

PROJECT IDEA ON UNPAID WORK

The idea of studying unpaid work* notably of women emanates from the concept of equality between women and men in the world of work within the human rights framework of the right to employment and sustainable development. The project in its first phase will be limited to reviewing how European countries are measuring and valuing unpaid work in national statistics, which was one of the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action; to improve data, making visible the full contribution of women and men in the economy, in line with the Commission on the Status of Women agreed conclusions in its Forty-third session on 1-12 March 1999, Agenda item 3 (c) Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern to, *inter alia*,

“o) Give visibility to the relationship between remunerated and unremunerated work and its importance to gender analysis, and promote greater understanding among relevant ministries and organizations by developing methods for assessing its value in quantitative terms in order to develop appropriate policies in this respect;

(p) Recognize and acknowledge that unremunerated work by women in, for example agriculture, food production, natural resources management, caring for dependants and household and voluntary work, is a considerable contribution to society. Develop and improve mechanisms, for example time-use studies, to measure in quantitative terms unremunerated work in order to:

- Make visible the unequal distribution between women and men of remunerated and unremunerated work in order to promote changes;
- Assess the real value of unremunerated work and accurately reflect it in satellite or other official accounts that are separate from but consistent with core national accounts;”

*The definition of *work* here refers to the participation of individuals in productive activities for which they either receive remuneration (in cash or in kind) for their participation or are unpaid because they are contributors to a family business enterprise. It also includes subsistence production of goods for their own households and non-economic activities such as domestic work, family and elder care, construction or repair of owner-occupied buildings, and volunteer work for which individuals receive no remuneration. (The World’s Women 2000: Trends and Statistics. United Nations, NY 2000).

The above definition is distinguished from the narrower concepts related to the “*labour force*” which comprise all persons who are “economically active” furnishing or available to furnishing all production oriented to the market, some types of non-market production and processing of primary products for own consumption, own-account construction and other production of fixed assets for own use.

. According to the above UN study, measurement of work in developed countries have concentrated efforts on time-use surveys that help determine the relative shares of women’s and men’s time in economic activities and household work. In developing countries, where

labour statistics are still inadequate to cover the various forms of work, efforts are needed to focus on the improvement of data collection in the informal sector and subsistence production activities as well as in the development of time-use surveys