



## **CONCEPT NOTE**

### **MEETING OF THE SADC PF STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN ADVANCEMENT AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

**THEME:**     *Unpaid Care and Domestic Work: Why Should Parliament Care?*

**WEDNESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Gender equality cannot be talked about without talking about Unpaid Care and Domestic Work (UCDW), which is a critical, yet largely unseen dimension of human well-being that provides essential domestic services within households and community members.

The current conventional measure of most economies in the world ignores a large portion of work that affects all of us. Most of this work is done by women and girls for free. In 2018, 606 million women of working age declared themselves to be unavailable for employment due to unpaid care work, while only 41 million men were inactive for the same reason. Women, therefore, have less time to engage in paid work, network or participate in activities for societal change. This undermines their well-being, fosters financial dependence and limits options for decent work, to a point of restricting women to low status and part-time jobs in the informal sector.

Women and girls are responsible for 76.2 percent of UCDW. UCDW refers to all non-market, unpaid activities carried out in household, including both direct care of persons such as the sick children or elderly, and indirect care such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water or fuel. These tasks vary in physical effort and intensity depending on socio-economic status and/or marital status. Estimates based on time-use survey data in 64 countries, representing 66.9 percent of the world's working age population show that 16.4 billion hours are spent in unpaid care work every day. This is equivalent to 2 billion people working 8 hours per day with no remuneration (ILO, 2019). Unpaid care work has been identified as an obstacle to women's empowerment because women's disproportionate share has a direct impact on their ability to participate in the paid economy, leading to gender gaps in employment outcomes, wages and pensions.

Target 5.4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals sets the direction on how to address unpaid care work. The first step is to recognise the value of unpaid care work. This will require data on how women and men spend their time. However, only 83 countries have conducted time-use surveys, and only 24 percent of those were conducted after 2010 (UN Women, 2010). Time-use data for developing countries is even more limited due to significant costs and capacities required.

The second step is to reduce the physically demanding and hazardous tasks such as cooking with unsafe fuel sources. Clean cooking for all would save more than 100 billion hours per year of women collecting and hauling fuel wood, thereby freeing women's time to pursue economic opportunities (IEA, 2017). Entry points to reduce time spent on unpaid care work such as electric grinding mills, water taps and biogas plants have been identified.

The third step is to share the remaining hours more equally between all actors, including men, women, states and the private sector. The availability of affordable and quality care services is, therefore, key to promoting women's economic empowerment and ensure their participation in paid work.

As a result of little evidence being gathered about the extent or distribution of unpaid work in different contexts such as rural and urban, there has been limited understanding of the impact of UCDW on women and girls, causing to receive little consideration in public policy. Against this background, the Committee finds it necessary to outline the need for national Parliaments in the SADC region to recognise, value and validate Unpaid Care and Domestic Work (UCDW) by ensuring the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies in the region.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this undertaking are to:

- (a) deepen the Committee's understanding of the magnitude, dynamics and impact of unpaid care and domestic work and its contribution to gender inequality and low status of women in the SADC region and identify possible avenues;
- (b) make unpaid care and domestic work a dialogue issue in national Parliaments so that it is recognised and valued;
- (c) open up space for national policy dialogue on unpaid care and domestic work with the assistance of national Parliaments;
- (d) encourage SADC member States to conduct of time-use surveys for the development of programmes and policies which will promote the recognition, reduction and redistribution of UCDW; and
- (e) make recommendations on how parliaments' role can be enhanced on issues of UCDW.

### **3.0 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY TO THE MEETING**

The Committee will benefit from expert presentations, discussions and interactive dialogue by the following:

- (i) UN Women;
- (ii) Oxfam International; and
- (iii) Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).