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## **Are Women Not ‘Working’? Interactions between Childcare and Women’s Economic Engagement**

Deepta Chopra, Amrita Saha, Sohela Nazneen and Meenakshi Krishnan

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# **Are Women Not ‘Working’? Interactions between Childcare and Women’s Economic Engagement**

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## **Summary**

This paper seeks to examine how childcare impacts upon women’s economic engagement in India, Nepal, Tanzania, and Rwanda. In delineating the linkages between childcare, paid work, and other tasks that women carry out within and outside the house, this paper privileges women’s own perceptions of childcare as ‘work’, and the extent to which they see this as a tension between women’s caregiving role and their income-generating role. Our findings corroborate that women experience significant trade-offs as they engage in both market activities and childcare tasks. We highlight the important distinction between direct and supervisory childcare – with supervisory childcare taking up a large amount of women’s time across all contexts. In bringing women’s voices to the fore of the prevalent discourse of childcare being a ‘barrier’ to women’s paid work, this paper highlights the complex and bi-directional relationship between childcare and women’s economic engagement. Our analysis shows that for women from lower-income households, the effect of childcare on women’s engagement in paid work (hours, location, type, or nature of work) is mediated by different factors: (a) the economic condition of the household; (b) the availability of alternative care arrangements; (c) the household structure and; (d) alternative options (for both men and women) for paid work. This research highlights how complex and constrained women’s choices are, in a context of low-paid jobs and lack of support for childcare from other institutional actors, and how women posit childcare as a positive and desirable experience.

**Keywords:** Childcare, women’s economic empowerment, paid work, unpaid work, women’s economic engagement.

**Deepta Chopra** is a Research Fellow based in the Governance cluster at IDS. She leads the gender work in IDS on women's and girls' empowerment, with her research interests focusing on gendered political economy analysis of policies for the empowerment of women and girls, and its core links with unpaid care work. She works closely with state and non-state partners in South Asia, and has designed, managed and implemented several research projects on social protection and women's economic empowerment.

**Meenakshi Krishnan** is a Doctoral Researcher at IDS. Her research interests focus on women's economic empowerment, links between paid work and unpaid care work, the gendered division of unpaid labour, and family-friendly work policies. She is currently researching the gendered political economy of the Maternity Benefit Amendment Act in India from a feminist ethics of care lens. Prior to starting her PhD, Meenakshi has over 17 years of consulting and organisation development experience, working in both private and not-for-profit spaces. She specialises in designing and facilitating programmes for women's leadership, gender-inclusive workplaces, values and culture alignment, and managerial effectiveness.

**Sohela Nazneen** is a political economist based in the Governance cluster at IDS, and leads IDS' work on gender, politics, and governance. Her research focuses on gender politics of policymaking, women's economic and political empowerment, social and feminist movement. Her recent book is *Negotiating Gender Equity in the Global South: The Politics of Domestic Violence Policy* (2019, Routledge). She has worked as a consultant for FAO, UNDP, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CARE and other organisations.

**Amrita Saha** is a Research Fellow at IDS and works with the Rural Futures cluster and the Business, Markets and the State cluster at IDS. Her research explores empirical questions on political economy of trade protection, agricultural commercialisation, and innovation – with a focus on poverty, outcomes for women, and effects on individual capabilities. She has extensive experience in designing and implementing quantitative and qualitative surveys that explore the use of new methods and tools. The geographic focus of her work is India and sub-Saharan Africa. Amrita holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Sussex and has worked in policy and academia.

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## Acronyms

AAI	ActionAid International
AAR	ActionAid Rwanda
BK	Bishwakarma
CCT	conditional cash transfer
CSGR	Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation
DFID	Department for International Development
EDP	Enterprise Development Programme
GrOW	Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ISID	Institute for the Study of International Development
KEP	Karnali Employment Programme
LFP	labour force participation
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NGO	non-governmental organisation
SEWA MP	Self Employed Women's Association Madhya Pradesh
SNA	System of National Accounts
STATA	Software for Statistics and Data Science
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
VDC	Village Development Committee
VUP	Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme
WDF	Women's Development Fund
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment

# 1 Setting the research agenda

## 1.1 Introducing the paper

Women's economic engagement is mediated by many factors including women's access and control over resources and opportunities for participation, as well as how effectively policies and programmes mitigate structural inequalities that disadvantage women in the labour market (Kabeer 1994, 2008; Elson and Cagatay 2000). In recent years, women's labour force participation has increased, particularly in lower-middle- and lower-income countries (Kabeer 2014), with more and more state policies and development agencies emphasising the need to continue this positive trend. The rise in women's economic engagement in developing countries has led to the re-emergence of an old issue in development policy and feminist circles – that of social reproduction or unpaid care work. It is well established that unpaid care work occupies large amounts of women's and girls' time. As women continue to do most of the unpaid caregiving in all contexts (Elson 1995; Razavi 2007; Eyben and Fontana 2011; Budlender 2008), it is also now a common assumption that this unpaid work is therefore a 'barrier' to women's participation in civil, economic, social, and political spheres. As Razavi as eloquently expressed, unpaid care corrodes women's ability to seek employment and income, thereby increasing the risk of 'economic disempowerment' (Razavi 2007: 22).

However, there has been little disaggregation, at least empirically, of which of the tasks belonging to the unpaid care work basket, impact which of the tasks that fall under the broad ambit of women's economic engagement, and how these impacts are experienced by women. This is the focus of this paper, which seeks to provide an empirical examination of the ways in which childcare impacts upon different types of women's economic engagement in the labour force. Singling out childcare as an activity or a sub-set of the unpaid care work tasks is critical, as studies conducted across the world show that childcare responsibilities are disproportionately undertaken by women, and that this affects their labour market participation (Folbre and Himmelweit 2000; Cook and Dong 2011). Hitherto, there is little empirical understanding, and therefore limited focus, especially in the context of developing country contexts, on how childcare responsibilities and activities affect women's lives and their economic engagement – which this paper aims to provide.

For this analysis, we draw from data collected through our project 'Balancing Paid Work with Unpaid Care Work' (part of the Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women – GrOW portfolio), funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and the Hewlett Foundation. This research aimed to examine the social organisation of care in low-income families, the division of care provision amongst different actors making up the care diamond (Razavi 2007),<sup>1</sup> and the experiences of women in low-income families as they attempted to balance their unpaid care work and paid work responsibilities.

The project's main findings have been sobering: that women living in low-income families in all four project countries – India, Nepal, Tanzania, and Rwanda – struggled to balance their various tasks of paid work and care, and were suffering serious levels of physical and emotional depletion in trying to sustain themselves and their families. We also found that there was hardly any difference in the conditions and experiences of women participating in

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<sup>1</sup> The 'care diamond' is a framework that outlines the institutions involved in the provision of care, which include: the family/household, markets, the public sector, and the not-for-profit/community sector (Razavi 2007: 20).

economic empowerment programmes, and those who were not participating in such programmes – pointing to the conclusion that the benefits from the Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) programmes was neither sufficient nor sustained enough to reduce the depletion that women faced while balancing paid work with their unpaid care work.

However, our analysis in our previous work (summarised in Chopra and Zambelli 2017) stopped short of being able to disaggregate the various tasks and activities that made up the basket of unpaid care work that women were mainly responsible for. In our study sites and previous analysis, *unpaid care work* was defined broadly as including not only direct care of children, elders, the sick, and care of animals, but also household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing, as well as fetching water and firewood for daily survival.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, we disaggregate the various care tasks and do an in-depth analysis to specifically focus on the care of children and its impact on women’s economic engagement. Further extending our analysis, we examine the differences across countries and contexts/sites within countries as well.

An important clarification of the definition of the term ‘women’s economic engagement’ will also be of value for this paper. We use the term ‘women’s economic engagement’ broadly, encompassing not just women’s paid work, but also their engagement in subsistence agriculture with their families, or family/self-owned businesses such as growing and selling vegetables, running shops, and so forth. Women from lower-income groups often spend huge amounts of time and energy doing this kind of work, yet with low or no returns. Thus, we expand our focus in this paper to consider women’s economic engagement rather than paid work – to encompass women’s unpaid tasks such as working on their own family farms/kitchen gardens for subsistence agriculture; shops/other family businesses; caring for livestock; community work; household repairs; and the collection of water and fuel. While these tasks are included in the System of National Accounts (SNA) as unpaid work, in analysing how women balance multiple forms of tasks, we pay special attention to the collection of fuel and water, given the time and energy that these tasks take, and the central importance of these for women to be able to carry out their other tasks – both domestic chores and care of people; as well as care of animals and land.

This paper corroborates that women experience trade-offs as they engage in market activities and at the same time carry out childcare tasks. It also provides evidence to support the important distinction between direct and supervisory childcare. Overwhelmingly though, it brings women’s voices to the fore of the prevalent discourse of childcare being a ‘barrier’ to women’s paid work. Instead, women in this research show how complex and constrained their choices are, in a context of low-paid jobs and lack of support for childcare from other institutional actors – thereby providing weight to the critiques of the neoliberal and instrumental approaches to empowerment (Chant and Sweetman 2012; Molyneux 2007). Finally, women’s voices are clear in positing childcare as a positive and desirable experience – which is in line with the overarching focus and message of this research project of care being a positive force (Eyben and Fontana 2011); a ‘social good that not only sustains and reproduces society, but also underpins all development progress’ (Chopra and Sweetman 2014: 409).

The paper is structured as follows. The remaining sub-sections of Section 1 provide a brief literature review on childcare and women’s economic engagement, set out the main

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<sup>2</sup> This was a broader understanding than that adopted by the System of National Accounts (SNA), because of practical and positional considerations (explained in Chopra and Zambelli 2017: 6).

research questions that the paper will seek to answer, and delineate the methods and concepts that we have used. In Section 2, we undertake a country-level comparative analysis, bringing in findings from both our qualitative and quantitative data, to pull out country-level differences and similarities in the time-use data collected in our study; to delineate the interlinkages between childcare and women's paid work; to capture women's participation rates;<sup>3</sup> and to provide insights into the interaction of types of activities to capture multi-tasking. In Section 3, the paper delves into how childcare impacts women's time use on other activities – their sleep and leisure, participation in community activities, and other household tasks. The impact on sleep, leisure, and participation in other community activities is important to explore wellbeing and depletion at the individual level. This paper examines not only how childcare impacts women's economic engagement, but also how women's paid work in turn has implications for their time use and quality of childcare – presented in Section 3. In Section 4, the paper concludes by drawing out our surprise findings, the implications of these findings for policy and programming, and sets out some knowledge gaps.

## 1.2 Literature review and gaps

Studies that explore the links between childcare and women's economic engagement, based on their key focus, can be broadly categorised under the following areas. First, there are many studies that focus on the 'conjugal contract' (Whitehead 1984); that is, how households make decisions, including about childcare and how couples exchange resources (labour and other types), and how these decisions are mediated by social norms. Second, some studies explore the nature of the 'reproductive bargain' (Pearson 2004) and demonstrate how actors negotiate around the social organisation of care work, including childcare, and how the outcomes of the bargain depends on the resources available to the actors, and the redistribution between different institutions – families, communities, businesses, and the state (Razavi 2007). Third, some of the studies have an explicit policy focus which investigates how different policy measures, including social protection, may reduce women's double burden (Molyneux 2006; Jones and Holmes 2011). While these categories highlight the broader thematic focus that explores the relationship between social reproduction and women's economic engagement, there are fewer studies that take into account how women from lower-income families view their choices and trade-offs between childcare and paid work in developing country contexts (Carswell 2016).

Folbre's (2006) article is one of the few theoretical pieces that focuses specifically on childcare and women's economic participation. It points out that childcare is not the only form of unpaid care work performed by women. Women are also disproportionately engaged in domestic and household chores such as cooking and cleaning; in water and fuel collection; and unpaid tasks such as caring for livestock, land, family farms, and shops. Hence, there is a need to empirically distinguish between these different forms of care tasks and how these affect and are affected by women's economic engagement (England and Folber 1999).

Folbre (2006) also goes further in her analysis, to argue that developing a nuanced picture of childcare also requires distinguishing between direct childcare, where one is directly dealing with the child (bathing, feeding, playing) and supervisory childcare, where one may be responsible for child-minding while performing other tasks. Folbre (2006) argues that while most time-use surveys captured direct childcare, they were not as effective in

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<sup>3</sup> Participation rates are calculated as the proportion of women participating in a given activity during the day, which gives an aggregated picture of time use.

capturing supervisory childcare – given that supervisory care may take place along with a primary and secondary task being performed by the women. In fact, as this paper shows, in lower-income households with young children, supervisory childcare persists throughout the day. Being responsible for a child over long stretches of time affects the ability of poor women in developing countries to engage in paid work and whether they choose to do this, and how women balance other unpaid tasks and childcare.

Both Folbre (2006) and Chant (1997) point out that women with low education and skills from lower-income households in developing countries have experienced a ‘feminisation of poverty’ (Folbre 2006: 184) and a ‘pauperisation of motherhood’ (*ibid.*). These are trends that are being witnessed in some developing countries with high levels of income inequality and labour mobility. In this paper, we aim to develop an empirical picture of how women from lower-income households in developing countries balance different forms of care tasks and the choices they make regarding childcare and paid work.

Understanding women’s views on these questions is important in developing country contexts, particularly for policy and programmatic support, as one of the most critical forms of gender inequality is an onerous and disproportionate share of unpaid care work that women have to undertake in these contexts. Chopra and Sweetman (2014: 414) state succinctly that in developing countries ‘women’s time spent in unpaid care work (including childcare) is widely assumed to be infinitely elastic’, and this affects the extent to which women can engage in paid work activities and other forms of economic tasks linked to subsistence. There is a gap in the literature that focuses explicitly on women’s own perceptions of these trade-offs, and how these trade-offs can be balanced through support from various institutional actors.

The care diamond developed by Razavi (2007) has provided us with distinct ways that unpaid care can be redistributed between four different institutional sites (household, market, community, and the state). Razavi (2007) distinguishes between these four institutional actors as having different responsibilities for the provision of care, and notes how it is often the household, and in fact, the women in the household, that carry out a disproportionate share of care responsibilities. Yet, the family is an important site of redistribution of care tasks, especially related to childcare. Studies have found that in rural areas within close-knit communities women receive more familial support for childcare than in urban areas where these social networks are missing (Folbre 2006). Studies have also explored the nature of intergenerational care transfers, particularly focusing on the role of older daughters and grandmothers in the provision of care (Folbre 2006). Some programmatic responses have also focused on trying to engage men in family responsibilities (Perrons 2000).

However, beyond noting that the familial responsibility for care is mostly feminised, most policy responses have treated the household as a composite unit, ignoring intra-familial inequality and the household as a site of contestation and negotiation (Kabeer 1994; Agarwal 2002: 35) over redistribution of childcare and other forms of care tasks. In this paper, we expand our focus beyond the negotiation that takes place between the ‘conjugal unit’ (husband and wife) to explore what role is played by different members of the household, when (that is, for what kind of tasks are they willing to step in), and how these members view women’s economic engagement and gender roles. Our analysis of the kinds of alternative support reveals the nature of ‘reproductive bargain’ (Pearson 2004) in the case study sites, particularly as it shows the way redistribution takes place or not within these different institutional sites.

We also investigate what other forms of social arrangements of care are available at the community level and what kinds of reciprocity exists between these relations. Apart from the community, we also investigate whether private/market options are considered and what kinds of provisions are made by the state. Our focus is on how women weigh the trade-offs of these options, their views on quality of care, and the decisions they make regarding the type and forms of employment they undertake. This then allows us to develop a nuanced picture of what kinds of redistribution of care work takes place, where interventions and policies have fallen short, and how women themselves perceive these as options.

### **1.3 Research questions**

Based on the literature review above, and gaps identified therein, we ask the following questions to interrogate the links between childcare and women's economic engagement in developing countries:

- In what ways does childcare affect the labour market decisions of women living in low-income families? And how does women's economic engagement affect quality of childcare?
- What are the interlinkages between childcare, paid work, and other tasks women carry out within the house and outside?
- How do women themselves view their struggles to balance childcare and their economic engagement and explain the various trade-offs that they make?

In attempting to answer these questions, we examine women's own perceptions of childcare as 'work', and the extent to which there is a tension between women's caregiving role and their income-generating role. In doing this, we firstly try to understand women's perspectives on childcare – and the extent to which women themselves see childcare as a barrier to their economic engagement. In this regard, supervisory childcare plays an important role (Folbre 2006). Capturing women's perspectives is also important as it provides us with insights into how individual decisions on labour force participation are made, specifically as most policy studies ignore women's perspectives on this issue, as reviewed above. In addition, our focus on the interlinkages, particularly beyond childcare and paid work, provides a fuller picture of the different forms of tasks women perform and the trade-offs between these in lower-income households in developing countries.

Moreover, in exploring trade-offs, we are able to unpack the different dimensions, other than the economic dimension; that is, the need to earn an income and the ability to afford alternative care services; as well as investigating the emotional aspects. How women make choices about engaging economically and rearranging childcare is mediated by many factors, including the quality of alternative forms of care provision (Folbre 2006). We also investigate the effect that multi-tasking (care or paid work coupled with direct or supervisory childcare) has on women's individual wellbeing, including the subjective dimension (Floro 1995). This analysis then allows us to build an empirical picture of physical and emotional depletion (Rai, Hoskyns and Thomas 2010) experienced by women in lower-income households. Unpacking these dimensions that fall beyond the economic domain is also important, given that women's decision to undertake most childcare responsibilities is influenced by the 'conjugal contract' (Whitehead 1984), particularly gender norms around the division of labour, and that of gender roles and childcare that permeate families and communities (Chopra 2014; Deshpande and Kabeer 2019).

Before we move on to explore the above questions in our chosen countries, we present some stylised facts that represent the broader global trends on the links between childcare and women's economic engagement. The literature shows that fertility, female labour force participation, and childcare provision are positively correlated with each other, while the gender wage gap seems to be negatively correlated (Borck 2014). Studies from North America (Gelbach 2002; Baker, Gruber and Milligan 2008; Lefebvre and Merrigan 2008; Cascio 2009); Europe (Nollenberger and Rodríguez-Planas 2015; Brewer and Cattan 2017); Latin and Central America (Attanasio and Vera-Hernández 2004; Berlinski and Galiani 2007; Barros *et al.* 2011; Hallman *et al.* 2005; Martínez and Perticarà 2017); Asia (Jain 2016; Nandi *et al.* 2016); and more recently, sub-Saharan Africa (Clark *et al.* 2017) all show a significant and positive effect of the provision of childcare on women's labour force participation (LFP). While estimates of the impact of affordable childcare provision on women's LFP vary from 7 per cent to as high as 20 per cent in these different studies, what is notable for our purpose is the positive relationships between these two which points to the fact that the care of children, especially young ones, can adversely affect women's choices with regard to the nature of employment (formal, informal, self-employed, or home-based), the number of hours worked, the quality of work, earning potential, and stability of employment.

Decisions on childcare and labour market entry are jointly determined decisions for women (Quisumbing, Hallman and Ruel 2007) and the age of children is a critical influencing factor (Sengupta and Sachdeva 2017). Studies show that women choose not to participate in full-time work especially when their children are young, and as children grow older, while active direct childcare activities reduced, supervisory time did not (Folbre and Yoon 2007), which then affects women's labour market engagement patterns. These stylised facts indicate the need to unpack childcare as a task – beyond just how many hours are spent on directly taking care of children – and explore how childcare, both active and supervisory, interacts with other tasks, both paid and unpaid. Understanding these aspects of women's role in lower-income households in developing countries is important for developing specific/effective policy measures, as this paper seeks to do.

#### **1.4 Sample and methods**

For this paper, we use data collected in four sites in four countries: India, Nepal, Rwanda, and Tanzania – hence drawing the sample from 16 sites in total – out of which only two sites (in India) were urban, while the remainder of the 14 sites were in rural areas. We aimed specifically to study women living in poor families in the four countries mentioned above, who had at least one child under the age of six, and who had also been in some form of paid work over the last 12 months.

Therefore, in each of the sites, we collected quantitative data through purposively designed surveys with 50 such women – taking our total sample to 200 women in each country, with a total of 800 women interviewed across the project. The survey included modules collecting information on the basic characteristics of all household members, women's time use, the sharing of unpaid care, characteristics of women's paid work and unpaid care work, and also on decision-making and social norms. Out of these 50 women, we purposively identified and interviewed eight women and their families (husbands, children, significant female/male carers in the household) in each site, thereby generating 32 interviews per country – a total of 126<sup>4</sup> case studies. In order to get a measure of how women's economic

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<sup>4</sup> We were able to undertake only 30 case studies in Rwanda instead of 32.

empowerment programmes were making a difference to women's lives, our sample was bifurcated into participants of programmes that aimed at women's economic empowerment, and women who lived in the same communities but were not participating in these programmes.

We also undertook a series of nine participatory exercises and group discussions in each of our sites – with groups of women, men, mixed adults, adolescent girls, and adolescent boys, to get a nuanced picture of the communities we were working with. All qualitative data was coded in NVivo through a coding framework developed for this paper, and quotes to substantiate our findings were drawn out from this data set. We also use the [126 published case studies](#) for our analysis, homing in specifically on women's experiences of childcare as a discrete care activity.

The analysis in this paper draws on key concepts that we discuss below in turn:

### **(i) Direct and indirect childcare**

In looking at childcare, it is important to note that we have distinguished between direct childcare (which women spoke about as spending time and energy on) as well as indirect or supervisory childcare – which is about having responsibility for a child, even while doing other tasks as their primary activity. This distinction between direct and indirect/supervisory childcare then provides us a more nuanced picture of childcare and its link to women's economic engagement in the labour force.

### **(ii) Types of economic activities**

A brief note about the types of economic activities that women in the different countries were engaged in is useful here. In Nepal, many women from land-owning households were involved in fresh vegetable and seed production, while landless women were engaged in multiple small-scale activities such as agricultural labour/sharecropping, livestock rearing, running retail shops, tailoring, and alcohol-making, breaking stones, selling firewood, and carrying sand. In Tanzania, owing to the predominantly rural character of our research sites, women's cash-earning work revolved around agricultural work, food processing, and small petty trade businesses (for example, in chickens, clothes, soap, and food stuffs). Digging on other people's land was the most frequently reported type of agricultural work. In Rwanda, women were primarily engaged in food crops and cash crop cultivation. Other jobs included income-generating activities such as selling surplus agricultural produce – including animal products (sometimes alone, sometimes through a cooperative); household work for others; construction work; tailoring; and selling local beer. A few women shared work with their husbands in small businesses. Paid work options for women living in the urban sites – in slum areas of our research settings in Ujjain and Indore, India – included a range of occupations. Women were engaged in home-based work (rolling incense sticks, punching files, stitching bags, tailoring clothes, rolling *tendu* leaves to make *beedis*<sup>5</sup>), construction, domestic, and brick-kiln work, employment as street vendors (for vegetables and plastic goods) and at factories, or self-employment such as stitching or running a small shop. In many of the rural sites across countries, women expressed a preference for agricultural labour close to home as it enabled them to perform both unpaid care work and paid work.

### **(iii) Time-use measures**

Quantitative analysis was done (STATA) to pull out the descriptive and analytical statistics in the paper. Specifically, we have used the following analytical tools using the time-diary data:

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<sup>5</sup> Local cigarettes.

- a. **Time-use incidence and intensity:** Incidence is the number of individuals that are doing a certain activity, while intensity is the amount of time spent doing the activity. Both concepts together help us examine time use across the four countries, and are used throughout the paper.
- b. **Tempogram:** A tempogram is a conventional ‘timing graph’ that provides aggregated information on the timing of work. A measure of time-use incidence – *participation rate* – that is, the percentage of women doing a certain activity at any given point of time, is denoted on the y-axis and the timing of the day is denoted on the x-axis, helping compare time-use trends on an average day across the different countries and groups. We use tempograms throughout the paper to measure incidence of different activities such as childcare, paid work, unpaid care work, and so forth.

#### (iv) Programme participation

We also examined in each of our countries, two programmes that engaged women economically (we called them Women’s Economic Empowerment – WEE programmes), and women’s participation in them. One was a government programme and one a community-led programme. These included: in India – the Self Employed Women’s Association in urban sites in Madhya Pradesh (SEWA MP) and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in rural, tribal areas in Rajasthan; in Nepal – the Karnali Employment Programme (KEP) in Karnali Zone, Jumla District, and Oxfam’s Enterprise Development Programme (EDP) in Surkhet District; in Tanzania – the Oxfam Food Security for Tanzania Farmers programme and the Government of Tanzania’s Women Development Fund programme, each running in Lushoto and Korogwe districts; and in Rwanda – Action Aid’s Food Security and Economic Empowerment Programme in Musanze District and the government’s Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) in Huye District.<sup>6</sup> We were interested in examining whether this participation in programmes that explicitly set out to ‘empower’ women were making any difference to women’s lives as compared to other jobs that women might be involved in. Accordingly, we divided our sample of 50 women into 30 participants of these programmes and 20 non-WEE participants. Our eight in-depth case studies were also bifurcated for each site into five WEE participants and three non-WEE participants.

## 2 Women’s time use in childcare

Women’s engagement in childcare is considered to be a barrier for their economic engagement, primarily because of childcare taking up a majority of their time. It therefore becomes critical to understand how much time women were spending on childcare directly, and also the effect of supervisory childcare. An analysis of our data reveals some very interesting findings, in terms of women’s time use in childcare, how this varied with the support that they received for childcare, their perceptions about childcare as work, and the

<sup>6</sup> Details of each country programme are available from the respective country reports: *‘My Work Never Ends’: Women Balancing Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work in India* (Zaidi and Chigateri 2017), *A Trapeze Act: Women Balancing Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work in Nepal* (Ghosh, Singh and Chigateri 2017), *‘My Mother Does a Lot of Work’: Women Balancing Paid and Unpaid Care Work in Tanzania* (Zambelli et al. 2017), and *‘You Cannot Live Without Money’: Women Balancing Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work in Rwanda* (Murphy-McGreevey, Roelen and Nyamulinda 2017). These [country reports](#) are available on the Interactions website, as well as [programmatic reports](#).

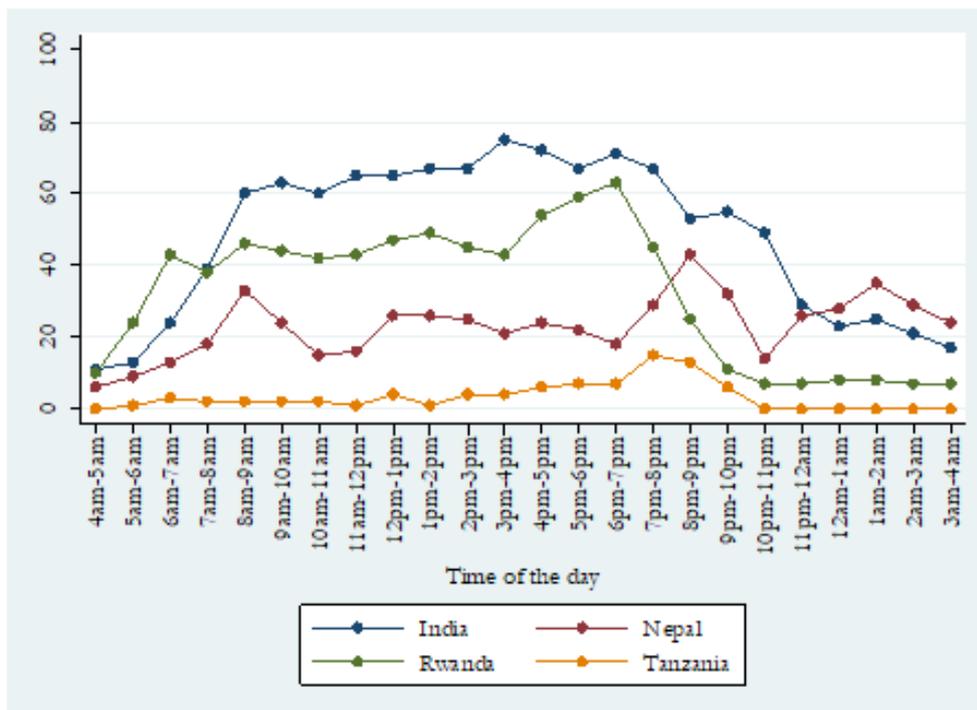
temporal dimensions (daily and seasonal) of childcare, as discussed in the following sub-sections.

## 2.1 Women’s time use in direct and indirect childcare responsibilities

While women in all four countries said that they were the ones primarily responsible for childcare, it was interesting to see that there was a clear difference between childcare as a primary activity (direct childcare) and childcare as an additional activity (indirect/supervisory childcare responsibility).

The pattern of the incidence of direct childcare, as depicted by the tempogram in Figure 2.1 below, shows that the incidence of direct childcare throughout the day is the lowest in Tanzania. The percentage of women doing direct childcare is highest in India, and appears to remain consistent during the day as at least 60 per cent of women engage in direct childcare from 10am–6pm.

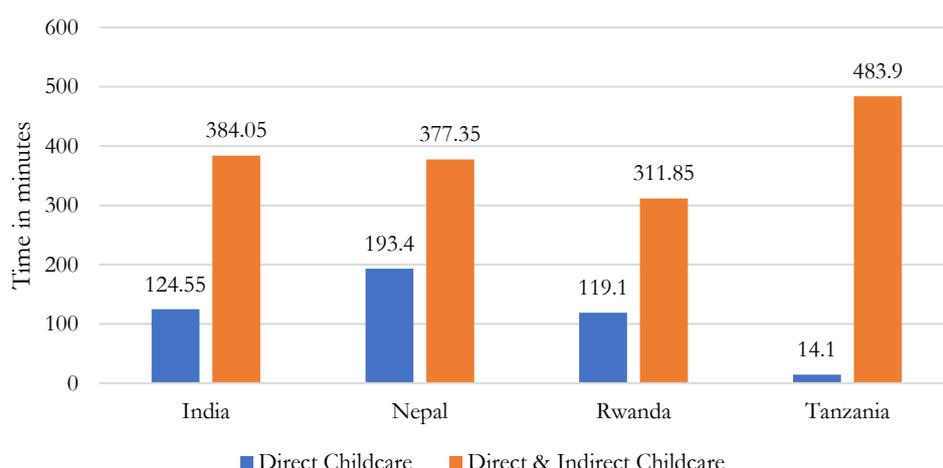
**Figure 2.1 Tempogram depicting percentage of women doing direct childcare during the day**



Source: Authors’ own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

However, a clear difference emerges when we examine the intensity of direct childcare and compare that with total childcare (including indirect or supervisory childcare). The average amount of time that women reported doing childcare as the primary activity (direct childcare), was actually quite low, as seen in Figure 2.2 below. With the exception of Nepal, where women reported spending more than three hours on childcare, women in India and Rwanda reported spending closer to two hours on childcare as their primary activity. Tanzanian women, on the other hand, reported spending less than 15 minutes on direct childcare. When women were asked about having indirect/supervisory responsibility of childcare, the time that they reported shot up significantly. Across all four countries, women were responsible for children at least five hours a day, and in Tanzania, this was as high as eight hours a day.

**Figure 2.2 Time spent on direct childcare and indirect childcare**



Note: Figure 2.2 depicts average time in minutes (y-axis) doing direct and indirect childcare across the four countries.

Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

The high number of hours spent by women on childcare in Nepal can be explained by two factors – firstly, men migrating out for work, and therefore children being looked after primarily by women:

*I wish our men did not have to go out for work. It's been ten years since my husband migrated to Malaysia. My children have grown up without him. In his absence, I have to face a lot of challenges. (One of the women in the Women Only Care Calendar, participatory exercise, Mehelkuna, Surkhet District, Nepal)*

*It [childcare] is women's work, where are the men that would support? All they [men] do is earn and give you the money, that's their job. The men in our house are not even home, they just go to India to earn money. (Sunkumari BK, mother-in-law of Lakshmi BK, 27 years old, two children, WEE participant, grows vegetables and seeds, rears and sells livestock and locally brewed beer, Mehelkuna, Surkhet, Nepal)*

Secondly, as the quote above also points to, across the four countries, but especially prominent in Nepal, were social norms that predicated women's primary role in looking after children:

*My child is my biggest responsibility. (Jamuna BK, 19 years, four-month-old baby boy, WEE programme participant, seasonal farm labourer, rears chicken for sale, lives in an extended family, Chandannath, Jumla District, Nepal)*

*It would be easy if he would do more... He keeps loitering around, after all he is a man, he keeps going to different places, unlike us women who stay inside the house all the time. I tell him that and he replies saying that these work are to be done by women and he will just help me a little. (Sarita Kunwar, 30, self-employed, two children, produces vegetables and seeds for EDP, speaking of her husband, Mahentada, Nepal)*

Women also shared that men would rather do paid work than look after the children:

*The men do not like to look after children. They offer to do our work as well instead of taking care of the children. Hence, they go for the work that we are offered – digging out sand, breaking stones – and we stay back to look after the children.* (Kusum BK, 37 years old, three young daughters, nuclear family, works as a daily wage labourer, Chandannath, Jumla District, Nepal)

In Tanzania, on the other hand, women spoke about childcare as something they did alongside other tasks – in other words, they did not perceive childcare as a task in itself that took up their time. Women in Tanzania also reported getting support from neighbours, mothers-in-law, and sisters-in-law – this helped them manage their unpaid and paid work, even as they were supervising their children:

*When I am not around, I leave the food prepared so they come eat and go back to school...* (Mama Marvin, 35, mother of four daughters, earns through casual farm labour, nuclear family, Lushoto, Tanzania)

*When we are at the farm, my mother-in-law takes cares of the children. She cooks for them and keeps them safe till we came back home.* (Mama Janice, 32, mother of five, two daughters, three sons, extended family, earns by selling produce from family's farm and working on other peoples' gardens, Korogwe, Tanzania)

*They [neighbours] help take care of my children when they realise that I am not around till I return.* (Mama Michel, 33, mother of three children, two boys and one girl, nuclear family, sews jumpers to sell in the market, also farms others' land for extra income, Lushoto, Tanzania)

Direct childcare seemed to peak across the four countries only when children were ill and needed special or undivided attention:

*Yes and this usually happens when my children are sick because I do stay home and take care of them. Like in these past two weeks, they were all sick and I was not working. I was staying here waiting for them to get well.* (Mama Francine, 38, four children, extended family, farming, Korogwe, Tanzania)

The higher incidence of supervisory children of at least five hours a day points to the intense under-reporting of childcare as a valid primary activity that women recognised they were engaged in. In other words, women did not consider childcare as a discrete activity that they needed to explicitly take into account in recounting their day – instead, they perceived it as being always there in the background, even though direct childcare was relatively quick to perform. This is reflected in the following two quotes, which although are from quite different settings (the first from rural Tanzania, the second from urban India), bring out the differences in women's perceptions of childcare as part of their routine, or as the second quote shows, as a discrete activity requiring time and energy:

*I take good care of my family because I am the mother and a mother always has to know the wellbeing of her family, that is what I do.* (Mama Emmanuela, 25, one son, nuclear family, sells vegetables in the market, Lushoto, Tanzania)

One woman says,

*It takes one hour to take care of children.*

Another woman says,

*Taking care of the child takes the whole day.* (Care Calendar, participatory exercise, Kotra, Udaipur, India)

An interesting trend emerges when these overall figures are disaggregated between the rural and urban sites in India, the only country where we had urban sites (Annexe Figure A.1). Women in rural sites reported much less time in direct childcare (average of 74 minutes a day) as compared to women in urban sites (312 minutes; that is, over five hours). This difference is probably explained by the fact that women in rural sites were more engaged in other work alongside childcare, and therefore were not spending time directly looking after the children. It may also be due to the fact that women in rural sites had help for direct care from others in the community than in urban areas.

This was quite different compared to women in urban sites who needed to look after their children in an urban environment without much support (familial, community, or more formal childcare crèches) – and therefore reported many more direct childcare activities:

*I don't work for more than four households because of my children. I used to work in more [houses] earlier.... Earlier I was working and earning around Rs.4000–5000/month. But now I can earn only Rs.2500/month. My children are small and my work has doubled because of them as I have to look after them. She [mother] cannot handle them for long...there are two children...always running around.* (Leena Dinesh, 40, two infant children, domestic worker, husband porter, living with 80-year-old mother, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, India)

These urban–rural differences are maintained, yet not so stark, for direct and supervisory childcare. In the rural sites of India, women reported doing over five and a half hours of direct and supervisory childcare, while in urban sites, women reported doing over seven hours of direct and supervisory childcare. Again, the intensity of childcare in urban sites was probably heightened because of a lack of support for childcare in an environment where children could not be left alone, as the following quote illustrates:

*Because looking after children is the most time-consuming activity, it takes up our time from morning to night and it never seems to get over.* (Care Calendar, participatory exercise, Indore, India)

Another notable aspect was that in Rwanda's Muko Sector, women reported higher amounts of direct childcare than the other areas – 175 minutes (nearly three hours), as compared to an average of just over an hour in each of the other three areas. However, the total (direct and supervisory childcare) in Muko District was about four and a half hours (264 minutes), as compared to the other three sites that varied between 5.7 and 6.1 hours. This means that women in Muko were reporting a much higher amount of time spent in directly looking after children than the other three sites, where women reported spending large amounts of time in supervisory childcare; that is, doing childcare activities alongside other tasks. It should be noted that Muko Sector had female-headed nuclear households engaged in agricultural farming (with women taking small children to the field), most with husbands unable to help

out and parents living far away, indicating less support for redistributing care work to other family members.

*The VUP worksites are far from Grace’s home, and she walks approximately 30 minutes to reach them. She carries her youngest child while at work because there is nobody else at home to take care of him. This means she wakes up very early in the morning to reach the VUP site, taking her youngest son with her. She prepares food the night before so that her eldest son can serve himself during the day when she has gone to work. Her children understand the challenges that their mother is going through, but overall they are happy because she cares for them. (Extract from case study of Mukamanzi Grace, 33, two boys, nuclear family, female-headed household, VUP member, construction worker, Huye District, Rwanda)*

What the differences in direct and supervisory childcare figures also point to, is that childcare is done alongside other activities – in other words, women multi-task, with childcare responsibilities being prevalent in the background for a large majority of their time. This was corroborated by our field observations, where we saw women taking care of children (albeit tangentially) alongside not only their other care activities (cooking, cleaning, feeding animals) but also alongside their economic engagement tasks, including paid work. Children were taken along to farms, played in kitchen gardens, taken to worksites, sat beside their mothers while they rolled incense sticks, or taken to homes where their mothers worked as domestic workers. The following quote from a different site illustrates the multi-tasking women undertake while also doing supervisory childcare:

*We [daughter and I] go together and take our turn [in doing paid work]. When I worked, she looked after the children and when she worked, I did. (Ramkala BK, 45 years old, five daughters, extended family with one son-in-law and one grandson, daily labourer in KEP, Depalgaon, Nepal)*

Section 2.2 details the temporal dimensions of childcare further.

## 2.2 The temporal element of childcare: daily multi-tasking and seasonality

Our quantitative data support the finding of childcare being an activity that women do alongside other activities – that is, as they *multi-task*. We found a very high incidence of multi-tasking; that is, women doing more than one activity simultaneously at any given time. In Tanzania, women multi-task for about 18 hours per day; while in Nepal and Rwanda, women multi-task for about 14 hours in a day; in India, this is the lowest at about 11.5 hours. As can be seen in Table 2.1 in fact, most of this multi-tasking was due to childcare – both direct and indirect.

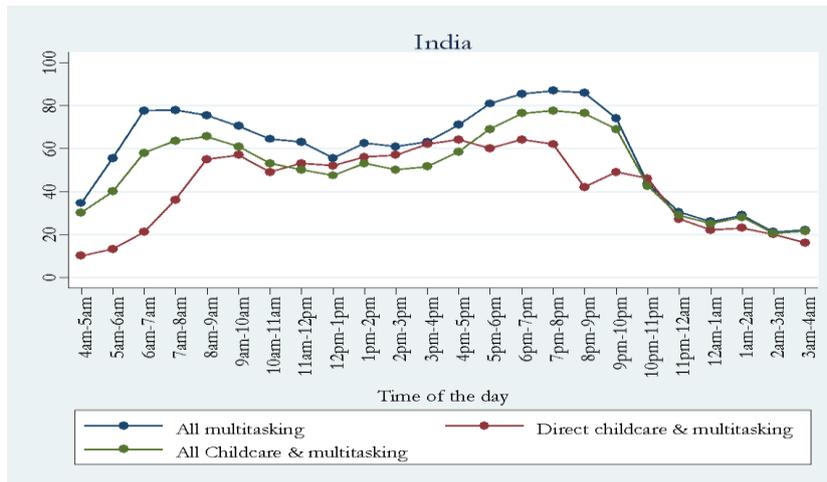
**Table 2.1 Multi-tasking with direct and indirect childcare**

Country	Multi-tasking	Multi-tasking with direct childcare	Multi-tasking with supervisory childcare
India	14.18	4.71	7.09
Nepal	14.41	1.12	9.83
Rwanda	11.49	3.4	6.87
Tanzania	18.11	0.24	17.31
Total	14.54	2.37	10.27

Source: Authors’ own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

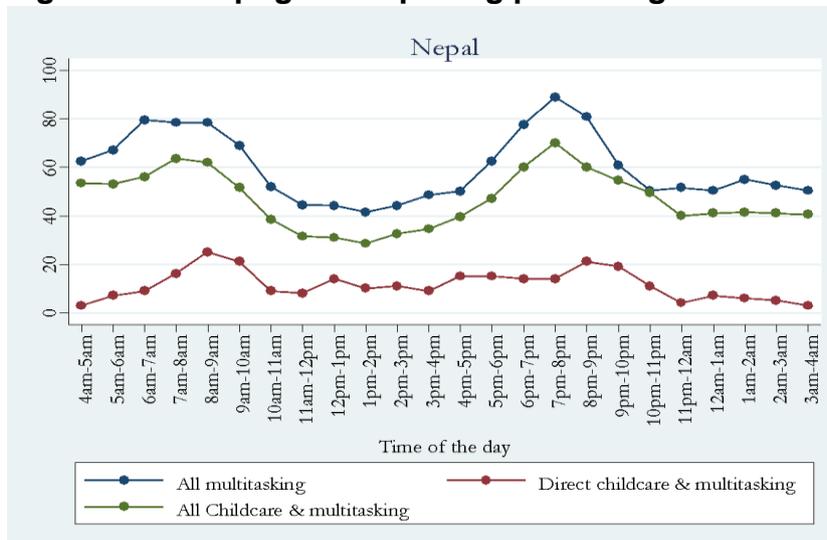
The following tempograms (Figures 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6) show women’s multi-tasking, and the extent to which total childcare activities (direct and supervisory) are affecting the need to multi-task. Clearly, most multi-tasking is attributable to women’s responsibilities of childcare in all four countries. Interestingly, supervisory childcare affects women’s multi-tasking far more than direct childcare responsibility – noticeable in all countries except India where direct and supervisory childcare seems to overlap during the day.

**Figure 2.3 Tempogram depicting percentage of women multi-tasking in India**



Source: Authors’ own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

**Figure 2.4 Tempogram depicting percentage of women multi-tasking in Nepal**



Source: Authors’ own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

In India, women have greater supervisory childcare responsibilities in the early morning, after which direct childcare assumes importance sometime after midday. Supervisory childcare in India coincides with women’s multi-tasking at night, as was illustrated by a vivid discussion in a focus group in rural Udaipur (India):

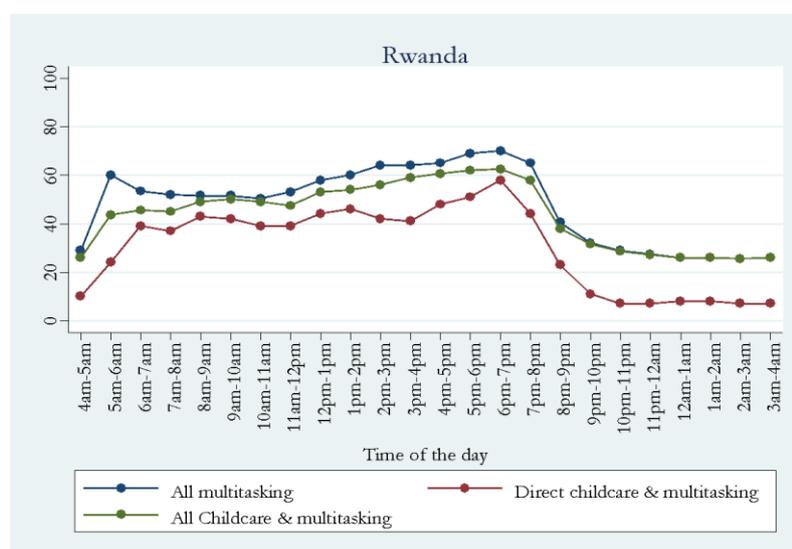
*The whole night I stay awake because of my child, I am unable to sleep. The child pees and passes stool and if the child asks for roti, I have to get up and make it, if the child asks for water I have to get up and give the child water.*

Another woman says,

*I wake up 17 times at night.* (Care Wallet mixed group, participatory exercise, Kotra, Udaipur, India)

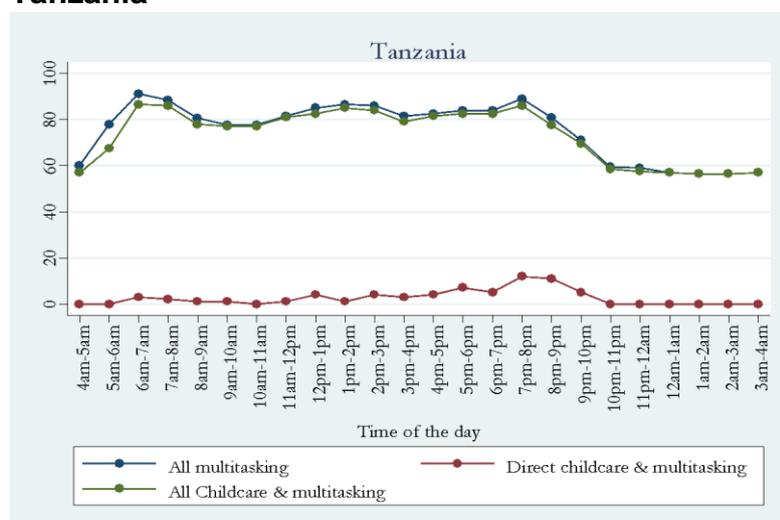
In India and Rwanda, there is a high proportion of women reporting direct childcare and multi-tasking, which is much greater than the direct childcare being reported in Nepal and Tanzania. This difference is probably attributable to differing perceptions of childcare – that is, women in India and Rwanda seem to recognise childcare as a discrete activity involving time and energy, whereas in Tanzania and Nepal, women seem to understand childcare as being more indirect/supervisory rather than discrete.

**Figure 2.5 Tempogram depicting percentage of women multi-tasking in Rwanda**



Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

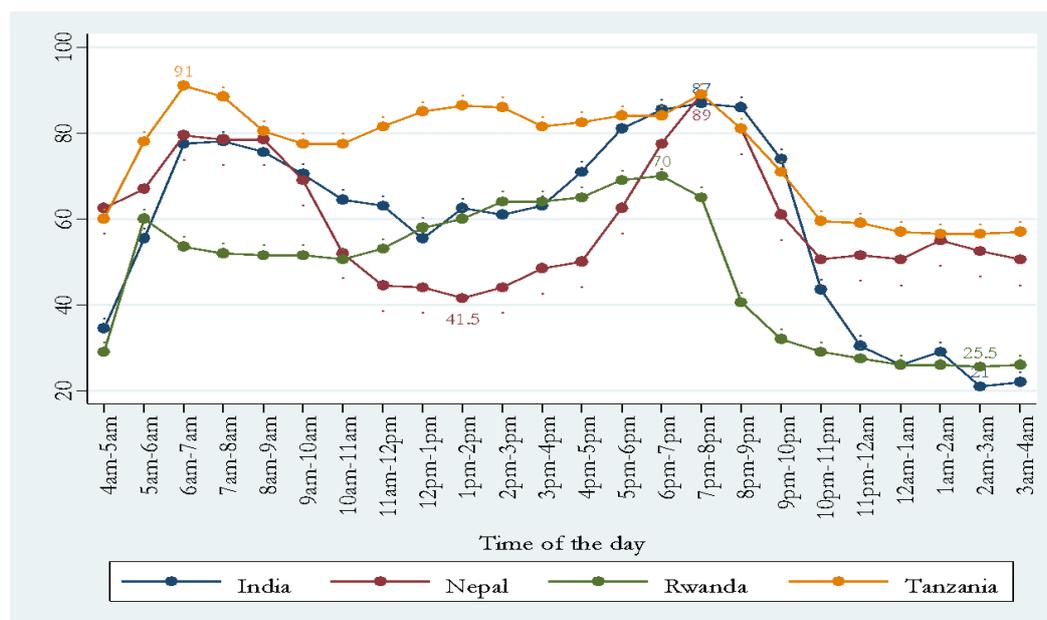
**Figure 2.6 Tempogram depicting percentage of women multi-tasking in Tanzania**



Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

Examining these tempograms revealed further insights into when women multi-tasked, and how childcare was intricately woven alongside their other work. Comparing the incidence of multi-tasking across all countries in Figure 2.7, women were found to multi-task especially early in the morning (5am–6am) – this was the case especially in Tanzania and Rwanda. In India, Rwanda, and Nepal, women show two clear peaks of multi-tasking – one in the morning, and one in the evening – which is precisely when children are at home.

**Figure 2.7 Tempogram depicting percentage of women multi-tasking during the day**



Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

Indeed, when we examine the peaks shown in Figure 2.7 in comparison to the times that women actually reported doing childcare (both direct and indirect – that is, having responsibility of a child) in Figure 2.8, we see that especially in India, Nepal, and Rwanda, there are two peaks – one in the morning and one in the evening, when women report undertaking most childcare (presumably when children are at home rather than at school). This is corroborated by women reporting that they juggle their paid work around childcare – as is the case of many domestic workers in urban India such as Leena Dinesh, who explained this:

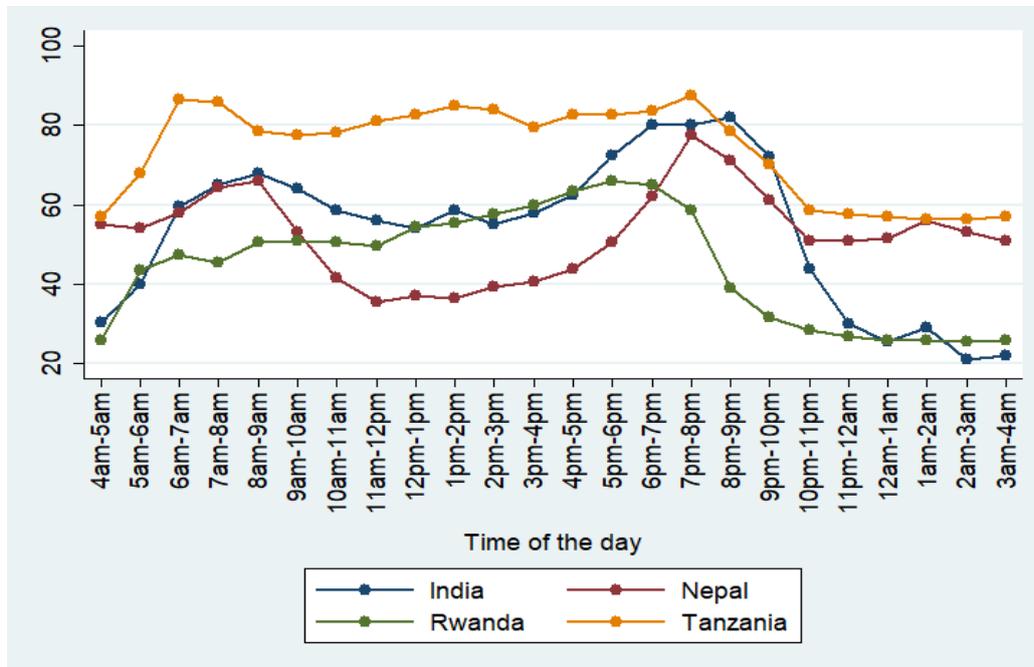
*I leave for work at around 10am after giving bath to my two children. I finish two households and then return home to take care of my children. They play for a while and then I bath them again and put them to sleep before leaving for work to two more households. (Leena Dinesh, 40, two infant children, domestic worker, husband porter, living with 80-year-old mother, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, India)*

In Tanzania, women were found to be consistently looking after children throughout the day, and they had to manage their other activities around this, as the following quote illustrates:

*It's complicated because you have to do both at the same time and with the school going children. You have to work here and there but it's difficult and you may end up*

*declining in the business...* (Mama Joy, 40, six children, home-based worker, Korogwe, Tanzania)

**Figure 2.8 Tempogram depicting percentage of women doing direct and indirect childcare during the day**



Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

The aspect of seasonality of childcare was big for many women across the four countries – affected by things such as school exams, holidays, and festivals. Some women expressed that they spent more time on childcare during the school holidays because of the presence of children at home throughout the day:

*When it is holiday... then... the work actually increases... children keep eating so they dirty the utensils... then you have to wash them, bathe them, clean their clothes... there's more work when they are at home... they are fine at school, they are very naughty at home.* (Reema Kotwal, 25, mother of three boys, large extended family, home-based worker making quilt covers, stitching together small pieces of cloth provided by a contractor, SEWA programme participant, Indore, India)

*Only in the holidays... right now the summer holidays will begin, that tension is there... when they will go to school there is no tension, otherwise anyone will get them ready and leave them at the school.* (Ruchika Pardi, 28-year-old tribal woman, mother of two boys, lives in extended family, works as a street vendor dealing in plastic goods in the urban sprawl of Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India)

Other women adjusted the amount of help they expected/received from children for paid work and other care work during the school holidays/exam season according to the amount of work their children were able to perform:

*When they have exams they don't make agarbattis.* (Roshni Mimroth, 33, four children, daily wage labourer, also makes *agarbatti* (incense sticks) at home, Ujjain, India)

Finally, women recognised that busy periods such as sowing and harvesting took time away from them doing childcare:

*It's only during the busy period at the farm that sometimes I am unable to make food for them when they return from school and then, they complain about it as they are all hungry. That is the problem.* (Sharmila Oli, three children, husband migrant labourer in Qatar, farms her own land, Mehelkuna, Surkhet District, Nepal)

In India, the monsoon is a most difficult season for fuel collection, summer the most difficult for water collection, and winter the most difficult for cooking (people eat more). For childcare, the difficult season is holiday time:

*Women say children need to be bathed twice a day in the summers, so it takes more time.* (Care Calendar, participatory exercise, Kotra, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India)

One woman says,

*It takes four hours to get firewood.*

One woman says,

*Regardless of season, getting wood takes time.*

One woman says,

*It takes longer to cook in the rains because the wood is wet and it becomes more problematic to cook.*

One woman says,

*Getting water takes more time in the summers because more water is needed in the house.* (Care Calendar, participatory exercise, Kotra, Udaipur, India)

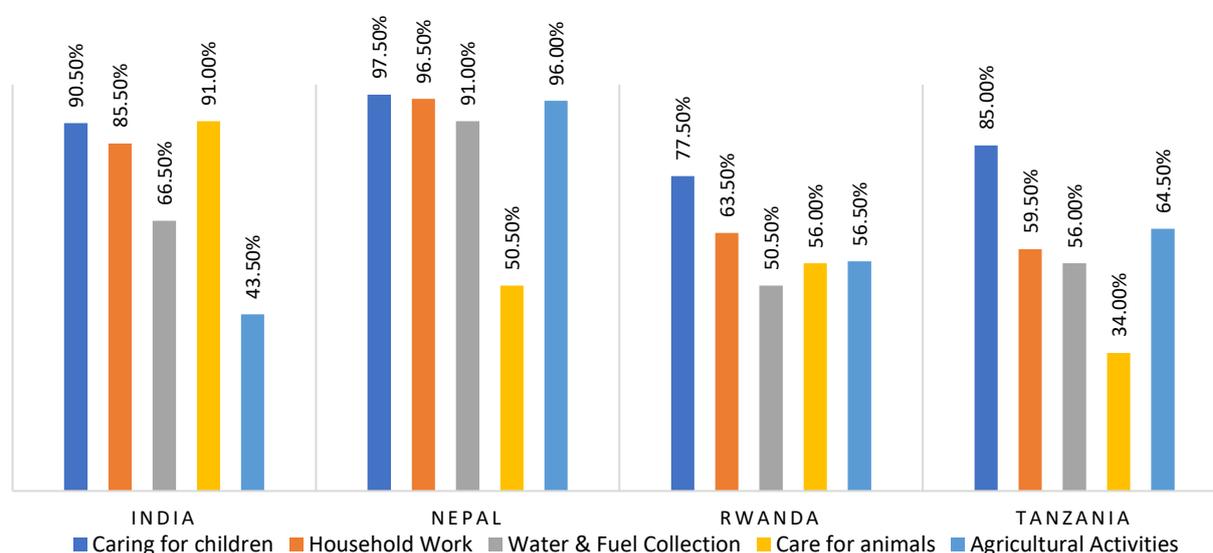
*School vacation start at that time. After Holi, our work [work on own field] lessens and children are home and help in house work. She does some work [in the home] and goes out [to work in MGNREGA].* (Sohan Damra, husband of Sangeetha Sohan Damra, four children, nuclear family, works on own fields and as daily wage labourer in MGNREGA, Dungarpur, India)

The above discussion illustrates that the intensity of multi-tasking (balancing childcare and other tasks) varies temporally, according to seasonality, especially in rural areas and also according to times of the day when children are home from school or before they leave for school. In Section 2.3, we show how the intensity of multi-tasking and being responsible for supervisory care affects women's choice of type, length, and site of paid work, and trade-offs that women make between time for leisure or personal care and other forms of care tasks. It should be noted that the patterns of multi-tasking are largely similar for the sites in different countries, indicating that these are important aspects for understanding the links between childcare and paid work, and other chores and tasks that women do. Multi-tasking, with large hours dedicated to supervisory childcare, and how women balance the different tasks influences the way women view childcare as an activity.

## 2.3 Women’s perceptions on childcare as work

We explored women’s perceptions about whether they considered childcare as work; that is, involving significant time and energy, as compared to all the other tasks that they were engaged in. Interestingly, when we pool our samples across all four countries, we find 92 per cent of women considered agricultural activities as being work, as compared to only 80 per cent of women who consider childcare as work (see Figure 2.9). Care for animals, household repairs, and household work all ranked higher than childcare as being work across the pooled data set. However, there were country-level differences – with women in Tanzania and Rwanda more readily recognising childcare as work in comparison to their other tasks, than in India and Nepal, where childcare was considered almost similar kind of work to either care for animals (in India) or household work and agricultural activities (in Nepal).

**Figure 2.9 Percentage of women who consider childcare as work**



Source: Authors’ own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

The following quotes illustrate women’s varied views about childcare compared to other work – most women rated childcare as a tough activity that they did, and one that they had to do; while paid work was rated as being easier and giving them more instant returns.

*Paid work is better as it empowers families. Care work is very tough. Taking care of children takes most of my time.* (Mukamusoni Anita, 36 years old, nuclear household, male-headed, husband, construction worker, three children, family farm (maize, beans, and so forth); non-participant in WEE, Mbazi Sector, Rwanda)

In a participatory exercise on which daily activities take up the most time, one woman immediately says,

*Looking after children.* (Women Only Care Calendar, participatory exercise, Indore, India)

*It [childcare] is drudgery but we have to feel happy because they are our own children.* (Women Only Bodymap, participatory exercise, Mehelkuna, Surkhet, Nepal)

None of them posted it as a positive effect though.

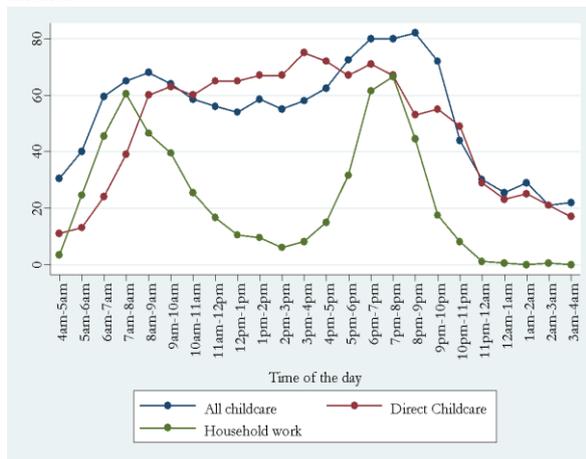
In addition, the fact that women under-report direct childcare comes from their perspectives that childcare requires high ‘natural’ skills (about 50–80 per cent of women in all countries) which women already have, rather than any ‘learned skills’, such as those required for paid work. Finally, women balance the actual time they spend on direct and supervisory childcare with their other tasks including domestic chores – as is explored in Section 2.4.

## 2.4 Childcare, domestic work, and leisure/sleep

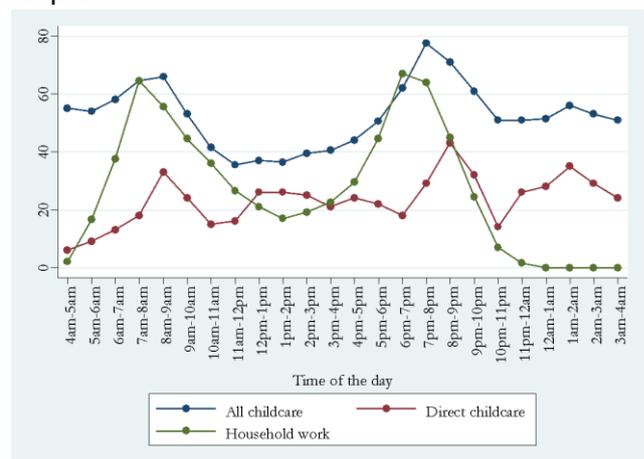
When childcare was reported as the primary activity, women said that they combined it with various tasks such as household work (in India), leisure time (in Nepal), food and drink preparation (in Rwanda), and housework and food and drink preparation, followed by leisure time (in Tanzania).

**Figure 2.10 Tempograms showing percentage of women doing childcare and housework throughout the day**

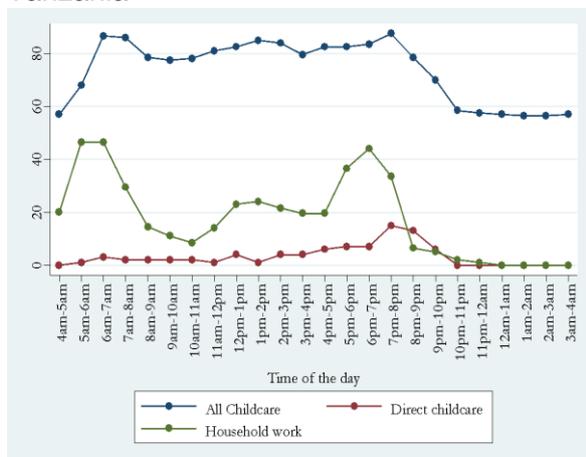
India



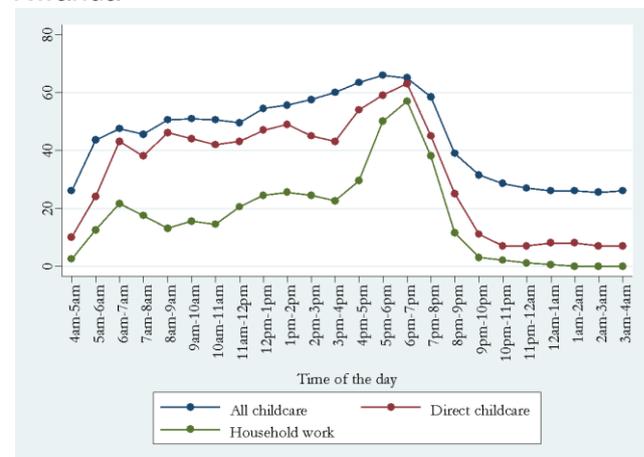
Nepal



Tanzania



Rwanda



Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

The tempograms above (in Figure 2.10) show how direct and all childcare (direct and supervisory) go hand in hand with household work for most women across the four countries. In India, household work has two clear peaks (morning and evening) when it coincides with direct and all childcare, while it seems that women are able to do childcare without household chores in the middle of the day. In Nepal too, the peaks of household work are at the same times as the peaks of childcare, but interestingly, women also report not doing childcare at the same time as not doing housework in the middle of the day – perhaps pointing to their time being spent on paid work or other unpaid work in the middle of the day. In Tanzania, as noted above, women always seem to be doing supervisory childcare but very few report direct childcare; and this seems to be combined with two main peaks (morning and evening) of housework, which tapers off in the middle of the day as well. In Rwanda, the picture is quite different – it seems that women undertake housework exactly for the same duration as childcare – both of which peak during the evening, much more than in the morning hours.

These tempograms depict that housework and childcare go hand in hand with each other in most countries. A further site disaggregation is provided in Annexe Figure A.2 – which also interrogates the extent to which family structure makes a difference to the time women spend doing housework. It can be seen that women in the urban sites of India (Indore and Ujjain) – whether in nuclear or in extended families – spend nearly an hour less time doing household chores as compared to their rural counterparts. This reflects the difficulty of doing household chores in areas of low infrastructural support such as electricity, water, and gas.

In Nepal, the site-wise variation is less pronounced, but with rural Mehentada being the area where women report the most amount of time that they spend on housework (3.3 hours on average). In Depalgaon, on the other hand, which has water connections in the village and is closer to the roadside, women report spending 2.64 hours on housework – again showing the importance of small infrastructure in lessening women’s time and drudgery in housework. On the other hand, women in Depalgaon who did not have access to gas connections explained the drudgery and multi-tasking that they had to face, because of this:

*Sometimes I have to go collect grass, I have to broom and clean the house, I have to cook food, I have to wake up at 4am, and... a few days ago I went to collect grass taking my child with me, because there was no one to look after her at home. And I do that while going to collect the firewood as well. I can only leave her if there is someone to take care of [her]. I cannot just go to work leaving my child home. (Menuka Dhital, 35 years old, six children, of whom five are daughters, nuclear family, subsistence farming, state WEE programme participant, Depalgaon, Nepal)*

The variation in number of hours that women spend on housework is also less pronounced in Tanzania, where women report spending anywhere between two and three hours on household tasks across the four sites – with Women’s Development Fund (WDF) Lushoto being the lowest and Oxfam Lushoto being the highest. But again, women’s multi-tasking of household chores alongside childcare came across clearly, as the following quote illustrates:

*Washing clothes takes much time because there I have to take care of my children while washing. (Mama Gloria, mother of one girl, self-employed, Korogwe, Tanzania)*

While the number of hours that women spend in Rwanda on housework is reported as quite low, there is quite a large variation across the four sites – with women reporting spending anywhere between one to two hours on average on housework. Interrogating the qualitative

data brings insights into the low amounts of time that women spend on housework – mainly explained by the significant levels of help that women in Rwanda get from their children to do housework. This is most often from the eldest daughter or other children or a sister. On occasion, the husbands or neighbours of some of the women do step in to help when they are absent from the home. The following quotes show the support that women in Rwanda had from their children or other household members:

*My children see that I work very hard and they help me without any pressure from me... most of the time I do not have to remind them what to do, they do it by themselves, and when [I] am around, we work together and I like it.*

(Jennine Byukusenge, 46-year-old widow, five children – four sons and one daughter, VUP beneficiary, Huye District, Rwanda)

*Her sister supports her with fetching water, collecting firewood, cleaning, cooking, and providing care for [the participant's] children.* (Kamikazi Rose, 31 years old, three daughters, WEE participant, Muko Sector, Musanze District, Rwanda)

In addition, women in Rwanda and Tanzania also shared that household chores often were the ones that got left undone or unfinished, if they were too busy doing paid work, unpaid work, or childcare. In other words, women were deprioritising household tasks:

*Sometimes food is cooked late, the young one is forgotten to be bathed, and people do not eat on time, etc.* (Baba Henry, Husband of Mama Henrieta, on impact of her paid work on the household, Korogwe, Tanzania)

*I can't wash children's clothes, wash the dishes, because of my involvement in paid work, have to go very early to my paid work.* (Mama Joy, 40 years old, six children, home-based worker, Korogwe, Tanzania)

However, this deprioritisation did not mean that women were not bothered by this – on the contrary, women expressed their frustrations at not being able to finish household tasks, or becoming fatigued and tired if they tried to do everything:

*Because there are times when I delay in the plantations and that means am going to prepare lunch late and washing my children's uniforms will also be late, but I can try to do whatever I had to do; in other words, everything becomes disorganised and I end up getting tired and exhausted although I fail to finish them all.* (Mama Juliet, 38 years old, five children, is employed in a shop nearby, Korgwe, Tanzania)

But what was also interesting to note, was that across the 16 sites in the four countries, there was not much difference in the time that women spent doing household work, based on the type of household structure that they were living in. In other words, living in either a nuclear family or an extended family made little difference in terms of the number of minutes that women spent on household tasks.

In terms of other tasks, childcare was found to be heavily cutting into women's leisure time in Nepal and Tanzania. Examining hours across those who carry out a secondary activity while doing childcare, we identify the top three activities performed in combination across all countries.

**Table 2.2 Three main activities when multi-tasking with childcare as primary activity**

<i>Country</i>	<b>Top three activities reported in combination with primary childcare</b>		
India	Household work	Sleeping or napping	Care for livestock/animals
Nepal	Leisure time	Household work	Serving food, drinks
Rwanda	Food and drink preparation	Personal care and hygiene	Care of child community members
Tanzania	Household work	Food and drink preparation	Leisure time
<b>Top three activities reported in combination with childcare as secondary</b>			
India	Sleeping or napping	Food and drink preparation	Household work
Nepal	Sleeping or napping	Food and drink preparation	Household work
Rwanda	Sleeping or napping	Food and drink preparation	Care for land
Tanzania	Sleeping or napping	Income-generating activities, self-employment	Care for land
<b>Top three activities reported in combination with indirect childcare</b>			
India	Household work	Sleeping or napping	Food and drink preparation
Nepal	Sleeping or napping	Food and drink preparation	Paid work inside the house
Rwanda	Sleeping or napping	Food and drink preparation	Care for land
Tanzania	Eating	Food and drink preparation	Household work

*Source:* Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

A similar picture emerged when interrogating which primary activities women were engaged in, while doing childcare as a secondary activity (Table 2.2). In India, household work was reported as the main primary activity with direct childcare as the secondary activity, followed by sleeping. In Nepal, sleeping time (instead of leisure) was reported as the main primary activity with direct childcare, followed by food preparation. Childcare responsibilities cut both into women's sleep and leisure time in Nepal and India, as the following quotes illustrate:

*I have to come back early... then I see the time and come... yes... I haven't taken up work in too many houses madam... because of the child... the child is small... I have one child only... it is because of her... that is why we want that there is employment nearby so I could keep her also close by... look after her also. (Shashikala Sailesh, 32 years old, has a four-year-old daughter, works as a domestic worker in the urban site of Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, India)*

Food and drink preparation was reported as the main primary activity in Rwanda, while women continued to undertake childcare as a secondary activity. In Tanzania, women reported eating and housework as primary activities while childcare was the secondary activity. Overall, childcare cut heavily into women's sleep, leisure time, and eating across the countries. In Tanzania, indirect childcare also cut into time for income-generating activities and care for land, and in general other household activities such as housework and cooking.

What was interesting to see, was that the responsibility for children continued during sleep hours as well – women reported as many as up to two hours of their sleep time being responsible for a child (highest in Tanzania and India), while in Nepal and Rwanda, this was closer to an hour – see Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3 Sleep and uninterrupted sleep from childcare**

Country	Sleeping as primary activity (in minutes)	Childcare with sleep (in minutes)	Uninterrupted sleep (without indirect childcare) in minutes
India	453.4	102.7	240.9
Nepal	453.9	46.2	336.3
Rwanda	601.9	78.65	429
Tanzania	459.4	137.15	184.8
Total	492.15	91.175	297.75

Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

Table 2.3 also shows that while women reported to be sleeping for an average of eight hours, this was not undisturbed sleep. The number of hours that women slept uninterrupted was only five hours – which shows that indirect childcare caused significant interruptions in women's sleep time. We also disaggregate sleep and uninterrupted sleep by sites and family structure (Annexe Figure A.3) to understand differences in sleep patterns.

It is clear that there is a major difference in the total number of hours of sleep and hours of uninterrupted sleep. Women were able to sleep more in extended families as compared to nuclear families. The exception was Rwanda, where women in nuclear families slept for one hour more than those living in extended families. In all countries (except India where the difference was the other way around), women in nuclear families got more total sleep hours as compared to women in extended families. There was also not much variation in total sleep hours by site, or by rural/urban comparison – as Annexe B shows.

In looking at uninterrupted sleep, some interesting patterns emerge. In Nepal and Rwanda, women living in nuclear families reported having higher uninterrupted sleep by about an hour, as compared to those living in extended families. This is probably because women in extended families need to care for sick and elderly relatives in addition to doing childcare. In India, there was hardly any difference, but in Tanzania, women in extended families reported having more than two and a half hours more uninterrupted sleep as compared to those living in nuclear families. In Tanzania, there was also high indirect childcare that cut into women's sleep significantly, thereby reflected in very low levels of uninterrupted sleep. Site variation was negligible in India's rural compared to urban sites, but in all other countries, there was significant variation in the amount of uninterrupted sleep that women reported.

#### **2.4.1 Women's childcare – overall trends and patterns**

From the above findings on time use and comparisons across countries, some main conclusions can be drawn out. First, women reported a lower level of time spent on direct childcare – this they perceived as the time they spent mainly looking after children, and most women considered this to be at a reasonable level across all countries. They themselves did not see direct childcare as a burden. However, the significant time they reported spending on indirect/supervisory childcare, showed that childcare is prevalent throughout the day. This then means that there are few hours during the day when women are not responsible for a child. Also, the intensity of involvement remained high across all four countries with some variations – indicating that indirect/supervisory childcare would be affecting both paid work and also personal care and leisure time. What is interesting to note are the variations

in Nepal and India. In Nepal, women reported spending larger amounts of time on childcare because of male out-migration and social norms dictating women's role in childcare. In India, the amount of time spent by urban women on childcare was much higher as compared to their rural counterparts – explained perhaps by more pressures of an urban environment and less support.

Second, the tempograms show that women were combining childcare with a varied range of tasks, revealing that childcare is one of the main multi-tasking activities they were engaged in. This is interesting because it indicates why contradictory views may be held by women at the same time. Given that direct childcare hours are low and the activity is performed while alongside other work, women themselves may not view this as a separate or a specific concern that needs to be addressed, but as something natural that takes place over time and throughout the day as a task requiring little extra skill. Many women do acknowledge childcare as being work, but not requiring as much time and energy as other tasks such as agricultural activities or animal care.

Third, it was interesting to see that childcare was often performed at the same time as household chores – once again pointing to the multi-tasking that women were constantly performing. Infrastructure such as water, electricity, and gas connections made a real difference to reducing the time and drudgery of household tasks, but the structure of the family made no difference to the real time that women spent performing these tasks. There was some deprioritising of household tasks (in terms of leaving them half done or getting help from others to do them) – thereby signifying a lower importance that women attached to them.

On the other hand, we saw that childcare causes significant interruption of sleep – irrespective of whether women live in nuclear or extended families. There are some site variations that perhaps can be explained because of the ways in which infrastructural facilities play out for interrupting sleep – but the overall trend is that women get much less uninterrupted sleep as compared to the total number of hours that they sleep. This, of course, has implications for their physical depletion and exhaustion, and therefore their economic engagement.

We now turn to examining the links between childcare and women's economic engagement, in Section 3.

### 3 Interactions between childcare and economic engagement

There is much literature on how care responsibilities impede women's participation in the labour force (Folbre and Yoon 2007). Separating out childcare as a distinct responsibility nuances this picture further. We found that the presence of young children specifically added constraints to women's time and energy levels – with many women dropping out of paid work, or reducing the time that they spent on paid work. In Nepal, women spoke about constrained choices in terms of what they were able to take up or not, depending on whether they could balance these paid work tasks with their childcare responsibilities. In India, women were seen to be choosing home-based work – in other words, childcare

affected the type and location of paid work that they took up, with distance being a strong deterrent.

However, we found that the ways that these constraints played out in terms of women's economic engagement, very much depended on three other things. Firstly, the overall economic situation of the household makes a difference to the extent to which women need to engage economically in paid work, and the value accorded to this paid work by their families – see Section 3.1). Secondly, the nature of unpaid work and the time that women engaged in these tasks becomes an important determinant that influenced women's overall workload and therefore their availability for paid work – this is explained in Section 3.2. Of course, what is also important in determining women's engagement in paid work, is the types and extent of paid work that is available for both men and women – including the nature and benefits that they receive from WEE programmes, if any – as discussed in Section 3.3. Finally, the nature of support that women get from their families for childcare and for their other domestic chores, determines what types of paid work women engage in – Section 3.4. Our research findings also highlight the effects of women's economic engagement on the quality of childcare in Section 3.5.

### **3.1 Overall economic situation of the household**

We found that in the lowest income households, women valued paid work of any kind (even the most drudgerous), as it gave them the much-needed income for their family's survival. In all four countries, women said that paid work helped them earn money for their children's food, education, and clothing. This need influenced their decision to engage in paid work, despite the constraints they faced in balancing childcare and other domestic chores.

Men sometimes acknowledged this contribution (as highlighted by the following quotes). In some instances, the acknowledgement of the wives' contribution to the household's economic condition, led them to help out their wives at home, so that the women were able to undertake certain economic activities, or perform unpaid work (fetching fodder, water, and so forth).

*Yes, my wife contributes because when she gets money from selling her vegetables, she buys food and clothes for the child.* (Baba Emmanuel, husband of Mama Emmanuela, 25 years old, one son, farms, sells vegetables and clothes, Lushoto, Tanzania)

*Though she is a second wife to me, she behaves like a mother to my old[er] children. They respect her and they discuss about family issues. I cannot say how good it is. I am very grateful to my wife because she works hard to support the family.* (Husband of Niwemahoro Helen, 36 years old, nuclear family, six children, participant in VUP 2020, Simbi, Huye District, Rwanda)

Children had mixed views about their mother's paid work. They acknowledged that paid work enabled their mother to pay for school clothes, fees, materials, and better quality food – as expressed here:

*I feel well when my mother is doing paid work since I know that when she gets money, she can provide us with whatever we need at home.* (Son of Byukusenge, 46-year-old widow, female-headed household, five children – four sons (aged 25, 22, 16, and 11)

and one daughter (aged five), casual labourer, WEE participant, VUP beneficiary, Huye District, Rwanda)

While they acknowledged these material benefits that their mothers were able to provide for them, children also pointed out that balancing paid work, domestic chores, and childcare was tiring for their mothers:

*My mother does a lot at home including cooking, fetches water, collects wood, washes clothes, and cleaning. She does not get time to rest, she is overloaded. In fact, after cultivating, she does care work and does not have any time to rest.* (Son of Kirabo Agnes, 29 years old, female-headed, nuclear household, three children, day labourer, construction work, VUP participant, Simbi Sector, Huye District, Rwanda)

Children also knew that these kinds of engagements meant various trade-offs for them; that is, they would have to help out, and that these took a toll on their energy and time available for leisure and school work.

[Answer to 'When do you get tired?'] *When my mother has gone to dig and I am left home alone with the child.* (Daughter of Mama Henrieta, 28 years old, three daughters, Korogwe, Tanzania)

Women also felt these trade-offs keenly as reflected in the following quote. Yet, the overall economic situation of the household was the predominant determinant of whether they chose to engage in paid work overall and accepted these trade-offs:

*My daughter and son get tired too since they combine school and work at home. It is so tiresome and they do not get enough time to play with their friends due to some [of the] duties assigned to them.* (Niyonsenga Jeannette, 31 years old, nuclear, female-headed household, divorced, four children, construction worker, Musanze District, Rwanda)

The second factor that influenced the nature and extent of women's economic engagement in terms of paid work, was the amount of unpaid work that they performed, as discussed below.

### **3.2 Extent and nature of women's unpaid work**

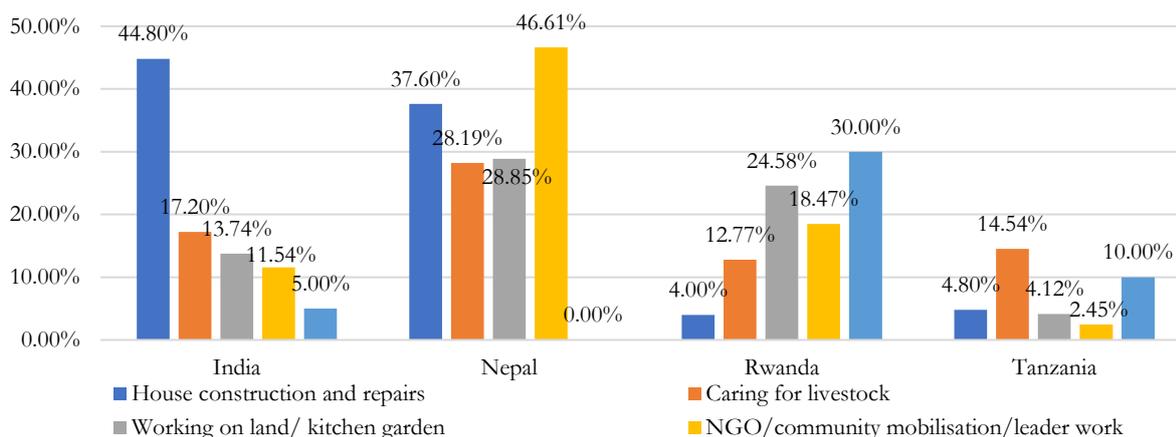
Women's economic engagement, as defined at the start of this paper, includes not just paid work (that is, work for cash or other material benefits), but also their unpaid work; that is, work that they did on their own family farms, subsistence agriculture, in shops, and in doing household repairs. We found that this distinction was especially useful in delineating the links between women's paid work and their unpaid work, as highlighted in this section.

Firstly, we found that women were not engaged in 'paid work' for long periods (up to an hour or two a day across the four countries). However, it is important to note that their time was limited less by childcare, and more by the vast amounts of unpaid work that they were doing. About 76 per cent of women in India were engaged in unpaid productive work, while in Nepal and Rwanda, 99 per cent and 90 per cent of women reported doing some kind of unpaid work. This was lowest in Tanzania (40 per cent). Women shared with us that this work involved subsistence agriculture as the most important task; as well as caring for livestock for subsistence or small dairy-selling, and running small family-owned businesses

such as shops or trading items such as vegetables. They were also involved in small household repairs. Most women did not see the returns from these activities in terms of cash-in-hand, but did end up spending vast quantities of time and energy on these tasks.

Figure 3.1 illustrates that most women in India (45 per cent) are engaged in own-house construction and repair work (Repairs); in Nepal, most women do NGO/community work (NGO – 47 per cent), while many also do house repairs as in India; many Rwandan women report working on their home land or kitchen gardens (Land); fewer women in Tanzania do unpaid work, and most engage in caring for livestock (Livestock).

**Figure 3.1 Percentage of women doing types of unpaid work**



Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

Disaggregating this by site (Annexe Figure C.1) revealed important differences in the rural sites across the three countries as compared to the two urban sites of India. Women in urban sites were more engaged in repair work and NGO-related work. However, in all the rural sites, the main work that women reported doing was on livestock and land-related unpaid work.

It was also interesting to note that the nature of the WEE programme that women were engaged in made a difference to the type of unpaid work that they did. In India's urban sites where SEWA was working<sup>7</sup> and in both of Nepal's WEE programmes (KEP and Oxfam's programme), women significantly reported doing NGO work as part of their unpaid work – this can be explained by the fact that the WEE programmes in both these countries necessitated community meetings and mobilisation drives – which women recognised took time and energy. Similarly, in Rwanda's Muko Sector, where ActionAid International (AAI) was active and necessitated participants attending community mobilisation and other meetings, women reported some time going into NGO activities. We would have expected the women participants of Oxfam Tanzania's programme to report similar time spent, but women saw this programme more as an income-generating programme, and complained about the time that attendance in meetings and mobilisation efforts took:

<sup>7</sup> SEWA's model is very much based on community mobilisation and meetings to discuss various issues that women face, rather than direct provision of employment or market linkages as other WEE programmes do. For further information, see the Programmatic Report, [Empowerment Programming and Unpaid Care Work: Learning From 30 Years of the Self Employed Women's Association in Madhya Pradesh \(SEWA MP\)](#) (Zaidi, Chigateri and Chopra 2017).

*What to do! I have many children. If I stay in many groups, then how to pay for them? Money is just enough to give them clothes, to feed them, to buy the basic household necessities. That is why I am not in other groups. Just one is enough!* (Sumitra Khatri, 35 years old, seven children, grows vegetables, Depalgaon, Jumla, Nepal)

*When I attend to the community meetings I benefit nothing. We don't get paid. So it is just wastage of time and not income from it. When I participate on weddings, I get positive effects of interacting with other people and get new things and ideas.* (Mama Daniela, Lushoto, mother of four, Tanzania)

Women across all four countries reported land-related unpaid work such as digging and tilling, as taking up large amounts of their time and energy, and therefore adding to their levels of multi-tasking, as the following quotes illustrate:

*I dig in the plantation and that's where we get crops that we sell to get the school fees for our children, and we cannot buy food we get food from there.* (Mama Juliet, 38 years old, five children, is employed in a shop nearby, Korgwe, Tanzania)

*Yes, they [the daughters] do help in digging. There is no irrigation facility here. If there was a canal, it would have been easier to get water from them.* (Sumitra Khatri, six children, Depalgaon, Nepal)

*What to do, ma'am, I have just come from digging the field. Now, we cannot educate our children, and we wake up in the morning, clean the house, broom the house, fetch water, knead the flour, and after sending the children to school, I have to go the field again. If I had a big farm, it would have been enough, even in one bhari of land, I have to work continuously. Sometimes I go to collect firewood, sometimes do something else and run the household. If only we could eat enough for a month madam, we cannot. If I do not send the kids to school, I myself am a thumbprint person [illiterate]. If my husband was employed, he could do something, but he is not. He is also a thumbprint person, and so am I. If I do not send the children to school, they may also live a poor life. No matter how difficult it is, we have to educate them. We have five children; we have to raise them too. It is not enough to eat and wear clothes. We hope to get support from someone.* (Menuka Dhital, 35 years old, six children, of whom five are daughters, nuclear family, subsistence farming, state WEE programme participant, Depalgaon, Nepal)

As the above quotes show, women's unpaid work was critical for the provision of money for children's education and health-care needs, albeit that these activities did not yield a direct return to the women.

Women on average reported spending between three and seven hours on unpaid work across all the four countries (Figure C.2). Women in India spent the most number of hours doing unpaid work across all countries, while Tanzanian women reported doing much fewer hours of unpaid work. Interestingly, when we look at the country average by WEE participation, we note that non-WEE participants do marginally less hours of unpaid work on average in India and Tanzania – this would be expected as the WEE participants would also be spending time on group meetings and community mobilisation activities as part of their WEE participation. However, WEE participants do less hours of unpaid work in Nepal and Rwanda, with the difference in Rwanda being half an hour less. This is probably explained by the nature of the WEE programme that women in Nepal and Rwanda are engaged in –

this gives women in Nepal and Rwanda economic/material returns, and therefore are reported not as unpaid work, but as paid work.

Disaggregating by sites shows up interesting trends that relate to the nature of women's work in these sites. In the two urban sites of India, women reported doing less hours of unpaid work as compared to the rural sites of India – where they were engaged in the tilling of land and livestock care, which was much more time-consuming. In fact, in the most difficult terrain of Udaipur, women reported doing an average of nearly seven hours (6.8) of unpaid work – mainly dominated by the care of livestock and land – (Annexe Figure C.3). This was in contrast to the urban site of Ujjain, where women reported doing 5.6 hours of unpaid work, this time primarily being taken up by household repairs.

In Nepal, the picture was one of women's unpaid work being affected by the location and existing infrastructure facilities available to them. In the remote site of Chandannath, women reported doing an average of 7.31 hours of unpaid work, this being dominated by care of land and livestock. The absence of infrastructure such as roads in this site made it harder and more time-consuming for them to perform these tasks, as is illustrated by the following quote:

*If possible, it would be easy if the workplace was close to my house, if not that, then, improved roads would make things a little easier.* (Urmila Dhakal, 28 years old, separated from husband, four-year-old daughter, works as a volunteer with limited payment at the eye hospital, Mehelkuna, Surkhet District, Nepal)

*If the government made roads, provided irrigation facilities, it would be easier for us. If a generator was brought for the farms, we would get water on time. We would plant on time and we would be happy.* (Purnikala Giri, mother-in-law of Gyanu Giri, 25 years old, one son, farms and sell vegetables and rears sheep, Chandannath, Jumla, Nepal)

*They [the VDC] have not done anything for water but they did something for the road. We have been saving for Mahila Bikas Bachat [women's savings for development], and the VDC is supporting us on that.* (Sharmila Oli, three children, husband migrant labourer in Qatar, farms her own land, Mehelkuna, Surkhet District, Nepal)

While the Depalgaon site was in the same area, women's time on unpaid work tasks was as low as 5.1 hours – this is explained by the fact that Depalgaon was easily accessible by road, and also water connections in the village meant that care of land and livestock was less time-consuming for women:

*Before [the water connection], we had to go far to fetch water. My mother-in-law used to go to fetch water. And I did not go far, when I was pregnant and when the children were small. But I had to go take the livestock for grazing sometimes.* (Gauri BK, 31 years old, five daughters, extended family, WEE in Karnali Employment Programme, Depalgaon, Jumla, Nepal)

However, lack of irrigation facilities still meant that women spent substantial amounts of time and energy on unpaid work tasks, as the following quote illustrates:

*There is no irrigation, we have to fill the water from the [nearby] taps and water the garden and field; it would be good if we received irrigation facilities too.* (Ramkala BK,

45 years old, five daughters, extended family, works as a daily labourer, Depalgaon, Jumla, Nepal)

Women in Rwanda and Tanzania reported a lower number of hours that they were spending on unpaid work than in Nepal or India. In Rwanda, women in Muko Sector reported the largest amount of hours out of any site (5.38 hours), mainly spent on care of land, followed by care of livestock (Annexe Figure C.1, Panel B), followed by Sibmvi Sector, where they spent 3.71 hours on unpaid work. In the other two sites, women reported spending less than two hours on unpaid work – which reflected mainly two things: firstly, these sites had more opportunities for women to undertake paid work and secondly, there was greater infrastructural support in these sites so that women were able to perform their unpaid work tasks in shorter amounts of time. Women also reported other women, often younger daughters, helping them in unpaid work and care tasks:

*Other [unpaid care] work is done by my daughter. Whenever I am not at home, she fetches water, collects firewood, cleans the compound, the house, cares for the siblings and sometimes she prepares food.* (Munyana Liliose, 42 years old, three children, self-help group president, Musanze District, Rwanda)

In Tanzania, women in Oxfam's Korgwe and Lushoto sites reported doing 4.2 hours of unpaid work – primarily on care of land (Annexe Figure C.1, Panel B); while this was much lower for the sites of WDF Korogwe (3.09 hours) and WDF Lushoto (1.67 hours). This might be explained by the fact that the Oxfam programme has provided substantial inputs to women for farming as part of their programmatic activities – and hence women report a larger proportion of time being spent on agricultural and farming activities. On the other hand, the WDF programme provides micro-credit support for various entrepreneurial activities, which generate cash-in-hand, rather than unpaid work on land.

Interestingly, WEE participation also made a difference to the time that women spent on unpaid work – sometimes with counter-intuitive trends. In India, WEE participants do much fewer hours of unpaid work in the urban sites of Indore and Ujjain than non-WEE participants. However, in the rural sites of Udaipur and Dungarpur, WEE participants do more hours of unpaid work than non-WEE participants. This might be explained both by the nature of the unpaid work in rural areas (linked to agriculture and care of land and livestock which is limited in urban areas), as well as the nature of the WEE programme which women were engaged in. In the urban sites of India, SEWA, although necessitating women's time in meetings and campaigns, provides women with the bargaining power that they need to undertake more paid work – and therefore less time on unpaid work overall. However, in rural Udaipur and Dungarpur, MGNREGA work is scant and irregular – and also necessitates travel to worksites, which all adds to women needing to undertake more unpaid work, as well as increasing their time.

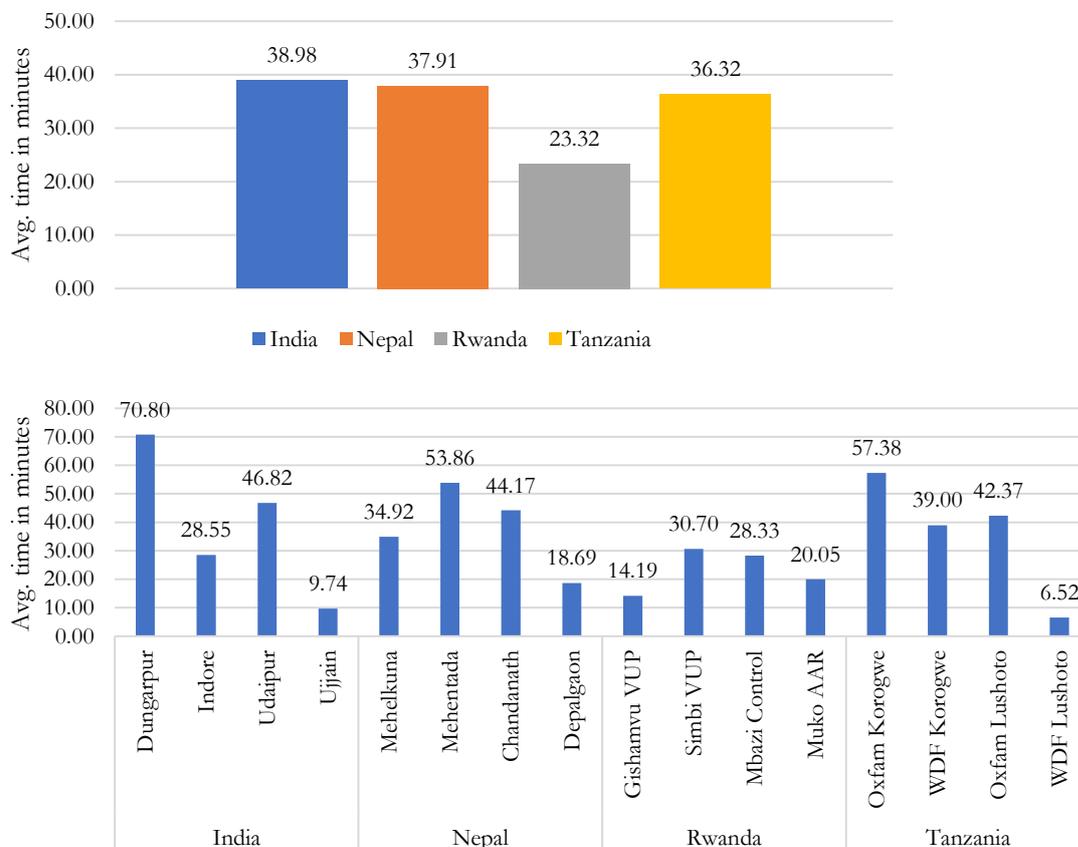
In Nepal, WEE participants across all sites do more hours of unpaid work – this is explained by the fact that WEE participation adds to women's unpaid work – in terms of time spent in meetings and community mobilisation campaigns, but also in accessing WEE programme benefits. In Rwanda's Simbi VUP and Muko ActionAid Rwanda (AAR) sites, WEE participants do less hours of unpaid work, but in Gishammvu VUP, WEE participants report doing more hours of unpaid work. Finally, in Tanzania, women who are WEE participants report doing higher hours of unpaid work in all sites except WDF Korogwe.

These findings suggest that WEE participation has had differential effects on women’s unpaid work hours across the sites and countries. This is owed to the local contexts of infrastructure, but may also be linked to women’s responsibilities for other activities.

The collection of fuel and water (Figure 3.2) is another activity that cuts significantly into women’s time and energy levels. While on average, women seem to spend only half an hour per day on this activity across the four countries, this is mainly because they report this both as a primary and a secondary activity (therefore, the time they report is taken as halved if they are doing something else alongside water and fuel collection). In addition, there are significant differences both between countries and within sites in these countries. Notably, women in Rwanda spend the lowest time on average, while women in India spend the highest time on average on water and fuel collection.

What is also interesting is that in urban areas of India (Ujjain especially), easily accessible water and fuel connections mean that women spend very little time (nine minutes to half an hour) on these tasks, while in rural Dungarpur and Udaipur, women easily spend an hour every day on the collection of fuel and water. In Depalgaon (Nepal) again, water connections have meant reductions in women’s time taken up by these tasks, while neighbouring Chandannath cannot boast of these. In Rwanda, there are less site-wise variations, while in Tanzania, women living in WDF Lushoto can access water and gas more easily than their counterparts in either Oxfam Korogwe or Oxfam Lushoto districts.

**Figure 3.2 Time doing water and fuel collection by country, site, and family structure**



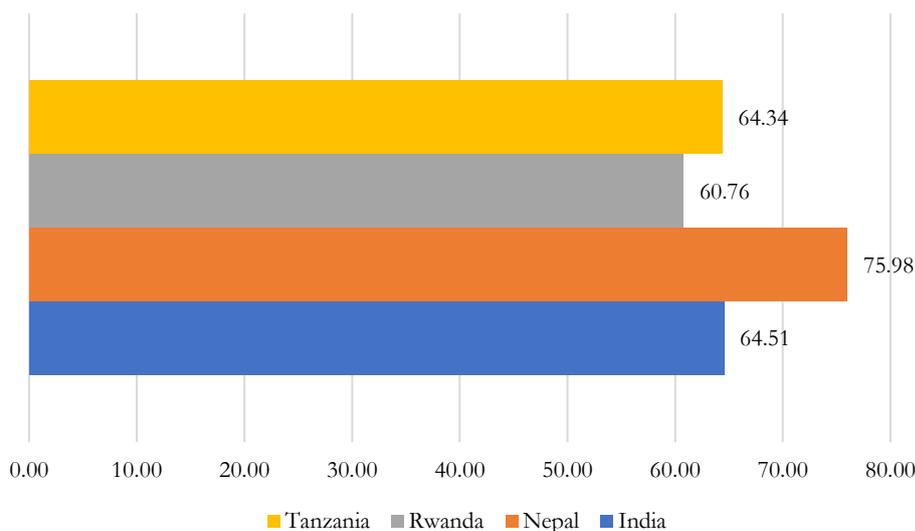
Source: Authors’ own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

The above discussion has shown that women spend a large amount of time on unpaid work tasks – and that the absence of infrastructure intensifies these tasks, especially in rural areas where care of land and livestock is premeditated by the presence of water, electricity, and roads. This large amount of time and energy that women spend on unpaid tasks directly impacts their engagement in paid work – as explained in Section 3.3.

### 3.3 Extent and nature of women’s paid work

Women’s paid work across the sites was reported as being fairly low (only about one hour in a given day) in terms of actual number of hours – as shown in Figure 3.3 below. The intensity of paid work done by women was comparable across all countries.

**Figure 3.3 Average minutes of paid work across countries**



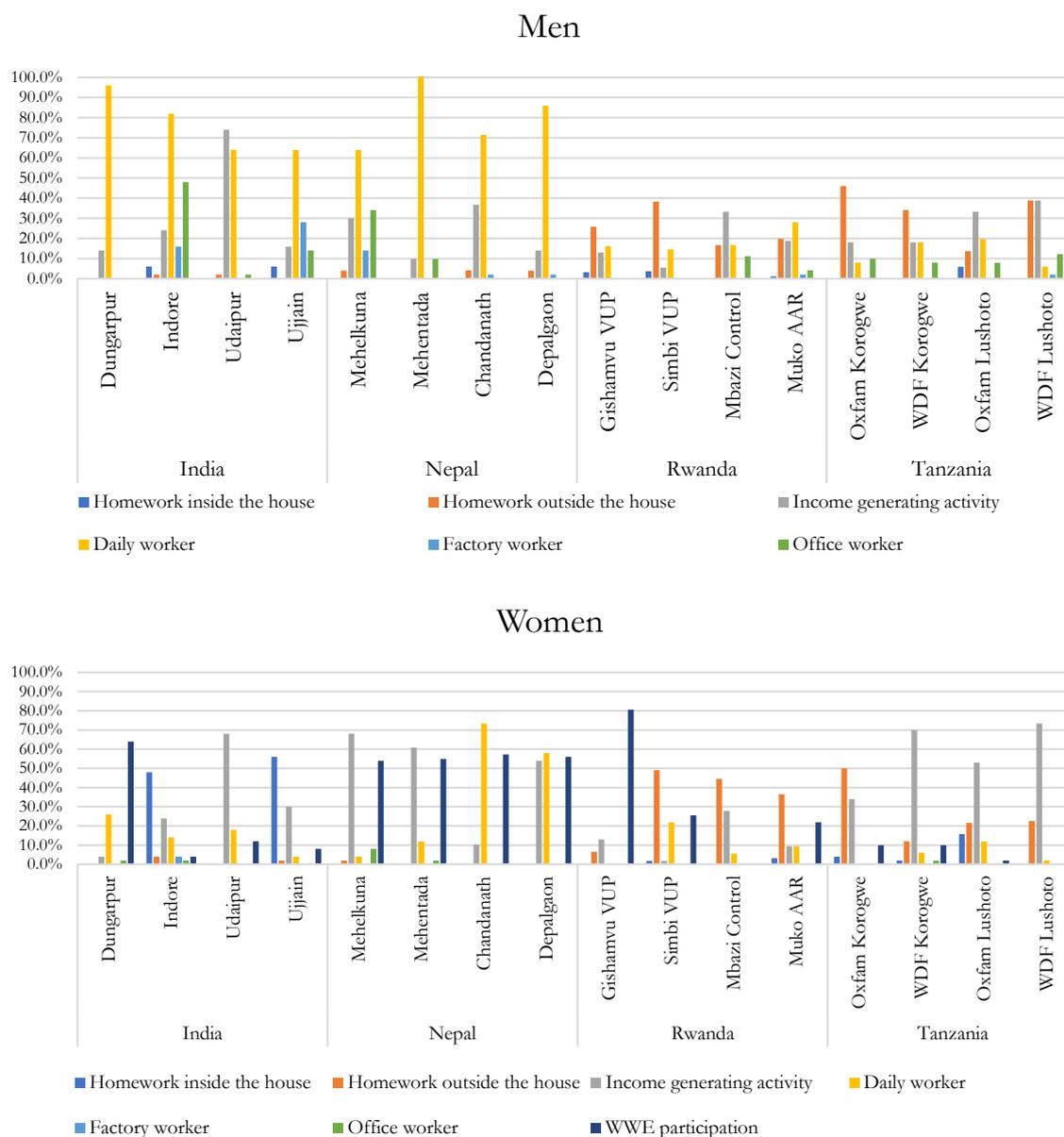
Source: Authors’ own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

Interestingly, the types of paid work being undertaken by women and men across the different sites in the four countries were quite different as the two graphs in Figure 3.4 show.

In India, most women do some income-generating activities under self-employment in Udaipur, while most men work as daily workers and are also engaged in self-employment. In Dungarpur, most women report engagement in WEE and also work as daily labourers. Women in Indore are engaged in homework inside the house such as handicrafts and some men do office work, while some also do daily labour. In Nepal, most women in Mehelkuna, Mehentada, and Depalgaon do some income-generating activities under self-employment, while women in Chandannath report to work as daily labourers. Women also report WEE participation across all four sites. Men in Nepal are primarily engaged in daily labour across all four sites.

In Rwanda, men and women report doing less paid work. For three out of four sites, women are doing more home-based work outside the house such as agricultural work on their compound. WEE participation is reported by most women in the fourth site, Gishamvu VUP. In Tanzania, the scenario is similar to Rwanda, but barely any women report WEE participation. Men and women engage in income-generating activities and home-based work outside the house.

**Figure 3.4 Paid work types undertaken by women and men by sites**



*Note:* Figure 3.4 is based on the response to the question 'What kind of paid work are you currently undertaking?' The respondent could mark up to three responses, from home-based work inside the house (e.g. handicraft); home-based work outside the house (e.g. agricultural work on compound/plot/own land); income-generating activities/self-employment (including domestic work); agricultural/non-agricultural daily wage labour (including construction); factory work for employer; office work for employer; WEE programme participation. The category of no paid work is not reported.

*Source:* Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

These findings suggest that there are clear differences in how women and men engage in paid work across most countries – this depends mainly on the opportunities available to them. In addition, WEE participation has had differential uptake across sites for women, suggesting two things: firstly, that patterns of existing opportunities of paid work impacts the extent to which women are willing to engage in WEE work; and secondly, the nature of the WEE programme, in terms of benefits that they see accruing out of this participation, will affect their participation, as explained clearly by women about both the WEE programmes that they were involved in:

*Yes, last year I worked for it [MGNREGA]. We don't even get paid. I had worked for about 12–13 days. [I] haven't received last year's payment yet. (Sarita Pargi, 32 years old, six children – four girls and two boys, works in MGNREGA, also migrates to Gujarat as agricultural labourer, Udaipur, India)*

*I only worked for one session in the employment guarantee scheme but didn't get paid for it. The work done in SEWA mandir is paid for after ten days on regular basis. This one [SEWA mandir] is better. (Indumati Khair, 35 years old, six children, engaged in waged labour, with husband also engaged in agriculture and construction work, India)*

One woman says,

*Men have one wage rate and women another. When projects like KEP [the Karnali Employment Programme] come in, the men take away most of the work. They will make it seem like women are being put in such projects, but then the money is passed into other hands behind our backs at times! (Women Only Care, Work Matrix participatory exercise, Chandannath, Jumla, Nepal)*

*Bad debtors. Sometimes you work for someone and he refuses to pay you. Or you sell your produce to someone and they don't pay you. (Mama Roberta, 35 years old, six daughters, home-based self-employment, Korogwe, Tanzania)*

There could also be another factor influencing the nature and type of paid work that women and men undertook in the sites, which related to the type of family that they were living in. In order to understand this further, we disaggregated the paid work that women and men undertook across our four countries, by family structure in Figure 3.5. Interestingly, it can be seen that women in nuclear families across the four countries report greater participation in the WEE programmes as compared to women in extended families.

There are also interesting variations by country. Paid work opportunities and uptake appears to be lower for both men and women in Rwanda and Tanzania. This is corroborated by the high levels of unpaid work that we saw women to be engaged in – mainly through agriculture/farming. Further, across the four sites in Rwanda and Tanzania, women and men living in extended families were engaging at even lower levels in paid work as compared to those in nuclear families – again reinforcing the finding that they were, instead, engaging in own-farm agricultural activities rather than as daily wage workers or other income-generating activities outside the house. Women living in nuclear families in Rwanda did report being engaged in WEE activities, while men were doing work on their farms or compounds primarily. In Tanzania, women in nuclear families did more income-generating activities, while men worked on their own farms.

Most Indian women in extended families engaged in paid work inside the house – that is, as home-based workers. This was the highest in the urban site of Ujjain. Their counterparts in nuclear families, interestingly, engaged in income-generating activities. Men in extended families were engaged in much more daily labour across all sites in India, than in nuclear families. The scenario in Nepal is similar to India, but women engage in less paid work across all sites and there is no clear difference between women in extended and nuclear families. But interestingly, women report greater participation in WEE programmes in Nepal.

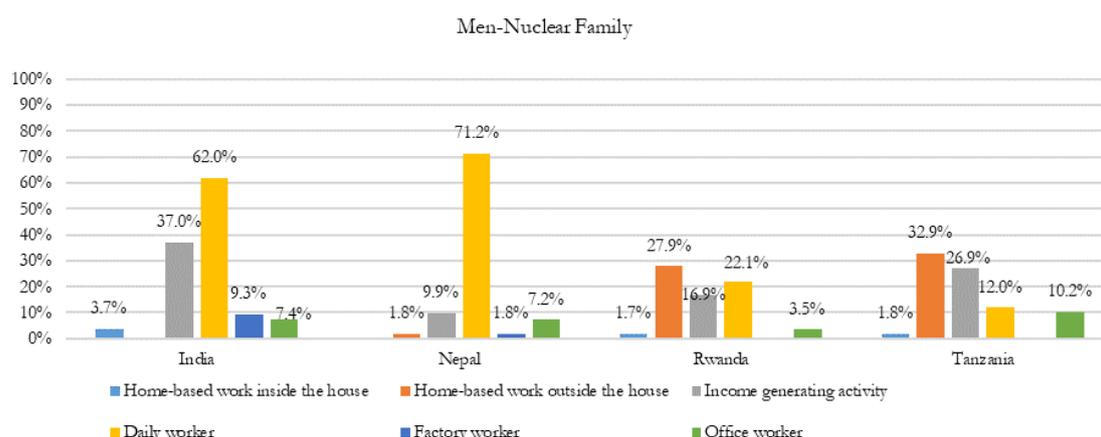
These findings suggest that there are some differential effects of family structure on women and men's paid work across the sites and countries, but being in an extended family is likely to be interacting with other factors including the availability of paid work, as there were no clear trends emerging.

**Figure 3.5 Percentage of women and men doing paid work, type by family structure**



(Cont'd.)

**Figure 3.5 (Cont'd.)**



Note: Figure 3.5 is based on the question ‘What kind of paid work are you currently undertaking?’ The respondent could mark up to three responses, from home-based work inside the house (e.g. handicraft); home-based work outside the house (e.g. agricultural work on compound/plot/own land); income-generating activities/self-employment (including domestic work); agricultural/non-agricultural daily wage labour (including construction); factory work for employer; office work for employer; WEE programme participation. Each percentage is reported out of the 200 women in our sample by country. The category of no paid work is not reported.

Source: Authors’ own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

The fourth and final factor that affects women’s economic engagement is the extent of support received by women from their families and at workplaces for childcare – as is discussed in Section 3.4.

### 3.4 Extent of support that women received for childcare

Razavi (2007) sets out four critical institutional actors that need to provide care: the state, the family, the community, and the market. It was clear from our research that childcare arrangements were a predominant concern in taking up any economic work, across the countries, as expressed by all women. Childcare responsibilities affected the type of economic engagement that women were willing to undertake as well as the amount of time that they could spend on paid work. We therefore posit that the provision of care from any of these institutional actors would directly affect women’s economic engagement. Accordingly, in this section, we present the findings for (a) support for childcare from families and communities; (b) support for childcare at/from the workplace or the state. We also interrogate how the structure of the family – nuclear as compared to extended, helps or hinders support for childcare.

#### 3.4.1 Support received for childcare from families and communities

The presence or lack of support made a huge difference to the time and energy that women spent on childcare. This support could be received, as seen above in some of the quotes, from family members such as husbands, mothers, mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and older children, as well as from neighbours and community members in Nepal:

*We [the sisters-in-law] take turns to go [to fetch firewood or grass]. We are four sisters [in-law]; all of us do not go at once, if two of us go, the other two are there to look after the children and if three of us go [then] the one left behind takes care of the children (Jamuna BK, 19 years old, four-month-old baby boy, WEE programme participant, seasonal farm labourer, rears chicken for sale, lives in an extended family, Chandannath, Jumla District, Nepal)*

*Both my parents help me... mostly, my mother cooks more than me, she looks after my daughter as I come for work here. She bathes her, washes her clothes, combs her hair, sends her off to school, makes snacks in the afternoon and feeds her.* (Urmila Dhakal, 28 years old, separated from husband, four-year-old daughter, works as a volunteer with limited payment at the eye hospital, Mehelkuna, Surkhet District, Nepal)

At the same time, children were sometimes left alone or in the care of other (predominantly female) family members while their mothers went to work – this was the case especially in Nepal when women were out collecting fuel and firewood, in India when women were out for work in public works, but less the case in Tanzania and Rwanda.

More than in the other countries, women in Rwanda reported receiving help from their husbands, neighbours, and also their children in care tasks more generally, and in childcare specifically – as is made evident in the following quote:

*When my wife is absent, I do the cooking and take care of my children. I cannot wait until she comes back. I do the same when she is doing paid work or when children are at school. I take care of the siblings because no one else is around. We perform together.* (Husband of Mukagasana Marie, 37 years old, nuclear family, four children, participant in Vision 2020; main work, livestock and farming, Simbi, Huye, Rwanda. Marie's two older daughters help her with care responsibilities, in addition to her husband.)

In the case of another interviewee, Liliose's daughter helps her to fetch water, collect firewood, clean the compound, and take care of her siblings. She also cooks food when her mother is not at home (Liliose, 42 years old, self-help group president, nuclear family, male-headed household, non-migrant, three children, family farm, livestock and land, ActionAid WEE participant, Musanze District, Rwanda).

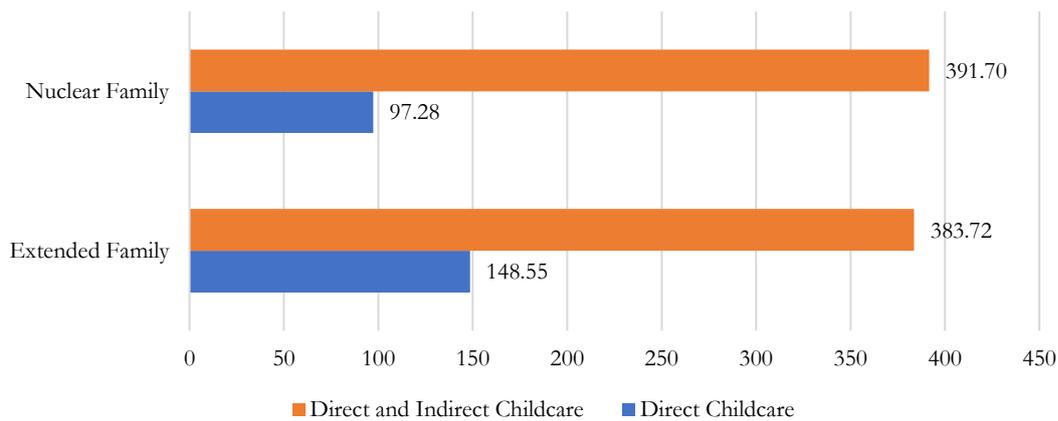
Interestingly, women living in extended families (30 per cent of our sample) across our four countries reported spending more time on direct childcare (148.5 minutes), as compared to those living in nuclear families (70 per cent of our sample, reporting 97.28 minutes on average on direct childcare) – as shown in Figure 3.6. This can be explained by the fact that women in extended families were looking after not only their own children, but also other children in the extended family, and therefore expending larger amounts of time on this as a direct activity, as Shaila was doing:

*Like when my sister-in-law goes for work, I have to look after her kids also... like when she goes for her 'parlour training'<sup>8</sup>... She leaves both her kids with me... I look after them, give them food, etc.* (Shaila Pathan, 30 years old, one daughter, divorced, lives in all female household with mother, sister, and sister's daughter, makes paper bowls and works as domestic help, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, India)

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<sup>8</sup> Training to become a beautician for a beauty parlour.

**Figure 3.6 Direct and total (direct and indirect) childcare: pooled sample**



Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

As would be expected, however, there was little difference in the time spent by women in nuclear or extended families when indirect/supervisory childcare was being performed (383 minutes in extended families, 391 minutes in nuclear families). This is because women would still be performing other tasks while looking after children, and therefore supervisory childcare was the same across nuclear or extended families. The only exception was Tanzania, where women in nuclear families reported spending over eight hours on direct and supervisory childcare, as compared to six hours being reported in extended families. Accordingly, women in Tanzania reported depletion in terms of both physical and emotional stress, as the following quote illustrates:

*You know when you have children, they need care and yet you have other house activities like digging and cattle rearing so you end up getting stress or becoming sick.* (Mama Christine, extended family of eight members, mother of four children, Lushoto, Tanzania)

Women were very reluctant to report leaving their children alone – only 89 of our 800 women reported that they had left their children alone in the last week – of which 34.5 per cent of women were in India, 6 per cent in Nepal, 34.5 per cent in Rwanda, and 18.5 per cent in Tanzania. Women were also worried about leaving their children at home – either alone or with other females of the family/community. The following quote reveals this fear:

*I wish to do some other kind of work, but I can do it only when the children grow up and become independent. They will start earning on their own and will self-support themselves then I can do jobs like stitching or selling vegetables.* (Malavika Gaur, 30 years old, five children, construction worker, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India)

Most women therefore tried to make alternative arrangements within their social networks, so that their children were not accompanying them to the worksite. These included usually female members of their extended family such as mothers and mothers-in-law, sisters and sisters-in-law, and sometimes also neighbours and community members. In many cases, this was reflective of the predominant social norms about childcare being a female domain, and there was variation within each country and site on the extent to which men helped, as the following quotes illustrate:

*If I had not looked after the children, my wife would not have been able to do her works... While taking care of the children, they need to be fed, slept and cleaned on time... I do it only in her absence.* (Sunil BK, husband of Gauri BK, father of five daughters, works as a mason, Depalgaon, Nepal)

*In response to the question of who cares after the children more, the men or the women, a few men say that the women do. One woman says that both do. Another woman asserts that because the man has to work hard to earn (usually far away), childcare falls on to the woman.* (Mixed adults participatory exercise, Chandannath, Jumla District, Nepal)

We also saw significant country and site-wise differences. In Nepal, more starkly than anywhere else, there was significant male out-migration, because of unavailability of jobs in local areas. When men were available, their participation and support to women in undertaking care tasks depended largely on their own workload – which in turn depended on factors such as small infrastructure, as the following discussion illustrates:

One man:

*Of course, there will be help. Men do not sleep in their beds and make the women work. There are some urgent works to be handled by men and hence the women are left with the burden of household tasks. The reduction of men's workload automatically minimises women's workload. Everyone has their own responsibilities, so when the men's responsibilities decrease, it will be easier for the women.*

Another man:

*For instance, if water is available at home, we don't have to spend time bringing it. Likewise, if we have to go to Mehelkuna and we have to walk back, if there was transportation, then we could easily come back in a short time and save a lot of time. That saved time, we could do something work, but it's not the case, we only come back in the evening. We are unable to do any work throughout the day as our time is wasted while commuting between places. Hence, both men and women have to face more problems.* (Men's WhatIF participatory exercise, Mehelkuna, Sukhet, Nepal)

Our findings show that there were country and family variations in the ways in which women's lives were impacted because of family structure. The structure of the household mattered in terms of who else was around to take care of the children while women were engaged in paid work. In some extended households, sisters, sisters-in-law, mothers, and mothers-in-law played a crucial role in taking care of the children, which sometimes enabled women to go for paid work. In India, a woman reported being able to take up paid work since her eldest son's marriage, as her daughter-in-law could stay at home and look after the woman's child: Indumati got some relief after her daughter was old enough to assume some care tasks, especially fetching water and bringing firewood from the forest, and she got further relief after her daughter-in-law joined the family. Indumati emphasised,

*Only women bring water, and the men in the family do not go [to bring water]. And [boys] go only if they wish... [my] daughter-in-law and my daughters now take care of everything.* (Indumati Khair, 35 years old, six children, three boys (aged 20, 16, and 5), and three girls aged (14, 12, and 8), engaged in waged labour, with husband also engaged in agriculture and construction work, India)

With a reduction in her own care work burden, Indumati is now able to take up paid work and contribute to the family's income.

In Rwanda, Uwase Jane (27 years old, mother of two, Musanze District, Rwanda) and her mother avoid leaving home at the same time so that at least one of them is around to care for the children and do other unpaid work).

### **3.4.2 Support for childcare at the workplace or from the state**

Across our 16 sites, we found a complete lack of support from women's workplaces or the state in terms of a formal crèche/childcare facility. Women in turn expressed frustration at having to give up employment opportunities because of a lack of childcare centres in the village:

*We don't have a crèche here, it is important to have one here. If the kids were going to a crèche, I would have been able to do my work.* (Leena Dinesh, 40 years old, two infant children, domestic worker, husband porter, living with 80-year-old mother, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, India)

Interestingly, lack of support was the case for both women who were WEE participants and non-WEE participants – which means that even programmes that were explicitly focused on getting women into the labour force were missing a consideration of women's lived realities and their time and energy constraints. For example, in Rwanda, Denise who lives in Muko Sector and participates in the ActionAid WEE programme is a smallholder farmer. There are no childcare centres in her village, and the WEE site is a 20–25 minute walk away. She takes her two young children to the WEE site or sometimes leaves them with the neighbours. She complains that 'It is so tiresome; I am not able to do all the care work at home on time.' In India, while there is provision for childcare centres under the MGNREGA, none were functional. Women with young children sometimes brought them to the worksites, but this was generally discouraged and not supported:

*For some time I would work, and for some time I would look after them [at the MGNREGA worksite]... what support, they would scold... you finish all the work, that is what they used to tell me.* (Hema Bai, 24 years old, three children, construction worker and MGNREGA participant, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India)

*They don't even give us breaks for when we have to take care of our young children. They do give time to us to feed the little children but it is very less. They give this time off generally, but not specifically for feeding children... for feeding, once a day.* (Valota Women Care Matrix Participatory exercise, Dungarpur, India)

In Nepal too, women were discouraged to bring their children to the worksites:

*We are all poor around here, it is difficult to sustain ourselves but whenever there is any programme in the village they restrict us from working. It is good for us only when the programmes give us an opportunity to work along with the facilities to keep our children with us at work. Instead, they restrict us (people with children) from working.* (Kusum BK, 37 years old, three young daughters, nuclear family, works as a daily wage labourer, Chandannath, Jumla District, Nepal)

Childcare support for women home workers such as those rolling incense sticks in urban India is even more scant – instead, children are pressed into helping their mother with the paid work:

*They [her two children] are unable to study but what do we do? It is necessary to work also... When they help in agarbatti making, we get more money... Three persons can make more than one person can... Yes, it does affect their studies. The teacher scolds me and asks me whether or not I teach my children. She tells me to sit with them for an hour and make them study. But who will teach them? When they have exams they don't make agarbattis. (Roshni Mimroth, 33 years old, four children, daily wage labourer, also makes agarbatti (incense sticks) at home, Ujjain, India)*

Women said that they would sometimes take the child to work with them – this was especially the case with women in Tanzania and Rwanda when they worked in agricultural fields, or in India for domestic workers, and in Nepal and India for women working on roadside construction projects or brick kilns. For home-based workers, we observed children alongside their mothers – in fact, sometimes helping women with the paid work tasks as well. The following quote illustrates this point:

*There is no place to keep the kids at the workplace... they [other women workers] have to bring older kids to take care of their younger kid, as they need to travel on foot for nearly two kilometres to work. (Indumati Khair, 35 years old, India, engaged in waged labour and construction work, six children, with husband also engaged in agriculture and construction work)*

However, most women also shared the lack of childcare support at worksites as being a big hindrance to them having children with them. In public works and construction sites, women were not able to bring their children because of the dangerous environment, or if they did, were constantly worried about their children's safety. Across the board, there were no childcare facilities in communities or at workplaces that women could leave their children with while going to paid work. Women were very clear that absence of support for childcare affected both their ability to undertake paid work, as well as to concentrate on their tasks, as Samina expresses eloquently:

*[If there was a childcare facility]... I could have done my work properly if there was a person to look after my child. Now, I worry about my child while working, I'm worried that the child would fall. I cannot concentrate on my work. (Jamuna BK, Chandannath, Jumla District, Nepal )*

It is important to note that in India, there is also the provision of 'Anganwadi' centres as childcare for children over three years old, but women expressed distrust as well as complaining of these being inconvenient in terms of location and timing, as the following excerpt from a discussion, and a quote, illustrates:

*Some from the neighbourhood go [to the Anganwadi]. But the children can play and enjoy at home only, what is the need of going to the Anganwadi? And that some children play pranks and disturb other children, that they don't like to go to the Anganwadi. The attention is also inadequate... (Amitabh Ajnave, husband of Prema Ajnave, 25 years old, mother of three, home-based worker, WEE participant, Indore, India)*

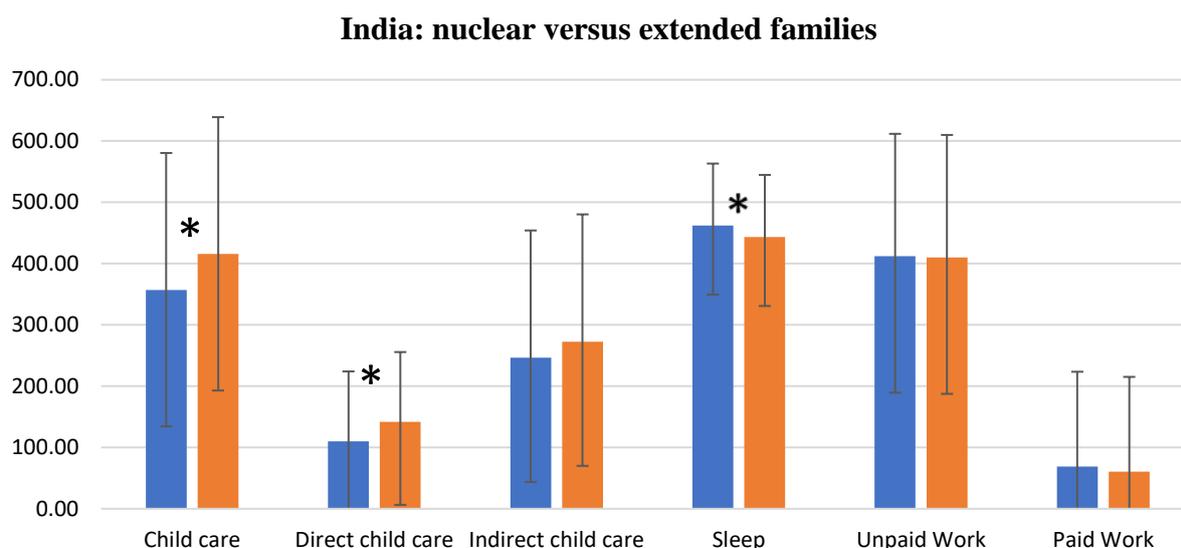
Women say that ‘the Anganwadi is only open till 11. That doesn’t suit our purpose.’ (Women Only Care, Marbles participatory exercise, Indore, India).

*The limited opening times of the Anganwadi centres also proved a hindrance in providing adequate respite care. (Ruchika Pardhi, Indore)*

### 3.4.3 Family structure and care – hindrance or help?

To examine whether the structure of the family (*nuclear versus extended families*) that women were living in made a difference in their overall care responsibilities, and the support that they received for undertaking these care responsibilities – which in turn would affect their economic engagement – we interrogated our data by country. This revealed a striking difference in terms of women’s direct care responsibilities, their indirect care responsibilities, and their sleep patterns – as shown in Figures 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, and 3.10. In India and Nepal, the average time spent on all childcare was higher for women in extended families, and significantly higher for total and direct childcare. This indicates perhaps the greater number of children that were present in extended families, necessitating a higher amount of time spent by females in that family on childcare. In contrast, sleep is significantly higher in nuclear families in India – suggesting that women in extended families had multiple and more responsibilities than those living in nuclear families.

**Figure 3.7 Comparison of significant differences by family structure – India**

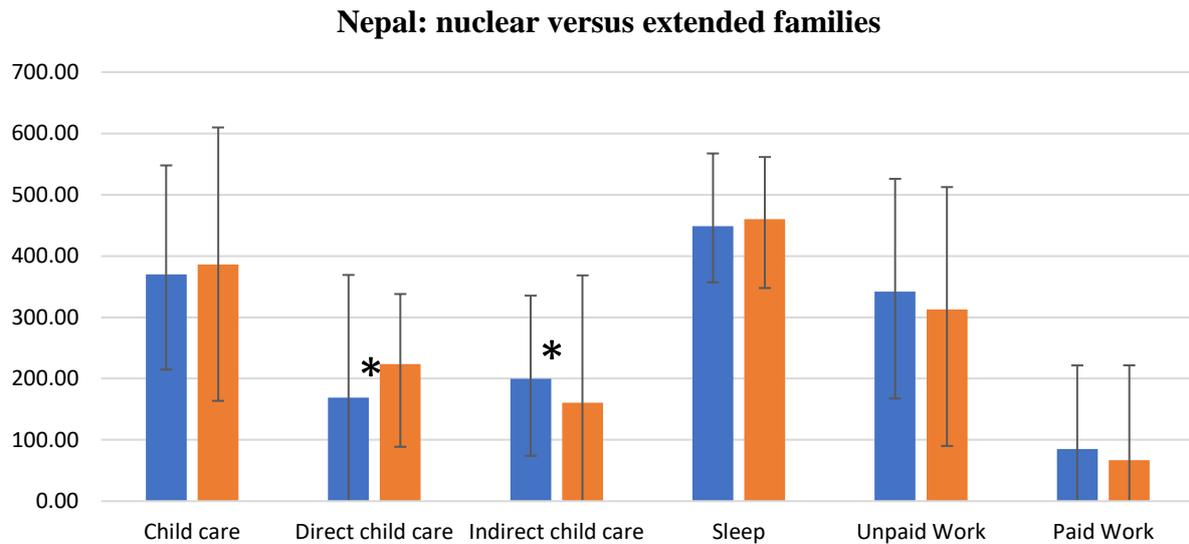


*Note:* Bars show average minutes, error bars show standard deviations. \*Denotes significant differences. Blue = nuclear, orange = extended.

*Source:* Authors’ own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

In Nepal, the time spent doing direct childcare is significantly higher for extended families, while indirect childcare responsibilities appear higher in nuclear families – suggesting that women in nuclear families are facing supervisory burdens of indirect care. There is no statistically significant difference for time spent doing other activities across the two groups.

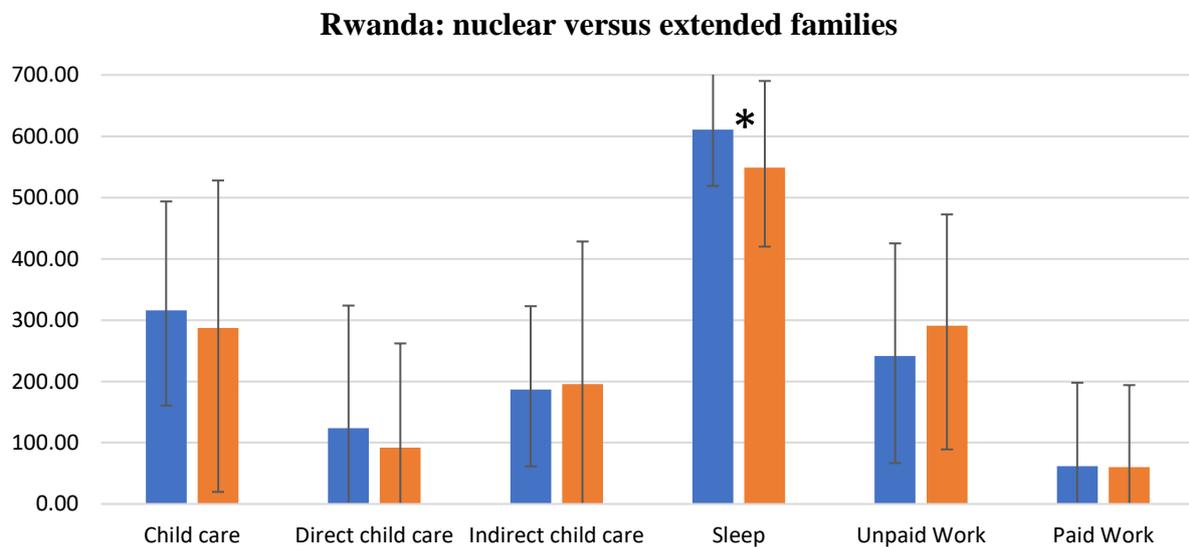
**Figure 3.8 Comparison of significant differences by family structure – Nepal**



*Note:* Bars show average minutes, error bars show standard deviations. \*Denotes significant differences. Blue = nuclear, orange = extended.  
*Source:* Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

In Rwanda, being in an extended family yields no statistically significant difference for women, except for total sleep. Surprisingly, women in nuclear families are getting higher sleep on average, when compared with their counterparts in extended families.

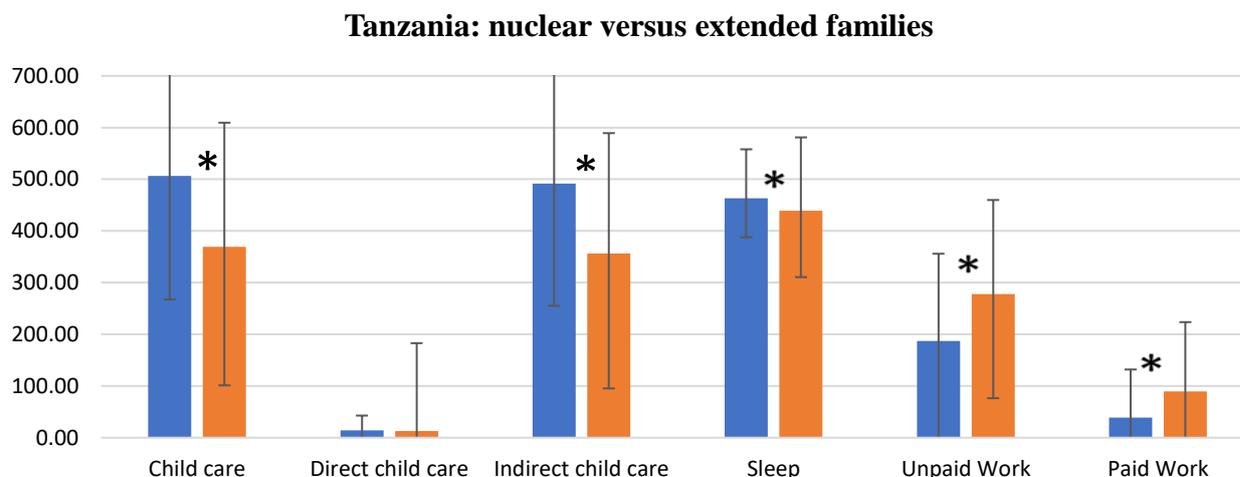
**Figure 3.9 Comparison of significant differences by family structure – Rwanda**



*Note:* Bars show average minutes, error bars show standard deviations. \*Denotes significant differences. Blue = nuclear, orange = extended.  
*Source:* Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

In Tanzania, extended families appear to be of greatest support as women in extended families report significantly lower average time spent on childcare and especially on indirect childcare. These women also get significantly higher amounts of sleep, and do more unpaid and paid work.

**Figure 3.10 Comparison of significant differences by family structure – Tanzania**



Note: Bars show average minutes, error bars show standard deviations. \*Denotes significant differences. Blue = nuclear, orange = extended.

Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

This above discussion corroborated our qualitative findings that there are no uniform ways in which family structure plays out to support women. While the presence of other women in the family meant that some women were better off in extended families and could share care tasks across different people, in some families this also meant a higher care burden, especially with increases in the number of children to be looked after – which constrained women’s time and energies to undertake paid work. In some families, the presence of mothers-in-law was a real source of support to the women, such as in the case of Gyanu Giri in Nepal:

*My mother-in-law feeds her [when I go for paid work], cleans her up and sends her to school. After returning from school, she goes to the farm with us. (Gyanu Giri, 25 years old, one son, farms and sell vegetables and rears sheep, Chandannath, Jumla, Nepal)*

In other families, however, women do not receive any help, either from their in-laws, parents, or from their husbands, as can be seen from the following quote:

*The men do not like to look after children. (Kusum BK, 37 years old, three young daughters, nuclear family, works as a daily wage labourer, Chandannath, Jumla District, Nepal)*

### 3.5 Effect of paid work on childcare

Women shared that their paid work had a massive negative impact on their ability to carry out childcare as they wanted to. In Tanzania, women spoke about the trade-off between paid work and childcare – paid work gave them money, but that meant a disorganised home and not being able to take care of children. In Rwanda, women shared that their children went hungry when they went for paid work, as they could not get home in time to cook food. The following quotes illustrate this, as well as women’s feelings of guilt and frustration at not being able to be there for their children because of their paid work:

*The effect on my children is that I do not give them much of my time as a mother; they do not get me when they need me since I am always busy with paid and care work which may not necessarily mean that I am with them all the time. (Kamikazi Rose, 31 years old, three daughters, WEE participant, Muko Sector, Musanze District, Rwanda)*

*For example, [it can be difficult] when I have gone for paid work and then [my] children come back from school and find that I have not prepared any food. In such a case, I [arrive] home tired and then I have to do work again. (Jennine Byukusenge, 46-year-old widow, five children – four sons and one daughter, VUP beneficiary, Huye District, Rwanda)*

In Nepal too, women shared feelings of guilt, and of children being forced to ‘grow up early’ and take responsibility, rather than being cared for themselves. In India, women reported feeling rushed for childcare, and not being able to devote time and energy to their children:

*Things won't carry on if I don't go for paid work and things won't carry on if we don't do the housework. That is why I have to do all the work... if a child falls ill, there are problems at home.... if I go to work, then who will see [to] them. (Sangeetha Sohan Damra, 35 years old, tribal woman, four children, husband migrates to Ahmedabad for work, Sangeetha works on family farm to produce grains and pulses for their own consumption, Dungarpur, India)*

*If they migrate to Gujarat, the effect is more on children. They stop going to school and it has a negative effect on their education. (Key informant, Muraari Lal, Pradhan (Head) of village Kotra, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India)*

*No, it is not good [if women go out of the house to work]. If women go out, we don't feel good since the children are left out and ignored. Children will not get food on time. The women folk will neither work well and also take good care of the household... It affects, the children are very young, they do not get their food on time. (Bhikha Hindor, husband of Manasa Hindor, 35 years old, four children, works on family farm, and in MGNREGA, Dungarpur, India)*

### **3.5.1 Reflection on interactions between childcare and women's economic engagement**

So what can we say about the relationship between childcare and women's economic engagement in developing countries? How does childcare affect women's engagement in paid work and what mediates this relationship? What are the other important factors that we need to take into account while analysing this relationship?

First, undeniably, childcare does have an impact on what kind of work, for how long, and where women decide to engage in paid work activities in low-income households. We saw that most women in our sample preferred to engage in home-based work or work closer to their homes because of more pressing responsibilities. However, what is interesting to note here is that childcare was not the only factor that influenced this decision. Women also took into account the other domestic chores they had to perform, such as cooking and cleaning. Most significantly, they also took into account the large amounts of time that they were spending on unpaid work, including working on agricultural land, care of livestock, and collecting water and fuel. This indicates that policy solutions which aim to increase women's

paid work participation cannot only focus on the provision of childcare, but also have to take other factors into account.

Second, our findings draw attention to the fact that the relationship between childcare and women's paid work (type, location, amount) is mediated by different factors and the influence of these is not uniform. These factors include (apart from the large amount of unpaid care undertaken by women) the household's overall economic situation, the availability of paid work alternatives for both men and women in the sample sites, and the structure of the household, in terms of how much familial/social network help is available for childcare. It was clear from our qualitative findings that working mothers from lower-income households had less time for direct childcare. However, the burden of supervisory childcare alongside large amounts of unpaid work performed by women influenced the choices made by women about the kinds of paid work activities they engaged in (Folbre 2006).

The fact that our sample group was from lower-income families, meant that the choice of not engaging economically was not an option for these women, as the household's survival and wellbeing depended on their ability to contribute monetarily. Yet, it was clear that women were primarily responsible for making alternative social arrangements for childcare (whether for undertaking paid work or unpaid tasks) and these care arrangements were mostly made with other women in the family, or with older children taking on the role (Chant 2003: 74). While these alternative arrangements seemed to work for the children, they were not always beneficial to these alternative caregivers who found their economic and social participation restricted because of childcare responsibilities.

Further, we found that the husband's role in providing childcare remains limited (except in Rwanda and some places in Nepal where men had not out-migrated), which points to the nature of conjugal contract that exists in these households (Whitehead 1984). While this indicates that men were also experiencing and living social norms around a gendered division of labour and gender roles, our research showed that men in poorer households also experienced time poverty with the necessity of maintaining their families through low-paid, insecure jobs.

Third, in extremely low-income settings, the trade-off between paid work and childcare posed a difficult dilemma but perhaps also highlighted the two-way interaction that takes place between these two factors. Paid work, while it allowed less time for the mother to care for the children, was beneficial for children in material terms. This was because of the money allowed for schooling, better nutrition, and improved household conditions – all vital for a child's growth and welfare. However, women also reported feelings of guilt for not being able to devote the kind of time and energy needed for ensuring children were properly cared for, and they cited examples where the child had been physically affected (care during illness) or psychologically affected (having to grow up too fast). Our findings show that the children are also aware about the trade-offs that came with their mothers' involvement in paid work. These findings indicated that the relationship between childcare and women's economic engagement cannot be interpreted from just the perspective of how childcare affects women's participation but also needs to be explored from the view of how paid work affects the quality of childcare and children's wellbeing.

Fourth, support from family members, including extended family, played a significant part in women spending more amounts of time on total childcare – yet in many extended families, the time spent on direct childcare was also higher because of the increased number of children to be looked after. Support from non-family members was significantly reported

across the four countries, but was especially notable in Rwanda and Tanzania – with neighbours playing a critical role in looking out for children while their mothers were doing unpaid and paid work. Notable by its absence, was support from either the state in terms of publicly-funded childcare centres, or from the market in terms of employer-provided childcare. Childcare support was also absent from WEE programmes, and women complained about having to juggle paid work with childcare, which impacted their work and vice versa. The latter, of course, indicates that despite a plethora of state programmes, at our study sites, the provision of childcare still remains a private matter to be resolved at the individual level – indicating a ‘reproductive bargain’ made on adverse terms (Pearson 2004).

Lastly, linked to the above point, is that the lack of institutional care arrangements across all study sites in four countries and the influence of restrictive social norms on women’s role as caregivers (that is, the woman is the one who has to take care of the child and there is lack of support from the wider household) had detrimental impacts on the children. These impacts were visible in the following ways. Firstly, women reported recruiting children into paid tasks, informally, as there were no other caregivers or support present. Secondly, children accompanied their mother to the workplace because of the absence of care arrangements at the community level or from the family, which led at times to children being exposed to a hazardous working environment or having accidents in the workplace. Thirdly, children dropped out of school to help look after young siblings or perform unpaid tasks, which had a negative intergenerational impact.

All of these findings point to a strong rationale for institutional care and community care arrangements as being crucial aspects that policies need to take into account in developing countries.

## 4 Overall discussion and conclusions

We started this paper with the intention of developing an empirical picture of the linkages between childcare and women’s economic engagement in developing country contexts – where national time-use surveys are not prevalent. Gaining an empirical understanding of these aspects has acquired a new sense of urgency as more and more states and development actors encourage women from low-income groups to engage in paid work as a magic bullet for improving household wellbeing, empowering women, and reducing poverty (Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem 2018; Nazneen *et al.* 2019). This empirical understanding has enabled us to develop a nuanced picture of women’s lives.

In this paper, we wanted to explore how this relationship between childcare and economic engagements for women belonging to lower-income groups was mediated by many different factors. This then required us to focus on the trade-offs that women face, and how women balance the different tasks – domestic chores, childcare, unpaid, and paid work. We aimed to take into account women’s own views to illuminate how women balance between these multiple tasks, and the kinds of trade-offs this balancing requires. Investigating how various structural and cultural factors influence the way women from lower-income households mediate different trade-offs is particularly important as women belonging to this economic group are unable to afford market solutions, and there are time and material costs involved to women engaging in paid work. These costs come in the form of: financial obligations, opportunity costs, and foregone wages (Folbre 2006). Understanding, then, the different trade-offs of women’s choice to engage economically, and what kinds of factors influence

the negotiations around redistribution of care tasks between family members and to other private/public institutions is important for effective policy solutions.

Our findings discussed above raise several important surprising questions and critical issues that need to be taken into consideration when developing policies and programmes for women's economic engagement, unpaid care, and also the social provision of childcare. In this conclusion, we recap these new findings and what these mean for developing areas of further research, and policy and programmatic gaps that need to be addressed for ensuring wellbeing and maximising women's economic engagement in lower-income settings.

It is abundantly clear from our comparative analysis of our case study sites that women from low-income households in four countries continue to struggle to strike a precarious balance between paid work, unpaid work, childcare, and other household/domestic chores – indicating that the terms of their reproductive bargain is adverse (Pearson 2004). In other words, women still bear the main costs of social reproduction, particularly childcare. That social reproduction is feminised in developing countries is not new; and our data revealed that while men do engage in childcare, they are also time-poor. Their engagement thereby remains secondary, and varies hugely across countries influenced by social norms and available alternative arrangements. The transfer of childcare to other women in the family or the community is a general pattern across all sites when women engaged in paid or unpaid tasks, with intergenerational transfer of care (to older women or to older children) being quite prominent. While these findings are hardly surprising, indicating the influence of gendered social norms and division of labour, our findings do reveal some important features that nuance our understanding of women's lived reality.

One such key finding is that women in lower-income households do not devote a huge amount of time to direct childcare across all sites. Yet, indirect/supervisory childcare does take up a huge amount of women's time across all contexts. The time devoted to supervisory childcare has the following impacts on women and their perceptions of childcare. First, as supervisory childcare takes place alongside other tasks, women themselves do not consider childcare as a primary activity, even though they are actually spending a significant amount of time being responsible for children. Second, most of the time that women spend multi-tasking is spent on childcare, along with some other tasks. In other words, childcare is the single most important contributing factor to women's multi-tasking, and therefore limits women's choices for undertaking other forms of tasks (including unpaid tasks, domestic chores, and paid work), drains physical energy, and causes them emotional distress when they are unable to perform childcare tasks effectively. Third, supervisory childcare affects women's leisure and personal care – which has major implications for women's wellbeing. Our analysis of multi-tasking and intensity of supervisory childcare reveals the different kinds of trade-offs women make in balancing their roles, and the physical, emotional, and psychological impact the lack of support for childcare has on women from lower-income groups.

Our empirical findings then allow us to develop a picture of depletion (Rai *et al.* 2010) and also the role supervisory childcare plays in influencing women's choice of work and trade-offs (Folbre 2006). In fact, our analysis of women's responsibility for the provision of supervisory childcare helps us then to have a nuanced understanding of the link between childcare and women's economic engagement. We have shown in this paper that this relationship is not unidirectional but bi-directional. Our analysis shows that for women from lower-income households, the effect of childcare on women's engagement in paid work (hours, location, type, or nature of work) is mediated by different factors: (a) the economic

condition of the household; (b) the availability of alternative care arrangements; (c) the household structure and; (d) alternative options (for both men and women) for paid work.

In our sample, while most women preferred home-based work or to work close to home, this is a false choice – that is, it is made in the light of absence of support for their childcare and other domestic chores, as well as the huge amounts of unpaid work that women need to perform and which takes up significant time and energy. This choice is also made in the presence of restrictive social norms (that is, who is responsible for care). It should be noted that women navigated the lack of institutional and family support in different ways, such as by taking children to worksites, arranging care at the community level, and so forth, but these have limits. In fact, a stark finding was the absence of policy, state, market, and community-level support to address the childcare needs of women.

A key area of concern here is also the intensity of unpaid work tasks (subsistence work on land, livestock care, water and fuel collection) performed by women alongside supervisory childcare. The lack of wider policy and programmatic interventions that may reduce the burden of unpaid work tasks through piped water, electricity, and small road infrastructure is an urgent area of concern that needs to be addressed, especially if the state and development actors are encouraging more women to raise their levels of economic engagement. Placing these findings against Razavi's care diamond framework (2007) reveals that the nature of redistribution of care within the household (mainly among women) and from the household to other institutions remains very limited.

The above, then, leads us to identify several areas that we need to explore further in research, and some critical issues that need to be addressed urgently in policy and programmes aimed at the social provision of care.

The key knowledge gaps are the following. Firstly, regarding women from lower-income households in developing country contexts – their choice of paid work and how they balance paid and unpaid work tasks is affected by the intensity of unpaid care tasks and supervisory childcare. What are the trade-offs women experience in economic terms (loss of wage; inability to take up better opportunities)? And what would effectively increase women's choice for decent work in these contexts?

A second, yet critical area to study would be to understand the effects of this precarious balancing act that women strive to maintain, on themselves, their children, and their families. In other words, when women have the constant pressure of doing something at any given point of time, without the time to rest or recuperate, what is the likely incidence and intensity of depletion because of this multi-tasking? While our earlier research has highlighted the qualitative nature of women being depleted both physically and emotionally, there is a gap in our understanding in terms of why some women cope better than others. In what ways do aspects such as type and intensity of paid work, types of unpaid work that women engage in, and support that women have for their care work responsibilities, affect the likelihood of, and intensity of, depletion that women face? Answers to these questions would further help in developing indicators for measuring depletion (Rai *et al.* 2010).

Third, another less studied area in women's economic empowerment literature (perhaps to some extent covered in the micro-credit literature) is how women from low-income households in developing countries emotionally view their engagement in paid work and the trade-offs – that is, the subjective part of wellbeing, as pointed out by Floro (1995). The fact that most of the women reported that they felt solely responsible for childcare and that they

were unable to gain relief from this mental burden comes at a huge emotional cost. In literature, the mental load of care has been discussed in the 'Western' context but is not extensively explored when it comes to developing country contexts. In developing countries, women from low-income households have been studied mostly through an economic lens – as economic agents whose productive power needs to be utilised. When social norms around market participation have been studied, the focus has been on norms being restrictive. It should be noted that individual motivations and preferences are influenced by a complex set of factors, and emotions do play a critical role in making choices. Our findings show that while women feel guilty, they also acknowledged the importance of being able to earn and provide the children better life opportunities. A key question to ask here, then, is: what kinds of alternative social norms (along with support systems) do we need so that the emotional costs of women trying to balance their care roles with their economic roles, can be mitigated?

In terms of knowledge on policy support, there is no doubt that policymakers and programmatic actors need to do more. There are successful models of social provision of care in different contexts, but the knowledge itself remains disparate – categorised under different policy domains such as early childhood development, labour policy interventions, or social protection programmes. There is a need to systematically analyse what makes these different kinds of interventions effective, and under which context do specific interventions work better than others.

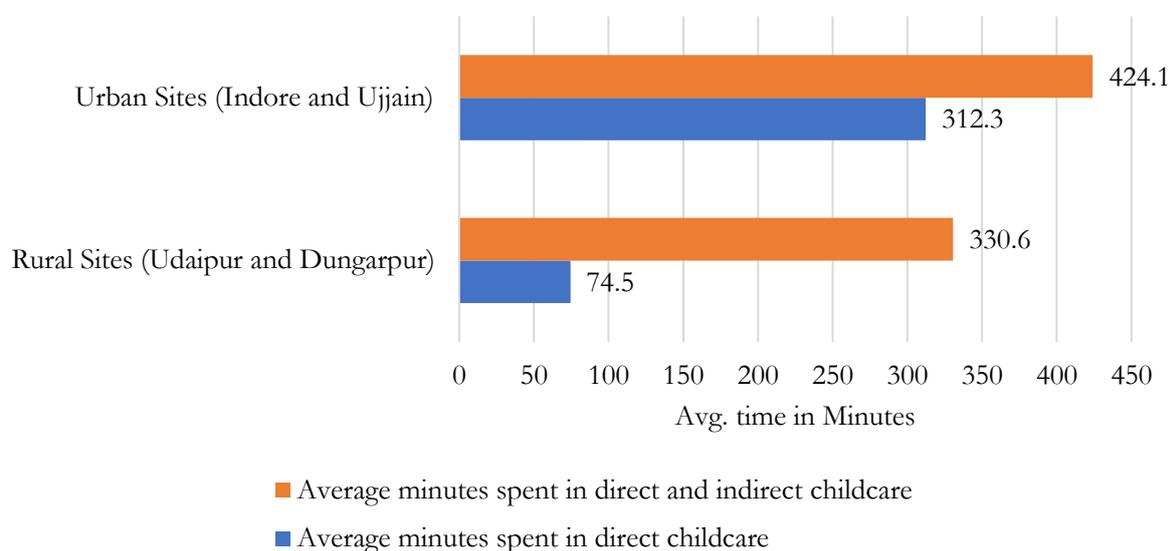
Apart from the above knowledge gaps, there is a need for social care policies to focus on the following four aspects to address women's needs for the social provision of care in low-income settings. First, there is an urgent need to address how the time intensity and the drudgery of unpaid work tasks performed by women can be reduced. Second, while most programmes that focus on redistribution of care within households focus on men behaving differently, there is also a need to take into account men from lower-income groups being time-poor and also perhaps not being present (due to migration). Thirdly, a neglected area in policy has been understanding the intergenerational transfer of care. There has been a focus on the negative impact on the female child in education and in other forms of service delivery; however, elderly women's role in the provision of care in policy literature remains under-recognised, and there is an assumption that women's ability to care is infinite. How can social policy better take into account the role played by different women within the family, particularly grandmothers?

Fourth, alternative models of the community provision of care, or provision by the state, or market actors that have worked effectively for women belonging to lower-income groups remains key to reduce the negative effects on women that arise from balancing these different tasks. These models need to be scaled up and it requires a political change in how we view social reproduction – the latter being an old argument in feminist discourse but which still remains to be widely accepted by critical players in the way that they design policies, implement programmes, and think about the economy.

# Annexes

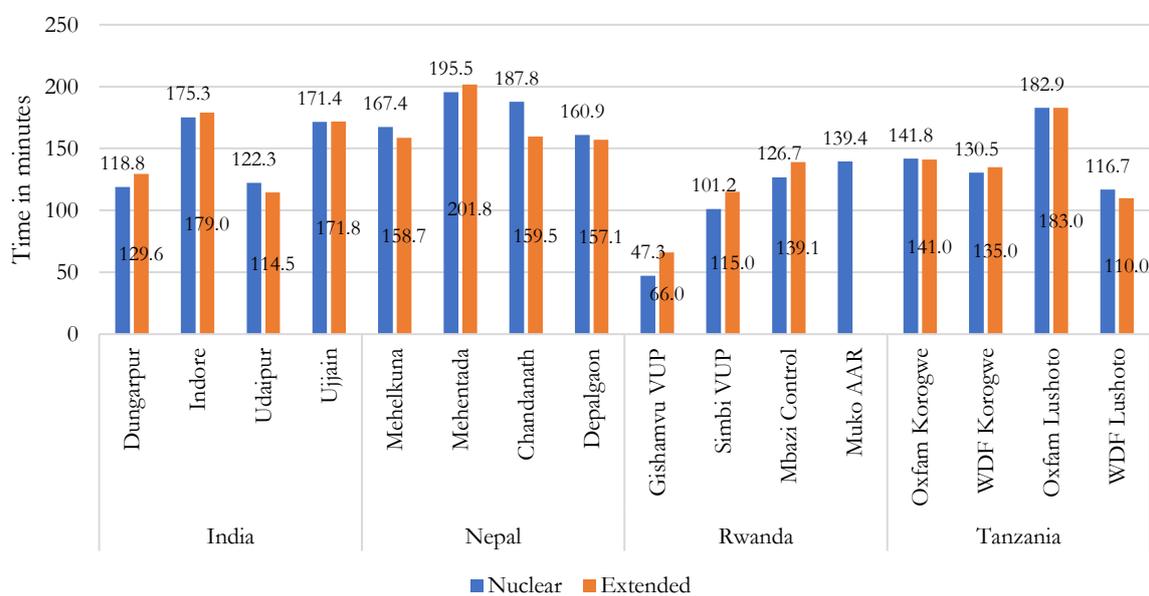
## Annexe A Stylised findings

**Figure A.1 Comparison of direct and indirect childcare time across urban and rural sites in India**



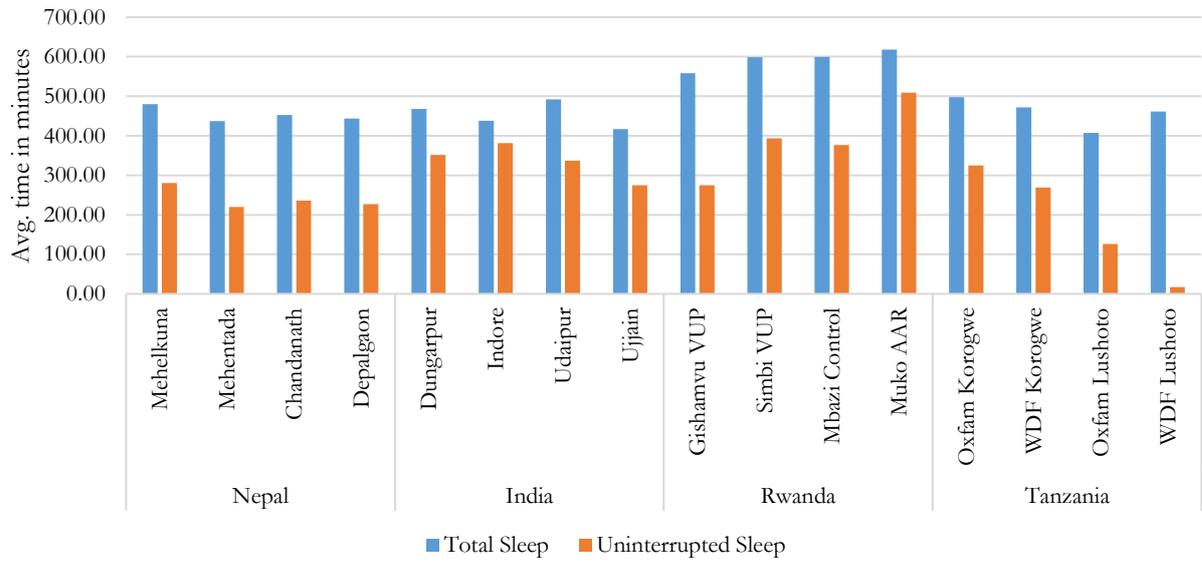
Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

**Figure A.2 Time doing household work by site and family structure**

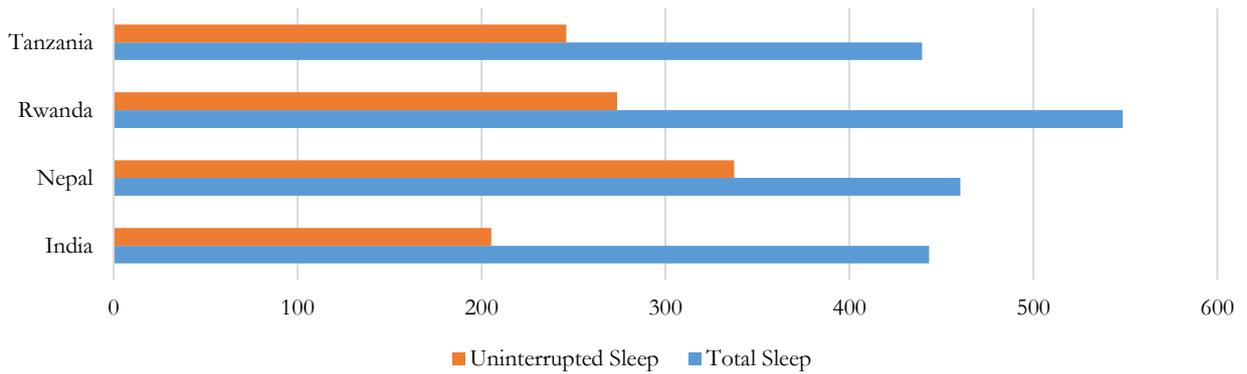


Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

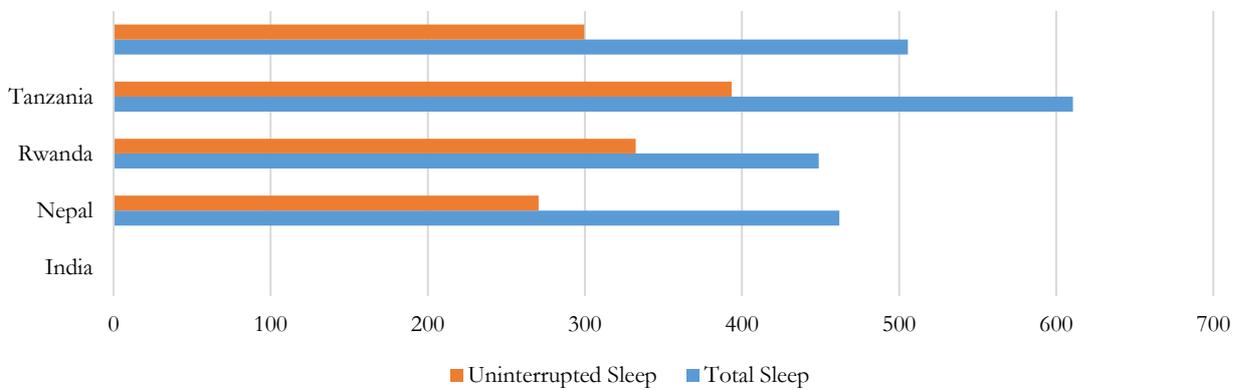
**Figure A.3 Total sleep and uninterrupted sleep by country, family structure, and site**



**Extended Families**



**Nuclear Families**



Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

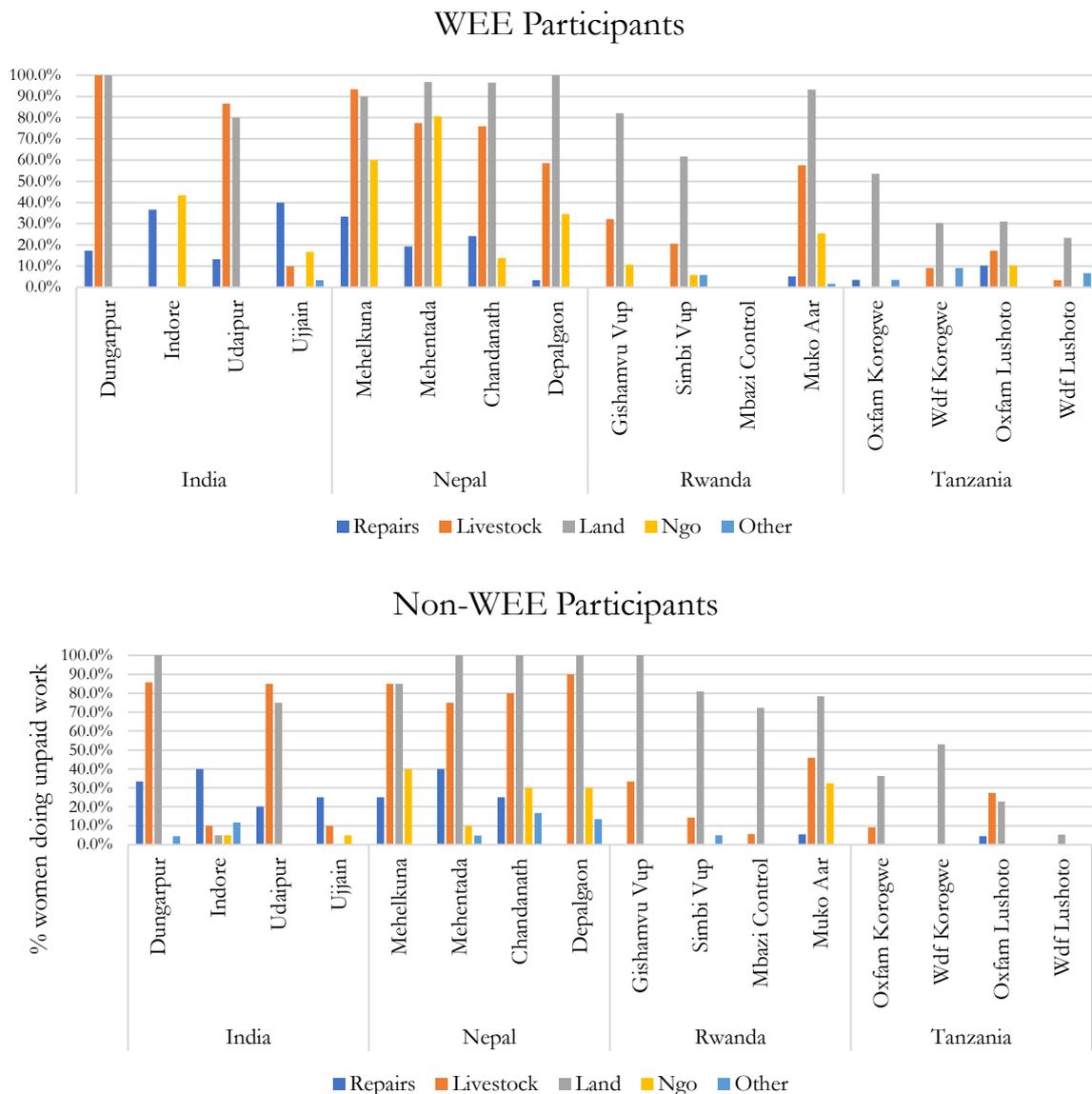
## Annexe B Total sleep and uninterrupted sleep – by country and sites

SITE	Total sleep						Uninterrupted sleep					
	All		Extended family		Nuclear family		All		Extended family		Nuclear family	
	N	Avg min	N	Avg min	N	Avg min	N	Avg min	N	Avg min	N	Avg min
<b>Nepal</b>	200	453.4	92	443.37	108	461.94	200	240.9	92	205.22	108	270.41
Mehelkuna	50	479.80	31	471.29	19	493.68	50	280.80	31	261.29	19	312.63
Mehentada	51	437.45	22	415.45	29	454.14	51	220.00	22	130.91	29	287.59
Chandanath	49	452.86	22	445.91	27	458.52	49	236.33	22	234.55	27	237.78
Depalgaon	50	443.80	17	425.29	33	453.33	50	226.80	17	194.12	33	243.64
<b>India</b>	200	453.9	89	460.22	111	448.83	200	336.3	89	337.38	111	332.27
Dungarpur	50	468.00	25	497.60	25	438.40	50	351.60	25	348.00	25	355.20
Indore	50	438.00	31	443.23	19	429.47	50	381.60	31	385.16	19	375.79
Udaipur	50	492.40	11	463.64	39	500.51	50	337.20	11	316.36	39	343.08
Ujjain	50	417.20	22	440.00	28	399.29	50	274.80	22	300.00	28	255.00
<b>Rwanda</b>	200	601.9	172	548.57	28	610.58	200	429	28	273.75	172	393.35
Gishamvu VUP	31	558.71	5	506.00	26	568.85	31	274.84	5	228.00	26	283.85
Simbi VUP	55	599.09	12	571.67	43	606.74	55	393.82	12	355.00	43	404.65
Mbazi Control	18	599.44			18	599.44	18	376.67			18	376.67
Muko AAR	96	617.92	11	542.73	85	627.65	96	508.75	11	512.73	85	508.24
<b>Tanzania</b>	200	459.4	33	439.40	167	463.35	200	184.8	33	246	167	168.10
Oxfam Korogwe	50	497.80	10	488.00	40	500.25	50	325.20	10	462.00	40	291.00
WDF Korogwe	50	471.80	10	444.00	40	478.75	50	268.80	10	348.00	40	249.00
Oxfam Lushoto	51	407.45	10	398.00	41	409.76	51	125.88	10	174.00	41	114.15
WDF Lushoto	49	461.63	3	400.00	46	465.65	49	17.14	3	0.00	46	18.26
<b>Total</b>	800	492.15	242	461.20	558	505.57	800	297.75	242	293.55	558	299.57

Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

## Annexe C Activities by WEE

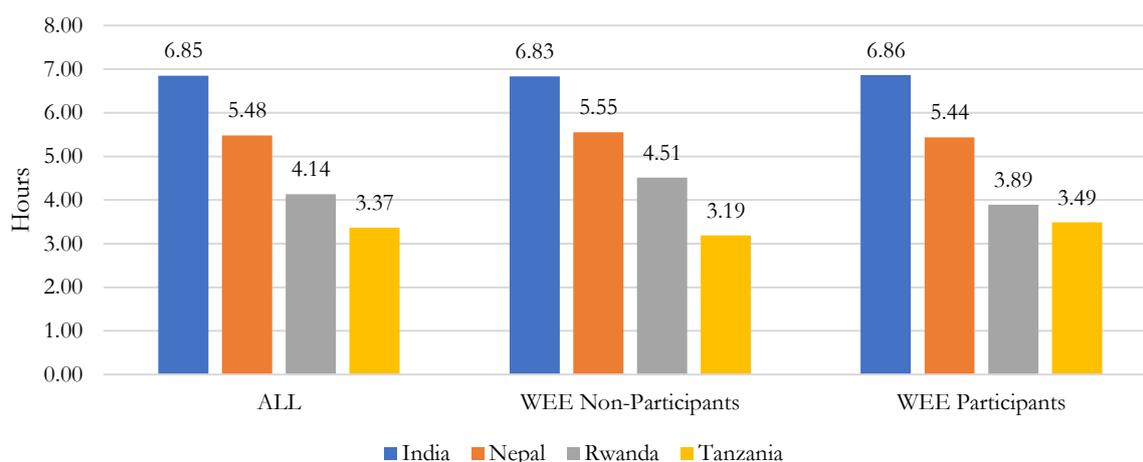
Figure C.1 Unpaid work type by WEE participation across countries



Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

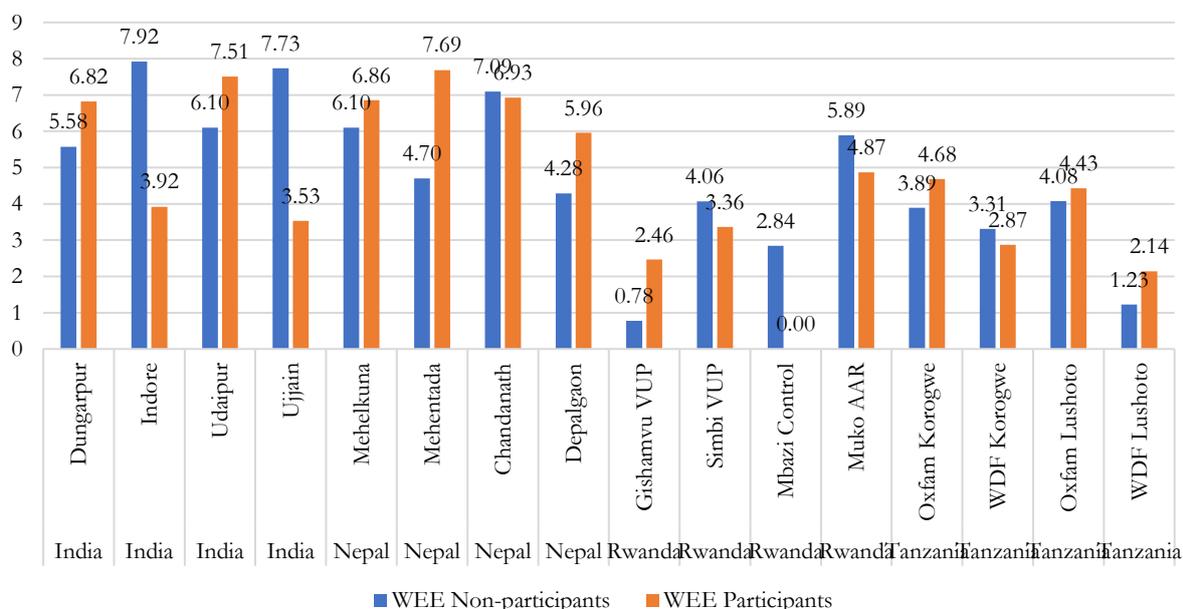
Figure C.1 illustrates the percentage of women engaged in each type of unpaid work across the countries and by WEE participation. The figures are compiled based on responses to the question: 'What types of unpaid work have you been engaged in during the last 12 months?': women could choose up to three activities.

**Figure C.2 Unpaid work hours and WEE participation across countries**



Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

**Figure C.3 Hours of unpaid work across sites and WEE participation**



Source: Authors' own based on calculations using IDS GrOW project data.

Figure C.3 reports the average number of hours by site and WEE participation, based on the responses to questions: ‘What were you doing yesterday at a given time?’ and ‘What else were you doing at the same time?’ Unpaid work categories include: house construction and repairs; caring for livestock; working on land/kitchen garden; NGO/community mobilisation/leader work; and any other unpaid work reported by women.

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