

▶ LFS modular time use measurement project

Closing the gender data gap on unpaid domestic and care work

September 2021

▶ Measuring unpaid domestic and care work

Launched in 2020, this multi-country, mixed methods pilot aims to produce evidence-based solutions to advance the production of accurate, timely, and cost-effective statistics on unpaid domestic and care work (UDCW), and total work time, in low- and middle-income countries.

Unpaid domestic and care work

Globally, women perform the major share of UDCW⁽¹⁾. The persistence of gender inequalities in the division of UDCW is both a cause and effect of women's economic and social marginalisation, constraining opportunities for decent work, and basic rights to health, education, and participation in the public sphere. The effects are amplified for the poorest in society, lacking options to outsource UDCW to the market or invest in timesaving appliances⁽²⁾.

Historically, the value generated by UDCW, and the costs imposed, have been largely overlooked in public policy and investment decisions. This is now beginning to change, following sustained advocacy.

Despite growing demand for statistics on UDCW, in many countries, data are collected infrequently or not at all. One reason for this is the cost and complexity of the default measurement approach, the *time use survey* (TUS).

Box 1: Unpaid care and domestic work



A woman does laundry while caring for her child
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Unpaid domestic and care work - also termed *own use provision of services* - covers a wide range of activities and responsibilities that are essential for societies to function and flourish, including: looking after family children and ill, disabled, or aging relatives; routine housework, household repairs, maintenance and decorating, and household budgeting and management.

LFS modular time use pilot project

The ILO's LFS modular time use pilot project aims to contribute to addressing this gap by supporting the production of statistics on UDCW and total work time through existing national LFS programmes.

The goal is to offer a practical solution where an independent TUS is not feasible, or where interim statistics are needed between dedicated TUS rounds.

Additionally, the project will assess how best to leverage LFS-based time use (TU) measurement to support analysis of the relationships and trade-offs between paid and unpaid work time, labour force participation, and opportunities for decent work.

Two common TU measurement approaches have been selected for pilot testing - the *light diary* and *stylised questionnaire*. Piloting is underway in Lao PDR and India, with qualitative and quantitative tests planned throughout 2021 and 2022.

The pilot tests address challenges related to field operations (e.g., maintaining a representative sample of days without compromising response rates) as well as measurement challenges related to activity classification, to capturing multi-tasking and unpaid care responsibilities, and to respondent ease with “clock-oriented” recall and reporting.

Evidence-based, validated project outputs are scheduled for release in late 2022, and include:

- Model LFS time use modules in diary and stylised formats
- National adaptation & implementation toolkits
- New ILO-ITC course offerings (both stand-alone training courses and [integrated sessions](#)).
- A practical training guide

Outputs will be integrated into the ILO’s programme of technical assistance and capacity building.

Interim project updates and findings will be published on the project [webpage](#).

The project contributes to wider UN and Country efforts to simplify TU measurement and support the production of national statistics on UDCW. ILO is working closely with other UN agencies and NSOs to align parallel streams of work.

Box 2: Pilot strategy

Rapid Ethnographic Assessment	Cognitive Interviews	Survey Experiments	Expert Review
► Light diary ► Stylised	► Stylised	► Light diary ► Stylised	► Light diary ► Stylised
Identify sources of reporting gaps	Assess variability in respondent comprehension	Evaluate impact of pre-assigned diary-day protocols	Align to emerging best practices
Inform salience of “passive” care responsibilities	Assess variability in respondent recall, retention, interpretation	Evaluate impact of restriction of proxy-reporting	Link to parallel work to advance UDCW statistics
Inform anchoring of ‘clock- time’ based reporting	Assess ease with clock-time based reporting	Evaluate strategies to identify passive care	Ensure compatible with countries’ LFS operating protocols
Inform recall aid development	Inform recall aid development	Identify threats to feasibility at scale	Identify barriers to widespread take-up
	Identify scope to reduce burden	Identify scope to reduce burden	Content validation: Instruments+toolkit
		Assess concordance of estimates	Trial and validation: Training curriculum

Figure 1: Research methods and objectives

Data and methods

Figure 1 summarises the pilot strategy and priorities for testing at each stage.

Qualitative methods include rapid ethnographic assessment and cognitive interviews. Based on the results of the qualitative testing, the pilot modules will be revised ahead of further testing.

Quantitative testing uses survey experiments to support robust evaluation of alternative question formats, different methodological approaches (light diary and stylised), and alternative field protocols to maintain the representativeness of the sample across the different days of the week.

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