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UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK IN ETHNIC MINORITY AREAS CURRENT STATUS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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ABBREVIATIONS

UCDW:	Unpaid Care and Domestic Work
CAF:	Centre for Analysis and Forecasting
EM:	Ethnic minority
LFS:	Labour Force Survey
Hh:	Household
FGD:	Focus group discussion

I. Rationale

In Vietnam, the gender gap in the overall labour market has been narrowed significantly in the period 2010-2020, but the gender gap in access to quality employment and career development remained very large: women made up a larger proportion compared to men in the informal employment sector, or in the same occupation, women earned less than men.¹ Is it because women have lower qualifications? Is it because of women's less labour market participation? Or is it because women work fewer hours? It is partially because of the burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women's shoulders. Based on the results of the 2020 Labour Force Survey (LFS), the International Labour Organization in Vietnam (ILO Vietnam) frankly provided a judgment that:

'It would be unrealistic for women to be able to continuously pursue career or capacity building opportunities like men if they are still burdened with household responsibilities and unpaid care work which have always been heavier than those of men.' - ILO 2020.



According to the results of the 2020 LFS, on average, women spent about 20.1 hours per week on unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW), nearly twice as much as men (10.7 hours per week).² In EM communities, this gap is even larger and becomes one of the obstacles preventing EM women from participating equally in the labour market. A study by the World Bank on analysing the drivers of socio-economic development among the ethnic minority (EM) groups with the top and bottom socio-economic development performances showed that UCDW is an important obstacle to the economic development opportunities of EM women.³ *'Social norms – especially regarding women's traditional domestic work roles – impact their participation in off-farm economic activities'* – World Bank 2019. Thus, it is clear that the UCDW burden is one of the factors that increase the gender gap in livelihoods and income in EM areas.

From the perspective of political economy, UCDW is considered an aspect of social reproductive labour where the outflows – women's health and emotion – and the inflows – the family member's health and well-being – are not able to be measured. Meanwhile, the UCDW that women carry out every day is not properly recognised by the members who benefit from it. At the same time, as women participate more in the paid labour market, they still have to stretch themselves to fulfil their role of social reproduction. Therefore, if the daily UCDW being conducted by women is not recognised and reduced, it will continue to be a burden and affect women's health and well-being first, then exhaust social reproductive labour and directly reduce the well-being of families and communities.^{4 5}

¹ https://www.ilo.org/hanoi/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS_774434/lang--en/index.htm

² Ibid

³ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/133521571219588748/pdf/Drivers-of-Socio-Economic-Development-Among-Ethnic-Minority-Groups-in-Vietnam.pdf>

⁴ Shirin M. Rai, Catherine Hoskyns and Dania Thomas; (2014); Depletion; International Feminist Journal of Politics 16(1):86-105 DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2013.789641

⁵ Juanita Elias and Shirin M. Rai; (2019); Feminist everyday political economy: Space, time, and violence; Review of International Studies (2019), 45: 2, 201-220 doi:10.1017/S0260210518000323

Vietnam has made reducing the UCDW burden one of the goals in the national action program to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development issued in May 2017 (Target 5.4). This target clearly states the commitment to: *‘Ensure fair sharing of domestic work and family care; recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through improved provision of public services, infrastructures, social protection policies, family support services, and child care services.’*⁶ The Government of Vietnam has determined that realising this target is crucial to achieving the dual goals of equity and efficiency, which helps sustainably increase incomes and contributes to poverty reduction. This action program has specific indicators on reducing gender gaps in UCDW. Recently, the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the period 2021-2030 also sets out targets for bridging such a gap.⁷ However, there has been no national program orienting on how to achieve these targets.

RECOGNISE, REDUCE AND REDISTRIBUTE (referred to as the 3R framework)⁸ is a synchronous approach to address UCDW issue that many organizations, including CARE International in Vietnam, apply in their interventions. This is also the approach that should be applied to relevant programs of government ministries and departments for Vietnam to fulfil its targets of reducing the UCDW burden.

‘Recognise’ is providing information to help the society properly realise the current status of the UCDW burden distribution among family members and the value of this type of work. ‘Reduce’ is finding evidence proving the need to reduce the housework burden and proposing solutions to improve the problem. ‘Redistribute’ is finding evidence and solutions for changing social stereotypes, increasing the men’s roles, and improving the availability of and access to care services.

With the desire to explore the current situation and analyse the overall picture of the UCDW in EM and mountainous areas in the 8-month period, starting from April 2021 to the end of December 2021, CARE International in Vietnam and the Centre for Analysis and Forecasting (CAF) under the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) and a number of independent consultants carried out studies on each component of the 3R framework. The ‘Study on the current status of UCDW’ was to explore the current status and value the UCDW among EM communities, and understand the impacts of gender norms on this status. *The reduction of workload was studied through the ‘Rapid assessment of the feasibility of household tools and appliances that reduce the time on UCDW in EM and mountainous areas’ and the study on ‘Assessment of the gender responsiveness of infrastructure’.* The most important care service which has the most impact on the time women do housework is child care service, especially for under-2 children. CARE also learned about this service via the *‘Research and Proposed Types of Childcare in Rural EM Areas’*. These studies consist of household surveys, group consultations, face-to-face individual consultations with more than 1,000 participants from two provinces of Ha Giang and Lai Chau and phone-based interviews with 1,000 EM households across the country. The household survey applied the 24h clock method to measure each individual’s time allocation to routine activities 24 hours before the interview. This report summarises the key findings of the above-mentioned studies and proposes some solutions to realise the targets set by the National Action Program to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This integrated research report uses the UN Women and ILO’s concept of UCDW, which defines that, ***UCDW includes indirect UCDW such as housework, cooking and food preparation, cleaning, washing, fuel and water collecting; and direct UCDW such as caring for children, the elderly, the sick and the disabled.***

⁶ <https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/Thuong-mai/Quyết-dinh-622-QĐ-TTg-2017-Ke-hoach-hanh-dong-quoc-gia-thuc-hien-Chuong-trinh-nghi-su-2030-348831.aspx>

⁷ National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021- 2030

⁸ McKinsey Global Institute analysis. Anna Fälth and Mark Blackden, “Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction: Unpaid Care Work”, October 2009, UNDP Policy Brief.

II. KEY FINDINGS

RECOGNISE

- 5 hours is the average time in a day that EM women have to spend on UCDW, which is 2.1 hours more than EM men.
- The 3 types of UCDW that EM women spend most of their time include taking care of children, the elderly, the sick, and the disabled (30.3% of the total UCDW time), cooking and cleaning up after meals (19.1%), and going to collect firewood (13.2%).
- Through UCDW, EM women contribute significantly to household income. On average, an EM woman contributes about VND2.7 million to the monthly income of an EM household, equivalent to about 52.4% of the household's total income.
- With an EM household, the replacement cost of direct care activities is quite high, especially childcare services. This cost can be up to one-quarter of the average household income. In other words, in EM families, the caregivers contribute an amount equal to 1/4 of the total household income.



REDUCE

- On average in a day, if EM women spend 1 hour more doing UCDW, then they will have to reduce by 0.63 hours on paid work, or 0.6 hours on the reproduction of labour, or 0.4 hours on educational and social activities.
- EM women's paid work time remains equal to that of men (34% of the daily time), even though women's UCDW time is almost twice that of men.

Increased use of household electric appliances helps reduce EM women's time and efforts on UCDW

- The number of domestic electrical appliances supporting UCDW in the household is linearly related to EM women's time spent on UCDW, every one additional device will lead to a reduction of 0.14-0.21 hours a day, which is about 51-76 hours a year.
- In EM areas, using improved wood cookstoves can amazingly reduce the time EM women spend on cooking and collecting firewood by an estimated 30-45 minutes a day, which is about 182-274 hours a year.

Improved quality of infrastructure and public services helps reduce EM women's time on UCDW

- 23 minutes a day, equivalent to nearly 2.7 hours a week, or 140 hours a year, is the women's reduced time on UCDW since the operation of the commune and village-level infrastructures in the period 2016-2020.
- 5 minutes a day, 35 minutes a week, or more than 30 hours a year, is the time that each EM woman can spend more on paid work after the operation of the infrastructures.

REDISTRIBUTE

- 41 minutes is the average time on UCDW a woman can save in a day if one under-6 child in the family attends school.
- 7 out of 10 ethnic minorities hold the norm that housework and care work are women's responsibilities and 5 out of 10 agree with the norm that housework is not men's responsibility. It is these norms that are preventing the sharing of the UCDW burden in households.

III. Current status of UCDW time allocation among EM women and men



In order to explore the current status and value the UCDW in EM communities, and understand the impacts of gender norms on this status in Ha Giang and Lai Chau, the research team interviewed nearly 800 people from 14 EM groups. Based on the use-of-time patterns of EM women and men in each ethnic group, the EM population in this study was divided into six groups based on similarity in their trend and pattern of time use in a day i.e. (1) Kinh, (2) Dao, Tay, and La Chi, (3) Pa Then and Kho Mu, (4) Giay and Mong, (5) Thai, Muong and Nung, and (6) Lao, Lu and Khang.

In all ethnic groups, women are overwhelmingly the primary managers of UCDW in the family

The comparison of the level of engagement in UCDW among different ethnic groups shows that in any of the above six ethnic groups, women are mainly responsible for UCDW in the family. While 100% of Kinh women living in the same area did housework in the past 24 hours (before the interview), this rate was only 96.4% among EM women, ranging from 94.9% to 98.4% in different ethnic groups. 88.9% and 87.6% of Kinh and EM men did housework in the past 24 hours respectively (Figure 1).

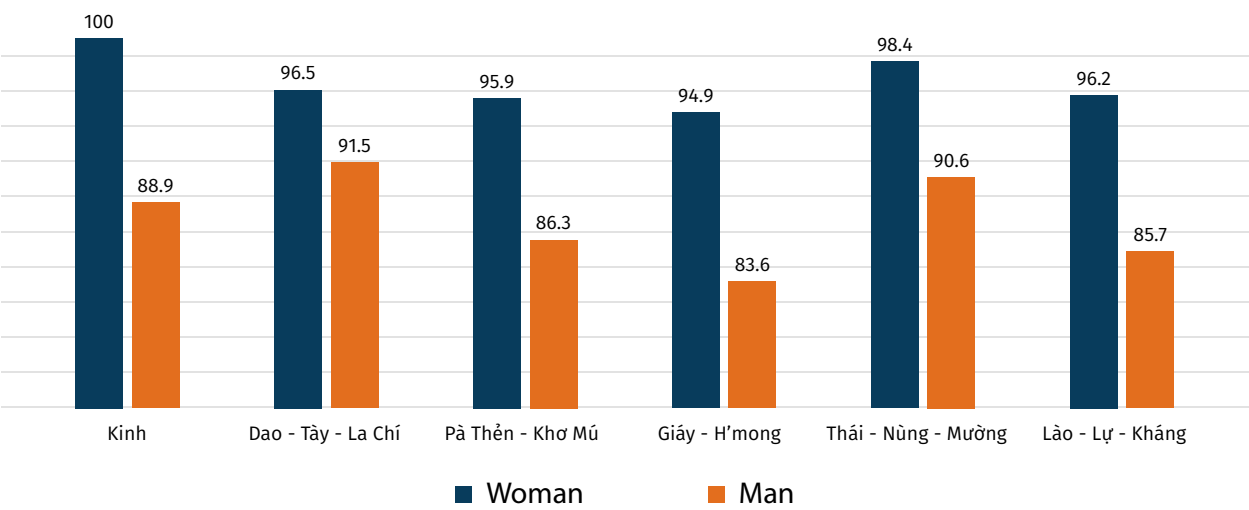


Figure 1: Gender difference in doing UCDW in the past 24 hours, by ethnicity (%)

The study results show an insignificant difference in women’s levels of engagement in UCDW among different ethnic groups. However, there is a pretty clear difference in men’s levels of participation in UCDW in some ethnic groups: Dao - Tay - La Chi men have the highest rate of doing UCDW i.e. 91.6%, while this rate among Giay –H’Mong men is only 83.6%.

Men tend to share more direct UCDW than indirect UCDW

Results of analysis by type of UCDW including direct UCDW (caring for the elderly, children, the sick, and disabled) and indirect UCDW (housework) show that the percentage of EM people doing indirect UCDW such as housework (in the past 24 hours) is lower than that of Kinh people living in the same area (89.4% vs 92.6%), but EM people do more direct UCDW than Kinh people (64.2% vs 60.4%) (Figures 2, 3).

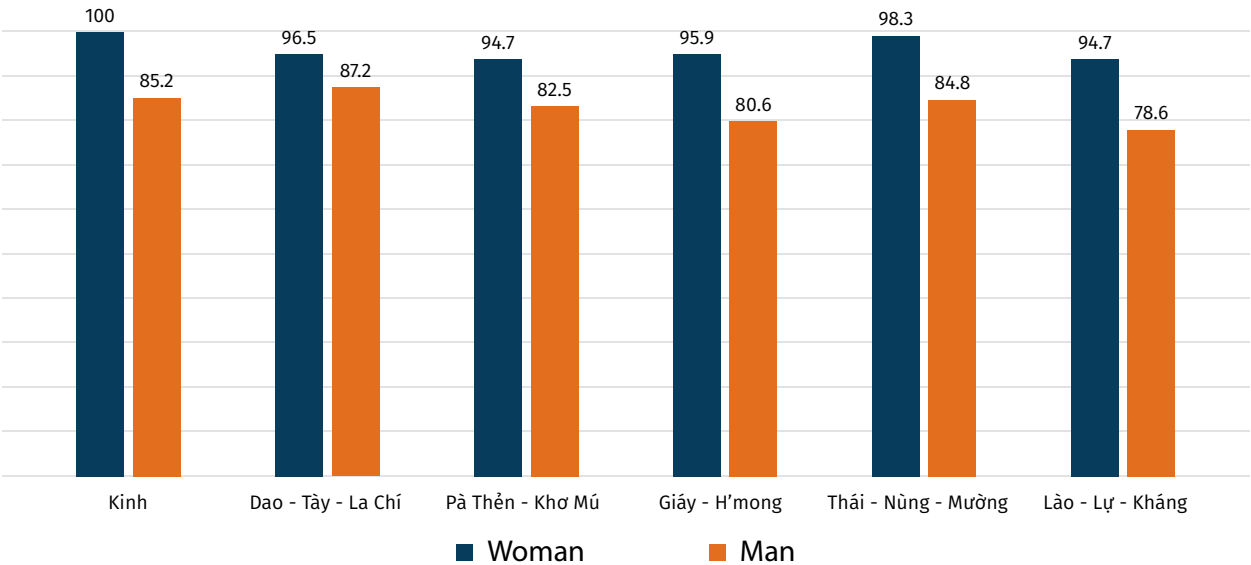


Figure 2: Gender gap in **indirect UCDW**, by ethnicity (%)

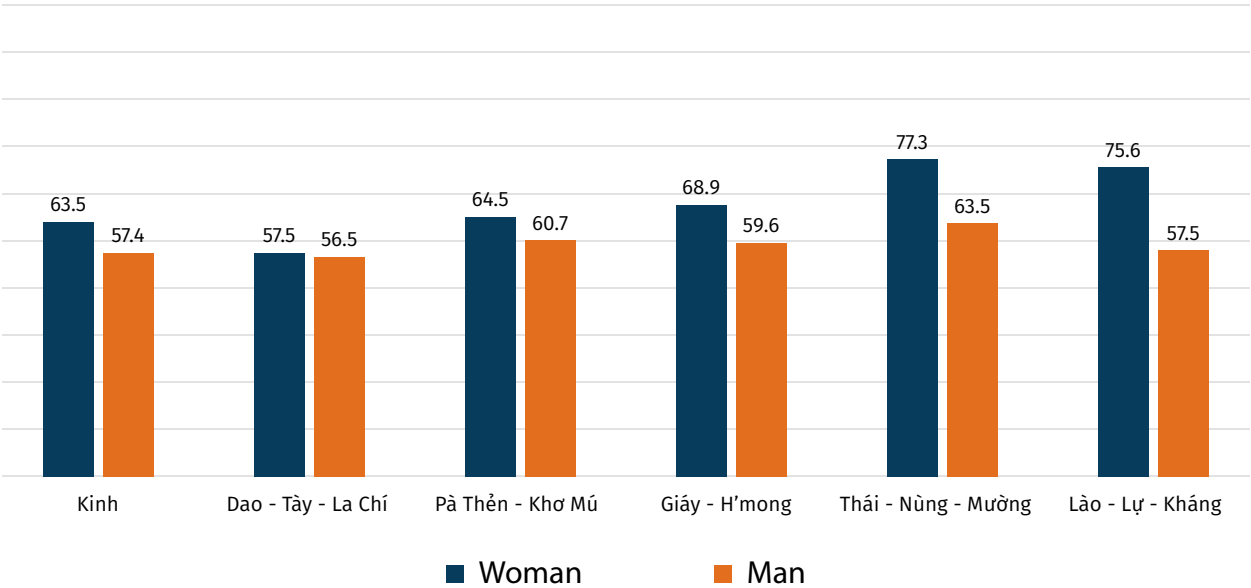


Figure 3: Gender gap **indirect UCDW**, by ethnicity (%)

In particular, the results of gender gap analysis in doing direct UCDW and indirect UCDW show that men, regardless of ethnic group, share less indirect UCDW, but participate more actively in the caring of children, the elderly and the sick. In the groups of Dao-Tay-La Chi, and Pa Then-KhMu, women and men do direct UCDW at almost the same levels (respectively by ethnic group: 57.5% (women) and 56.5% (men), 64.5% (women) and 60.7% (men)).

The total UCDW time of EM women is nearly twice as higher than that of men

The analysis of women’s and men’s time-of-day on UCDW shows that the average total time spent on UCDW by women is almost twice higher than that by men. Figure 4 below demonstrates the time spent on UCDW by women and men in different ethnic groups in the Ha Giang and Lai Chau EM areas.

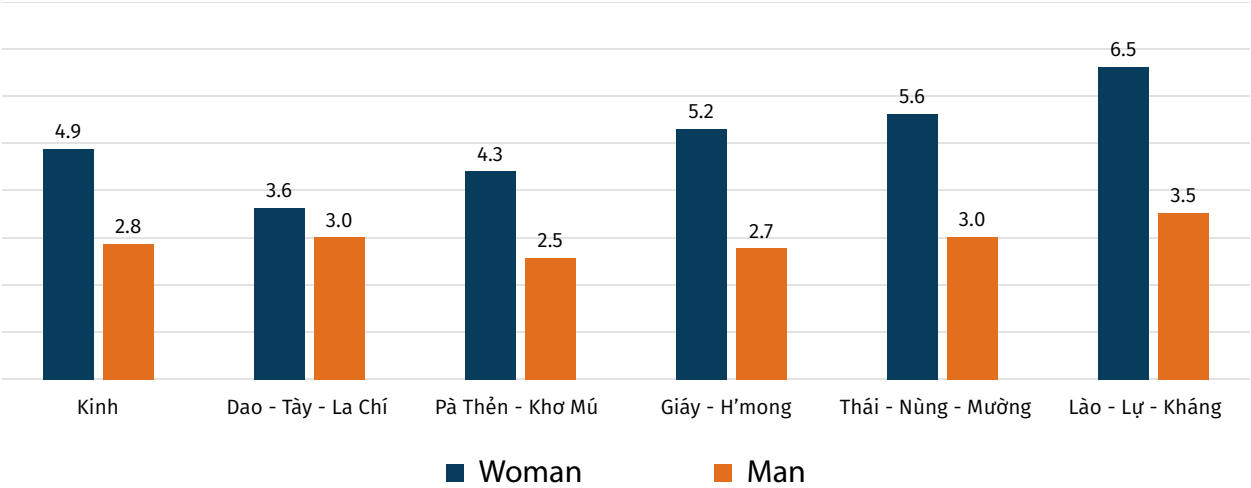


Figure 4: Gender gap in UCDW time amount, by ethnicity (hours)

The results show that on average, an EM woman in the survey area has to spend about 5 hours a day on UCDW, which is 2.1 hours longer than men. In which, women from the Lao - Lu - Khang group spend the most time i.e., about 6.5 hours a day on UCDW, followed by Thai - Nung women (5.6 hours), Giay - Mong women (5.2 hours), Pa Then - Kho Mu women (4.3 hours), and lastly Dao women and Tay women who spend the least time i.e., about 3.6 hours a day on UCDW.

A comparison of men’s UCDW time across different ethnic groups shows that where women have to spend less time on UCDW, the men’s participation is higher. Men of the Dao and Tay groups do UCDW more actively (around 85% of the time the women in the same ethnic group spend on UCDW) than those of other ethnic groups (around 51-58% of the time the women in the same ethnic group spend on UCDW). Among the Kinh group living in the same area, the time spent by men on UCDW is only about 56% of women’s time on UCDW.

The top three UCDW taking up the most time of EM women include caring for children, the elderly, the sick, and the disabled (30.3% of the total UCDW time), cooking and cleaning up after meals (19.1%), and collecting firewood (13.2%).

Regarding the types of UCDW among the ethnic minorities, the research results show that direct UCDW, particularly child care, requires the most time of both EM men and women, followed by cooking and cleaning up after meals, then collecting firewood, washing, cleaning the house/garden, and shopping for food and family stuff (Figure 5).

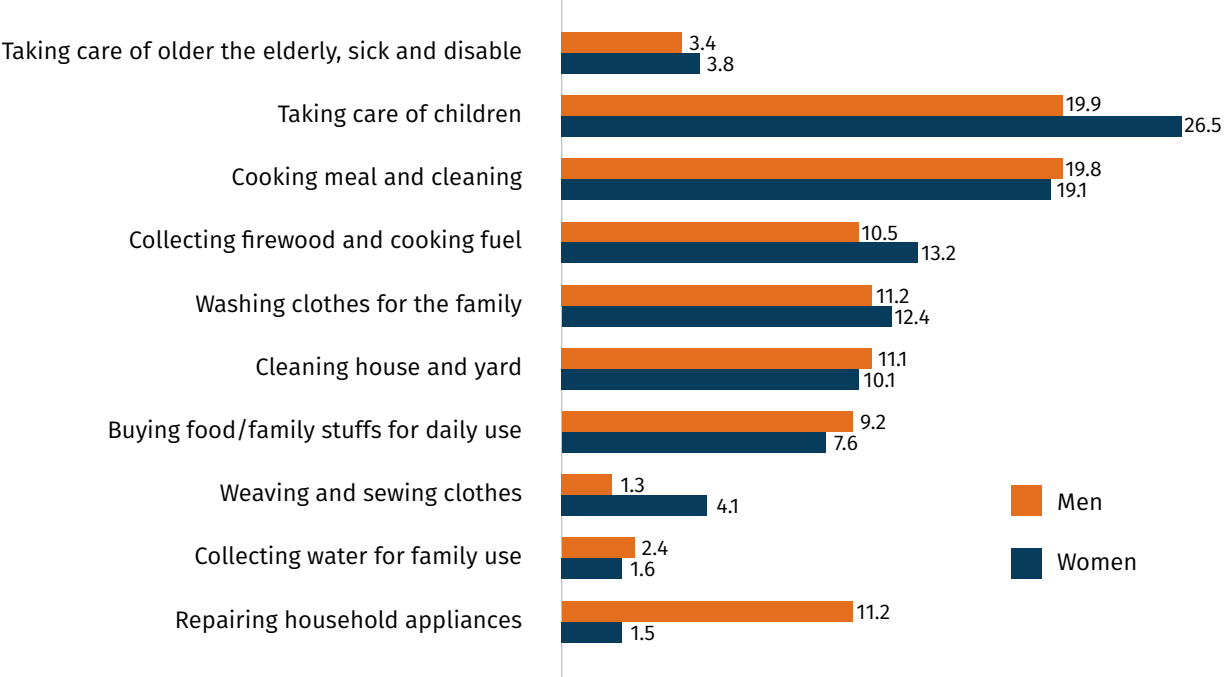


Figure 5: Gender gap in time spent on each type of UCDW (% out of total UCDW time in a day, by gender)



On average in a day, an EM woman has to spend around 40 minutes collecting firewood. Women of Lao - Lu - Khang ethnic groups have to spend more than an hour a day; Thai, Nung-Muong, H'Mong, and Giay women have to spend about 50 minutes a day; Pa Then women spend about 42 minutes a day; and Dao - Tay - Kho Mu women spend the least amount of time i.e., only about 15-18 minutes a day on collecting firewood.

“ I have to go to the forest to collect firewood every day because I can only carry a bundle of about 20kg of firewood, enough to cook three meals a day. I will need twice as much firewood on the days when I have to cook animal feed. ”

FGD in Xuan Hoa, Ha Giang.

The analysis of EM men's time on UCDW shows that they also spend most of their UCDW time on the above three types of UCDW, in addition, EM men spend, on average, 20 minutes a day on repairing household appliances. This is the only UCDW type where men spend more time than women.

In some ethnic groups where the practices of embroidery and self-tailoring clothes for family members to wear on ceremonies or Tet occasions are maintained, such as the Lu and Mong groups, women also have to spend a lot of time on such work: on average, a Lu or Mong woman has to spend 1 hour and 15 minutes a day to tailor clothes for her family members.

“

Only women do this work. We sew new clothes for all family members, one set for each member to celebrate Tet. It takes about 2-3 months to complete a set. Sewing machines can save sewing time, but [we] have to embroider manually.

FGD in Pa Pe village (Lu ethnic group in Lai Chau)

”

IV. The value of UCDW for ethnic minorities - from an economic and social perspective

The replacement cost method is used to determine the economic value of the UCDW. Replacement costs are the costs a household might have to pay for UCDW support services in the family if family members do not do these works. This analysis uses the average salary of domestic workers to calculate replacement costs. Specifically, the replacement cost is calculated by the average hourly wage of a domestic worker and the number of hours that family members spend on UCDW. In the survey area in Ha Giang and Lai Chau provinces, the services of domestic help, child care, and sick people care are not common, the average cost of domestic help services (house cleaning, cooking, laundry) is about VND15,000/hour, the cost of services including both domestic help and child care is about VND18,500/hour. As such, the replacement costs are calculated as the hourly wage of these services multiplied by the number of hours the family members spend doing housework. However, the replacement cost calculation results are for reference only because the estimate of service costs is very relative, and because of the small number of observations due to the reality that the domestic help services in EM areas such as Lai Chau and Ha Giang are not popular.

With UCDW, on average, an EM woman contributes about VND2.7 million to the monthly income of an EM household, equivalent to about 52.4% of the total income of the household.

The analysis of the replacement costs of UCDW in general compared to the total income of households shows that, in the surveyed EM areas, on average, an EM household will have to pay up to 67.3% of household income for the cost of UCDW support services if no family members are doing these tasks. It also means that these members, with UCDW, contribute about 67.3% of the total household income.

When comparing the UCDW contributions to household income between women and men, women contribute quite a lot to household income, accounting for more than half of total household income (Figure 6).

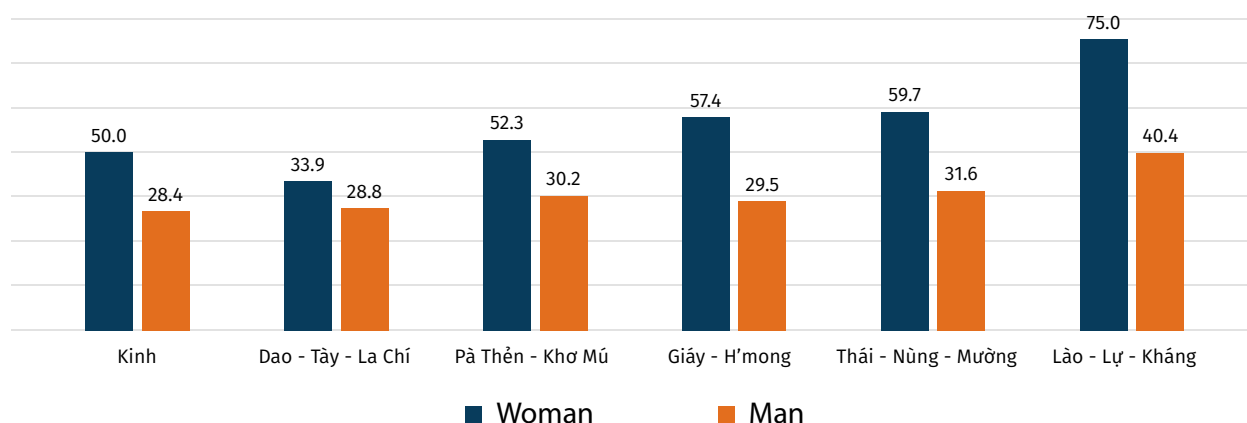


Figure 6: Estimated economic contribution of UCDW to average total income of household via replacement cost, by ethnicity (% of average total household income)

Survey results in Lai Chau and Ha Giang EM areas show that Lao - Lu - Khang women's UCDW contributes the most to the household's income, up to 75% of the total income of the households, followed by Thai - Nung - Muong women (60%), Giay - Mong women (57%), Pa Then - Kho Mu women (52%), and lastly Dao - Tay - La Chi women (34%).

Replacement costs of direct UCDW account for one-quarter of the average total income of an EM household

Data analysis from the survey area also indicates that the average replacement cost of direct UCDW including caring for children, the elderly, the disabled, and the sick in an EM household is very high, accounting for about 23% of the average household income. Except for the Dao-Tay-La Chi group having the lowest replacement cost of direct UCDW (12.5% of total household income), this cost is high in all other ethnic groups, accounting for one-third to one-quarter of the total income of the household (Figure 7).

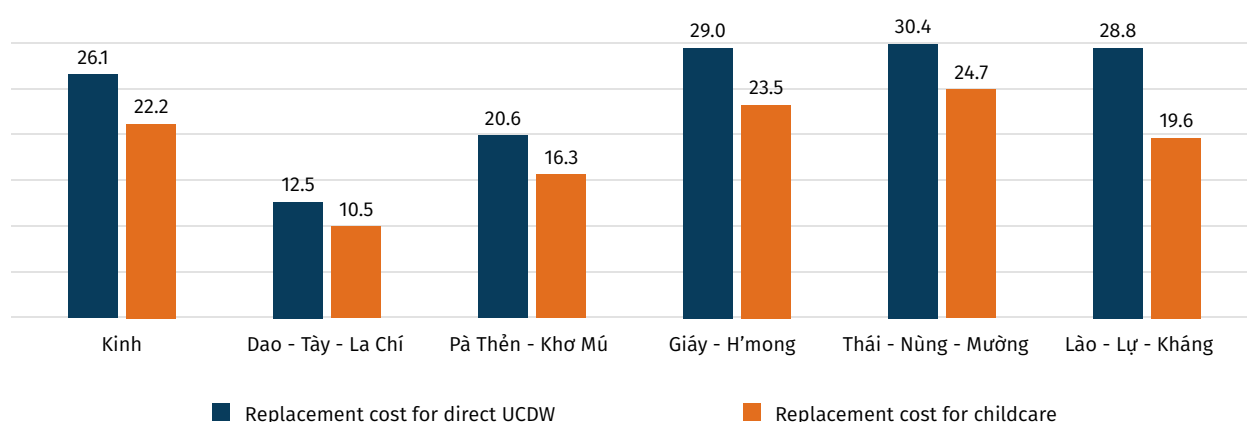


Figure 7: Estimated percentage of replacement costs of direct UCDW out of household's average total income, by ethnicity (% of household's average total income)

Among the types of UCDW in general, the replacement cost for child care is the highest cost that an EM household has to pay (if no family member is doing it). This cost accounts for about 14.3% of the total household income (ranging from 10.8 - 24.7% with different ethnic groups). In other words, in EM households, the caregivers contribute an amount equal to one-quarter to one-fifth of the households' total income.

V. Women’s improved choice by reducing UCDW burden

On average in a day, if EM women spend 1 hour more doing UCDW, then they will have to reduce by 0.63 hours on paid work, or 0.6 hours on the reproduction of labour,⁹ or 0.4 hours on educational and social activities.¹⁰

The analysis of the relationship between the UCDW time and paid work time of ethnic minorities in the survey area shows that EM women always try to arrange an available time to do paid work, however, UCDW is a huge barrier. Figure 8 below demonstrates the difference between EM men and women in their time used on paid work, compared with their time used on UCDW.



The less time spent on UCDW, the more time EM women can spend on the paid work. When time spent on UCDW is less than 2 hours, nearly 88% of EM women do paid work in more than 8 hours, and this percentage decreases as their time on UCDW increases.

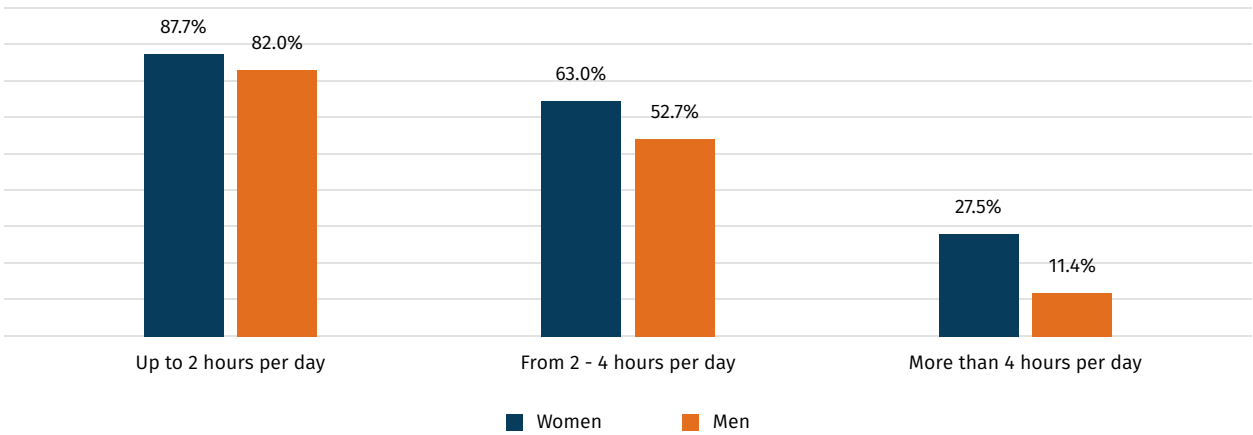


Figure 8: Percentage of men and women reporting that they usually spend over 8 hours on paid work, compared to their UCDW time (by groups of time use)

It is particularly noteworthy that, despite the similar time amounts spent on UCDW of women and men, women still spend more time on paid work than men. In Figure 8, the percentages of women doing paid work for more than 8 hours are higher than those of men, with all groups of time doing UCDW. Even if the time spent on UCDW of EM women is higher than 4 hours/day, the percentage of women doing paid work over 8 hours a day is higher than that of men (27.5% vs 11.4%).

EM women’s time doing paid work is still similar to that of men (accounting for 34% of the total daily time) although their time spent on UCDW is nearly twice that of men.

⁹ The activities that reproduce labor in this study include sleeping/resting, personal hygiene and eating, relaxing (watching TV, doing sports activities, surfing the internet, reading books, newspapers...).

¹⁰ The educational and social activities in this study include 6 different activities: trainings, village or group meetings, volunteer activities in the community, attending weddings, funerals and festivals in the villages, interacting with relatives, communicating with local authorities.

Figures 9, and 10 below show that women’s time spent on UCDW is almost twice as much as men’s UCDW time (19.3% vs 11.6%) while women’s and men’s time amounts spent on paid work are still relatively equal (about 34% of the total daily time).

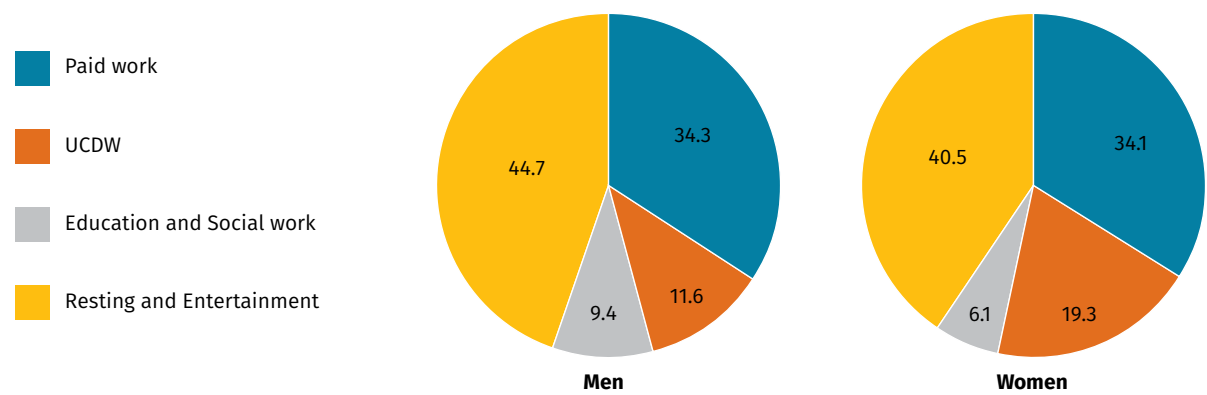


Figure 9: Percentage of time allocation for different activities in the past 24h by EM men and women (%)

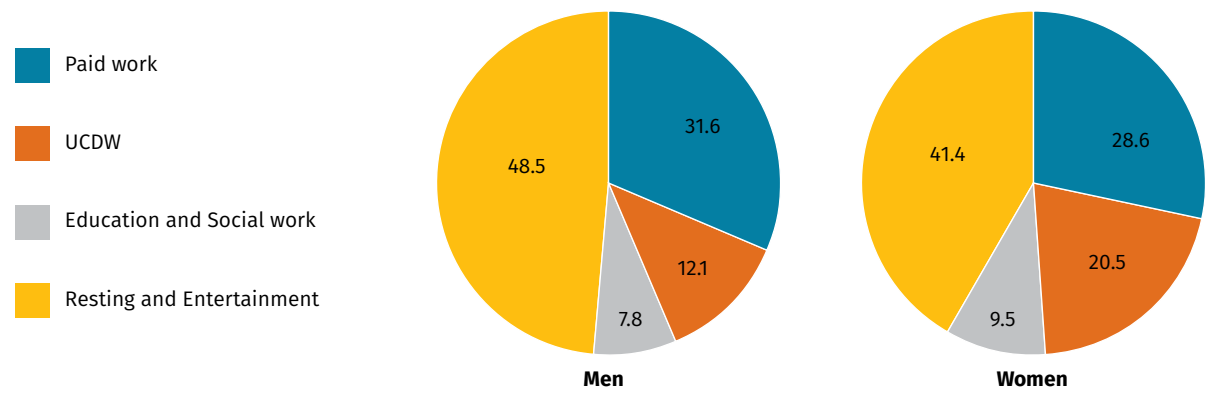


Figure 10: Percentage of time allocation for different activities in the past 24h by Kinh men and women (%)

For the Kinh group living in the same area with the ethnic minorities, women’s time on UCDW is also nearly twice as much as men’s UCDW time, but the time they spend doing paid work is less than men’s time (28.6% of total women’s time, compared to 31.6% of total men’s time).

As the main breadwinners of the families, in all ethnic groups, EM women’s time on paid work is equal to that of men. On average, EM women’s time on paid work equals 95.4% of the men’s time on paid work. Then, in the same amount of time i.e., 24 hours a day, how do women allocate time to be able to both fulfil their roles and participate in social activities and take rest/reproduce labour? Research results show that EM women have very limited time for resting and social activities, which is equal to about 90% of the rest time of men. (Figure 9, Figure 11).

EM women’s time on UCDW is no less than that of Kinh women, but EM women’s time on paid work (34.1%) is much higher than that of Kinh women (28.6%), EM women’s time amounts on resting, recreation, education and social activities are also less (Figure 10).

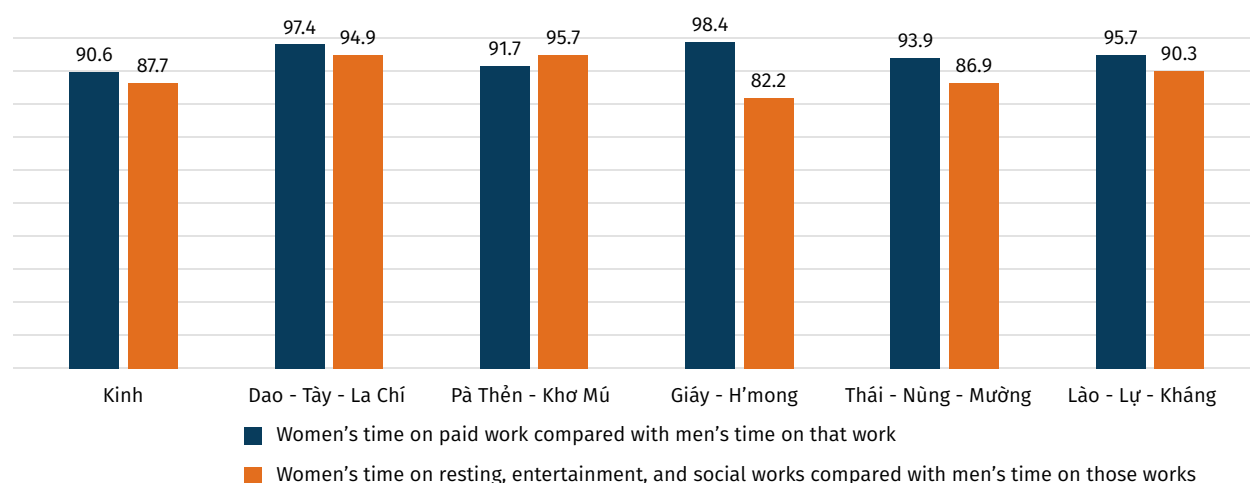


Figure 11: Comparison between the time on UCDW and resting and social activities of women and men (%)

Thus, the time amounts EM women spend on social and educational activities as well as labour reproduction activities are all affected because they spend a lot of time on UCDW. Compared to men of the same ethnic group or Kinh women living in the same area, EM women’s time on these activities is lower.

These results explain why nearly 89% of EM women in the survey area said that if the time spent on UCDW decreased, they would spend that time resting and socializing. Only 9.7% said they would use the extra time to do paid work, and more than 1% would spend that time on self-study activities to learn more knowledge, skills or acquire more information.¹¹ Obviously, the need for rest is also obvious to EM women. This need, according to a rights-based approach, is a fundamental human right that needs to be guaranteed, so there must be solutions to realise the right/need, thereby helping improve women’s spiritual life and improve the health and well-being of EM women, increasing the quality of social reproduction of labour, and bringing prosperity to families and communities.



¹¹ CARE, 2022. Research report ‘Gender Responsiveness of Infrastructure and the Relationship between Infrastructure and Women’s Unpaid Care Work’

VI. Reduced UCDW burden for women in EM areas



UCDW-supported household appliances such as electric cookers, gas cookers, electric kettles, electric rice cookers, refrigerators, and washing machines significantly reduce the time spent doing UCDW by EM women.

Investing in equipment that reduces time and labour, specifically food processing tools, and cooking and washing tools, has a direct impact on the reduction in women’s UCDW time. Previous research data show that even in the period 1960-1990, women’s time on UCDW decreased significantly in places where alternative or labour-saving devices such as washing machines, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners and cooking appliances were used.¹² The results from the survey in Ha Giang and Lai Chau also show this linear relationship.

The number of home appliances also leads to a reduction in the women’s total UCDW time. The women’s UCDW time tends to decrease as the number of home appliances increases.¹³ Specifically, every one additional home appliance will lead to a reduction in women’s UCDW time of 0.14-0.21 hours a day.

“*These appliances [household electrical appliances] such as electric kettles, rice cookers can help us cook very quickly, and more importantly, we can do many things at the same time to save time.*

FGD in Thuong Binh, Ha Giang.

”

At the time of the study, over 80% of EM women surveyed in Lai Chau and Ha Giang said that their families possessed some basic cooking appliances such as electric rice cookers, or electric kettles. However, the percentage of households having washing machines remains low, only about 24.7%. Women participating in the group discussion also estimated that household electrical appliances such as rice cookers, electric kettles and gas cookers could reduce their cooking time by about 30-45 minutes/day because they could do multiple tasks at once to reduce the total UCDW time.

¹² Greenwood, J., A. Seshadri and M. Yorukoglu (2005), ‘Engines of Liberation’, The Review of Economic Studies, Vol. 72/1, pp. 109-133.

¹³ This variable is calculated by the sum of all home appliances in the household related to UCDW including electric cook/stove, gas stove/induction cooker, constructed water tank, stainless steel water tank with a capacity of 500ml or more, electric kettle, refrigerator/freezer, microwave/oven and washing machine. The more appliances a family has, the higher the value of its support for CVCSKL is. The value of this variable varies from 1 to 8.

In addition, the survey results in Ha Giang and Lai Chau on the actual status of stoves and fuels show that the renovation of wood stoves will significantly change women’s time and effort in collecting firewood and cooking.

Most of the households in the EM areas use three-legged stoves (bếp kiềng) for cooking, therefore EM women have to spend a lot of time cooking and collecting firewood - the main fuel for these stoves.

The research results show that the three-legged stove is the most common type of stove in the survey area, 93% of EM households in Lai Chau and 99% of EM households in Ha Giang use at least one three-legged stove (Figure 12). The three-legged stove is used to cook, boil water for the family, and cook a feed for livestock. Due to its very low thermal efficiency, of approximately 10% only, this stove emits a large amount of heat, increasing the cooking time, the cook’s efforts and the fuel consumption. Firewood is the most common type of fuel for the three-legged stove. Therefore, collecting firewood is a time-consuming task for EM women.



Three-legged stoves are commonly used in EM areas in Ha Giang and Lai Chau

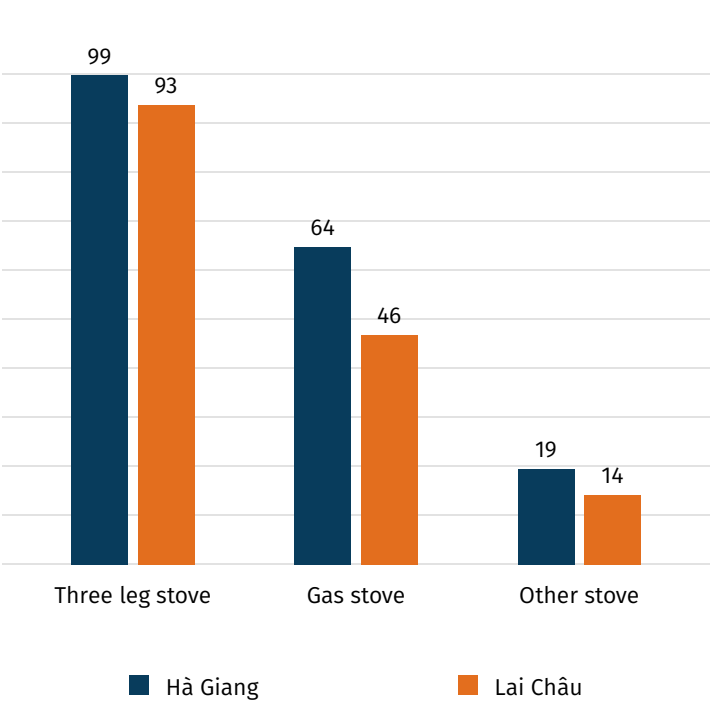


Figure 12: Types of stoves used in Ha Giang and Lai Chau (%)

Although about 50% of households now have gas stoves, in order to save gas, local people only use gas stoves when cooking lunch (when they don’t have much time to cook) ‘we want to save money, but more importantly, to save gas because the traffic condition is very difficult, and we can only buy gas in the commune centre, so we can’t go to buy gas often’ - FGD in Xuan Chieu, Ha Giang.

Focus group discussions with villagers show that improved (wood) cookstoves or a new type of cookstoves can both save firewood and allow them to cook many things, but very few households in the community possess this type of stove. Most of the FGD participants clearly stated their need to own this type of stove, and they estimated that the new stove type could save them about 1.5 hours per day collecting firewood and cooking.

The application of multiple solutions such as improved (wood) cookstoves, more home electrical appliances, increased sharing of UCDW in the family can help EM women save UCDW time (about 2-2.5 hours per day), equal to the national average UCDW time of women.

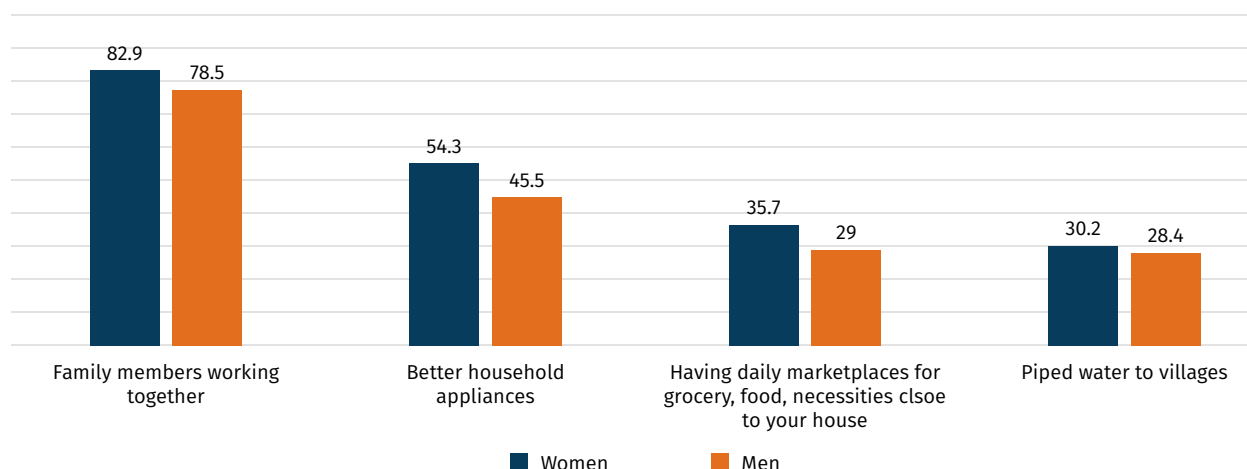


Figure 13: Measures mentioned by survey respondents to reduce women’s UCDW burden in EM areas in Ha Giang and Lai Chau

Out of the respondents’ opinions on the activities that can help them reduce UCDW time and efforts, the top two activities they preferred the most are ‘family members working together’ and ‘better household appliances’ (many household electrical appliances to support household chores). In general, men and women share pretty similar views, except that the percentage of women who wish to have more home electrical appliances to assist them in UCDW is higher than men (54.3% vs 45.5%) (Figure 13).

VII. Redistribution of resources – Current status and solutions

As discussed above, ‘redistribute’ is one of the three dimensions of the 3R framework to address the UCDW burden that is being adopted by many international organizations in both research and intervention design. Resource redistribution, including UCDW redistribution among family members, UCDW redistribution between the decision-makers and beneficiaries, and between the state and citizens is one among the recommended specific solutions.

The UCDW redistribution among family members would be possible through changing social norms related to the labour division between men and women in EM and mountainous areas.¹⁴

Gender stereotypes and norms related to the roles of men and women have a large impact on UCDW division practices in the family. According to the theory of social norms, a social norm is made up and maintained by one’s beliefs about what others do, and one’s beliefs about what others think one should do. Surveys in Ha Giang and Lai Chau provinces show that the majority of EM people believe that women are the ones doing most of the UCDW and they should do it because it suits their abilities.

¹⁴ CAF, 2022. Survey on UCDW among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam

According to the results of a phone-based survey conducted by the Centre for Forecasting and Analysis (CAF), the gender norm that UCDW is women’s responsibility is very strong among ethnic minorities. The data on the two types of beliefs mentioned above are almost the same: particularly, 73.0% of EM household representatives believe that the majority of women do most of the housework nowadays, and 70.8% think that household chores like house cleaning, washing, shopping, and cooking are suitable for women, and women should do these tasks. Thus, 7 out of 10 ethnic minorities are supporting this norm. In addition, nearly half of the phone-based survey respondents think that women do housework, and take care of children, the elderly, and the sick because the men in the house want them to do so (44.7 % of female respondents and 42.7% of male respondents hold this viewpoint). This gender stereotype is further reinforced when women themselves

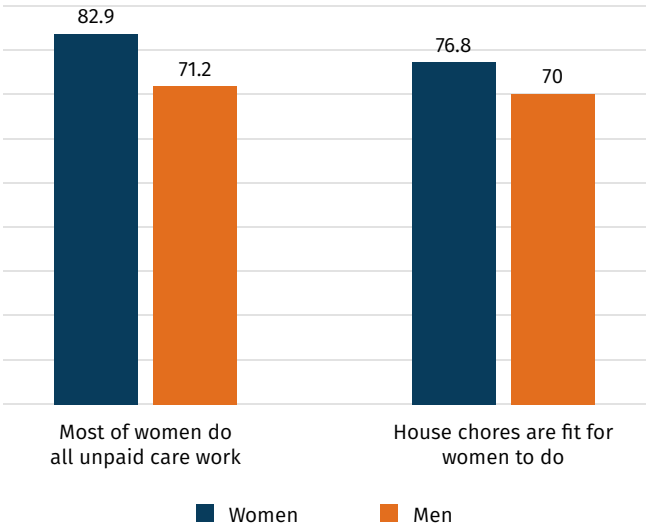


Figure 14: Gender gap in the perception of women’s role and UCDW (% of respondents agreeing with the surveyed statements)

always believe this to be true (76.8%) (Figure 14).

The data from the survey in Ha Giang and Lai Chau also show that 40% of women respondents think that UCDW is their responsibility, and 53% think that it’s okay for a man to share housework, but if he does not share it’s also accepted.¹⁵

Together with the norm of women’s role, there is also an opposite norm that ‘men should not do housework’ or ‘care and housework are not a man’s task’. The data show that 5 out of 10 EM people observe that men in their community are practising this stereotype (51.5% agree with the observation that the majority of men are currently not doing housework) and 27.4% believe that men do not do housework because they are afraid of being laughed at if they do (Figure 15).¹⁶ The differences in percentages in

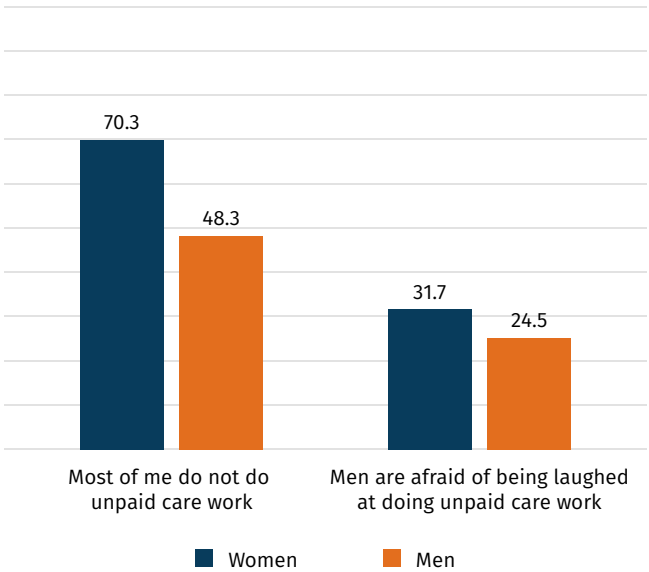


Figure 15: Gender gap in the perception of men’s role and UCDW (% respondents agreeing with the surveyed statements)

these two types of beliefs suggest that the stereotype of men’s roles is not as strong as that of women. This is a positive sign of the potential to change this stereotype with the appropriate interventions.

The study also focuses on the impacts of gender equality awareness on the men’s UCDW sharing behaviour in the family. The results show that men with good awareness of gender equality tend to do housework for more than 0.24 hours/day. This once again confirms that changing gender norms and raising awareness of gender equality is one of the necessary and possible solutions to redistribute the UCDW burden in families in EM and mountainous regions.

¹⁵ CARE, 2022. Study on Infrastructure and UCDW. Table 6. T14 Executive Summary

¹⁶ CAF, 2021. Survey on UCDW among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam

Redistribution of resources between the state and citizens, between policymakers and implementers and policy beneficiaries, can be achieved through the availability of and access to and use of infrastructures and public care services.

At the household level, UCDW can be redistributed mostly within the family, performed by family members, or may be redistributed by domestic help services. However, from the perspective of state governance, the UCDW can be reallocated through the investment decisions of governments at all levels in the investment and development of accessible child care services/facilities, centres for the elderly, or health facilities. Besides, the laborious housework can also be reduced if the road system, clean water works and markets are invested in and built with good quality and highly accessible

Research on UCDW in Ha Giang and Lai Chau shows that childcare facilities play an important role in reducing women’s care work time and increasing women’s paid work time. Specifically, in families with children aged 6 months to 6 years who do not attend school, on average, the women have to spend up to 327 minutes a day on housework (including household chores, caring for the children/the elderly, etc.) etc.). Meanwhile, in families with a child of this age attending school, the average time per day on housework by women falls to 286 minutes (41 minutes lower) and continues to decrease to 239 minutes in households with 2 children of this age attending school. In contrast, the time on paid work increases from 596 minutes in families with child/ren aged 6 months to 6 years not attending schools to 630 minutes in families with child/ren of this age attending schools. (Figure 16).

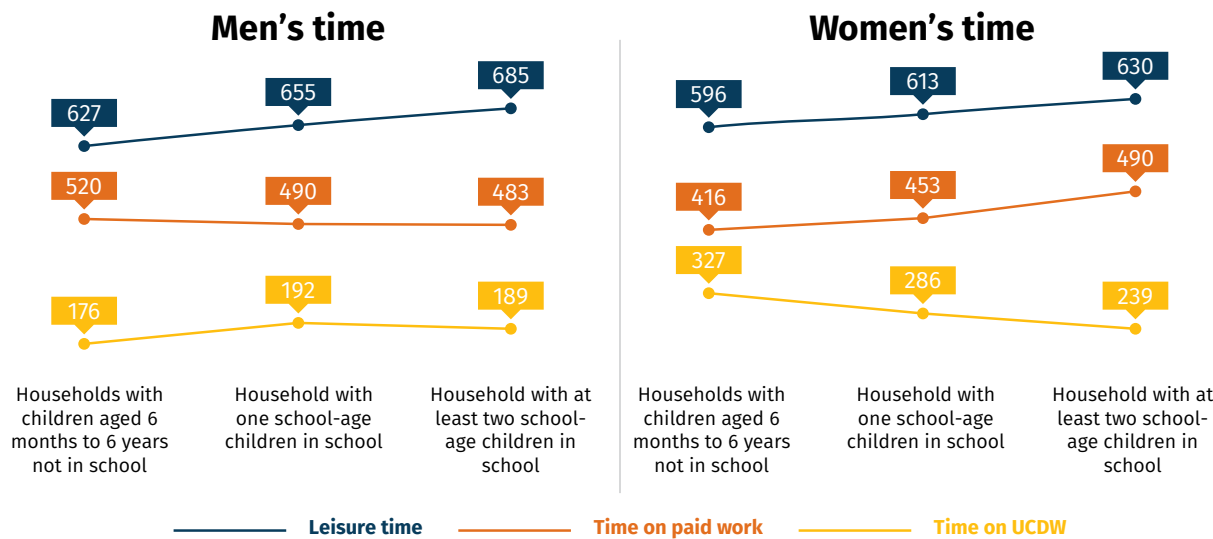


Figure 16: Differences in time on UCDW, paid work and resting, by children’s school attendance (minutes)

Moreover, when children go to school, men spend more time picking up and dropping off their children, so their total UCDW hours increase. The men’s average time spent on child care (including taking children from/to school and teaching children) per day in the group with children of this age but not yet attending school is 37.8 minutes. This time increases to 52 minutes in the group with children of this age and attending school. Research results suggest that children’s schooling will also contribute to promoting men’s participation in care work in the family.¹⁷

¹⁷ CARE, 2022. Study and recommendations on childcare types in Lai Chau and Ha Giang. Page 38,39

The Research on Gender Responsiveness of Infrastructure Work and the Relationship between Infrastructure and Women’s UCDW shows that the impact of infrastructure on travel time, and time on caring for the elderly and persons incapable of work are the most significant. After the infrastructure works in the period 2016-2020 were put into operation, the travel time (to the market, to fetch water, to collect firewood, to take the children to/from school) has reduced by 12.6%. The time to take care of the elderly and persons incapable of work has been reduced by 24.2% (Figure 17).

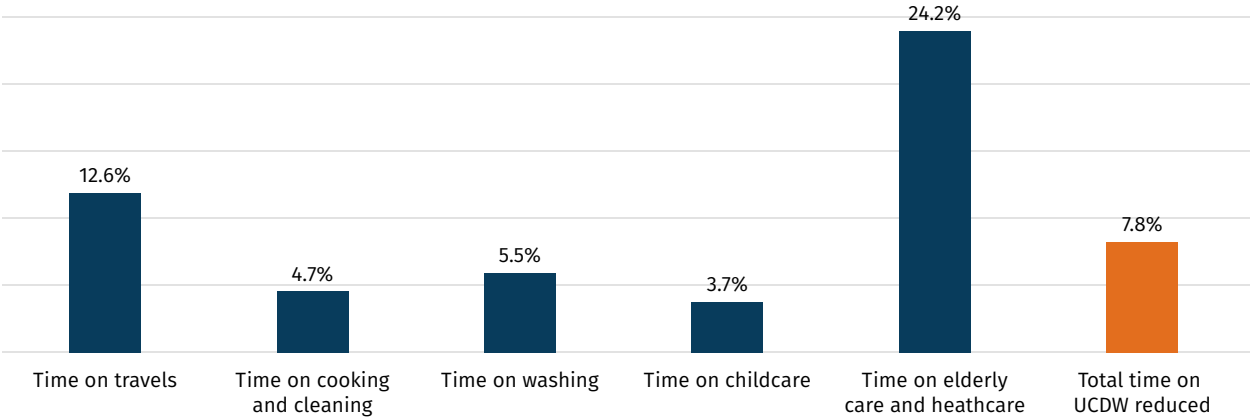


Figure 17: Reduction in UCDW time since the operation of rural infrastructures (invested in the period 2016-2020)

The survey results show that after the commune and village-level infrastructures in the period 2016-2020 come into operation, women’s UCDW time decreases by an average of 23 minutes a day (equivalent to nearly 2.7 hours a week; 140 hours a year). Infrastructure works are estimated to help increase the time on paid work by an average of 5 minutes a day (equivalent to 1.2% of the average time on paid work), or 35 minutes a week, or over 30 hours a year. Moreover, this figure will increase if, in the survey area, there are more diverse paid work opportunities.¹⁸

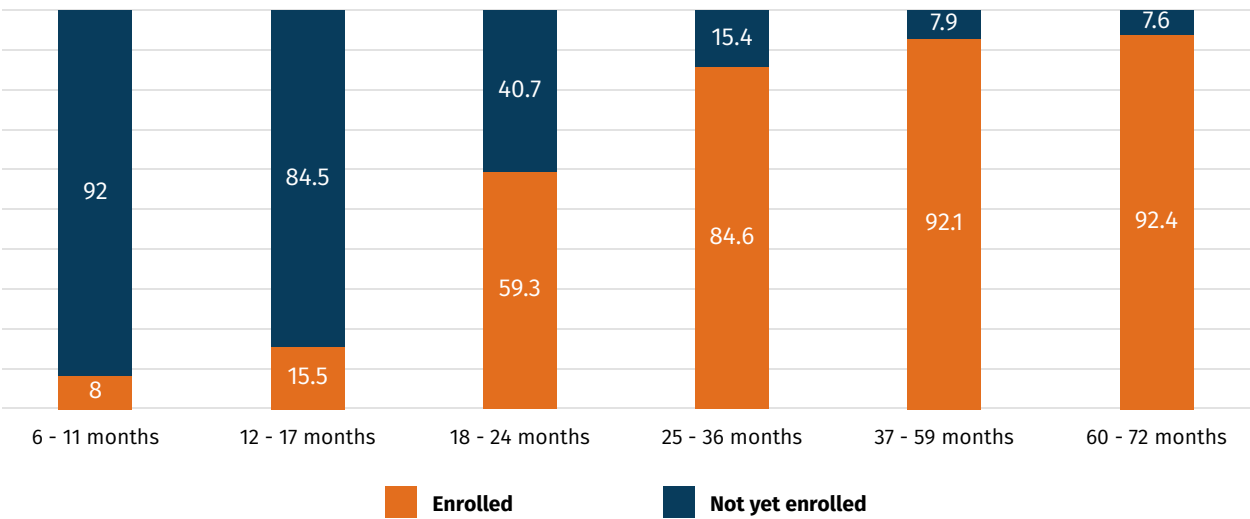


Figure 18: School enrolment of children in EM areas in Ha Giang and Lai Chau, by age group (%)

¹⁸ CARE, 2022. Study on Infrastructure and UCDW (Executive summary. Page 12,13)



Limited level of availability and use of care services Care services including daycares, kindergartens, nursing homes for the elderly, centres for people with disabilities and healthcare centres are potential to contribute to reducing the housework burden. However, the lack of and the low level of use of daycares and kindergartens is one of the findings of the research in some communes in Quang Binh district, Ha Giang province and Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province. According to regulations, these communes should all have main schools and additional school branches in villages that far from the main schools. However, at the time of the research, some remote villages were having no school branches. Therefore, despite some families wish to send their children to kindergartens, due to the long distance to school (more time to school), the mothers have to stay at home to look after the children. The rate of children attending school tends to be proportional to the age group of the children.

Most children go to school at the age of 18 months or older. The lower the age is, the higher the percentage of children not attending school is. Specifically, 40.7% of children aged 18-24 months have not yet attended school, while this rate among children aged 25-36 months is 15.4% and children aged over 36 months is about over 7%.¹⁹

The results of a phone-based survey by the Centre for Forecasting and Analysis also show similar figures. Only 24% of households reported that they used childcare services i.e., preschool for children over 2 years old near their living area. This rate drops to 10% for children under 2 years of age.²⁰

In addition to the lack of school sites, the lack of class groups, the lack of teachers, the lack of day-boarding services due to the lack of kitchens or the inconvenience of shifting meals from the main schools to the school branches are also factors that lead to children not enrolling in schools and many EM women in these places have to stay at home to look after their children. In Quang Binh district, Ha Giang province, 16 out of 33 school branches in communes have not yet provided lunches in class. Regarding the distance to school, the longest distance recorded is about 10 km from a household to the nearest school site. The average distance ranges from 0.7 km to 1.9 km. Facilities at both the main school and the school branches are inadequate. In the communes of Quang Binh district, Ha Giang province, all

¹⁹ CARE,2022. Study on childcare facilities (Nghiên cứu về các cơ sở chăm sóc trẻ) (Page 11, 12)

²⁰ CAF,2021. Survey on UCDW.

children's toilets in the main schools do not meet regulations. There are outdoor playgrounds but not enough toys in some main schools such as those in Xuan Minh, Sao Mai, and Tien Nguyen. In addition, many school sites are borrowed sites and do not yet have electricity and water, and these sites could be easily reclaimed when the commune needs them.

Care services and other basic infrastructure are not better. With 1,000 observations in a phone-based survey by the Centre for Forecasting and Analysis, in EM areas, only 15.1% of survey respondents said that there is a nursing centre for the elderly, and 43% reported there is a private healthcare service. Notably, the coverage of clean water services at home remains low in the Northern mountainous area and the Central Highland (49% and 46% respectively). Accordingly, the rate/access to clean water at homes of the ethnic groups living in this area remains low, only about 23%. Surveys in Ha Giang and Lai Chau also show similar results, with about 21.2% of households having clean water piped to their homes. However, since they have to pipe/lead clean water from public tanks, it will be more difficult for households living far away, especially when the water level in public tanks is low, and women are still mainly responsible for fetching water in the family.

“

On the days when the water level goes down [the water level in the public tanks gets low], I have to ask for water from the neighbours, which takes a lot of time

FGD in Hop Nhat, Ha Giang

”

Infrastructure projects are not highly gender-responsive and do not pay enough attention to promoting the participation and benefits of unpaid care and domestic workers.

The gender responsiveness of infrastructure projects is assessed through the criteria of participation and benefits of women in the stages of work selection, design, construction, maintenance and use. According to the household survey results, on average, the total score of gender responsiveness of infrastructure work is only 34.4/100 points. In which, women's participation in all stages is still limited, especially at village meetings to propose projects that need investing, women do not contribute many ideas (score: 2.31/10) or the projects they propose receive medium priority only (score: 4.53/10). Women also self-assess their level of use of infrastructure projects (compared to men) to be at an average level (score: 3.99/10). Therefore, it can be seen that the invested infrastructure projects may not necessarily meet women's preferences of use nor reflect their interests or needs.

In addition, the projects with high gender responsiveness scores are mainly village-level transportation works, with small investment capital, where the communes are investment owners. Larger investment projects will have fewer women's participation, which means that their needs and interests in such projects receive less attention.

VIII. Policy recommendations

Recognise

In the process of researching the UCDW topic, the most challenging part that CARE, CAF and independent consultants encountered is the inconsistency in the definitions of UCDW on different documents and reports. Besides, the UCDW measurement methods are also asynchronous, making it difficult to compare and track the related changes from time to time. In addition, in the context of Vietnam, although a number of studies in different geographical regions conducted by previous development partners have shown certain values in reflecting the current situation, however, they have not guaranteed the nationwide representativeness of the status of UCDW. In 2019, for the first time, UCDW questions were included in the Labour Force Survey which is a national survey of the General Statistics Office. The questions about time spent on different UCDW groups were estimated within seven days prior to the interview. This is an important milestone for the Government of Viet Nam to track the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.4. However, the disadvantage of the LFS method of measuring time spent on UCDW is that it relies on an estimate of the time spent on these activities within seven days before the interview, which leads to under- or over-estimates of time when they have to accumulate all time spent on these tasks over a long period (a week) and it is easy for respondents to forget the small individual routine activities. Moreover, the LFS does not have information disaggregated by ethnicity, therefore the LFS report will not be able to track in detail and reflect the actual situation and the changes related to the UCDW issue among ethnic minorities.

Thus, to ensure consistency and comparability across countries, it is necessary for Vietnam to reach a consensus on the concept of unpaid care and domestic work, which should be consistent with the globally used concept. In addition, national surveys on this issue also need to use the time use survey method to measure the time spent on UCDW most accurately to support the process of tracking and monitoring the SDG 5.4. In addition, this monitoring and supervision should be disaggregated by ethnic groups for a more focused solution and better use of resources.

The economic and social values of UCDW should be fully recognised by stakeholders and correlated with the contribution to the household economy, given the economic position of women in development and inclusive growth. Discussions on this topic should be promoted at the national level, chaired by the Economic Committee, the National Assembly's Committee of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, and the Women's Union, with support on theories, information and evidence from relevant agencies such as General Statistics Office, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) and policy research institutes. This recognition should be accompanied by a change in gender stereotypes and norms about UCDW in society so that all classes of people, especially men, realise the benefits of UCDW sharing for themselves and their families. Gender equality communication programs need to be sensitive enough not to reinforce the norms. At the local level, the recognition of the economic value of UCDW should be integrated into the women's economic empowerment programs in EM areas by both governmental and development organizations.

Key messages

- ✓ UCDW is a type of work generating **economic value for the family**, so whoever does this also makes an important contribution to balancing the costs of maintaining family life and to the development of society. Either men or women can be proud to perform this type of work because by doing this they contribute significantly to the family economy and overall development.
- ✓ The measurement of time spent on UCDW needs to be formalised through the information collection system of the General Statistics Office to ensure nationwide representativeness, **especially it requires ethnicity variable to have separate data for EM groups.**

Reduce

Reduction solutions including the increased use of assistive tools and labour and time-saving technologies such as home electrical appliances are difficult to implement on a large scale, but they are also highly recommended solutions in cases companies or businesses want to penetrate the EM market by giving promotional products or prizes to assist women in reducing the UCDW burden.

Applying and scaling up the use of improved cookstoves to save cooking time and effort as well as cooking fuel is also a solution worth applying to reduce the UCDW burden among ethnic minorities. Full or partial support and mobilisation of communities and businesses' engagement can help improve household cookstoves, thereby significantly reducing the women's time spent on UCDW. This is also the solution that programs deployed via Women's Unions at all levels or development organizations should implement.

Gender responsiveness of infrastructure projects should be ensured by promoting the participation of communities, especially women, in the planning and design of infrastructure facilities. Specifically, it is necessary to further promote the application of specific mechanisms in infrastructure investment, thereby ensuring the right to be an actual investment owner by the grassroots level. In the process of participatory planning and selection of investment portfolio, priority should be given to rural transport works, clean water works, electricity grids, and school sites in disadvantaged villages in order to be able to significantly reduce women's care work time. In addition, it is necessary to pay attention to investing in the public culture and sport facilities which are suitable for the use and benefits of women, to meet their needs for recreation, leisure and community activities in the villages, thereby improving the mental life of women and helping improve the reproduction of labour.

The allocation of resources for activities to reduce the UCDW burden should take into account the ethnicity factor. Investment resources should be prioritised for areas inhabited by ethnic groups where women still have to spend a lot of time on UCDW as men's sharing remains limited. This further demonstrates the need for disaggregated data by ethnicity and related cultural features in order to have appropriate policy interventions.

Key messages

- ✓ **Household appliances help reduce significantly UCDW time** of women in ethnic minority areas. Development projects, programs of Women's Unions or businesses should prioritise supports to access to or improve household appliances to help reduce UCDW time and effort.
- ✓ The National Target Program on Socio-Economic Development in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas (NTP-SEDEMA) should prioritize investment in gender-responsive infrastructure projects. This will contribute to the reduction in EM women's UCDW time and burden.

Redistribute

In EM areas, it is necessary to develop plans to promote children's schooling to reduce women's time on care work. Plans to promote children's enrolment should be developed based on local needs, aiming at addressing barriers related to the access to childcare services at all levels such as tuition fees and availability of care services to attract children. Note: in addition to solutions to improve school facilities, solutions to change the community's perception of the necessity to send children to school early need implementing synchronously.

Given the existence of gender stereotypes related to the roles of women and men in UCDW and their impacts on the current UCDW division, there is a real need for intervention programs to change gender norms in a synchronous manner, which requires the collaboration of many sectors/departments and which can effectively take advantage of new approaches.

Key messages

- ✓ **Investing in care services** such as kindergartens, care facilities for the elderly and the disabled is **a necessary solution in redistributing resources for UCDW**, contributing to EM women's increased paid work time.
- ✓ The redistribution of UCDW among family members can be achieved if **social norms related to the labour division between men and women are changed**. There is a great need for communication strategies to change the gender stereotypes that are still prevalent in ethnic minority areas.



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