



REPORT

Online Discussion

**The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men,
including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS**

Organized by

**Division for the Advancement of Women
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I. INTRODUCTION

The online discussion “Women and Men: Equal Shar

statistics). During the discussion, 340 messages were posted (excluding those posted by the moderator) by 147 contributors. While contributors broadly reflected the organizational distribution of participants, the geographical distribution of contributors was more heavily weighted towards Africa (44 percent of contributors versus 35 percent of participants). (See Annex 2 for more detailed contributor statistics.)

II. GENDER STEREOTYPES AND EQUAL SHARING OF RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN IN THE PRIVATE SPHERE

A. Background

It is probably universally true that gender – the social meaning and implications assigned to biological sex – is one of the central determinants of both chosen and socially-imposed responsibilities. The term “responsibility” refers to a wide range of activities and obligations at the household level. Caregiving, obligations and activities that involve connecting to other people in an effort to meet their needs, is a big part of these responsibilities, particularly in the

Systematic differences by gender in access to and ownership over assets are common around the world, and partly determine women's bargaining power in the household. Laws or other rules such as property rights and family law are also crucial determinants of the type of responsibilities that men and women can or do assume. Patriarchal property rights, where eldest men have the right to claim and apportion the fruits of the labour of all household members, can create incentives for high fertility and lower female labour force participation.

With these structures of constraint as a reference point, proposed discussion topics centered on the division of private sphere responsibilities between women and men, the associated consequences for women's power in household and political decision-making and social and economic development, the benefits of equal sharing for women and men, the lack of recognition of unpaid work (especially that having to do with care), and the associated tension between women's increasing market labour force participation and the ongoing supply of care in the private sphere.

formulated. As pointed out by Nthabiseng Sepanya Mogale in the context of South Africa: “... *I would like to urge other participants to help us look beyond sharing but rather at how we could mobilize resources, systems and private and public institutions to enable single parents to cope and thus delegate or even rely on other institutions and systems to be effective within the private or family sphere. Sharing somehow assumes both parents are there. In our country lately this may not be the case.*” Households headed by single individuals responsible for care – in particular by women and girls, but also by men and boys –constituted an important thread

especially property rights. Where women have a legal right to an equal share of household resources, they are better able to participate in making household labour allocation and consumption decisions. Even though many countries have anti-discrimination legislation (or are party to international agreements like the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of

labour market opportunities. Poima Brown-Lutal of American Samoa made this point: *“It is not to state that women do not want change, but I wholeheartedly believe that there are populations of women who want change, and those that are innately afraid of the unknown consequences of such change, and yes would rather remain in the status quo of letting it remain a ‘man’s world,’*

with fewer years of work can lead to lower pensions.

2. *Women's lack of empowerment*

Lower income and less time results in women having less say over household labour, resources and income allocation decisions. These dynamics seem to confirm stereotypes about women and men: that women are more suited and successful in a home/family environment, and that men are better at working in the market or productive sphere. Hence, stereotypes affect distribution of household work between women and men, girls and boys. The resulting decision-making hierarchy between men and women can also result in women having little or no influence over their reproductive lives, i.e. decisions on when to have children or whether to use condoms, an issue that was also prominent in the third week's discussion on HIV/AIDS.

3. *Invisibility of care*

Participants agreed that women's (largely unpaid) care work is virtually invisible, partly because of women's lower status. Felicia Eghan of Canada put it this way: "*Housework, childrearing, taking care of the sick and elderly as well as the disabled are very important for the progress of humanity but these important responsibilities are not valued because most of them are shouldered by women.*" This invisibility is perhaps most clear in the context of the statistical methodologies used to measure economic production. The underestimation of women's work in the official System of National Accounts (SNA), which provide summary measures of economic performance and were intended to cover market transactions only, has been repeatedly pointed out by feminist economists since the late 1970s. Partly as a result of pressure from the international women's community, in the 1993 SNA revision the U.N. Statistical Commission recommended that national statistical offices create satellite accounts of nonmarket activity to be used in conjunction with traditional measures of market activity.³ While the statistical demands of valuing unpaid work are high, participants argued that women's lower status was at the heart of this oversight.

This invisibility detracts from the knowledge base used to conduct macroeconomic and social policies. Barrister Rizwana Yusuf of Bangladesh explained: "*The differences in the work patterns of men and women, and the 'invisibility' of*

result that have implications for development but are completely missed because of the invisibility of care. First, the decline in government spending is not a savings but a shift from the market to the nonmarket provision of care. Second, if children are pulled out of school, or their mothers out of income generating activities, to care for the sick at home, both current and future

women demanding responsibility-sharing, while men will continue to build walls and see women as a threat, which in turn will lead to more gender-based violence.”

(iv) Media

One way to counter gender stereotypes and the unequal sharing of responsibilities in the private sphere associated with them involved critically evaluating the media, as it can either support or challenge traditional gender stereotypes. In speaking of television, magazines and newspapers, Griselda Lassaga of the Universidad de Bernal in Argentina noted, “*Here they [the media] reinforce the idea that the place of a woman IS AND MUST be at home, cooking, preparing meals for the family, washing, dishwashing... old stereotypes of traditional roles.*” On the other hand, the media could also be used as a positive force for change by, for example, showing men in nontraditional caring roles as described by Socheat Chi of CARE Cambodia: “*Media has a powerful impact in giving out messages to the society and bringing about change in attitudes. Men would not feel ashamed in washing the dishes if they see a TV spot showing men doing the laundry.*”

(v) Institutional leadership

Even though localized efforts through community-based education and family involvement constituted the core of most of the discussion on education and raising awareness, it was also commonly noted that both formal governmental and civil society organizations can be important in starting and financing such educational efforts. Rachel Aston of the Mothers’ Union in the United Kingdom gave an example of such a programme, noting, “*Within the private sphere, grassroots cultural change is the only way to change ingrained gender stereotypes... However, what influences or kick starts cultural change may be led externally, for example by global society, government, NGOs etc. Mothers’ Union groups run programmes within their own communities that provide families with skills such as literacy and farming methods, whilst addressing gender stereotyping and the unequal sharing of responsibilities. This ensures that inequality is tackled in all parts of family life.*”

2. Formal education

The necessity of ensuring access of girls to a high quality education is widely documented. Results include lower fertility, greater child and maternal health, and higher incomes for women that are more likely to be spent on basic needs and education than male incomes. Vivi Germano-Koutsounadis of Australia recounted how advanced education among immigrant women induced men in their communities to accept their leadership: “[Women] had the opportunity to gain an education and achieve professional status through tertiary education. [T]herefore, these women were accepted in the ethnic communities by the men, because [these communities] needed their [expertise] to assist the thousands of immigrants who migrated from their country of origin.” Formal education systems can also raise awareness on gender stereotypes among both male and female students by paying attention to how these stereotypes are woven into curricula and textbooks, and by incorporating awareness of gender roles in all aspects of teacher training. Participants also noted the direct empowerment effects of a good formal education, as it better enables girls to bargain with their partners and families for greater gender equality in the

household and sensitizes boys to the demands of family caregiving. Perez Akech Odera of Kenya wrote, “[Higher] education for the girl child is one way of empowering girls to have bargaining powers for their rights. In this way, they are better placed to argue, discuss and reach a compromise with their men folk.”

Enhancing girls’ access to formal education means that policymakers must directly address how the traditional division of household responsibilities sometimes acts as an obstacle to girls’ school attendance. For example, getting girls to school might require providing publicly-funded or subsidized childcare for young children, as it is often girls who are pulled out of school to take care of their younger brothers and sisters. Sarat Bazoum of Burkina Faso described this problem: “To address this difficulty...the creation of facilities such as pre-schooling infrastructure ([with] low cost access) where kids are followed up would reduce girls’ involvement in taking care of young brothers and sisters, giving them time to attend class without any difficulties and a chance to succeed at school.”

3. Financial support for caregiving

At the core of the discussion on the unequal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, and in particular women’s disproportionate share of household responsibilities, was the low value accorded to care work (both paid and unpaid), and how that acts as an obstacle to changing both the status of women and the status of care work. Fatma Elkory Oumrane of Mauritania noted, “Among these ideas, I think that as long as the role at home on the one hand and the role of ‘parent’ on the other are not valued, supported, honored, encouraged and developed, inequalities will always be there to make participation of women ‘incomplete.’”

Participants proposed addressing this low value by raising financial support for unpaid caregiving, in the form of compensation and other incentives. Mariam Yunusa of UN-HABITAT in Kenya explained, “Society is challenged to devise safe and profitable ways and means of making motherhood not only safe and pleasurable but that it [society] should share in the burden of nurturing as well. Society should uphold motherhood and share the burden through sensitively designed care and compensation, and support incentives packaged for families with a focus on women ... Several countries are already doing this as a means of replenishing their ageing populations. This is one area where the [Division for the Advancement of Women] needs to do more work. Without a concerted effort backed by sound research, children, mothers, fathers, and the society as a whole stand to lose.” Virginia Saldanha, of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, Office of the Laity, Family & Women’s Desk in India, gave some specifics on how this type of financial support could be delivered, “State policies should give incentives to those who do this work for free (parents/relatives/volunteers), like tax rebates for the earning member of the family; concessions for care givers in travel, healthcare and food (this should help single parents/elder caregivers/volunteers).” Financial compensation for unpaid caregiving could substantially counter gender stereotypes, as noted by Sodeyi Rose Titi of Nigeria, “If money is attached to all the domestic work carried out, it would attract men which would bring about equal sharing of responsibility.”

Increasing financial support for caregiving faces financial and institutional limits. Shelly Archibald of Canada challenged the discussion this way: “The issue of providing financial

support to caregivers certainly seems like a good idea on the surface. But I'm not sure where the money would come from under this type of system – especially in an impoverished country that doesn't have the resources (financial, human) to dedicate to this end. Such a model would only be applicable in an industrialized country with a large population base that could support/pay for this system.” Muhammed Usman Ghani of the Survive Welfare Organization in Pakistan made the point about the limits of institutional capacity: *“Financial support for care givers is possible in welfare states where welfare policies are enacted in the public and private spheres to benefit workers.... [S]ocial services or care centres are not common in our society, where men and women prefer to leave their children under family care and guardianship.”*

In addition, participants noted that designing such a system of financial support for caregivers would face the added challenge of creating a new sub-class of workers that are largely female. Again, Shelly Archibald of Canada queried this point: *“[W]hat about compensation for caregivers? If we paid women to care for loved ones with a chronic/terminal illness, would this equalize the system and promote gender equality in caregiving? I don't believe it would make any difference, mainly because we would create another sub-class of low paying, dead-end jobs (primarily) for women, without having to change the fundamental problems related to gender inequality in care.”* This result is already happening as a “global care chain” is created where poor women migrate to wealthier countries and work as paid caregivers. Lee Sze Yong described this phenomenon in Singapore: *“The trend...is to get a foreign domestic worker to help with care-giving, as many women are working. This causes another layer of issues, [for example] maid abuse by employers, child neglect by maids, no rest day for maids, etc.”* This issue was discussed in the second week in the context of how sharing of responsibilities between women and men affect women's participation in the public sphere.

4. Legal and political support

The ability of women and men to successfully counter the types of gender stereotypes that underlie the unequal sharing of responsibilities in the household can be strengthened by legal and political supports in the wider society. Ensuring equal property rights between men and women under the law was by far the most common legal measure discussed. Such property rights improve women's bargaining power in the household, making them better able to demand a more equal division of household responsibilities, as well as enhance their economic security when their traditional roles limit their participation in paid work. Asina Omari of the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania gave an example of how educating people about their existing rights can empower them in the private sphere: *“[T]he Tanzania Women Lawyers Association has a campaign to educate the community on the importance of having wills as a way to do away with property grabbing in case of death of the husband.”*

While a number of participants' countries have made progress in terms of equal property rights legislation, participants widely acknowledged that there is a gap between legislation and implementation, partly because of the persistence of traditional gender stereotypes. Perez Akech Odera of Kenya noted, *“[T]he culture of many communities has a negative bearing on property ownership by women. Much as the declarations have been made, with some countries passing laws to guide equal property ownership between men and women, the people's culture does not allow for meaningful progress in this area.”* Participants identified this obstacle as an extremely

serious one. Edouard Munyamaliza of the Rwanda Men’s Resource Centre described how efforts to change property rights can sometimes even result in violence, “[W]e are even experiencing never-ending conflicts over property because Rwanda has enacted and promulgated a law on matrimonial regimes, succession and liberalities to allow ... women to inherit, but as you have just said, the understanding of men of this situation and the application of this law are proving very difficult due to poor cultural beliefs that are anchored in their minds. Instead of taking advantage of this positive change to advance socio-economic development, once again women are victims of violence and abuse of rights.”

III. THE EFFECTS OF UNEQUAL SHARING OF RESPONSIBILITIES ON WOMEN’S FULL PARTICIPATION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

A. Background

Looking towards the public sphere, which involves activities and relationships that take place outside of the household – in the community, the workplace and in government bodies – the second week’s discussion focused on how the unequal sharing of responsibilities affects women’s abilities to fully participate in all aspects of public life.

In terms of the workplace, the key issue considered is what economists Nilufer Cagatay and Diane Elson have called “male breadwinner bias.”⁴ Male breadwinner bias refers to the fact that workplaces are too often fashioned after male models of work, that is, treating workers as if they do not have significant family responsibilities beyond sharing their wages. In most societies, very few provisions are made for addressing these constraints on women’s labour force participation. Examples of such provisions include affordable and accessible child and elder care, flexible paid work arrangements, and educational institutions that can accommodate the schedule of a working parent (i.e. longer school days and summer enrollment).

One of the results is that the substantial demands on women’s time outside of the workplace – the fact that women are most often the ones responsible for caring labour regardless of their labour market status – substantially limit their ability to fully participate in labour markets. As a consequence, economies do not benefit from women’s full participation in the labour market, the nonmarket care sector is often under stress, and women themselves are disadvantaged in amassing the assets or bargaining power that it takes to shift gender norms and roles in ways that would overcome these obstacles.

To explore these issues, participants were asked to focus on two aspects of the unequal sharing of responsibilities. The first set of issues involved how women's disproportionate share of responsibilities in the private sphere (the focus of the prior week's discussion) limits their abilities to participate in the public sphere. Questions posed drew attention to men's perspectives by, for example, focusing on how policies, programmes and initiatives have led to a more equal balance between work and domestic responsibilities for both women and men who enter the labour force. The second set of issues involved the sharing of responsibilities between women and men in public sphere decision-making, the challenges men and women face in terms of sharing participation in public life equally, and how public policies could be more gender-responsive.

B. Summary of the discussion

Fatou Diouf's (Senegal) statement regarding women's political participation is a sobering but widely shared feeling about the current state of women's political participation around the world: *"The representation of women has not evolved much since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Although the fundamental right of women and men to participate in political life is recognized internationally and nationally, there is always a gap between equality in the exercise of power and decision-making. The concerns and interests of women are [not] taken into consideration and women can not influence key social, economic and political decisions that concern the entire society."*

Contributions focused on three themes: how women's disproportionate share of household responsibilities limits their involvement in the public sphere, both in terms of the type of labour market and/or political participation they engage in, and extent to which they can engage (i.e., how much extra work they can put in or which political meetings they can access); the additional factors (relative to what was detailed in the prior week) that come into play when considering the public sphere; and finally, proposed solutions and good practice examples, which constituted the bulk of the discussion.

Three conceptual aspects of the discussion merit separate analysis. First, participants frequently noted that it is virtually impossible to separate the public from the private spheres, since the two are so interdependent. For example, stereotypes of masculinity that keep men from taking up an equal share of responsibilities in the private sphere constrain their female partners from public sphere participation, both in the labour market and in political decision-making, because of the time pressure experienced by women providing the bulk of family care. Similarly, stereotypical notions of femininity which keep women primarily associated with the home make it more difficult for girls to attain the types of labour market skills that would afford them fuller participation in paid work, and ultimately more bargaining power at home. The associated consequences illustrate the interlinkages between the private and public spheres: private sphere stereotypes and responsibilities lead to public sphere inequalities which perpetuate private sphere stereotypes and unequal responsibilities. As a consequence of these links between the private and public spheres, some of the countermeasures discussed below, such as increasing men's involvement in (paid and unpaid) care work, inevitably seem to blur the two issues.

Second, participants also argued that the cons

socialization processes. The very people giving employment or making decisions in the public sphere are people who have been brought up in certain settings with stereotypes. For example, boys grow up seeing their mothers and sisters in the kitchen and tilling the garden, while their fathers and uncles are looking after animals or doing income generating activities. It's very hard for a girl to move alone even if it is to go to the nearest shop without a boy escort in my culture because women are considered weak and the men are the strong link. How do you expect a man who has been brought up with a view that women are subordinate to men to have a different attitude in allocating resources at the work place? It is easier to [see] a woman as a secretary, ... tea girl, or even sweeper than a man in the public sphere."

2. *The limits on girls*

Participants noted that the situation is particularly limiting for young girls. As detailed in the first week, the socialization process leading to different expectations of women and men begins in early childhood. Daughters often have higher household workloads than sons, including responsibilities for caring for younger siblings or older or disabled family members. One of the results is that girls often have fewer educational opportunities than boys, feeding back into a social system that deems men as more capable participants in the public sphere. Mercy Adhiambo Orenge, a 21-year old young woman from Kenya, described her own experience: *"[W]hen I was growing up, I was the one who was to take care of my younger siblings, fetch water, cook, and do other household chores. [Although] I had brothers, they were not allowed to do the chores which were 'for girls.' This definitely affected my school work. I had no time to read because most of my time was involved in housework. I know I am not speaking for myself...So many girls go through this. No wonder most girls do not perform too well in their examinations, and some of them have great potential. Unequal sharing of responsibilities especially affects education. It extinguishes the fire of the girl child and most of them end up getting [a] poor quality education. [S]ome even drop out when housework outweighs school work, [and] hence we end up with uneducated women, who in the future also subject their female children to the same treatment, and the cycle continues."*

3. *Women's paid work and the distribution of care*

As women throughout the world have increased their involvement in paid work, there has been very little re-distribution of their unpaid caring and other household responsibilities. This results in what many term the "double" or "triple" day, with women involved in paid work outside the household maintaining their roles as the primary caregiver within their families. Chitra Nohanlal of the National Bureau for Gender Policy in Suriname summarized it well: *"As many women have jobs, children are left in the care of a day care center or family members. The shift in women's time did not result in the transformation of care relations between men and women. Women still have responsibility for the family."*

As touched on in the first week, in some countries, women subcontract out their caring

will be 'brought in' to support another woman's involvement in the public sphere. My difficulty is that unless the labour conditions of the women that are being brought in consider gender justice, we are merely moving the problem to a level that is very difficult to monitor and engage with. We are shifting the burden of unequal sharing of responsibilities to an even more vulnerable group of women. Instead of making demands on their partners or the community/state, many women turn to poorer women to alleviate their 'double burden.'" At the same time, some women turn to paid care work as a means for their own economic empowerment. The issue is not about paid care wo

on governments to provide a state social-welfare system (especially in developing countries). Women often pick up the slack where the government fails to provide adequate mechanisms to take care of the vulnerable in society.” State social welfare systems refer to government programmes that socialize the financing and provision of care and protection against risk. Examples include disability insurance, public health care services, and pensions for the elderly. Women’s provision of unpaid household work is implicitly treated as a limitless resource in economic analysis and policy, able to fill in the gaps left by economic hardship or inadequate social welfare spending.

In addition, the greater the likelihood that a woman is a single caretaker and/or poor, the less likely she will be able to pay someone else to fulfill her caregiving responsibilities. A common outcome in the developed world is that she will work for low wages in the care industry. The result, as described by Linda Basch of the National Council for Research on Women in the United States, is that among women, the poor tend to shoulder a disproportionate share of care work (and the associated public subsidy): *“Women in the U.S. continue to shoulder a major share of household and care-giving responsibilities. Poverty and the prevalence of households headed by single women also have significance for the division of labour in the private sphere. Women-headed households have about one-half the income and less than one-third the wealth of other American households. Lack of access to adequate child care, health care and paid sick leave impact the number of hours spent on care-giving and household responsibilities.”*

F. Policy responses

1. Balancing work-family life

(i) Incorporate men into paid and unpaid care work

In the discussions of how to more equally distribute responsibilities, participants expanded on the recommendation of the first week to counter gender stereotypes by educating men and boys to specifically include models of work-family life balance that are based on the equal participation of men in care work, both in the private and public spheres. When women can equally share household responsibilities with their male partners, they are better able to equally

The same principle can be applied to improving girls' readiness for full and equal participation in the labour market. When designing educational or vocational programmes to assist girls in acquiring labour market skills, participants noted that these programmes must incorporate an awareness of how girls' traditional responsibilities will inevitably limit their involvement if there is no publicly-provided substitute for girls' household work, or at least some economic incentive for families that do invest in girls' education.

(iii) *Change workplace culture*

Rather than always focusing on how women must change to increase their participation in public life, discussants urged that we take a critical look at the public workplace to see how the rules and norms accepted as standard practice limit women's full and equal participation. Amanda Khozi Mukwashi of the United Kingdom explained this point: *"I think one thing that I have experienced, myself and through others, is that the workplace, whichever space that might be in terms of private firms, NGOs, public space etc., are all defined and run to suit a male culture and method of operation. So when we are talking about decisions being made at the [p]ub or meetings being held at very awkward hours or 'soft' skills being seen as not as important as the 'hard' tough male who has the ability to be objective and not emotional, we need to re-shape that politics...In summary, I guess what I am saying is that we need to re-define the workplace and in order to do so, we need to re-shape the politics itself, in the workplace. So, for example, let us not talk about how women are unable to deliver....but let us talk about what kind of leadership is needed to transform our ways of working to get the most out of employees, male and female, in order to achieve the vision. That way, the onus is on the organisation and the leadership, in particular, and not on women as a problem to be solved."*

2. *Women's political participation*

(i) *Public education and advocacy*

A particular thread of the discussion emphasized the effectiveness of advocacy and organizing specifically aimed at raising women's direct political participation. When women actively participate in politics, whether it be through simply voting or standing for government office, the likelihood that their concerns will get political attention increases greatly. Schirin Salem of the German Technical Corporation describes one such programme in Mauritania: *"If women's ability to influence areas of public decision-making is limited, and there is no doubt, then we need strong initiatives on political participation of women, especially in developing countries. There are some examples of innovative approaches (by the German Technical Cooperation) which I know, like a project in Mauritania, which intended to enhance the political participation of women, especially due to the elections, which took place in 2006. They supported women candidates and developed together with the Ministry of Women a broad awareness raising and education campaign, which involved relevant target groups: political parties, public administration, [religious] and traditional authorities, civil society, the media and prospective candidates. They have also initiated a very successful media campaign with several chansons [songs], documentaries, radio and TV spots and posters. One of the results was the high rate of elected assembly women in the project regions (higher than the statutory 20 percent) and the high [rate of] female voter participation."*

(ii) Active promotion of women into government

Participants broadly acknowledged that women's share of household responsibilities resulted in their having less direct representation in government and policy-making bodies, partly because of low participation, and partly because of the associated persistence of gender stereotypes that treat only men as natural leaders and lead to discrimination against women in the public sphere. To counter this, Kwachu Justine Ngum of Women in Alternative Action in Cameroon explained, we need to be active about getting women into elected and appointed public offices: “[J]ob discrimination [against] women vis-à-vis men constitutes a major problem. This is evident in the ratio or percentage of men to women in some key jobs in government...Unequal sharing of opportunities is a real problem for women in my society and stems from...discrimination...against women whether in the political, administrative, economic, social or cultural frameworks. To balance this scale, there is [a] need to: Introduce [a] quota whereby a fifty-fifty (50/50) [balance] between men and women is taken in some strategic positions in order to empower women; [and to] introduce equal opportunity ... in the recruitment process, especially of government jobs.” Many participants lauded the potential effects of gender-based quotas in elected government office as one of the more promising ways to increase not only women's representation in the public sphere, but also the significance of issues having to do with unpaid household work.

(iii) Gender-responsive budget initiatives

One of the ways to increase women's political participation and the representation of their concerns in government policymaking is by analyzing government spending from a gender perspective. This type of analysis raises awareness about the extent to which government is supportive of women's equal participation in the public sphere, and the lack of attention to women's caregiving roles in government policy (for example, when social welfare programmes are cut to close budget deficits).

Gender-responsive budget (GRB) initiatives encompass a number of budgetary activities that ultimately aim to increase gender equality in government spending. These include: comparing programme expenditures by their different impacts on men and women; employing time-use surveys to understand

challenge. The private sector is not even aware of the existence of such laws. How can the UN agencies support our governments to popularize [and] allocate appropriate budgets and operationalize these gender sensitive laws?” Sylvia B. Engracia, in recounting her own experience with GRB in the Philippines, provided some direction on these questions: “To institutionalize [gender-responsive] planning and budgeting I think it is essential to have champions who are positioned high enough in the organization to be able to push for [gender-responsive] interventions. The role of oversight organizations is also important. As well, having [an incentives] system that rewards agencies that are [gender-responsive] will help. Donors can also help by making gender-responsiveness a criteria for providing assistance.”

3. Legal frameworks

(i) Implementation of existing laws

Many participants raised reservations about the effectiveness of rules or laws in countering gender inequality in the public sphere, as they often are not fully implemented. A common illustration of this point was the prevalence of gender-wage gaps throughout the world, despite the widespread existence of anti-discrimination employment legislation. One part of the solution would be to enforce implementation of current laws. As explained by Henry Serunkuma of Uganda: *“Unless governments pay attention to our calls, and initiate/implement policies on domestic relations, women will stay unsuccessful even at workplaces. Men ... take good advantage of ... systems and processes at the workplace. Employers, who are most likely men, barely consider giving women maternity leave and many women have lost jobs [while] others [have been] forced to work beyond [what is medically recommended]. Such gender relations in the workplace greatly limit women’s competitiveness in the labour market.”*

(ii) Take a human rights approach

Some participants felt that treating the unequal division of responsibilities as a matter of human rights, and introducing the possibility of legal enforcement of those rights, was a promising

addition to reiterating points made in the firs

B. Summary of the discussion

Participants unequivocally agreed that women and girls provide the majority of care when individuals and families are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. This pattern spans the life cycle: when young girls head households after their parents become ill or die, when mothers care for ill and dying partners and children, or when older women (for example, grandmothers) take on orphaned children whose parents have died from the disease. Philippa Amable of the Anglican Communion in Ghana described it this way: “[*T*]his caregiving is the traditional role of the

C. Impact of unequal sharing of responsibilities on women

Women's systematic lack of access to resources, whether it be education, income-generating activities, political power, or property rights, increases their vulnerability to the stresses of care in the context of HIV/AIDS, and limits their ability to control their own sexual and reproductive health, increasing the likelihood that they themselves will contract the disease. Likewise, where gender norms limit women's activities to unpaid work in the household, including caregiving, there are very few opportunities for women to access pathways to empowerment (for example, education, independent income, community support networks, or social services), and their vulnerability to infection can increase.

Examples of this dynamic were very common among participant contributions. As noted by605 -D(/ia we

such women. Gendered patterns of blame ensure that men blame their female spouses for HIV infection and desert their spouses on learning of their HIV status. Some men who get infected accuse their spouses of infecting them. In these regions many women do not even have a clue of the whereabouts of the father of their children.”

These concerns are applicable to other types of households where caregivers are also the main source of financial support, including those headed by elder children (often daughters) when parents are deceased, and older women (especially grandmothers) when a relative, neighbor or friend leaves children behind. Susan Choge of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology in Kenya painted a poignant picture of these types of households in Kenya: “*When death results - especially of mothers – due to*

V. CONCLUSION

As the discussion has shown, traditional gender roles and stereotypes often narrowly define the division of labour between women and men, and girls and boys in both the private and public spheres. The HIV/AIDS pandemic illustrates the implications of these gender norms, as women and girls have taken on the great majority of care work generated by the crisis. Unequal sharing of responsibilities between women and men limits women's participation in the labour market, and can lead to a double or even triple day for women when they are employed. It also has implications for women's full participation in political decision-making, limiting their potential to find the time and develop the skills needed for their full participation. While a variety of policy interventions have emerged in an effort to ameliorate women's responsibilities, and to encourage men's and women's equal sharing of responsibilities, it remains clear that much more work needs to be done.

This conclusion will detail the main strands of discussion and key recommendations, ending with some observations about future research. It provides a very brief summary of cross-cutting issues, and should not be seen as an exhaustive representation of the discussion.

A. Key Discussion Themes

1. The division of responsibilities between women and men and their consequences.

Participants agreed that women and girls bear a disproportionate share of household responsibilities, across all cultures and levels of development, and that cultural norms and stereotypes are the root causes of this inequality. One consequence of this unequal sharing is that women and girls have less access to resources and income-generating opportunities, with lower income and less time resulting in women also having less say over household labour, resource and income allocation decisions, as well as limited involvement in the public sphere, especially in terms of decision-making. Girls who are given a disproportionate share of household and caring responsibilities at an early age are further limited by lack of access to education that would prepare them for formal labour markets and other responsibilities in the public sphere.

2. Care work. Very little attention is paid to the social and developmental importance of care work in the household, either in national income accounting systems or in state and community planning. Enhancing the collection and use on sex-disaggregated data on women's and men's participation in the market and domestic spheres would make for better-informed public policies. What is known is that as women throughout the world have increased their involvement in paid work, but there has been very little re-distribution of their unpaid caring and other household responsibilities among other household members, including men. A common alternative is for women to subcontract out these responsibilities by employing a (typically female) worker from the expanding paid care industry. While these jobs provide paid opportunities for the many women working in the paid care sector, they are often informal and/or low-paid.

3. Single-carer households. As pointed out by a number of participants in the discussion, the very nature of the topic about the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men presumes that all families are headed by a co-habiting male-female couple. Increasingly, this is

not the case for both developed and developing countries, as female-headed households have been on the rise globally, and the proportion of elderly households has risen in the developed world. This is of particular relevance in the context of HIV/AIDS, where illness and death raise the proportion of households headed by women, children, or an elderly relative.

4. An absence of an equal focus on men. Although issues pertaining specifically to men ran throughout the entire online discussion, and each of the three main discussion topics included policy responses expressly targeting men, men's needs and roles were not a central discussion theme. This may reflect the fact that only 14 percent of participants were men. Participants that did address the issue of men's involvement agreed that meeting men's needs are an essential part of any programme aiming to bring about equality. Gray Southon of New Zealand made this point well: *"I would suggest a solution of true equality requires balancing the strategy and providing equal consideration of the needs of everyone, and the equal involvement of everyone...In [principle], if we are going to move into an equal society, then men and women will need to participate effectively in that move. If we don't, then most men will be left behind trying to maintain traditional relationships, while the women try to pursue equality. That does not seem to*

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coordinated regional, national or international approaches and increased information-sharing; and documentation and dissemination of good practices.

C. Directions for future research and discussion

1. Men and care

Part of the reason why it is so difficult to bring about an equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men is that there is little understanding of male perspectives around caregiving. More research on men's caregiving is needed to better understand the obstacles and entry points. Insights from such research and data collection should be incorporated into public policy aimed at achieving an equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men in both the private and public spheres. Very little is known about the prevalence or needs of single-carer households headed by men, and the extent to which they receive support from women. The question should also be raised whether there are any barriers to men's participation in care work, for example a

4. *Eliminating institutionalized gender stereotypes*

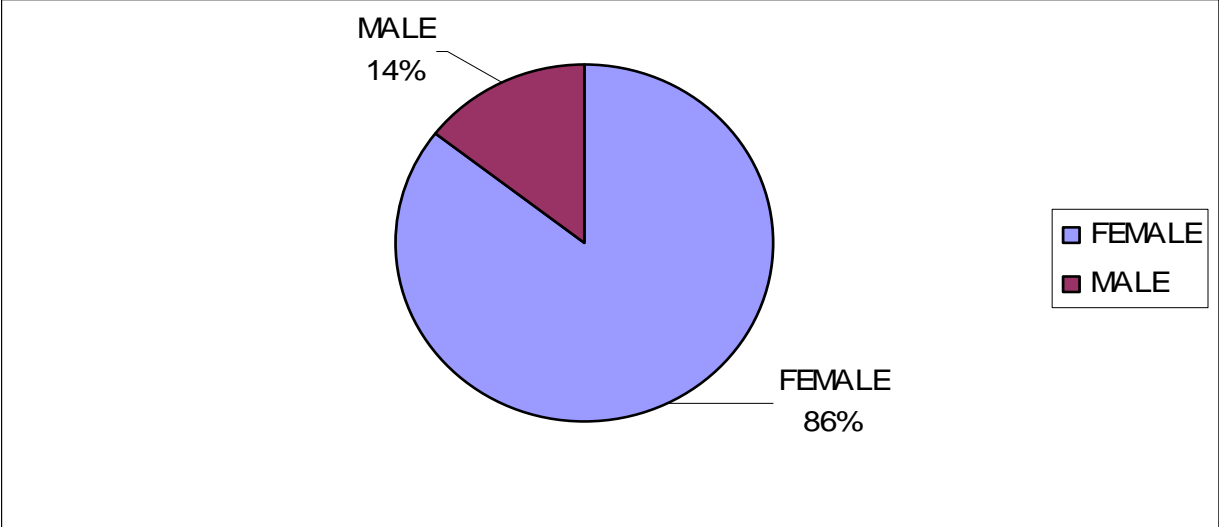
The discussion rooted the formation of gender-based norms and preferences in the private sphere: the unequal division of responsibilities between women and men in the household as the source of stereotypes that reach out into the public sphere to limit women's participation. However, participants frequently pointed out the manner in which these stereotypes are institutionalized and reproduced in the public sphere, highlighting a two-way causality between the public and private spheres. For example, workplaces built around an idealized notion of the typical male breadwinner – one with a wife at home – make it more difficult for both women and men, with significant family responsibilities to succeed professionally. Workplace norms can thus perpetuate existing stereotypes. Beginning discussions of caregiving with a focus on stereotypes which highlight the unequal division of responsibilities between women and men is rooted in both the private and public spheres – is important for future work.

Annex 1: Statistics on participation

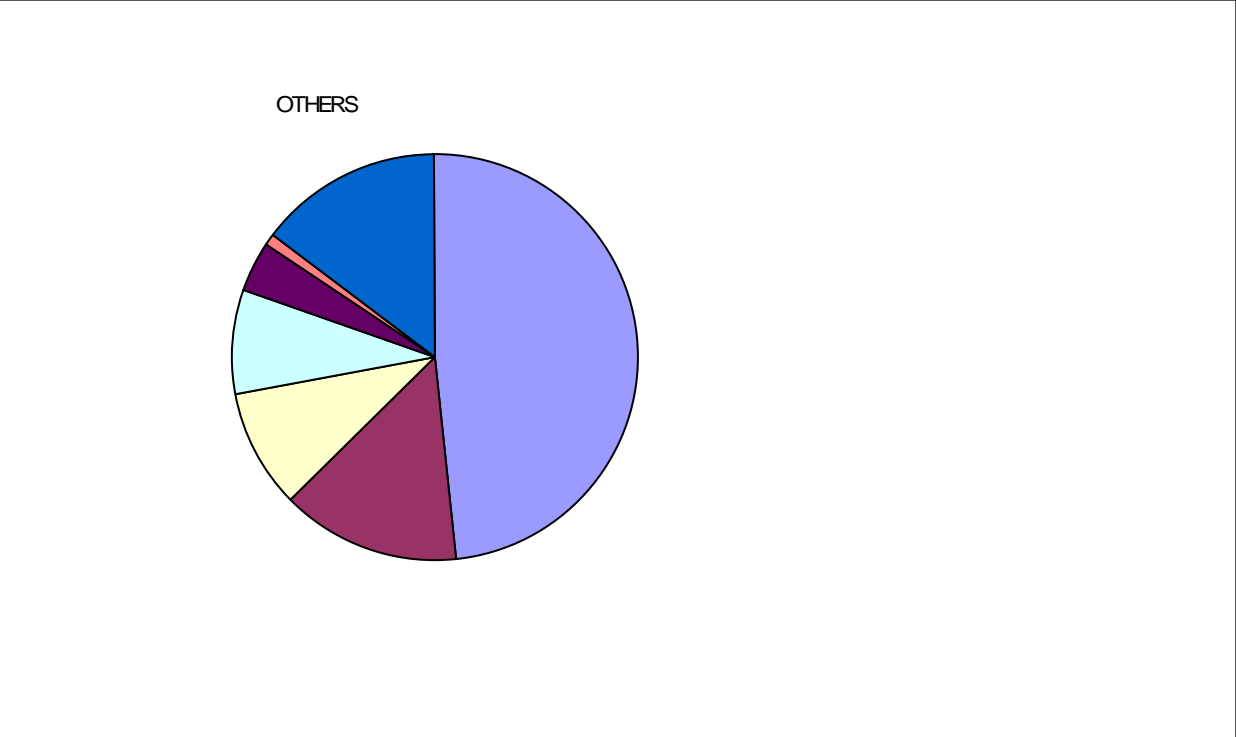
I. Registrants

Total number of registrants: 1,243

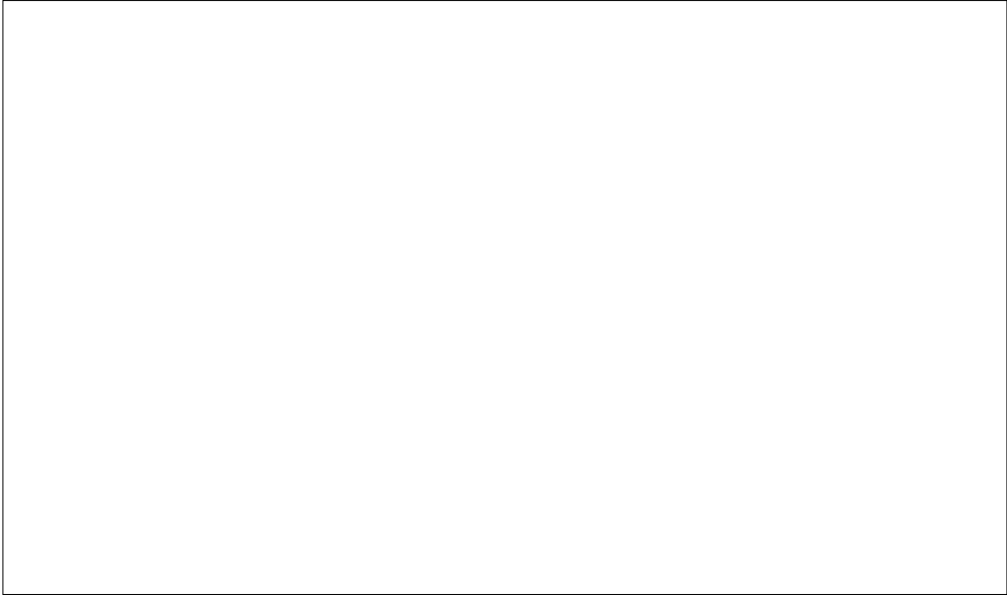
Registrants by sex



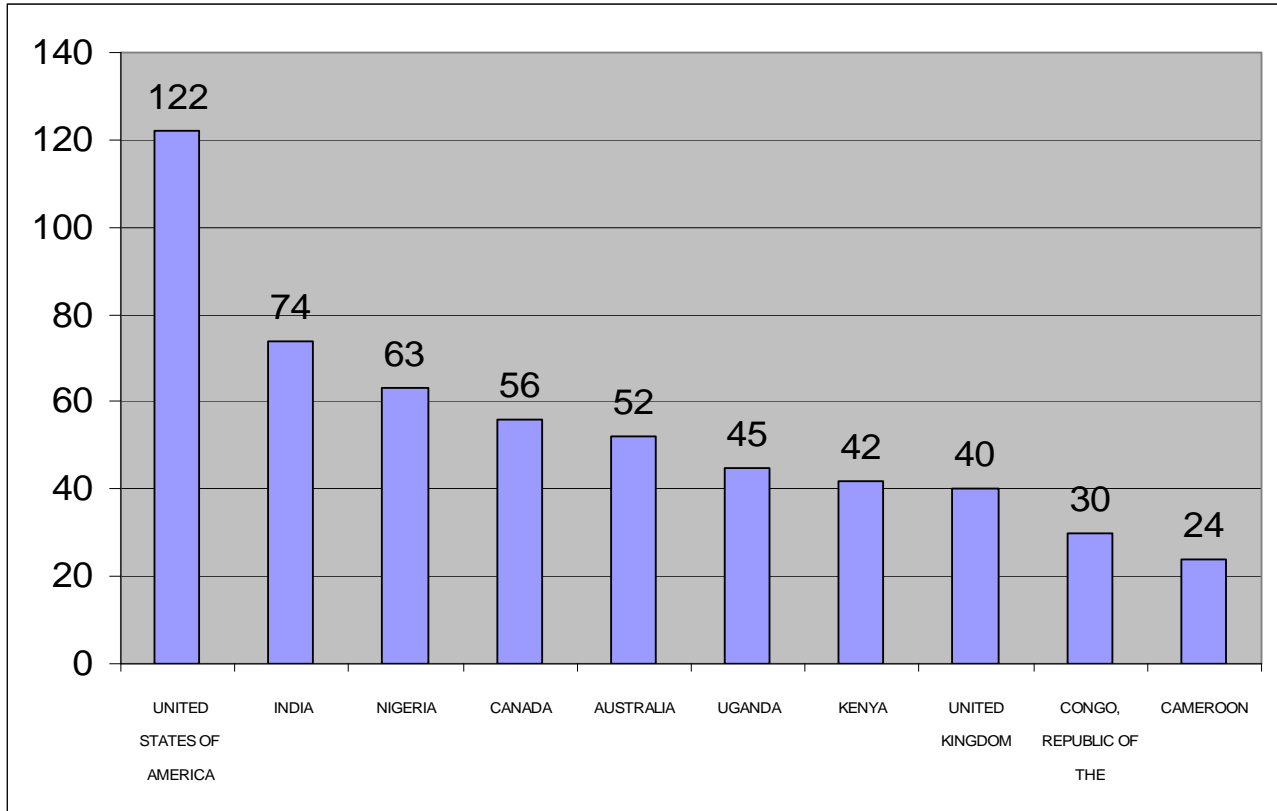
Registrants by affiliation



Geographical distribution of registrants



Top 10 nationalities represented in registrants



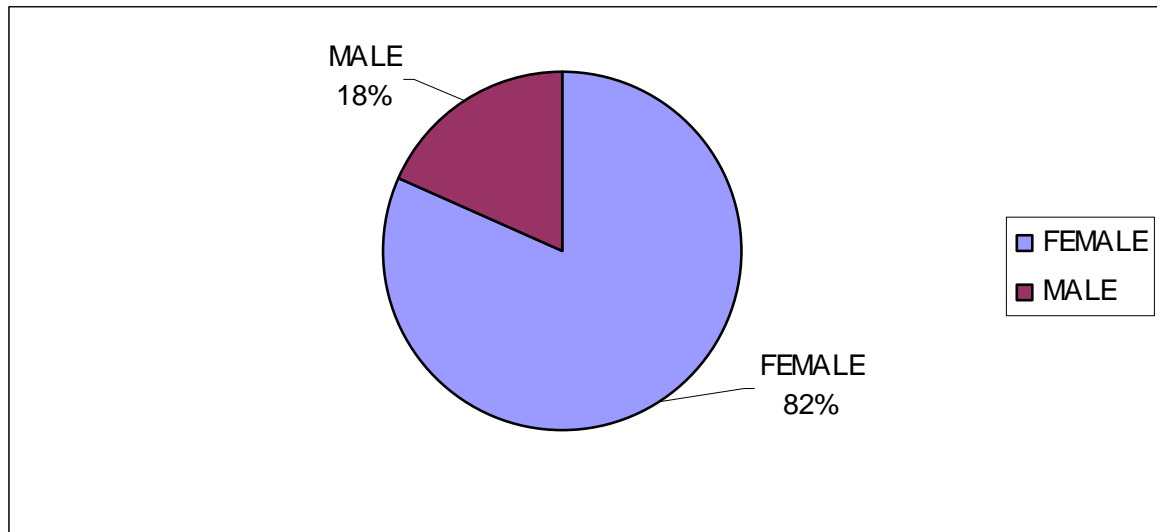
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	122
INDIA	74
NIGERIA	63
CANADA	56
AUSTRALIA	52
UGANDA	45
KENYA	42
UNITED KINGDOM	40
CONGO, REPUBLIC OF THE	30
CAMEROON	24

II. Contributors (i.e., registrants who posted at least 1 message)

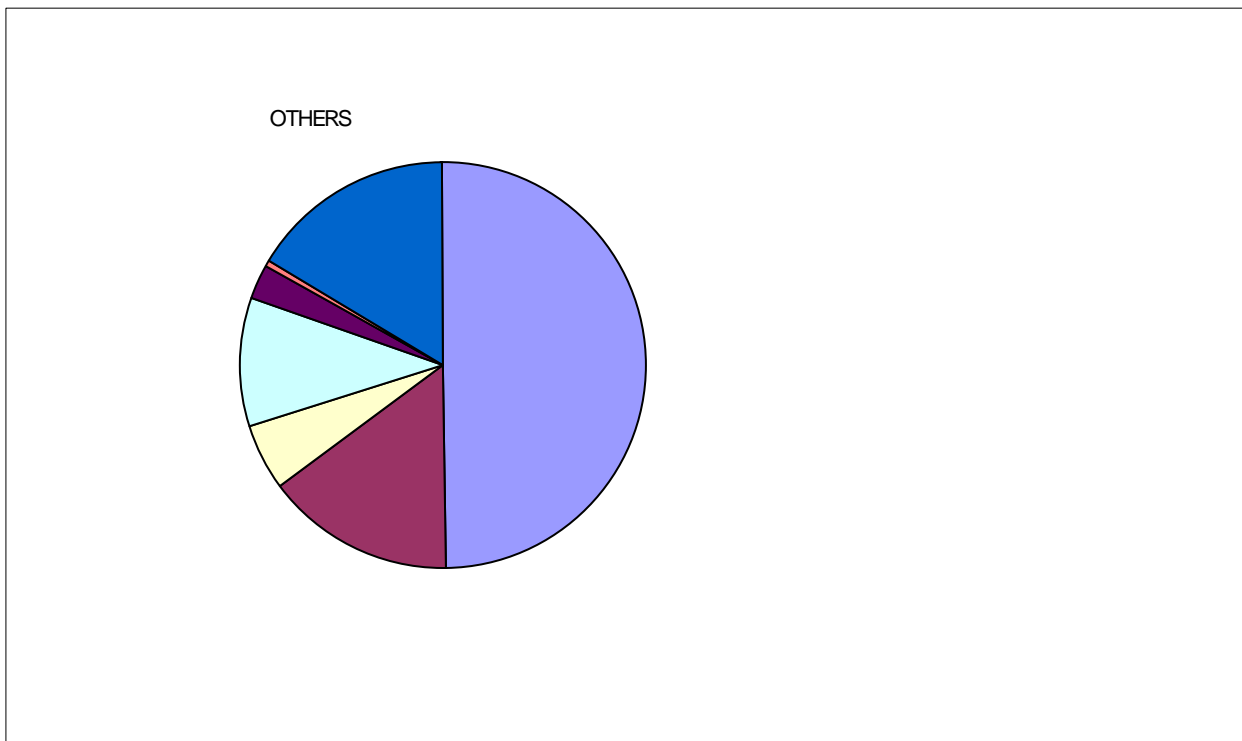
Total number of contributors: **147** (excluding 1 moderator and 3 Administrators)

Total number of postings: **340** (excluding 82 messages posted by the moderator)

Contributors by sex



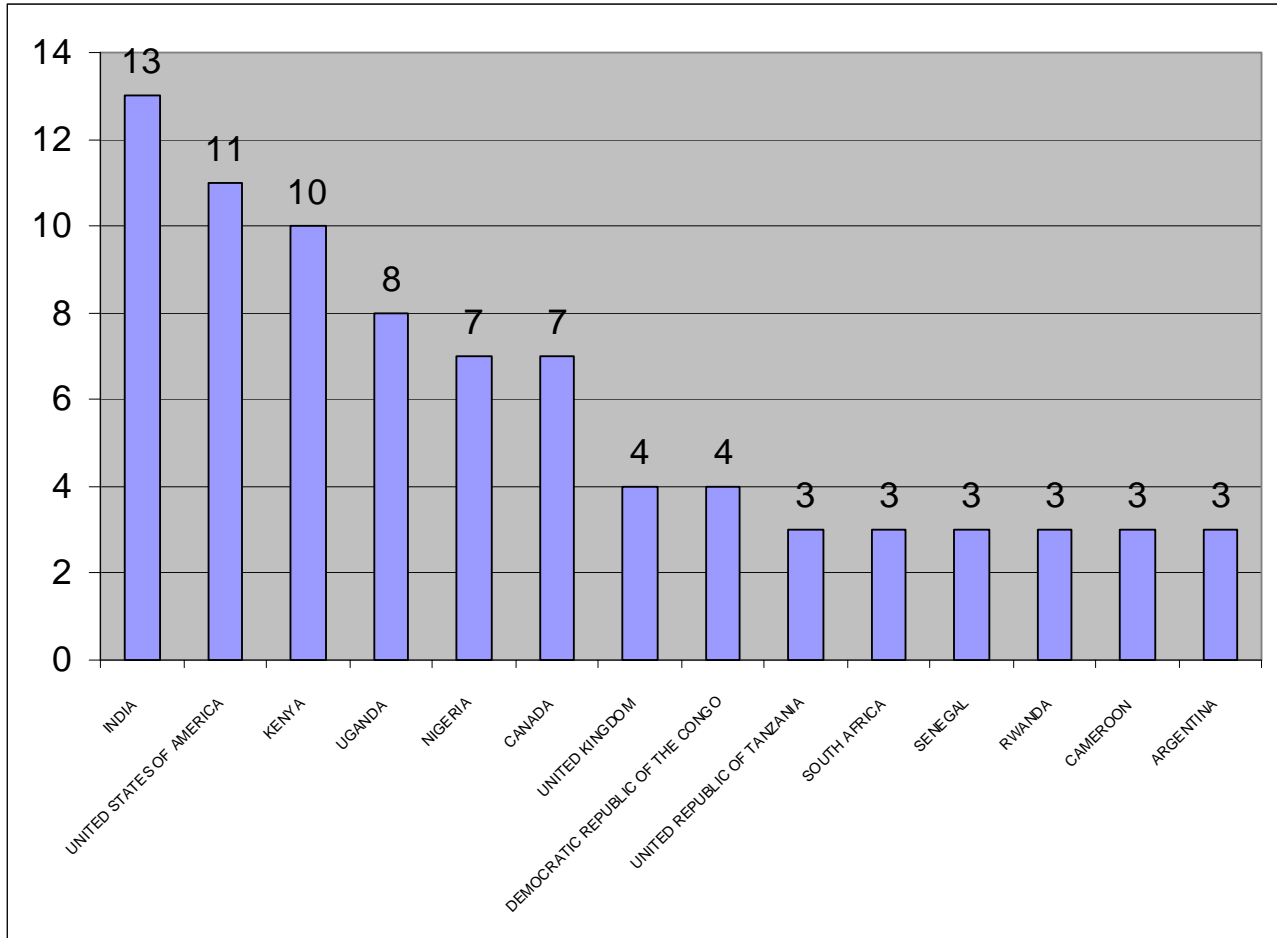
Contributors by affiliation



Geographical distribution of contributors



Top 14 nationalities represented in contributors



INDIA	13
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	11
KENYA	10
UGANDA	8
NIGERIA	7
CANADA	7
UNITED KINGDOM	4
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	4
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA	3
SOUTH AFRICA	3
SENEGAL	3
RWANDA	3
CAMEROON	3
ARGENTINA	3

Annex 2: Number of participants in online discussion by country

I. Registrants

ALGERIA	1	AFGHANISTAN	5
ANGOLA	2	AUSTRALIA	52
BAHRAIN	3	AZERBAIJAN	7
BENIN	3	BANGLADESH	14

Europe	ALBANIA	1	Latin America and the Caribbean	ANTIGUA & BARBUDA	1
	AUSTRIA	10		ARGENTINA	12
	BELGIUM	5		BAHAMAS	1
	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	1		BARBADOS	1
	BULGARIA	2		BOLIVIA	1
	CROATIA	3		BRAZIL	12
	CYPRUS	1		CHILE	4
	CZECH REPUBLIC	2		COLOMBIA	6
	DENMARK	8		CUBA	2
	FINLAND	3		DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	2
	FRANCE	17		ECUADOR	2
	GEORGIA	5		EL SALVADOR	2
	GERMANY	15		GUATEMALA	2
	GREECE	2		GUYANA	2
	HUNGARY	2		HAITI	2
	IRELAND	12		HONDURAS	2
	ITALY	8		JAMAICA	2
	LITHUANIA	2		MEXICO	4
	MALTA	1		PANAMA	1
	MONTENEGRO	1		PARAGUAY	1
	NETHERLANDS	15		PERU	10
	NORWAY	4		ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES	1
	POLAND	6		SURINAME	2
	PORTUGAL	13		TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	2
	FMR. YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA	3		URUGUAY	1
	ROMANIA	1		TOTAL	78
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	5				
SERBIA	1				
SLOVAKIA	5				
SPAIN	21				
SWEDEN	7				
SWITZERLAND	1				
UKRAINE	1	North America	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	122	
UNITED KINGDOM	40		CANADA	56	
TOTAL	224		TOTAL	178	

II. Contributors

Africa	BURKINA FASO	2
	BURUNDI	1
	CAMEROON	3
	DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	4
	EGYPT	1
	ETHIOPIA	2
	GHANA	1
	KENYA	10
	LESOTHO	1
	LIBERIA	2
	MALAWI	1
	MALI	2
	MAURITANIA	1
	NIGER	1
	NIGERIA	7
	RWANDA	3
	SENEGAL	3
	SIERRA LEONNE	1
	SOUTH AFRICA	3
	TOGO	1
	TUNISIA	1
UGANDA	8	
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA	3	
ZAMBIA	2	
TOTAL	64	

Asia and the Pacific	AFGHANISTAN	1
	AUSTRALIA	2
	AZERBAIJAN	1
	BANGLADESH	1
	BHUTAN	1
	CAMBODIA	1
	FIJI	2
	INDIA	13
	KYRGYZSTAN	1
	LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REP.	1
	LEBANON	1
	NEPAL	1
	NEW ZEALAND	2
	PAKISTAN	2
	PAPUA NEW GUINEA	1
	PHILIPPINES	1
	SAMOA	1
	SINGAPORE	2
	SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC	1
	TOTAL	36

AUSTRIA	1
CROATIA	1
DENMARK	1
FRANCE	1
GERMANY	2
IRELAND	1
ITALY	1
NETHERLANDS	1
POLAND	1
PORTUGAL	1
SPAIN	1
UNITED KINGDOM	4
<hr/> TOTAL	<hr/> 16

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Gender and Development Section

<http://www.unescap.org/esid/GAD/index.asp>

The International Labour Organization (ILO)

Gender equality at the heart of decent work, campaign 2008-2009

<http://www.ilo.org/gender/Events/Campaign2008-2009/lang--en/index.htm>

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

<http://www.unece.org/oes/gender/Welcome.html>

Time-use surveys:

<http://www.unece.org/stats/gender/timeuse/Welcome.html>

Gender roles and responsibility sharing:

<http://www.unece.org/stats/gender/genpols/keyinds/families/respshare.htm>

United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Contribución de la economía cuidado a la protección social

[http://www.eclac.cl/cgi-](http://www.eclac.cl/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/5/29975/P29975.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f-st.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl)

[bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/5/29975/P29975.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f-st.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl](http://www.eclac.cl/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/5/29975/P29975.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/p18f-st.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl)

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Gender statistics programmes project

<http://www.escwa.un.org/gsp/index.html>

United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI)

www.ungei.org

United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UNINSTRAW)

Project on global care chains

<http://www.un-instraw.org/en/media-center/e-news/new-project-on-global-care-chains-2.html>

United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

Political and social economy of care

[http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/projects.nsf/\(httpProjectsForProgrammemeArea-en\)/37BD128E275F1F8BC1257296003210EC?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/projects.nsf/(httpProjectsForProgrammemeArea-en)/37BD128E275F1F8BC1257296003210EC?OpenDocument)

United Nations Population Fund

Involving men in promoting gender equality and women's reproductive health

<http://www.unfpa.org/gender/men.htm>

Reading List

1. General Readings

- Goldschmidt-Clermont, Luisella and Elisabetta Pagnossin-Aligisakis (1999) "Households' non-SNA production: Labour time, value of labour and of product, and contribution to extended private consumption," *Review of Income and Wealth* 45(4): 519-529.
- Ironmonger, D.(1996) "Counting outputs, capital inputs and caring labor: Estimating gross household product," *Feminist Economics* 2(3): 37-64.
- Ironmonger, D. (2004) "Bringing up Bobby and Betty: The inputs and outputs of child care time," in Michael Bittman and Nancy Folbre, eds. *Family time: The social organization of care*, New York: Routledge.
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division (2005) *Guide to producing statistics on time-use: Measuring paid and unpaid work*, New York: United Nations.

7. Policy Issues

- Elson, Diane. (1998) "Integrating gender issues into national budgetary policies and procedures: Some policy options," *Journal of International Development*, 10(7): 929-41.
- Gornick, J. and Meyers, M. (2003) *Families that work*, New York: Russell Sage.
- Knijn, T. and Kremer, M. (1997) "Gender and the caring dimension of welfare states: Toward inclusive citizenship," *Social Politics*, 4(3): 328-61.
- Lewis, J. (1992) "Gender and the development of welfare state regimes," *Journal of European Social Policy*, 2(2): 150-73.
- Stark, A. (2005) "Warm hands in cold age--on the need of a new world order of care," *Feminist Economics* 11(2): 7-36.