

**Unpaid Care Women and Gender Responsive Budgeting
at Commune Level in Cambodia**

Research Team:

Consultant and Lead Researcher:

Sok Leang

GADC Researcher:

Eng Chandy, Prak Chan Phosda, Keat Botyphallyvong , Ngorn Seavmey

Local Researchers:

Prey Veng: Nuon Yeb, Oeun Samon, Prach Pak, Ms. Khon

Kampong Chhang: Mary, An Chan Khon, Srey Chantha, Srey Roth, Mol Chan Hoeun

Pursat: Tieng Phoung, Eng Nai, Yim Chem, Ek Sa Im, Sopha

August 2020

Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)

Content

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
II. CONTEXUAL BACKGROUND	7
III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY	8
Objectives of the Research	8
Research Methodology	9
III. FINDINGS	9
1. UNPAID CARE WORK/WOMEN	9
1.1. Routine work performed by women	10
1.2. Work performed by men	10
1.3. Sharing responsibility vs helping responsibility	11
1.4. Unpaid care work is not equally shared	11
1.5. Light work and heavy work	12
1.6. Household consumption activities vs income-generation activities	12
2. REASONS WHY WOMEN REMAINED STUCK WITH UNPAID CARE WORK	13
2.1. The women’s belief the unpaid care work belong to women, a natural attachment	13
2.2. Women justification of the supremacy of men	14
2.3. Perceived Values Given to unpaid care work	15
3. WOMEN’S PERCEPTION ON WHY UNPAID CARE WORK IS NOT VALUED	15
3.1. Different perception about being given value	15
3.2. Limited values/lack of recognition given to unpaid care work	16
4. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT HOW VALUE IS GIVEN	16
5. PERCEPTION ON HOW SITUATION OF UNPAID CARE WORK CAN BE IMPROVED	17
5.1. Wish for economic opportunity	17
5.2. Income generation: both outside of home and inside the home:	17
5.4. There is no one can help	18
5.5. Need for external support	18
5.6. There is a need for change of knowledge, attitude and behaviors:	18
6. WHAT WOMEN CAN DO TOGETHER	19
7. COMMUNE BUDGET AND BUDGET ALLOCATION	20
7.1. Knowledge about commune budget	20
7.2. Lacking awareness of gender specific benefit from commune budget	21
8. EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNE BUDGET ALLOCATION IN HEALTH SECTOR .	21

8.1. Commune’s health services	21
8.2. Perception on general health issues	22
9. GENDER RESPONSIVENESS OF BUDGET ALLOCATION	23
9.2. Lack of awareness of gender-responsiveness	24
10. NEEDS EXPRESSED BY WOMEN DOING UNPAID CARE WORK TO BE INCORPORATED INTO COMMUNE INVESTMENT PLAN (CIP)	25
11. WHAT WOMEN CAN DO TOGETHER	27
12. BARRIERS/CHALLENGES	29
IV. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION	30
A. Commune Budget Allocation and gender sensitive budgeting	30
B. Advocacy by the people towards gender responsive budgeting	31
C. Villagers awareness of the commune budget and continuous discussion	33
D. Shifting CSO/NGOs support to commune’s responsibility and accountability	34
E. Discussion and awareness-raising about sharing of household responsibility and value of unpaid care work	34
F. Implementing existing laws and policies that promoted gender equality	35
V. RECOMMENDATION	36

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Objectives:

After many years of experiences working on gender and women issues at policy and grass-root levels, GADC has been intrigued to take a closer look into deeper organism of the society, which is household level to have a closer understanding at women who have been largely ignored, therefore, made vulnerable of inclusion. Women who are doing unpaid care work are the subject of this research. The research is focusing on effectiveness of national budget allocation on health sector, gender responsive budgeting which is reflected into unpaid care work and improving the public service at sub-national level. The study has these two objectives (1) understanding unpaid care work situation in Cambodia; and (2) understanding effectiveness of national/commune budget allocation in relation to health care of unpaid care women and gender responsive budgeting which is reflected into unpaid care work and how budget allocation could improve the public service at sub-national level. Another implicit objective is for women who have been involved with GADC and other civil society organizations (CSO) in relation to women and gender issues to have a better understanding of the fellow women who are doing unpaid care work. It is; therefore, this research employs Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) Approach, which is to build capacity of the local researchers to be more empowered through their engagement in the subject itself.

Methodology

In its methodology, in employing FPAR approach, an external consultant works together with GADC officers and researchers, together with 14 female local researchers (5 from Kampong Chhnang, 5 from Pursat and 4 from Prey Veng). These three provinces where local researchers were from where the target areas of this research: Kampong Chhang, Pursat and Prey Veng provinces. Local researchers were trained for FPAR tool and were involved in the design of questionnaires, testing the questionnaires, collection of data and analyzing the data, as well as presenting their experiences in a national level consultation workshop. A total of 150 women were interviewed in the three provinces (50 in each province) and 30 FGD were conducted (10 in each province).

Findings

The research finds that women who are doing unpaid care work are in status of taking responsibility on most of the household chores—the work general perceived as women's roles of in the family— other work around the house which includes home gardening and poultry, as well as those in the farm. Men's share in unpaid care work was very little and most of which failed to perform physically-omnipresent tasks by women. Men were responsible on more physically demanding tasks but most of them are mostly a one-off action or interval task, like the once-a-year soil preparation. Men are not '*sharing responsibilities*' but they are '*helping*' whenever they want, not when they are available.

Women who are doing unpaid care work have come up with many reasons why they are in the places and positions where they are which include the living up to the culturally and socially ascribed status as housewife. They believe that unpaid care work belongs to them and men only do paid work. Moreover, women in this study justify the supremacy of men and

believe that unpaid care work is not for men. With this, women doing unpaid care work are trying to find values upon their unpaid care work.

Women doing unpaid care work perceived differently about how values are given to their work, which include values given by their partners/husband, family members, neighbors and community. However, they do perceive that little value is given when all their hard work was not credited by their partners/husband, that is, when they are called useless and dependent on the husband's income.

Women in this study, when discussed about how their unpaid care situation can be improved, they reported that because men's income is the single most important thing that makes men superior, they want to be on the same level of an income generator. At the same time, many women were not believing that the situation would be improved any time soon in light of what happens at the moment and in their whole life experiences so far. On the other hands, for them, there may be light at the end of the tunnel if there is external support, like those projects by CSO, that have provided them some hope so far; and the long-term vision of the need for a change of knowledge, attitude and practices of their partners and community.

The study explores the possibilities that women doing unpaid care work perceive that they can do together in order to change the situation they are in. It should start with women becoming on the same page about the issues that are facing and acknowledge that there are problems that need to be dealt with and being united and strategic and it would take a long-term commitment. However, there are challenges they women in the study admitted that it could be a long way to go before they have capacity to take the necessary actions.

The commune budget that have been around for almost 20 years is something that has rarely caught attention of women doing unpaid care work. While many of them are not familiar with the budget, those who are familiar no not yet have confidence that it would be something that is gender-responsive in general or meets the need of women doing unpaid care work in particular. There has been a lack of awareness of the commune budget and its utilization. While many things are happening in the commune, much is known about whether they are the result of the commune budget.

Women in the study were interested in discussing their experiences related to health issues and the services that used at the commune's health center, other state hospitals and private clinics. It general shows a lack of confidence in public services for their health treatment, while they have more confidence in the private ones thought admitting that it costs them more.

While learning about the available commune budget, women in the study have come up with a number of services that they think commune budget would be useful and beneficial for them. They include better health facilities, community pre-schools, child care center, old age centers, livelihood support, in-demand vocational and technical trainings, awareness-raising for men about the value and importance of unpaid care work, behavior change education and campaign for men and so on.

Women have expressed concerns if they are to be involved in action to improve their unpaid care status and the demand for gender responsiveness to need of women in general and

needs of women doing unpaid care work in particular. The concerns include the lack of time, lack of capacity, lack of support from the husband which could backfire, lack of acknowledge from local authority which causes fear of intimidation and reprisal.

Recommendations

- A. Regular Capacity Development for commune councilors about technical aspects of commune budget, budget allocation, budget line utilization and diversification in budget line items.
- B. Feminist approach, strategic advocacy skills and gender responsive budgeting are the skills needed for advocacy and demand for commune budget allocation for unpaid care women.
- C. Build knowledge and understanding of commune budget process and capacity to see the available items for gender sensitive budgeting in favor for unpaid care women, while at the same time build supportive environment for the women's solidarity and alliance with local authority.
- D. Local communities and authority should be made aware that CSO/NGO projects are not there for long. Therefore, they should take the opportunities to build local human resources and be ready to take ownership through the utilization of the available commune budget.
- E. Start with issue that is closest to the heart and the mind of everyone—raising awareness, sharing and learning about the very tasks as basic as housework. Start to discuss about the equal sharing of responsibility as it is important for the mainstreaming of the gender equality from start from personal, then to commune, then to the national, which is political. That is from personal to political.
- F. Implementing laws and policies that promote status of women to achieve gender equality and strictly enforcing any practices that move toward those gender equality objectives as well as punishing any acts that interfere or violate those laws and policies to avoid any reinforcement of negative stereotypes and gender-biased and discriminatory mindsets.

II. CONTEXUAL BACKGROUND

Cambodia constitution states that “Khmer citizens of either sex shall enjoy the right to choose any employment according their ability and to the needs of the society. Khmer citizens of either sex shall receive equal pay for equal work. The work by housewives in the home shall have the same value as what they can receive when working outside the home. Every Khmer citizen shall have the right to obtain social security and other social benefits as determined by law.”

Cambodia has various laws and policies from the highest to the lowest levels to deal with issues related to women and their inferiority, in order to achieve gender equality. In terms of domestic work, there is big gap between men and women sharing household responsibilities, where women are responsible for the biggest shares of the work. Women do more unpaid domestic and care work than men and have little spare time for productive economic activities¹. In addition to the social and cultural practices that put a lot of burden on women, most women who live in the rural area, who are engaged in agricultural work to earn some income, have been facing difficulties to work on those activities due to climate change, and climate change has been cited as one of the reason unpaid time burden increased for women, as a result of increased migration, increased borrowing to smooth consumption need². Moreover, climate change related natural disasters may accentuate women’s unpaid domestic work burden, associated with collecting drinking water and firewood³.

The burden that keep them at home and spare less time for economic activities, together with more burden entrenched by other factors, have made women become less and less economic independence and as a result increase more of their housework activities, while other members of males work outside of the home. Women’s high unpaid domestic and care work activities and low human capital constrain economic empowerment. Women and girls perform the majority of valuable unpaid domestic and care work in households and communities. This constrains their participation in paid work and in education and training⁴.

In Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey in 2004 and released by the National Institute of Statistics in 2007, it is estimated that women spend 3.5 hours per day on unpaid and care work⁵. This unpaid work reflects a strong imbalanced division of labour and contributes to a higher total number of working-hours burden than men⁶.

In Unpaid Care Work and Labor Market: An analysis of time use data based on the latest World Compilation of Time-use Surveys, it seeks the amount of time men and women share their housework. It found that in Northern European countries come close to it, with Sweden, Norway and Denmark above 40 per cent (respectively 44.7, 43.9 and 43.4 per cent), followed by Canada, Finland and Estonia (above 39 per cent); while at the other extreme Mali, Cambodia, Pakistan and India with fewer than 10 per cent (respectively 8.0, 8.7, 8.9 and 9.5 per cent)⁷.

In UN Women Annual Report on Asia and the Pacific 2017-2018, it found that in developed and developing countries alike, women still do the brunt of unpaid care and domestic

¹ Neary Ratanak 4, Policy Brief, Women’s Economic Empowerment, p8

² Neary Ratanak 4, Policy Brief, Women’s Economic Empowerment, p9

³ Neary Ratanak 4, Policy Brief, Women’s Economic Empowerment, p9

⁴ Neary Ratanak 4, Policy Brief, Women’s Economic Empowerment, p9

⁵ National Institute of Statistics (2007) Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004. Time Use in Cambodia. Phnom Penh.

⁶ Neary Ratanak 4, Policy Brief, Women’s Economic Empowerment, p9

⁷ The Unpaid Care Work and the Labour Market. An analysis of time use data based on the latest World Compilation of Time-use Surveys / Jacques Charmes; International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2019.

work. Many lack access to social protection and safety nets⁸. With all the inferior status socially, culturally and economically, Cambodia has ratified a number of human right instruments, particularly CEDAW in 1992, aiming to address all issues of discrimination against women which include the unfair responsibility of household share of work and therefore missing opportunities for economic empowerment. To address this issues, CEDAW states in its introduction that [...] cultural patterns which define the public realm as a man's world and the domestic sphere as women's domain are strongly targeted in all of the Convention's provisions that affirm the equal responsibilities of both sexes in family life and their equal rights with regard to education and employment⁹.

According to CEDAW, it defines the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field¹⁰", the fact that women do the most part of unpaid domestic work, resulting in inferior status and the deprivation of economic opportunities, clearly mean there is a discrimination against unpaid domestic work in Cambodia.

Moreover, Cambodia is committed to UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2016-2030. Among all the goals, Goal 5 is targeting gender equality. Particularly in SGD 5, Target 5.4, it targets domestic responsibility and states to 'value unpaid care and promote shared domestic responsibility.'

Internally, the Political Platform of the 5th Legislature of the National Assembly reiterated to "continue to strengthen the status and important role of women in society, promote ethics and values of Khmer women and eliminate all views that devalue the role of women in order to promote more extensive participation of women in building and protecting the homeland."

Cambodia has introduced the commune budget for the councils to work with citizens in their respective commune to consult and discuss their local issues, gender-based issues have been incorporated too. However, women unpaid domestic work has rarely seen been targeted in budgeted interventions.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the Research

The research is focusing on effectiveness of national budget allocation on health sector, gender responsive budgeting which is reflected into unpaid care work and improving the public service at sub-national level.

- Understanding unpaid care work situation in Cambodia
- Understanding effectiveness of national/commune budget allocation in relation to health care of unpaid care women and gender responsive budgeting which is reflected into unpaid care work and how budget allocation could improve the public service at sub-national level.

⁸ UN Women Annual Report Asia and the Pacific 2017-2018

⁹ UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

¹⁰ CEDAW, Article 1

Moreover, another objective in employing FPAR is to build capacity of the local researchers to be more empowered through their engagement in the subject itself.

Research Methodology

FPAR approach was employed.

14 local researchers were recruited and trained. Four from Prey Veng and five from each province of Kampong Chhnang and Pursat.

The local researchers were gender focal points for GADC for a range of years and have been active in women-related issues in their locality.

The 14 local researchers were provided a two-day training in Phnom Penh.

Before collecting the data, local researchers were joining in the formulation of the questionnaires. After the draft of the questionnaire, the local researchers were consulted and trained, and inputs were collected in order to finalize the questionnaires.

Local researchers were asked to do the testing of the questionnaires.

Before going the field collecting data, the team from GADC and consult met with local researchers in each province to go through the questionnaire again.

GADC team spent one session of actual interview with all local researchers in each province to support and to reflect before every parted and conducted their own interview.

The data was collected from 15 June to 25 June 2020 in Prey Veng, Kampong Chhnang, and Pursat provinces.

On 21-23 July, the 14 local researchers and GADC team conducted participatory analysis in Phnom Penh, as well as working on crafting some advocacy messages for future advocacy.

On 29 September 2020, a consultative workshop was conducted in Phnom Penh, participated by 80 people from ministries, CSO/NGOs, local authorities and the local researchers.

Data was collected through one-on-one interview and FGD.

A total of 150 women were interviewed using semi-structured interview questionnaire and for FGD, a question guide was prepared. The research is meant to have local women leading the data collection and data collected is the reflection of women who do unpaid care work only.

All women interviewed in the research are people have been doing their household work as main work and no one has a full time job outside of their house.

III. FINDINGS

1. UNPAID CARE WORK/WOMEN

1.1. Routine work performed by women

For women who do unpaid care work, their work could be categorized into care for people, care for home, care for children, care for home gardening, care for poultry/husbandry, care for farm, care for income-generation.

Care for people: kids, old and/or sick husband or parents, feeding children, taking care of grandchildren, bathing the children, going to market to buy foods.

Care for home: making bed, cooking, cleaning house, clothes washing, dishwashing, feeding children, chopping firewood, collecting dry clothes,

Care for home gardening: watering, uprooting grass, growing plants/vegetables,

Care for husbandry/poultry: cutting grass for cows, giving feeds to chicken, duck, tying cows to the post, tending cows back home, preparing mosquito nets for cows or chicken, collecting cow dung.

Care for farms (if they have): uprooting grass, fertilizing the rice fields, to replant rice.

Care of income-generation: collecting lotus stem, collecting bamboo shoots, collecting morning glory, selling some groceries, making monk's robes, making bamboo sieves. In Kampong Chhnang province, in some villagers, women who have to remain at home also make bamboo sieves earn some income. Some women work in the factories and their husband go to work too. Washing clothes for others. Motorbike cleaning service. Working on other people's farms.

But they reported the income is very minimal. They could sell at 5000 Riels¹¹ for one bamboo sieve, which they could made rough 2-3 per days (that include all other preparation work before actually making them). When this income generation is very minimal, it is also hard to claim anything compared to that amount that men make. This meager income has largely been considered as nothing by the husband.

For some women, their husband has migrated to work in the capital city and elsewhere, and returned home only once or twice a month or once every two months. They therefore reported that all work at home and in the field exclusively belong to them. Men do no care to do anything at all.

Added burden: Alcohol consumption has raised as one of the factors contributing to some issues in the family too. Women either have to suffer more care work when husband got drunk or suffer from violence by their drunk husband.

1.2. Work performed by men

From the account of women who tell about the work of the men in the house, men's work include: bringing cows back home, chopping firewood, ploughing, pumping water, cutting grass for cows, raising chicken, eating and then sleep, washing face and go out to work, selling labor, raking the field, planting corns, preparing to plant corns, pumping water to the

¹¹ USD 1 is equal to around 4,000 Riels, at the time the research was conducted.

field, collecting big ants for sale; setting fire to cows, spraying pesticides, ploughing, working in their farms, rilling wells, , welding metal parts.

Repeated nuance is that women do everything from the time they get up until the time they go to sleep, while men do a particular jobs and even when they arrive home after work late afternoon, most of the them would not care to share their homework responsibility.

However, most of the work traditionally considered men's job has almost been shared or taken up by women already, excluding labor intensive work, like ploughing the fields. Very few women have taken up this job. But some women's who have to insist their husband repeatedly to do this work, wished that they could do it, so that they do not have wait for men to kick-start the farming cycle. A majority of women in the research also spend their time to do the work in the farm that is considered one of men's daily job too.

Among the jobs that are said to be men job as mentioned in this part, all job are not daily basis. They are more of one-off activities. That is they are labor-intensive work which is done at an interval and not on daily basis.

Some women even report that violence happened to them as regularly activities they have to endure.

1.3. Sharing responsibility vs helping responsibility

For any unpaid work that is done by the husband is not considered 'shared' but considered 'helped' by the husband, which means the help will be optional for men. They could choose to do it or not, which is fine for them.

When men do household chores, the wives are said to be lucky that their husband 'help' to do the housework.

They are essential work that we have to do even if men do not help with that, but men have to go and work outside. If he could help, ok; but if he can't, it is also fine because they are women's work.

If men do some housework, it is just because they 'help' However, there are only particular tasks that men would do and not all the things. Men are selective in what they would 'help' in the household work.

However, some women believed that unpaid care work is not women's work alone. Some respondents believed that unpaid care work should be shared a least a bit, though not equally, by men. But men just don't do it.

Some women really wanted their husband to change this mindset and practice, but they do not seem to know what to do in order to change their partner's behaviors and this situation.

1.4. Unpaid care work is not equally shared

All women believe that unpaid care work is not equally shared by their husband and other family members in the family. For women who do not go out to work, they have to be responsible for everything, while those women who have to go out and work to make income

like their husband, they still have to do most of the unpaid care work when they are back home, while men considered done after coming from their paid work.

However, a few women reported that it is fair, not because they are shared equally, but it is because the husband does work that bring income home, while for women, no matter how much thing and how much time they spend on unpaid care work, it is still not much because it does not generate income, therefore, it is fair.

1.5. Light work and heavy work

There is a general agreement that women do 'light' work while men do 'heavy' work. Heavy work refers to work that needs much physical strength, like ploughing the fields, while house work is considered 'light' because they do not demand intensive labor. Heavy work includes working to earn income outside of home, like construction work or working in the factory.

The long hours by men that make income counts, while the long hours of women's unpaid work do not seem to count. Therefore, it was like women's working hours are not a lot. While women's housework is not physical labor intensive, it is enduring physical presence. The bottom line is what is important is what *bring money* to home.

Women clearly disputed the idea that their household chores are *light work*. While not labor-intensive, it is physically demanding and time-consuming in a way that they have to stick there all the time.

1.6. Household consumption activities vs income-generation activities

There are different perceptions about the activities women do in addition to their household chores. Some home gardening and collecting plants or vegetation randomly, fishing in their areas provide women some income as they could sell them and make money from them.

In addition, they also raise poultry, fish, cattle in the expectation that it will provide income when they reap benefit from the effort, when they are mature enough to sell.

However, there is a controversial perception about all those activities that are enough for household consumption as compared when they make income. For those that can be converted into physical money is considered income-generation. However, some women also think that those enough for household consumption is also income-generation because they do not need to spend money to buy those things. Though sometimes they do not get the income or profit from the sale, but when they consume them, they do not have to pay (like if they do not use their vegies from home gardening, they have to spend 5,000 or 50,000. So, it has to consider paid job. Some people do it larger scale make better profit. So, while they do not make income, they also do not have to spend.

A few would suggest that their home-gardening activities could only reduce the expense, it would not make any income. Some vegetables growing and poultry are just enough

for family consumption, so that is not making any income. So, it is not a paid job, while agreeing that raising cows and pigs have higher possibility to see income.

Other activities that could eventually make an income like taking care of chicken, pigs, cow, planting vegetation were considered by many women respondents are income-generation activities, while some women respondents do not call these as income-generation activities because their daily activities of care of those stuff do not give them money, while some of those activities do not really turn into money if deceases are contained by cow, chicken, ducks or disaster happening onto vegetable and lead to death which mean they cannot sell them.

Some were adamant that they are paid activities when they looked into the intention of the activities. When planting, they plant multi-vegies, so if one destroyed, still others can be benefited. If destroyed once, people still continue to plant, in hope that they will make income out of it.

Arguably, while most of the respondents considered taking care of children are unpaid care work, some elder women who take care of their grandchildren considered it is a paid job because money is sent to them on a regular basis by the parents of the grandchildren. This money was reported to be for the expenses for the children and some is left for the grandmother who take care of the kids.

It was discussed that if clearly stated about the amount for the mother, for example the income-making children put it clearly that \$50 for the grandmother and the rest for the kids, then it is considered 'paid'. If not stated that specifically, all will go to the kids, so can't say it is salary for take-takers. However, there is a feeling that it is still unpaid, because the grandparents would use all those money on the kids anyway, or sometimes they have to top up from their own money in addition to the amount given.

There was an interpretation that it is the income that the parents of the kids get paid from their work, because they can keep the kids with grandparents, while otherwise, they could not make any income at all.

2. REASONS WHY WOMEN REMAINED STUCK WITH UNPAID CARE WORK

2.1. The women's belief the unpaid care work belongs to women, a natural attachment

In the study, women respondents reported the reasons why women have to do all those unpaid care work because they are women and all those work belong to work and they question that if they do not do them, no one else will.

"We are women, so we have to do it."

"They are alone without husband, so they have to do them."

"We are women. If women do not do it, who will?"

Moreover, while women perceive that this work belong to them, they also believe that it does not belong to men and men's sphere of work is outside of home, where they will make money.

“Men are supposed to work outside to make actual money. Because husband must go out to work and make an income.”

“If men do housework, men will not make any income to support the family.”

Women expressed their attachment to the kids and express disbelief that the husband would be care enough or capable enough to provide good care for the kids. Then it would make sense for them to do household chores and give good care for the kids.

“Husbands do not allow us to work outside because no one would take care of the kids and poultry at home.”

“Pity on the kids: if they don't cook and wait for men to cook and the kids do not have anything to eat, how can we stand seeing them having nothing to eat, and if they don't have anything to eat, they will get hungry and sick. Then when they are sick, it is us again who would have to take care of the kids.”

Some women even called their unpaid work as their 'career' while men have their 'career' working outside and earn an income. Because it is already a career, women can't go out to work for an income.

Because women give birth to kids, so they are the ones who take care of the kids and other needs of kids and the family.

“These practices have been practiced for so many generations already. Everyone talks about this and everyone always does like this. So, it is normal that people do just that, so we just follow the tradition and because we do not have work outside of home either.”

2.2. Women justification of the supremacy of men

Because it is women's role and they are light, so men choose to do it anytime if they want to. Men are supposed to do 'heavy work' while women can easily deal with 'light work.' Women are not used to doing all those 'heavy work.'

Some respondents reported that the unpaid care work when done by women is right because they divided work equally between unpaid care work and outside work make an income. So because men make an income, women do the care work. That is equal share of roles and responsibility. If the roles are exchanged, women would not be able to make an income to support the family.

Some respondents blame themselves for being uneducated, therefore, incapable for income-generation work. They reported that they do not know how to make an income and cannot do anything else besides the unpaid job at home. So, they are fortunate that the husbands are willing to work outside to earn income.

Men think that all these unpaid works are not generating income, so men justify that that it is not their task, while the issue is that men justify to accept it too.

Some women even believed that no real men would come to clean the cooking pots or wash their wife's clothes. However, some women disagreed and reported that some men did know how to cook and do some cooking and some laundry.

Because men are the head of the family, so they don't have to do these works. They know that they already have women to take care of these work.

It is cheap for men to do and they will look bad in the eyes of the neighbors and would lose values as men.

2.3. Perceived Values Given to unpaid care work

Because of all of these, women demand their long day task is valued. However, women respondents reported that men never give them these values.

Some women respondents justified that men give value in the form that men would rather go out and work to support the family financially and would rather let their wife staying at home without a need to do the hard work that men are doing. So, this way, men are credited for sacrificing themselves for the sake of the family.

Some women reported that when husband makes income and they give the wives money, it means the husband pay for the housework; it means wives get income from that. Household chores receive an income when husband give money to them. These respondents reported that when husband gives her money from his work, it is the given value to the unpaid housework.

3. WOMEN'S PERCEPTION ON WHY UNPAID CARE WORK IS NOT VALUED

3.1. Different perception about being given value

There is a confusion between the value of the housework and value given by their husband and other people (praising). Many women reported they are given value in different forms. However, most of the values given are that they accept all housework without complaining.

“Some women reported that because people say they are good housewives because they could perform all the work well. So, these good words are the value given to us. I am satisfied with all those praising”

Some reported the that the value is given equally, as they reported that *“if the husband makes 100,000 Riels, that men the housework that the wife does at home has a value of 100,000 Riels too.”*

Some reported that they are given values because they do not help to go and work outside. Men are willing to make the income alone to support the family, *the way men give value to women is when men do the job, women do not need to help them.”*

Some respondents said that the value is given to them because when husband go out to work hard to earn income and they never complain about their wives doing work without income.

3.2. Limited values/lack of recognition given to unpaid care work

Some respondents reported that they work is not given value at all. Some husband complained that the wife does not contribute to making income into the family, but only waiting to ask for or take money from the husband. When women are late in performing household work, some women even got blamed for being useless and stupid and lazy.

It is not given value because it does not generate money. Even if women reported they are very exhausted daily and all the time, women reported that men just don't see it.

Women respondents reported that some men said that this is useless work. So, they looked down on the work and on the women. Some men resorted to violence because women just do useless work without earning income into the family, which leave financial burden on his shoulders alone.

Some women respondents reported that they even tried to talk about these hard works with their husband too but husbands still don't care. Because men do not do the work, so they don't understand about the value. Some men do it not because they want to share responsibility. They do it because they have no choices only.

Women respondents reported that men said that this work is not tiring because women only have to stay at home. Men said women do not do anything, they just stay at home all day every day. Men said that only taking care of the kids, women seem to pretend they are very tired. Men said that if taking care of the kids is too difficult, women should try to work outside to know how much harder it is.

Some women do not know why the work they do round the year is not given value. And they had never thought about the value until the day they are interviewed for this research.

4. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT HOW VALUE IS GIVEN

Most women respondents believe that men should share these responsibilities for them to understand and give value. If value is given verbally without actual participation in doing these works, the value given is not real or from their heart.

Some respondents reported that, '*women have to do housework in order for husband to give them value as a wife.*' This is well in line with stereotypical mindsets that put women in inferior position.

A lot of women reported that they want to have jobs because they are nowadays trapped in the household chores and would not imagine what should be happening in order to give them freedom to work.

In order for the husband to give value to unpaid care work, most respondents appeal to local authority and gender NGOs to educate and disseminate to men about the value of the

work. It needs husband to give value. But in the village, most of the husband don't give value to this work. So, it needs village and commune authority to educate and disseminate about the value of these unpaid care work, so that they will understand about its value.

Because the work does not bring any money. Want the village and commune chief to disseminate to all those husbands to understand about this unpaid care work and so they understand about its value. This mean: not given value because the husband does not yet understand about the value of the unpaid care work.

Women respondents want men and women to join the meeting about this unpaid care work topic, so that they will hear about women sharing their hardship.

5. PERCEPTION ON HOW SITUATION OF UNPAID CARE WORK CAN BE IMPROVED

5.1. Wish for economic opportunity

They think there are way that can make them on the same level of value as men by having an income-generation work. However, a second thought would immediately put them back while thinking about who will be taking care of the thing, they take care every day and every moment. While women believe that the tiring work is not recognized and given value properly, it even makes the tiring and physically-demanding work more exhausting without quality time to relax.

As the only most important contribution from men is the income, no matter how much how little, women seem to be desperate to try out working and making an income too, in the belief that it would give them the value they most needed: *“We want to be able to go out and work like men, so that we can participate in economic activities like men, which they believe will be given more value.”*

Women respondents believe that going to work outside not only can help them to make income but will put them on the same level as men, and they believe that it would help them have proper time to relax.

5.2. Income generation: both outside of home and inside the home:

In addition to the wish to go out and work to make an income, many women respondents reported that if home gardening, poultry and husbandry make a regular and good amount, they might be more empowered economically.

5.3. Lack of quality time for themselves

As they are tiring and physically demanding, many respondents believe that they should have more time to relax *properly* because *“every day since the time of getting up to the bedding time, we do not have proper time to relax. We really want to take some rest, but it is extremely hard and we almost do not know how.”*

When thinking about trying out for work, and to enable them to work outside of home, women respondents reported that other things need to happen in order to allow them to do as they wish, for example, people or center to take care of kids, old age parents or other household chores and so on.

There is also concern that no one will replace them if they choose to do something else. Women with children reported that they want to do something to make income, but the biggest barrier is when they have to take care of the kids

5.4. There is no one can help

Husband, children and other family members should share the work responsibility to help ease the burden from women's shoulders. But the issue is husband goes to work and come back late, so will not share anything; while school-age children go to school and would not care to share the work.

We want men to exchange our roles for a few days for them to understand how hard it is, and they will have a better understanding and respect.

Women who never go out and work want to have these opportunities to test whether they have ability to do the work or not.

Some respondents were so hopeless when they compared their endless unpaid work to the paid work by men, no matter how much they make, men are always in superior position because they bring back that thing *money*.

5.5. Need for external support

NGO/CSO support

With very little hope that the status will change anytime soon spontaneously, women in the study look elsewhere outside themselves to hope for the change. As some of them have tried to test the water by discussing with their husbands and under the environment where the community is in the not-know what to do, the women wish to turn their luck to the authority or CSO/NGOs to do things on their behalf.

Utilization of commune budget

Women reported the following should happen in order for them to have any opportunities to untie themselves from the unpaid care work. They also think of the utilization of commune budget to provide child day-care center, old-age care center, community pre-school, and other services and/or facilities to support them.

Some other barriers include weak health, having no ideas of what to do. And shy. Health problems: often get sick.

Moreover, in addition to relishing themselves from home premise, women also believe that serious support for their home-based activities could also very important and necessary to lift them up another level of value and equality

5.6. There is a need for change of knowledge, attitude, and behaviors:

This needs support both from CSO/NGOs and Commune budget

There is a need to change this to improve the situation and value. On top of the above-mentioned, mindset change is very important, and it will have long-lasting effect.

Wife wants to talk about this to the husband, but the issue is when wife talks about this, men are not going to listen. It could backfire as men would perceive that this is a look down on them as people who know nothing. It would also lead to violence some time.

So, it should be local authority or NGOs like GADC to initiate these activities to get men involved. Experiences so far, men rarely attend such meeting or training. Moreover, women respondents cautioned that many men would say that they would change their behaviors or that they now have understood the situation and promises to change, but lessons and experiences show that they only expressed those words in the meeting or gathering only. They are the same person again.

6. WHAT WOMEN CAN DO TOGETHER

From the discussion, though women respondents were not sure what they can do together in order to improve or change the situation.

they have identified the following.

Women who are doing the unpaid care work need to collectively understand each other's mind and need and collective need. This would enable them to be on the same page about their reality of being inferior being. It should be the first step if they are to do things together or to achieve a high end they wish for.

Women reported that they have learnt what men think of their unpaid care work and how men value their work. Most of the time, what men think, and value care work have been very discouraging and overwhelmingly low towards women. To this end, women respondents believe that this need to change. Some women who have enough courage to discuss about this situation with their husband have proved to be ineffective or even backfire, in ways that not only men do not agree to discuss, they even exert even more anger. Women need a collective and common strategies to change this.

Improving home-based economies have been raised as one of the actions that can improve their economic situation in light of the fact that sometimes when they have produced something out of their farm or home-gardens, the small quantity or lone selling gave little in return or sometimes they cannot even bring them through to the market. This idea have been thought and discussed long before, but it does not seem to materialize at all, because they may have only expressed their frustration among themselves, while having no means for getting what they thought of done. Women respondents want to work as collective as group for growing vegetable or crop group or agricultural cooperatives or saving groups, to increase the amount, diversity or market price.

Fears of getting started

Some women respondents were not sure of how they can get things done even if they have ideas for something. For example, they wanted to mobilize as a group to propose plan for their activities, but they could not figure out where to start while the first thing they had more confidence with is if it is joint by CSO/NGO. They believe that the presence and participation by CSO/NGO staff are much more effective than if they do it only among themselves.

Even when they want to propose ideas, inform the authority and request something to the authority, they have learnt that without participants of NGO/CSO, both their spouse and local authority do not seem to take them into serious consideration. Sometimes, any effort of gathering or discussion have been continuously and repeatedly questioned by the authority. This, instead of motivating to do more, it was seen as discouraging to move forwards.

Existing platforms are ineffective

Besides CSO/NGO, women respondents thought of wanting to appeal to the commune authority to listen to their demand. But so far, the experiences of joining with local authority or commune meetings were not encouraging enough as it was not meaningful participation. At the same, the local authority has their fixed agenda which is hard to have their demand incorporated.

With the discussion about the commune budget and budget allocation in the commune, which they may not understand well about where the budget is from and how it is allocated and what happened if it is not spent correctly, women respondents thought that the commune budget should be allocated to reduce the villagers' financial burden and increase family and women's productivity in the form of provision of technical capacity, inputs including fertilizers and seeds, as well as markets for those crops for a better price.

7. COMMUNE BUDGET AND BUDGET ALLOCATION

7.1. Knowledge about commune budget

A majority of women respondents reported that they have heard and known that the commune has the budget. But they do not know how much the budget is their commune has each year and how they are used, or what items are allocated by budget where they get it from. A general understanding is that the budget is used for construction of infrastructure including building and repairing roads, water canals and so on. A small number of respondents reported that they have never heard about such thing as commune budget.

Most of the women respondents reported that they have not been invited to attend the commune meetings. Women respondents reason that authority did not invite them to join the commune meeting because they see that unpaid care women are busy with their household work which would not spare them time to join the meeting or gathering for discussion. Local authority invites only those who are available, without having any specific target for specific purpose.

For the few women respondents who have attended commune meetings reported that they never raised anything related to their demand. They were only listening to the plan already proposed. When women know that there are women who are invited to join, they should discuss in advance about what to propose during the meeting. This way, no matter who are in the meeting, they can always raise about this issue.

During the discussion, after getting an understanding about the commune budget, some respondents questioned why the commune collected contribution money from the people when

they need to buy diesel to pump water into the canal and other similar activities and not using the budget from the commune.

7.2. Lacking awareness of gender specific benefit from commune budget

In discussing whether the commune budget, as there many of the respondents just talked about this for the first time, while some heard about the budget but never discussed about the budget. They find it difficult to see what items of tangible or intangible establishment benefit men or women more. Majority would report that all that exist in the commune benefit both men and women as all men and women can used all those existing in the commune.

As it is difficult for respondent to distinguish the benefits for men and women, most often, they thought that every service benefits men and women equally, except for pregnancy and birth delivery benefits which clearly benefit women.

Most of the respondents who have either participated in commune meeting in one way or another, or have never participated reported that they never follow the commune budget allocation and the utilization of the budget, as no one knows even in approximately number how much money their commune receive from the national budget. Here are some of the reasons women respondents raised:

- *'I am too busy with housework,'*
- *'I joined the meeting with commune too, but I never hear about the amount of budget. I think it is because they never talk about the amount;'*
- *'I was invited to join but failed to attend because of all those work at home, so I don't know.'*

Some respondents believe that commune authority has not done anything to relieve this burden yet. They only focus on physical infrastructure. *"Because if they had done something to relieve our burden, we should have felt it."*

8. EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNE BUDGET ALLOCATION IN HEALTH SECTOR

8.1. Commune's health services

Women respondents use health center for light illnesses while for serious ones, they will use the provincial hospital, or will be referred by the commune's health center to the higher levels of hospitals (in this case, the district's referral hospital or provincial hospital). However, there is a general perception and practice that whenever people do not feel right, they would immediately go to use the services of private clinics, when they could receive more consultation and given injection or more (perceived effective) medication.

There seems to be a lack of confidence among women respondents in this study about using public health care service. Poor communication, consultation and unfriendly customer services have been raised as common issues at many of the commune's health centers. It has much more to do with perception and confidence when comparing between private and public

hospital/clinic. The satisfaction of the private services is more favorable by the villagers, though they would spend much less or even free of charge at the health center.

Women respondents reported that they do not think there are enough medical experts to provide treatment while the facilities are not what they expect, as compared to private clinics. District and provincial hospitals are believed to have better equipment but women respondents reported that many people would choose to use private clinics as they are more convenient, less time-consuming, close proximity and better customer services, even though they have to pay more.

Many respondents agreed that even if they do not have enough money to pay at private clinics right at that time of need, many would still choose to borrow money from other or take small loan to pay for the service of private clinics, rather than going to a different state hospital, even knowing that it pays less. Only when private clinics say they could not treat the illness that they would have to go to public hospitals at the district or provincial levels.

Particularly for gynecology, usually, women respondents reported that there is no medicines in stock, so patients could only get consulted. Women respondents reported that when women wanted to get a check-up or examination or a treatment, they would have to go to the provincial hospitals or private clinics in the provincial town, because commune's health centers do not have enough equipment and expertise. As a result, it was easy for some women who choose to ignore their gynecological issues if they do not cause any troubles which need immediate attention.

For those who live close to the provincial towns, they find it more convenient but some women respondents who live quite far from provincial town would have to spend over nights in order to access the service.

8.2. Perception on general health issues

Most female respondents perceive that budget allocation is effective for treatment of coughing, cold, diarrhea, birth delivery, light illness and other general health issues, and more convenient for those with health equity card. But beyond those normal and common illnesses, it is not effective. Many respondents reported that even people with poor ID card, when they go to provincial or district referral hospitals, the care is not very good, and service was very slow.

Many women in the interview do not have health equity card and they did not know details about the reason why those who are in their neighborhood with desperate conditions do not receive the card, while those seem to be better off receive one.

Some respondents reported that when they go to health center, they do not really get better, so they would go to the private one, spending more money but more effective. At the health center, there is a lack of equipment to examine patients. They only have blood pressure toolkit and heart measurement only.

Most of the respondents reported that commune's health center cannot do much. So, most of the time they would go to the district hospital. If the health condition looks serious,

respondents would prefer to go to private clinics because health centers do not have the right medicine or patients do not seem to get recovered well compared with those treated by private clinics. Respondents perceived that private clinics are more effective, as they might have different medicines which could be right for illnesses.

There are different experiences reported by respondents in the research about favorable treatment. For example, *'If we know people working there, we tend to receive better medicines for the illness. If not, we will receive only normal medicines which are not effective. Good medicines are given to us with proper packaging.'*

Women respondents also lamented about their experiences at the provincial hospitals. They reported that *"even when we have health equity card, the medical staff do not pay much attention to us; they used harsh words. When we asked them, they don't want to answer our questions. When we talk a lot, they blamed us that we know too much already."*

Some women respondents reported about unfriendly services as they experienced when using the commune's health center, one respondent said that, *"I asked staff at that health center to write how and when to take medicine, but I got blamed for not remembering what they told me how and when to take them. I just asked him to write it for me, as I might not remember what he told me when I get back home. They told me to bring everyone in the village to come with me the next time I come to the health center, so that everyone of those from the village will help me to remember how to use the medicines."*

Some respondents further reported that *"instead of being greeted by the service providers, the patients and service users have to greet them first, otherwise, they would ignore us and were not willing to talk to us."*

9. GENDER RESPONSIVENESS OF BUDGET ALLOCATION

9.1. The budget is gender neutral, not gender responsive

The common response from women respondents is that whatever is put out there in the commune setting is to serve the need of general population. They are for the benefit of everyone men and women, boys and girls, young and old.

In general, the budget allocation is not gender sensitive and even more so to women who are doing unpaid care work. Some respondents reported that they made some requests for women-related activities too, but they never got any response. Sometimes, the response arrived in the form of emergency relief only, such as when there are natural disasters, but that do not happen on regular basis.

Some unpaid care women reported that regular office hours of health centers do not really suit their time availability because if they want particular women's health issue checked and consulted but medical staff are on duty during official working hours, unpaid care women who are waiting for their husband to come back home from work, so that they have time to go to health center, will not be able to receive the service. More importantly, if the problems do not really trouble them in an unbearable manner, they would put it off or completely ignore it. This could have longer implication from not treating the illness early on. Women respondents

reported that they always staff on duty most the time at health center, but the specialized medical staff are available only during official working hours.

There have not been any activities to help relieve burden of women doing unpaid care work yet. Often time, if any, the support is done on the basis of the family unit only. For example, if rice or seeds are provided, it is based on the family as a unit, not based on the fact that they are women of unpaid care work or respond to what are really needed by the women. This is also frequently practiced by NGO/CSOs too.

With this lack of gender responsiveness, many women with small children only received the same things as others without additional support to ensure that they could really benefit from the support and meet their actual needs. For example, if seeds or poultry or technical capacity is provided, women who have small kids still cannot afford time and labor to benefit from those support. They are enlisted as beneficiaries, but they do not see themselves as benefiting from the activities.

9.2. Lack of awareness of gender-responsiveness

When discussion about finding any specific mentioning that particularly for the need of unpaid care women, almost all women respondents could not think of anything of that category. The nuances are that *“the commune does not response to the need of the women because the commune never have any activities to support or help women. They only have activities to repair road or water canal.”*

Women respondents could not think of any particular projects that specifically done for to response to women’s need, other than those general activities that are claimed to not discriminate anyone in the process. More particularly, the responsiveness toward unpaid care women’s work is completely non-existent, not even a discussion.

People do not even hear about this issue being discussed yet, except being discussed here with the researchers of this study.

When asked if women respondents know why all those activities are not gender sensitive for women in general and for unpaid care women in particular, women respondents’ reported the following:

We do not know.

- *We never asked.*
- *We asked but never got any positive response.*
- *We never get invited to join the commune meetings.*
- *The commune does not know about women’s specific needs.*
- *The commune doesn’t understand what is gender-responsive budgeting.*
- *The commune doesn’t care about those issues, while only focusing on infrastructure.*

The only aspect that everyone almost agreed with is the benefits for pregnant women which all respondent perceived that it is well-deserved.

10. NEEDS EXPRESSED BY WOMEN DOING UNPAID CARE WORK TO BE INCORPORATED INTO COMMUNE INVESTMENT PLAN (CIP)

One respondent raised about the benefit of having a child care center to the fact that she has her mother to look after her children that, *“I have my mother to look after my kids so that I can freely go to work wherever I wanted and do all the things I want. Without her, I could not imagine how it would be like.”*

Women respondents who did not have such luxury agree that this would be really helpful for reducing their burden too.

Old care center: is even more important because some men if they help with some housework, they would take care the kids and some work, but it would be hard for them to take care of old people. Everyone should share the work in order to understand its value.

The interview itself has become an awareness-raising event where many women respondents got to realize about what they do not know and should have known long ago. The interview has proved to provide women respondents more questions about commune budget and its budget allocation rather than the answers.

A need for economic support/opportunity

A number of women prefer to have support to set up their own business-like selling thing, while other want to learn a particular skill like how to making food, to process food or to dry food.

Participation in house-based economic activities. Awareness and consciousness raising about the importance and benefits from home-based economic activities will help other members of the family to economically benefit more in addition to the wages earned by the husband. It not only increases the income but also the understanding of hard work and values of those activities.

A gender sensitive approach is even more important for women who believe that their physical presence is to be at home to take care of sick family members. They were adamant that any support for them is confined to home or around the house only. Any support for them to do things beyond the home compound is not welcome. In this sense, they need sufficient water and labor force. A need for capacity development to support economic activities is to provide the right vocational training or technical trainings that match market demands.

Also, some would prefer to look into their cultural and/or environmental resources to be exploited for more of community-based management of cultural/historical and/or environmental resources.

Seeing issues arising from migration for economic opportunities outside the community, women respondents also think that the commune budget should be allocated to create association or center that returned migrant women should benefit from, if they believe would help prevent them from migration again if they so wish.

A need to alternative care options to free up time for themselves

The creation of community preschool, childcare center and old age center would help people with their time and burden. Beyond just having the center, people in the commune should be recruited for employment, and certain related skills should be provided. Those who are recruited to work will do it with care and confidence as they are equipped with skill and salary.

Responsiveness to women's health specific needs

Well-equipped health center, with gynecology treatment as well as sufficient medical staff and flexible working hours, not just stand-by after working hours.

Changing attitude of others

Educate men and boys about the values of unpaid care work by means of training and reflective gatherings of family life and the role-play performance.

Commune meetings should start to discuss about women's need in general and unpaid care women in particular, to ensure that these issues are put on table for discussion as a way for awareness raising among the commune authority. Then, put into projects/activities which truly benefit women in general and unpaid care women in particular, bearing a result in mind that unpaid care women will have more time to work and enough time for health care.

Commune authority should set out in the agenda about educating villagers about the commune budget and budget allocation, so that people know how much money their commune is allocated from the government, and how budget is allocated for the commune so far.

There needs to find ways for commune authority to start talking seriously about women issues and about unpaid care work issues and the problems they face.

Encourage more participatory public consultation

Commune authority should encourage villagers to join force with them to develop the commune. The discussion should also focus on the creation of additional job/career that generate further income. For this, respondents from different geographical location come up with different ideas. For example, in the commune close to the provincial town, job/career could be created through the attraction of more manufacturing companies or factories in the urban areas. For those in the more rural areas, a more one village one product is more preferred, but it has to come with proper market demand. The commune authority should find markets for their produce and production because if villagers try to produce but without market, or good price, they will lose motivation.

Authority should make sure to invite unpaid care women to attend commune discussion and decision-making sessions on an equal and regular basis. Many of the respondents reported that they have not been invited to join or have never joined a commune meeting. Some village chiefs when seeing that we are busy in our work, they just decided not to invite unpaid care women. This practice need to change in a way that is more gender sensitive to ensure that gender perspective come into existence in all stage of the whole process for CDP and CIP. At the same time, the conducts by the authority should take a gender sensitive and gender responsive approaches to ensure that women participation bring about quality, not just quantity. They should incorporate women's unpaid work in discussions and in their CIP.

Support for basic household necessity

Some unpaid care women have thought about getting the budget from the commune allocated the most basic needs for some family, including the digging of well and the construction of toilets, because some unpaid care women could not afford the expense. Availability of water and hygienic and sanitary facility will benefit much more to women unpaid care women as they are the ones who need it for daily consumption and would be useful for you for their health.

Investment in long-term capacity development

Authority should utilize the budget to invest in long-term technical capacity development for the villagers in agricultural production and home-based gardening. For the time of this research, almost all these activities are conducted by CSO/NGOs. Many women respondents reported that though they were provided with trainings on technical skill and get introduced with modern ways for cultivation, many of the them still cannot follow the proper or modern ways of production or raising poultry or taking care of their crops, because after they learn about the techniques, they do not have capacity (money or other resources) to follow the good methods from the training, which means they could not get good result. While CSO/NGO projects are short-lived, the efforts should be picked up by the authority who are there with the villagers all the time. This will have high chance for sustainability as the commune will have a continuous budget for a long time to come.

Commune's health center should be equipped with modern equipment for various kinds of illnesses and sufficient number of expert doctors, especially for illness related to intestine, women related illnesses and sexual and reproductive health. Women in the study reported that wanted more consultation with the doctors. The health center should provide in-patient services too. As people are paying more money at private clinics, respondents in the studies reported that they would be more than willing to pay like those in private clinic too if health center has sufficient equipment and friendly staff

11. WHAT WOMEN CAN DO TOGETHER

Women respondents reported that they should start with raising awareness about the issues related to unpaid care work among women themselves and to take them to the next levels during the meetings or gatherings with local authority. They reported that they should leverage their presence in all events, not necessarily everyone being present. They believed that they should seek their agencies in the form of their representative; for example, if any women are to join the gathering with local authority, it is important that they meet and discussed beforehand and strike a strategic move. That is, anyone can be their voice.

Understanding the status quo of the pace of actions taken by the authority, women respondents believed that they should take proactive approach to all the things they wish to see happen, rather than waiting for them to happen.

Some women respondents have started to think that there is a need for women respondents to raise awareness about these issues faced by unpaid care women. Before this

study, almost all of the respondents have never heard other people talk about these issues faced by unpaid care women as what we are talking now. For them, it is a wake-up call, as they have understood the fundamental principles that they can start to work on.

Women should exploit the opportunities when at the present time most of the participants in the training and meetings conducted in the commune are mostly women. Therefore, women should take this great opportunity in having more number to convert into quality, because if it requires a vote, women already have it. So, the question now is how to turn this advantage into leverage.

Learning from experiences about taking part in the meetings organized by the commune, when most of the respondents failed to attend or had not been invited, women respondents reported that in the future when they are invited to commune meetings, they need to make sure that they can make it, so that they will learn about what the discussion is about and may raise some concerns related to their unpaid care work. However, this comes with concern that they may now have ideas of what to do, but they also have foreseen the challenges to put into action and reported about not knowing what to do exactly.

Raising voice and mobilizing force is another belief as well as a concern is that *“If everyone has the same voice and committed to do, we will do too. But if we cannot mobilize them, we can’t make it happen.”* Women respondents reported that unpaid care women should come together and be united to raise about all these women's issues. *“Women always want something, but we do not know how to do it and where to get it. And so, we never raise about all these in the meetings we had attended.”*

There is a need for an effective follow-up after each meeting with local authority to ensure that what were agreed upon is put into reality, not just another lip service because, often times, after the meeting with CC, it is done. Women respondents reported that they do not know what happen next or care to monitor or follow up.

Women respondents believe that they need to take actions to raise the issues to the commune authority and they should not wait for a meeting to be called. That is, they should find ways to propose a meeting with local authority to discuss what they want to be heard and be prepared for the well-thought proposed solutions and alternatives. This is the way they can set up their agenda, otherwise, it would only sever the authority agenda.

Domestic violence as an impactful issue to deal with

Women respondents also saw another issue that is so impactful on their personal well-being is the issue of domestic violence, which disproportionately victimize them. With all the low value given and the lack of financial means, these women respondents take it to their heart about putting this matter as one of their agenda items to advocate for budget allocation from the commune to ensure that this will be long-term initiative, rather than short-lived under CSO/NGO support. They are adamant that men the perpetrators need to be the first to educate about violence and gender equality and should be held responsible for their conduct, rather than always walking away freely.

But first of all, women respondents believe that they need to start to work together to identify the problems, the issues, the proposed solutions/alternations that are gender responsive before laying a plan to work with the commune for budget allocation as a CIP incorporation.

12. BARRIERS/CHALLENGES

Still there is perception that the fact that women are stuck in the unpaid care work is because they are weak and inferior and poorly-educated. These factors make women respondents believe that women are not brave enough to stand up and make proposals and raise questions about their status quo. Because of that, it is perceived to be difficult to build solidarity among women themselves.

Women respondents find themselves tied up with the family and household responsibility, coupling with lack of any official capacity, which would be challenging for them to find ways to move out of this trap and dusk themselves up and build solidary with other women trapped in the same situation. Some even justified that if they were capable of that, it should have already happened, but it hasn't.

When women respondents thought of wanting to initiate to do something for this cause, they recalled another barrier about the poor livelihood and lack of the capital if they are to pick up something that is different from the status quo. The poor livelihood which means it all now depends on their male partner to financially support them. It could have cut off this support which put a dent to any effort in the future. At the same time, it would require resources, especially financial resources to start the challenge the status quo, and this would prevent them from starting any activities. *"We had some discussions with neighbors on other issues. Some want to do something, but we do not have any ideas or capacity. For example, we want to do some business, but we do not have capital."* Worse still, it could backfire if the attempts are not going to be successful and it make the livelihood worse.

At the time being, it is even challenging to imagine gaining support from the social environment that have not yet given enough value to women's brevity to stand up and fight conventional wisdom and practices.

For them, it is hard to imagine that suddenly they are about to do something out of their comfort zone. Their husband may not agree with them to do so and would do everything to stop them from meeting or gathering.

Moreover, another struggle is reported to be the lack of support from local authority even though they have initiated something. They feared that this would mean it is just useless endeavor. Learning from what is happening in the society, fear includes the fact that they could be accused of inciting others to stand up against the local authority. Most respondent reported that they dare not raise about their demands at the commune, for fear that they would be accused of knowing too much.

While a number of women seem to be ready to join force for the initiatives, concerns were raised that there is a lack of initiative for the big group to partake. Moreover, those who reported they are ready are not ready to take the lead for the initiation. *"I am ready all the time*

to be involved, but if you ask me to lead or to think about this, I can't. But I will definitely join the cause, and I can represent to speak on the group's behalf." Moreover, there is a concern that even if they find something to start with, they have thought forward that it would also be difficult to keep it rolling forward for a long time, as was reported that *"It is very hard to motivate each other and to keep each other motivated for a sustained period of time."*

Many women respondents reported that they have been put in the place where they have to accept whatever is put on them. The lack of education and quality time for discussion and limited knowledge on particular topics put them at very disadvantaged situation. When they need something, they just hoped that it happened. When they are courageous enough to take their problems to the authority, they do not always receive what they thought would happen. For example, when they bring the matter about domestic violence they have bear close to their heart for so long to let the authority know, most of the time they would return home with nothing sort of solution and therefore continue to put up with the same situation for a sustained period of time.

Another example was when they do not have water. It takes so long for the authority to come up with any initiative to work on the pond, be it to rehabilitate or to store water. If the authority doesn't have this activity on their agenda, villagers will just have to suffer. Now knowing that the commune has its own budget, many women questioned why they would need to contribute the money when the authority want to have anything done in the commune. Some women know that it is people's contribution to build ownership, but the question is why a contribution is needed from the very poor.

Lack of examples of sustainability: most of the women respondents had been involved in saving groups in the past. While they were progressing well under project activities of CSO/NGOs, they had gradually died out after the conclusion of those project activities. One of the lessons was that people were active when outsiders were in support (in this case CSO/NGOs) but were less and less active when they were on their own. With support, all, at least most, of the policies and guidelines could be implemented with some mistakes that people learnt along the way. However, once there was no such support, things started to go disarrayed and they did not seem to have any more control until they died out. Some of the women with these experiences seem to be disappointed and hopeless but some are still hopeful that they would be able to learn the ways to move toward sustainability.

IV. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

A. Commune Budget Allocation and gender sensitive budgeting

It has been reported commune budget allocation for various items seem to be formulated with very little discussion and meaningful discussion with the villagers who are the real beneficiaries of the budget. This study finds all women respondents did not know how much budget their commune has and a majority of the respondents had not attended commune budget meetings while those who had experiences attending the meetings rarely had any opportunity to meaningfully discussed the budget.

While a majority of the villagers do not know precisely or approximately the amount of commune budget, it is an indication that villagers are not well-informed about this and it implies a lack of transparency and accountability in using the budget. When this goes on for many years, everyone will become relaxed and authority will not seek to be accountable.

The political nature of the commune council election was reported to make technical budget allocation secondary compared to the determination for election success. The turnover of commune councilors from one mandate to another has taken aspects of budget allocation for granted, reportedly focusing on the same priorities centering on physical infrastructure rather than social structure and actual livelihood improvement of the villagers. It was also reported that because of this turnover, new commune councilors may not have received regular training or refreshing sessions on the technical aspects of the budget issues (budget allocation methodology and/or budget formulation, though they have to do them annually. Therefore, if villages found a new priority in women's issue need budget to address, it is not easy for the commune councilors to incorporate it properly and technically sound. Commune budget has to go through to the budget integration process at the district level of authority. That means, even if the proposed line items on the budget are axed during budget integration process at the district level, the commune councilors would not be able to defend or justify why they are needed. It is reported that, eventually, commune councilors would inform the villagers that they have tried their best to set the items as priority, but they were not convincing enough to get them incorporated. In effect, when it happened for a few times, it would be normalized that it is up to the budget integration committee to make decision at the district level when it is actually a commune budget, which should serve the purpose proposed by each commune.

Moreover, in the commune budget allocation, there are different budget categories and line items that go to different sectors, including agricultural and gender issue. The gender issue that is central to the commune is domestic violence, under specific committee in charge of women and children affairs (CCWC) to deal with issue of gender, particularly domestic violence. However, in the gender issue section, it is reported that it is hard for commune councilors to initiate other activities beside allocated for the persons in charge of women and children's affairs.

In this sense, it is necessary for the commune councilors to be knowledgeable and capable of utilizing this budget line items. If convincing the budget integration committee to strike on specific items is beyond their capacity, it needs capacity to utilize around the gender issue budget line. That is, they can propose for more budget for that line items and internally within individual commune, it needs capacity to allocate the budget into micro items under gender budget, which would serve whatever gender-responsive purposes, which is more conveniently chop in for unpaid care women.

A budget allocation no matter how big or small to work on this issue of unpaid care women would play important role to get the local authority to start to discuss about this issue and to raise awareness among themselves and the villagers.

B. Advocacy by the people towards gender responsive budgeting

As unpaid care work is considered women's traditional roles and it still places important emphasis on women to take care of them, it may be difficult to see that it will change any time soon without proactive interventions from all stakeholders involved to raise awareness, to support, to advocate at the local levels and various national policy levels.

Women want their husband to give them value for the unpaid care work they have been performing their whole life to the point that it is taken for granted already. Individual women's effort may end up in vain because even if the individual women try hard, they may not be up to the level of gender equality. Moreover, pressure from peers and social environment would be too much for the potential men who want to change to challenge the status quo. It may also backfire on the individual women who have collected the effort to challenge the status quo too. Furthermore, the effort by individual women in isolation would not serve the objective of feminist participatory approach, in which women need to be supported and work in solidarity and to look at changes from a systematic patriarchal structure.

To this end, a gender transformative approach is needed. This approach needs a more holistic strategy which needs to tackle the issues from different dimensions that inform patriarchal structure. Efforts to change mindsets for individuals and social groups through knowledge buildup, change in attitude, and transformation in practice.

It is advisable that a proactive approach and persistent interventions, as well as support in solidarity of actions and mental wellbeing are well-taken care of to prevent disappointment and exhaustion and to promote solidarity, continuity and sustainability.

As commune budget is available and could be subject to feminist advocacy, the cause needs to bear in mind that resources are always available and within reach. Therefore, knowledge in gender responsive budgeting is imperative that members of the cause and stakeholders are awareness, and this cannot go out of sight.

Further, women respondents know that they need a lot of support from commune budget and from elsewhere. They have learnt that so far, the support that they have received from both the authority and CSO/NGOs have not necessarily been what they really need and more importantly they have rarely been sustainable. They have first-hand experiences that some feel-good and well-intended projects would be concluded sooner or later and eventually it is the commune authority and the commune budget that will remain there without an expiry date.

They have learnt too that when CSO/NGOs were conducting activities, the respective local authority seem to be more active with the activities, but when the CSO/NGO activities ceased to exit, a lot of things have returned the previous situations. Women respondents as well as other women have also learnt that when they were involved with CSO/NGO project, they were more welcome and respected by the authority, but the same cannot be said after the conclusion of the project.

This means, women in their respective communities should build on the credit they earned when they were involved with CSO/NGO projects or build credits on their own term with women groups to ensure that it does not fade away when outside support comes to an end.

C. Villagers awareness of the commune budget and continuous discussion about the budget, so that they will see the many items in the budget format that they can draw attention from commune councilors

It is very obvious that almost all the respondents have very little knowledge over the commune budget, including sources, budgeting, allocation, process, integration and prioritization, and the like. The lack of this specific knowledge would put potential advocates at a disadvantaged level in their effort, not only for budgeting in general but even more difficult toward gender-responsive budgeting, thus, making it hard to go further details into unpaid care work, which already faced with intersectional discrimination and patriarchal mindset.

The existing situation of knowledge and understanding of this budgeting process will keep potential women advocates from being effective resources towards this cause. They will be reluctant; they will lack confidence; they will doubt themselves endlessly. We simply cannot advocate for the commune budget in our favor without having concrete knowledge and an understanding of what it is and how it works.

It is imperative that this commune budget related topics be discussed and strategically advocated for, through means of having a comprehensive understanding of the amount, the source, the process, the integration and prioritization. On top of that, it would not be effective either if the potential advocates could not share this knowledge and understanding to the local authority who they will build alliance with. Moreover, women advocates should be prepared for any loopholes of potential disagreement at local level and at budget integration level.

Two scenarios can be taken into consideration. First, utilize to the maximum of the given budget lines and direct them towards gender-responsive budgeting for unpaid care women under women or gender related sections at the commune level. When this is done at the commune level, the local authority would not need to fight hard during the budget integration workshop at the district level. The second scenario is to be prepared to justify the items that have been proposed and were challenged at the budget integration workshop. If traditional practice of having to cut off or reduce the proposed amount, the advocates and local authority has within their own autonomy should be knowledgeable to adapt the given amount in the same category to support activities internally proposed for women-related issues of unpaid care work.

To be agent of change, the women's groups need to be able to support their most important alliance in the commune authority and to partner them in ways the commune authority see themselves credited and as partners.

The most important thing is the bear in mind that all things cannot be taken for granted and be well-prepared all the time. Challenging conventional practices in budget matter as well as in social and cultural mindsets in a patriarchal society is never easy. It will be exhausting. It will be frustrating. It will be disappointing. That is why, a feminist transformative approach requires solidarity with continuous and ongoing social and mental support from the alliances. Though with the goal in mind, this needs to be seen as a process.

D. Shifting CSO/NGOs support to commune's responsibility and accountability in livelihood, job creation via gender responsive budgeting

While many factors contribute to current women's status as unpaid care women, supporting unpaid care work take the forms of many different things in order to be consciously on the journey to achieving gender equality, which creates and sustain equal rights, status, opportunity, responsibility, benefits and outcomes.

In addition to merely focusing on unpaid care work, other aspects need to be channeled under the commune budgeting to ensure sustainable prosperity. So far, there have been NGO activities that are considered good and the beneficiaries as well as the local authority wanted to continue or reminisced about the good old time under those support. However, they have been fading away for such activities once the CSO/NGO project phased out. It is actual fact that CSO/NGO projects will not be there forever or a long time. These lessons from their respective communities and elsewhere should be seriously learnt.

One of the strategies to ensure sustainability and long-term impact is when the local community and authority take ownership over those issues, without having to completely rely on outsiders. This means beneficiaries and authority needs to be prepared and take over before they are phased out. In this sense, once the activities are considered useful, they should immediately build human resources and look into the current budget line where it fits and learn how to resource those activities as early as possible.

Without having to wait for the authority to take action, the women's groups who are benefiting from those CSO/NGOs projects and/or activities should initiate the ideas in partnership with local authority, applying methods and scenarios as mentioned in the first three discussion points. This kind of proactivity will be important resources for the commune to move forward in a prosperous manner under duty of care with high level of ownership and accountability.

Activities should include various aspect of lives including economic opportunities, job creation, agricultural assistance, social and public services, mindset-change education, awareness raising, prevention and protection of domestic violence and so on.

E. On-going and continuous discussion and awareness-raising about sharing of household responsibility and value of unpaid care work

As women respondents who are trapped in the household responsibility feel very lowly about their status, we could see that many women were not satisfied with their situation but because they could not find a way out, it becomes normal to see they justified their inferior status in many ways to accept their current situation, with very little hope that things could change any time soon. Not only they justify for themselves to be in inferior positions, but they also have to justify for men who are dominating them on many aspects of their life and of course their body.

Women respondents grow up doing the household work and see the importance of the work. Men grow up doing their so-called masculine work and see their contribution as very important but see their partner's contribution to the family as unimportant and therefore would not give any value. On the other hand, women grow up depending on the financial income from the man and see the man's job as a more important and will therefore compromise on any wrong doing toward themselves.

This is a socialization process that teaches people to accept their status both as inferiority and superiority. It forms mindset. It is a life-long learning. So, in order to change this mindset, socialization process need to unlearn the current status quo and to reshape the mindset to move toward feminist objectives.

In achieving that long-term goals, many short-term and medium-term ones need to start as soon as possible. Among them, women groups should share the findings of this research among themselves or in a simplified way, pick up key points or important information and share and discuss among themselves, to help each other understand their actual situation and the perceived values given to them.

At the same time, sharing these findings to the local authority and related stakeholders and lobby them to find ways to share this research findings as well. Moreover, work with them as partners into the commune budget on how at least small chunks of budget can be utilized into the direction of feminist objectives via small, interactive, inviting and fun activities for sharing and learning about household responsibility.

F. Implementing existing laws and policies that promoted gender equality and punish or deter any acts that prevent progress toward gender quality

The Constitution of Cambodia states that *“The work by housewives in the home shall have the same value as what they can receive when working outside the home. Every Khmer citizen shall have the right to obtain social security and other social benefits as determined by law.”*

If the supreme law of the country provides that substance, it should be made realized in actual life of the housewives in general and those who are doing all the unpaid care work. The same value should also mean the same outcome.

It is the obligation of the state to *respect, protect and fulfil* those rights of the citizens are provided in the laws. In CEDAW, it provides that employing special temporary measures may be faster ways to promote substantive gender equality. While negative, biased and discriminatory mindset is still widespread, the state needs to take action to eliminate all these as well.

If the constitution states that *‘the work by housewives in the home shall have the same value as what they can receive when working outside the home,’* when people work in paid job are entitled various benefits include social security insurances, the state should study the provision seriously and find ways to make sure that women who do unpaid care work receive those benefit too.

V. RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations are based on the previous section on conclusion and discussion.

- G. Regular Capacity Development for commune councilors about technical aspects of commune budget, budget allocation, budget line utilization and diversification in budget line items.
- H. Feminist approach, strategic advocacy skills and gender responsive budgeting are the skills needed for advocacy and demand for commune budget allocation for unpaid care women.
- I. Build knowledge and understanding of commune budget process and capacity to see the available items for gender sensitive budgeting in favor for unpaid care women, while at the same time build supportive environment for the women's solidarity and alliance with local authority.
- J. Local communities and authority should be made aware that CSO/NGO projects are not there for long. Therefore, they should take the opportunities to build local human resources and be ready to take ownership through the utilization of the available commune budget.
- K. Start with issue that is closest to the heart and the mind of everyone—raising awareness, sharing and learning about the very tasks as basic as housework. Start to discuss about the equal sharing of responsibility as it is important for the mainstreaming of the gender equality from start from personal, then to commune, then to the national, which is political. That is from personal to political.
- L. Implementing laws and policies that promote status of women to achieve gender equality and strictly enforcing any practices that move toward those gender equality objectives as well as punishing any acts that interfere or violate those laws and policies to avoid any reinforcement of negative stereotypes and gender-biased and discriminatory mindsets.