

Meeting of the 2013/2014 Bureau
Geneva (Switzerland), 28-29 January 2014

Item 3 (b) of the
Provisional Agenda

PROPOSAL FOR FURTHER WORK ON TIME-USE STATISTICS

Note by the Secretariat

*This document contains a proposal for future work that reflects the issues requiring further work identified in the “Guidelines for the harmonization of time-use surveys” (2013), and the related discussion at the October 2013 meeting of the Bureau. The proposal includes two activities: (a) collection of methodological materials on time-use surveys and (b) preparing guidelines on valuing unpaid household service work. **The Bureau reviewed and approved the proposal.***

I. BACKGROUND

1. In November 2010, the CES Bureau conducted an in-depth review of time-use surveys, which led to the establishment of a task force on this topic. The task force developed the “Guidelines for harmonizing time-use surveys” that the Bureau endorsed in October 2013. The secretariat submitted the Guidelines to publication¹ in December 2013.
2. The work on the Guidelines revealed that current knowledge on several key issues is not sufficient for the formulation of clear-cut recommendations. The Guidelines therefore include a chapter on issues requiring further work. CES members identified further such issues in the electronic consultation on the Guidelines in spring 2013. The Bureau discussed these issues in October 2013 and requested the secretariat to prepare a proposal for further work. The present document contains this proposal.
3. It is proposed to pursue further work in the following two areas:
 - a) Collecting methodological material on time-use surveys
 - b) Preparing guidelines on valuing unpaid household service work

II. COLLECTION OF METHODOLOGICAL MATERIALS ON TIME-USE SURVEYS

4. The “Guidelines for harmonizing time-use surveys” identified, among others, light time-use surveys, the use of modern technologies and the measurement of subjective well-being as areas requiring further work. Recommendations in these areas could not go far enough because of insufficient empirical evidence on the various practices in countries. It is therefore necessary to collect such evidence as more countries carry out light time-use surveys, use

¹ Available at http://www.unece.org/publications/time_use_surveys.html

web-based questionnaires and new technologies, such as GPS trackers or accelerometers, and include questions on subjective well-being in their time-use surveys.

5. The Centre for Time-Use Research at Oxford University maintains a database of time-use surveys² that includes basic facts on each survey and in some cases links to more documentation. While this is a very useful source of information on time-use surveys in general, the methodological information available on different surveys varies greatly and is not covering the methodological issues of light surveys, new technologies and the measurement of subjective well-being. It is necessary to make the existing information on those issues easily accessible.

6. It is therefore proposed that the UNECE secretariat will carry out the following activities:

- a) Create a web site for sharing material on the implementation of light time-use diaries, novel data collection methods and the measurement of subjective well-being in time-use surveys;
- b) Contact the statistical offices and other organizations that recently conducted a time-use survey, to obtain their methodological reports;
- c) Organize the collected material in a user-friendly manner and update the site with reports from new surveys as they become available.

7. Such web site could be very useful for countries that are planning their time-use surveys. After accumulating more information on the experience with light time-use surveys, use of new technologies and measurement of subjective well-being in time-use surveys of different countries, methodological work could be undertaken to provide guidelines and recommendations on those topics.

8. The web site with the initially collected methodological reports would be available in summer 2014. The secretariat would present a progress report to the October 2014 meeting of the Bureau.

III. GUIDELINES ON VALUING UNPAID HOUSEHOLD SERVICE WORK

9. According to the “Guidelines for harmonizing time-use surveys”, one of the areas where information from time diary surveys is necessary for informed policymaking, and for which other data sources are not adequate, is **unpaid work and non-market production**. Lack of information on unpaid household service work might lead to a policy conclusion that an increase in services, such as childcare or long-term care, increases the quantity of goods and services produced in a country, when in fact they simply move production from the household to the market sector. Some countries have started to value these activities through an input-based Household Satellite Account³, which provides important information on the economy and society.

10. **Placing monetary values on the non-market sector is not straightforward** since the work is unpaid and often produces intangible services. Broadly, there are two distinct

² <http://www.timeuse.org/information/studies>

³ See for example: Eurostat (2003), *Household production and consumption: proposal for a methodology of Household Satellite Accounts*; Statistics Finland and the National Consumer Research Centre (2006), *Household production and consumption in Finland, 2001 – Household Satellite Account*; United Nations (2000), *Household accounting experience in concepts and compilation vol. 1 household sector accounts, Vol. 2 Household satellite extension*; United States National Research Council (2005), *Beyond the market: designing non-market accounts for the United States*.

approaches to estimation: (1) by placing a value on the unpaid work registered in the time diaries (“input valuation”), and (2) by estimating the market-equivalent value of the episodes of intangible service consumption recorded in the diaries (“output valuation”). In turn, the first of these has two alternatives: (1a) the “opportunity cost” approach and (1b) the “replacement wage” approach. The opportunity cost approach is based on the observation that, while doing this unpaid work, the household members are prevented from engaging in paid work, so their unpaid work is to be valued by their own marginal wage. The replacement wage approach values the unpaid work time either by the wage rates earned by specialist workers or by generalists (termed “housekeepers”) who might otherwise have been paid for this work.

11. Related **measurement challenges** include the question of multitasking as, for example, it is possible for somebody to prepare a meal, keep an eye on a small child and help an older child with their homework at the same time. Furthermore, there is a question about the borderline with household service work and leisure as, for example, some people would regard gardening as a routine household work while others may see it as a leisure activity.

12. **There is currently no general agreement on the methodological choices and measurement challenges.** It is therefore necessary to summarize the existing national experience and provide guidelines on these issues.

13. **Further need for updated guidance emerges from the “Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization”** adopted by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians in October 2013. The Resolution aims to set standards for work statistics to guide countries in updating and integrating their existing statistical programmes. It defines the statistical concept of work for reference purposes and provides operational concepts, definitions and guidelines for distinct forms of work. This has implications on the classification and analysis of time-use activities related to unpaid household service work.

IV. PROPOSAL

14. It is proposed:

- a) To collect methodological material on the implementation of time-use surveys and create a web site for sharing experience as described in para 6;
- b) The secretariat will consult with countries and international organizations participating in the work of CES the proposal to set up a task force for developing guidelines on valuing unpaid household service work. ILO has already indicated readiness to participate in such a task force.

15. The Bureau agreed with this proposal, and terms of reference for the task force will be presented to the October 2014 meeting of the Bureau for review and approval.

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