclusion of women's unpaid work in GDP.

The mainstream economists may not be interested in such change because this would imply that all analysis of GDP growth and the

EXCESSIVE WORK BY EMPLOYED WOMEN

SOURCE: CALCULATED FROM LFS, VARIOUS YEARS

■ 2010 Figures in %
■ 2016-17



Note: Excessive hours are defined as work of more than 50 hours per week.

impact of traditional policies on such growth, or in other words the entire economic analysis would have to change.

Such change is unthinkable in the present state of the discipline.

One may also notice that the difference in men's and women's contribution to domestic work is much higher in developing countries compared to high-income countries.

In the high-income countries, many of these services are purchased in the market and the use of machinery and other amenities has reduced the time required for such activities.

In the given circumstances, recognition of women's contribution to the economy requires attention to other aspects which may throw light on women's hard work while combining activities of 'employment' and 'household services for own family use'.



REUTERS

The participation of women in paid work is rising but it is still lower than the high or higher middle-income countries.

Of course, this is not being suggested as an alternative to the research on women's contribution to GDP but is expected to complement that.

Women's working hours received attention as soon as women's participation in labour force and in paid employment soared in the high-income countries.

It was soon realised that it imposes a "double day" on women.

In Bangladesh, the extent of participation of women in paid work is rising but is still lower than the high or higher middle-income countries.

Growth of employment in RMG sector, in addition to other forces, led to rise in the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for women. Long working hours received attention in the context of RMG workers, but it must extend beyond that.

There has been hardly any analysis based on national data on this and how the responsibility of domestic work aggravates the situation.

Studies have observed that alongside underemployment, long working hours is also a reality for both men and women in the labour market of Bangladesh. However, there is hardly any acknowledgement that a large percentage of employed women also work excessive hours.

Therefore, it is essential to take a closer look

at the data on working hours of women.

In addition, one must also recognise the role of care work performed by women not only in terms of its value addition and raising the size of GDP but also in terms of total workload of women.

If needed, women can work not only fulltime but also excess hours. If 50 hours per week is regarded as a cut-off point for excessive work, a large share of working women are subject to excessive hours, even if one considers only the hours in income earning work.

The situation is worse for women in urban areas.

In 2016-17, about 40 per cent of employed women in urban areas worked excessive hours. The proportion of urban women working excessive hours increased during 2010 to 2016-17.

On the whole, working hour is not so much a choice left to the worker but it depends on the demand side. One has to accept the working hours as a given factor when accepting a specific type of activity/occupation and such acceptance is a strategy for survival among poorer women in Bangladesh.

The above data focuses only on hours spent on income earning activities. On top of that both men and women are likely to work in the production of services for household. When the two are added, in the urban areas, the average hours worked by women is higher compared to men. These are respectively 66

and 53 hours per week.

For those not employed and are engaged only in the production of home services, men work much smaller number of hours than women. This glaring difference must be highlighted. Even the total working hour does not fully capture the low-paid working women's burden and drudgery.

To this total hour, one must add the time for commuting to the place of work as most of them walk to their workplaces due to a lack of availability of women-friendly public transport services.

These findings imply that appropriate conceptual framework for generation of data on female labour market and its analysis can help policy advocacy for gender equality in the relevant sphere and recognition of women's contribution to the economy, family and society at large.

As a concluding remark, it should be emphasised that this indicator is easy to visualise and one may easily relate it to everyday experience in the society and family.

This indicator may better appeal to the conscience of the policymakers to adopt policies for provision of services for working women which could reduce drudgery and the length of working hours in the domestic front.

The write is executive chairperson of the Centre for Development and Employment Research (CDER).

WORKING HOURS IN EMPLOYMENT AND IN FAMILY USE SERVICES BY SEX

	PERSONS EMPLOYED		
	WEEKLY HOURS IN EMPLOYMENT	WEEKLY HOURS OF FAMILY SERVICE	TOTAL WEEKLY HOURS IN ALL TYPES
Male	52	8	60
Female	38	21	59
Urban male	55	8	63
Urban female	47	19	66
	NOT EMPLOYED		
Male	----	11	11
Female	----	28	28

SOURCE: BBS: LABOUR FORCE SURVEY, 2016-17

Bangladesh unlikely to cut subsidy on jute goods export

Commerce minister says after a meeting with Indian commerce secretary

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh is unlikely to reduce incentives on exports of jute goods, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi said yesterday.

He shared the info at a press briefing after Indian Commerce Secretary Anup Wadhawan paid a courtesy call on him at the minister's secretariat office in Dhaka.

At the meeting, the minister raised the issue of the antidumping duty that India slapped on Bangladesh's jute goods in January 2017.

On the contrary, Wadhawan urged Munshi to cut the subsidy—ranging from 7 per cent to 20 per cent—that Bangladesh provides to the exporters of jute goods.

Munshi said his government might not reduce the subsidy as per the Indian demand and Bangladesh will try to resolve the antidumping duty issue through bilateral discussion.

Bangladesh has been seeking removal of the antidumping duty for the last four years, as this has affected the country's exports to Indian markets.

If the issue is not resolved through bilateral discussions then Bangladesh might go to the World Trade Organisation, the minister also said.

The commerce secretary also shed light on Bangladesh's onion imports from India and the signing of a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the two

neighbours.

Munshi said India agreed to give onion seeds so that Bangladesh can grow the item in summer season to increase its production here and reduce the country's dependence on Indian onion.

Of Bangladesh's total onion import, some 75 per cent comes from India. But both the countries get affected when onion crisis begins. That is why, India imposes ban on onion export to Bangladesh almost every year to meet national demand.

Relying too much on Indian onion is not right, the minister said. "So, Bangladesh may import onions from other countries like Myanmar."

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Indo-Bangla officials sit today to help remove trade barriers

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The commerce secretaries of Bangladesh and India will sit in Dhaka today to discuss how to increase bilateral trade by removing trade barriers.

They will discuss various issues such as tariff and non-tariff barriers, anti-dumping duty on exports of Bangladesh's jute goods to India, and the feasibility of signing a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the two nations, the Ministry of Commerce (MoC) said in a statement.

Commerce Secretary Md Jafar Uddin and his Indian counterpart Anup Wadhawan will lead their respective sides at the meeting, to

be held at the InterContinental Dhaka.

The last commerce secretary level meeting took place on January 15-16, 2020.

At today's meeting, the progress in implementing the decisions made during the last meeting will also be discussed. Besides, both sides will talk about how to expand a number of border haats and improve port infrastructure.

While briefing the media at his office yesterday, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi expressed his hope that some trade disputes could be resolved through the discussion as Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to come to Bangladesh this month to attend the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence.

City Bank Capital issue manager for Tk 3,000cr Beximco sukuk

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Beximco Ltd has appointed City Bank Capital Resources Ltd as the issue manager as it looks to raise Tk 3,000 crore by issuing sukuk.

This will be the largest sukuk issuance in the private sector in Bangladesh.

A sukuk is an Islamic financial certificate, similar to a treasury bond and structured to generate returns in compliance with Islamic finance principles.

Bangladesh entered the sukuk era on December 28 when the central bank held its first-ever auction for the Islamic bond. The government is raising Tk 8,000 crore through the issuance of the sukuk to implement a safe water supply project.

Osman Kaiser Chowdhury, group director and CEO for power and engineering of Beximco Group, and Ershad Hossain, managing director and CEO of City Bank Capital, signed the agreement for the Sukuk Al Istisna yesterday.

Beximco is the originator of the issue, and City Bank Capital is the arranger, adviser and issue manager. The profit rate of the sukuk will be a minimum of 9 per cent per annum.

The proceeds will be utilised to construct the solar projects of Teesta Solar

and Korotoa Solar, both subsidiary of Beximco Power Company, and to finance the purchase of machinery required for the expansion of Beximco's textile division, the company said in a post on the website of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE).

Teesta Solar is a joint venture of Beximco Power and China's TBEA Xinjiang Sunoasis Company, and it has an agreement with Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB). Korotoa Solar, a joint venture between Beximco Power and the Jiangsu Zhongtian Technology Company, has a similar agreement with the BPDB.

Each Islamic bond's face value will be Tk 100, and the minimum subscription size will be Tk 5,000. The tenure is five years.

Half of the Tk 3,000 crore fund will be raised through private placement. Of the rest, 25 per cent would be issued to existing shareholders of Beximco Ltd, and 25 per cent will be set aside for public offer.

Investors will have the option to convert their investment in the sukuk into ordinary shares of Beximco within five years, the company said.

If an investor does not want to convert the securities, they will get back the fund on maturity through a single payment.

Shares of Beximco Ltd closed 0.24 per cent lower at Tk 81.90 on the DSE yesterday.

'South Korean companies here should look beyond RMG'



South Korean Ambassador Lee Jang-keun, left, meets Bepza Executive Chairman General Md Nazrul Islam in Dhaka yesterday.

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and South Korea believe that companies of the latter which are operating here should look beyond readymade garments (RMG) and promote diversification of industries.

The consensus was reached when South Korean Ambassador to Bangladesh Lee Jang-keun met with Maj Gen Md Nazrul Islam, executive chairman of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza), yesterday.

They noted that South Korean companies have greatly contributed to developing Bangladesh's RMG industry since the 1970s, said a press statement of the embassy.

There are some 70 Korean companies in operation here employing over 60,000 Bangladeshis, making a cumulative investment of around \$900 million.

They agreed to work together to invite more investment from South Korea to take advantage of Bangladesh's abundant workforce and promising business opportunities.

Islam assured that Bepza would continue to enhance a business-friendly environment and put in utmost efforts to support and fulfill the needs of South Korean investors.

Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency Trade Representative Dong Hyon Kim was present.