



Measuring children's time use: Methodological challenges

Counted & Visible: Global Conference on the Measurement of Gender and Intersecting Inequalities

Session 4: Age and Gender

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OVERVIEW

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What are time use data?

- Time use (TU) data = activities + their duration
- Proposed indicators:
 - Participation rate- proportion of children who engaged in [activity]
 - Total mean- average time spent engaged in [activity] among all children
 - Participation mean- average time spent engaged in [activity] among children participating in [activity]

Why measure children's time use?

- *“Before we can evaluate how well children are doing and why some are doing better than others, it is important to understand what they are doing...”* (Harding, 1997).
- Currently, no standardized data collection tools exist to examine how children spend their time
 - Long history of TU data collection anchored in gender & quality of life statistics but less attention paid to children
- But how children spend their time affects key outcomes in their wellbeing, (health, emotional/cognitive development, educational achievement, *gender equality*)

Gender disparities in the burden of unpaid domestic and care work must be addressed in childhood before becoming cemented in adulthood

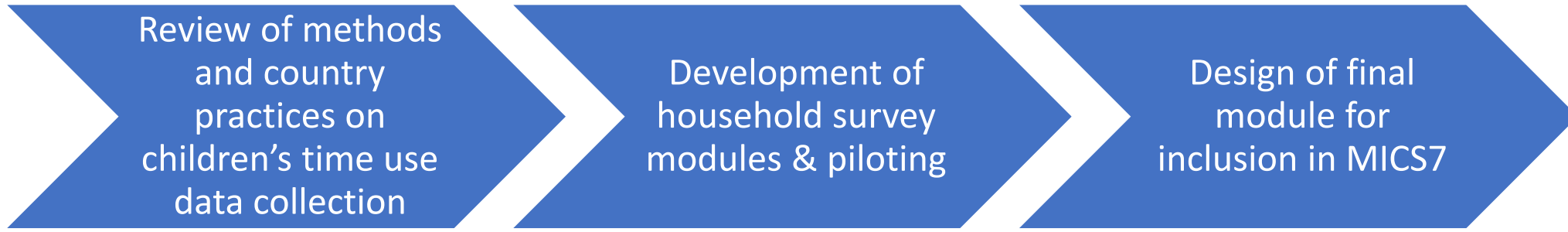
Girls' outlook and potential are limited by the types of chores they undertake and the time they spend on chores

Girls' ability to engage in childhood leisure, build social networks, and focus on school are stymied

Girls and boys socialized to expect women to assume burden of unpaid work



Methodological development of children's time use module



- ✓ Review of methods & country practices on children's TU data collection
 - In most countries, minimum age for collecting TU data is 10 yrs.
 - TU instruments typically completed by parents for children 0-12 yrs. and by children 13-17 yrs.

- ✓ Field tests conducted in Malawi (2017) and Belize (2019) to assess:
 - Time use instruments (stylized vs. diary)
 - Quality of data obtained
 - Integration of TU module into MICS

Belize field test

- Partnership with Statistical Institute of Belize
- Time diary tested
 - Developed using ICATUS 2016 classifications adapted for children
- CAPI implementation
- Probability-based sampling for district representation
 - Toledo district: mainly rural, mostly indigenous population
 - Belize City South Side: urban, various ethnicities, somewhat “marginalized”
- Sample
 - 680 households selected, yielding data on **290** children ages 5-17 years
- Data collection by **proxy**
 - Primary caregiver (usually mother) reported time use of children

Belize field test preliminary results - implementation

Observations from interviewers:

- Respondents pleased to speak about children
- Generally, respondents know the activities and duration of activities but detailed probing of interviewers is required
- Respondents recall key events in the day and frame other activities around these
- Interviewers found the responses credible, genuine
- Mothers vary attention between what is usual and what the question asks: activities yesterday

Belize field test preliminary results - gender analysis of children's time use

Gender disparities in time use manifest in two ways:

- As a differential in **access** to an activity
 - E.g. Girls less likely to use social media, but when both girls and boys use social media, they spend similar amounts of time on it
- As a differential in **access** AND **time spent** on an activity
 - E.g. Girls more likely to play than boys- and when both girls and boys play, girls play more

May require targeting interventions differently depending on gender gap observed

Methodological challenges

Integration into MICS' existing survey protocols

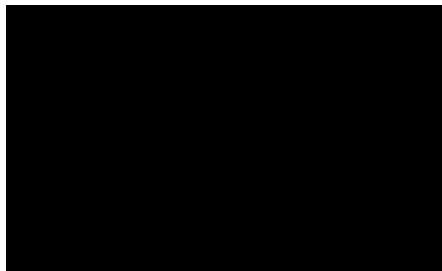
- Random selection of diary days
- Implementation in low education settings
- Risk of respondent fatigue
- **Self vs. proxy reporting bias**
 - Do caregivers know how children (esp. older children) spend their time?
 - Belize pilot indicates mothers may have some difficulty reporting children's time use
 - Does social desirability influence how caregivers report children's time use?
 - Some evidence that parents underreport girls' domestic work (Levison 2000)

Next steps

- Further analysis of Belize data:
 - Do observed gender disparities in time use shift with age?
 - Analysis of other key stratifiers (rural/urban, household wealth, etc.)
- Additional pilot testing:
 - Self vs. proxy reporting
- Inputs to “*UN Guide to Producing Statistics on Time Use*” as member of UN Expert Group on Innovative and Effective Ways to Collect Time Use Statistics
 - Collecting TU data on children
 - Integrating TU module into existing household surveys



THANK YOU



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