

WOMEN ARE NEVER PAID FOR WORK LIKE RAISING CHILDREN, FETCHING FIREWOOD, COOKING

By Stella Naigino

Women bear brunt of

Would you work as an administrator for a big company without hope of ever getting paid? Would you still carry out your duties month after month diligently without even an allowance? That is highly unlikely, however, that is the plight of many stay-home mothers.

Alice Namugwana is one such mother. She quit her full-time job at Uganda Christian University to raise her three children aged two to six after she failed to get a reliable maid.

"I do not get paid for doing this, but the peace of mind that I get as a mother ensuring that my children are safe under my care, keep me going," Namugwana says.

Besides that, my husband is very supportive. He provides all we need. Other things that I feel I need as a woman will come later after my children have grown," she adds.

For teacher Florence Wagaba, leaving her children with a maid in order to earn sh200,000 per month did not make sense.

"I tried to work, but whenever I went back home, my children complained about how the maid treated them. At first, I ignored them, but later realised that I had to prioritise their wellbeing. I quit my job and started a nursery school at home. This helped me kill two birds with one stone," she adds.

According to a 2013 study on women's uncompensated work by ActionAid, women usually engage in

Some educated women are known to quit their good jobs to take care of their homes and ensure their husbands return home to hot meals, warm baths and ironed clothes. Most men do not deem such work as worthy of pay



work that is never paid for cooking, cleaning, taking care of children and collecting firewood, among others.

The study noted that women's unpaid daily tasks amount to a massive amount of time, energy and ingenuity that has been historically

exploited and undervalued.

The study also revealed that in addition to doing house work and staying home to care for children, women get involved in subsistence farming, which makes them spend more hours working than even their

male counterparts. The more time they spend working at home, the more they are left behind when it comes to catching up on what's going on in the world.

The study shows that in Uganda, more women head households than

in other countries. There were differences between rural and urban women, with rural women spending more time on unpaid GDP work.

Women in Pallisa mainly worked on their families' small plots of land, farming both food and cash crops and looking after livestock, which are types of work that are generally unpaid. Women in peri-urban Bwaise worked as small scale traders, domestic workers and bar attendants.

Experts speak out

According to Grace Goro, a woman activist in Koboko district women engaging in unpaid labour has become a trend.

She says many usually quit their jobs to stay at home and take care of their families. This is because they do not have people they can trust with their children and even the daycare facilities are way too expensive for them to afford.

"So if they remain doing office jobs, they will never have peace because their families are not stable. Many of them resort to quitting so they can regain peace and stability in their families at the expense of their paying jobs," Goro notes.

She says after quitting their jobs to stay home, the women

AND CLEANING. SOME PUT THEIR CAREERS ON HOLD TO CARE FOR THEIR FAMILIES

unpaid labour

get so busy that they miss out on opportunities that could benefit them.

"They also fail to find time to engage in the other gainful activities in the communities around them, which leaves them behind economically, hence increasing the poverty rates among women," Goro says.

Joyce Nangobi, a woman activist and director of Slum Women Initiative for Development in Jinja district, notes that if only men could come up with a figure that they give their wives in appreciation for them being at home to ensure that things do not go wrong, then there would be less trouble in homes.

"However, many men tend to mistreat women who stay at home, instead of encouraging them. They instead look at them as failures and go as far as leaving them for other women. And if the new woman has a job, the man will use it as an excuse, claiming he has always wanted a woman with a job. What they forget is that the first wife had to quit her job to raise a family," she says.

Nangobi says even those who work still have to juggle work and family. "They have to ensure that children are safe at home and have meals in time. They must ensure that the house and all its members are in order. Even when she returns home after work, you will find her trying to do her roles as a mother.



Clockwise: A woman washing clothes, one cares for a baby, while another carries a jerrycan of water. All of them are never paid for such work



"Today, many mothers pick and drop children at school, have to follow up on their children's academic performance and also attend to special school programmes. A woman is never paid for all that work," Nangobi says.

Way forward

Nangobi says there should be a balance, where these roles are shared

by both women and men.

"If she is cooking, the husband should help wash dishes or bathe the kids. The attitude that men who engage in housework are bewitched is wrong," she says.

Nangobi says men should devise means of appreciating their wives if they are to carry on the unpaid for roles of taking care of the home. she

says this will motivate them so they feel valued.

Maggie Kigozi, the former executive director of Uganda Investment Authority, says while engaging in home care is not bad, women should devise means of working from home to earn a living. She says this will improve their financial status so they do not depend entirely on their husbands.

"Think around the things you are passionate about. It could be gardening, weaving, catering or doing artistic things. Try working from home and you will be surprised with the way things will turn out," she advises.

She says men should be at the centre of supporting their wives and helping them think out of the box on ideas that can enable them juggle unpaid labour and things they can do from home and still earn an income.