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## UNPAID CARE WORK: WOMEN, MEN, AND SHARED DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Mornings start early for Badong which usually begin with the preparation of breakfast. He and his wife ensure that everything is attended to before going to work – a task they both do on a daily basis.

Badong is one of the small percentage of the male population in the Philippines who voluntarily engage in unpaid care work – a term that describes direct care of persons and domestic work for family members and other households which includes caring for children and elderly, as well as cooking, cleaning, washing and fetching water, among others.

According to a survey conducted by Oxfam, an international confederation of 20 NGOs working with partners in over 90 countries to end the injustices that cause poverty, “men and women perceive care work differently.”

Men are accustomed to providing for the family through their profession in which they acquire the means to ‘put food on the table’ while women are the ones left at home to take care of the family, dedicating more time for unpaid care work.

Unpaid care work in the Philippines is overwhelmingly performed by women as mirrored through the culture, tradition and social norms. Women, on a daily basis,

perform hours of care work compared to the 2.3 hours rendered by men.

*Nakaugalian na kasi sa atin, bilang mga Pilipino, na ang mga babae ang tumutupad sa mga gawaing bahay dahil ang mga lalaki naman ang laging nasa labas at naghahanap-buhay upang mabuhay ang pamilya - a common notion exercised in the Philippines.*

Fingers point to unpaid care as a ‘barrier to various human rights’ for women and girls. In the Philippines, especially in far-flung outskirts and sitios, as influenced again by the culture, women are confined to household duties which suppresses their rights to association and leisure, and the rights to work and for social security.

The right to education and professional development are also compromised, hence, limiting their chances for paid work opportunities.

### Changing tides and times

In one of the studies conducted by Oxfam in the Philippines, unpaid care work was painted on the same hue as in most developing countries, and as how Nestor, one of the research’s case studies says: ‘As a Filipino, our culture is that the woman should be the one to do everything.’

Through the course of the study, perceptions and common notions were swayed towards a better attitude regarding shared responsibility within the households.

*“Before, upon waking up, my wife used to bring me coffee at 5am. Now, I rise up early and bring her coffee. I didn’t use to help with the laundry and now I do. My children now also share the care work. I have learned that it is not good if the women do all the work. My wife is very happy. And she hugs me more,”* Nestor shares in the report from the Oxfam study.

*“It used to be a stigma if the husband shares the housework. Now, we share it and work closely together and it has helped me to become a better mother,”* says Jeanette, who lives in the same community as Nestor.

As the data continue to tell a new and positive story of gender-equality in all levels of the society, unpaid care work will remain to be one of the challenges that needed to be addressed. But with the continued policy and advocacy, women can one day go beyond the bounds of domestic tasks and spread their wings to aim for greater heights.

### DILG SHARED VISION

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