Revaluing Unpaid Work
The Case of the Orunodoi Scheme in Assam

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The 2021 state assembly elections offered a unique and unexpected opportunity for the recognition of women's unpaid domestic and care work through the promises of unconditional cash transfers. These cash transfers present feminists with a valuable opportunity to theorise the welfare state. This article uses primary data and in-depth interviews to evaluate one such scheme, namely the Orunodoi scheme in Assam.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the high levels of unpaid domestic and care work (UDCW) performed by women the world over. In India, long before the pandemic, studies have documented the unequal and gendered distribution of such unpaid work. The 2019 time-use survey by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) revealed that women spent up to 352 minutes per day on domestic work while men spent 52 minutes (GoI 2020). This disproportionate burden is attributable to cultures of "gendered familialism" (Parliwala and Neetha 2009) whereby care is considered to be a familial and female responsibility. This burden in turn is presented as one of the main reasons for India's low and declining female labour force participation rate and as an obstacle to growth. Numerous international organisations have turned their attention to the relationship between women's paid employment and their unpaid work obligations resulting in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5.4 whereby states are required to recognise, reduce, and redistribute UDCW through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

In India, the 2021 state assembly elections offered a unique and unexpected opportunity for the recognition of women's UDCW through promises of unconditional cash transfers. Debates over the desirability of cash transfers (for example, universal basic income, income transfers, and minimum income guarantee) are hardly new (Drèze 2019; Ghatak and Muralidharan 2021; Khosla 2018; Standing 2012). These proposals assumed political significance in the 2019 general elections when major political parties backed them. However, concerns have been expressed about the potential of these proposals to undermine, even replace rights-based legislation, depoliticise citizen's claims on the state and thwart more ambitious attempts at the redistribution of resources. Yet, the politics of these welfare measures have not been adequately theorised from a feminist perspective. As women become a key electoral group and bend the "arc of democracy" in state elections (Aiyar 2022), political parties have found unconditional cash transfers to be an effective way to reach them.

In December 2020, Kamal Haasan, as leader of a new political party Makkal Needhi Maiam, proposed paying salaries to housewives. Within weeks, every political party (barring the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] except in Assam as I will elaborate) in every state where elections were due, followed suit. These promises took different forms. In Kerala, the Left Democratic Front promised security pensions while the United Democratic Front promised women between the ages of 40–60 who were not eligible for the Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY) programme (under which ₹6,000 per month was promised to below the poverty line [BPL] families) a payment of ₹2,000 per month. In Tamil Nadu, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) promised a gendered basic income of ₹1,000 to women in the households, while the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) promised a monthly salary of ₹1,500 to the homemaker. In West Bengal, the Trinamool Congress promised an allowance of ₹500 per month to women in the general category and ₹1,000 to those in the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) category. In Puducherry, the Congress promised ₹1,000 per month to homemakers. Finally, in Assam, the Congress promised a salary of ₹2,000 per month, while the BJP offered ₹830 per month. As successful parties formed governments, some have operationalised these promises. These schemes present feminists with a valuable opportunity to theorise the welfare state. This article which is based on primary data involving in-depth interviews with 108 beneficiaries of one such scheme, namely the Orunodoi scheme (henceforth, the scheme) in Assam, is a step in that direction.

This article starts by outlining the vibrant feminist debate that followed Kamal Haasan's promise. It then describes the scheme in operation since October 2020 before presenting the findings from this study on the scheme's implementation, how women received it, and its impact on their paid and unpaid work. Based on this, the article argues that the scheme offers an unprecedented even if nascent recognition of women's UDCW. The unconditional nature of cash transfers led to its versatile use. Women not only welcomed the scheme but also hoped for increased payments. However, the direct benefit transfers (DBT) are not a magic bullet for achieving women's economic empowerment. There is a fundamental need to secure an adequate financial infrastructure and financial literacy. Although some of the negative consequences anticipated by the critics of such transfers were not borne out in reality, it was noted that the patriarchal social norms around UDCW are so deeply entrenched that explicit feminist messaging on the part of the government is necessary to shift social norms towards the recognition and eventual reduction and redistribution of UDCW. In short, unconditional cash transfers like the scheme are an innovative means of recognising women's UDCW which could potentially rewrite the relationship between women and the Indian welfare state and hold critical insights for international debates on the vexed relation between paid work, unpaid work, and social reproduction.

Feminists Debate Unconditional Cash Transfers

Electoral promises of unconditional cash transfers in 2021 spurred a vibrant debate amongst feminists. Some argued that these transfers would result in greater demands for unpaid work and reinforce gender stereotypes, while others viewed these transfers as having the potential to recognise women's UDCW (Chandrasekharan 2021; Deshpande and Kotiswaran 2021; Geetha 2021; Kotiswaran 2021a, 2021b; Langer 2021; Mustafa 2021; Neetha 2021; Reddy 2021; Tulsyan 2021).[1] Further, it also raised other issues like how would these transfers be financed? Would they be commensurate with women's UDCW? Should the payment be conditional or unconditional, targeted, or universal, gendered or gender neutral, short-term or long-term? Significantly, feminists argued that these transfers would detract from the better measurement of women's unpaid work, from the much-needed investments in physical infrastructure such as piped water, clean energy, and transportation as well as care infrastructure in the form of universal, high-quality childcare that reduces UDCW. Further, it was also argued that the transfers would disincentivise women from seeking paid employment and getting an education. Instead, they wanted the focus to be on improving access to paid employment and redistributing UDCW between men and women.

However, this article argues otherwise that these cash transfers are a welcome redistributive move given the compulsory institution of hetero-patriarchal marriage. By the age of 30, 95% of women are married, while divorce rates are only 2.6% (Raveendran 2016). The 2011 Census shows 160 million women with "household work" as their main occupation, and there are possibly more. Therefore, the family is a key site at which women's UDCW is performed and consumed. Women have difficulty realising equal inheritance rights over natal property and have no access to community property upon divorce. Hence, even a basic payment will offer the much-needed recognition of UDCW. It will likely enhance the homemaker's economic bargaining power where they now rely on their husbands' benevolence, help them set time boundaries on UDCW, resist domestic violence for not doing enough UDCW, learn a skill or exit marriage. Further, unconditional cash transfers can coexist with continued investment in public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and improved access to education, decent jobs, and workplace protection. Finally, valuing UDCW would have spin-off effects for millions of accredited social health activists (ASHAs), anganwadi workers and schoolteachers whose reproductive labour is viewed as an extension of UDCW, as "intuitively feminine" and thereby often devalued and underpaid as well as for other women performing commodified reproductive labour in sex work, surrogacy, egg donation, and paid domestic work.

Despite this robust debate, differences between feminists are most likely overstated. We are hardly worshipping at the altar of maternal altruism. Nor do we think that the state must not interfere in the private domain as the Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani opined when interviewed about wages for housework (Bhavna 2021). Feminists instead agree on the need to respect, recognise, reduce, and redistribute UDCW between men and women. It is the strategy that differs. While those opposing cash transfers prioritise paid employment and the need to redistribute UDCW between men and women, those supporting cash transfers place emphasis on recognition and respect first without necessarily deprioritising improved access to education and paid employment. Critically, these transfers must be embedded within the existing social security system of the welfare state and complement and strengthen the numerous rights-based entitlements of citizens to food, education, health, and employment while aggregating feminist demands in the form of an Indian care manifesto (Kotiswaran 2021b).

Whatever the political predilections, monetary gains for at least 34 million women (Khaitan 2021) in four states have been won in 2021 in the absence of any feminist advocacy. The perceived success of these schemes in garnering women's votes is not lost on political parties as evident in the All-India Trinamool Congress's recent promise in Goa of ₹5,000 per month to every homemaker as part of the

Griha Laxmi Scheme and Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) promises for a more modest ₹1,000 transfer to homemakers in Punjab and Uttarakhand. Unconditional cash transfer to women are now a part of the political landscape, and mandate a clear-eyed feminist engagement with and an analysis of their distributive effects.

The Orunodoi Scheme in Brief

In Assam, the scheme was announced by the then finance minister (and now chief minister) Himanta Biswa Sarma in his pre-pandemic, 2020–21 budget speech on 6 March 2020 and was formally launched on 2 October 2020, prior to the 2021 state assembly elections. The female beneficiaries were promised an unconditional cash transfer of ₹830 per month. This was increased to ₹1,000 from July 2021 to ₹1,250 in 2022. The chief minister referred to it variously as an income, income support, financial assistance, DBT, a pension, and a subsidy in order to promote development, for poverty eradication, financial inclusion, and women's empowerment while fighting inflation and stimulating demand.

Allocations under the scheme are limited to 15,000 households per legislative constituency where the population is up to 2 lakhs; at a higher population, this is increased. The beneficiary (a nominated adult female member) must be a permanent resident of Assam and be currently staying in the state, have a composite household income of less than ₹2 lakh per annum and have her own bank account. Priority is given to those households that have widows, divorcees, unmarried females, separated women or specially abled members and to poor households whether they are covered under the National Food Security Act, 2013 or not. Households without a female member, or which have former or current political representatives, government employees, employees of cooperatives, certain professionals, government contractors and income-tax payers are excluded. Lastly, farmer families owning more than 15 bighas of agricultural land and households owning tractors, four wheelers, mechanised boats, refrigerators, washing machines or air conditioners are excluded. Based on these inclusion and exclusion criteria, local bodies draw up the initial list of applicants which is reviewed and finalised by the district-level monitoring committee with government representatives, members of the legislative assembly (MLAs), and other nominees. As of 13 December 2021, 19.32 lakh women were the scheme beneficiaries; the plan is to extend it to 30 lakh beneficiaries.

The Current Study

The study team conducted in-depth interviews in October 2021 with 108 beneficiaries (married and single women from low-income households) and held four focus group discussions (FGDs) with 60 women. We interviewed stakeholders from the government and civil society. We approached beneficiaries through the North East Network (NEN) which operates Grameen Mahila Kendras (GMKs) to counter domestic violence. We worked with GMK mobilisers in Udalguri, Darrang and Kamrup (rural) districts who helped identify beneficiaries. We accessed beneficiaries directly in Guwahati (Kamrup Metropolitan district). The questionnaire consisted of 78 questions and took 45–90 minutes to administer. It covered the socio-economic profile of beneficiaries, the implementation of the scheme (access, regularity of payment, rationale for the payment, control over use of the monies), and its potential strengths and drawbacks. We queried any negative consequences on paid employment, education, gender stereotypes and increased demands for UDCW. We asked if the scheme enabled a greater recognition of women's UDCW, reduced UDCW through use of labour-saving devices, redistributed UDCW within the household and if it improved their say in the household's decision-making process.

Main Findings and Analysis

In terms of profile, almost two-thirds of the beneficiaries came from households with a monthly income of less than ₹5,000. Around half to two-thirds of the beneficiaries worked outside their homes in the informal economy and at home doing home-based work. Work outside the home was wide-ranging (daily wage work, construction work, paid domestic work, tailoring, working at a pharmacy, working at a motor dealer, selling vegetables, giving tuitions, working as an anganwadi worker, and running a shop). Work at home included livestock rearing and weaving. There were slightly more single women (58) than married women (46).

Most of the respondents had been a beneficiary for the last three months; in districts where the scheme was rolled out earlier, a majority had received payments since January 2021. Their awareness of the scheme was very good and the registration process straightforward. On average, 43.7% of the women were getting their payments on time, and 18.4% said that they mostly received their payments on time. Many claimed that payments had stopped during the 2021 election months, which coincided with the consolidation of 10 public sector banks. Most had not received the increased payment of ₹1,000. All but one beneficiary had their own bank accounts and in 98.2% of the cases, these had been acquired before the scheme was rolled out thus building on near 100% financial inclusion.

Beneficiaries did not have a clear understanding of the scheme's rationale. Explanations ranged from the state's aim to counter poverty, help with buying medicines, to addressing individual circumstances, and in a cynical vein, as a way to give a benefit that was promptly taken away through price rises. Women were happy with the eligibility criteria that prioritised single women and households with specially abled members. They wanted all needy people to access the scheme, including men. More than two-thirds of the beneficiaries knew someone who had been excluded from the scheme.

More than 80% of the women that we interviewed in the rural areas (and two-thirds in Guwahati) had complete autonomy over their bank accounts. Only one out of 108 women opined that the men would appropriate their wives' money. By autonomy, women meant that the bank passbook was always in their possession and they went to the bank to conduct transactions. Although DBTs are imagined as seamless interactions between Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana accounts, Aadhaar cards, and mobile phones, they are necessarily mediated through physical infrastructure and power dynamics between social actors. The materiality of the scheme was underscored when beneficiaries arrived to our interviews carrying clear folders with their passbooks; few had smartphones. Women often had to walk several kilometres in rural areas to access bank branches. They had no training on how to use ATMs, hence the preference for in-person transactions. They did not know how to update passbooks and fill deposit and withdrawal slips. The discernible power imbalance between bank officials and beneficiaries translated into poor services. Distrust and fear meant anxiety that the government would take back unspent payments or require repayments of disbursed amounts.

Beneficiaries invariably spent their scheme payments; savings were rare. They spent their payments on food, medicine, children's education, themselves,[2] the household,[3] grocery shop loans, interest on debts, their livelihood,[4] building a house, expenses for relatives,[5] getting Aadhaar and PAN cards, and local travel expenses. Around 70%–75% said that the amount was insufficient especially given the price rises. Most households had borrowed money from microfinance institutions and self-help groups (SHGs).[6] The SHGs did not contribute to generating livelihoods. The beneficiaries' estimation of an ideal transfer amount was between ₹2,000 and ₹3,000. A majority were not confident that the government would increase the amount to ₹3,000 as promised.

Beneficiaries said that they performed unpaid work all day. There was no correlation in women's minds between payment under the scheme and unpaid work. Unpaid work was considered to be personal work rather than a valuable form of labour that sustained family members doing paid work and the economy itself. The scheme payments did not translate into the greater recognition of unpaid work for a large majority (78%), although many women (22%) were grateful for the transfer with some saying that their families respected them for contributing to the household's needs. Some said that the scheme conferred dignity on them. At a focus group discussion (FGD) in North Jyotinagar, Shiva Road in Guwahati, women expressed happiness that they could now spend on their own needs without having to ask for money from their sons or other men in the family. One woman said, *Nichoy, etia aru malikor fale sabo nalage poisar karone. Etia pura bindas*. ("Definitely, now I do not have to look up to my husband for money. Now I am carefree.") Another woman said that she can now tell her husband that "I don't have to eat from you now, I have my own money."

Payment under the scheme did not reduce UDCW because although women desired time-saving appliances, they were unaffordable and unrealistic given electrification rates in rural Assam. A handful bought appliances for their small businesses. In terms of the redistribution of UDCW, where women got any help, it was from other female relatives and neighbours. Men helped sometimes, especially with tending to livestock or traditionally masculine work or when women were sick or menstruating. The scheme did not shift these patterns. Conversely, beneficiaries were unanimous that the payment did not lead to increased demands from men for UDCW.

As many as 60% of the beneficiaries noted that the payment under the scheme did not disincentivise women's paid employment. Notably, the beneficiaries were so poor that they undertook paid employment outside the home, home-based work for pay and both unpaid economic work and UDCW. They insisted that women should also go out to work and that anybody could do any form of work irrespective of their gender. Both men and women should perform paid work to support the household. Two women noted that they would need a payment of ₹5,000 and ₹15,000, respectively, to stop paid work. Beneficiaries were unanimous that the scheme payments did not prevent women's education. As one woman put it, "poverty is the obstacle to education, not Orunodoi." Beneficiaries firmly believed in education as a pathway to mobility and that women should study and be treated as equal to men, and 53% of the beneficiaries said that the payment did not reinforce gender stereotypes. When asked whether they preferred the cash transfers or jobs, 54% preferred paid work over transfers; 33% preferred transfers and some wanted both. For those wanting jobs, they desired a steady stream of income as a cash transfer may be discontinued. Jobs also brought social recognition; women wanted to do paid domestic work, tailoring, and cooking in schools. Older and medically infirm women, however, preferred not to engage in paid employment.

When it came to intra-household dynamics, married beneficiaries reported that payment under the scheme did not mean that husbands gave them less money than before for household expenditure. Neither did it translate into increased decision-making for the majority (94%), although there were some exceptions. Women said that since they had always been dependent on their families, now with money in hand, they could not turn against them. They equated decision-making power with disloyalty. In an FGD in Udalguri district meanwhile, women said that if they got ₹1,000 to ₹1,500 per month, they might be able to make decisions for themselves. We asked if receipt under the scheme could help women to exit abusive marriages. Although 25% said yes and 43.5% said no, there was a strong social preference for not exiting marriage even in the face of domestic abuse; women said the payment was anyway too meagre for this. Further, one woman noted how courage was what was needed to exit marriage, not money.

While wifely and maternal responsibilities were key to most women's identities, a small minority spoke of their religious identity, their aspiration for something more than cooking and taking care of their families and for doing paid work and standing on their own feet. Respondents were divided on whether housework should be viewed as an occupation; 52.5% said no, the rest said yes. Asked a hypothetical question about who should pay for their UDCW (the state or the husband), women were divided. Some felt that the expenses incurred by their husbands in maintaining them was payment enough. However, one woman noted that she needed good food and money in return for her work especially since doing the same work at someone else's house would fetch her ₹8,000.

A majority of the beneficiaries (75%) said that an association of homemakers was feasible and necessary to counter male alcoholism and violence against women. Similarly, a majority (75%) claimed that the scheme did not cause them to vote for the BJP. Women did not take their decision to vote casually nor were they impressionable. As one woman explained,

> *Moi saisilu j sorkar khone sobore kolyan koribo ne nai. Ei Orunodoi tu kebol moi paam kintu val sorkar ekhon ahile sobore val hobo.* (I examined which party would bring maximum welfare to everyone. I might get the benefit of the Orunodoi scheme now but if a good government comes to power, it will do good to everyone.)

At one FGD in an Adivasi village in Udalguri, when asked to list their key demands, women stated in order of priority: roads, temple, toilets.

Finally, there was tremendous enthusiasm for the scheme and the beneficiaries' key suggestion was to increase the payment. As one mobiliser noted, a meeting on the scheme drew far more attendees than on livelihood or domestic violence. Out of the 108 women, only one woman, a widow and the sole graduate in our pool objected to the scheme because she was not needy and could earn her own income.

Conclusions

Electoral calculations aside, in interviews, the architects of the scheme claimed to be motivated by past successes of conditional cash transfers in reducing maternal mortality and positive welfare outcomes for family members when women received cash. Although they were not aiming to compensate women for their UDCW, they offered a nascent acknowledgement of their role in social reproduction at the household level. This was accompanied by a benevolent paternalistic desire to reduce women's economic dependence on male family members. Fortuitously, the scheme was implemented amidst a raging pandemic, job losses, and soaring prices. Its unconditional nature meant that women spent on a wide range of goods and services. Where women routinely subordinate their needs to those of others, beneficiaries fulfilled their own basic needs for food and healthcare.

When it comes to UDCW, it is premature to expect the scheme to have led to its recognition, reduction and redistribution. But the scheme has not led to increased demands for UDCW or acted as a disincentive to paid employment or education. Neither has it reinforced gender stereotypes. Paradoxically, the sexual division of labour is so firmly entrenched that further reinforcement seems unimaginable. If anything, the obligation to perform UDCW was the primary identity of most women such that even domestic abuse would not lead them to consider exit. Women's UDCW remained invisible and is taken for granted. Even women thought of it as simply "niji" or personal work, rather than as valuable work necessary to keep the wheels of society and the economy churning. Yet, women perceived the money that their husbands spent on their upkeep as sufficient compensation for UDCW thus underscoring the transactional nature of marriage. Interestingly, it was the scheme payments that conferred respect (the fourth feminist inspired "R" that was dropped out of SDG 5.4). Thus, the path to the recognition of UDCW is long and that towards redistribution longer still. Interestingly, however, women also felt strongly about the need for both men and women to do paid work and contribute to household finances suggesting that gendered social norms are not as fixed as we imagine them to be.

For the scheme to have a truly transformative effect on women's lives, the government's nascent recognition of women's UDCW must be rendered concrete through more targeted messaging on female empowerment undergirded in a discourse of rights rather than welfare. Initiatives to reduce the load of unpaid domestic work along the lines of the smart kitchen project in Kerala and through community kitchens, laundries and creches must be pursued. The need to redistribute unpaid work between men and women must find a place in the school curriculum, alongside campaigns that depict and incentivise men and boys to do UDCW. Above all, there should be support for whatever women choose to do with their money and time (whether it is paid or unpaid work within or outside the home). Given that a large part of Assam's population lives in rural areas, the value of unpaid economic work involved in subsistence agriculture must be accounted for. The scheme month, the period during which beneficiary lists are rationalised, should be used to connect women to livelihood options and decent jobs. Financial inclusion must also go hand in hand with financial literacy and an adequate financial infrastructure, in the absence of which a benefit can feel more like a burden. Last but not the least, the National Crime Records Bureau lists Assam as having the highest crime rate against women for four consecutive years with cruelty by husbands and relatives topping the list of crimes. Since the scheme seeks to achieve female empowerment, it must be used to ensure zero tolerance for domestic violence alongside scaling up initiatives like the NEN's Grameen Mahila Kendras.

To conclude, despite the meteoric rise in women's UDCW during the pandemic, it has received little material recognition. In 2021, unconditional cash transfers for women caught the imagination of Indian political parties and it cannot be glossed over in terms of competitive populism. Politicians in several states who did their homework understood that women were unable to undertake paid work outside their homes due to caring responsibilities and needed the unconditional transfer to meet the basic needs. Further, that not all women could take up paid employment. Or that even when they had jobs, given low compensation for lengthy hours with few benefits, a cash transfer acted as a cushion whether to meet the educational or aspirational needs of their children or to buy a vehicle to reduce reliance on public transport to get to work. Thus, women could decide how they wanted to spend the money.[7]

There is a reason to be sceptical of governmental recognition. Conditional cash transfers impose onerous obligations on women to deliver on state identified objectives. Microfinance schemes and SHGs have hardly translated into greater economic empowerment. Household indebtedness has in fact spiralled out of control. Yet unconditional cash transfers do not need repayment and give women complete control to use at their discretion. Such transfers are known to be the most responsive to care needs. The dismissal of these schemes as offering a pittance reveals the elitist bias of critics who fail to appreciate how far even an amount of ₹830 can go in meeting the needs of the poor. However, the schemes must aim higher at shifting unequal gender relations including through the greater recognition of UDCW and zero tolerance of domestic abuse.

Finally, the redistributive effects of these schemes need greater study. When implementing election promises, governments face difficult choices—award a meagre amount to a larger number of beneficiaries or a slightly higher amount to a limited pool? Should it be paid to residents or migrants too? Goa and Assam confine these cash transfers to permanent residents but not West Bengal. Should there be a cap on the number of beneficiaries? If so, on what basis? In Goa, there is a fixed number for the entire state whereas in Assam, the cap operates along constituency lines which generates lines of political patronage and excludes many BPL families in poorer constituencies. In West Bengal, however, there is no cap. Further, should the amount be paid to one woman per household or to all women irrespective of household configuration? In Assam, only one woman per household can receive the payment, unlike in West Bengal. Should eligibility be determined by a means of a test or not? It is not tested in West Bengal but is tested in Goa and Assam. Interestingly, eligibility has not been dependent on employment status and is therefore not limited to homemakers. So, it is less likely to disincentivise paid employment. Conditions relating to marital status vary. Notably, the scheme prioritises single women, including unmarried, separated, divorced, and widowed women; hence, the state is rewriting the marriage contract, directly intervening in the familial space by dislodging the penalties of being single in a country where marriage is near universal and by promoting social respect for these women alongside reduced dependence on their male relatives. This could result in reversed dependencies as seen in South Africa where the state becomes the new "husband" (Granlund and Hochfeld 2020).

Ultimately, the study of the scheme reveals the need to recalibrate assumptions made by feminists on both sides of the debate about unconditional cash transfers. We have overestimated both the strengths and drawbacks of such schemes. Even as we find an unarticulated buy-in on the part of governments for the recognition of women's UDCW, feminists must now offer robust engagement so that we can embark on the transformative goal of underlining the significance of UDCW for society, while sharing the joys and burdens of UDCW more equitably and promoting women's economic empowerment.

NOTES

1 See also https://lawsofsocialreproduction.net/2021/04/01/debates-for-and-against-wages-for-housework/.

2 Medicine, clothes, cosmetics, tea, betel nuts, and mobile phone recharge.

3 Electricity bill, "puja" items, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinder, and house rent.

4 To buy yarn to weave and sell handloom products, buy stocks for the shop, buy oven for baking business, and buy sewing machines.

5 For father's medical treatment, son's funeral, and relative's wedding.

6 Roughly, 48 women said they had no debts in the household; the rest had debts ranging between ₹5,000 and ₹2,00,000.

7 Interview with C P John, UDF, April 2021.

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