

## Case #11: Women's Work

What is a mom? “Housekeeper, day care center teacher, cook, computer operator, laundry machine operator, janitor, facilities manager, van driver, CEO, and psychologist,” according to Salary.com. And, what is she worth? According to that website, “If paid, Stay at Home Moms would earn \$134,121 annually ... Working Moms would earn \$85,876 annually for the “mom job” portion of their work, in addition to their actual “work job” salary.

But of course, moms *aren't* paid. Indeed, “On a worldwide scale, the UN has found that women do two-thirds of the work in the world, receive less than 5 percent of the world's income, and own less than one percent of the world's real property,” according to a recent article in the Ottawa Citizen. Statistics Canada reports that “unpaid work took up 831 hours of an average man's year, whereas it's an average of 1,482 hours for a woman.”

The lack of payment for traditional woman's work creates a variety of concerns beyond basic equity and fairness, said author Penney Kome.

First, the work, if performed by paid assistants, counts in a nation's Gross National Product (GNP); unpaid labor by domestic partners does not. The fact that the work is often unpaid decreases the value that society places on it as demonstrated by the low wages paid day care workers, housekeepers, and maintenance workers. In addition, unpaid workers are not entitled to benefits provided those workers who perform the same duties for pay, such as “unemployment insurance, pensions, or social assistance.” Last, unpaid domestic labor can be ignored or usurped by focus on market value. According to Kome, “[S]ubsistence agriculture is specifically excluded from IMF and World Bank Calculations. Therefore, IMF and World Bank projects often evict mothers and their families from small patches of arable land – where they are, at least, reasonably well nourished – to create huge plantations with cash crops. The nation's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) flourishes, but the local children go hungry.”