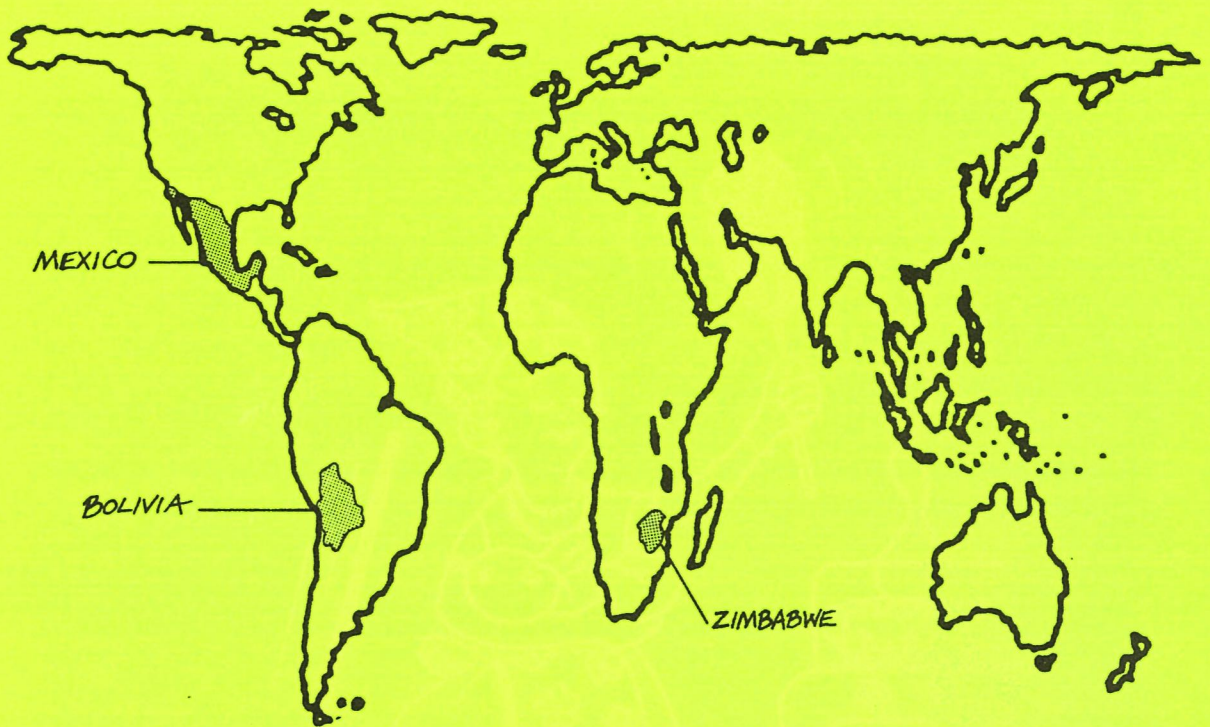




Housework



This booklet is one in a series of eight. Together they make up a women's kit. Each booklet is made up of material about women's lives from the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa and England. The themes of the booklets are:

Women's Days

Childcare

Health

Housework

Finding Paid Work

Working Conditions

Violence in the Home

Women Working Together

The kit is intended for use by women in English as a Second Language classes, literacy groups and other women's groups. We hope the kit will help women to get together to think and talk about their lives.

The following women put together the kit: Gwen Davies, Amy Gottlieb, Jenny Horsman, Linzi Manicom. With help from: Rachel Epstein, Maureen Simpkins and Lynda Yanz.

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Cover graphic from: Women, Work and Health, Autonomous Metropolitan University/SEDEPAC, Mexico.

Housework means hard work with no pay. Most societies depend on women to do this work.

This book shows what some women from Bolivia, Zimbabwe and Mexico think about housework.

In Canada many women do all the housework. Some men are beginning to share the work. But when they do, they often only help. Men still see housework as a woman's job and women have to make sure it gets done.

Here are some of the questions that women from Bolivia ask about housework.

From: Women Have a Way, Gregoria Apaza Women's Centre,
Bolivia

Housework is all the work we do at home. The life and health of the family depends on us. If we stop doing this work it will be a big problem for everyone.



Many people see housework as women's work. If we get help, it is a big favour. We get tired of doing the same work every day.

If we do our work well, we get kind words. If we do it badly, we are "bad women". In any case we must work harder.



Housework is as hard as any job. We must do it every day, but we do it for free. What would happen if housewives went on strike? Would men do our jobs? Would the bosses pay them to do housework? We work for our families and society. Why do many people see housework as work of less value?

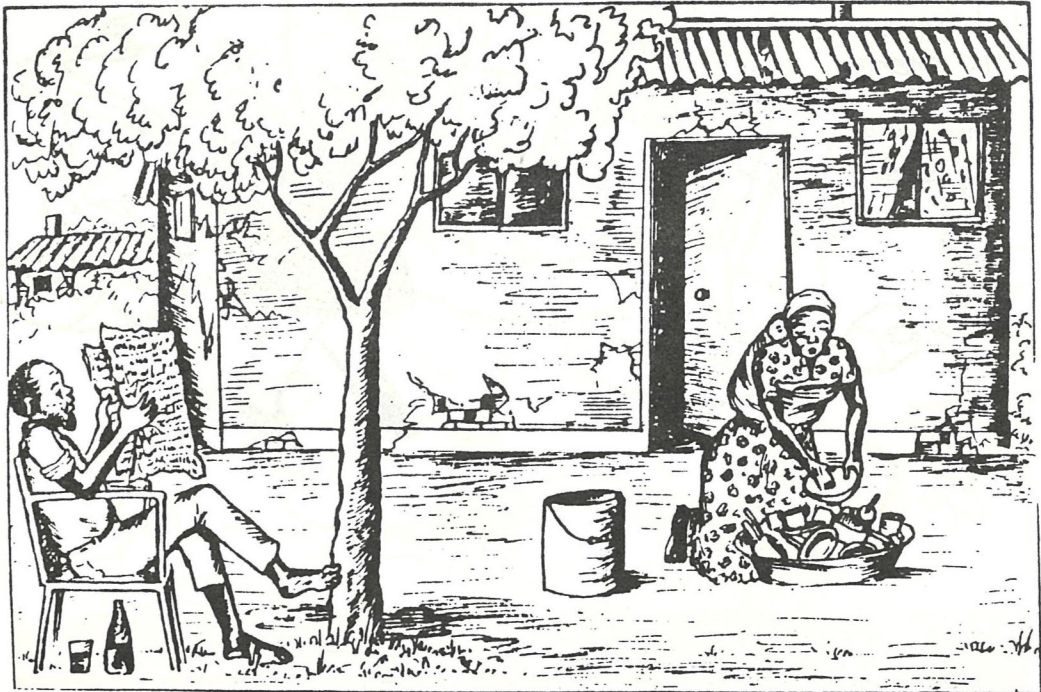


Housework is not one job but several jobs that take a long time to do. In many places women have to do all of these jobs.

Women from Zimbabwe look at the work of a housewife in the next two stories.

The women act out the story and use the questions to help them talk about the problem and how to make changes.

From: Women's Problems, Zimbabwe Publishing House



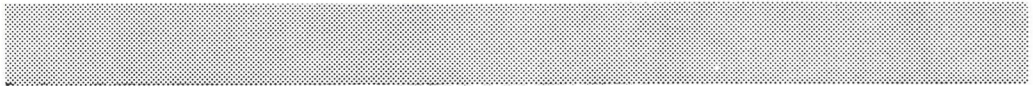
Story to Act

Mai Mubaiwa lives in a village. Every day she works very hard. She wakes up early to make a fire and prepare breakfast for her family. After breakfast VaMubaiwa, who is a road-builder, goes to work, and Chipo (15), Tendai (13) and Rudo (9) go to school. The youngest child, Chisi (18 months) stays at home. Mai Mubaiwa cleans the house, puts Chisi on her back, and goes to the fields. She works in the fields until 3 o'clock, then she goes to the road to sell vegetables. In the late afternoon she collects water and goes home.

VaMubaiwa comes home from work. He sits down, asks for a beer, and tells the children to be quiet. He reads the newspaper and Tendai does his homework while Rudo, Chipo and Mai Mubaiwa prepare the supper. After supper VaMubaiwa goes to bed. But Mai Mubaiwa goes to bed late because she still has to wash the younger children and wash the dishes.

“Mai” and “Va” in the story mean mother and father and are a polite way of talking to a woman or a man.

Chipo and Rudo are the names of Mai Mubaiwa's daughters. Tendai is the name of her son.



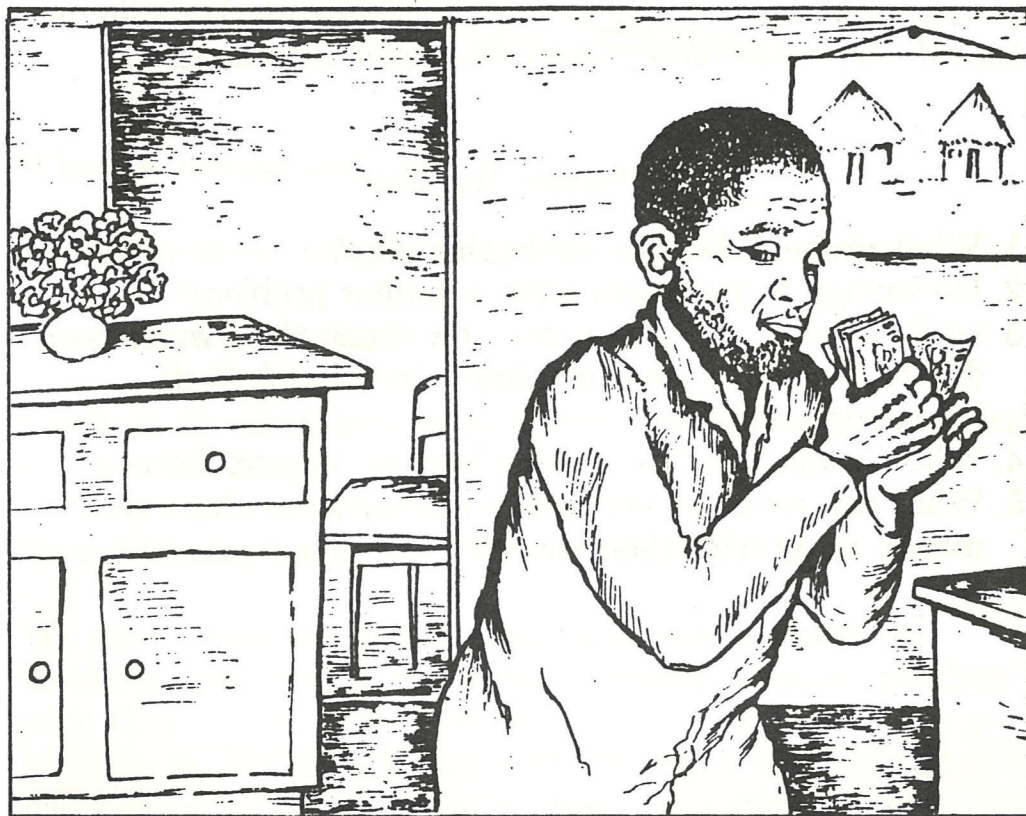
Discuss Together

1. What do you notice about Mai Mubaiwa?
2. What did you notice about her husband?
3. Which children helped the mother?
4. Why do most women in Zimbabwe do all the housework without the help of men?
5. In your house, who does all the housework?
6. (a) How much time do you spend on housework each day?
(b) How much time do you spend on housework each week?
7. How can we spend less time on housework so that we can have more time for other things?

Here is a problem which many housewives face. Because women are not paid for the work they do in the home they must depend on a man's wage.

Perhaps like women in Zimbabwe you could act out this story and use the questions to start your own discussion.

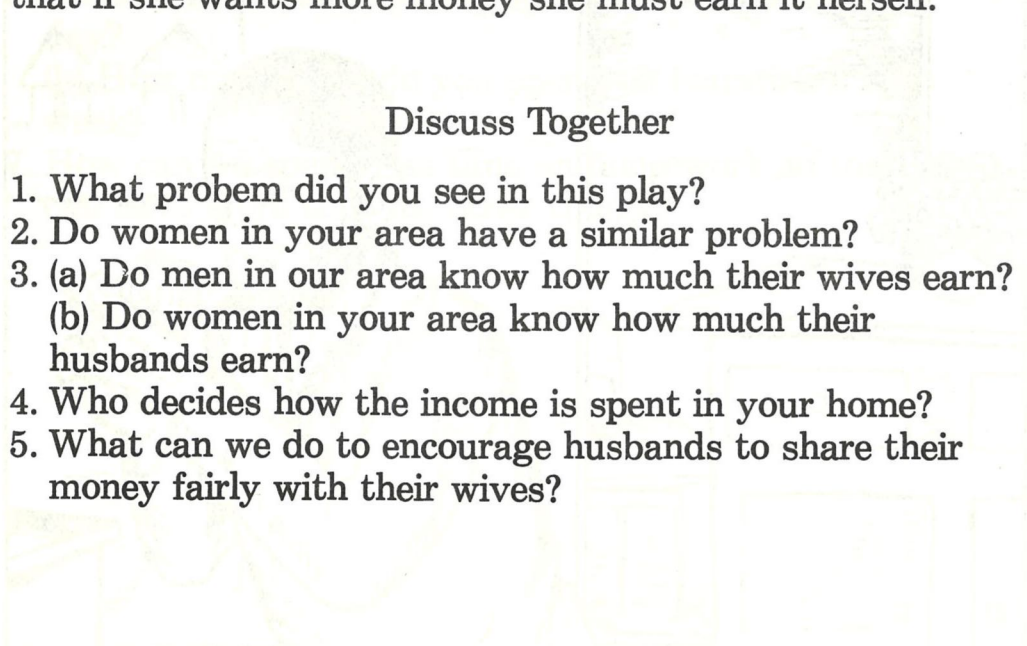
From: Women's Problems, Zimbabwe Publishing House.



Story to Act

Mai Mubaiwa is pleased because she knows her husband is getting paid. When he comes home from work, she gives him a beer. Then she asks him if she can have money for housekeeping and for things the children need at school. He goes into a separate room, and counts out his money. He has \$105. He takes \$45 for his wife, and hides the rest away. Then he goes and gives the wife \$45. She is disappointed and tells him that it won't be enough. He tells her that if she wants more money she must earn it herself.

Discuss Together

1. What problem did you see in this play?
 2. Do women in your area have a similar problem?
 3. (a) Do men in our area know how much their wives earn?
(b) Do women in your area know how much their husbands earn?
 4. Who decides how the income is spent in your home?
 5. What can we do to encourage husbands to share their money fairly with their wives?
- 



What do women do?

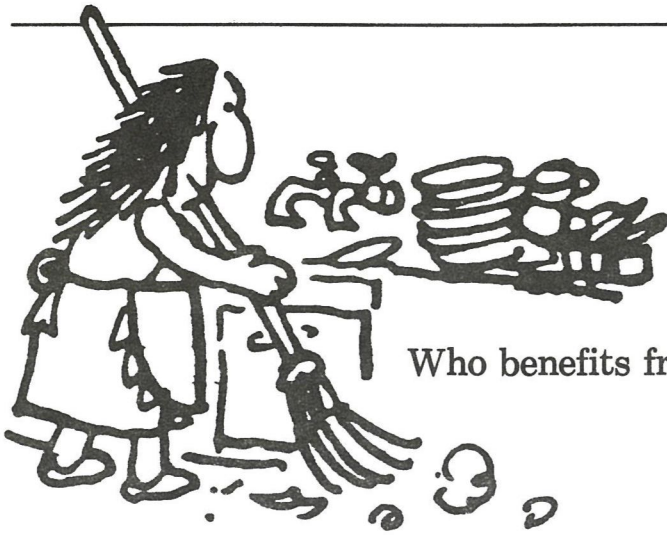
As housewives we work to care for the needs of the family.

What are these needs?

Feeding, clothing, love, rest, health, time off, education, and many other things.

To meet these needs, we must do many jobs every day.

We must clean the house, shop for groceries, cook, do washing, take care of the family's health, help our children with their school homework and shop for cloth and household items. We must be a friend and support for our husband and children ...and an endless list of other duties.



Who benefits from our work?

Our husbands do, so that they can have enough energy to go to work. The business owners do, because they profit from our husbands' work. Our children, the future workers, do, because we help their development. Mexicans do, because they are consumers of the goods produced by our husbands. Society benefits, because without our work, the country itself could not exist any more.





THANK YOU

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ABOUT US

The Participatory Research Group (PRG) is a collective of activists, educators and researchers working for social change. Since 1976 we have produced a range of materials, including booklets, bibliographies and slide shows. We also produce a bi-annual newsletter, organize workshops and conferences and have a resource centre for public use. We work with literacy, women's and community groups, labour and native people.

The International Council for Adult Education, Women's Program is presently coordinated from the office of the Participatory Research Group, in consultation with representatives from various regions.

The Women's Program works with individuals and groups in different regions of the world who are exploring and developing popular forms of education which reflect and address women's issues. Our aim is to contribute to the development of a feminist popular education that makes connections between broad social struggles, and the personal issues and oppression women face daily.

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