

Care work measuring:
ADVANCES IN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

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Context

Just fifteen years ago, upon adopting the Platform of Action of Beijing, States acknowledged that domestic work and care giving, mainly carried out by women, is not only an important contribution to the economy of a nation, but also an obstacle to women obtaining remunerated work.^{1 2} This Platform urges states to:

“...develop a more comprehensive knowledge of all forms of work and employment... with a view to recognizing the economic contribution of women and making visible the unequal distribution of remunerated and unremunerated work between women and men”

The Platform also points out the ways to produce said knowledge and urges states to:

“- Develop an international classification of activities for time-use statistics that is sensitive to the differences between women and men in remunerated and unremunerated work, and collect data disaggregated by sex.

At the national level, subject to national constraints:

- conduct regular time-use studies to measure, in quantitative terms, unremunerated work, including recording those activities that are performed simultaneously with remunerated or other unremunerated activities;
- measure, in quantitative terms, unremunerated work that is outside national accounts and work to improve methods to assess its value, and accurately reflect its value in satellite or other official accounts that are separate from but consistent with core national accounts...”

In this context, the System of National Accounts in a recent revision points out that among activities which are not considered economically productive we find included activities such as eating, drinking, sleeping, doing exercise, etc., which cannot be done by one person in place of another: paying another person to do exercise for one does not keep the person who pays in shape. On the other hand, activities such as washing, cooking, caring for children, the ill and the elderly, **are all activities which can be done by others and therefore the latter are within the general scope of production.** These are now considered productive household activities carried out as unremunerated work, especially when done by women.

¹Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the 16th plenary meeting on 15 September, 1995

² See: UN, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (**CEDAW**), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly.

Furthermore, unremunerated work carried out by women in family businesses is considered by the Committee on the Elimination of discrimination against Women to be a type of exploitation since besides not receiving any payment, women do not have social security or access to benefits produced.³

NON-REMUNERATED WORK: A PROBLEM OF PUBLIC POLICIES

In order to formulate, monitor and evaluate public policies, it is essential to make visible gender inequalities and show the obstacles faced by women which limit their capacities.

Gender research have focused on studying the way in which men and women divide their time in order to point out the abysmal inequality in the distribution of household work, care and responsibilities as well as the lack of public policies which take into account the specific needs of women. On the other hand, social policies have also been analyzed; usually these policies, far from promoting equality between the sexes, tend to further overload women with work by putting them in charge of more work, for example, the case of the transfer of responsibilities and care giving work which reforms in health systems have imposed on women, responsibilities and work which before the reforms were carried out by the State.

Most of the research has been carried out with unofficial data or on the basis of sub-national geographic units. Thus, more and more, there is a need for information on the time use and URW (unremunerated work).

Surveys on the time use and NRW have become important tools for measuring domestic and volunteer work done by men and women, in the household environment as well as at the community level, and remunerated (economically) work in the informal sector, including the household sector (considered in national accounting); surveys also constitute the basis

³ General Recommendation 16, 1991

for analyzing economic and non-economic activities carried out by men and women and their interrelationships.

Statistical measurements allow us to evaluate the contributions made by women to the goods and services of the economy and to the total added value of the goods of nations and to the amount of participation of men and women in mercantile and extra-mercantile economic activities which are not reflected in existing economic indicators.

MEASURING NON-REMUNERATED WORK IN THE FRAMEWORK OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTING

Dimensioning the value of unremunerated household work within the methodological framework of the System of National Accounting is the way to make its magnitude and relevance visible and thus incorporate this issue into macroeconomic analysis and governmental and societal decision making.⁴ To measure unremunerated work within the framework of national accounting signifies removing it from the shadows and revealing its contributions to economy; it means showing the amount of non-paid work which is integrated into production, but which remains hidden from economic analysis. With this tool, States can initiate gender sensitive public policy based on empirical evidence and evaluate the policies.

ADVANCEMENT IN THE MEASUREMENT OF THE USE OF TIME AND NON-REMUNERATED WORK IN LATIN AMERICA

Over the past years, UNIFEM has organized the Meeting of Experts on Time Use Surveys yearly, in collaboration with the Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (INMUJERES) (National Women's Institute), the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) (National Institute of Statistics and Geography), and the División de Asuntos de Género (DAG) (Division of Gender Matters) of ECLAC. Specialist from the offices of statistics from various

⁴ María Eugenia Gómez Luna. *Macroeconomía y trabajo no remunerado (Macroeconomy and non-remunerated Work)*. In *Economía y Género (Economy and Gender)*,. Ed. Paloma de Villota, ed. Icaria. Barcelona 2003, p. 159

regions of Latin America as well as scholars who are experts in the field and specialists from other international organizations participate in these meetings.

Progress, both methodological and operative, related to various instruments for collecting information, are presented at these meetings. Successes are shared and the limitations of certain types of data collecting which have been used in the region are studied; alternatives for overcoming shortcomings are also discussed.

UNIFEM, part of UN Women, has also promoted and supported initiatives to produce statistics on unremunerated work and time use in countries such as Cuba, Venezuela, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico and more recently Honduras, El Salvador and Peru. National statistic offices have made important efforts to satisfy the demand for public policies of equality by gathering data through specific surveys on time use, time use modules and by way of a small group of questions included in households and employment surveys.

Countries like Cuba and Uruguay have made independent surveys on the use of time, without a doubt the ideal way of collecting information on time use; the instruments used were 24-hour diaries and the long lists of activities, respectively. Chile made an independent exploratory survey in the capital. Last year Brazil made a time use survey using diaries of activities.

Others have used a longer, more complete list, closer to the available classifier of activities, as in the case on Mexico (2002). The Mexican case is worth mentioning, there already being three time use surveys with distinct collection instruments: a module with a list of activities in 1996, a module with a diary of activities in 1998 and once again, a module with a long list of activities in 2002, all three included in the Survey of Household Income and Expenditures. Combining these modules with household surveys -with which the official indicators used to measure poverty in households are calculated- substantially enriches the generation of information used to determine public policies in a country. Mexico has also chosen to

include a short list of time use activities in the questionnaire of the National Employment Survey, which is taken regularly. Despite the limitations of a short list of activities, it has been possible to enrich the analysis of remunerated and unremunerated work using this source of data.

Up to now, 16 Latin American countries have collected information over a period of a decade, with different instruments and a wide cross section of methodologies.

The diversity of types of surveys observed in the region reveals the difficulty of constituting comparative indicators for the use of time and unremunerated work and also the enormous difficulty of developing instruments used to collect information (see annexed chart).

The coordination of UNIFEM part of UN Women together with the Division of Gender Matters of ECLAC and with the cooperation of national statistics offices and national women machineries in the region has allowed for: a) showing the advantages and disadvantages of various methodologies used for measuring non-remunerated work, from the gender point of view; b) promoting the development of *ad hoc* methodological schemes applied to Latin American context; c) carrying out research, making recommendations and embarking on effective public policy actions, based on a better understanding of the economic and social value of unremunerated work. One concrete product is the publication of *Lineamientos Generales para las Encuestas de Uso del Tiempo en America Latina* (General Guidelines on Time Use Surveys in Latin America), which contains a conceptual reference framework for surveys on the use of time, as well as the Classifications of Activities on the Use of Time for Latin America (CAUTAL), which was elaborated with support from INEGI, UNIFEM part of UN Women and the Division of Gender Matters of ECLAC. Now that we have this instrument, the challenge is to develop models of instruments for collecting data (modules, batteries of questions and questionnaires for independent surveys, be these diaries or lists of activities) in order to achieve the objectives of evaluating the contribution of women of the

region and the significance of this contribution on the quality of life and exercising of their rights.

It is also necessary to make a diagnosis of various measurements using the different instruments and to study the consequences of using different types of instruments on the quality of data. As an example, some countries that have collected information using the methodology of diaries of activities have encountered problems in conciliating information 24 hours a day and with choosing the days of the week; they have also had problems with the type of information being appropriate. There have also been reports of high percentages of no-answer and of information of bad quality when using the diary instrument, such as the case of experimental surveys recently applied in Brazil or the survey made in Mexico in 1998. These types of problems are found most often in contexts of very low educational levels.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

States should formulate public policies which assume their responsibilities for providing public services and diminishing the overload placed on women due to the lack or weakness of these services. It is necessary that relevant public policies be aimed at breaking the barriers confronting women which prevent them from participating fully in remunerated work and obtaining economic autonomy; making water and electricity available for women, satisfying their need for day care centers (with schedules compatible with women's jobs). In order to acknowledge the economic value of this unremunerated work done by women it is necessary to have good, reliable and opportune information. Not to do this is to continue with public policies blind to the needs of women and indifferent to their economic and social contributions.