



**Mémoire**  
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**A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE USE AND  
ALLOCATION OF TIME BY WOMEN IN THE USE-  
VALUE AND EXCHANGE-VALUE SECTORS IN  
THE RURAL AND URBAN AREAS OF ZOMBA  
DISTRICT.**

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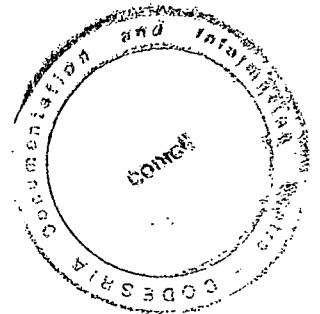
CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE USE AND ALLOCATION OF TIME  
BY WOMEN IN THE USE-VALUE AND EXCHANGE-VALUE SECTORS IN THE  
RURAL AND URBAN AREAS OF ZOMBA DISTRICT.

I, Febbie Kaufulu declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been presented for any other awards.

*Febbie Kaufulu*

Candidate for M.A. Sociology  
July 1992



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A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE USE AND ALLOCATION OF TIME  
BY WOMEN IN THE USE VALUE AND EXCHANGE VALUE SECTORS  
IN THE RURAL AND URBAN AREAS OF ZOMBA DISTRICT

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Social Science in  
partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Master of Arts  
degree in Sociology (Women in Development).

BY

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Dedication

To my mother for her toil.

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## Abstract

This dissertation examines the inadequacy of two theoretical frameworks (i.e. the public/private approach and the economic approach) that are commonly used in evaluating work. It offers an alternative framework that values work regardless of where it is performed and whether or not such work is remunerated. This alternative approach is the use-value production/exchange-value production approach. The alternative framework values all work that contributes to the well being of families and societies equally. By examining the manner in which women use and allocate time in three different geographical areas in Zomba, the superiority of the alternative approach, over the other two approaches in documenting women's work is shown. The three areas include one rural setting (Male/Onga villages in Chief Malemia's chiefdom), one peri-urban community (Chinanwali location) and Zomba town.

The findings of the research suggest that women in Zomba District, irrespective of the area in which they live use and allocate their time using similar logic in order to maximise on time and also in order to effectively and efficiently maximise on their energy. It is because of such effective use and allocation of time and energy that women are able to accomplish many varied tasks within a limited amount of time.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In all contemporary cultures domestic work is overwhelmingly considered women's work (Beneria, 1980). In addition to domestic work Boserup (1970) has pointed out that in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is predominantly a female farming region, food production continues to fall predominantly on women. Maguire (1984) observes that as women move into the wage earning sector, either through financial necessity or personal choice, they continue to retain nearly full responsibility for work in the home. These authors draw attention to the importance of women's labour to the maintenance of households and national economies while at the same time drawing our attention to the multiple demands on women's labour.

The situation of Malawian women is similar to the one described above. Apart from the work of bearing and raising children, caring for their husbands and looking after the home, activities that are being referred to in this dissertation as household maintenance activities, Malawian women also are also the predominant producers of food crops and also carry the major responsibility of processing and storing such crops. In cases where women enter the paid wage sector, like women globally, Malawian women remain responsible for household maintenance activities. It is, therefore, apparent that because women have to manage household maintenance activities apart from any other activity that they may be engaged in, their working day is

considerably longer than that of men (Beneria, 1981; Dixon, 1985).

This dissertation examines, on a comparative basis, the characteristics of women's work in three different areas in Zomba District to determine differences and similarities in the way women allocate their time to various tasks within the length of a woman's work day. The three areas include one rural setting, one peri-urban community and Zomba town. A contrast is made with the nature of work carried out by women from Onga and Male villages in Chief Malemia's area in Zomba rural with women of Chinamwali location who neither are involved in paid employment nor agricultural work and that of women engaged in paid work from the town of Zomba. In total, 200 women were interviewed with reference to their time allocation and of these, a group of 40 were selected for observations.

### 1.1 The Importance of Time Allocation Studies and Women's Work in Malawi

In the African context, paid employment is not the main activity for the majority of people. In Malawi, only 4.5% are in paid employment (Government of Malawi, Economic Report, 1990). For women, in particular, entry into paid employment has been on a much smaller scale than it has been for men. For example, in Malawi in 1990, out of a total work force of 429,111, only 17,000 were women, representing only 4% (four per cent) of the total work force in paid employment

(Government of Malawi, Economic Report, 1990). From an economic point of view, such national statistics give an impression of little participation by women in the economic sector, yet that women's labour is vital in the maintenance of households. The undervaluing of women's work in Malawi, as elsewhere, has been partly due to models of valuing work using paid employment as the standard. Little knowledge of what exactly is entailed in women's work has existed until recently. Time allocation studies, especially those using both questionnaires/interview schedules and ethnographic methods, enable us to document the time involved in the various tasks that women perform and elucidate the multiplicity of such tasks. Furthermore, this type of study enables us to relate the various tasks to the overall economic and social well-being of the women's households and the economy as a whole. At the national level, such studies enable planners making decisions, especially those pertaining to the introduction of measures that involve women's labour, to assess the realities of women's time constraints as related to planned innovations.

Whilst it is commonly accepted that in general a woman's work day is longer than a man's, almost inevitably this fact is ignored in planning development programmes for women designed to meet other needs, such as for increased income. Often these programmes end up actually increasing a woman's workload. One can only conclude that such programmes are based on inaccurate assessment of the complexities of

women's work. In 1983, a World Bank Report asserted that development activities continued to make life worse for women because technologies introduced in Third World countries to boost economic well being for rural women often ended up increasing the workload for such women without any increase in their economic well being (World Bank, 1983). If planners utilised time allocation surveys for pre- and post-assessment of development interventions on the nature and quantity of women's work, then programmes could be designed that lessen women's workload while enhancing their economic and social well being rather than the other way round. Such assessments of the impact of programmes on women's work could also provide a basis for planners and policy makers to critically examine the assumptions that they are using in planning programmes for women.

The time allocation survey on women's work in this study serves three purposes:

- (1) To raise questions about the relevancy of existing theoretical perspectives that have so far been used in the assessment of women's work in designing development programmes, particularly in the Malawian context;
- (2) To provide factual information on the exact nature of women's work and the allocation of time to various tasks and the reasons for such allocations, using three different social settings as case studies;

- (3) To illuminate the critical role of Malawian women in development by making a realistic assessment of the value of women's multiple tasks, including their relationship to women's families' well being and to the nation's economic development.

The next section reviews two major theoretical approaches that have been advanced in analysing women's work and offers an alternative approach that is more relevant to the African situation.

### 1.2 Review of the Literature on Frameworks Used in Analysing Women's Work

Two major theoretical perspectives have been used by social scientists in analysing the nature of women's work. These are: (a) the division of labour model inherent in the public/private dichotomy, and (b) the economic model which gives an economic value to work exchanged in the labour market but does not give similar value to labour for use value. Both models contribute to the invisibility of women's work. Time allocation surveys using either of these two frameworks have undermined the value and quantity of women's work.

#### The Public/Private Approach

The public/private approach is based on the notion that the sexual division of labour is natural rather than socially constructed (Rosaldo, 1974). According to this model, men's activities, are in the public sphere whilst women's activ-



ities are associated with the household, thus belonging to the -private sphere. The labour market, like the political arena, is seen to be part of the public sphere. The public/private approach has its basis in the Western-Victorian middle-class ideal of womanhood, whereby women were perceived as the purer, and weaker sex fit to operate in the security of their homes whilst men went out to earn a living to support the women and children (Hall, 1979). This Western approach has since been extended to other cultures. That the public/private approach is based on specific Western social practices that are alien to the African context is little addressed.

#### Limitations of the Public/Private Approach

Four main limitations dictate against using the above approach in analysing women's work. These are:

- (1) Under the approach, women's entry into paid employment is perceived differently from that of men's. Women's entry is perceived as of a secondary value rather than necessity;
- (2) The approach fails to recognize that in rural societies in Africa and many other Third World countries, it is impossible to isolate one sphere from the other as the two spheres - public and private - are intrinsically intertwined.
- (3) The approach fails to give accurate value to women's work especially those women who are not in wage employment but are involved in household maintenance tasks;

(4) Finally, the approach contributes to the invisibility of women's work in official statistical documents.

#### Women's Entry into Wage Employment

The first limitation advanced is that the public/private approach treats the entry of women into wage employment differently from that of men. Because the approach perceives housework as a woman's "natural" role, the entry of women into paid employment is regarded as secondary and women's commitment to paid employment is also regarded as secondary (Glazer, 1980). Women are, therefore, perceived as doing paid work for "nonessential" and non-economic reasons (Ibid). Although time allocation surveys have revealed that women who enter paid employment endure a double burden since household maintenance activities remain the women's responsibility, policy makers consider such a problem to be of the women's own making since the problem arises from their personal "choices" (Fuchs, 1988). Hence the solutions proposed by employers to solving problems women experience in engaging in both paid and unpaid work have emphasized personal sacrifice and innovation on the part of women (Glazer, 1980).

A time allocation survey in the United States of America carried out in 1979 by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan revealed that the number of hours spent in paid work and their scheduling were problematic for women when they have young children because of lack of childcare facilities (Quinn and G. Staines, 1979).

The major solution recommended by American employers to problems of childcare was to advise women to forego having children if they were serious about pursuing a career. The underlying assumption is 'if women enter into the male public domain and leave their biological role, then it's their problem'. Because of this assumption the structuring of the work schedule in the United States remains designed to enhance the productivity and convenience of the work organization and not to cater for the needs of women who have to deal equally with family responsibilities (Matiher and Sorensen, 1984). Unfortunately, this attitude towards work in many other countries follows a similar structuring thus causing conflict between household maintenance and paid employment. In a survey on the relationship between domestic responsibilities and paid employment in Cameroon, West Africa, De Lancey (1981) found that mothers in paid employment experienced difficulties in balancing paid work and household maintenance work. The study further revealed that employed mothers were twice as likely as employed men to aspire to the ideal of self-employment because they would have control over the allocation of their working time and self-employment was seen to be more compatible with household maintenance tasks and childcare obligations (De Lancey 1981).

Women's entry into wage employment is perceived secondary work because according to the public/private approach, woman's primary role is in the home and the man

the "breadwinner" or major provider who looks after a woman's needs. Kameme Okonjo (1976) has critiqued this assumption as not applicable in the African context. She argues that the approach had been transplanted superficially on an indigenous foundation of substantial female economic contributions, female solidarity organizations and women's authority in separate, not inferior, structures which enable women to manage their own affairs (Okonjo, 1976).

There is no evidence to suggest that as women enter into wage employment in Africa they cease to control the money they earn or cease to have authority in separate areas; for example, in the use of their wages in the maintenance of the household, an area which although separate is not inferior to areas in which men operate. A study of women's work in Indian cities revealed that women's earnings in India were not marginal to the household economy though the earnings tended to be less than those of the men (Sharma, 1986). In cases where a woman's income was the only source of income for the household it was totally inappropriate to categorise such earnings as secondary (Ibid). The notion arising from the public/ private approach that women's earnings are secondary and peripheral to men's in the household economy is, therefore, erroneous. Yet the perception of women as subsumed under the economic protection of men is used to justify lack of public policies addressing women's double workload (Kathleen Staudt, 1985).

### Rural Women and the Public/Private Approach

The public/private approach demarcates spatial work spheres into separate categories and makes them gender specific with no interaction between the two. For rural women in Africa, in particular, women operate in both spheres. They combine the 'productive public sphere' and the 'procreative (private sphere)' in their daily lives and the two are interwoven (Afonja, 1986). This applies to Malawi where women do not view themselves as relegated to one or the other sphere. In sub-Saharan Africa today women are the major producers of food for the region, carrying out the agricultural work alongside their household maintenance tasks. Further, the women may sell some of the crops they produce in a public market or along the roadside and utilize the rest for family consumption. The fields in which the women work are in many instances within the same vicinity as the women's residences. Women often work with a child tied on their backs, combining agricultural production with child-care. Women, therefore, combine all activities of production and consumption within the same area. It is with the foregoing evidence in mind that feminist critics have all fervently argued against the public/private dichotomy as a framework for understanding the activities of African women because it is inaccurate in conceptualizing both the present and past African life; (Afonja, 1986; Davison, 1988; Okali, 1983;) Looking for spatial "spheres" when carrying out time allocation surveys on women in rural areas of Africa misses the

point that such spheres are non-existent and that the African home is both a production and consumption unit. Davison (1988), therefore, argues that the creation of gender-specific spheres only serves to confuse an analysis of gender differences in African societies.

#### The Public/Private Approach and the Value of Women's Work

Jaggar (1983) asserts that demarcating work into two spheres trivializes women's work. Once women's work has been placed into the private sphere, it is automatically perceived as less important to that of men's work in the public sphere.

Neither the content nor the complexities of household maintenance work changes such a perspective. Studies have shown that even when women are not in wage employment, household maintenance tasks take many hours to accomplish, as many or even more than the hours men spend in wage employment (Beckerson, 1988, Dixon 1985, Fuchs, 1988), yet women's household maintenance tasks, because they are not compensated, are basically unrecorded and women who solely do "household maintenance tasks" are considered unemployed in labour statistics. Beckerson (1983) in a comparative time allocation study between male-headed households and female-headed households in Lilongwe Agricultural Development Division in Central Malawi concluded that in rural Malawi, women heads of households already have a 'full day' because women have to do both household maintenance tasks and agricultural work. Despite this, women were being encouraged

to grow cash crops as well as food crops. The result has been that in order to contribute their labour to the cash crops women had to reallocate their time by reducing the time they spent on farming food crops. As a result, families in areas where cash crops were grown suffered from lowered nutritional status. Beckerson recognized the value of women's work in a way that many researchers do not recognize it. Her results can be contrasted with an earlier study by Barbara Clark (1972) who, after doing a comparative study of women's activities in Ngabu Agricultural Development Division (Southern Malawi) concluded that on average women spent 38% of their twelve-hour working day in recreation and resting, and, as such, it was possible to increase time women could spend on cash crop production (Clark, 1972). Although Clark states that the aim of her study is to produce comprehensive farm management data through a detailed study of the activities of village women, her other comments show that she trivializes much of the activities that women do (Clark, 1972: 2 - 3). For example, she perceives women's social production through their attendance at weddings and funerals as unnecessary and thus misses their social implications, including the production and distribution of food and drink. When women's work is viewed as "private", the contents of that work is often undervalued and its relevance equated to the more important work done by men in the public sphere. It is precisely this undervaluing of women's work that is used to portray women as helpless beings in need of male protection. When women, due to time constraints fail to

effectively take up new technologies, they are further perceived as problematic recipients of new innovations.

The Public/Private Approach and the Invisibility of Women's Work

Jaggar (1983) also critiqued the public/private approach as contributing to the invisibility of women's activities. Because household maintenance activities belong to the private sphere and the activities of the private sphere are deemed inferior, in order for women to be recognized they have to perform certain activities in the public sphere. The result is that all work in the private sphere is viewed as irrelevant for research or for official documentation. If not included, the nature of women's work is denied the chance to be a topic for public debate to be dealt with through public policy. It is this condition of invisibility that the public/private approach creates in women's work. As a result, women worldwide, suffer because problems related to their work are not sufficiently researched nor are they documented.

The issue of childcare, which falls mainly on women, is a case in point. Kamerman (1972) has described the fate of families in the U.S.A. whose mothers are in paid employment. These families end up relying on diverse modes of childcare and 'juggling a complex set of supports' to assure continuous care (Kamerman, 1972: p. 474). Although Kamerman shows that an employed wife has a much longer working day than her husband, women are, nevertheless, being called to reorganize



their lives and maximise efficient use of time and energy (Kamerman, 1972). The problem of childcare because of its invisibility, is not being sufficiently addressed as an issue for public policy in the U.S.A. because it is assumed to be a "private" family issue. The manner of the invisibility of women's home labour is further illustrated by the findings of Susanna Hecht (1985) for Latin America. She found that because rearing of livestock is done by women, little research has been carried out on women's livestock care. Hecht hypothesises that the lack of research on livestock rearing in Latin America is because the activity is predominantly done by women and is therefore relegated to the private sphere. As such, researchers fail to acknowledge it, and because it is not seen, it may not be included in women's household maintenance activities. The consequences are that even in cases where women engage in trade and other income generating activities within the home, their activities remain invisibly "private". Development planners relying on statistical bases that do not account for women's home labour often end up designing programmes that increase women's workloads. Nor do planners design programmes to aid those they cannot see (White, 1982).

The public/private approach can therefore be perceived as an unsuitable framework to use in analyzing time allocation studies as its total effect on the analysis of women's work is to undervalue it, relegating it to the private sphere where it remains invisible and its complexities largely misunderstood.

### The Economist Approach

The Economist Approach to time use and labour allocation is popular in neo-classical and Marxist economics. It assumes the primacy of economic motivation in human life. Only those goods and services that are exchanged on the market are defined and enumerated in this approach because they are the outcome of productive rather than reproductive work. It, therefore, follows that all other work that does not produce goods and services exchanged on the market is considered unproductive in terms of labour force participation.

### Limitations of the Economistic Approach

Within the context of my discussion, I have isolated three limitations that make the economistic approach unsuitable in the evaluation and analysis of women's work. These are:

- (1) The approach assumes that the market is the only legitimate arena for the determination of productive or non-productive work;
- (2) It is largely silent on the analysis of work outside the market apart from simply classifying it as unproductive;
- (3) It contributes to the invisibility of women's labour, including her reproductive labour.

### The Market as the Determining Factor for Productivity

The majority of Third World populations, Malawi included, live in the rural areas, producing their own food, goods and services and consuming the products of their labour. Whilst some of the commodities produced are exchanged on the market for cash, a significant portion are used by the household. It is such activities that have historically sustained the rural community and continue to do so. Whether such home-based labour could be perceived as unproductive or productive based on how its products are related to the market becomes a matter of semantics in a situation where such labour clearly sustains the majority of the populace. For women, in particular, who spend the greater part of their adult lives in child bearing and child rearing activities for the benefit of the household and the wider society, as well as being engaged in all the other household maintenance tasks, the irony is that such reproductive work could be regarded as unproductive by virtue of its arbitrary relationship to the market.

Further, in Africa women have become the major producers of food for their economies, producing between 60 to 80 per cent of the total food produced (Jaquette, 1985). Evidence gathered from various countries shows that women work much longer hours than men as they have to combine both home maintenance work and agricultural work (Jaquette, 1985). Yet because most of the products of women's labour is not exchanged on the market, it is classified as "unproductive".

Women's work also has a social productive value. It is a significant factor in maintaining social relationships because it is women who more often than men visit sick friends and relatives, attend weddings and funerals and make other social visits. During ceremonial events, women are expected to provide food and drink, an investment of labour. Women's work therefore clearly contributes to both the social and economic well being of the household. And because it does, this raises questions about privileging economics as the determining factor in valuing productive work rather than the relationship of work to the social and economic well being of the household and society. Beneria and Sen (1986) have critiqued Boserup's seminal work on women and development by arguing that the latter had used an economic approach in discussing women's labour, ignoring other aspects of women's labour. They point out that by concentrating on women's productive labour, Boserup (1970) overlooks the significance of women's procreative labour, thereby ignoring its value in reproducing labour for the benefit of male heads of compounds and also for the benefit of society at large (Beneria and Sen, 1986: 153). The use of the economic approach in time allocation tends to distance the value of women's contribution to society and to their households. By making the market and exchange-value labour the centre piece of their analyses, advocates of this approach marginalize the other aspects of women's productive and reproductive work.

The Economistic Approach and its Relationship to Labour Outside the Market

The economistic approach is silent about the value of home-based work. Hanna Papanek (1981) explains this by relating it to historical reasons whereby methods of data collection and analysis were developed in the West at a time when industrialization was beginning to take place and the separation between home and workplace was a salient issue. Even as economic analysis became more sophisticated, it was mainly applied to firms and industries because it was relatively easy to collect data from such organizations. It was also such organizations that needed precise data for planning future strategies. No precise methods of data collection and analysis were developed for subsistence farming or for other household maintenance activities. Household maintenance activities, in particular, suffered from the separation of the home and workplace and were completely left out of conventional analysis (Papanek 1981). This legacy of leaving out household maintenance activities in economic analyses and not developing methods for the inclusion of such work into conventional economic analyses continues up to the present times. This is despite the fact that household maintenance activities and subsistence agriculture remains the work done by most of the world's women and men for most of their lives.

The aim of the economistic approach, therefore, is to convert all that labour which is considered unproductive into productive labour and thus bring it into a relationship with

the market. The approach treats much of the work done by women (and men) not engaged in wage employment as non-work disregarding the fact that when such work is performed by hired labour, it becomes very expensive. The result is that heavier work loads are created for women as recommendations are made for women to take up work deemed to be 'more productive' without the provision of alternative labour to take over the household tasks. The study by Beckerson in Lilongwe Agricultural Development Division illustrates this point; women were urged to grow cash crops, as cash cropping was more productive in terms of cash value than subsistence farming and household maintenance tasks. The result was that women allocated less time to household maintenance tasks and subsistence farming. The consequences were poor nutritional status for their families (Beckerson, 1983). The introduction of cash cropping to women who already were involved in other useful household maintenance work shows another tendency of the economic approach whereby only that labour that produces a cash value is productive labour, other labour being considered non-productive. Yet women's work, especially household maintenance work, is essential to the survival of humanity. Women cook food, do the laundry, clean the house and shop so that husbands and children do not need to worry about these basic requirements. Yet the work incurred in fulfilling such needs remains invisible to husbands and male employers who benefit from this labour. In the U.S.A., the combined estimated monetary value of the cleaning, cooking, nursing, shopping, child care, home

maintenance, entertainment and other services performed by women under the umbrella of housework has been estimated as equal to roughly one-fourth of the Gross National Product (Galbraith, 1973 cited in *Manager and Families* by Lamanna and Ruedmann, 1985: 386).

Because much of women's work is classified as unproductive for market purposes, the greater part of women's contribution to households and to national economies goes unrecorded. Even though cross-cultural time allocation studies in Third World countries have revealed that rural women of all ages spend on average more time working and less time on leisure than men, ironically it is men's work that is most often recorded in statistics (Dixon, 1985). Beneria and Sen (1986) confirm that the use of the economic approach in time use surveys in Sub-Saharan African countries has resulted in women appearing in only a few countries as half or more of the farm labour force (Beneria and Sen, 1986). Yet it is a fact that women are the major producers of food in Sub-Saharan Africa. As argued in the public/private approach, similarly the consequences of making invisible women's work in national accounts and statistics is that it implies that women should take on even more responsibilities in the so-called "productive" market where their labour will be counted (and paid). But employment has the effect of increasing further women's work. In order to address the problem of the invisibility of women's work Dixon (1983) argues for the fullest accounting of women's work in time use

surveys where hours of labour per day are tallied according to activity and these activities, too, are recorded in national labour statistics. This dissertation, however, calls for an alternative approach to deal with the problems associated with women's work, an approach that, unlike the public/private dichotomy and the economic approach, comes directly from Third World experience.

An Alternative Approach: Use-Value Production and Exchange-Value Production

Unlike the public/private approach and the economic approach, which are based on Western economic and social models, the use-value production/exchange-value production approach came out of the Third World as a critique to existing Western frameworks used in the analysis and evaluation of women's work. Whilst Beneria (1981), from whose work I largely draw for the alternative approach, did not explicitly suggest the above alternative approach, she consistently used the terms "use-value production" when referring to work that produces goods for use and consumption outside the market and to "exchange-value production" for work that produces goods and services exchangeable on the market.

The use-value production/exchange-value production comparison, has the following advantages over the other two approaches discussed. First, by referring to both types of activities as production, Beneria manages to clarify the fact that work, be it for use value or exchange value is productive work. She, therefore, gets away from the economic



approach. She also transcends problems arising from the private/public approach, by viewing the place or space where work is performed as irrelevant. For Beneria, the true value of work is whether it satisfies human needs (Beneria, 1981). Perceived from this perspective, women's work and men's work is included in the alternative approach. Nor is one type of work predominantly female and the other regarded as male. Both women and men do use-value work and likewise both should have opportunities for exchange value labour. Clearly, the alternative approach challenges the ideological basis that has been used to perceive most of women's work as inferior and unproductive because it demands the use of more accurate concepts.

Following from clear concepts, the alternative approach enables all work that contributes to the social and economic welfare of households and of the nation to be recorded in the national statistics. The problem to be faced in the collection of such data is not whether the activity is work or not work, but rather whether the activity belongs to either use-value or exchange-value production. The invisibility of most of women's work will have been addressed in using an approach that differentiates the two types of production.

The third benefit of the alternative approach is that development planners will be able to plan for women whose work is visible and whose work load has been accurately determined.

It is with this alternative approach in view that the time allocation survey upon which this dissertation is based was conducted. The survey sought to accurately document women's work activities and workloads in three locations in Zomba district. Activities that women perform, the time they take to accomplish them and their contribution to the well being of the women's households were recorded. The task was made easier by knowing that all the activities could be evaluated and analysed within the conceptual framework of use-value production and exchange-value production, an approach that lends itself to the broadest inclusion of women's labour activities.

The next chapter describes the research setting and the methodology. It gives reasons why the particular methodology was selected. Chapters three to five discuss how women in each of the geographical settings use and allocate their time to various activities. Chapter six examines differences and similarities in the use and allocation of time among women in the three settings.

## CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH SETTING AND METHODOLOGY2.1 Research Setting

The research upon which this study is based was carried out in Zomba district, Malawi. Zomba District is in the Southern Region, being one of the ten districts in the region. It is the third largest district in size after Mangochi and Machinga with a total area of 2,580 square miles. The total population of the district is 438,150 of which 229,116 are female (National Statistical Office, 1987).

Zomba municipality is known primarily because it was the first capital of Malawi before the capital was moved to Lilongwe in 1975. Today Zomba Town is commonly referred to as a "University town" because Chancellor College, the largest campus of the University of Malawi, and the Central University administration are situated in Zomba municipality. The municipality has a population of 42,878 of which 20,715 are female. For purposes of agricultural development and planning, Zomba District has been placed under the Liwonde Agricultural Development Division which includes Mangochi and Machinga districts. Zomba has no major industries. Most people who are in paid employment work either for the University, the Government district offices or a few service organizations and retail outlets. One third of the women interviewed lived in the town. A second group of women came from Chinamwali location, a peri-urban area about five kilometres north of Zomba town. Chinamwali lies within the

Municipality of Zomba. It is demarcated for town planning purposes as a Traditional Housing Area in that plots are allocated to people by local authorities. Plot holders build houses mainly to let out to families who work in Zomba town who are not provided with institutional accommodation.

The population of Chinamwali location is 3,175 of which roughly half, 1,516, are female (National Statistical Office, 1987). Chinamwali is one of those settlements in the country which initially grew unplanned. Chinamwali has no access roads to dwelling units that can be used by vehicles. Access between units is by small winding footpaths. This means that people with vehicles coming to Chinamwali or living in Chinamwali have to leave their vehicles with friends whose houses are nearer to the main tarmac road from Zomba to Lilongwe. Some residents with vehicles clear rough access roads to their premises.

Chinamwali lacks not only access roads but community services as well. For example, there is no permanent health clinic in the area. A mobile "under-five" clinic is operated by the municipality on certain days. The water supply in Chinamwali is also problematic. The supply is from communal taps which are opened between 5:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. in the morning and between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. in the evening. In response to the shortage, a few families have installed water taps within their premises and these, in turn, sell water to other residents by the bucket. There is no primary school in Chinamwali. Children have either to go to Zomba

town for school or enrol at Chikupila Primary School situated about two kilometres west of the Zomba-Lilongwe Road, in Chief Malemia's chiefdom. Dwelling units are crowded in Chinamwali and this may contribute to lack of facilities as certain houses would have to be demolished to create space for a development project. Dwellings are mainly constructed of mud walls with corrugated iron sheet roofing (see Table 2.1).

There is a market in Chinamwali which is mainly an open market although some vendors have erected their own tin or mud kiosks from where they sell their merchandise. The market is situated next to the tarmac road from Zomba to Lilongwe where a few grocery shops are also located.

People living in Chinamwali are employed mainly in various organizations in Zomba as clerks, labourers, drivers etc. Their houses in Chinamwali are rented. Some are engaged in various small scale businesses like selling different commodities in the market. Chinamwali, therefore, appears to be in a transition stage between being a village and a true urban location (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.I: Type of Houses in Chinamwali for the Sub-Sample of 67 Households

Type of Walls	Type of Roof		
	Corrugated	Thatched	Total
Mud Walls	41	12	53
Walls of burnt bricks	12	1	13
Walls of Sunbaked bricks	1	-	1
Total	54	13	67

To represent women in rural agrarian situations, two villages 20 kilometres north of Zomba town were selected, Onga and Male villages in Traditional Authority Malemia's chiefdom. The two villages are adjacent to each other and lie west of the main tarmac road leading toward Lilongwe. Onga village is nestled up in the foothills of the Zomba escarpment, while Male is in the valley flatlands. They have a combined population of 375 people of which 183 are male and 192 are female. Both villages are predominantly Yao speaking. The inhabitants are either Muslims or Christians. Both villages have women as village heads though this was not a factor in their selection. The crops grown in the villages are mainly maize interplanted with beans, pumpkins and pigeon peas. Rice is also grown in the low lying, moist dambo areas. No major cash-value crops are grown in the area.

The three geographical settings have implications for women's work; that is, women's work is not identical in space but articulates with the environment in which it is

performed. Women in the urban area are, therefore, likely to experience their work differently from those in Chinamwali and those in Onga/Male by virtue of different physical, spatial, economic and social environments affecting and determining the way time is to be allocated to various tasks and the type of tasks. For example, most women in Chinamwali perform their work within a small space necessitating that the women put utensils away as soon as they are used in order to create space for other tasks. This is not the case for Male/Onga women whose compounds are larger.

Although a good deal has been written about the work of women in rural areas in Malawi (Butler, 1976; Clark, 1972; Farrington, 1975) little attention has been paid to women's work in the urban areas in order to find out the effects of urbanization. This comparative study of women's work in use value and exchange value production was designed to document and analyse differences in women's work in an agrarian setting, a peri-urban setting and an urban setting. The three geographical areas roughly represent the range of environments in which most Malawian women are found.

## 2.2 Methodology

The data collected for this dissertation are based on a total sample of 200 women drawn from the three areas as outlined in the last section. Data collection began on 20th October, 1991, and ended on 27th December, 1991. Quantitative data elicited through interview schedules was collected

at a faster pace than qualitative data collected through direct ethnographic observation. It took six weeks to complete the interview schedules and about four weeks to carry out 40 direct observations of women at work. This is understandable as direct observations require that the researcher shadows one individual for the greater part of a day, whilst several interviews can be done within the same space of time.

The first urban sub-sample of 60 women was purposively selected from 30 randomly selected employment agencies in Zomba town to represent women engaged in employment (exchange-value production) as well as use-value production (household maintenance work). Two women were randomly selected from each agency. The second sub-sample of 70 women in Chinamwali area was drawn from 70 households through a process of random stratification. The last group of 70 women was drawn from 70 households in Onga and Male villages. Because of the small number of adult women in the two villages, all the adult women available in the villages at the time of research were included in this sample.

#### Selection of Research Assistants

Three research assistants were selected to conduct the interviews who met the following criteria:

- (a) Female
- (b) Attained MSCE or its equivalent
- (c) 25 years old or above



(d) Living near the vicinity where the research was to take place

Due to problems of finding suitable candidates, however, only two of the research assistants met all the requirements. The third was much younger, being 21 years old. The older two assistants had worked as enumerators with the National Statistical Office whilst the third younger assistant had no previous work experience.

The educational standard of 'O' level was used as a minimum requirement because these assistants were expected to accurately translate from the local language into English answers or information from respondents. It was also necessary for the assistants to be able to accurately translate the English question into Chichewa or Yao especially for respondents in the two villages and in Chinamwali because these women were likely to have little or no education. Setting the minimum qualification at MSCE also enabled the assistants to feel at ease with women in the exchange-value sector in Zomba town, the majority of whom had attained an educational qualification of JC or above.

In spite of the fact that two of the assistants had previously administered questionnaires, ten days was spent coaching them on interviewing methods and procedures before they interviewed women in the three areas. During training the assistants were given instructions that each respondent be interviewed alone to avoid other people volunteering their

opinions thus influencing the respondents' answers. Techniques for gaining entry into a research area were particularly stressed. During the course of the field research, meetings with the assistants were held twice a week to discuss issues arising from the field experience.

It was important for purposes of the research that all the research assistants be female as all respondents were female. Female research assistants are more likely to establish a working rapport with fellow women than male assistants, and the information is given more freely.

The age of twenty-five was selected to further strengthen the building of rapport as it was assumed that it would be difficult for a younger woman to establish a rapport with a much older woman.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were selected for this research. The quantitative methods used interview schedules whilst the qualitative methods used unstructured interviews and direct observation. The quantitative method collected much demographic data and opinions of the women which the use of qualitative methods, alone, would by pass. It also enabled such information to be collected from a larger sample of women (200 in total). However, in order to verify what the women reported, especially information pertaining to times they perform various activities, qualitative methods were also used. Women do not normally check the time they take to perform

activities. Mueller (1983) has critiqued as inadequate the sole use of questionnaires or interview schedules in time use surveys without the element of in-depth direct observation. One of the reasons she gives is that questionnaires cannot give valid estimates, neither do they give us the actual meaning of time (Mueller, 1985). For example, a woman may spend several hours knitting whilst chatting with her friends. Because the woman values the social interaction more than the knitting, she may report through an interview that she spent time chatting because culturally social interaction is what is most valued. In order to avoid such problems, and also problems related to recalling exact activities performed and the time spent on each activity, this study used a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods so that the two reinforce each other.

#### Quantitative Methods Used

As indicated earlier, the major quantitative method used was the interview schedule. The schedule was administered by the three female research assistants, one working in Chinamwali location, one in Zomba town and the third in Onga-/Male villages. I interviewed at least ten respondents in each area. This was done to enable me to check the responses I got against those obtained by my assistants. Apart from Zomba town, interviews were mostly conducted at the homes of the respondents. In Zomba town, interviews were held at the respondent's work place.

The major focus of the interview schedule was to determine the factors that influence the way women allocate their time and why they do so for various tasks. In addition the schedule was meant to isolate tasks common for all the three settings from those that were specific to a particular setting. The sequential recall method, whereby women are asked to recall activities that they have performed in the last twenty-four hours and the time allocated to such activities, was used. However a lot of information was also obtained by letting women simply talk about the ways they experienced their work even though they were not directly answering questions on the schedule.

These unstructured sessions were intended from the beginning. To limit the method to structured questions, might, in some cases, mean missing out an important factor influencing how women experienced their work. Research assistants were, therefore instructed to let women digress if necessary and to record protracted explanations pertaining to women's work. Thus, in part, the interviews became qualitative. Much valuable information, especially on women's opinions about their work was collected in this manner. These unstructured sessions lengthened the interviewing time considerably. On average, each interview took an hour to an hour and half, thus limiting the number of interviews per day to about five.

### Qualitative Methods

For direct observation a total of 40 women were randomly selected from the total sample of 200 respondents, 20 from Male/Onga villages, 10 from Chinamwali and 10 from Zomba town. Each woman was observed over a period of two days for six to seven hours each day, one observation taking place from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and the other observation beginning from 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m. on another day. In total, each woman was therefore observed and her work activities and time allocated to each recorded for a total of about 12 hours. The decision to observe one woman in two half days in Onga/Male and Chinamwali was to minimize fatigue by the researcher in watching the same person and also to enable the respondent to have a break from being followed around by the researcher.

For Zomba town slight variations were made whereby focused observation began at 5:30 a.m. in the morning, continued in the woman's place of employment and ended at 7:00 p.m. in her home. This observation pattern was carried out in order to document work activities not only during employment hours but also at home. Whilst prior permission had to be sought from each woman who was directly observed, the women were not told when the observation was to take place so as to prevent them getting prepared for the exercise. In Zomba town, because permission was obtained from both the woman's employer and the woman concerned, doing the observation in one day was considered more appropriate by

employers in terms of accommodating a stranger in their work place. The process of observation involved recording every activity the woman carried out, including multiple activities in the same time period, and the number of hours, minutes spent on each activity.

The next chapters focus on the quality and quantity of women's work activities in Zomba town, while subsequent chapters take up peri-urban women's work in Chinamwali and rural women's work in Male/Onga villages. I begin with Zomba town women because they represent a small, but important, sector of women in Malawi who have broken into wage employment, once a male domain. The fact that these women are in wage employment does not imply any less responsibility for household maintenance work.

#### Note

1  
"Under-five" refers to health services provided for children under 5 years of age.

## CHAPTER THREE

USE AND ALLOCATION OF TIME  
BY ZOMBA TOWN WOMEN**3.1 Profile**

The Zomba woman in wage employment (exchange-value production) is on average between 26 and 40 years of age (only 8.3% were 20-25 years and 18.3% were over 40 years. She is, thus, in the peak of her child bearing years. She is married (over 76%) and living in a nuclear family. She has on average two to five children of which about 72% are under the age of ten years. She has lived in Zomba for less than 10 years (88.3%). She is employed as a clerk, typist or secretary (90%) in a Government or parastatal organization (70% as compared to 23% employed in the private sector). She lives in a two bedroomed brick-walled house with corrugated iron roof (95%), allocated to her husband by his employers (63.3%). Her hours of wage employment per week are between 40 hours and 45 hours (63%). Her official starting time for employment is 7:30 a.m and she ends her wage-earning day at 5:00 p.m (70%). In order to meet household and family needs she gets up around 5:00 a.m. After returning from paid employment, she works two more hours on family needs before falling into bed at 8:30 p.m.

**3.2 Length of Day for Zomba Women and the Determining Factors**

Women in Zomba town who are employed have an average working day of between 15 and 16 hours. One third of the women arise between 5:00 a.m. and 5:30 a.m. and go to bed

between 8:30 - 9:30 p.m. However, 46% arise earlier than 5:00 a.m. (between 4:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m.), retiring at the same time as the other women (8:30 - 9:30 p.m.). Some women go to bed as late as 12:00 midnight but these are only a small percentage (See Fig. 3.1). Between eight and nine hours of the day are spent in paid exchange-value work whilst the remaining hours are spent in other activities including use-value work. When asked why they arose at the time they do, Zomba women gave three reasons: (1) the official starting time for the husband and wife's paid employment; (2) the school starting time of their children; and (3) the mode of transport the women used to travel to their places of employment.

Most of the 60 women interviewed (over 84%) started their job by 7:30 a.m. or 8:00 a.m. A few working in retail outlets started earlier than 7:30 a.m. The majority of women's husbands also started work at 7:30 a.m. School children, depending on the grade they were in, started class as early as 7:15 a.m. In terms of transport to work, 85% of the women walked to their places of employment, taking an average of 30 minutes (See Tables 3.1 and 3.2). However, irrespective of the time women started work, the number of children beginning classes at 7:15 a.m., or the mode of transport, women still arose between 4:00 a.m and 5:30 a.m. There was no correlation between the factors the women mentioned as determining the time they arose and the time for arising. That the time for getting up remained unaffected by



Table 3.1 Mode of Transport to Work: Zomba Town

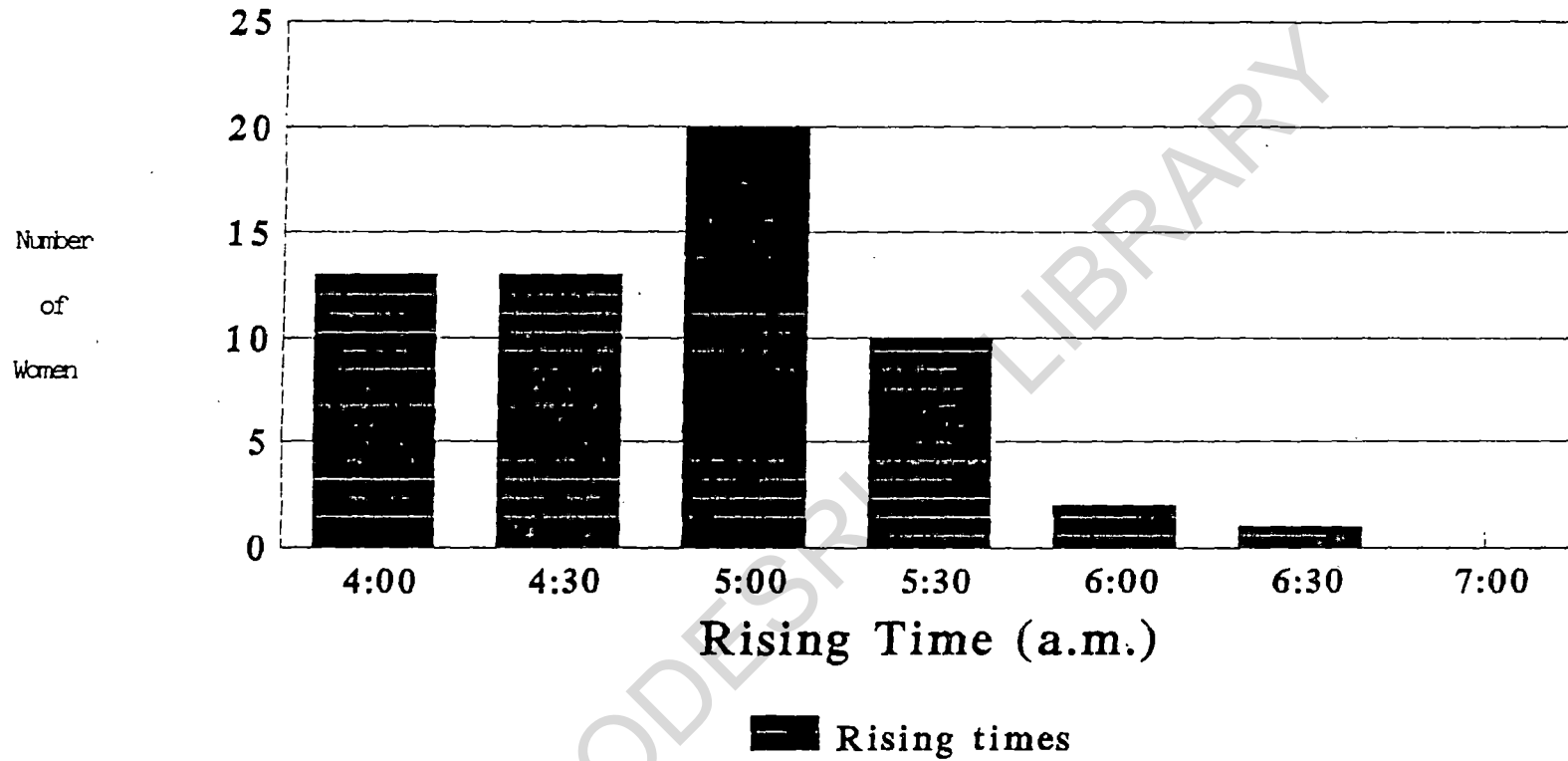
Mode of Transport	N = 60 No. of Women	% of Women
Walking	41	68.3
By Car	7	11.7
* Walking/Bus	6	10.0
* Walking/Car	4	6.7
, Cycling	1	1.7
Bus	1	1.7
Total	60	100

\* The women indicated that they walked most of the times only occasionally using the other mode of transport.

Table 3.2 Time Taken to Get to Place of Work: Zomba Town

Time (in Minutes)	N = 60 No. of Women	% of Women
0 - 5	9	15.0
6 - 15	11	18.3
16 - 30	10	16.7
31 - 45	18	30.0
46 min. - 1 hour	9	15.0
Over 1 hour	3	5.0
TOTAL	60	100

**Figure 3.1:**  
**Time Women in Zomba Town Arise**  
**By Number of Women** (N = 60)



30

those factors does not, however, imply that such factors are irrelevant. The reason for lack of correlation is explained by the fact that 4:00 a.m. is about the time when it begins to get light. Before then, it is still dark. Women therefore, simply arise at the earliest sign of light to ensure that they get themselves, their children and husbands ready for work or school on time. All women indicated that they were constrained for time in the mornings. The 2 - 3 hour period in the morning prior to departure for paid work proved to be insufficient for women, even for completing tasks such as heating water, dressing children and cooking breakfast, that are directly related to facilitating the departure of family members to school or work. In addition to helping family members, the woman who has house help has to issue instructions for the day.

Most of the tasks that women were observed performing at their homes in the early mornings were geared towards facilitating the departure of various members of the household, including themselves. Of the women directly observed, only three had breakfast in the morning although all women had ensured that their children and husbands had had breakfast. Only one of these 10 women used the family car to get to work.

Of the 60 women, the majority (68.3%) walked to work. Only 11.7% used cars. The largest proportion of women (30%) took between 31 minutes and 45 minutes to walk one way. In a day, these women spent one and a half hours walking to and from work.

Fifty-seven out of the 60 women in the Zomba sub-sample had househelp but most employed young and inexperienced girls because they were willing to work for lower wages than older, more experienced persons. The result is that employed women must monitor the activities of the young girls they hire as the case of Mrs. Phiri (not her real name), a clerk in a Government office illustrates:

Mrs. Phiri has a 13 year old girl as her househelper. She employed the young girl mainly because she has a two-year old son who needs supervision and care. Her other two children are over six years of age and go to primary school. However, because of the girl's young age, and her lack of experience in housework; Mrs Phiri arises at 4:00 a.m. each morning and awakens the girl so she can instruct her how to sweep and mop the floors of the lounge and kitchen, and supervise her in washing the baby's nappies. Meanwhile, Mrs Phiri warms water for bathing. She takes a bath first whilst porridge is cooking on the fire. Then she bathes the baby and feeds him some porridge and puts the baby back to bed. Next, she wakes up her two school-age children and bathes them, helps them get dressed and gives them porridge. Her husband bathes last and she serves him tea. By this time the family is ready to leave. Because the househelp has washed the baby's nappies and cleaned the house early she is free to concentrate on looking after the baby the rest of the day, although she will cook the midday meal.

Mrs Phiri's case is typical of many women in low income families who, though they have househelps, they are young and inexperienced, and are only able to do limited amounts of work.

The time for going to bed for women is much more flexible than the time for rising. However, since most women have to be up early the next day, they normally go to bed between 8:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. after serving supper to the family and clearing up. No woman reported doing any substantial household maintenance tasks after 9:00 p.m. If women go to bed after 9:00 p.m., it is mostly because they are just sitting and chatting. Women do, however, carry out household maintenance tasks between 6:00 p.m. when they get home from paid work and 8:30 p.m. By 9:00 p.m. women are too exhausted to do any further work.

### 3.3 Balancing Paid Work With Household Maintenance Tasks

Women's employment does not lead to any substantial redistribution of household maintenance tasks between the sexes, although it may lead to a redistribution of tasks among available women, especially older daughters in the family. When asked whether husbands assisted with any household maintenance tasks, 43% of the women answered that their husbands did not assist with any tasks, and 28% replied that husbands assisted with only one task occasionally, the commonest being clearing the yard of weeds and holding babies for some time when their wives were busy. Only five per cent of

women reported substantial help from their husbands. Interestingly, such women worked in shift occupations that sometimes necessitated wives working until late at night. These women, who were only three in number, reported that their husbands cooked, did laundry and took on substantial responsibilities for childcare. Even so, the women who reported that their husbands helped them, said that a husband's attitude towards performing household maintenance tasks was related to assisting the wife, rather than any feeling that such work was their responsibility. They could thus decide not to do any chores if they so inclined.

The Availability of Househelps: Effect on Balancing Paid Work with Household Maintenance Tasks

Of the sixty women interviewed, 36 women (60%) had hired househelp, 21 women (35%) used younger relatives as helpers and three women (five per cent) had neither hired helpers nor live-in servants. In the last case, children looked after themselves and did much of the household maintenance tasks. The reason the three women did not hire househelp was because their wages were low. Therefore, children had to cope when they came home from school. The women did not like having to have their children perform much of the housework after school but they had no choice. All three constantly worried about the safety of their homes and children as they worked. Even though most women employed househelp, the majority employed young, inexperienced girls of between 12 years and 15 years of age for two reasons; (1) they could not afford to pay the higher wages of older

and more experienced househelp, and (2) because most women lived in houses with no servants accommodation, older and more experienced servants would demand accommodation in a room of their own. The employment of younger inexperienced girls was cheaper, but similar to women without househelpers, the women who employed young househelp, constantly worried about the safety of the children and the home while they were at work. They also worried about crises, such as the sudden illness of a child during their absence.

The quality of househelp that a woman is able to hire is an important factor in the balancing of household maintenance tasks and paid work. Those women who are able to hire more experienced househelp are able to leave most of the household maintenance tasks to them and are, therefore, able to rest when they come home from paid work. Even the days when they are off from paid work, such women are able to rest more, engaging in supervision of tasks rather than actually doing the tasks themselves. Such women made up only five per cent of the women interviewed. The majority of women were in low status, low paying jobs (See Table 3.3). Their limited salaries had an impact on the ability of the women to balance paid work and household maintenance.

Table 3.3: The Kind of Work Women in Wage Employment In Zomba Town Are Engaged In  
N = 70

Kind of Work	No. of Women	% of Women
Clerical + Typing	40	66.7
Sales Assistants	8	13.3
Secretaries	3	5.0
Executive Admin. Jobs + University teachers	3	5.0
Nurses	2	3.3
Teachers (Primary School)	2	3.3
Teachers (Secondary School)	2	3.3
TOTAL	60	100

The effect of househelp on women's time is threefold. The first result is that women spend a substantial amount of time giving instructions to the househelp especially prior to departure for paid work. Second, the greater burden of household tasks falls on the women rather than on the househelp. Third, women have to decide carefully on which household maintenance tasks the househelp can handle, which tasks have to be performed on a daily basis, and which tasks can be performed on days when the woman is off from paid work without having negative effects on the welfare of the household.

The case study of Mrs Phiri presented earlier and her relationship with young househelp is typical of most women interviewed in Zomba town who employed them. Not only do women issue a lot of instructions to the househelps but they also do as much household maintenance tasks as possible before they depart for paid work. Upon return, the women

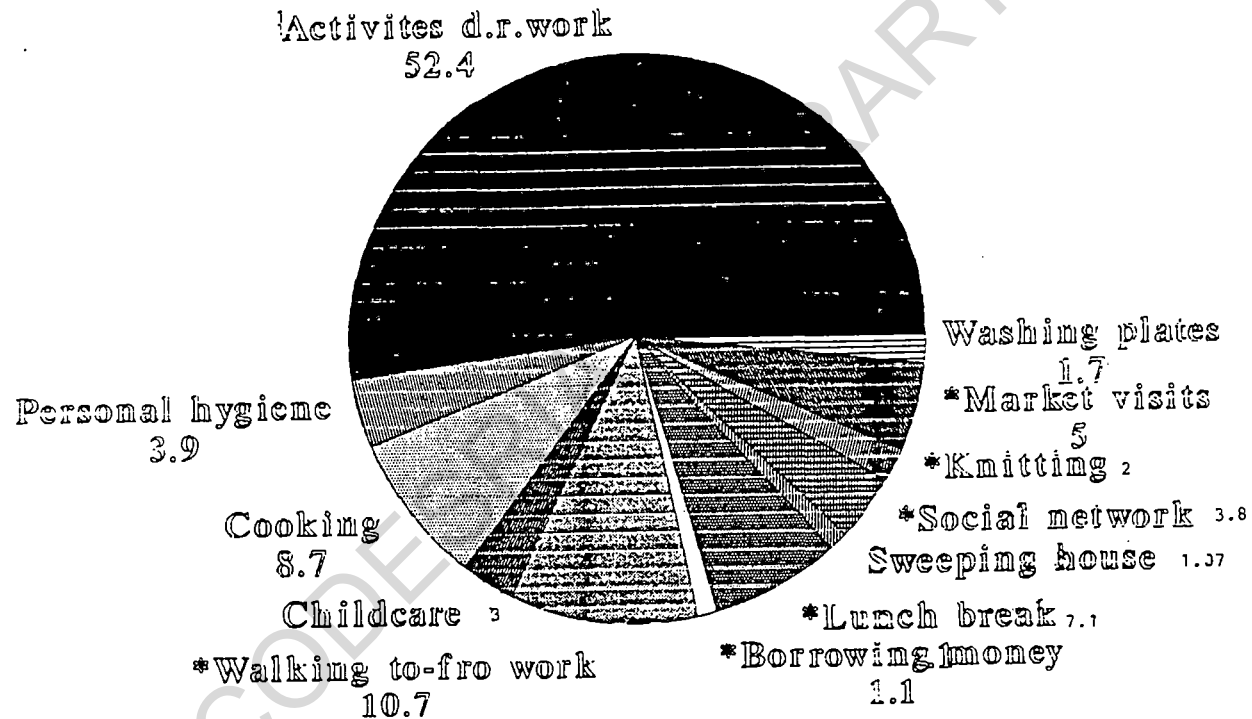


cook the evening meal and plan in advance meals for the next day. Cooking takes the greatest amount of time in comparison to other tasks the women perform. The time allocated to cooking shown in Fig. 3.2 refers mostly to the preparation of the evening meal by the woman. As the woman cooks, she may suckle the baby and issue instructions to the househelp. Women with inexperienced househelp experienced much strain in handling both household maintenance tasks and paid work, and they complained of over-tiredness. Whilst househelps are essential for women in wage employment, when such househelps are inexperienced, they merely perform those household maintenance tasks that are absolutely necessary to sustain the household on a daily basis.

#### 3.4 Management of Time

The quality of househelps has also an effect on the overall management of time by the woman in wage employment, as we have seen. A woman who has experienced househelp performs those household maintenance tasks that she prefers, leaving the rest to the househelp. Her daily tasks are minimal and she has more leisure time over the weekend, spending on average 12 hours on household maintenance tasks over the weekend (i.e. Saturday and Sunday) compared to 33 hours by women with inexperienced househelp. She also has more time to maintain social networks during days that she is off from paid work, spending as much as six hours on social networking over the weekend compared to about two hours for women with less experienced househelps.

**Fig. 3.2 Showing % Amount of Time Spent on Various Activities by Zomba Women During Days When in Wage Employment**



(Based on 14 Hr-Day from 5:00am - 7:00pm  
N = 10)

<sup>1</sup> Activities directly related to paid work.

\* Activities carries out during exchange-value time.

Exchange value time includes the one hour lunch break and the time spent in walking to and from work.

The management of women's time was crucial in effectively balancing their two jobs. Activities to maintain the household can be placed into two categories: (1) activities that a woman performs concurrently while she is engaged in wage employment, and (2) activities that women perform when they are off from paid work. Household maintenance tasks that women perform on days when they are engaged in wage employment usually require little energy, are of short duration, and are aimed at satisfying the immediate needs of the family. In contrast, the activities performed during days that women are off from their employed jobs require much energy and time. The tasks that require a lot of energy also tend to be the ones disliked by women. Table 3.4 shows tasks performed on a daily basis by women and those performed occasionally. Table 3.5 shows the frequency with which the task is performed. The frequency depending largely on energy and time factors. The categorization of tasks into week-days tasks and weekend tasks by women is thus an effective way of ensuring the continuous maintenance of the household. It is based on the energy requirements of the tasks, who the tasks satisfy, whether the tasks can be done concurrently with other tasks and, to a lesser extent, on women's own preference.

Table 3.4 Tasks Women Perform During Week Days/  
And Days Off: Zomba Town

A	B
Tasks Women Do During the Week	Tasks Women Do During Weekends or on their Days off from Wage Employment
Cooking Sweeping the house Warming Water Feeding children Bathing self Bathing children Washing Plates	Cleaning house Laundry Maize Flour Processing Shopping Social visits Gardening

Table 3.5 Frequency with which Certain  
Tasks are Performed by Zomba Town  
Women by No. & Percentage of Women

Tasks Performed	Daily		Weekly		Twice a Month		Monthly	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Cooking	60	100	--	--	--	--	--	--
Sweeping the house	58	96.7	2	3.3	--	--	--	--
Warming water	40	66.7	20	33.3	--	--	--	--
Feeding Children	47	78.3	13	21.7	--	--	--	--
Bathing self	60	100	--	--	--	--	--	--
Bathing children	38	100	22	36.7	--	--	--	--
Washing Plates	52	86.7	8	13.3	--	--	--	--
Major house cleaning	--	--	5	8.3	12	20.0	43	72
Laundry	12	20.0	54	90.0	6	10.0	0	--
Maize Flour Preparation	--	--	--	--	6	10.0	54	90.0
Shopping	8	13.3	48	80.0	4	6.7	--	--
Social visits	2	3.3	5	8.3	10	16.7	45	75.0
Clearing the master bedroom	--	--	32	53.3	25	41.7	2	3.3
Gardening	--	--	15	25.0	35	58.3	10	16.7

requiring an average of five hours of labour. Ninety per cent of women did their laundry on a weekly basis and 72% did a thorough cleaning of their houses only once a month (See Table 3.5).

In cases where women had older and more experienced servants, usually male, women delegated high energy tasks to them, except for shopping and cleaning of the main bedroom. A male househelp who bears major responsibility for household maintenance tasks is paid a salary of between K60.00 and K100.00 or even more per month. However, when a woman in wage employment performs the same tasks, the work is defined as belonging to the private domain and it loses its economic value, to the extent that it is not even recorded as work in national statistics. The woman not only does not get remunerated for her labour but she also does the work at the expense of her own leisure time and social production activities. Placing a monetary value on work based purely on the basis of who performs the work arbitrarily marginalizes women's labour value.

One woman observed of her double workload, 'My main problem is that I am always tired because even when I get home from the office, I have to do the cooking, feed the children and clear up for the night. She is not alone in her predicament.

### Tasks Requiring a lot of Energy Vs Tasks Requiring Little Energy

Since employed women spend most of their daylight hours, usually from Monday to Friday in activities related to their paid jobs, women's household maintenance tasks outside the hours of wage employment are limited. In general, however, women perform household tasks that require little energy during the morning or evening hours during the week, leaving tasks that are energy consuming for the weekend, especially on Saturdays. There are two main reasons why women budget their tasks in this manner: (a) If women had to perform tasks requiring a lot of energy during week-days, they would be exhausted and would not effectively carry out their responsibilities pertaining to wage employment. (b) Since tasks requiring a lot of energy also tend to be time-consuming, women find that not enough time exists in the morning or the evening to carry out such tasks. Therefore, women leave these tasks for days when they have longer blocks of time. Some tasks done during the week can also be accomplished during days off from paid work.

Tasks carried out on a daily basis are essential to the daily maintenance of the house and family. Periodic and weekend tasks are also essential, but need not be done daily: for example, maize flour processing may be carried out only once a month on a day off from employment. Ninety per cent of the women reported that they prepared maize flour only once a month and that it is a time-consuming operation

Activities Aimed at Satisfying the Needs of the Family or Society vs Activities Aimed at Satisfying the Woman's Personal Needs

Most of the household maintenance tasks that a woman does, whether on a daily basis or otherwise, are aimed at satisfying the needs of her family. Activities that satisfy the needs of the family are given priority in the allocation of time compared to those that satisfy the woman's own needs.

When a woman returns from paid work, if she has not had time to shop earlier, she may rush to the market on her way home to purchase vegetables or meat (relish) to accompany the staple food, nsima (thickened maize meal porridge) or rice. She will rarely go to chat with friends after work as her husband is likely to do. On days that she is free from paid work, a woman labours even more at household maintenance tasks, trying to satisfy all family members' needs. Even meals are elaborately cooked on these days, in most cases with members of her household taking it for granted that it is the woman's duty to do this. In addition, visitors may come to the family's home and it is the responsibility of the woman (and any older daughters) to prepare food for the guests. Only when the woman decides to visit friends and relatives herself does she escape obligations of hospitality. However, the demands of household maintenance tasks do not give a woman the chance to leave her home as she might like.

Although 73% of the women indicated that they had some leisure time, on further questioning only 18% of the women

turned out to have leisure time occasionally during the days off from paid work. The confusion arises from the fact that women tend to classify social production activities as leisure. They also think of tasks such as knitting or mending the family clothes as leisure because they are usually chatting with someone while performing such task. Even when the knitted items are sometimes sold for cash, women would still classify the activity as leisure. Leisure has different meanings to different people, but it is difficult to find women performing tasks, other than eating and bathing that exclusively satisfy their own needs. Women appear to feel guilty doing activities purely for their own pleasure.

The fact that women prioritize tasks according to the energy and time requirements and according to whether they meet family needs is evidenced by the fact that whilst 75% of the women indicated that wage employment made it difficult for them to adequately accomplish household maintenance tasks, those tasks that were left undone because of lack of time were most often those that aimed at satisfying the woman's needs. The pie diagram (Fig. 3.2) illustrates that women allocate most of their time to tasks that satisfy family needs. It also indicates that employed women are paid for only about 50% of the work they perform. Wage employment takes up over 50% of their working day. Significantly, they are not paid for the other 50% of the work they do which is as valuable as wage employment when related to its contribution to the well being of the family and society.



The pressure felt by women in wage employment is further evidenced by the fact that when asked whether they preferred more pay or more time off from paid work, nearly a third indicated that they would choose more time off, not for leisure pursuits, but to be more effective in accomplishing household maintenance tasks. In an earlier section, we noted that when constrained for time in the morning, women forego breakfast and leave for work whilst the rest of the family eats the breakfast the woman has prepared. Likewise, women put the maintenance of social networks and obligations ahead of activities designed to satisfy their own needs. Women are expected to cook, serve food and drinks at wedding ceremonies, funeral and other social gatherings. These obligations come before the women's own personal needs and leisure. Weekends, therefore, are not rest days for most women in wage employment as they use these days to clear the backlog of household tasks and fulfil social obligations. For most women, Monday morning comes too soon.

#### Activities Liked and Disliked By Women

There are certain tasks that women in Zomba town dislike. These include tasks related to use-value labour such as laundry, maize flour processing and others (See Table 3.6). The common features of the activities disliked are that they take a long time to accomplish, they are best carried out on their own as carrying them out concurrently with other tasks is either impossible or problematic, and third, women tend to perform them only occasionally.

Table 3.6 Disliked/Problematic Tasks for Zomba Women by Number and Percent of Women  
N = 60

Task	Number of Women	% of Women
Laundry	25	41.7
Paid Work	10	16.7
Flour Processing	9	15
Walking to and from work	8	13.3
* Childcare	7	11.7
Gardening	1	1.7
TOTAL	60	100

\* Problematic task

Women in wage employment, as we have seen, do not have adequate time either in the morning or after work to complete many household maintenance tasks. They defer doing tasks such as laundry, a highly disliked task, until they have a day off from paid work. In the absence of experienced househelp, disliked tasks are those that reduce drastically the amount of leisure time the woman would otherwise have. Therefore, women without experienced househelp spend their day off in use-value labour taking care of tasks they dislike. They do not have the freedom to choose not to do them as the underlying ideology behind the sexual division of labour which is culturally entrenched in Malawi, compels women to perform such tasks. Despite this lack of choice, and despite the energy and time that such tasks demand, women perform these tasks without remuneration.

Walking to work is also an activity that most women dislike. The reason for this is that women are already constrained for time and the majority (57%) feel that spending 30

to 45 minutes walking to and from their places of employment is a waste of valuable time that could be better utilized in doing more productive household maintenance tasks. Walking takes up the greatest percent of use-value time for women during week days. Lack of adequate transportation facilities in Zomba thus further constrains women's time.

Disliked tasks, on the whole are those that significantly contribute to fatigue, force a woman to cut down on leisure, visiting friends, or even on meals in an attempt to balance paid work and household tasks.

#### The Multiplicity of Tasks

Much of women's household maintenance tasks are carried out concurrently, which enables women to accomplish several tasks within a short time. Balancing several tasks concurrently is management skill women have acquired, one that servants, especially male servants, find difficult to achieve. Most of the women interviewed (67%) felt that male servants find it difficult to carry out multiple tasks within the same time period. The performance of multiple tasks by women in the exchange-value sector is most apparent in the morning when women are most constrained for time. From our observations of 10 women within a period of two to three hours, a woman will have warmed water, bathed herself, bathed the small children, cooked breakfast, dressed herself and the children, fed the small children and issued instructions for the day to the househelp. At least three of the women observed did some house cleaning as well.

Tasks that can be done concurrently tend to be performed on a daily basis whilst those that cannot be done concurrently with other tasks are carried out during days when women are off from paid work. Table 3.7 illustrates the number of tasks one woman observed accomplished within an hour because she did many tasks concurrently. In all, the woman performed more than 10 tasks in the one hour in which she was observed. In wage employment, this management skill that women have of doing tasks concurrently is not tapped by employers. Women, instead, perform routine duties requiring little management skills. Consequently, women's management skills go unrecognized and under-utilized.

#### Managing the Home During Hours of Paid Work

On the face of it, women in wage employment only perform household maintenance tasks during hours when they are not employed. However, direct observation revealed that women perform some household management tasks during office hours. For example, employed women spend, on average, one to two hours per day on household related activities during hours of paid work. The most common household tasks women perform whilst at the office are going to the market and social networking. These two activities take up 14.5% of the time for paid work, which is eight and a half hours for most women (see fig. 3.3). Women leave their offices to go to the shops or the market between two o'clock and four o'clock in the afternoon because to go after 5:00 p.m. would delay their

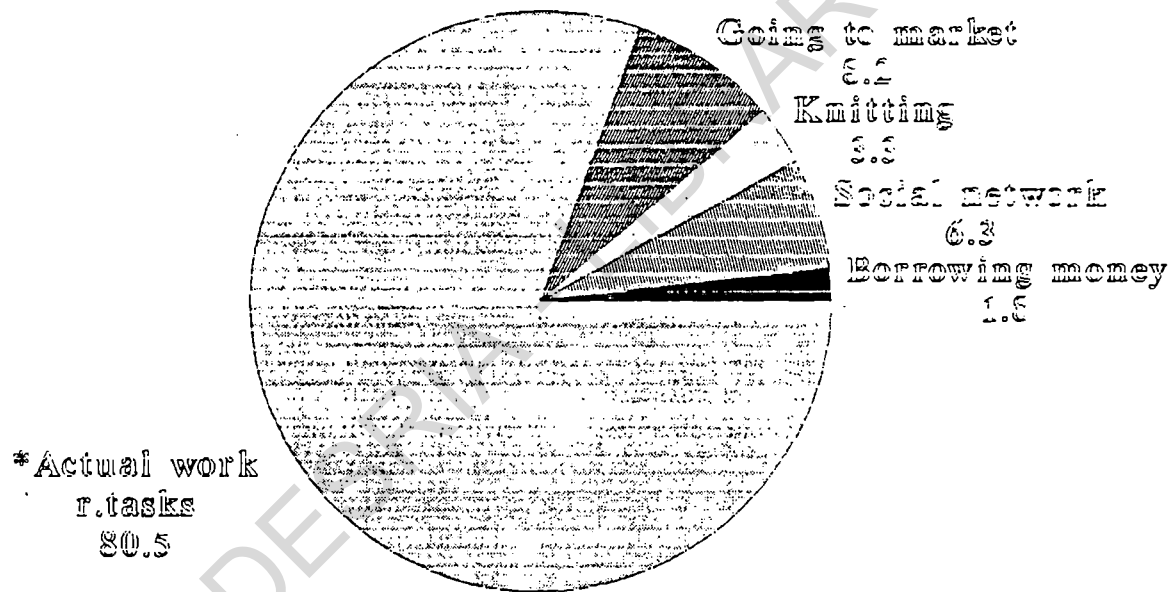
Table 3.7: Tasks Performed by One Woman in Zomba Town  
Between 6:30 p.m. and 7:30p.m.

<u>Time</u>	<u>Task</u>
6:30 - 6:44	- Washes vegetables and cuts them up into pieces, places them on the fire to cook.
	- Gives some orange drink to her 3 children, telling them to sit down lest they spill it.
	- Wipes off orange juice spilt by one of the children on the floor.
6:44 - 6:46	- Asks eldest child (about 9 years) to lay the table for the evening meal.
	- Washes two dish cloths and hangs them on the kitchen rack.
6:46 - 6:48	- Places pot of nsima on fire; places pot of already cooked meat stew on the fire to warm.
6:48 - 6:55	- Fries the vegetables; warms the meat stew.
6:55 - 7:00	- Checks that the children have laid the table properly. Husband enters house she greets him. She goes to the bedroom and brings slippers for husband. Takes husband's shoes and briefcase to the bedroom.
7:00 - 7:10	- Cooks nsima, places nsima in dish.
7:10 - 7:15	- Places all food on the table. Tells husband and children to begin eating.
7:15 - 7:23	- Places a bucket of water on fire. The woman intends to use the water to bath later.
	- Clears the kitchen and wipes the sink and kitchen table.
7:23 - 7:32	- Joins the family at the table.

getting home to prepare the evening meal since 68% walked to work. There is much borrowing of money among women who work in the same offices. Additionally small loans may be secured through use of the phone or by direct contact. Women largely borrow money from one another to buy food items. In addition women spend at least 6% of employment time on social production activities, such as maintaining social networks with friends and relatives through the telephone. As already mentioned earlier women have little or no time to visiting friends after work and their days off from employment are largely taken up by household maintenance tasks. The telephone, therefore, seems to ensure the maintenance of social networks. It is commonly believed that employed women spend a lot of time on the telephone, wasting valuable employment time. The research, however, demonstrates that women continue to manage their households from their employment places because if left to chance, the management of households and family survival would break down. Because employed women carry two jobs concurrently, it may be necessary to consider policy measures that allow for flexible shorter employment hours in order to accommodate women's double labour burden.

In this chapter, it is clear that women in exchange value production (wage employment) hold two equally demanding and full time jobs. In order to manage the two jobs, women use exceptional skills in managing and allocating time to various activities. However, often women cut down on

**Fig. 3.3 Percentage of Paid Work Time Zomba Women Spend on Household Maintenance Tasks on a Daily Basis**



Based on 8 and 1/2 Hr Working Period  
(N. = 10)

\*Actual work related tasks

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leisure, visiting and eating in order to cope with the two jobs. Yet women are only paid for part of the work they do. The rigid hours of employment found in most organizations have been shown to be problematic for women in fulfilling household maintenance tasks. Women plan carefully to overcome the incompatibility of household maintenance and paid work.

The argument has been advanced that the types of employment women enter, which are low paying, further makes household maintenance tasks and paid work less compatible because women are unable to hire adequate househelp to lighten their burden.

The next chapter examines the nature of women's work in Chinamwali location, a peri-urban location, where women are predominantly involved in use-value production.

#### Note

1

31% were employed over 45 hours per week and 16% began work earlier than 7:30 a.m.



## CHAPTER FOUR

## Use and Allocation of Time

## By Women in Chinamwali

4.1 Profile

A woman living in Chinamwali is on average between the ages of 26 and 45 years. Only 7.19% were 20-25 years and 15.79% were over 40 (See Table 4.1). She is in the peak of her child-bearing years. She is married (90%) and living in a nuclear family (Table 4.2). She has on average three children (Table 4.3) of which 60 per cent are below ten years. She has lived in Chinamwali less than five years (Table 4.4). Because she is unemployed, she and her children depend on her husband's salary to buy most commodities and food. She rents a small two-room mud-walled house with a corrugated iron roof. She has access to little land for cultivation.

4.2 Length of Day and What Determines It

The length of a woman's work day in Chinamwali can be as long as 20 hours. However, for the majority of women the length of the working day is between 16 hours and 18 hours (See Table 4.5). Most women arise between 4:00 a.m. and 4:30 a.m. and go to bed between 8:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Women who have no househelp are more likely to get up earlier than women with help. Only 10% of women in Chinamwali have any househelp whilst another 15% lived with relatives who assisted the women with household maintenance tasks. Fig 4.1 shows that 55.1% of women with househelp arise between 4:00

Table 4.1: Distribution of women in Various Age Groups by No. and Percent: Chinamwali

Age Group	No. of women	% of women
Under 20 years	-	-
20 - 25 years	5	7.1
26 - 30 years	14	20.0
31 - 35 years	17	24.3
36 - 40 years	13	18.6
over 40 years	11	15.7
Do not know	10	14.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4.2: MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN INTERVIEWED by Number and Percent: Chinamwali

Marital Status	Number	%
Married	63	90.0
Widowed	-	-
Separated	3	4.3
Divorced	1	1.4
Unmarried	-	-
No Answer	3	4.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>

TABLE 4.3: Number of Children per Woman  
(Chinamwali)

Number of Children	Number of Women
0	8
1	12
2	8
3	9
4	12
5	8
Over 5	13
	TOTAL 70

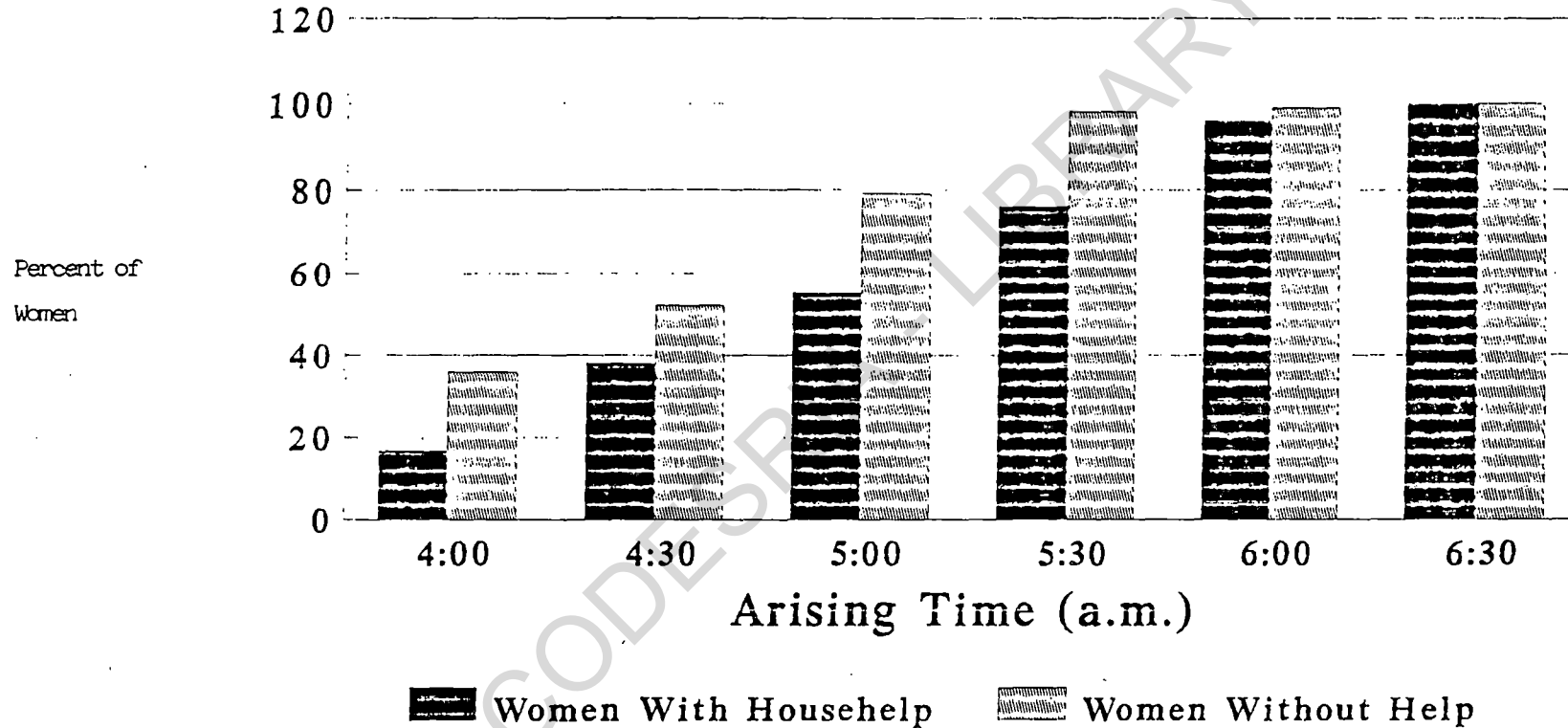
TABLE 4.4: Length of Residence in Chinamwali  
by Number and Percent of Women

Length of Residence	Number of Women	% of Women
Born in Chinamwali	3	4.3
20 years or more	2	2.9
10 - 20 years	6	8.6
5 - 10 years	11	15.7
Less than 5 years	45	64.3
Do not know	3	4.5
TOTAL	70	100.0

Table 4.5: Cross Tabulation of Time Women Arise and the Time Women Go to Bed in Chinamwali

Time Women Arise (a.m.)	Time Women Go To Bed (P.M.)						TOTAL
	7:00-7:30	7:30-8:00	8:00-8:30	8:30-9:00	9:00-10:00	10:00-12:00	
4:00-4:30a.m.	2	8	7	2	1	1	21
4:30-5:00a.m.	-	5	8	1	-	2	16
5:00-5:30a.m.	1	1	5	3	2	3	15
5:30-6:00a.m.	1	3	4	1	-	2	11
6:00-6:30a.m.	-	-	2	2	1	-	5
6:30-7:00a.m.	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
TOTAL	4	17	26	9	4	10	70

**Fig. 4.1**  
**Times Chinamwali Women With and Without Household Help Arise in the Morning.**



69

a.m. and 5:30 a.m. as compared to over 79% of women with no househelp who arise during the same time period. It, therefore, is apparent that having or not having househelp has a significant impact on the length of the woman's work day in Chinamwali. The time women retire at night, however, does not seem to depend upon househelp. Nor does the time women arise impact the time they retire. Most retired between 8:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Neither the age of the woman, nor the number of children she has under ten years of age coupled with her marital status had any significant impact on the time of arising or retiring. Two factors influenced the times of arising for a woman in Chinamwali: (1) For married women, the husband's time of leaving the house for his place of employment, and (2) the time when the communal water taps opened. The latter was the more significant of the two since water points in Chinamwali, are opened between 5:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. Therefore, a woman has to get up earlier than 5:00 a.m. to go and place her buckets in a queue at the tap. She then returns home to light the fire for heating the husband's bath water, then returns to the water taps to stand in the queue to fill up the buckets. A woman may have several buckets which she fills and then carries, one after another, to her house. Enough water has to be collected to last the entire day until the taps are opened again from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Those with househelp forego such a burden and instead it is the helps who do most of the water fetching. However, despite the househelp, women still rise early in order to warm water for their

husbands and also to prepare breakfast. If the woman has school going children who are young, she has to prepare them for school in terms of bathing them/dressing them and giving them breakfast. Although there is no correlation between the total number of children, or the number of children under ten, that a woman has and the time she gets up, young children are clearly one factor determining a woman's rising time. However, in comparison with the problem of acquiring sufficient water, the effect of young children is insignificant.

#### 4.3 Activities in a Woman's Day

Similar to women in Zomba town, women's work activities in Chinamwali can be grouped into the same three categories suggested: (1) Activities requiring a lot of energy and those requiring little energy, (2) Activities aimed at satisfying the needs of family, society or self, and (3) Activities liked or disliked by women.

#### Activities Requiring Much Energy vs Activities Requiring Little Energy

In general, activities that involve much energy and motion on the part of the woman are performed during morning hours, whilst those involving little motion or energy are carried out in the afternoon. Childcare, however, takes place all the time and overlaps often with other activities. In Chinamwali, activities requiring a lot of women's energy input (labour intensive) include fetching water and doing laundry. These two tasks are performed almost everyday

**TABLE 4.6: Activities Generally Performed in the Morning, Afternoon or Evening by Women in Chinamwali\***

Morning Tasks (Performed between 5:00a.m. & 12:00 noon)	Afternoon Tasks (Performed between (1:00p.m. & 5:00p.m)	Evening Tasks (Performed between 5:00p.m. & 7:00p.m.)
- Heating water for husband and school going children	- Bathing babies	- Fetching water
- Fetching water from the tap	- Bathing self	- Preparing and cooking staple food (nsima)
- Sweeping the yard	- Knitting/sewing	- Clearing for the night
- Going to the market	- Visiting friends	
- Wet mopping the house	- Cooking snacks (e.g. mandazi, cassava)	
- Laundry	- Plaiting hair of children and self	
- Going to the hospital	- Cooking the evening relish	
- Going to fetch firewood	- Going to funerals and visiting sick friends	
- Washing plates and utensils	- Ironing clothes	
	- Storing away utensils	
	- Washing plates, utensils	
	- Attending religious meetings	

\* Any task that was performed by 80% of the women or over in the sub-sample during any one of the three periods was taken as being predominantly performed during that period. The tasks are listed not necessarily in the order in which they were performed.



during the morning. Not only are high energy requiring tasks performed in the morning but they are performed very early in the morning before women do other tasks. For instance, a woman going to fetch firewood normally leaves for the forest before her husband leaves for paid employment, simply leaving the bathing water warming on the fire. In contrast, low energy tasks are performed from mid morning up to late afternoon hours. Such activities include washing dishes, sewing, knitting, cooking, bathing, braiding hair and going to the market. From 6:00 p.m. women begin to prepare the evening meal which normally consists of nsima and a relish. The latter may be vegetables, meat, fish or beans.

#### Activities to Satisfy Family Needs, Social Needs and Woman's own Needs

Much of the work of women in Chinamwali is to satisfy the needs of the women's families. Table 4.6 shows that only a few of these activities performed are aimed at satisfying the needs of society and even fewer activities are for the satisfaction of the woman's own needs. Activities that require much energy by Chinamwali women are aimed to meet the needs of the family. These activities tend to be carried out mainly in the morning. They include water fetching, cooking food and washing plates.

In contrast to the busy morning hours, during mid-afternoon hours, roughly from 1 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., women were observed plaiting each other's hair, bathing, chatting as they knitted or sewed or went to visit friends in the neighbourhood. Tasks performed during this time period were

mainly geared towards satisfying the women's own needs. However, women were also likely to forego these self gratifying activities if some other pressing work to meet the family's or the society's needs arose. For example, women would forego the self gratifying activities if there was a funeral in the neighbourhood or if there was a religious meeting taking place. The afternoon time period is therefore used for social production activities or for activities to gratify women's own needs. Apart from activities like visiting sick friends and relatives, going to funerals or church meetings, which necessitate women temporarily leaving the homestead, most activities performed during afternoon hours require little motion and are less taxing than the morning tasks. Because of these two attributes, many of the tasks can also be carried out concurrently. For example, a woman may be cooking relish whilst at the same time she is knitting.

#### Tasks Liked or Disliked by Women

Women's preference for tasks is related to the amount of energy and time they require and also to the degree of obligation women feel to others to perform them. The higher the time and energy a task requires and the greater the degree of obligation, the lower the preference for such tasks. In Chinamwali, fetching water and laundry are high energy tasks and take much time to accomplish and women perform them essentially to satisfy the needs of the family. They are also the most disliked tasks (See Table 4.7). Dis-

liked tasks are performed mainly in the morning hours and, to a lesser degree, in the evening hours. The disliked tasks are also directly related to the availability of infrastructure, such as tapped water, that affects women's work. For example, laundry, the most disliked task in Chinamwali, is related to the lack of availability of water in this community. It ranked higher than water fetching, as a disliked task. One woman, even though she had househelp, observed that water fetching and laundry, together, took 8.4% of her time in a 16 hour day.

Fetching firewood, processing maize flour and gardening were ranked as disliked tasks by only a minority of women. This is because most women buy firewood rather than walk a distance of three kilometres to fetch it themselves. However the women who fetch their own firewood disliked the task even more than laundry because it is extremely exhausting. As for maize flour processing, only a minority of women pound maize to remove the husks. Most rely on grinding mills. Even those who pound maize using a mortar and pestle do not complete the entire process manually. They simply perform the initial tasks of removing the husks and later take the partly processed maize to a maize mill to be ground into flour.

Overall, laundry and water fetching are tasks most disliked because they are labour intensive and women in Chinamwali have no alternative means of getting such tasks

Table 4.7: Activities Disliked by Women in Chinamwali  
by Task and Number of Women

Task	Number of Women	% of Women
Laundry	28	40.0
Fetching Water	21	30.0
Fetching Firewood	8	11.4
Processing maize flour	5	7.1
Gardening	5	7.1
Fetching water & Laundry	3	4.1
TOTAL	70	100

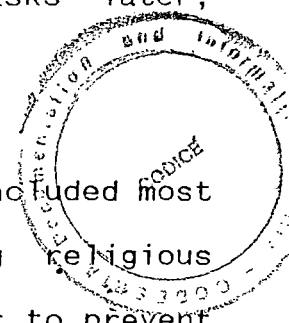
completed except through the time consuming methods available to them.

#### The Multiplicity of women's Tasks

The range and quantity of activities that women perform within a day would be impossible unless some were carried out concurrently. For example, women with babies were observed breastfeeding their babies whilst peeling vegetables for cooking. Also common for Chinamwali women is fetching water whilst carrying a baby on the back. Childcare is one of those activities that women perform predominantly in combination with other tasks. Other tasks also carried out concurrently include sweeping the house while at the same time checking food on a cooking fire. Unless qualitative methods using direct observation are employed in assessing the allocation of women's time, the multiplicity of Chinamwali women's tasks would be missed, as the woman when interviewed is likely to mention only one task which she may consider to be more important than the other.

One of the characteristics of tasks disliked by women is that such tasks prevent them from performing other tasks at the same time. However, most tasks in Chinamwali are performed within the surroundings of the home and thus enable women to perform more than one task at the same time. In general, tasks that take women away from the home reduce this possibility and entail women to perform other tasks later, thereby lengthening the women's work day.

In Chinamwali singly performed activities included most social production activities, such as attending religious meetings, funerals and visiting friends. In order to prevent a major reallocation of time, women carry out these activities only occasionally. Other tasks that also reduce the possibility of performing tasks concurrently are fetching firewood, going to the maize mill, fetching water, and ironing. Women try to resolve time constraints connected with such tasks by either performing them very early in the morning, or if they are able to choose, by doing such tasks only occasionally. For example, if a woman decides to go fetch firewood from the Zomba plateau, she will perform the task before most of the essential home maintenance tasks, such as cooking food for the family, in order to maximise her time on wood collection. Wood collection may mean going back three or four times up the mountain to pick up loads of firewood and carry them home. The same applies to the processing of maize which must be headloaded to a mill for grinding.



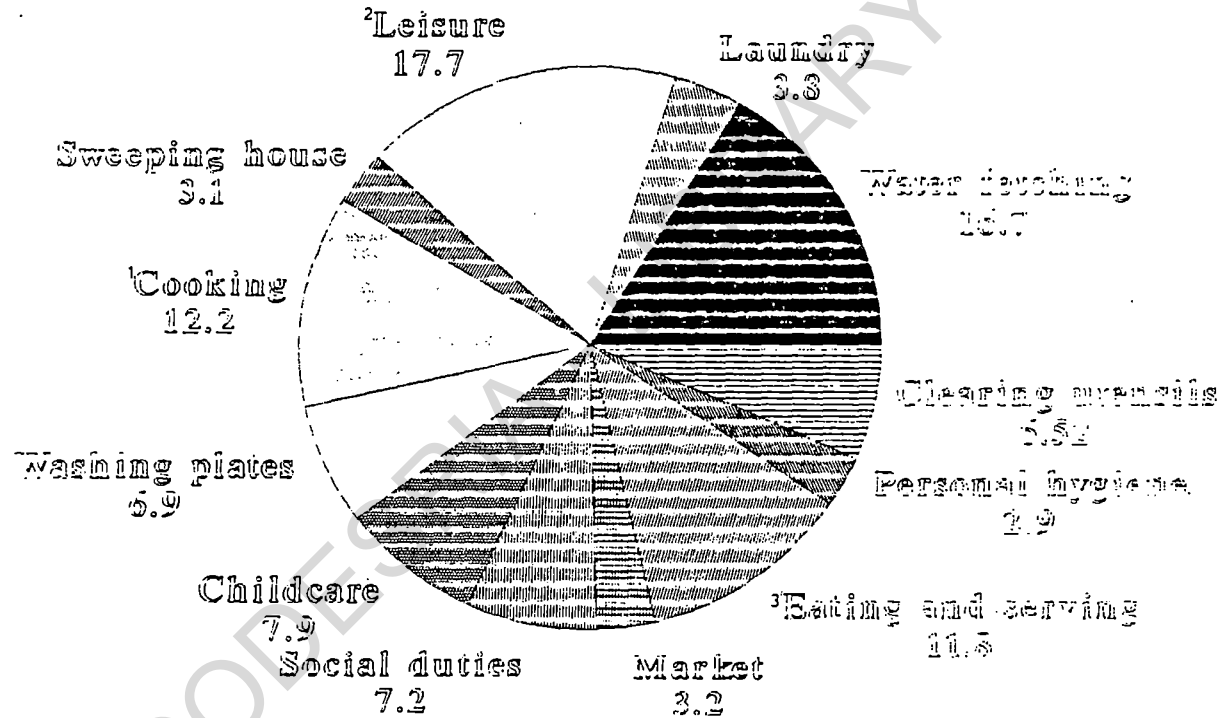
Enough will be ground to last several weeks. As for ironing, this task is done exclusively because the use of charcoal and the necessity of refilling the iron periodically demands that when charcoal has been lit in the iron, it must be used immediately before the charcoal burns out. Table 4.8 (p.90) shows tasks that one woman performed within a 60 minute period. The quantity of tasks in the table highlights the multiplicity of women's activities.

#### 4.4 Time Allocated to Various Activities

One way of looking at women's time allocation is to see how they divide time into the three major time periods in a day: morning, afternoon and evening. Another way is to look at the proportion of time spent on each activity. Fig 4.2 shows the proportion of time allocated to various activities in a day's work by the eight women observed with no house-help. The activities shown do not cover the entire range of activities that women in Chinamwali perform because certain activities, for example, visiting the ill, were not carried out during the period of direct observation since they are performed only occasionally. For example, washing plates, is performed by nearly all women on a daily basis. Other activities like laundry, are performed only at certain regular intervals, and, apart from going to the hospital with a sick child, an activity which would normally be carried out in the morning, whilst other activities, for example personal hygiene, are performed in the afternoon. Because such activities are not routine, women normally forego their own

# Fig. 4.2 Percentage of Time Spent on Various Tasks By Women in Use-Value Production on Daily Basis

N = 8



76

- 1. Cooking (Cooking - 9.1, Food Processing 3.1)
- 2. Leisure (Leisure - 5.2, Knitting & Mending 12.5)
- 3. Eating (Eating 5.8, serving food 6.0)

Chinamwali: Women Without Househelp

personal leisure to accommodate such tasks. If, for example, a woman has to attend a funeral (normally it is the burial that most women attend) she will rush through routine tasks like having a bath, bathing children and washing plates to make time for a funeral in the afternoon. Because most women do not have househelp, going away from home for a period of as long as thirty minutes entails that they remove all items from the yard outside into the house for security.

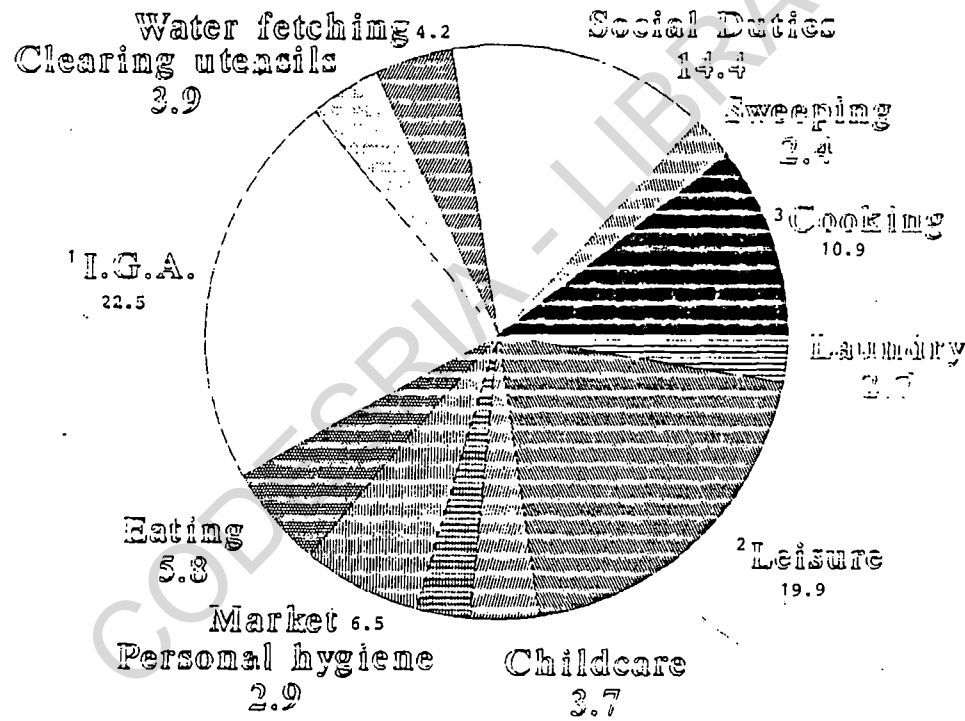
The amount of time that it takes to perform an activity does not necessarily mean that the woman considers it more important relative to other tasks. For example, laundry takes a larger percentage of a woman's time than buying vegetables for "relish" but the woman does not consider it more important than going to the market to buy the vegetables for the family's meal. This fact has implications for economic assessments that determine the value of an activity according to the amount of time spent on it. The length of time it takes to perform activities in Chinamwali is largely related to the lack of basic services in the location, the amount of space in which a woman has to perform her work, the school time table and the availability or non-availability of househelp.

### Lack of Basic Services

The point has already been made that Chinamwali women's work day is affected by the water supply. Apart from influencing the length of the day, the distance to the communal tap necessitates that women spend an average of fifteen minutes



**Fig. 4.3 Showing Average % of Time Spent on Various Tasks By Women in Use-Value Production: Chinamwali**



- <sup>1</sup> IGA - Income generating Activity
- <sup>2</sup> Leisure (Knitting/mending - 14.9%  
Leisure - 4.8%)
- <sup>3</sup> Cooking (Cooking - 8.9%  
Food processing - 1.9%)

(Women with Househelp) N = 2

### The Amount of Space Available to Women

For the size of the women's houses in Chinamwali, which are small, women appear to spend a lot of time cleaning the houses and putting things away. However, direct observation demonstrated that the smallness of the house necessitates repeated cleaning and replacing items in their proper place because the same room might be used as a lounge to entertain visitors at one time and at another it served as a dining room or was a room in which clothes are ironed. Such multipurpose use of one room requires that items which were used for one purpose be put away to enable other items to take their place for another purpose.

The fact that kitchens are detached from the main house also entails that women carry out utensils used during cooking and the food prepared to the main house, as the security of detached kitchens is questionable. Most houses in Chinamwali have little space around them. Children are therefore, confined to play within the small space. Women tend to keep a strict eye on their children as they easily wander into someone else's yard. Children entering one another's yards have been reported to be a source of quarrels among women, neighbouring women accusing each other's children of various mishaps, such as beating another's child or breaking a neighbour's item. This does not imply that children do not play with each other but rather that the space available for each family is constrained and crowding of the houses creates a lack

privacy for families. Because it is mostly women and children who are at home, the effect of limited space and overcrowding causes frustration among women and can easily lead to quarrels.

With children often the source of women's quarrels, childcare in Chinamwali is more of an individual affair rather than a corporate affair. Women reported rarely leaving the care of their children to another woman unless that woman was related as kin. There is a mistrust among women and also fears of one's children being bewitched by other women. This mistrust and fear is further evidenced by the fact that 85% of the women interviewed in Chinamwali responded that they would not leave their children in the care of a neighbour if they had to go away. Of the 15% who said they would entrust their children to neighbours, 90% said they would not do so for more than five hours. Child care in Chinamwali is, therefore, a full time job for most women. And few women have the financial resources to hire someone to help with childcare. Moreover, older children's ability to help with younger siblings is affected by the school schedule.

### The Children's School Time Table

Lack of space in Malawi's primary schools necessitates that children of different grades come to classes at different times. This strategy of staggered schedules adopted by education authorities, however, has increased the amount of time a woman spends in cooking food and serving it.

This is because a woman with children in various classes at primary school has to serve the children's food before they start off for school. Staggered school schedules thus increase a woman's work load in terms of food preparation and washing up time.

#### Availability/Non Availability of Househelp

The lack of househelp contributes to the amount of time women spend on various tasks. Two of the ten women directly observed had househelp. Women with househelp spent 4.2% of their time collecting water compared to 16.7% for those without househelp. The two women with househelp spent less time in food processing and preparation (10.8%) and also less time in childcare (3.7%) as compared to 12.2% and 7.9% respectively, for women without househelp (See Fig. 4.3 and 4.4). There were four women who had househelp in the Chinamwali sub-sample of 70 women and all four had income-generating activities on a continuous basis. Other women occasionally engaged in small businesses when they needed some cash but this was not done on a continuous basis. The two women with househelp who were directly observed, spent an average of 22.4% of their 12 hours each day on their business. None of the women without househelp had time for Income Generating Activities. Whilst the sample is too small to draw conclusions, it nevertheless demonstrates that unless women's work loads are drastically reduced or they have extra help, women may not be able to effectively engage in income generating activities on a continuous basis.

#### 4.5 Categories of Women's Work: The Logic Behind Them

From the previous discussion, it becomes apparent that activities which require a lot of energy and are geared to meeting the family's needs are also the least liked by women. Several reasons account for this. First, these activities require much more physical exertion on the part of the woman and, therefore, are extremely tiring. Second, they tend to involve a multiplicity of routine tasks to be performed within a short period of time. The effect of this is also that women get tired of balancing different tasks. Third, these tasks have a tendency to reduce the possibility of performing tasks concurrently; this is especially true of the tasks requiring a lot of energy in their performance. The result is a conflict whereby women need to get a lot of work done within an available time period and they also have to perform tasks that reduce this possibility. This contributes to stress. It is in order to cope with this conflict that women have adopted the strategy of performing certain tasks at particular periods of the day. This is not to suggest that the women, themselves, are conscious of factors influencing the budgeting of their time to specific tasks. However, there are logical reasons that can be deduced for allocating tasks in such a manner.

#### Reasons For the Allocation of Time

One reason for the way women allocate time to certain tasks is that they have to get rid of unpleasant and tiring

tasks first so that they can free themselves to perform other less tiring and more pleasant tasks later in the day. This was confirmed during an unstructured session with one woman concerning laundry, a universally disliked task in Chinamwali. On answering a question as to why she did her laundry only during morning hours, she replied,

The job (laundry) is tiring because children's clothes require a lot of scrubbing. I would not want to do such a job in the afternoon when I need to take a break.

Another reason why women prefer doing heavy tasks such as laundry in the morning is directly related to the weather. Activities requiring a lot of movement and energy are best done in the cool morning hours when it is not too hot. Yet another woman related her preference for fetching water in the morning to the constraints in Chinamwali's water supply:

I do wish water was available all the time within the premises of my house. Even if it were available all the time at the communal tap, I would have to be very desperate to go and fetch water in the afternoon when it is very hot. I suppose that even if it were available all the time I would still have to go early in the morning but not as early as 4:00 a.m., may be at 5:30 a.m.

Another consideration in allocating time to various tasks has to do with the cycle of activities of other famil

members. During the morning hours the woman's activities are focused to ensure that the husband and children's needs have been met in terms of hygiene and food. By early afternoon, children have returned from school and the mother serves them lunch. Only then is she free to meet her own needs. From 5:00 p.m. until bedtime, a woman begins to prepare the evening meal for the family.

Women in Chinamwali logically allocate their time to best suit their needs and the needs of their families whilst at the same time maximising their labour. Very rarely will women perform duties associated with social production, such as attending religious meetings or visiting the sick, in the morning. The morning hours are strictly reserved for fulfilling tasks that directly affect the welfare of the family. As we saw in Chapter 3, a contrasting situation exists for women in Zomba town who, because of their involvement in exchange value work, allocate their time differently for activities related to social production.

A woman's day is largely taken up with work (see Fig. 4.1). Yet only three women in Chinamwali related that they had no leisure time during their working day. The rest indicated that they had some leisure time during the afternoon hours. When asked what they did during this leisure time, forty-six (46) women said they either sat and did some sewing and knitting or went to visit sick friends and relatives. The majority, however, indicated chatting with knitting or sewing. Only a third of the women (23) indicated that they

simply sat down and rested. Direct observation of ten women's daily activities confirmed that women tend to sit down for about an hour and a half or two hours between the afternoon hours of two and half past three. However, none of the women observed was doing nothing. In three cases women suckled their babies for longer periods than they did during morning hours. Women plaited each other's hair or knitted and/or mended their families' clothes. However, because those activities are less strenuous and involve little physical energy many women did not perceive them to be work even though most are activities that maintain the family.

In this chapter, we have found that women's work in Chinamwali is experienced in an environment that is deficient in vital services such as reliable water supply, schools and health facilities. Women's work is carried out in a crowded environment. Most women in Chinamwali have no househelp and have little or no leisure time. It is clear that the multiple labour activities carried out by women here fit into the category of use-value work; that is, work performed to maintain the household and social community but which is not compensated through wages or income. At the same time without women's use-value production, their husbands would find it difficult to leave each morning to earn a salary and it would be very difficult for them to look after their children. Women in Chinamwali may be perceived as dependent on their husbands because most depend on their husbands' salaries to buy the family's food and clothes. Yet without



the women's use-value production these families would have little chance of survival. That women spend 16-18 hours per day working for their families without monetary compensation is little appreciated by society. Their families must wear adequate clothing, and, as we have seen, a great deal of the time women spend is connected with maintaining the family's clothing through laundry, ironing and mending. Both the length of hours a woman devotes to housework and the multiplicity of tasks indicate the complexity of home management and the need for public policy to examine and address women's workloads. The fact that the survival of people within households is dependent on women's labour challenges the idea or assumption that women's work belongs to the private sphere. Women's work, as we have seen, is not bounded by a private household nor is it carried out to gratify women's private needs. Rather, it is performed in a number of contexts to satisfy needs of family members and society. The appropriateness of the conceptual model of use value/exchange value production in evaluating women's work in Chinamwali is that it takes into account the long hours that such work entails and the contribution of such work to society. The irony is that when the same work is done by employed helpers, it gains a monetary value and is recorded in statistics and national accounts. Yet when it is done by wives and mothers it neither gets compensated nor is it recorded as 'uncompensated' labour in national statistics and national accounts. The use-value/exchange-value production model transcends the ideologies upon which other approaches

are based and gives recognition to work whether such work is carried out within the family household context or outside of it. Further, the alternative approach gives equal and appropriate value to work regardless of whether it is men or women who perform it.

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Table 4.8: Activities Carried Out by One Woman in Chinamwali to Illustrate Multiple Task in a 60 -Minute Period (From 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.)

<u>Time (a.m.)</u>	<u>Activity</u>
9:00	Sweeps the house, calls daughter and sends her to see to the fire in the kitchen.
9:04	Picks up child and wipes its nose
9:05	Continues to sweep
9:06 - 9:10	Checks that the relish on the fire is cooking properly, puts more wood to the fire
9:10 - 9:12	A neighbour comes and asks for a hoe, the woman hands the hoe to her neighbour and they chat a little
9:12 - 9:15	Sits down and suckles baby
9:15 - 9:17	Goes to the kitchen and takes a plate of porridge and sits down and starts to feed the child. Tells daughter to start bathing so she will not be late for school. Tells daughter to put a pot of water on fire so she can have some tea before she leaves for school.
9:17 - 9:25	Continues to feed the baby porridge
9:25 - 9:36	Washing cups and plates that were used for breakfast
9:37 - 9:50	Cleans windows of the lounge with baby on back.
9:50 - 9:52	Tells daughter to take some cooked maize to eat at school.
9:52 - 10:05	She gets a chair for a visitor to sit down. Greets the visitor, gives him some cooked maize to eat and sits down to chat with the guest. Goes to the kitchen to rekindle the fire and comes back. Takes baby from her back and suckles him.

Note

1

By househelp I mean a hired worker or any other person who lives in the woman's household specifically for purposes of assisting the woman with household tasks.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## Use and Allocation of Time

## by Male/Onga Women

5.1 Profile of Male/Onga Women

A woman from Male village told me, "The greatest mistake I ever made in my life was to get pregnant when I was in standard eight and only 18 years old, because now I have a son whom the father refuses to support. I am now married to a man who has another wife and who is rarely here with me. It is hard to live here. I work very hard in the garden to provide for my son and yet I rarely produce enough food for us to last an entire year. We women are unfortunate, because we bear children, then we have to raise them whilst the men simply abandon their children. It is very hard work to be able to live here in the village."

The young woman who spoke these words, whom we will call Mrs Makoko (a pseudonym), is twenty-seven years old. Her son is now nine years old and is still her only child. In addition to her son, she lives with a sister's daughter, aged 10 years who helps her with housework. Male village, where Mrs Makoko lives is nestled between the Zomba Plateau and Malawi's major North-South roadway. It is a matrilineal area so Mrs Makoko's house is situated near her sister's and mother's houses. She has got a piece of land of about one acre in size on which she grows maize, and a piece of dimba land adjacent to a river which is one-quarter of an acre in size where she grows vegetables. The piece of land where she

grows maize was allocated to her by her mother when she moved out of her parents' home at 22 years to marry the man who is her present husband. Mrs Makoko's husband comes fortnightly and spends a week with her then goes to his older wife's village. She says she really does not love her husband much but claims a woman needs a man - "she cannot live alone as she will be termed a prostitute." She doesn't think the marriage will last. Mrs Makoko's house has two rooms. It is constructed of mud walls with a thatched roof. She has a separate kitchen and bathroom within her reed fenced compound. She works hard on her piece of land but is frustrated because all that hard work does not produce food to last her the year. Having left school at standard 8, she has little chance of finding paid employment in town. She has no alternative but to farm.

The population of Malawi is predominantly rural (89 per cent). The rural majority lacks access to basic services in many critical areas, including electricity, an adequate water supply, health and schools. Agriculture is the main activity for most of the rural population and rural women are the backbone of the agricultural system, growing maize, cassava, beans and vegetables. Male/Onga villages north of Zomba town fit this typical rural scenario. Women in Male/Onga, apart from being the main producers of food for the family, remain responsible for household maintenance tasks, like women elsewhere in Malawi. This chapter examines the nature of women's work in the twin villages of Male/Onga and

how women allocate their time to different activities. It begins with an overview of the demographic characteristics of the women interviewed.

## 5.2 Demographic Characteristics of Male/Onga Women

The ages of women in the sub-sample for Male/Onga villages ranged from just under 20 years to 55 years. The largest number of women were over 40 years (42%), with the rest of the women spread evenly between 20 and 40 years (See Table 5.1). Seventy per cent (70%) of the women were

Table 5.1: Male/Onga Women by Age  
(N = 70)

Age	Number of Women	% of Women
Under 20 Years	1	1.4
20 - 25 years	8	11.4
26 - 30 years	7	10.0
31 - 35 years	6	8.6
36 - 40 years	6	8.6
Over 40 years	30	42.9
Age unknown	12	17.1
TOTAL	70	100.0

married, 20% were divorced and 8.6% widowed (See Table 5.2). Although most women were married, the husbands did not live permanently with the women as they were away for most of the time in towns looking for occasional employment. The number of children per woman ranged from 1 child to 9 children with the highest percentage of women (over 22%) each having over 5 children. The older women were likely to have more children

Table 5.2: Marital Status of Women in Male/Onga

Marital Status	Number	%
Married	49	70.0
Widowed	6	8.6
Separated	14	20.0
Divorced	1	1.4
Never married	-	-
TOTAL	70	100.0

than the younger ones. Slightly over half of the women interviewed (57%) had been born in the villages. The rest of the women had lived in the villages for periods ranging from 5 to 20 years, having moved to the area from other villages with their parents mainly in search of enough land for cultivation (See Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Length of Time Women Have Lived in Male/Onga

Length of Residence in Male/Onga	Number	%
Less than 5 years	10	14.3
5 - 9 years	3	4.3
10 - 19 years	7	10.0
20 years or more	10	14.3
Born in Male/Onga	40	57.1

### 5.3 The Length of a Woman's Day in Male/Onga

Women in Male/Onga villages arise as early as 4:00 a.m. As soon as they arise, they sweep the kitchen and put water to warm on the fire. This water is for the children to bathe before they leave for school. The women also prepare porridge

and leave it by the fireside for the school-going children. At about 4:45 a.m. the woman leaves for the field. If she has a child still breastfeeding, she takes the child with her to the field. Young children over the age of four are normally left at home sleeping. The children are used to being left alone. However since women live next to kin, it is rare that a child will be alone as there are other children from the woman's sisters' houses. The woman does not eat anything before leaving for the fields. The fields may be a kilometre or so away. At night the woman retires between 7:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. A minority of women arise later than 5:00 a.m. and also retire later (See Table 5.4). The times they arise and the times they retire for bed remain essentially the same irrespective of demographic factors like the age of the women, her marital status or the number of children she has. The major reason given by most women for getting up early was to perform garden work, an exhausting and energy draining activity, in the cool morning hours before the weather became hot. Almost all women were back from their fields by 10:00 a.m. However, the time when they arrive home from the fields is influenced by other factors such as the time table of school-going children. This study



**Table 5.4: Rising Times and Retiring Times:  
Male/Onga Women (N = 70)**

Rising Time (a.m.)	Retiring Times (p.m.)							TOTAL
	7:00- 7:30	7:30- 8:00	8:00- 8:30	8:30- 9:00	9:00- 10:00	10:00- 11:00	11:00- 12:00	
4:00-4:30a.m.	2	12	9	5	2	-	-	30
4:30-5:00a.m.	1	2	6	2	1	-	-	12
5:00-5:30a.m.	-	3	5	2	-	-	-	10
5:30-6:00a.m.	1	1	4	4	-	-	-	10
6:00-6:30a.m.	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	4
6:30-7:00a.m.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Do not know	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>70</b>

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was carried out during the peak cultivation season before the onset of the rains when the temperatures are the highest. It is, therefore, possible that during other seasons when different agricultural activities are performed, women may spend more or less time in their fields.

Another reason the women cited for arising early is to enable women to accommodate both agricultural work and household maintenance work. If women went to the fields later, inevitably they would come back later and this would infringe on the time needed for other household maintenance tasks. The time for going to bed is usually soon after the women have had their evening meal. Since there is no electricity in the villages, women cannot do much once it gets dark. Although the women have paraffin lamps, these are put out as soon as possible after the evening meal in order to conserve scarce fuel.

The average length of a woman's day in Male/Onga villages is between 16 - 17 hours per day, and is slightly longer than the average for Zomba town women whose day is between 15 - 16 hours. It is, however, the same as for Chinamwali women.

As with the samples of women in Zomba Town and Chinamwali, we will look at the way women in Male/Onga villages budget their time according to the amount of energy needed for the task, benefit of the task to family and society and the woman's own preference for particular tasks:

#### 5.4 Activities Requiring a lot of Energy vs Low Energy Activities

Women in Male/Onga tend to perform activities requiring more energy in two periods, either early in the morning between 4 a.m. - 10 a.m. or during the mid afternoon (between 2:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.). Tasks requiring less energy are performed at other times. For example, whereas work in the fields is done almost exclusively in the morning, mending and knitting are done in the early afternoon.

The average number of tasks requiring much energy that a woman is able to manage in a day is two. Agricultural field work, the most important task for subsistence, is carried out in the morning. Other high-energy tasks such as clay gathering are carried out in the afternoon hours after the hottest part of the day is gone. For example, women were observed collecting clay from the river banks to smear their houses in the afternoon. Women are also unlikely to allocate the time that they perform for agricultural work to another task. The only instances which women were observed giving preference to another task was when they went to Zomba plateau to fetch firewood. Fetching firewood involves walking relatively long distances and is very exhausting. It also takes a long time, each trip to and from the plateau taking as long as three hours. Women are, therefore, unable to perform this task on the same day that they do agricultural work since both tasks take up a lot of time and also a lot of energy. Mrs Chinthenga, (a pseudonym) a resident of Male village, explained that when a woman decides to replenish her fuelwood

supply, she allocates two or more extra hours each day to agricultural work during the week prior to the week that she plans to go and fetch the firewood. She will then spend the next week going up the plateau (Zomba Plateau) every morning to collect wood. In this way she accumulates enough firewood to last a month or even more so she does not have to repeat the exercise often. Mrs Chinthenga's explanation confirms that if two tasks demand large amounts of time and energy, women are not likely to perform both tasks in the same day. Collecting firewood from the Zomba Plateau and cultivating in the fields are two mutually exclusive tasks for Male/Onga women. Another set of mutually exclusive tasks are smearing the floor and walls of their houses with clay and fetching firewood. Women reported that they postponed smearing the floor and walls of houses with mud during the same week they planned to collect firewood.

The budgeting of tasks during certain times of the day is based on the energy requirements of such tasks and the temperature, a rational strategy used by women to conserve their energy whilst at the same time ensuring that the tasks are carried out. The fact that tasks requiring a lot of energy (See Table 5.5) are performed during the time of day when it is cooler and those requiring low energy are performed at other times of the day illustrates this strategy.

**Table 5.5: TASKS CARRIED OUT AT CERTAIN TIME PERIODS OF THE DAY  
by Male/Onga Women**

5:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	10:00 a.m. 12:00 noon	12:00 noon - 3:30 p.m.	3:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- Cultivating	- Cooking	- Cooking	- Fetching water
- Fetching water	- Laundry	- Childcare	- Childcare
- Fetching firewood	- Childcare	- Washing plates	- Splitting Firewood
- Fetching clay	- Washing plates	- Bathing	- Cultivating
- Smearing clay on the floors and walls	- Going to the market	- Social visits	- Fetching clay
- Pounding	- Eating	- Leisure	- Bathing
- Visiting Health centres		- Fetching relish	- Eating
- Childcare		- Church meetings	
- Cooking			

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### 5.5 Activities to Satisfy Needs of Family vs Own Needs

The tasks women in Male/Onga perform first in the day are not only high-energy tasks but are also aimed at servicing the needs of the woman's family. Tasks performed during the middle part of the day and in the afternoon serve to satisfy the needs of the family, the society and the woman herself. For example, women in Male/Onga are unlikely to take a bath in the morning hours or to sit down to rest. They are also unlikely to engage in social visits including church meetings during morning hours. The morning hours from the time the woman arises to about 10:00 a.m. are reserved for tasks aimed at ensuring that the home is clean and the family has been fed. The mid-morning to afternoon hours are to cater for family needs such as cooking and laundry. In addition the woman may visit friends or visitors may call. The woman may also bath herself during this time period and give herself enough time to eat. From late afternoon to the time the woman retires, she spends less time on social visits and reverts back to activities that meet the immediate needs of the family. Social needs like social visits and church meetings are normally carried out during afternoon hours (See Table 5.5). The categories used here are not mutually exclusive as women also meet their own needs in the process of meeting the family's needs and social needs. However, the bulk of the work women do is to cater for their families, their children, and not themselves. One explanation why women allocate their time in this manner is because tasks that satisfy the needs of the society and the woman demand

less energy than those satisfying the entire family needs and are, therefore, performed in the afternoon. However a much more fundamental reason is that the rural household in Malawi has increasingly become dependent on women's labour (Butler, 1976). This is so because men have increasingly moved out of the rural areas to the urban centres in search of employment and also because women remain responsible for household maintenance activities. Also women themselves perceive activities designed to gratify their own needs as of minor importance compared to those aimed at satisfying family and societal needs. A woman who spends a lot of time on personal hygiene or visiting friends is considered as frivolous by fellow women and may be branded as having loose morals.

Regardless women have some free-time. Ninety-four per cent of the women responded that they have some leisure time. Of these, 78% indicated that they had such leisure time every day in the afternoon between 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. However, when asked how they spent such leisure time, 52% said they either visited sick relatives, mended torn clothes or knitted. And 48% said they spent such leisure simply sitting and resting. Even then, direct observation of 20 women over a period of 12 hours indicated that rarely was leisure time a period of total rest. Of the 20 women, nine were engaged in food preparation (e.g. removing maize from kernels, peeling vegetables like pumpkin leaves, peeling beans). Six mended torn clothes, two knitted and only three sat doing nothing. It appears that women tended to classify as "leisure" many of the activities performed with little motion, such as mending

clothes, peeling vegetables and knitting. When one considers that none of the women interviewed had any househelp, the probability of women having much leisure time is questionable taking into account the amount of work that women have to perform in a day.

By three-thirty to four o'clock in the afternoon noticeable changes occur in the tasks that women perform. Whilst the tasks performed between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. involved little motion, from 3:00 p.m. onwards women are engaged in tasks that require much more movement and also aimed at satisfying the needs of the entire family, rather than the women's personal needs. Tasks during this time period are geared towards food preparation for the evening meal and also ensuring that there is enough water to last until mid morning the next day. Women also ensure that they have split enough firewood for the preparation of the evening meal and for warming bath water in the morning for school going children and husbands. By 5:30 to 6:00 p.m. women begin preparing food for the evening before it gets dark. Obviously women in Male/Onga, like women in many rural areas, are limited in the amount of tasks that they do in the evenings by the absence of good lightning like electric light. Whilst women in Zomba town do some knitting after dinner, women in Male/Onga clear up and go to bed. Table 5.6 gives a summary of tasks women have to perform and the division of labour. Any help women may have is likely to come from children and relatives and occasionally from



husbands when the latter happen to be around, which was usually over the weekends when husbands were off from casual employment. Hired labour is used sparingly and only in agricultural work. Whilst children, especially girls, do help their mothers with household maintenance activities after school, women do not rely a lot on such help and most of what the girls do is perceived by the women as proper training for the girls future role as mothers/wives.

Sundays are termed 'rest' days by women. No agricultural work is done and such tasks as fetching firewood and smearing of homes, laundry, pounding and any other heavy tasks are not carried out on Sunday. All other less strenuous tasks are however carried out on Sunday. Christians go to church on this day. For Christian women, Sunday is also a day to attend church services. Even though the ideology of Sunday being a rest day is derived from the Christian religion, non-Christians also avoid doing strenuous work on Sunday. Women in Male/Onga also use Sunday to fulfil social obligations like visiting sick relatives, condoling friends and relatives who have lost beloved ones and other social interactions. Whilst women looked forward to Sunday for rest, they sometimes also perceived it as a day wasted to carry out some vital activities such as agricultural work. One woman lamented that the rains had come on a Sunday but since Sunday was a day when no agricultural work is carried out, she could not go to plant her maize. The irony was that the woman who said this was a Muslim.

Table 5.6: Household Tasks and Division of Labour:

Male/Onga (N = 70)

	Cultivating		Food Processing		Childcare		Housework	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Woman Alone	13	18.6	46	65.7	27	38.6	35	50.0
Woman + Husband	15	21.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hired Labour	14	20.0	1	1.4	-	-	-	-
Older Children	-	-	10	14.3	19	27.1	17	24.3
Relatives	-	-	2	2.9	14	20.0	18	25.7
Woman + Hired Labour	4	5.7	1	1.4	-	-	-	-
Relatives + Hired "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Older children + Hired Labour	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Older children + Relatives	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woman + Children + Hired Labour	17	24.3	6	8.6	-	-	-	-
Woman + Children	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woman + Relatives	4	5.7	4	5.7	10	14.3	-	-
Woman + Husband + Children	3	4.3	-	-	-	-	-	-
	70	100.0	70	100.0	70	100.0	70	100.0

### 5.6 Activities Liked and Disliked By Women

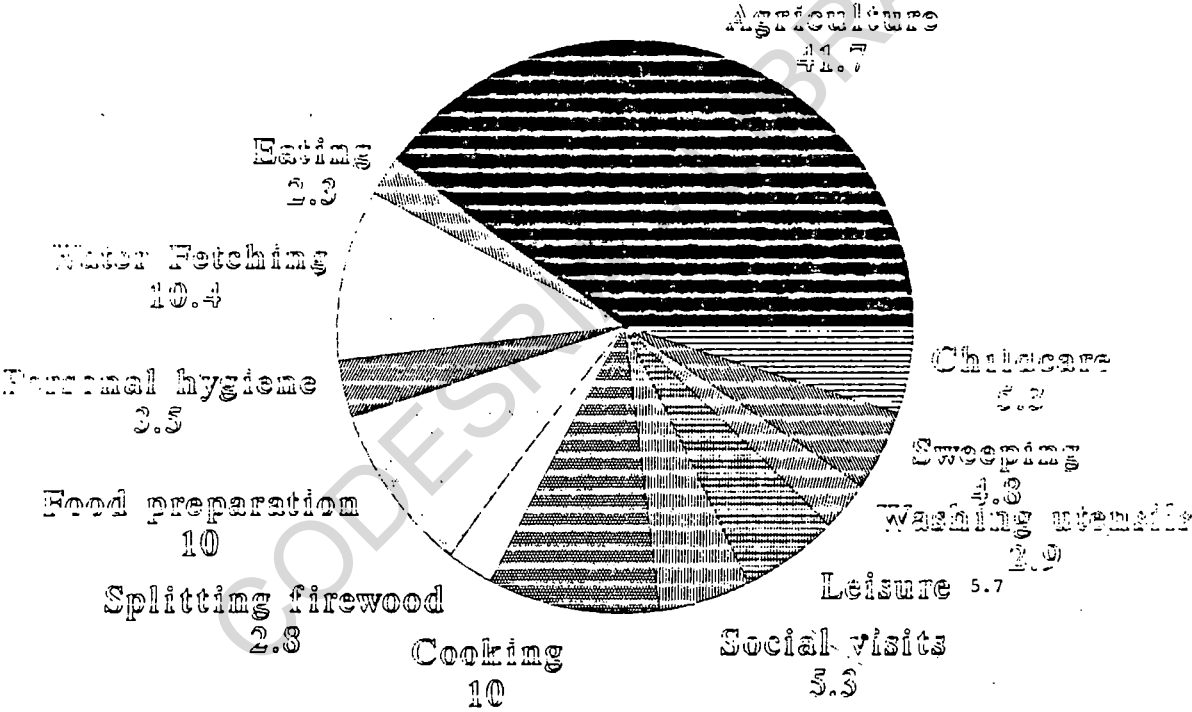
Cultivating crops is universally disliked by women in Male/Onga because most women perceive it as a 'necessary evil' (See Table 5.7). Most women are of the opinion that the returns, in terms of having adequate food throughout the year and some surplus for sale, do not warrant the amount of labour that goes into this activity. Other disliked tasks

Table 5.7: Disliked Tasks by Number and Percent of Women: Male/Onga (N = 70)

Tasks Disliked	No. of Women	% of Women
Cultivating	40	57.1
Fetching Firewood	8	11.4
Pounding	7	10.0
Fetching water	5	7.1
Transport	3	4.3
Childcare	1	1.4
Animal Husbandry	1	1.4
No Answer	5	7.1
TOTAL	70	100.0

are pounding maize and fetching firewood. Other tasks such as washing plates, sweeping and cooking are not particularly disliked but women perceive them as boring. Childcare and laundry are not perceived as problematic. The three most disliked tasks mentioned are almost always performed by women in the morning hours. Any two of the three disliked tasks of cultivating, pounding maize and fetching firewood are mutually exclusive because women rarely perform them within the same day. Like cultivating, pounding maize or going to fetch firewood is carried out as soon as a woman rises up.

**Fig. 5.1 Showing % Amount of Time Spent  
By Women On Various Activities in a Day:  
Male/Onga**



Based on a 12-Hour Day

All require a lot of energy and none are aimed at satisfying exclusively the personal needs of the women themselves. Women thus tend to perform these disliked tasks as early as possible so as to get rid of them and to create time for other tasks. Apart from cultivating, the other two tasks are only performed occasionally since at each performance women ensure that they stockpile the product of the task to last a long time.

As discussed in Chapters three and four, women dislike tasks that reduce the possibility of doing several tasks concurrently. Hence fetching firewood, cultivating and pounding are disliked in Male/Onga precisely because of this reason. Fetching firewood and cultivating demand that a woman move away from her house for some hours, whilst pounding demands that once the process is started it has to be completed otherwise the maize being pounded would get water logged and spoiled (See Fig. 5.1 for times allocated). However even the three disliked tasks mentioned here are concurrently carried out with childcare. Young babies are carried around on the mothers' backs as they do their work. Childcare therefore seems to be compatible with most tasks women perform in Male/Onga and as such ceases to be as problematic as it is in Zomba town where paid employment is incompatible with childcare.

The fact that women perform many tasks concurrently also further explains why women dislike carrying out more than one high-energy task in a day, even if the weather

remained cool for the entire day hence making it practically possible for a woman to do so. High energy tasks performed by Male/Onga women also tend to be tasks that require being performed away from the immediate surroundings of the home, or tasks that require continuous activity like pounding. They also take a long time to complete. These tasks therefore reduce the carrying out of tasks concurrently. If women are to engage in more than one such task in a day, it means the women would be unable to perform any other low energy tasks that can be done concurrently as all the time would be taken up.

The conclusion of this chapter is that women in Male/Onga value time and plan for its use. The planning takes special attention to ensure that all necessary tasks are done in the most effective way maximising both on the women's energy and time. It is therefore erroneous to perceive the way women in rural areas of Malawi use and allocate their time as arbitrary. Planning for time and maximising on energy is therefore not exclusive to exchange value production but is utilized by women in Male/Onga on a daily basis as they go about doing use value production. And it is precisely because women plan so well that their labour is able to sustain households and produce most of the food for the country.

## CHAPTER SIX

Summary of Findings

We have seen the way women whose work largely has a use value budget their time and how women who are employed balance exchange-value work with use value tasks. This chapter identifies similarities and differences in the way women in Zomba town, Chinamwali, and Male/Onga villages in the way they allocate and use time, and the factors underlying such decisions.

The way a woman manages and utilizes time depends on six factors: (1) the amount of energy required to perform a particular task; (2) the climatic conditions in which the work is to be done; (3) the spatial environment; (4) available services and infrastructure; (5) personal preference for some tasks over others; and (6) whether the woman is employed. Although women in the three areas are not affected equally by all six factors, taken together they are the major determinants of women's time management in Zomba District. For example, that women in Zomba town have to balance the demands of exchange-value and use-value work affects their allocation of time differently than for women in the other two areas, just as climatic factors affect women farmers' work in Male/Onga to a greater degree than they do in Zomba or Chinamwali. Energy required for a task is a major factor in women's management of time in all areas.

### 6.1 The Energy Factor

The amount of energy that a particular task requires determines to a large extent, when women will perform that task. The greater the amount of energy required, the more likely the task will be carried out during the cool morning hours or late afternoon hours of the day, as we have learned. Thus energy required and temperature are associated in planning time slots for physically demanding tasks.

The energy factor also determines how often tasks are performed. The more energy a particular task demands, the less likely it is to be performed on a daily basis. As we have seen, fetching firewood and processing maize flour are tasks that require much energy and time. As a result, they are carried out only occasionally when women allocate a large block of time to the task. For Male/Onga and Chinamwali women, collecting firewood and processing maize meal requires large blocks of time periodically. For employed women who spend much of their day at their places of work, tasks which demand maximum energy are performed on Saturdays because this is the day those women are not engaged in exchange-value labour. Some activities that women perform in the three areas are similar and others are not. Those that require less energy are performed in all areas. Examples are food preparation and cooking, childcare, sweeping and washing plates. These activities are performed on a daily basis by all women. They are often performed concurrently with other tasks. That those activities requiring little energy are



carried out with other tasks gives women some flexibility in deciding how much time to allocate to them. For example, a woman may decide to sweep only one room, for example the kitchen rather than the entire house if she is constrained for time on a particular day. As she sweeps she periodically stirs a pot of porridge on the fire. Hence she is accomplishing two tasks in the same time period. For all three areas then, women tend to perform low energy tasks on a daily basis because they fulfil the family's daily needs, require little time and can be carried out concurrently with other tasks. Even women in wage employment are able to do multiple, low-energy maintenance tasks prior to departure for work and when they return home.

Certain high energy tasks, however, must be carried out on a daily basis, particularly in rural areas. Examples are water collection and cultivation. In Zomba town, women have to walk long distances to get to paid work. The common factors of these energy-consuming, time-consuming activities are that family maintenance or income is dependent on them.

Although in use-value work, energy is a factor of time allocation, in exchange-value work, because women do not control their time, they cannot allocate wage employment tasks according to their energy requirements. For example, clerks in a government office may be recording incoming mail in a register for most of the morning hours and may have to search for records in closed files that have to be retrieved from high shelves during the afternoon hours. Entering mail

in a register is a low energy task performed whilst sitting whilst retrieving files is a task requiring relatively more energy, yet the latter is performed in the afternoon. Their jobs entail taking instructions from supervisors. The fact that most of the paid jobs that women are in are low paying and of low status give women little control over the use of time. This may explain why over 33% of the women found their work in the exchange-value sector both tiring and unsatisfying. They do not make use of their exceptional management skills.

Energy as a factor in time allocation is also evident in the tasks that women will expend of given alternative means of accomplishing the tasks. For example, cash is used to purchase processed flour by Zomba town women instead of having to process the flour themselves. In Chinamwali servants are employed to fetch water and in Male/Onga casual labourers are hired to cultivate in the gardens when alternative means or labour is available to accomplish tasks requiring much energy. It is usually the high energy tasks that the women get rid of first. A lot of women's time and energy is freed when even only one high energy task is accomplished by alternative means. This is evidenced by the four women in Chinamwali who have hired househelp and as such are freed for as much as three hours or more per day, time that would have been spent fetching water and doing laundry. For Zomba women, although hired labour is prevalent, the experience and age of the hired labour prevents most women from delegating

tasks requiring a lot of energy to the hired helps, hence the women have to perform the tasks themselves on days when they are not engaged in paid work.

It is therefore important to recognize that time consuming and energy consuming tasks vary across space and as such if energy saving gadgets are to be used, they should be appropriate to the area. For example, Zomba town women would welcome time saving technology on laundry, Male/Onqa women on cultivation and Chinamwali women on the water supply among others. By estimating the amount of energy and time it takes to perform particular household maintenance tasks, it is therefore possible to identify when such tasks are performed during the day because women allocate time periods to tasks according to the energy requirements for such tasks.

## 6.2 Climatic Conditions and their Effect on Allocation of Time

The use and allocation of time to household maintenance tasks by women is also governed by the climatic conditions. In the previous section and in earlier chapters, the point has been made that tasks requiring a lot of energy are performed in the early morning hours or late afternoon hours. The reason for this is that at these time periods, the weather is cooler and women can effectively utilize their energy. Temperatures in Malawi can go as high as 38 °C. At the time of this study (October - December) the temperatures were very high, reaching as high as 33 °C. The weather is also humid. In such climatic conditions, it would be

exhausting to garden, pound maize, fetch firewood, or perform any of the other tasks requiring a lot of energy, between mid-morning and mid-afternoon hours. Such climate particularly affects women farmers who necessarily work outside their houses. That is why women in Male/Onga went to the fields as early as 4:30 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. to ensure that by the time the temperature became hottest beginning around 10:00 o'clock in the morning, they would have completed most energy needed cultivation tasks. For Chinamwali women, they did their laundry early in the morning so they could hang it up to dry in the hottest part of the day. Only on Saturdays did Zomba women follow a similar logic in the performance of use-value tasks, tackling high energy tasks as early in the morning as possible. Most of their exchange work is performed indoors and as such temperature fluctuations are less significant.

The fact that women in all the three areas logically plan household maintenance tasks taking into account climatic conditions as well as energy requirements is further evidence of women's planning and management skills. Yet climatic factors are rarely taken into account when assessing either use-value or wage-value labour. In spite of such skills, household maintenance skills are still not regarded as adequate skills for women to use when they apply for paid jobs.

When new programmes and technologies are introduced into a community, it is important to estimate the amount of energy they demand. The energy demands will determine when

women would slot in the new activities to suit the climatic conditions. For example, if because a task is exhausting and thus needs to be performed during cooler hours of the day (i.e. morning and late afternoon) and if those time slots are already filled with other required activities, the new activity may not be taken up by women because it competes with other demands that a woman judges to be more critical to her family's needs. Since women's work schedules are already over-burdened, it is unlikely that they will take up extra tasks unless time-saving and energy saving techniques are introduced to create time where none previously existed.

### 6.3 The Effect of Spatial Arrangements on Time Allocation

The size and type of house and the amount of land available are factors that I refer to as spatial arrangements. These spatial arrangements have a bearing on how a woman allocates time to household maintenance tasks. Spatial arrangements may also affect but to a lesser degree, how women allocate time in an office. A woman in Male/Onga experiences her work either within a compound surrounded by a bamboo fence or in her fields. To a lesser extent she works in her two-roomed house. The kitchen, a separate building is situated within the bamboo fence, or mpanda and the latrine and bathing area a little outside the mpanda. Male/Onga women rotate between several separated spatial areas for their work. In contrast, a woman in Chinamwali experiences her work in a constrained spatial environment because her small two-roomed house is crowded in with many houses built

very close together. She has little yard space around her house. The latrine and bath are behind the house whilst the kitchen is situated separately on the side of the house. The rooms of her house are small with little light. A Zomba woman lives in a house constructed of bricks with glass windows for light. The house usually has three spacious rooms, one a lounge and the other two being bedrooms. The interior space is larger than in the houses of Chinamwali or Male/Onga. In contrast to the other two areas, the toilet, water supply, kitchen and bathroom are within the house and rarely outside. It may have a small garden attached. The space in which a woman performs her work influences the way a woman uses and allocates time to various tasks. For example, a woman with more rooms in her house has the option of hiring househelp as has been shown in this study for Zomba women. She also has the option of requesting a relative to come and live with her to help her in household maintenance tasks. One reason frequently given by women as to why they did not ask relatives to come and live with them was that the houses, especially those in Chinamwali, did not have enough room to cater for such help. Many families in Chinamwali already had children sleeping in the lounge and calling for a relative from the village would exacerbate the accommodation problem. The lack of space also dictated the age of the hired househelp or relative to be considered by the women. Young girls were often chosen as live in househelps as they are less problematic to house as they required little privacy, compared to older househelps. The net effect of either having

or not having househelps is that it directly affects the amount of work a woman has to do. The age of the househelp has also a similar effect. For Zomba women it has been shown how young inexperienced househelps contribute to the pile up of work women have to do on Saturdays when they are not engaged in wage employment. For Chinamwali women, the four women interviewed who had househelp were able to allocate some time to income generating activities on a daily basis as the househelps took over substantial amounts of household maintenance tasks. Space therefore has implications over and above the simple use of accommodating a family and of storage of household items.

Spatial arrangements also affect how women use and allocate time because the space influences the frequency with which certain tasks are performed. For example, women in Chinamwali who on average have less space within which to perform their work were observed spending more time on washing dishes and putting them away than women in Male/Onga who are also primarily in use-value work. The utensils used for meals in the two areas are similar in quantity and, therefore, do not account for the differences in time allocated to the task. What was observed, however, was that women in Chinamwali wash and put away utensils soon after each meal. Plates are washed outside the house in both Chinamwali and Male/Onga as the houses do not have washing facilities inside, but Male/Onga women are more apt to wash dishes and let them drain dry in the sun on a raised platform

within the fenced compound. Sometimes plates are left to soak in water for a while while a woman does other tasks. The mpanda fence around Male/Onga compounds created relative privacy for the family enabling women to leave utensils and other household appliances lying outside the house but within the security of the mpanda. Only in the evening were the utensils collected so as to put them inside the house. In contrast, the lack of mpanda surrounding Chinamwali houses and the close proximity of neighbours meant that utensils used for a meal had to be cleaned and put away inside the house because items left lying around outside were prone to theft. The added burden of having to wash up, dry and put away utensils each time they were used in Chinamwali greatly increased the time women spent on this particular task (See Table 6.1 and fig. 6.1). The lack of amenities inside houses in Chinamwali causes women to perform almost all household maintenance tasks outside the house and to carry items to and from the house.

In other instances, limited space decreases the time spent on other activities, such as sweeping the house and yard. A comparison between Male/Onga women and Chinamwali women indicates that women in Male/Onga spend considerably more time sweeping the house and yard due to the size of their houses and yards, than Chinamwali women because the latter have less space to sweep. At the same time Chinamwali women were observed sweeping their houses more frequently (on average twice a day) than Male/Onga women who swept only once a day. Chinamwali houses have little space



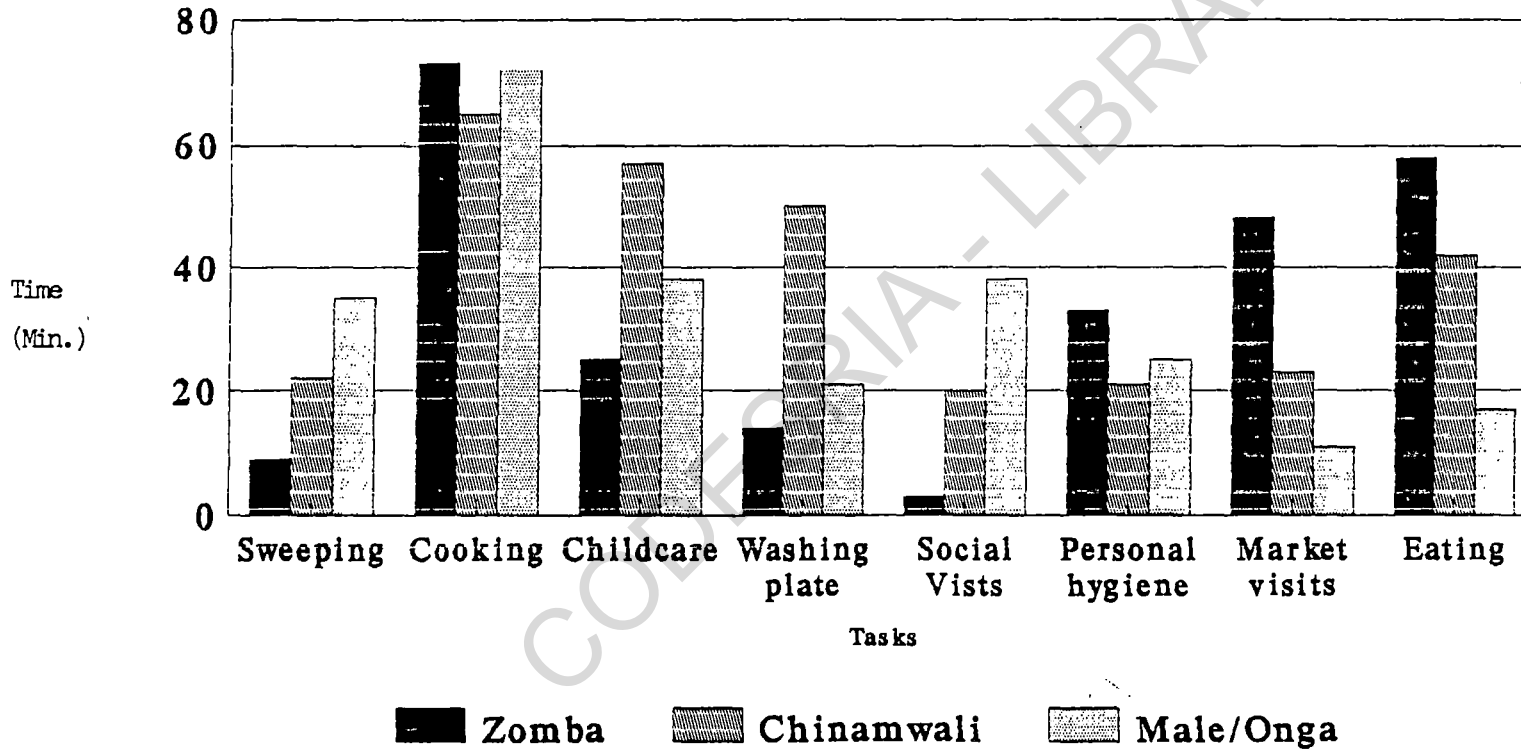
**TABLE 6.1: Activities Performed on a Daily Basis by Women in Zomba Town, Chinamwali and Male/Onga and the Average Time Spent on Each Activity**

ACTIVITY	ZOMBA		CHINAMWALI		MALE/ONGA		Overall
	Time (min)	%	Time (min)	%	Time (min)	%	Total %
Sweeping the house and compound	9	1.07	22	3.1	35	4.8	3.0
Cooking & Food Preparation	73	8.7	65	9.1	72	10.0	9.3
Childcare	25	3.0	57	7.9	38	5.3	5.4
Washing plates/ Putting utensils away	14	1.7	50	6.9	21	2.9	3.8
1 Social duties	38	4.5	53	7.2	38	5.3	5.3
Personal hygiene	33	3.9	21	2.9	25	3.5	3.4
2 Market visits	48	5.7	23	3.2	11	1.5	3.5
Eating/Serving Food	58	6.9	42	5.8	17	2.31	5.0

1  
Notes: Social duties for Zomba Women done mainly through phone contacts

2  
Women in Zomba Town and Chinamwali visit the market more than Male/Onga because they have to buy all their food. Zomba women visit the market more as they have more money to spend.

**Figure 6.1 Showing Amount of Time Allocated to Some Household Tasks By Women in Each of the Three Areas**



around them but people track across the small space more often so that women are forced to sweep more frequently than Male/Onga women.

Another effect of space on women's allocation of time to household tasks is the location where tasks are performed. For example, food is served outside the main house within the mpanda in Male/Onga. Sometimes it is eaten in the family's kitchen. Only on the rare occasion when a husband is at home does a woman serve food inside the house. Otherwise women and children eat outside the house within the mpanda affording them privacy. The advantage of eating food outside is that it also cuts down on time spent on carrying plates to and from the house. In contrast, Chinamwali women usually eat inside the house because they have no privacy in their yards. Because food is cooked outside in a kitchen and then served inside the house, this further increases time spent on serving food. It is also true that women in Chinamwali, similar to Zomba women spend more time serving and eating the evening meal when the entire family comes together than women in Male/Onga. However even for the midday meal, spatial arrangements in Chinamwali increase time spent in meal service and clean up.

Zomba women do minimal household maintenance tasks during the week because they are engaged in wage work. What increases women's time allocation to wage work is the distance of their offices from their homes. Distance increases the amount of time used to walk between home and

wage work. Inversely, the distance decrease the amount of time women are able to spend on household maintenance tasks prior to departure for paid work and upon return. Table 6 shows that Zomba women spent considerably less time on most tasks except cooking, than women in Male/Onga and Chinamwali. This is because Zomba women usually cook the nsima and all the relish for the evening meal themselves. It is the amount of time spent on the single meal that substantially increases the amount of time allocated to cooking. In contrast Male/Onga women's and Chinamwali women's cooking caters for all the three daily meals: these being breakfast, lunch and supper. The evening meal is given extra care in preparation by women in Zomba town and is rarely cooked by househelp. When Zomba women are at home on days off from employment they perform most of the household maintenance tasks inside the house because amenities such as water taps, showers and in some instances, bath-tubs, and stoves are located inside the house. The fact that all the appliances are confined within limited space reduces the overall time women have to spend on tasks such as cooking and laundry, even though the tasks may not necessarily be performed in a single day.

Spatial arrangements within households vary by area location and affect women's management of time for use-value tasks. It also affects the amount of time women allocate to getting to paid work, particularly when home and office are some distance apart.

A critical aspect of women's use-value work is the amount of time allocated to childcare. Spatial arrangements

affect childcare. The time indicated in this study as being the time women spend on childcare refers to time when a woman is directly handling a child, including feeding it, bathing it, or carrying it on her back. The time could be increased considerably if the amount of time a woman spends watching a child play as she does other tasks were also included. The social environment in which a woman lives contributes significantly to the amount of time a woman spends on childcare. Included in this social environment are spatial arrangements. Where relatives live in the same spatial neighbourhoods, women can call on younger kin as child minders. Spatial arrangements of houses also affect children's play as we saw in the chapter on Chinamwali. Children in that area cause frequent quarrels between women living in adjacent houses as children tend to frequently stray into other families' living space. The lack of space in which a child can play in Chinamwali causes their mothers to carry toddlers more often on their backs as they go to fetch water or perform other maintenance tasks. One woman explained that when a child is on her back, she can do other tasks with less worry about the child causing a disturbance. In contrast, the mpanda found in Male/Onga homes enables a woman to do work with a child free to play around her in the enclosed yard. The mpanda, by confining the space of a child's movements, makes a mother's supervision of the child easier without necessitating her putting the child on her back. It also limits the toddlers' play with children from other houses.

Space also is a concern for mothers in Zomba town where childcare is concerned. Women with houses with little space around them often worry about their children wandering into neighbouring houses or being bullied by neighbour's children when they are at work.

The whole question of distance between children and their employed mothers has not even been addressed substantively in Malawi. However, from this study, it is evident that mothers removed spatially from their small children by employment worry about their care and health, a factor that could be alleviated by childcare facilities in places of employment.

#### 6.4 Available Services and Infrastructure

The effects of lack of infrastructure on women's use of time are multiple. Water in Chinamwali has been discussed already. In Male/Onga, lack of technology to reduce the time on cultivation results in women spending long hours toiling in the field. The lack of fuel-efficient stoves results in women spending long hours fetching firewood. In Zomba, women arise earlier than the men of the household, their time of arising taking into account the time they will spend walking to work due to lack of public transport. Lack of adequate health services causes women in Male/Onga and Chinamwali to spend the entire day travelling to hospitals and queuing once there in order to obtain drugs. Reference was earlier made about a woman in Chinamwali who spent six hours to obtain medical care for her sick child. Lack of infrastructure is

costly to women in particular who are responsible for household maintenance tasks.

Whilst the effects of lack of infrastructure in certain areas is easy to see, the effects of lack of infrastructure on other areas of women's work less directly related to the infrastructure in question are less obvious because to perceive these secondary effects, one needs to understand the totality of women's work. An example of this is the water supply in Chinamwali that not only increases the time length of day for women in Chinamwali and the amount of time spent in fetching water but also increases the amount of time spent on laundry. Similarly lack of transport facilities in Zomba town apart from lengthening the woman's work day also affects her ability to go home during the one hour lunch break to check on her children. It also causes her to shop and do other household maintenance tasks during office hours. Whilst each area has specific tasks that are problematic to perform because of lack of infrastructure, other tasks may be problematic to more than one area. What is critical to be aware of is that infrastructure introduced in one area would not necessarily have the same effect on women's work as in another area. There is need to understand the linkages between different household maintenance tasks that women in each area perform when time-saving technologies are introduced. Appropriate time saving technologies can only be fully effective if they are based on an understanding of the totality of women's work in each specific area, taking into account rural and urban differences.

### 6.5 The Influence of Personal Preference For Tasks on Time Allocation

In all three areas, women prefer household maintenance tasks that take up the least amount of time and energy. Such tasks are least exhausting and are not limited to a particular time of the day. Tasks such as childcare, sweeping and cooking are accepted by most women because they allow women to do other tasks concurrently, which increases the efficiency with which they use their time. Efficient use of time is critical to women. A related factor that influences women's preferences is whether the task is carried out around the home or not; women tend to prefer tasks around the home as they allow a woman to perform several tasks at once.

Tasks that enable a woman to sit while performing them such as knitting and mending are also preferred by women. Women tend to leave such tasks for afternoon hours when energy consuming tasks are completed. For Zomba women in the exchange sector, these more leisurely tasks are allocated time on their days off after they have completed more difficult tasks. This is a feature of the way women allocate time in all areas because less demanding, more relaxing tasks are saved to the afternoon hours after more demanding and less liked tasks have been accomplished.

Theoretically women in Male/Onga and Chinamwali might be perceived as having relative flexibility in determining how to manage their time to fit various tasks. Women in wage



employment have half their working day structured for them by supervisors. The only full days they have to manage household maintenance tasks are on weekends. Whether in exchange-value work or use-value work, it is a gross error to perceive of women's time as completely flexible and autonomous from other demands. It is precisely because women's work is structured to maximise efficiency regardless of the value attached, that the rationale underlying women's time allocation emerges as we have seen in the three study sites.

Women have little choice but to perform household maintenance tasks. They perform such use-value work for the benefit of their families regardless of their personal inclinations or talents and even when they are employed in the exchange-value sector. If women refused to perform household maintenance tasks, the effect on families' welfare would be phenomenal. In households with high incomes, hired help is an option. Often the hired person performing the household maintenance tasks in Malawi is male, and as such, his work gains a market-value. In cases where a female is hired, she is most likely paid less than the male.

#### 6.6 Remuneration and Women's Work

Two groups of women studied, those of Male/Onga and Chinamwali are solely engaged in use-value work, while Zomba women balance use-value labour with exchange-value labour, both jobs often demanding and full time. Feminists have focused increasingly on this dual nature of women's work, and

investigated the degree to which entry by women into wage employment has changed the sexual division of labour. Maguire (1984) concluded that little change has occurred. The pressure felt by women in the exchange-value sector is evidenced by the fact that sixty-percent of the women in Zomba town choose more time off to more pay when asked which of the two options they preferred. They chose more time off not for leisure pursuits but in order to be more effective in looking after the welfare of their families and to catch up with the household maintenance tasks. Women in exchange-value production allocated over 50% of their 16 hour day to work which has an exchange-value. Because they are paid for this labour, it is given greater priority than use-value work, although the sum total of the latter socio-economic value may be equal or greater. The effect on women of balancing exchange-value with use-value work means a major reallocation of the way employed women use time with most labour-intensive household tasks being performed when women are off from paid work. The net effect of this balancing is constant over-tiredness on the part of women who have little or no leisure, unless their incomes are high enough to hire experienced labour.

Although it is easy to see the effect of paid work on women in exchange-value labour on allocation of time, this does not imply that women in non-paid work necessarily have more leisure time. Earlier chapters have already shown that household maintenance tasks take up the entire day for even

such women. Agricultural work that women in Male/Onga engage in is as structured to a schedule as wage work. Even though this agricultural work goes unpaid, it is crucial to the survival of those women's families. As a result, the multiple tasks related to maize production, for instance, are given priority, being performed on a regular morning basis.

The fact that women's household maintenance tasks are not given a market-value could very well be due to methods of assessing work and valuing it that uses the public/private dichotomy or the economic approach. Such methods having mainly been propagated by male scholars. These methods have increasingly been critiqued by feminist scholars.

#### 6.7 CONCLUSION

By documenting the labour activities in a woman's work day, this dissertation has shown that women's work is not only vital to family maintenance, but that it also is time consuming. It is, therefore, a fallacy not to document and record women's use-value labour for national statistics purposes. Use of statistics based only on concepts of work found in the modern employment sector is inappropriate in the Malawian context given that only 5% of the population is employed. It leaves out the vital contribution of women's work that maintains and sustains the family. The use of such employment dependent statistics may explain why few resources are allocated to water projects or fuelwood projects designed to make women's work easier and more effective. There is

need to recognize that the wage market is not the only factor in valuing work, but that any valuation should take into account the benefits of use-value work to society. The long hours that women endure and their total contribution to the total economy and the survival of society must be allocated a value.

The non-recognition of women's work in the home is accompanied by a lack of policy to alleviate the stress and work burdens of women in exchange-value work, who bear a double burden as they are expected to manage use-value labour at home while being employed. It has been shown here that low pay and low status jobs that women hold further makes it difficult for them to perform their dual roles.

Policy makers and planners must address the issues pertaining to women's work that women themselves have singled out as critical to their development. For example, there is need to introduce strategies that reduce women's toil in agricultural production, as in Male/Onga. There is also need to introduce strategies to reduce women's labour in water fetching in Chinamwali. Finally, as more women enter wage employment, there is need to address women's time constraints in balancing employment demands with family maintenance demands.

From this study, three further conclusions are reached. The first is that women allocate and use time in a logical manner to maximise efficiency depending on energy required

for a particular task, climatic conditions, spatial arrangements and personal preference. The second is that women's ability and skill in managing numerous tasks often performed concurrently within a limited time, have not been given recognition as part of a person's administrative resource capacity by potential employers because: (1) these management skills are not awarded a monetary value and (2) they are not listed on a resume. Yet households would collapse without these management skills. Thirdly, national statistics that leave out women's use-value work are inadequate for economic planning purposes because use of such statistics are liable to produce skewed plans.

This dissertation also confirms what has been found in time-allocation studies across nations and cultures that women work very long hours, be they engaged in exchange-value or use-value work. That the length of the working day in all three Zomba district areas is about 16 hours demonstrates that Malawian women (regardless of residence in a rural or urban area or whether they are engaged in wage employment or use-value labour) spend approximately the same amounts of time in labour. Considering that the norm for paid employment is eight hours, 16 hours is a very long work day, one which would not be approved by ILO standards. Clearly there is need for national policies aimed at decreasing this 16 hour work day.

The findings of this study call for an alternative approach to valuing work. By using a model that acknowledges

both use-value production and exchange-value production, all work is given a value based on its contribution to the maintenance and survival of societies and families. The use-value/exchange value production model is particularly relevant to Third World situations where most people, of both sexes, are not in exchange-value production. The approach, as already mentioned earlier, is particularly applicable to Malawi where only five percent of the entire population is engaged in exchange-value production. For women, especially the approach recognises their vital contribution to the sustenance of Malawi's society.

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TABLE 6.2: Disliked/Problematic Tasks by Area  
and By Number and Percentage of Women

Activity	Zomba (n = 60)		Chinamwali (No. = 60)		Male/Onga (No. = 70)		Total %
	No. of Women	%	No. of Women	%	No. of Women	%	
Cultivating	1	1.7	-	-	41	58.6	21
Fetching Water	0	0	36	51.4	8	11.3	22
Laundry	25	41.7	26	37.1	-	-	25.5
Walking	8	13.3	1	1.4	3	4.3	6.0
Paid Work	10	16.7	-	-	-	-	5.0
Flour Processing	9	15.0	2	2.9	7	10.0	9.0
Childcare	7	11.7	-	-	1	1.4	4.0
Fetching Firewood	-	-	5	7.1	10	14.3	7.5
TOTAL	60	100.0	70	100.0	70	100.0	100

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AppendixUse and Allocation of Time Interview Schedule

1. What is your age
  - (a) 20 - 25 years
  - (b) 26 - 30 years
  - (c) 31 - 36 years
  - (d) 37 - 40 years
  - (e) 41 - 45 years
  - (f) over 45 years old
  
2. What are your educational qualifications?
  - (a) Less than Standard 8
  - (b) J.C.
  - (c) MSCE
  - (d) University Qualification
  - (e) Other (specify)
  
3. What is your marital status?
  - (a) Married
  - (b) Never married
  - (c) Divorced
  - (d) Separated
  - (e) Widowed
  
4. How many children do you have?
  - (a) None
  - (b) 1 - 3 children
  - (c) 4 - 6 children
  - (d) Over 6 children
  
5. How many of your children are under 10 years old?
  - (a) None
  - (b) 1 - 3 children
  - (c) Over 3 children
  
6. Do you have any daughter(s)?
  - (a) Yes
  - (b) No
  
7. If yes to Q.6, how many daughters do you have that are over ten years old?
  - (a) None
  - (b) 1 - 2
  - (c) 3 - 4
  - (d) Over 4

8. How long have you lived in this house?
- (a) Born here
  - (b) 20 years or more
  - (c) 10 - 20 years
  - (d) 05 - 10 years
  - (e) Less than 5 years
9. Do you own the house you live?
- (a) Own
  - (b) Rent from a private person
  - (c) Institutional quarters
10. In whose name is the house?
- (a) Self
  - (b) Spouse
  - (c) Self and Spouse jointly
  - (d) other
11. Type of housing (observe)
- (a) House of mud with thatched roof
  - (b) House of mud with iron roof
  - (c) House of burnt bricks with thatched roof
  - (d) House of burnt bricks with iron roof.
12. (a) Have you (your household) got a garden of your own?
- 1. Yes
  - 2. No.
- (b) If garden, how big is the garden?
- 1. 1 - 2 ha
  - 2. 3 - 5 ha
  - 3. 6 - 10 ha
  - 4. over 11 ha.
13. What do you grow in the garden? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Who works in the garden?
- (a) 1. Self
  - 2. Self & husband
  - 3. Self & children
  - 4. Hired labour
  - 5. Self & others (specify)

(b) Who lives with you here in your household?

Relationship	Age last birth	Sex		Marital Status				
		M	F	M	S	W	D	Sep.

15. Who is responsible for food processing and preparation?

- (a) Self
- (b) Children
- (c) Hired Labour
- (d) Other (specify).

16. Who is responsible for child-care?

- (a) Self
- (b) Hired Labour
- (c) Relatives
- (d) Husband
- (e) Older children
- (f) Other (specify)

17. Have you any farm animals?

- (a) 1. Yes
- 2. No.

(b) If yes, what farm animals do you have?

- 1. Goats
- 2. Sheep
- 3. Cattle
- 4. Chickens
- 5. Rabbits
- 6. Other (specify).

18. Who looks after the animals?

- (a) Self
- (b) Children
- (c) Relatives
- (d) Hired Labour
- (e) Other (specify).

**B. EMPLOYMENT**

19. (A) Are you engaged in wage employment at this time?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

(B) If yes to Q. 19a, is it

- (a) Full time (40 hrs/week or more)
- (b) Part-time (less than 30 hours/week)

(C) What type of work do you do?

- (a) Labourer
- (b) Clerical work
- (c) Typist
- (d) Secretary
- (e) Teacher
- (f) Other (specify)

If No to Q. 19

(D) Have you ever been engaged in wage employment?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No.

(E) What was your main occupation? .....

.....

20. Are you

- (a) Self-employed with employees?
- (b) Self-employed without employees?

21. How are you paid?

- (a) Hourly
- (b) Weekly
- (c) Monthly
- (d) Other (specify)

22. (a) What kind of organization do you work for?

- (i) Private
- (ii) Government Civil Service
- (iii) Para-statal organization
- (iv) Other (specify)

(b) Why did you choose to work for this organization?

.....

23. Where do you work?

- (i) At home
- (ii) No fixed place, travel around "all over"
- (iii) In Market Centre
- (iv) In an Office
- (v) Other (specify)

C. Transportation To/From Work

24. How long does it usually take you to get to work from your home?

- (i) 0 - 5 minutes
- (ii) 6 - 15 minutes
- (iii) 16 - 30 minutes
- (iv) 31 - 45 minutes
- (v) 46 minutes - 1 hour
- (vi) Over 1 hour

25. How do you usually get to work?

- (i) Walk
- (ii) Bicycle
- (iii) Motor-cycle
- (iv) Car
- (v) Bus
- (vi) Train
- (vii) Other  
(Can tick more than one)

26. Do you think the time it takes you to travel to work

- (i) Too long
- (ii) About right
- (iii) Too short

D Working Conditions

27. (a) How long is your official working week? (Official I mean the hours laid down by your employer.)

(b) Did you in fact put in more hours than the official hours at your place of work last week?

- (i) Yes
- (ii) No.

(c) Was this paid or unpaid overtime?

1. paid 

--

 2. No of hours .....



2. unpaid    4. No of hours .....

28. (a) During last week, did you do any work at home in connection with your job?

- (i) Yes
- (ii) No.

(b) If yes, how many hours? ..... hours.

29. (a) What is your official starting time?

.....

(b) Is it always the same each working day?

.....

30. (a) How does the number of hours worked affect your ability to carry out your family responsibilities?

.....  
 .....

30. (b) How do you solve the problems you experience in 30a?

31. (a) Would you prefer to start and finish work earlier or later in the day than you do at present?

- (i) Prefer to stick to present time
- (ii) Start and finish earlier
- (iii) Start and finish later.

(b) How would the changed hours affect your ability to carry out family responsibilities?

.....  
 .....

32. Do you normally have both Saturdays and Sundays off work?

- (i) Yes
- (ii) No

- 33. Instead of having them both off, would you prefer to work
  - (i) On Saturday and have Sunday and Monday off?
  - (ii) On Sunday and have Friday and Saturday off?
  - (iii) Other combinations (specify).
  
- 34. Tell why you would select other days off than presently assigned .....
  
- 35. (a) Suppose at sometime in the future you were able to choose either to have your wages raised for the same amount of work or to have more time off for the same pay, which would you choose?
  - (i) More pay
  - (ii) More time-off(b) If more time off, what would you do with the extra time? .....
  
- 36. (a) Is there a career ladder in your place of employment?
  - (i) Yes
  - (ii) No.(b) Who gets promoted (advances up ladder) more easily?
  - (i) Male employees
  - (ii) Female employees.(c) Give a reason for your answer to (b) .....
  
- 37. How much, say do you have over the way you use your time at work?
  - (i) A lot of say
  - (ii) Some say
  - (iii) No say.
  
- 38. When you are at work do you feel that you are pressed for time or do you have plenty of time to do the things you have to do?
  - (i) Pressed
  - (ii) Sometimes pressed
  - (iii) Not pressed.

- 39. Would you say that you usually find your work
  - (i) very interesting/stimulating
  - (ii) sometimes interesting
  - (iii) not interesting.
  
- 40. How satisfied are you with your job?
  - (i) very satisfied
  - (ii) fairly satisfied
  - (iii) not satisfied.
  
- 41. If you did not need the money, would you continue to work anyway?
  - (i) Yes
  - (ii) No.
  
- 42. Have you ever thought of starting up a business of your own?
  - (i) Yes
  - (ii) No.
  
- 43. If yes, have you ever done anything about it?
  - (i) No
  - (ii) Yes, definite plans
  - (iii) Had own business.
  
- 44. (a) What type of business did you think about or have?  
.....  
.....
  
- (b) Why did you choose this particular business?  
.....  
.....  
.....

D. EMPLOYMENT AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 45. (a) Do you feel that the demands of your work interfere at all with the demands of your home and family?
  - (i) Yes
  - (ii) No.
  
- (b) If yes, in what way?
  - (i) Problems with husband
  - (ii) Problems with meals
  - (iii) Problems with housework
  - (iv) Problems with shopping
  - (v) Other (specify)

46. What other things would you like to do that you can't do because of the demands of your work?

.....  
.....

47. (a) If married, did you give up paid work at some point after you got married?

- (i) Yes
- (ii) No

(b) If yes why did you give up work at that time?

.....  
.....  
.....

48. (a) Did you start work again?

- (i) Yes
- (ii) No

(b) If yes, why did you start work again?

.....  
.....

49. (a) Do you have any help with housework and/or children?

- (i) Yes
- (ii) No.

(b) If so, is the person

- (i) a relative
- (ii) Hired worker
- (iii) Older sibling
- (iv) Other (specify)

50. Now I want to ask you about various daily activities you yourself perform. For the day before (yesterday) at what time did you perform the following activities?

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Time Period</u>
1. Time you got up from bed	
2. Clean the house	
3. gardening	
4. processing food	
5. cooking breakfast	
6. cooking lunch	
7. cooking dinner	
8. washing clothes	
9. Ironing	
10. Bathing children	
11. Feeding children	
12. Fetching water	
13. Fetching firewood	
14. Washing plates	
15. Mending clothes	
16. Knitting	
17. sewing	
18. helping children with homework	
19. social visits	
20. clearing up for the night	
21. going to bed	
22. other (specify).	

51. (a) Are there any other activities that you did at home yesterday that you do not normally do everyday?

1. Yes
2. No

(b) If yes,

1. What where the activities?
2. How often do you carry out such activities?

52. What household task do you find most problematic to perform?

53. Why do you find the task problematic? .....

.....

.....

54. (a) Are you an active member of any organizations or clubs?

1. Yes
2. No.

60. Here is a list of things that the government has to spend money on. If you had to decide which three things would you put at the top for spending more money on?

1. Improving primary education
2. Improving secondary education
3. Building more day care centres
4. Improving the local transport system
5. Providing more health clinics
6. Building more boreholes
7. Vocational training for women
8. Other (specify).

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DIRECT OBSERVATION SHEETA. Relating to Wage Employment

Activity

Time (minutes)

- | Activity  | Time (minutes) |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Time employee gets to office premises                                    |                |
| 2. First activity employee does as she gets to the office                   |                |
| 3. Activities performed throughout one day (time allocated each activity)   |                |
| 4. Any interruption during working time (specify)                           |                |
| 5. Time spent at the work-place before starting or finishing work           |                |
| 6. Travel to and from work-place, including waiting for means of transport. |                |

B. Domestic Work Activities

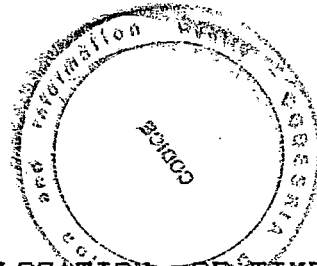
Production, processing, preparation of meals and home maintenance.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Preparation and cooking of food/drinks   |  |
| 2. Washing up and putting away the dishes   |  |
| 3. Indoor cleaning                          |  |
| 4. Outdoor cleaning                         |  |
| 5. Laundry, ironing                         |  |
| 6. Repair or upkeep of clothes, shoes, etc. |  |
| 7. Home decorations                         |  |
| 8. Repairs to the home                      |  |
| 9. Gardening                                |  |
| 10. Travelling to and from fields           |  |
| 11. Fetching water                          |  |
| 12. Fetching firewood                       |  |
| 13. Heating water                           |  |

Activity	Time (minutes)
14. Livestock care	
15. Sewing	
16. Knitting	
17. Pottery	
18. Other (specify)	
C. <u>Care of Children</u>	
1. Care of babies	
2. Care of older children	
3. Supervision of school work	
4. Playing with children	
5. Taking children to the hospital/ health centre	
6. Transporting children to and fro School	
7. Other (specify)	
D. <u>Purchasing of Goods and Services</u>	
1. Purchasing of everyday consumer goods and services	
2. Purchasing of clothes	
3. Waiting, queuing for the purchase of goods and services	
4. Travelling connected to activity	
5. Other (specify)	
E. <u>Private Needs</u>	
1. Personal hygiene (getting bathed, dressed, going to bed)	
2. Visiting the hospital for personal medical care	
3. Eating	



## ABSTRACT



### A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE USE AND ALLOCATION OF TIME BY WOMEN IN THE USE VALUE AND EXCHANGE VALUE SECTORS OF THE URBAN AND RURAL AREAS OF ZOMBA DISTRICT.

A review of time allocation studies for women in different societies in Africa and in Malawi in particular indicate that the totality of women's work is not taken into account. The problem often lies with the models utilised in drawing up the methodology and to be used in the time allocation exercise and also in the analysis of the data.

The argument advanced in this thesis is that unless an appropriate model is utilised in time allocation studies both in data gathering and data analysis, women's work often ends up being invisible. In Malawi in particular, the majority of women are not in paid employment, yet their labour is vital in the maintenance of their households and their societies. The thesis argues that models such as the public/private model and the economic model that have been used in time allocation studies of women's work inherently leave out most of the activities that the women perform because they perceive much of women's work as private and economically unproductive. An erroneous picture of the vitality of women's work therefore emerges.

The time allocation study in this thesis used the Use Value/Exchange Value model of evaluating work, whereby the value of work does not depend on where it is performed nor on whether it is paid or not but rather on its contribution to the well being of societies and households.

In order to capture the totality of women's work, qualitative and quantitative methods were used in data collection so that the two augment each other. Thus questionnaires, participant observation and focused group interviews were used.

The research findings show that women, irrespective of whether they are in an urban setting or a rural setting utilise their time using similar logic. Women's contribution and their logic in time allocation become invisible if women's work is perceived as either belonging to the private domain or is perceived through an economic view. This logic only comes out if an appropriate model is used both in data collection and in data analysis.