

**Time-Use Data for Policy Advocacy & Analysis: A Gender Perspective and some
International Examples**

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The primary rationale for the collection of statistical data through national statistical offices and other government agencies is its use in public policy processes. National statistical systems have tended to assume that the principle use for their data is policy analysis, which in general requires high quality data that are statistically representative at the relevant policy level (whether national or sub-national) and quite sophisticated quantitative analytical skills on the part of users. However, the development, formulation and implementation of policies and programmes involve other uses of data that may be able to utilize different qualities of data, different skills and serve new kinds of users. This paper reviews international uses of time allocation data from this broader perspective.

Under-utilization of data

An evaluation of UNIFEM work on gender statistics in South Asia and Southeast and East Asia found that very little of the data that had been generated and disseminated through national publications on Women and Men in Statistics were being actively used in policy processes. In fact, much was hardly being used at all! Reflection and discussions with colleagues working in statistics showed that this problem is not limited to gender statistics: much of the statistical data currently collected by national statistical agencies in developing countries are not widely or well used, particularly at the national level. In contrast to developed countries, most government departments do not include on their staff or have ready access to expertise in policy analysis. Such expertise is often extremely limited even in research institutions in many developing countries. The main users of national data for policy analysis are often international agencies such as the UN, the World Bank or regional Banks such as the Asia Development Bank, and international researchers. This partly

explains why data collection in developing countries is often driven more by international standards rather than national needs, and thus produces data that the countries themselves do not use.

Lack of national capacity in statistical analysis is also a contributing factor to the lack of use of statistics at the national level. Although international agencies have trained generations of statisticians from developing countries, many have remained in the developed countries in which they were trained. Many who returned were from national statistical agencies, which defined their role primarily in terms of the collection, presentation and dissemination of data. Data analysis and interpretation was explicitly seen as outside the mandate of data collection agencies because it might compromise the objectivity of the agency and the data that it provided¹. Thus, apart from overseas-trained statisticians returning to universities or research institutions, many nationals who had been trained in statistical analysis were located in institutions that were not able to directly utilize those particular skills.

Time allocation data is especially vulnerable to under-utilization, especially if its primary use is considered to be policy analysis. Since the collection of time-use data of sufficient quality for policy analysis is a complex and necessarily expensive task, many time use data sets are regarded as not meeting the technical standards in terms of coverage, sampling or data collection methods required for policy analysis. Even where data sets do meet these standards, the time and computing power required for analysis are major obstacles to their full utilization. As a result, much of the analysis of time use data has to be carried out by academics or graduate students who have both sufficient time and the required computing resources². Even compiling and presenting time use data for dissemination requires

¹ This perception has changed with the emergence of user-pays principles in developed countries. National Statistical Agencies, typically in partnership with policy agencies in Government, now play a much more active role in presenting basic descriptive analysis of their data, although they do not engage directly in more policy-oriented analysis.

² However, the release of time use data to such users is complicated by the fact that analysis requires access to raw data files rather than the usual aggregated data files that are usually made available to external users in order to protect the confidentiality of

considerable time and computing resources. Time use data is also vulnerable to under-utilization because the policy issues that it addresses remain relatively marginalized in national policy debates.

Uses of Time Allocation Data

In India, time allocation data was initially seen as contributing primarily to work on poverty reduction, the informal sector, and improving enumeration of the conventional definition of female labour force participation. In most developing countries, these three applications of time use data remain fundamental even from a gender perspective since women dominate in the informal sector, and are affected by poverty in different ways from men. The main issue in the measurement of women's labour force participation is not merely obtaining a believable measure, which is the major concern in some countries in South Asia, but in challenging the widespread assumption that women do not contribute in a major way to national economies. Time allocation data can help to challenge the current invisibility of much of women's contribution to the economy in developing countries, even in those countries where technically female labour force participation is reasonably well measured but remains politically unrecognised. As long as women's economic contribution remains unrecognised, their needs and interests will continue to be ignored in policies and programmes.

Time allocation data can also be used to address broader gender issues that are fundamental to all countries, whether developed or developing:

1. Related to India's concerns but also beyond them, is the full implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts. This revision extended the economic production boundary to include a range of activities that are primarily performed by women and are of particular importance to poor women, including fetching water and gathering fuel.

respondents. As a result, special security arrangements have had to be made to enable independent researchers to utilize time use data.

2. An issue highlighted by Indira Hirway³, as well as in the UNIFEM publication *Women, Men and Economics*⁴ is the exclusion of the household economy in the current conceptual frameworks used for the formulation of economic policy. This overlooks the fact that the core of the process of development is the transfer of activities from the household to the monetised market sector. As a result, and especially in the poorest of countries, conventional economics is unable to adequately analyze the process of development since it is blind to changes within the household sector and the interaction between SNA and non-SNA activities. Conventional analysis also ignores that fact that the boundary between the household and the market is highly gendered, with the bulk of work in the household sector being performed by women. Countries that do not conduct time use surveys lack information on the amount of time expended on such vital tasks as unpaid child care, unpaid care of elderly or disabled persons, and voluntary community and social work, most of which are carried out by women.

Thus, policy making not only ignores the social and economic impacts of interactions between changes in the household and changes in the market (for example, what will be the impact of population ageing on women's participation in paid work? what will be the impact of reduced public sector expenditure on health on the participation of poor women in the informal sector - or of their daughters in education?). It also ignores the potentially differential impacts of such changes and of policies and programmes on women and men. Understanding such differences is especially important during periods of economic crisis or structural adjustment. It is also fundamental to the development of effective poverty reduction strategies, since women are not only more affected by poverty (the "feminisation" of poverty) but instrumental in reducing the inter-generational transmission of poverty.

³ Indira Hirway, "Gender Approach To The Collection and Use of Data: The Time Allocation Component", UNIFEM, November 2002

⁴ Lorraine Corner, **Women, Men and Economics. The gender-differentiated impact of macroeconomics**, Economic Empowerment Series, UNIFEM Asia-Pacific, Bangkok, 1996

3. The unequal sharing of all areas of unpaid work and particularly of unpaid domestic work and childcare, which are currently not included within the extended production boundary. Time allocation studies in developed and developing countries show universally that the majority of such work is carried out by women. As long as this remains the case, it is unrealistic to consider gender equality to be an achievable target since in addition to anticipated equality in the labour force, women would continue to carry the major responsibility at home. The experience of developed countries suggests that significant change in the sex distribution of unpaid housework and childcare requires it to be seen explicitly as a policy issue and as something that must be addressed in order to implement national and international commitments on gender equality and women's human rights. It is also becoming increasingly clear in some of the most developed countries that below-replacement levels of fertility are related to this unequal sharing of domestic work and childcare.

Particularly in conceptual areas such as time allocation, where there is not yet a consensus on the policy issues involved, the use of data must involve policy advocacy as well as policy analysis. In fact, policy advocacy often will be the priority concern because until the issues are recognized on the policy agenda, statistics agencies are unlikely to receive the funding required to collect data of sufficient quality for policy analysis. However, the use of statistics for policy advocacy is not well developed in developing countries for a variety of reasons:

1. In many countries, particularly those that are not democratic or where democracy is new and relatively weak, policy advocacy itself is not well developed.
2. Those engaged in policy advocacy - the potential users of statistics - have little familiarity with statistics and lack the skills to use them effectively. For example, although national women's machineries were involved in all of the UNIFEM gender statistics projects as a "user group", the majority lacked training in both statistics and advocacy and played a relatively passive role.

Solutions to Under-Utilization of Data

1. Training users

Training of users will provide part of the solution to the problem of poor utilization of data. However, training programmes must first identify users and potential users, as well as the uses to which the data can be put. In a rapidly changing world, both users and uses of data are also changing. While national women's machineries and women's NGOs might be among the more obvious users of gender statistics and thus of time use data, women in the parliament, and women leaders at all levels are also important potential users. With increasing democratisation and decentralization, the needs of users groups at the local government and community levels must also be addressed.

2. Training producers of statistics

Training of users will also require improved training of producers of statistics, since they will be among the trainers and must also learn to present their data in more user-friendly ways than is currently the case. I have been frustrated and disappointed in the recent statistics meetings that I have attended to see highly trained statisticians continuing to present overheads of complex crosstabulations that viewers cannot possibly comprehend in the average two minutes (or less) they have to digest each overhead. Modern computer software makes the preparation of graphics so easy and convenient, there can be no excuse for these kinds of presentations, even to an audience of statisticians, much less to lay audiences. Statistics, and particularly gender statistics, are too important to be abused in this way! If national statistical systems hope to persuade taxpayers and politicians to increase their budgets, they must learn to de-mystify their data and present it in ways that are readily understandable to the average citizen.

3. Partnerships between users, producers and researchers

Partnerships between users and producers are a second essential strategy for improving the use of statistics in general, and time use data in particular. The majority of users or potential users of data will continue to lack the technical skills needed to make the most effective use of the data or even to identify the kinds of data they need. Their comparative advantage lies in their understanding of the policy issues and of the target

audiences they wish to address. The technical expertise in knowing what data are actually or potentially available, and the ways in which they can be validly used and presented lie with the statisticians, and especially in the national statistical offices that are primarily responsible for data collection and data standards. However, in the case of time use data in particular, academic researchers will typically also be needed within the partnership because only they have the time and computer resources to fully analyze the data and draw out the richness of its policy implications. The challenge here lies in linking academic research to policy and ensuring that it is communicated to policy makers and, if appropriate, the general public in readily understandable ways.

How have time use data been used?

1. Awareness raising

Not surprisingly, the earliest use of time use data was for advocacy and some of the data used was extremely basic, most having been collected by one or two researchers or graduate students at a very micro level. Despite its humble beginnings, the impact of such data has been quite profound. Its use has led us to the point where a country such as India is prepared to invest a considerable amount of resources in formal, statistically representative time use surveys at the state level. Most of us who have been involved in early gender training programmes would be familiar with some of the ways in which these data were used. Even in the absence of actual case study data, the understanding of time use that was provided by those studies enabled gender trainers throughout the region to use the stereotypical model of a 24 hour day, in which they asked participants to describe the use of time by a woman and a man either on a typical day in their own household or on a typical day in what they knew of rural households. Such a simple exercise! Yet, it produced quite a revelation as communities, NGOs, government officials and others suddenly realized that women were not just "sitting at home all day" waiting for a project or government programme to come along and "involve them in development". It established a number of now widely-accepted facts:

- women and men use time differently;
- women work longer hours of total time than men but shorter hours of paid time;
- women have less discretionary time;
- women typically perform multiple activities (childcare, housework, minding stock) simultaneously.

In many ways, the 24 hour day time use analysis signalled the end of the WID approach and the desire to "put" women in development as if they were not already involved, and the beginning of a gender approach that more systematically analyzed the differences between women's and men's lives and realities.

2. Policy Advocacy

From the simple stereotypical 24 hour day data, simple descriptive statistics from the micro time allocation case studies provided more solid empirical support for gender analysis that gradually moved gender onto the policy agenda. Pioneering efforts by researchers such as Meena Acharya⁵ in Nepal and Ben White⁶ and Gillian Hart⁷ in Indonesia probed more deeply: challenging the System of National Accounts, and challenging assumptions about the roles of rural women in agriculture and therefore agricultural extension and other policies. Other researchers used time use studies as a basis for estimating women's economic contribution in developing economies. A review of 35 studies between 1973 and 1985 estimated that household production was equal to between 38 and 60 per cent of household income. The UNDP Human Development Report 1991 found estimates of women's economic contribution ranged between 11 and 35 per cent of GDP. Such studies focusing primarily on women's economic roles were gradually linked to the established tradition in some developed countries of time use surveys that had primarily targeted social and other policy issues that had proved unamenable to conventional surveys. The controversial work of Marilyn Waring, in her book *Counting for Nothing*⁸, and the equally controversial debate at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1994 did much to move time allocation studies forward onto the policy agenda. Together with the 1993 revision of the SNA, much of this work

⁵ Meena Acharya. **Time Use Data and the Living Standards Measurement Study**. Living Standards Measurement Study Working Paper 18. Washington, D. C.: The World Bank, 1982

⁶ Benjamin White. (1984) "Measuring Time Allocation, Decision-Making and Agrarian Changes Affecting Rural Women: Examples from Recent Research in Indonesia" **IDS Bulletin** 15(1):18-32

⁷ Gillian Hart, **Patterns of Household Labour Allocation in a Javanese Village**, (Indonesian Agro-Economic Survey, Universitas Diponegoro and Institut Pertanian Bogor), 1976

⁸ Marilyn Waring, **Counting For Nothing: What Men Value and What Women are Worth**, Bridget Williams Books, 1993

came together in efforts - mainly in developed countries - to implement time use surveys as the basis for developing satellite accounts to value women's contribution to the economy.

However, most developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region do not have national time use surveys, and the issues that time use surveys could address are not yet firmly on the policy agenda. Thus, advocacy remains the priority.

What kinds of advocacy are needed?

The previous description of how time use surveys have been used globally provides a general map of the steps that are needed. At first, awareness raising is the priority: even simple time use surveys or those from other countries can be used to make communities, development workers, women and men themselves and ultimately policy makers aware of the work that women do and of the interaction between changes in the market economy and the impact on the household economy. The statistics needed are simple descriptive graphs - bar graphs, pie charts - showing how women and men spend their time that can be easily understood by users. The level of detail should be sufficient to identify differences that point to potential policy issues and provide some understanding of those issues. For example, time use data might show that the majority of women in rural villages are working in the fields at precisely the time when the Maternal and Child Health Clinic is open, enabling health staff to question their assumptions that low immunization rates are due to "the mother's ignorance" and can be solved by health education.

This second dimension of awareness raising inevitably begins to move the debate forward toward policy issues and identifying the most important policy issues for specific policy advocacy. These will vary by country and by level of development. In Australia, Canada and several other developed countries, issues related to the balance between work and family life have entered the policy agenda partly as a result of the kinds of data provided by time use surveys. Even in developed countries, the data needs for advocacy tend to be quite basic. However, data presentation needs to be tailored to the specific target audience. For example, pictographs or cartoons may be most effective for community target groups [Figure 1]. Even in a country like Australia, the publication *Juggling Time* produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Office of Status of Women uses a combination of graphs, texts and cartoons to get their messages across [Figures 2-3].

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7. Working Hours of Children Ages 10-14 years in 1997

The working hours of children who are forced to work are generally more than 20 hours per week.

In urban areas:

- Out of 100 working female children, 65 work for more than 20 hours per week
- Out of 100 working male children, 53 work for more than 20 hours per week

In rural areas:

- Out of 100 working female children, 38 work for more than 20 hours per week
- Out of 100 working male children, 40 work for more than 20 hours per week

Area	Female	Male
Urban	65	53
Rural	38	40

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1. The productive Age Group in 1997

For every 5 persons of the productive age group, there are 3 dependents of the non-productive age group (0-14 years and 65 years or older).

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Figure 1 Good Examples from Indonesia of Advocacy Presentations Tailored to Semi-literate Audiences

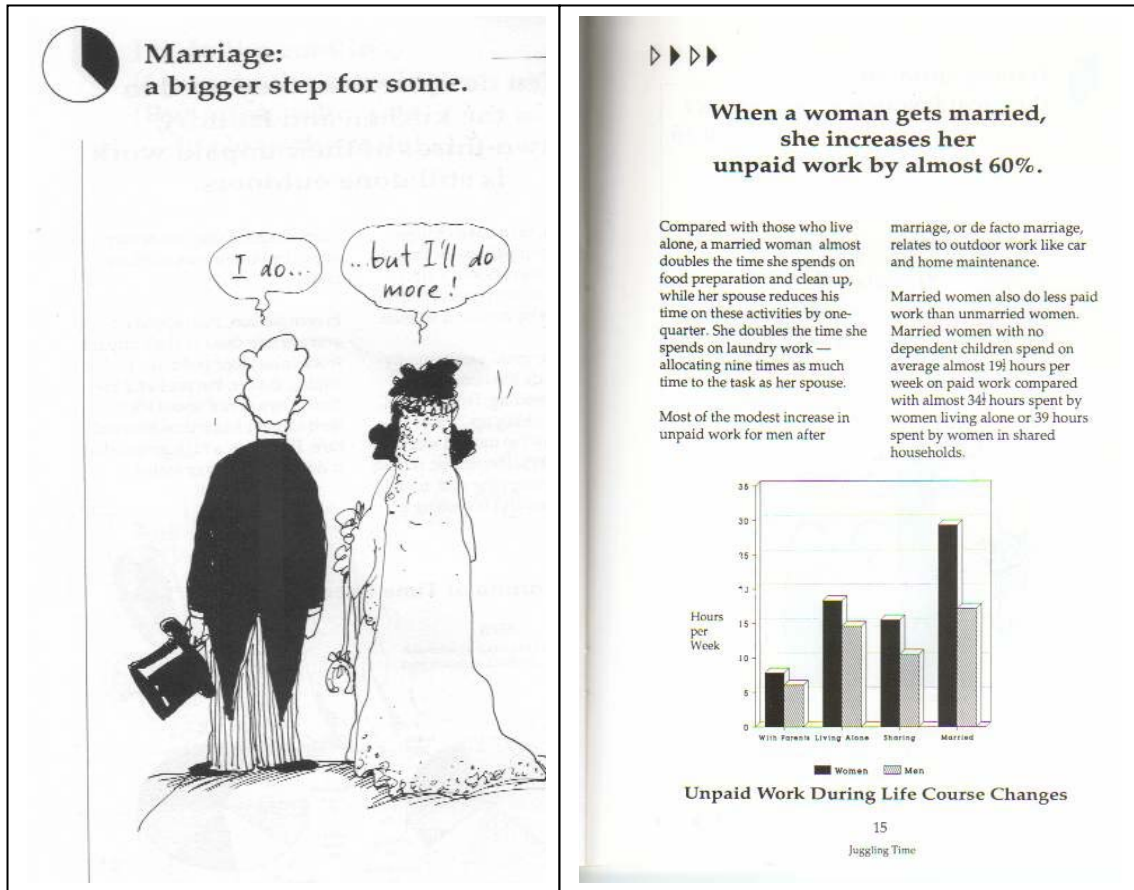


Figure 2 Australian Time Use Data: Cartoons, Text and Graphics for Effective Advocacy

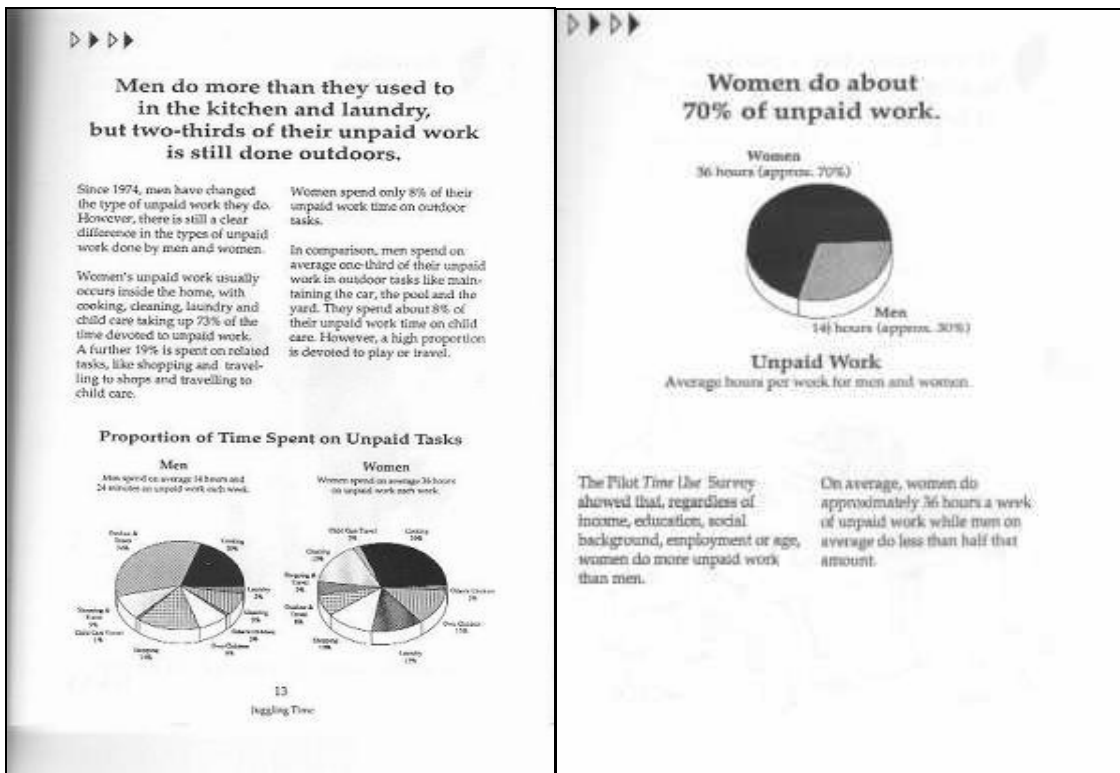


Figure 3 Australian Time Use Data Presented for Advocacy: Note the clear message in the heading

Emerging Uses of Time Allocation Data

As the debate moves more firmly toward policy analysis, the demand for sophisticated quantitative analysis of time use data increases. For example, in the Republic of Korea time use data has been used to challenge assumptions about the value of women's work in relation to pension policy, insurance claims and divorce settlements and inheritance. Countries such as Australia, Cuba, Japan, and Republic of Korea have or are developing satellite accounts of the value of unpaid work. Australia integrated the monetary value of unpaid work into the analysis of the household sector in its national accounts for the first time in 1997.

Gender analysis of budgets and the general area of performance budgeting and people's budgets are emerging areas where time allocation data has the potential to make an important contribution. Time allocation data can help to identify beneficiaries of project and programmes, as well as identifying certain aspects of the efficiency (performance) of programmes. For example, time allocation data could show the amount of time used in waiting for government services, as well as how this might differ between women and men. Time use data also has the potential to show the interaction between government budgets and household time budgets: for example, what effect does a cut in the local health budget have on the way in which women use their time.

Challenges for the Future

1. How to make more effective use of time use data to raise the awareness of both the public and policy makers in developing countries on women's economic roles and contributions to the national economy. Greater awareness, particularly among society at large, is a pre-requisite for incorporating women's interests and concerns into economic policy.
2. How to use time use data to improve and engender poverty reduction strategies. Although the concept of the feminisation of poverty is widely discussed, a key limitation of existing poverty data sources is their inability to probe the intra-household dimension of poverty and thus to reveal, other than in terms of output measures such as nutrition and education, the nature of feminized poverty. Because

time use data is collected and analysed at the individual level, it has the potential to address this critical gap in our understanding of feminized poverty.

3. How to build effective partnerships between users and producers of time use data and, in particular, to develop the capacity of new user groups - national women's machineries, women's NGOs, women parliamentarians, women in local government - to use this relatively sophisticated type of data more effectively for both awareness raising and policy advocacy.
4. How to incorporate time use data in macro economic analysis and modelling. It is relatively easy to identify the kinds of issues that might be addressed at the micro level through time allocation surveys and the ways in which time use data can lead to marginal improvements in the gender-sensitivity of programmes and policies. However, the real challenge is how to engender macro economic policy as well as to engender national statistical systems on which macro and micro economic policy decisions are made. Again, this is a pre-requisite for gender mainstreaming and the eventual achievement of gender equity.