

The costs of home-based care work

In 2003 UNIFEM funded and coordinated research in Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe on the time and money costs to government, organisations and carers in organisations and households of the home-based care model of dealing with HIV/AIDS. The research was planned and implemented by a combination of government representatives, people from NGOs involved in HBC, people from NGOs which have done budget work, representatives of women's organisations, and academics.

The research used a case study approach, with three HBC projects in each of three countries serving as the cases. Each country used similar tools so that the findings could be more easily compared and so that it would be easier for advocates and their audiences to learn from the different cases.

At the end of the project, researchers and representatives of organisations from the three countries came together to share findings, and to come up with country-based and regional advocacy messages. The group agreed on the following as region-wide concerns:

- The very limited participation of men in HBC work;
- The complete lack of incentives for some HBC workers, the low level of incentives where they existed, and disparities between workers in terms of incentives received;
- A lack of recognition of the work done by HBC workers, particularly by government;
- Abuse of the HBC worker by some beneficiaries;
- Unequal access to home-based care for those who needed it;
- The need for more integrated approaches to HBC, encompassing a range of actors and covering health, nutrition, social and financial factors.

The researchers calculated the value of the work done by a typical HBC worker in their country by multiplying the number of hours worked by the average wage paid to nurse aids, domestic or similar workers. The monthly value was 270 Pula in Botswana, US\$ 130 in Mozambique and Z\$ 403 550 in Zimbabwe. However, researchers felt that using the wages of nurse aids and domestic workers trivialises the work of the HBC workers, given the range and variability of HBC tasks as well as the psychological and other stresses. In addition, they noted that the wages for all these jobs are based on assumptions about women's work, which generally tends to undervalue the work done whether in the market or at home.