Measuring Women's Unpaid Work

Mains: *GSII – Social Justice | GSIII – Economy*

Why in News?

Recently the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has initiated steps to collect unpaid work data to better understand its relationship with women's employment.

What is it meant by Women's Unpaid Work?

- **Unpaid Housework** – Domestic activities such as cooking, cleaning, washing and household maintenance performed without monetary compensation.
- **Unpaid Care Work** – Providing care to children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities and other dependent family members without payment.

What is the Relationship Between Unpaid Work and Women's Employment?

- **Reduced Labour Force Participation** – Household responsibilities and childcare restrict women's ability to enter or continue paid employment.
- **Employment Choices** – Women often prefer home-based employment, flexible working hours and workplaces closer to their homes.
- **Informal Employment** – Care responsibilities push women towards informal and insecure jobs with limited social protection.
- **Gender Pay Gap** – Compromises in employment choices contribute to lower wages and limited career progression.
- **Time Poverty** – Women in households with young children spend more time on unpaid responsibilities, reducing their availability for paid work.

What are the Limitations in Measuring Women's Unpaid Work?

- **Differences Between Existing Surveys** – The Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Time Use Survey (TUS) follow different objectives, concepts and definitions, limiting data comparability.
- **Limitations of Labour Force Survey** – LFS primarily captures employment-related information and provides limited insights into household responsibilities and care-related constraints.
    - It does not adequately examine how unpaid work influences the employment decisions of women already in the workforce.
- **Inadequate Occupational Classification** – TUS uses a restricted National Industrial Classification (NIC), 2008, with data available only at the two-digit level.

    - Absence of occupational classification limits analysis of the relationship between specific occupations and unpaid care responsibilities.
- **Limited Disaggregated Data** – Existing surveys provide insufficient information to understand why women facing similar care responsibilities experience different employment outcomes.

What is the Significance of Integrating Unpaid Work Data into PLFS?

- **Better Policy Formulation** – Helps identify how unpaid responsibilities influence women's entry, retention and choices in paid employment.
- **Improved Data Collection** – Enables regular collection of housework and care work data alongside employment information.
- **Gender Equality** – Supports policies promoting equal employment opportunities and workplace participation.
- **Addressing Gender Pay Gaps** – Identifies how care-related employment compromises contribute to wage inequalities.
- **Valuation of Unpaid Work** – Supports efforts to recognise and estimate the economic contribution of unpaid domestic and care activities.
- **Inclusive Labour Statistics** – Helps identify women engaged in subsistence and peripheral economic activities who may be missed by conventional labour force surveys.

What is the Way Forward?

- **Integrated Data Framework** – Combine PLFS and TUS indicators to establish the relationship between unpaid work and employment.
- **Gender-Responsive Policies** – Promote affordable childcare, elderly care services and accessible community-based care infrastructure.
- **Recognition of Unpaid Work** – Recognise unpaid domestic and care activities in economic policymaking and national development.
- **Workplace Reforms** – Encourage flexible working arrangements, maternity benefits and equal employment opportunities.
- **Improved Statistical Systems** – Strengthen occupational classification and collect gender-disaggregated data across employment categories.
- **Shared Care Responsibilities** – Promote equitable distribution of household responsibilities between men and women.

What lies ahead?

- Measuring unpaid work is essential to recognise women's invisible economic contributions.
- Integrating care-related data into PLFS can improve employment policies, reduce gender inequalities and promote inclusive economic growth.

Reference

[The Indian Express| Measuring women’s unpaid work]



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