Measuring children’s time use in MICS

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OVERVIEW

01. OBJECTIVE

02. WHY MEASURE CHILDREN’S TIME USE?

03. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS INTEGRATING A CHILDREN’S TIME USE MODULE INTO MICS

04. OVERVIEW OF MICS FIELD TESTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

05. NEXT STEPS
Objective

To develop a household survey module measuring children’s time use at the population-level for inclusion in the UNICEF-supported Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS)
Why measure children’s time use?

- How children spend their time affects their wellbeing and shapes their opportunities (e.g. unpaid care and domestic work may be associated with schooling, learning, socializing)

- Relevant to monitoring SDG 5 on Gender Equality:

- Gender disparities in time use begin to form in childhood but focus of TU data collection efforts is on adult population

- No standard data collection tools to measure children’s TU
Why measure children’s time use in MICS?

**Determinants**
- **Individual factors** (age, sex, disability status, religion, ethnicity, marital status, educational attainment)
- **Household, environmental factors** (residence, wealth, household composition, emergency affectedness status)

**Children’s time use**
- **Type of activities child engages in** (sleeping, playing, schooling, socializing, etc)
- **Time allocation by activity**

**Outcomes in children’s wellbeing**
- Multi-dimensional poverty
- Mental health
- Quality of life
- Health
- Educational achievement

**Evidence-based programming**
- Adolescent wellbeing
- Social protection
- Health
- Poverty alleviation
- Education
Challenges & considerations integrating a children’s time use module in MICS

• Seasonality bias
• Accurate reporting of timing and duration of activities in more traditional rural settings
• Enumerator training requirements
• Respondent burden associated with integrating TU module into multipurpose household survey
<table>
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<th>Challenges (cont’d): Self vs proxy reporting</th>
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<tr>
<td>Is there social desirability bias when caregivers report? (e.g. under/over reporting of stigmatized/desirable activities)</td>
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<td>How accurate is caregivers reporting? Do they know what children are doing?</td>
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<td>At what age can children self-report?</td>
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<td>Parents underreport girls’ domestic work (Levison 2000)</td>
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<td>Social desirability bias by proxy respondent may decrease with age (Janzen 2016)</td>
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<td>Discrepancies in time spent in paid/unpaid work, sleep and leisure</td>
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<td>Few discrepancies in time spent learning (Rost 2020)</td>
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<td>From age 8-10, most children can report on their own time (Eurostat 2016)</td>
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<td>TU instruments typically completed by caregivers of children 12 yrs. or younger and by children themselves, 13-17 yrs.</td>
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Overview of field testing children’s time use module in MICS

Field testing

- Stylized questions vs. time diary
- Child versus caregiver reporting
- Adequacy of time use categories adapted from ICATUS 2016
- Additional respondent burden in multi-topic survey
- Low literacy, rural settings
- Enumerator training

Guiding criteria

- Trade off between granularity and complexity of codification and training
- Relevance across diversity of settings, and for policy and programming
- Getting quality data without adversely affecting overall MICS quality
## Overview of field tests (cont’d.)

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stylized questions with 2 reference periods (7 days &amp; 24 hrs.)</td>
<td>Survey-based time diary (past 24 hrs.)</td>
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<td>Adaptation of ICATUS 2016 to prioritize children’s activities</td>
<td>Further adaptation of ICATUS 2016 Introduction of contextual questions</td>
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<td>Sample design</td>
<td>Split purposive sample of 447 households in 2 rural districts (Nkhata Bay and Balaka)</td>
<td>Probability-based sample of 680 households in 2 districts (mostly rural; urban)</td>
<td>Purposive sample of 250 households in urban, peri-urban and rural settings in Mutare</td>
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<td>Respondent</td>
<td>Proxy reporting by primary caregiver of children aged 5-17</td>
<td>Proxy reporting by primary caregiver of children aged 5-17</td>
<td>Self-reporting by adolescents aged 15-17 and proxy reporting by primary caregiver of adolescents aged 15-17</td>
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Lessons learned

• In general, respondents pleased to speak about their day/their child’s day
• Stylized questions versus time diary
  • Respondent fatigue observed with stylized questions, potentially owing to cognitive burden of retrieval and aggregation
  • Diary performed better, although detailed probing is needed to avoid gaps in accounting of activities
• Some difficulty collecting accurate information in low-literacy settings
  • Non-numeric responses (“a bit”, “not long”, etc.) required time estimation after extensive probing
Lessons learned (cont’d.)

Child self reporting versus care-giver proxy reporting:

• Caregivers not as able to report child’s activities and duration when child away from home
• Caregivers found it harder than children to report activities children were engaged in, even when children at home
Lessons learned (cont’d.)

• Quality data depends on good interviewer-respondent rapport and strong interviewing skills
  • Interviewing techniques differ from typical MICS survey administration (facilitated conversation rather than scripted set of questions)
• With adequate training and practice, interviewers’ probing and activity coding skills significantly improve
• CAPI can minimize entry and estimation errors with prompts and consistency checks but can interfere with interview’s flow
• Training manuals need to be customized to provide country-relevant examples to aid in activity coding
• Sufficient time for training is critical
Lessons learned (cont’d.)

Developing a time diary meaningful for children involved:

- **Re-classification and re-grouping** of ICATUS domain activities and introduction of **new activity labels** to prioritize children’s activities and align with UNICEF programming

- Examples - School attendance in person/remote, gaming separately from play, socialization in person/through digital technologies, social media as entertainment
  
  ➢ Tradeoff between granularity and complexity of coding and interviewers’ training

- Introduction of **contextual questions** related to homework support/tutoring, digital/online engagement associated with learning, socialization and civic participation (Zimbabwe)

- ICATUS activities adaptation and contextual questions were understood, but small samples did not capture low prevalence activities in testing locations
Next steps

Time use module for children 10-17 yrs. now available as complementary topic in MICS7 (2023-2026)

- Direct reporting for children aged 15-17
- Proxy reporting by caregiver for children aged 10-14
- Tool package includes administration guidelines, interviewer’s instructions, protocols, ethical considerations for interviewing children and tabulation plan
- Further methodological work to lower direct reporting for children 10-14 as well as to collect time use data for children below age 10
Thank You
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