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Women's Labour in the Jeepney Informal Transport Sector

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■ Executive Summary

This primer focuses on the gendered organization of labour in the Philippine jeepney informal transport sector, particularly on the often invisible yet essential work of women in the widely perceived male-dominated sector. Public and media attention typically centers on male jeepney operators and drivers, particularly in the context of ongoing struggles against the government's jeepney modernization program and other transport policies. However, a closer attention reveals that women are present within the jeepney sector, and they perform essential labour that are essential to its functioning.

Utilizing the women's "triple role" concept as a lens, the primer seeks to name and bring attention to the women, particularly, the multiple, interlocking forms of labour that women undertake across three spheres: First, they contribute to productive labour within jeepney operations and, often, engage in additional income-generating activities to help stabilize the highly precarious earnings from the jeepney enterprise. Second, they perform organizing work within transport associations and the national informal transport federation PISTON, sustaining the organizing and resistance of workers in the jeepney sector. Third, they carry the primary responsibility for reproductive labour in the household, ensuring the needs and care of family members, and managing and budgeting (even stretching or augmenting) the household income.

This primer outlines the work of women in the jeepney sector but it does not claim to capture the full breadth of women's lived experiences as they perform these different forms of labour. Rather, it seeks to provide an entry point for understanding why women's labour is often unrecognized and undervalued, and how this invisibility reflects broader structural inequalities under capitalism-patriarchy. By naming these contributions, the primer aims to show the essential roles women play in sustaining the jeepney sector.

1 This primer is derived from the first author's research proposal entitled "Making Women's Work in the Jeepney Sector Visible: Stories of Living through Care, Informal Transport Labour, and Organizing from the PISTON Women NCR." The proposal was completed under the guidance of Associate Professor Redento Recio as part of the Community Development Research graduate course of the Master of Community Development Program at the UP College of Social Work and Community Development. For this primer, the original proposal has been thoroughly edited by the first and second author and adapted to better fit the purpose and format of the primer.

The authors extend sincere thanks to Nikki and Lans of the Center for Women's Resources for their thoughtful comments on the said research proposal, as well as to Thea Flores and Hans Bautista for taking the time to read the initial version of this primer. Deepest gratitude is offered to the women members of PISTON, whose work and contributions to the jeepney sector this primer seeks to explicitly name and bring attention to.

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Photo credit: Mayday Multimedia/Brian Sulicipan

■ Introduction

In public consciousness, the image most often associated with the jeepney is that of male jeepney operators or drivers (JODs)—wearing blue t-shirts, often with a white towel draped over one shoulder or placed on top of their head, typically middle-aged or older, and commonly described as ‘family men’. They are the most visible figures in the jeepney sector, frequently portrayed in the media navigating congested roads to deliver public transport services. They are also the ones most ordinary Filipinos encounter daily on the streets, as well as at terminals and at PUV (public utility vehicle) stops. They are also the ones often seen leading protests and strikes around major transport issues, such as oil price hikes, arbitrary apprehensions by traffic enforcers, and transport policies, including the ‘formalization’ and ‘modernization’ of PUVs and jeepneys (e.g. the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program or PUVMP), as well as concerns regarding routes and franchise arrangements affecting transport service providers such as JODs.

The men being highly visible—make them essentially the public face of the jeepney sector. This high visibility of men is not surprising, as the transport sector has historically been a male-dominated industry—not only in the Philippines, but also across the Global South and globally

(Wright 2016, 2019; Ng and Acker 2020; Wright, Budd, and Ison 2022; Hamid 2025).

Far less visible in this public consciousness are women who also work in the jeepney sector. However, upon closer attention, women are indeed present in the jeepney sector, and they perform essential forms of labour within it—not only in relation to jeepney operations themselves, but also in participating in struggles for rights and livelihood alongside their male counterparts as transport workers. Their presence is often rendered seemingly ‘invisible’, as is the work they undertake within this sector. Such invisibility is not merely incidental; it reflects broader gendered patterns of recognition in which certain forms of labour—particularly those performed within the confines of families—are undervalued or unrecognized.

It is this absence of visibility and lack of public consciousness of women workers that this primer seeks to address: women are part of the jeepney informal transport sector, and we aim, even in an initial way, to sketch their location in the jeepney sector. Particularly, we aim to describe and situate the work women perform in jeepney operations, in organizing work alongside fellow JODs, and in their household—within the broader terrain in which they perform such labour.



Photo credit: PISTON

While this primer outlines the work of women in the jeepney sector, it does not claim to capture the full breadth of their lived experiences as they perform these different forms of labour within their family enterprises, their transport associations (the Jeepney Operators and Drivers Associations or JODA and PISTON), and families. Rather, it seeks to provide an entry point for understanding why women's labour is often unrecognized and undervalued, and how this invisibility reflects broader structural inequalities under capitalism-patriarchy. By naming these contributions, the primer aims to show the essential roles women play in sustaining the jeepney sector.

■ **Women's Role under Capitalism-Patriarchy³**

Women are often stereotyped as 'housewives' or 'ilaw ng tahanan', positioning them primarily within the domain of unpaid work performed inside the family. This stereotyping is rooted in the gender division of labour—a socially constructed system that assigns different roles to women and men while attaching unequal value to those roles. Importantly, this patriarchal division of labour is neither natural nor fixed; rather, it is historically and socially shaped and reinforced by capitalism (Eviota 1992; Moser

1993). In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), Friedrich Engels argued that women's subordination is closely linked to the emergence of private property and the patriarchal family system. As private property became more established, the family functioned as a mechanism for securing inheritance of private property along male lines. Men were increasingly positioned as property holders and heads of household, while women were confined primarily to the home. Within such an arrangement, men's work was constructed as publicly recognized productive work, whereas women's work inside the home was treated as a 'natural' obligation to their family. With the rise of capitalism as the dominant mode of production, labour power itself became commodified.

Filipino Marxist feminist Elizabeth Eviota (1992) in her seminal work, *The Political Economy of Gender: Women and the Sexual Division of Labour in the Philippines*, examined how pre-existing unequal gender relations and gendered divisions of labour reinforced by capitalism operate in the Philippine context. She noted that households that previously had more direct access to the means of production and subsistence became increasingly dependent on selling their labour power for wages.

3 The term capitalism-patriarchy is used in this primer to highlight the inseparability of capitalism and patriarchy. While patriarchal norms and values existed prior to the emergence of capitalism, the rise of private property and class society reinforced and reshaped these, embedding them within everyday life and work.

For further discussion on the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy, see Commane (2010), De Lima (2023), and Almada (2023).

This economic reorganization reinforced gender roles within the Filipino family. Men were positioned as primary wage earners ('breadwinners') and household heads, even though a single male wage was often insufficient to sustain the needs of the household. Women, on the other hand, were positioned either as full-time housewives or as secondary wage earners whose paid work was considered merely supplementary to male income. However, even when women participated in wage labour, they remained primarily responsible for the reproduction of labour power—that is, sustaining the current workforce and nurturing future workers. Under capitalism, women's social and economic position is shaped through the family.

Women, being the *ilaw ng tahanan*, relate to capital indirectly through men's wages. But as paid workers, they relate to capital more directly, although their participation in the labour force is often shaped by their household responsibilities and life-cycle expectations; and their work is frequently concentrated in occupations shaped by gendered stereotypes, such as service work, clerical (finance, admin, or logistical) work, and small-scale informal trading. These occupations are often performed under male supervision and are typically associated with lower wages (compared to those of the men); moreover, the persistence of wage differentials is justified by the ideology that women's earnings are merely intended to 'supplement' the wages of men (Eviota 1992).

Writing from a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist tradition of the Philippine revolutionary women's movement, Juliet De Lima argues that the transition from Spanish colonial-feudal exploitation to the imposition of United States (US) monopoly capitalism upon an already feudal social and economic structure intensified women's subordination. She situates women's subordination historically in her work⁴ *A Historical Approach to Women's Emancipation in the Philippines* (2023), tracing it from its earlier roots to its intensification under the rise of semi-feudalism⁵ during US colonial rule and its continuation under semi-colonial or neo-colonial rule⁶ (See also Almeda 2023):

The rise of semi-feudalism under the impetus of the expanded colonial pattern of trade between the US and its Philippine semi-colony subjected women to further oppression and exploitation.

A decadent bourgeois culture was super-imposed on the feudal-patriarchal cultural legacy from more than three hundred years of Spanish colonial rule.

The Filipino woman who was subordinate to the man under the feudal-patriarchal system suffered further degradation in the process of commodification under the sway of US monopoly capitalism. Women liberated from the parochial confines of the hacienda (the landlord's estate) became commodities in the capitalist labour market as well as in the sex trade and suffered economic discrimination. They were generally paid lower wages and had fewer opportunities for employment.

The feudal-patriarchal view of women as subordinate of men-domestic bound to care for home and family—and the bourgeois decadent view of women as commodities for display and with value dependent on their desirability as male objects have combined to subject women to further discrimination in the economic sphere. The same views tell women to keep their peace and bear their woes in silence. (2023, 15)

The household becomes a contradictory site under capitalism-patriarchy: it is essential for survival, but at the same time it reproduces unequal gender relations and absorbs economic precarity. Claims that women hold the 'real power' in households often mask this contradiction. However, women's authority in household decision-making usually means merely managing scarce resources and ensuring the family's survival, rather than having genuine control (Eviota 1992).

4 While this particular work of hers was published in 2023, her analysis draws on decades of experience within the Philippine revolutionary movement, which has been ongoing for over five decades (since 1968).

5 Semi-feudalism describes a system where land relations are not entirely feudal, such that it is no longer only the landlords who primarily rule over the land, but foreign capitalists as well. In the Philippines, the landlord class remains, while local capitalists—acting as intermediaries for foreign corporations—control large tracts of land and extractive enterprises to facilitate the extraction of raw materials and their export abroad (PWRC 2020).

6 Semi-colonialism (or neo-colonialism) describes a condition in which a country is formally independent but remains politically and economically subservient to an imperialist power. In the Philippine case, although the US formally granted independence in 1946, political authority shifted from direct colonial administration to the administration of local political elites who manage the government in favor of foreign interests (PRWC 2020).

Persistence of patriarchal constructions of women's roles

Such patriarchal norms and values⁷ towards women's roles continue to be widely reproduced in contemporary Philippine society (See CWR 2026, n.d.; GWP 2026). A recent survey⁸ conducted by the social research institution Social Weather Stations (SWS) on public opinion toward women's roles in family life—tracking trends from 1994 to 2025 and released in 2026—found that

An overwhelming majority of respondents (at 83%) agreed with the statement that “a man’s job is to earn money while a woman’s job is to look after the home and family.”

Similarly, the majority of the respondents (at 75%) agreed that while having a job is acceptable, “what most women really want is a home and children” (SWS 2026).

These findings from SWS highlight the enduring prevalence of patriarchal norms and values regarding women's roles in Philippine society, as well as the persistence of the patriarchal division of labour—views that are subscribed to by both men and women as a result of enculturation under capitalism-patriarchy. Such norms and values are continuously reproduced through institutions such as religion, the education system, media, and the state, which shape prevailing views about gender roles and women's labour in society (CWR 2026; GWP 2026).

Women's triple role

Within this context, the 'triple role' of women has been conceptualized to capture the multiple labour burdens women carry (Moser 1993). These refer to reproductive work, productive work, and community management work.

- Reproductive work consists of activities necessary for the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force. This includes both direct care work—such as feeding, bathing, and childcare—and indirect care work, including food preparation and cooking, cleaning, laundry, and purchasing household necessities (Moser 1993; ILO 2018).

7 Patriarchal constructions of women being subordinate to men also underpin the gender-based violence experienced by women; for a deeper discussion on this, see the Orientation on Violence Against Women developed and presented by the Center for Women's Resources in an online forum organized by the Gabriela Women's Party (GWP 2026).

8 The survey sample included men and women in equal proportion (a 1:1 ratio) and drew respondents from different age groups (18–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, and 55 and above), with the largest share of respondents coming from the oldest age group, followed by those in between 25 and 44 years old (See SWS 2026).

The wording in one of the survey questions also reflects the persistent devaluation of women's reproductive labour by implicitly distinguishing it outside of the category of “work”. For instance, the statement that “a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work” can be interpreted in two ways. On one hand, it may reflect the researchers' own categorization of unpaid household labour as conceptually distinct from paid productive work. On the other hand, it may have been designed to engage prevailing views among respondents regarding women's roles within the family.

Although essential, this work is widely perceived as a 'natural' obligation of women as *ilaw ng tahanan*. The patriarchal notion of 'maternal instinct' reinforces the normalization and invisibility of this reproductive labour. Consequently, women often perform longer total working hours than men when unpaid reproductive work is combined with other work they perform.

- Productive work refers to income-generating activities. While under patriarchy and capitalism, men as the primary breadwinners, Moser (1993) emphasizes that poor and marginalized women—particularly those from the Global South—also play significant productive roles, often as secondary wage earners.

In urban settings, women's productive work is frequently located in the informal economy. In informal family enterprises, women's labour may be unpaid but is often treated as an extension of familial obligation rather than as recognized productive work.

- Community management work involves activities undertaken for collective benefit, often performed during what is called women's 'free time'. These may include organizing for collective consumption, such as securing community social services, or organizing for political participation. In this work, however, gendered divisions of labour still persist.

Explicitly political organizations tend to be male-dominated, while those more oriented towards collective consumption are women-led. When organizations mix both collective consumption and political participation, leadership positions are frequently occupied by men; while women are relegated to rank-and-file positions.

■ **Women in riskier and lower-paid informal work**

The informal economy refers to economic activities, enterprises, jobs, and workers that operate outside or are only partially covered by formal legal and regulatory frameworks (ILO 2023). It encompasses both the informal sector—unregistered or unincorporated enterprises—and informal employment, which may exist within both the informal and formal sectors (Chen 2016; Chen and Carre 2020). Work in the informal economy is typically characterized by job insecurity, inadequate income, limited or no legal and social protection, minimal access to credit or training, poor working conditions, and the absence of collective bargaining rights (Cabegin 2018, 2022a; DTDA 2025; IBON Foundation 2025a).

Globally, the informal economy remains a major source of livelihood. Approximately 2 billion people—around 60% of the world's workforce—are engaged in informal work (WIEGO n.d.-a; Chen 2016). In the Philippines, the informal economy provides work to more than 70% of the labour force (Cabegin 2022b; IBON Foundation 2025a). Estimates further indicate that approximately seven to eight out of ten Filipino workers are engaged in informal work (Cabegin 2022b; IBON Foundation 2022, as cited in 2025).

A significant proportion of Filipino workers are employed in informal and/or family-based enterprises, with many also engaged in self-employment or household-based work arrangements. According to the IBON Foundation (2025b), approximately 14.3 million workers are employed in informal enterprises, 164,000 in family enterprises, and 2.0 million in private households. Among these, around 13.4 million are self-employed without paid employees, 3.2 million are unpaid contributing family workers, and 998,000 are employers in family enterprises.

Work in the informal economy also takes a variety of employment statuses which have varying degrees of autonomy (but also risks and earnings for workers) (Chen 2016). They include:

- Employees. Workers who sell their labour power for a wage under an employment contract.
- Employers. Self-employed workers who hire others and derive income primarily from enterprise profits, either through producing goods or providing services.
- Own-account workers. Self-employed workers who produce goods or deliver services on their own and earn income directly from these activities.

- Contributing family workers. Workers who work in a family enterprise, typically without direct wages.
- Casual day labourers. Workers hired and paid on a daily basis.
- Industrial outworkers. Workers who produce goods from or near their homes for contractors within broader supply chains, with earnings determined by these contractors.

While these employment statuses exist for both men and women, women are disproportionately concentrated in riskier and lower-paying positions (Chen 2012; 2016). The gendered hierarchy of informal work is captured in the Pyramid of Risk of WIEGO⁹ (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing), which maps the relationship between employment status, earnings, poverty risk, and sex (See Figure 1 below).

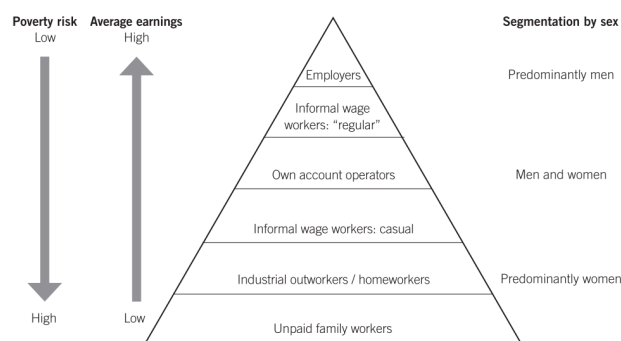


Figure 1: Pyramid of Risk; Source: Chen 2012, 2016

Those facing the highest risk of poverty and lowest earnings are unpaid family workers and industrial outworkers; these positions are overwhelmingly occupied by women. In the middle—characterized by moderate poverty risk and earnings—are own-account workers and casual informal wage workers; their composition is more balanced, with both women and men represented.

While those with the lowest poverty risk and highest earnings are employers and regularly employed informal wage workers, positions predominantly held by men.

This pyramid of risk by WIEGO demonstrates that women informal workers are disproportionately concentrated in employment statuses associated with higher risk and lower earnings, highlighting the persistent gendered inequalities within the informal economy.

⁹ WIEGO is a global network of researchers, development practitioners, and organizations of informal workers in 90 countries, supporting the movement of workers in informal employment, particularly women and people living in poverty.

■ **Precarity experienced by men and women in the jeepney sector**

Informal transport constitutes a significant source of employment and mobility across the Global South (WIEGO n.d.-b), including in the Philippines (Pascual 2006). In Metro Manila, for instance, approximately 76% of transport operations are carried out through informal modes (Cervero and Golub 2007), a pattern observable in many cities in the region. Beyond providing livelihoods—particularly for marginalized groups—informal transport ensures affordable, flexible, and widely available mobility for the urban poor (WIEGO n.d.-b). Within this landscape, the jeepney remains the most prominent mode of public road transport in the country. Jeepneys have emerged from small-scale entrepreneurial initiatives that repurposed surplus military jeeps after the Second World War (Kurokawa and Iwata 1984; Otsuka, Kikuchi, and Hayami 1986; Gatarin 2024), jeepneys evolved into the backbone of everyday mobility in both urban and rural areas (Romero et al. 2014; Boquet 2017; Mateo-Babiano 2015; Mateo-Babiano et al. 2020). Today, they continue to operate across thousands of routes nationwide (IBON Foundation 2024), underscoring their central role in the Philippine transport system.

JODs, however, face structural vulnerabilities characteristic of work in the informal economy. Many belong to the poorest segments of the working population and operate under largely survivalist conditions, with limited access or absence of access to labour rights or social protection. Income is often low and unstable, while job security remains tenuous. Workers endure long hours on the road under physically demanding conditions and are routinely exposed to health risks, harassment and extortion by traffic enforcers (WIEGO n.d.-b; Pascual 2006; Dimalanta and Atienza 2026, forthcoming).

The precarity of work in the jeepney sector extends beyond the operator-driver and driver. Income instability, debt, policies threatening their livelihood, and everyday operational pressures spill into the household, where these are managed and absorbed. It is here that women's labour becomes essential—though often unrecognized—in sustaining both jeepney operations and collective organizing of JODs.

■ **Naming women's invisibilized work in the jeepney sector**

Women's work in jeepney operations as a mostly an extension of familial obligation

Women's contributions to jeepney operations are essential to the functioning of family enterprises. However, their labour is often unrecognized and undervalued. Jeepney operations can be understood as informal family enterprises that involve multiple overlapping employment statuses. Jeepneys are typically owned by operators, the majority of whom own and drive only a single vehicle (Pascual 2006; Velasco 2023; Gatarin 2024). These operator-drivers are own-account workers who directly control jeepney operations and assume the risks associated with operating the vehicle. When not personally driving, operator-drivers may rent their vehicles to other jeepney drivers under the boundary system, wherein the driver pays a fixed daily amount to the operator-driver. Drivers under the boundary system may also be considered own-account workers, although they lack ownership and full control of the enterprise while still bearing substantial operational risks (Kurokawa and Iwata 1984; Otsuka, Kikuchi, and Hayami 1986; PISTON 2004; Boquet 2017).

(Unpaid) work within the jeepney enterprise

Beyond operator-drivers and drivers, jeepney operations also rely heavily on contributing family workers, most of whom are unpaid and are typically wives, daughters, or other female relatives of male jeepney operator-drivers.

Women's labour in jeepney operations is often framed as an extension of familial obligation. In practice, however, it encompasses a range of tasks that are essential to sustaining both the jeepney enterprise and the household. Wives—especially those of operator-drivers—often act as (a) “co-operators” within the family enterprise, managing finances by budgeting daily earnings, allocating funds for fuel and maintenance, and overseeing household expenses. Other female kin may serve as (b) assistants (of wives) in carrying out these responsibilities. Although these tasks are crucial to the day-to-day functioning of the enterprise, they are typically performed as unpaid contributing family labour and are rarely recognized as productive work. In some cases, women may occupy other roles within jeepney operations that correspond to different employment statuses.

When their husbands or other male kin serve as drivers or operator-drivers, women may also perform operational roles within the jeepney itself. For instance, some women serve as (e) fare



Photo credit: Mayday Multimedia/Brian Sulicipan

collectors or cashiers as male kin drive the jeepneys, receiving payments from passengers and providing change.

Paid work in the jeepney sector

Others may work as (f) dispatchers or 'barkers', coordinating passenger queues and jeepney departures at terminals. When this dispatching work is performed outside their own family enterprise, women may receive payment or earn income, making it a form of paid informal work. When performed within their own jeepney operations, however, it may instead take the form of unpaid contributing family labour.

In some instances, women may also serve as (g) paid staff of a JODA, performing administrative and financial tasks related to the management of the jeepneys plying their specific route; or doing the collection of JODA dues (*butaw*).

These varying roles illustrate how women's participation in jeepney operations spans multiple employment statuses within the informal economy.

Additional productive work of women

Income from jeepney operations is often low, unstable, and highly vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices, passenger demand, traffic conditions, and changes in transport policies. Because of this precarity, many families cannot rely solely on jeepney earnings to meet their daily household needs. To augment the unstable earnings, some women engage in additional forms of productive work beyond their work in jeepney operations, effectively taking on the role of secondary wage earners. This income-generating work may include small-scale informal trading—such as selling goods from their homes, online, or along the streets—taking on short-term service-sector work, or engaging in various forms of *diskarte* (hustling) that generate additional income for their families.

This additional productive work is often carried out alongside their work in jeepney operations, whether as co-operators managing finances, assisting with daily operational tasks, and budgeting household expenses. In this way, women's labour not only sustains the functioning of the jeepney family enterprise but also absorbs and compensates for the precarity inherent in work within the informal transport sector.

Women's organizing work as support to male kins

Jeepney operations are not sustained solely through individual family enterprises; they are also supported by collective forms of self-organization by the informal transport workers. JODs form their association, the JODA, which manage day-to-day operational concerns, including regulating terminal queues and ensuring orderly provision of public transport along routes. Membership typically involves initial endowments, annual fees per vehicle, and daily dues contributed by operators (Boquet 2017; Mateo-Babiano et al. 2020; Dimalanta and Atienza 2025; Dimalanta and Atienza 2026, forthcoming).

At a larger scale, the informal transport federation PISTON organizes these dispersed transport associations into a structure that allows for collective negotiation with state institutions. PISTON's organizational structure includes the National Congress, National Council, National Executive Committee, and General Secretariat, which coordinate activities across regional or city/multi-city chapters, and local JODAs under these chapters. The federation implements various programs, which include chapter building, education (through their Paaralang Medardo Roda), campaigns and advocacy, and alliance-building with local and international organizations (PISTON 2011; Dimalanta and Roa 2025; Dimalanta and Atienza 2025; Dimalanta and Atienza 2026, forthcoming).

Within both the JODA and PISTON, women perform a range of important tasks that help sustain organizational activities. These include:

- (a) administrative and financial work, such as managing JODA records, monitoring finances, collection of JODA dues, taking minutes and attendance during meetings, mobilizations, assemblies, and dialogues. They also typically do the preparation of paperwork needed for the campaigns of PISTON, such as the filing of mass withdrawals of jeepney drivers from the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP); and
- (b) logistical work, including preparing venues, procuring and arranging food and materials, and helping ensure member participation in various activities.

These responsibilities are carried out alongside women's direct participation in organizational activities within both the JODA and the federation. Despite the women's critical role in sustaining the operations of the JODA and the organizational activities of the federation, women's work often remains seen as merely supplemental to the organizing work of their male kin.



Photo credit: Mayday Multimedia/Brian Sulicipan

Household work on top of other forms of labour

After completing their productive work in jeepney operations—and, in many cases, additional income-generating activities (diskarte or hustling) as well as organizing work within the JODA or PISTON—women typically return home to assume primary responsibility for reproductive labour, or household work (gawaing bahay).

As the *ilaw ng tahanan*, they are often expected to

(a) First, ensure the needs and care of family members. This includes purchasing groceries and other necessities; planning, preparing, and cooking meals for children, spouses, and other household members, including extended family such as grandparents, siblings, or cousins; cleaning the house; washing clothes; and providing care for young children and elderly relatives; and

(b) Secondly, manage and budget the household income. The continuous rise in the prices of basic commodities and social services, however, makes this increasingly difficult. The acute economic crisis and economic shocks forces women either to stretch meagre household income to secure food, and access to basic social services, or, in many cases, to seek additional income-generating work (additional productive work) to cope with the economic pressures (CWR 2026)¹⁰ (as discussed in the earlier part of the primer), that raises the price of basic commodities, reducing the purchasing power of households.

These responsibilities are essential not only for maintaining the household but also for reproducing labour power—sustaining current workers (husband and other working family members), and nurturing future workers (children) within the family.

As a result, when combined with women's productive work in jeepney operations (and, in some cases, additional productive work), and their organizing work within JODA and/or PISTON, these responsibilities (at home) contribute to longer total working hours. Their labour spans multiple spheres—the jeepney enterprise (as well as additional income-generating work), collective organizing, and the household—revealing how women in the jeepney sector carry multiple, overlapping, and structurally necessary roles that remain unrecognized and undervalued.

■ Essential labour invisibilized through the 'family'?

In jeepney operations and in the work of JODAs and PISTON, women's roles are often carried out within the context of the family. This reflects broader views illustrated in the SWS (2026) survey discussed above, where the majority of respondents associate women's primary role with maintaining the home and family. Women themselves may describe their work as supporting their husbands or male kin in jeepney operations. Such articulations reflect how norms and values under capitalism—patriarchy shape the perception of women's roles and point to how women's contributions may be rendered invisible within the (patriarchal) family system in the Philippines (See Eviota 1992; De Lima 2023; Almeda 2023; SWS 2026). As a woman 'co-operator' (wife of a jeepney operator) explains:

Ang sabi nila, bilang kababaihan, bakit ako andito [kasamang nakikibaka ng mga lalaking jeepney driver at operator]? Bakit kami nandito - eh babae kami? Bilang asawa...hindi lang kami basta babae. Kami yung kababaihan...may asawa na sumusuporta kasi sinusupportahan kami ng asawa namin - tulungan [kami].

Kami yung nagmamamane sa kinikita ng aming mga asawa [sa operasyon ng jeepney]. Lahat ng ikot at galaw na pinansyal sa amin [na mga babae] dumadaan. Bakit kami nakikisali? Hindi ito pakikisali—ito ay pagsuporta bilang asawa...bilang ina...at bilang isang mananakay.

(Why am I here, joining the struggle alongside male jeepney drivers and operators? Why are we here—just because we are women? As a wife... we are not simply women. We are women with husbands who support us, and whom we also support—we help each other.

We are the ones who manage our husbands' earnings [from jeepney operations]. Every financial transaction passes through us [the women]. Why do we participate? This is not just involvement—it is support, as a wife... as a mother... and as a passenger.)

(Mayday Multimedia 2024)

The testimony above provides a window into how many women workers in the jeepney sector articulate their labour—both in day-to-day jeepney operations and in the work of JODAs/PISTON

10 For access to CWR's Ulat Lila 2026 report, message the organization through their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/cwr1982> or contact (63-2) 7758-5784 or 09534780468.



Photo credit: Arvin Dimalanta/Inklusibo

—as familial obligation and marital support. Even when articulated in this way, however, it does not diminish women's essential work in sustaining their household and jeepney operations, and enabling the organizing of informal transport workers to defend their rights and livelihood.

■ **Recognizing women's labour, strengthening solidarity in the jeepney sector**¹¹

Women play essential roles in the jeepney informal transport sector, but their work is often invisibilized—usually seen as helping or supporting their husbands and fulfilling familial obligations, rather than being recognized as independent work. They perform crucial tasks that ensure the daily functioning of jeepney operations and sustain the collective power of workers through organizing in JODAs and PISTON—all while carrying primary responsibilities at home.

This primer has sought to highlight these contributions—not yet to capture the full breadth of women's experiences, which would require a deeper, more participatory inquiry—but to provide an entry point for understanding the gendered dynamics of informal transport work in the jeepney sector, shaped by structural inequalities under capitalism-patriarchy.

Recognizing women's labour does not simply mean assigning wages to the multiple roles they perform. It means acknowledging the economic, social, and political value of the work that sustains households, jeepney operations, and organising within JODAs and PISTON. Recognition, however, must go beyond appreciation. If women continue to carry the weight of multiple roles alone, acknowledgment is insufficient. Truly valuing women's labour requires a more equitable sharing of responsibilities within households, enterprises, and organisations.

Sustaining the jeepney sector must become a collective effort—one that strengthens solidarity among workers in the continuing struggle for rights and livelihood, for their families and children, and for the welfare of informal transport workers, women and men alike. Lastly, while capitalism-patriarchy primarily positions the family as a site of women's subordination, families—especially when situated within (social) movements that are able to recognize gendered inequalities—may also become spaces of mutual support, solidarity, and shared struggle toward a more just and dignified future. •

11 For further reading, see Arcilla (2020), which thoughtfully explores how subaltern women's acts of everyday 'homemaking' contribute to political organizing and challenge patriarchal norms and values.

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