



Unpaid and unrecognised

How business can realise the benefits
of tackling women's invisible labour

May 2021



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Lindsey Block

Head of Partnerships & Capacity Building, Ethical Trade, Primark

Pins Brown

Head of Responsible Procurement, Natura &Co

Felicity Butler

Producer Partnerships Programmes Manager, Divine Chocolate UK

Sandra Fontano

Senior Global Sustainability Manager – Gender Equality, Unilever

Catherine Hoskyns

Professor Emerita, Coventry University

Nick Hoskyns

Managing Director, Ético: The Ethical Trading Company

Lee Mann

Head of Community Fair Trade, The Body Shop

Winfridah Nyakwara

Integrated Social Sustainability Manager, Africa, Unilever

Erinch Sahan

Chief Executive, World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO)



Foreword

Together, The Body Shop and Primark have worked with the Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) Programme to improve understanding of women's invisible labour and how it impacts both gender equality and the productivity, resilience and success of our supply chains.

At Primark we found that some women working in its suppliers' factories in Bangladesh are essentially working a '[double day](#)' when unpaid labour related to household and family care duties are taken into account. At The Body Shop we have learned how to better assess and address invisible labour via production management and costings. We will continue pushing to improve our companies' approaches to invisible labour, but systemic change is not possible on our own, company by company. Collaboration within and across our industries will accelerate change for women and men all over the world. We urge our fellow business leaders to take action on invisible labour by using this guide to start conversations on this important topic and bring the issue into the spotlight. Together, we can create a gender equal world.

Pins Brown

Head of Responsible Procurement

Natura &Co (Natura, Avon, The Body Shop, Aesop)

Katharine Stewart

Group Corporate Responsibility Director

Associated British Foods Plc (including Primark)

Purpose of this guide

This guide was researched and developed by the Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) programme. Over the last four years of the programme, multiple examples of the unremunerated and unrecognised labour that women undertake as part of their productive work have emerged through research and direct activities within supply chains.

Women's unpaid work – both direct and indirect - is keeping societies functioning and global supply chains and economies growing. Women's direct unpaid work are those activities which directly contribute to production within supply chains, and presents risks to businesses, such as modern slavery. Indirect unpaid work, such as domestic or care work, supports workers in productive supply chains all over the world by keeping them and their communities safe, healthy and well-fed.

The excessive amount and unequal distribution of this labour is a major barrier to women's full and equal participation in the workforce that has been ignored for too long. Covid-19 has further exacerbated the situation, with more women than ever having to juggle paid work and unpaid care responsibilities.

Companies are beginning to consider how to address unpaid, invisible labour and unrecognised care. On unpaid, invisible labour, the UK's Modern Slavery Act and the increased focus on human rights due diligence are forcing more companies to identify exactly who has produced a product, who has been paid, and that workers are not working unreasonable hours. On caring and domestic work, companies have begun to take steps to influence change – some have subsidised [childcare provision](#); others are using their brands to [break down stereotypes](#) and encourage men to take on more domestic work; and corporate leaders are using their influence to encourage the uptake of [paternity leave](#).

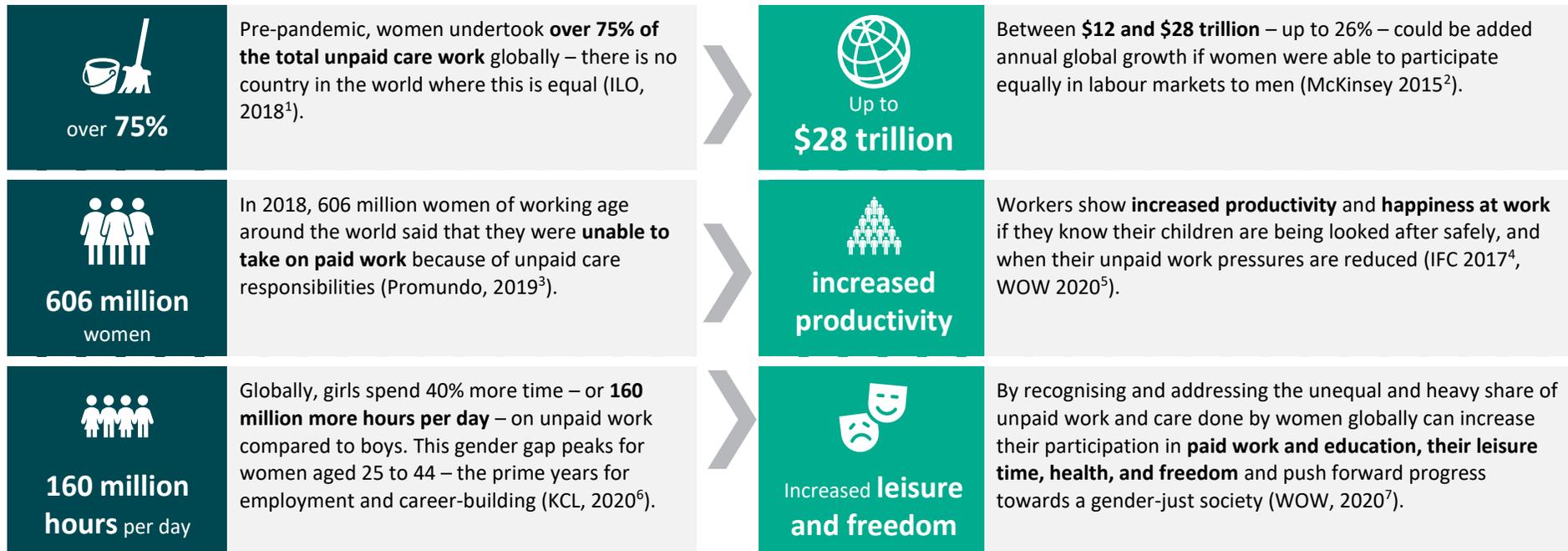
Yet very little guidance exists on how companies can tackle these inter-linked issues further down their supply chains – despite the fact this is where women face the most disproportionate responsibilities and where social safety nets are weakest. To address this gap the WOW team have developed this practical guide to enable business to take action. It is targeted at companies who want to push for change and be part of the journey towards a more gender equal world.

This guide is based on WOW programme findings, desk research and a series of interviews with business professionals, supply chain experts, gender experts, leading suppliers and academics.

For further information, please contact sarah.v.pickin@pwc.com

The costs of invisible labour...

...and the opportunities of taking action



¹ Care work and care jobs: for the future of decent work. International Labour Organization

² The power of parity: How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth. McKinsey Global Institute

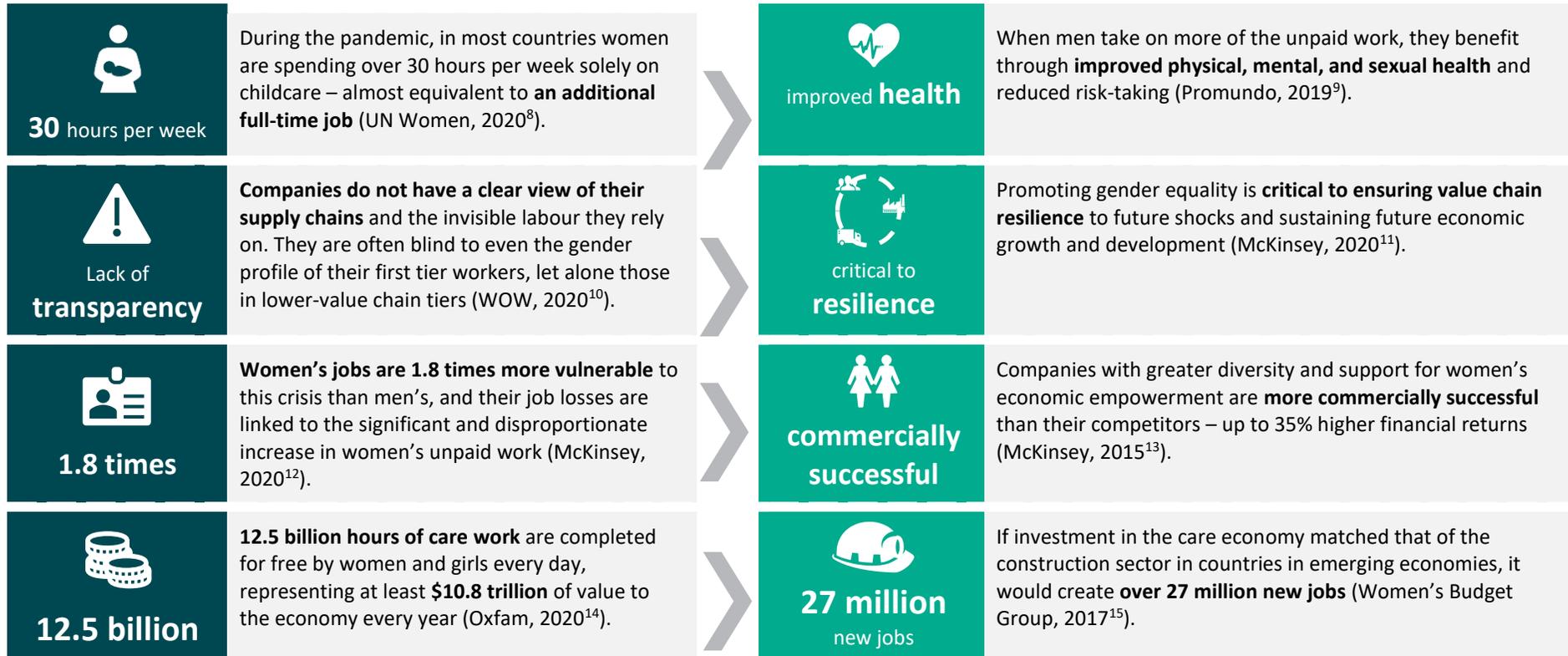
³ State of the world's fathers: Unlocking the power of men's care. Promundo

⁴ Tackling childcare: The business case for employer-supported childcare. International Finance Corporation

⁵ Hidden in plain sight: Why we need more data about women in global value chains. WOW Programme

⁶ Women's unpaid care work has been unmeasured and undervalued for too long. Kings College London and the Global Institute for Women's Leadership

⁷ The Double Day: Exploring unpaid work and care for female garment workers in Bangladesh. WOW Programme



⁸ Whose time to care? Unpaid care and domestic work during Covid-19. UN Women

⁹ State of the world's fathers: Unlocking the power of men's care. Promundo

¹⁰ Hidden in plain sight: Why we need more data about women in global value chains. WOW Programme

¹¹ Covid-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects. McKinsey Global Institute

¹² Covid-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects. McKinsey Global Institute

¹³ Diversity matters. McKinsey & Company

¹⁴ Time to Care: unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis. Oxfam

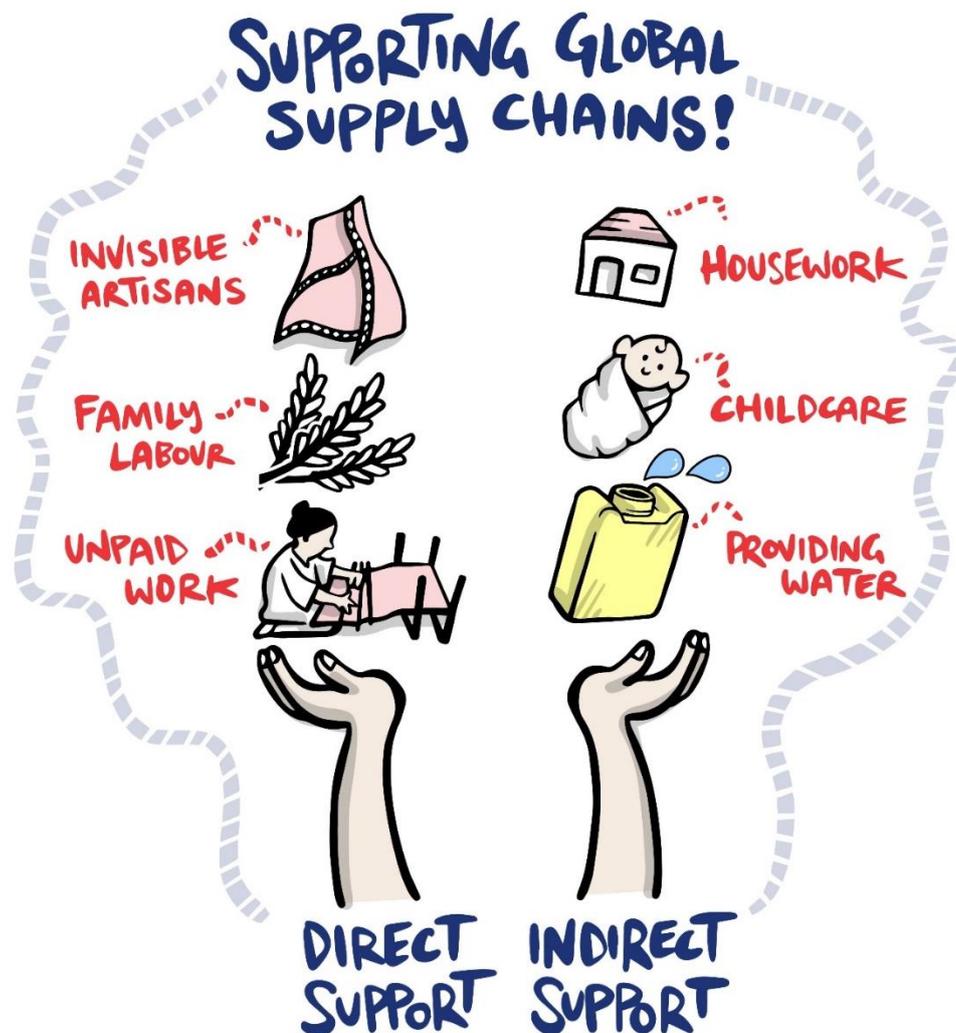
¹⁵ Investing in the Care Economy: Simulating employment effects by gender in countries in emerging economies. Women's Budget Group for the International Trade Union Confederation.

INVISIBLE LABOUR:

what do we mean?

Invisible labour represents the work done by individuals that both directly and indirectly supports the production of goods or services but is unrecognised and unremunerated.

Companies all over the world rely on invisible labour to keep their supply chains functioning. This labour is primarily borne by women.



DIRECT INVISIBLE LABOUR

Contributes directly to production, such as where family members work to support the traditionally male wage earner, and it is assumed that his wages cover the costs of the additional labour.

INDIRECT INVISIBLE LABOUR

Contributes indirectly to production through cooking nutritious meals for supply chain workers, doing laundry or, where work takes place in the home, maintaining the house and water/energy supply.

Within indirect invisible labour, unpaid care work supports workers in productive supply chains all over the world by keeping them and their communities safe, healthy and well-fed, and contributing to the stability to the household and the community.

Business risks emerge when supply chains rely on invisible labour

		
<p>A female worker may get family members and children to support them during busy periods or if piece rates are set incorrectly, posing not only child labour risks but a risk of modern slavery, should payment not be distributed amongst workers or if exploitative labour practices are in place.</p>	<p>Family workers on farms may not have their labour valued at all, causing them to survive on poverty wages and pushing the viability of their business to a knife edge, where any shocks could cause their enterprises to collapse.</p>	<p>Highly skilled and productive women workers may leave the workforce all together after starting a family, look after older relatives or those with disabilities, leaving companies with skills gaps and significant retraining costs. Mothers who remain in the workforce may experience high levels of mental strain from excessive unpaid care commitments, limiting their workplace productivity.</p>

“ Because of work and so much working pressure I can't take care of my family. On the weekly vacation [on Friday], I try to rebalance and cook and clean for the family. ”

Female artisan, Bangladesh

WHY: address invisible labour?

RECOGNISING
THE ECONOMIC
IMPACT OF
INVISIBLE LABOUR...



Some will argue that it is not the responsibility of business to tackle invisible labour; rather it is for society and governments. But it is the responsibility of everyone. Now is the time to take action on invisible labour. After all, everyone stands to gain by accelerating progress towards a gender equitable world. In this world, women will be given the voice and agency in their lives, be able to take advantage of economic opportunities and improve their health and wellbeing. Companies have an opportunity to be authentic leaders on a complex shared challenge, create meaningful change for women and advance progress towards a gender-just economy.



ACCELERATING PROGRESS TOWARDS A GENDER EQUITABLE WORLD

- Creating meaningful change for women in your supply chain
- Recognising and rewarding the women's labour keeping communities thriving
- Advancing gender equality and engaging men as allies
- Aligning with company values, ethos and brand
- Increasing gender parity in jobs throughout your supply chain

When the time burden and mental load of invisible labour is lifted, women's opportunities grow exponentially – they can take on paid work, build their skills and advance in their career. Companies have the potential to create real and tangible change for women. There are double-edged benefits too – by responding to invisible labour with climate-smart technology, the private sector can accelerate the race to Net Zero.



AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP ON A COMPLEX SHARED CHALLENGE

- Raising interest, commitment and action on one of the most entrenched barriers to gender equality
- Sharing learning with peers to increase collective action
- Engaging with industry groups, ethical trade initiatives and the wider public on progress
- Improving brand recognition, loyalty and trust from engaged, ethical consumers

Collaboration on invisible labour can amplify the benefits for women. Oxfam, Unilever and Surf have come together to jointly advocate for public policies that recognise invisible work of women and reduce and redistribute time spent on unpaid work through better access to public services, infrastructure and social protection policies.



INCREASED SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE

- Increasing supplier resilience to shocks (including Covid-19, climate and automation which threaten to increase women's unpaid work)
- Increasing supplier commercial viability and stability
- Increasing security of supply
- Improving the reliance of suppliers, supported by a committed workforce

By supporting suppliers to address invisible labour, companies can help build stable and diverse sources of supply. Textile producer Nalt Enterprise in Vietnam estimates that it costs 85% of a factory worker's annual salary to replace that worker. By offering childcare, Nalt reduced staff turnover by 33%¹⁶.

¹⁶ Tackling childcare: The business case for employer-supported childcare. International Finance Corporation



MORE PRODUCTIVE SUPPLY CHAINS

- Improving productivity of workers and suppliers
- Increasing retention of skilled and valued workers
- Reducing workers absences

In partnership with Primark, the WOW Programme conducted [innovative research](#) on the impact of unpaid care work on garment factories in Dhaka. This research focused on unpaid work relating to household and family duties undertaken before or after women’s shifts in the factories. Excessive unpaid, invisible labour has significant negative impact on both women and on garment factories. Female factory workers reported working an additional seven hours of unpaid work in relation to household and family duties, on top of their paid shift work at the factories – in effect working a “double day”.



INCREASED TRANSPARENCY AND REDUCED RISK

- Improving knowledge of high-risk areas for invisible labour
- Reducing health and safety risks
- Reducing risks of exploitative labour practices, including child labour and modern slavery
- Reducing reputational risk and negative media coverage

Covid-19 has seen consumers’ expectations of companies evolve dramatically. 60% of consumers reported making more environmentally friendly, sustainable, or ethical purchases since the start of the pandemic, and nine out of 10 of those customers say they are likely to continue doing so¹⁷.

¹⁷ How will Covid-19 change the consumer? Data-driven insights into consumer behaviour. Accenture

How: to address invisible labour?

Companies are uniquely positioned to take action on invisible labour. They can use their influence to enact change not only within their direct supply chain, but also elsewhere in the business ecosystem. These actions can be framed through the lens of the [3R framework](#)¹⁸:

RECOGNISE – REDUCE – REDISTRIBUTE



¹⁸ The 3R framework relating to unpaid care work, was conceived by Professor Diane Elson. The framework takes three interconnected dimensions that seeks to address and incorporate unpaid care work into the development agenda. Two additional Rs, representation and reward, have been integrated into the 3R approach as detailed below.

RECOGNISE

Understand the different types of invisible labour and identify where they occur in your supply chain. Seek to recognise it as 'work' – productive activity that creates real value – in your policies and actions, including rewarding and remunerating invisible labour that supports your supply chain. Ensure women and men are represented in discussions about what works.



SPOTLIGHT ON REPRESENTATION AND REWARD

In order to recognise women's invisible labour as *work*, women must be both represented and rewarded. Ensuring women's full and effective participation in decision making, and promoting social dialogue to fully recognise and understand the invisible labour your supply chain relies upon is essential to the recognition of invisible labour.

When invisible labour is recognised as work, it must be rewarded as such. Rewarding invisible labour not only pays women for their productive work supporting supply chains, it also facilitates safe working conditions and employment protections. As such both *Representation* and *Reward* have been incorporated under *Recognition*.

REPRESENTATION



REWARD



Examples of business action

World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO)

Recognising invisible labour by strengthening Fair Trade standards



The World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO) is the global community and verifier of social enterprises that fully practice Fair Trade. WFTO requires its members to support their workers balance their work and family duties, directly addressing some of the invisible labour in global value chains.

Criteria 6.8. Work and family: Businesses must support Workers in combining family and work duties. This includes flexible working hours, allowing time for breastfeeding, and providing some flexibility to tend to sick children.

Through its Fair Trade Principles, the WFTO is promoting a comprehensive and sustainable approach to recognising women's unpaid, invisible labour, and the systems to support these women.

When layered with the other benefits of Fair Trade, WFTO members are 4x more resilient in bankruptcy terms than similar SMEs.

The Body Shop, Ético and Prokritee

Rewarding women's invisible, productive contributions through costing and premium funds within sesame, hemp mitt, and coffee value chains



The Body Shop and Ético have sought to understand how women's unpaid work supports their supply chains, and have implemented innovative pricing models to reward this work. In the sesame value chain in Nicaragua, they collaborated to incorporate an increase in the price paid for sesame oil to recognise and remunerate the unpaid work of women that supports the sesame production. The increase in price is collated into a Premium Fund, which is designed to support the women producers and their communities. Ético has since expanded this initiative to coffee.

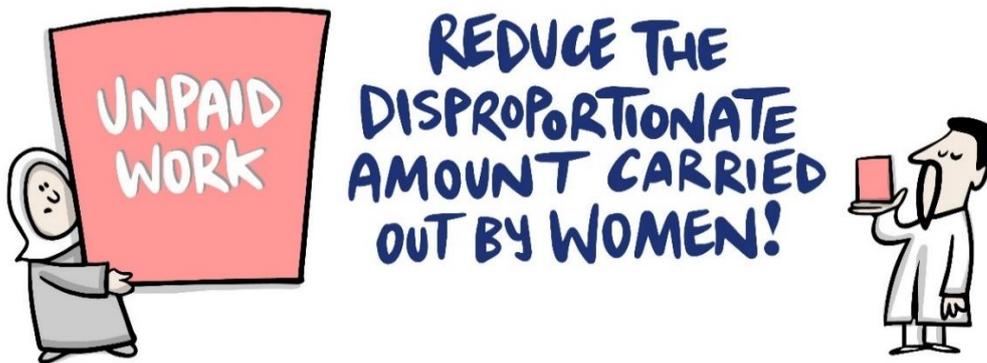
The Body Shop has expanded this work to the hemp mitt value chain with Prokritee, a different supplier in Bangladesh. By participating in the WOW programme's in-country research, The Body Shop will be considering how its wider Community Fair Trade producer assessment process recognises invisible work, and making sure that pricing fully covers any potentially invisible work that relates to production.

These Premium Funds are designed to enhance women's autonomy and decision-making power. Women select how best to use the funds to create local initiatives that deliver benefits to producers, their families and their community. By creating a commercially viable pricing model that recognises the full scope of women's work by including a component for social labour in the costs of production, as well as implementing a strategic gender initiative, The Body Shop and its Community Fair Trade partners are strengthening the social and commercial outcomes for women, suppliers and cooperatives. It also supports wider engagement on valuing unpaid work and including it in measurements of the economy, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

To complement this work, The Body Shop has created an evaluation tool for its sustainable sourcing charter assessment guidance, designed to assess unpaid work and better understand care burdens in supply chains for The Body Shop to integrate into its Community Fair Trade global sourcing.

REDUCE

Engage with women to understand their time burdens, and take steps to lower the time spent on invisible labour by improving access to time-saving devices or providing (or modifying existing) time-saving infrastructure.



“ I have a mother and father who I take care of weekly. They are ailing. When my father was sick I took 5 days of leave to take care of him.

Female artisan, Bangladesh ”

“ I find it very difficult to arrive at work on time due to all the different household chores I need to complete before attending the factory.

Female garment worker, Bangladesh ”

Examples of business action

Unilever and UNICEF

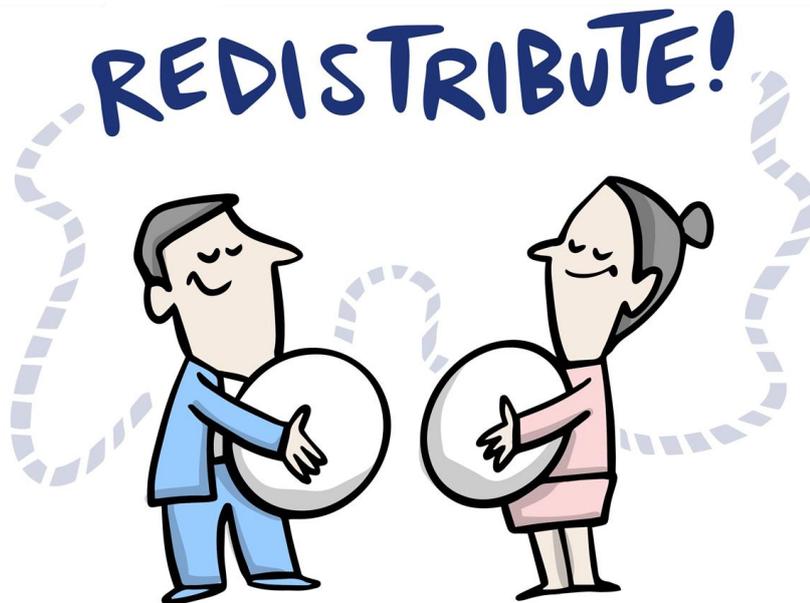
Reducing invisible labour within tea plantations by supporting mothers to return to work



In Unilever’s tea plantation in Kericho, Kenya, Unilever and UNICEF are supporting mothers as they return to work through an innovative baby-friendly workplace initiative. The interventions in the tea plantation focus on disseminating baby-friendly workplace policies, sensitising managers, supervisors and employees to the issue, and equipping the social welfare team to facilitate access to workplace support. Day care centres were also established, promoting safety, hygiene and play and providing breastfeeding rooms for mothers.

REDISTRIBUTE

Strive to achieve a fairer distribution of invisible labour between men and women, encouraging public and private sector actors to take some responsibility for these activities.



“

When my wife comes home from working she has to cook. All the household work is the duty for women, not men. If men want to do it or don't, it's up to them.

”

Husband of female artisan, Bangladesh

“

Since I help my wife, my neighbour commented that I am a girly man because I am doing roles that are supposed to be done by women. But I don't care because I must help my wife.

”

Male garment worker, Bangladesh

Examples of business action

Divine Chocolate

Redistributing invisible labour within cocoa value chains by challenging gender norms



Through Divine Chocolate's work in cocoa value chains, it has begun integrating social norms workshops into its programmes, starting conversations around redistributing invisible labour.

In São Tomé, the social norms that assign women responsibility for household tasks that limit their time; their limited mobility due to social norms; and unequal responsibility for care work all hold women back from accessing agricultural training. Worldwide it is estimated that women only receive 5% of extension services and technical training, and so Divine has begun addressing the root causes.

Engagement with women workers highlighted that their invisible work was insufficiently valued by the community and was limiting women's ability to participate in the local cocoa cooperative, CECAQ-11. In response to their concerns, Divine ran workshops on social norms for both men and women, focusing on women and men's roles and responsibilities, women's rights and access to land titles. These workshops encouraged a shift in attitudes and supported men to begin engaging with women's invisible labour, with further assessment of the impact of the workshops planned in 2021.

Taking action on invisible labour in supply chains

Approaches companies can take to address invisible labour in their supply chains vary and can depend on the types of relationships held with suppliers. Some companies hold strong sourcing relationships with female producers, but the vast majority of companies don't have the visibility of the numbers and roles of women in their entire supply chain, let alone the invisible labour they undertake. The degree of transparency, and the *direct level of influence*, companies have over their suppliers decreases further down the tiers of the supply chain. However, companies can still exert significant *indirect influence* including for example lobbying for national social protection or improved infrastructure for women. Therefore, the actions proposed in this guide have been structured against different supply chain relationships.



Getting started

To prepare for taking the first steps on invisible labour, consider the following questions to start building momentum:



What does invisible labour mean for you and your business?



Have you developed and communicated the business case for taking action on invisible labour within your organisation? What about to suppliers?



Could you raise this issue with your procurement function, and communicate how it impacts supply chains?



Have you identified gender equality champions and agents for change?

Type of sourcing arrangement	Sourcing raw materials directly	Sourcing from a manufacturer or processor of raw materials	Sourcing through intermediaries or wholesalers
<i>Position of unpaid workers</i>	<i>Employed by your direct suppliers (Tier 1 of your supply chain)</i>	<i>Employed by secondary suppliers (Tier 2 of your supply chain)</i>	<i>Employed by tertiary suppliers (Tier 3 of your supply chain)</i>
Recognise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a supply chain mapping to identify where invisible labour risks and opportunities lie. Consider adding invisible labour to materiality assessments Identify a pilot supply chain area, ideally aligned with where the risk and company influence are highest, where activities can be tested for impact Engage women workers in the process of designing and taking action, for example through social dialogue. 		
Reduce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable and support suppliers to provide flexible working hours, safe and dignified spaces to breastfeed at work, and childcare options - from on-site crèches to locally supported social enterprises. Ensure that suppliers are providing a living wage, reducing the likelihood of women workers experiencing poverty and increasing their chances of accessing time-saving options 		

¹⁹ A Time Use Survey, or TUS, measures the amount of time people spend doing various activities, such as paid work, domestic work, childcare, voluntary work, social life and leisure activities.

<i>Type of sourcing arrangement</i> <i>Position of unpaid workers</i>	Sourcing raw materials directly <i>Employed by your direct suppliers (Tier 1 of your supply chain)</i>	Sourcing from a manufacturer or processor of raw materials <i>Employed by secondary suppliers (Tier 2 of your supply chain)</i>	Sourcing through intermediaries or wholesalers <i>Employed by tertiary suppliers (Tier 3 of your supply chain)</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure wages or piece rates are set correctly to disincentivise out-of-hours working or invisible labour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request that manufacturers give pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers the option of reduced targets or reduced hours. Introduce digital wage payments for women workers. Encourage factories to provide in-factory or on-site healthcare clinics or partner with other brands and NGOs to establish these facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby governments and trade associations to improve infrastructure (e.g. transport to and from work, water facilities, electricity) thereby raising standards across the board, including any intermediaries you might engage with.
Redistribute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that any ambitious gender equality targets, such as increasing the percentage of women in leadership, are underpinned by clear action on invisible labour Hold trainings and workshops with male and female workers and family members to support more gender equitable attitudes and encourage greater task-sharing between men and women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with suppliers to encourage more women to safely participate in traditionally 'male' roles and more men to participate in traditionally 'female' roles Ensure this is facilitated through clear action on invisible labour, so as to not further exacerbate gender pay gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby governments and create multi-stakeholder partnerships to shift some of the cost, responsibility and opportunity around invisible labour (e.g. childcare, cash transfers, and quality schooling). Join global networks e.g. the ILO Business Network on social protection floors

The pandemic has exposed the crisis in unpaid care work, which has increased exponentially as a result of school closures and the needs of older people and falls disproportionately on women. Before the start of the pandemic it was clear that care work – unpaid in the home and underpaid in the formal economy – has long been a contributing factor to gender inequality.

It is time to end the inequities of unpaid care work and create new economic models that work for everyone.

UN Secretary General, António Guterres

We need to move towards systematically tackling one of the most binding constraints women face – the disproportionate responsibility for family and household care work. This is an unfair burden and it is not just a family matter; the impact of unpaid care on women and girls is a business issue too.

Leena Nair, Unilever Chief HR Officer

Annex: The Body Shop Community Fair Trade Verification Guidelines on Invisible Labour

This guidance was developed to guide conversations and data gathering on invisible labour with The Body Shop's Community Fair Trade suppliers, in partnership with the WOW Programme. It is provided as an example to other businesses looking to enter into or expand their work on invisible labour in supply chains.

Recognise unpaid work and care in the supply chain: Supply Chain Actors recognise and value unpaid work and care that producers, collectors, additional workers, family members and other individuals undertake within the supply chain and make effort to remunerate fairly or support reducing and redistributing unpaid work and care through a do no harm approach.

Questions to ask	Notes	What to look for
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the local community context, do men and women have designated responsibilities regarding who earns an income and who undertakes household chores/ looks after family? Does this affect women's and men's time, mobility and agency differently? 2. Would you consider that <i>Producers'</i> unpaid work and care responsibilities have an impact on your supply chain reliability, workforce stability, or product quality and productivity? If so, how does your organisation manage this? 3. Do <i>Producers</i> with additional unpaid work and care responsibilities – such as women (or men), single parents, families with young children/ elderly relatives, people with disabilities – find it difficult to balance their jobs with unpaid work and care? Does your organisation do anything to enable such groups to work flexibly around their other 	<p>Supply chains for Natural Ingredients, natural accessories and componentry can be a source of employment and income in areas that otherwise offer few employment opportunities, e.g. rural areas. The Body Shop International would like to see that employment opportunities recognise and value the contribution of unpaid work and care by <i>Producers</i> to production in the supply chain.</p> <p>Unpaid work and care contributes directly to production and plays a key role in ensuring community stability and maintaining society including the functioning of markets. It includes work done by individuals that produces goods or services but is unremunerated. It also includes care of people such as childcare, and the domestic work that facilitates caring for people such as cooking, cleaning or collecting water. Often women and girls perform the majority of these care activities</p>	<p><u>Awareness & Capability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation understands the roles and responsibilities that <i>Producers</i> play in and outside of the workplace. • The organisation recognises and rewards unpaid work and / or care <i>Producers</i> undertake which contributes to production in the supply chain. • The organisation offers its workforce flexible working opportunities to work around unpaid care and paid work responsibilities. <p><u>Practice</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts with flexible working policies included. • Information about organisation services/ benefits/ technology that help to reduce/ redistribute unpaid work and care.

Questions to ask	Notes	What to look for
<p>responsibilities?</p> <p>4. Are you aware of your <i>Producers</i>, their family members or any other workers or individuals not employed by you carrying out any work for your organisation at home or any other place outside of normal working hours? Do you use any workers who are not formally employed by your organisation?</p> <p>5. Do you contribute to any support services within your organisation or in the community to reduce/redistribute unpaid work and care, e.g. through childcare or other services/ local investments? Does your organisation contribute to access to technology that reduces the burden of care, e.g. water pumps?</p>	<p>resulting in time poverty, poor health and well-being, limiting mobility.</p> <p>Where <i>Producers</i> and other individuals have unpaid work and care responsibilities, it is important to recognise and value these, understanding the issues that they bring about and looking at ways to support <i>Producers</i> and other individuals in remunerating and/or removing unpaid work and reducing care. Offering flexible working hours and employment benefits helps attract and retain skilled staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Producers</i> state that they have the option of flexible working. • HR records about <i>Producers</i> flexible working hours/ agreements. <p><u>Documentation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible working policies. <p><u>Outreach</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation presents itself as committed to recognising and valuing unpaid work and care and listens to its <i>Producers</i> needs particularly regarding these responsibilities.



The Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) programme is the UK Government's flagship women's economic empowerment programme. The objective of WOW is that women have access to improved economic opportunities through business interventions in supply chains and economic development programmes. The five-year programme aims to enhance the economic empowerment of 300,000 women working in global value chains. It will achieve this goal by supporting businesses, organisations and programmes that are ready and willing to act on women's economic empowerment; enabling players across the supply chain ecosystem to drive change; and influencing the UK and global agenda on women's economic empowerment.

WOW is delivered by a consortium of global experts on women's economic empowerment research, programme design, and delivery – including PwC, BSR, CARE International, and Social Development Direct.

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