

High Demand and Low Supply of Quality Time Use Data in Global South: How to Address the Critical Concerns

Indira Hirway
Centre For Development Alternatives, India

Global First Conference on Gender Equality and Measurement of Care and
Domestic Work

CEGS, Mexico City, 11-12 September, 2018

This Presentation

- Highlights the rising demand for quality time use data in the recent decades and the progress in the supply of the data in the global south not matching the demand.
- Describes the major problems faced by countries in the global south to produce quality time use data.
- Suggests how these countries can be enabled to produce quality time use data using sound concepts and methods.

Why has demand for quality time use data increased

- Empirical analysis of time use data by scholars in the global south have shown how some critical socioeconomic concerns of these countries can be understood and addressed using time use data (such as, time poverty, persistent gender inequalities, low workforce participation of women and their constraints, well being of women and men, work-life balance and nutritional deficiency among women) and how policy makers need these data to address these concerns.
- 193 countries have committed to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in their respective countries. Many of these goals cannot be measured, monitored and addressed without quality time use data.
- ILO has passed a ground breaking Resolution on work statistics, which has presented a new conceptual framework on work statistics. Countries are expected to enforce this Resolution, and this cannot be done without sound time use data.
- Global organizations also need time use data for measuring and monitoring global commitments as well as for commitments of countries and providing suitable guidelines

Rising demand not matched by the supply of quality

- In Asia Pacific countries belonging to the global south only six countries (of the total 30 countries) have conducted national (or large) time use surveys and only two countries have mainstreamed the survey in their respective national statistical systems – through the rest of the countries have conducted at least one, big or small, time use survey with or without a time diary (Hirway 2017).
- In the case of Africa, where good progress has been made in the last 15 years, total 13 countries have conducted modular time use surveys where stylized questions without using time diary, while 14 countries used 24 hour time diary with pre-listed or post listed list of activities. However, only South Africa and one more country used time diary and institutionalized time use survey in their respective national systems (Charmes 2017)
- In the case of Latin America 23 countries conducted a time use survey between 2005 and 2015. Majority of these countries used stylized questions in modules of household surveys. Only about 2-3 countries used time diary and only two countries conducted national surveys using a time diary.
- In short, the number of countries conducting national time use survey using 24-hour time diary is very rare in the global south. Even if we forget about quality, the global south has a very long way to go to conduct national time use surveys with a time diary and institutionalized the survey.

Problems with the quality of data in the global south

- Apart from the low coverage of the time use surveys, there are serious problems with regard to quality of time use data in the global south
- These problems can be divided into two parts: (1) problems pertaining to the designing of time use surveys and (2) problems pertaining to data collection using time diary.
- The first category of problems are related to sampling, background questionnaire, reference period, classification of time use activities etc. These problems are observed in all the three regions of the global south (i.e. Asia Pacific, Africa and Latin America)
- The first category of problems can be resolved by a revised new global guide book that is written in the present context including new demands on time use data. This will encourage countries to adopt standard concepts and methods, which will enable cross country comparability of data through standardization and harmonization of concepts and methods.

Second categories of problems

- The second category of problems, which are complex and tough, are pertaining to designing time diary and using it for data collection
- In the absence of universal literacy, most of these countries are not in a position to use self reported time diary with 10-15 minute time slots. They need to find alternative methods
- Since the use of clocks is not common particularly in remote areas, respondents will not be in a position to report their time use correctly. Again there is a need to find alternatives
- Many countries do not have capacity to manage data collection through time diary, as this is a different survey from others
- Time use surveys are very time consuming and expensive, and most countries cannot afford to conduct these
- In short, major challenge is data collection by managing 24-hour diary

Addressing the problems

- Countries have found several ways to address these: (1) interviewers are hired to collect data based on one day recall and face to face interviews with bigger time slots, Say 30 minutes, (2) giving an inexpensive time pieces to households to enable them to keep time records, (3) developing methods to enable respondents to report activities chronologically. These steps make data collection considerably easy
- To reduce the effort and cost of collecting time use data, activities can be pre-coded, and interviewers can enter the data directly in a tablet. This will reduce the cost of coding and data entry. Careful pretesting is needed before finalizing the data collection so that no activity is missed out
- Again, data of the background questionnaire also can be entered while collecting data. This again will reduce the cost of data collection.
- Other ICT tools, use of smart phones, telephonic interviews can be tried out without compromising on the rigor of methods and quality of data, and other methods
- There is a kind of substitution possible between time diary activities and background questionnaire, and between time diary activities and context variables. Tapping the potential of these substitutability can reduce the burden on time diary
- Conducting time use survey as a module of LFS or in a staggered manner after LFS will reduce considerably the burden on data collection, a LFS data will be available

MTUS and IPUM Time Use

- Integrated Public Use Micro-data Series Time use (IPUM time use) is a major project that provides on line time use data access by creating data files ready for analysis. Though its major focus was on ATUS, it collects international time use data through its data extract system. The project, which is located at the Population Centre at Maryland University, and its final aim is to give access to the world TUS data
- Multinational time use study (MTUS) brings together more than a million diary days from over 70 randomly sampled national-scale surveys, into a single standardised format. The access to MTUS data is free Professor Gershuny developed a single dataset with common series of background variables and total time spent per day in 41 activities.
- Both these projects are contributing significantly towards making TUS data sound and globally comparable. Both try to access data from Developing countries also
- However the problem is that when the many countries in the South produce data with poor quality, even comparable data are not usable.

Emerging Issues

- The rising demand for time use data is not well matched by the supply of the data produced in most countries of the global south.
- This needs to be addressed by (1) new Guidebook by UNSD on how to conduct time use surveys in a manner that the methods are rigorous and data are of sound quality, (2) making time use data collection doable for the countries of the South
- The above steps need to be backed by (1) make NSOs aware of the many advantages of time use data, (2) curriculum development and capacity building of NSOs and other concerned departments in conducting time use surveys, and analyzing time use data, and (3) making available to national governments the funds needed for conducting time use survey
- Light time diary vs full fledged time use survey is being discussed hotly at present. If light time diary works well for ILO for implementing 19th ICLS Resolution on work statistics, it may not work for implementing SDGs and other critical socioeconomic concerns. A decision needs to be taken whether one should employ two separate surveys or one survey should incorporate all.

Comments welcome!