

## Making Time for Time-use Research

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Planning intentional learning initiatives to measure time-use impacts is crucial for development projects that might unintentionally burden program participants with additional time-use constraints<sup>1</sup>. For example, equipping participants with labor-intensive technologies can elongate their working hours. Time-use data can show us how much time individuals devote to productive or reproductive tasks<sup>2</sup>, including childcare, domestic chores, and leisure. Understanding this data allows programs to make decisions that do not overwhelm or create additional burdens for participants. Additionally, time-use data helps us understand gender norms and roles or how men and women spend their time differently during the day. It also helps programs understand the unequal distribution of paid and unpaid work and its effects on intrahousehold power dynamics and decision-making.

### Time Poverty Defined

Time poverty can be measured by if an individual has time to rest or for leisure. The importance of time-use comes from the understanding that an individual's welfare is based not only on their income or consumption but also on their ability to allocate time. Time-use allocation and constraints have severe implications on the ability of households to escape poverty<sup>1</sup>.

Research has shown that although there has been an increase in female participation in the paid workforce, women are still responsible for more unpaid work and domestic chores, in addition to paid work responsibilities<sup>3</sup>. This "double-duty" for women who decide to enter the workforce can leave them with limited or no discretionary time, also known as time poverty (see text box). Across the globe, women do three times as much domestic and unpaid care work as men-although this varies by country, with larger inequities in developing countries. According to global time-use surveys, females work more hours than men when unpaid and paid work are combined.<sup>4</sup>

This case study focuses on two ACIDI/VOCA projects, where different methods were used to measure and compare time-use between men and women within the same household and its impact on intrahousehold dynamics and economic opportunities. The pros and cons of these two measurement methods are discussed, along with suggestions on how such methods might be implemented in other projects to provide similar value.

### Understanding Time-Use Impacts in Tanzania & Laos

Two ACIDI/VOCA programs conducted time-use studies to understand time-use within households<sup>5,66</sup>. The NAFKA II activity, a United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Feed the Future (FtF) initiative, aims to develop efficient market systems that will improve the

<sup>1</sup> Seymour, Greg, Hazel Malapit, and Agnes Quisumbing. 2020. "Measuring Time Use In Developing Country Agriculture: Evidence From Bangladesh And Uganda". *Feminist Economics* 26 (3): 169-199. doi:10.1080/13545701.2020.1749867.

<sup>2</sup> Reproductive tasks and domestic work/chores are used interchangeably and are defined as labor or work associated with care giving and housework such as cleaning, cooking, childcare, and the unpaid domestic labor force.

<sup>3</sup> Hyde, Elizabeth, Margaret E Greene, and Gary L Darmstadt. 2020. "Time Poverty: Obstacle To Women'S Human Rights, Health And Sustainable Development". *Journal Of Global Health* 10 (2). doi:10.7189/jogh.10.020313.

<sup>4</sup> 2021. *UN Women Global Factsheet*. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/poww-2019-fact-sheet-global-en.pdf?la=en&vs=0>.

<sup>5</sup> Rodrigo, A., Flock, J., Samweli, D., Meena, L. and Nyambega, U. Women of Africa, what are you not? A time diaries approach to deconstruct gender norms in a rural setting- A case study with rice producers in Kilombero district, Tanzania. *Journal of Gender, Agriculture and Food Security*. Submitted April 19, 2021.

<sup>66</sup>2021. Laos Microenterprise Supported by USAID Time-use Study Report. ACIDI/VOCA.

competitiveness and inclusiveness of the rice and maize value chains in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. To accomplish its objectives, NAFKA II launched several interventions to increase the adoption of mechanization technologies and improved inputs among its program participants. The program leadership acknowledged that, for these activities to benefit men and women equally, there was a need to better understand how intrahousehold dynamics might affect the household's decision-making and control and allocation of resources.



*NAFAKA male program participants working on their time diary entries.*

Similarly, the Laos Microenterprise Activity (the Activity), supported by USAID, also conducted a time-use study. The Activity supports microenterprises in rural areas of the Xiengkhouang Province to spur competitiveness in targeted value chains, using a holistic push-pull approach<sup>7</sup>. The Activity conducted a time-use study to document how time was spent among male and female program participants. This established a baseline for future measurements and ensured participation in program activities does not add undue labor burdens.

The two programs used different methodologies to conduct this research due to varying time and budget limitations.

### NAFAKA II Methodology:

NAFAKA conducted this research using time diaries. For the initial research, participants were visited four times throughout the year 2018. The visits were planned according to the cropping calendar to gather information throughout the agriculture season. This methodology turned the farmers into enumerators. Throughout each of the rounds, farmers were in charge of recording their time for seven days, categorizing their daily activities into specific categories such as household chores, social activities, and farming activities. Before farmers recorded their time, the NAFKA staff conducted a two-day training where participants learned and ask questions about how to categorize their work. Training sessions were intentionally conducted in sex-disaggregated groups to ensure confidentiality and create safe spaces to talk about sensitive topics. To make the research more accessible for participants, the program adapted time-use diaries into a picture format so that communities with limited or varying literacy levels could equally participate. The NAFKA staff collected diaries at the end of the week and engaged in conversations within groups with approximately 169 couples-men and women separately- about their experiences, challenges, and learnings.

### The Laos Microenterprise Activity Methodology:

The Laos Microenterprise Activity took a different approach to conduct this research. The Activity collected data over four days in September 2020. Four different sites were visited: two, where the primary ethnicity of participants was Hmong, and two sites where the participants' primary ethnicity was Lao Lum. In each site, data on daily time-use and the gendered division of labor within the

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<sup>7</sup> A push/pull approach is a pathways-based, market-oriented approach to development that uses pull strategies to expand the quality and diversity of economic opportunities accessed, as well as push strategies to build capacities for engaging in markets.

household was collected from four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) organized into same-sex groups, disaggregated by age. One hundred and twenty-three persons participated in the study.

During the FGDs, the facilitators led two main activities. First, FGD participants plotted a typical day from when they woke up until the time they went to bed. Facilitators recorded these tasks, how long it took to complete the tasks, and what time they occurred.

The second activity involved participants identifying who in their household was usually responsible for the daily tasks. This activity used picture cards showing various tasks. Participants placed the picture cards into baskets that identified the person responsible for each task. Additionally, facilitators led a general discussion on workload. Participants responded to questions about if they would like to pay someone else to do specific tasks to free up more of their time or if any technologies would reduce time spent on domestic tasks, enabling them to spend more time doing productive labor and participating in cash-earning activities or leisure time.

### Study Findings:

Key findings from the NAFKA II time-use research demonstrated that:

Although the findings showed that men spend an additional two hours every day on activities that provide monetary compensation, due to higher participation in farming, these additional hours do not necessarily indicate they work more intensely.



Women developed a strong relationship and trust with the NAFKA staff

#### Women feel powerless and face abusive situations.

Women developed a strong relationship and trust with the staff, thereby creating a safe space for them to share personal information. This yielded an unexpected finding, such as instances of intimate partner violence (IPV).



by foot VS.



bike

Women lack having proper infrastructure or technologies to support them as compared to men. Women would fetch water by foot while men use bicycles to transport buckets of water.



60 percent VS. 23 percent

Domestic and care work

The overall analysis showed that **women are burdened with disproportional reproductive work** (childcare and domestic work), spending about seven hours a day on these tasks while their male counterparts spend about three hours a day on those same tasks.

As for the Laos Microenterprise Activity, the key findings are as follows:

For both Lao Loum and Hmong groups, *men had more free time than women* and spent less time than women on productive/reproductive tasks. (See Figure 1).



Respondents noted that **specific productive and reproductive tasks were highly time-consuming (such as washing clothes and feeding animals)** and stated they would benefit from technology like washing machines and maize grinders for chicken food, freeing up more time for income-producing activities.



**68.8** percent of Lao Loum Women  
**66.7** percent of Hmong Women

Most women engage in handicraft production like weaving and producing tapestries. This type of work provides stable household income throughout the year.

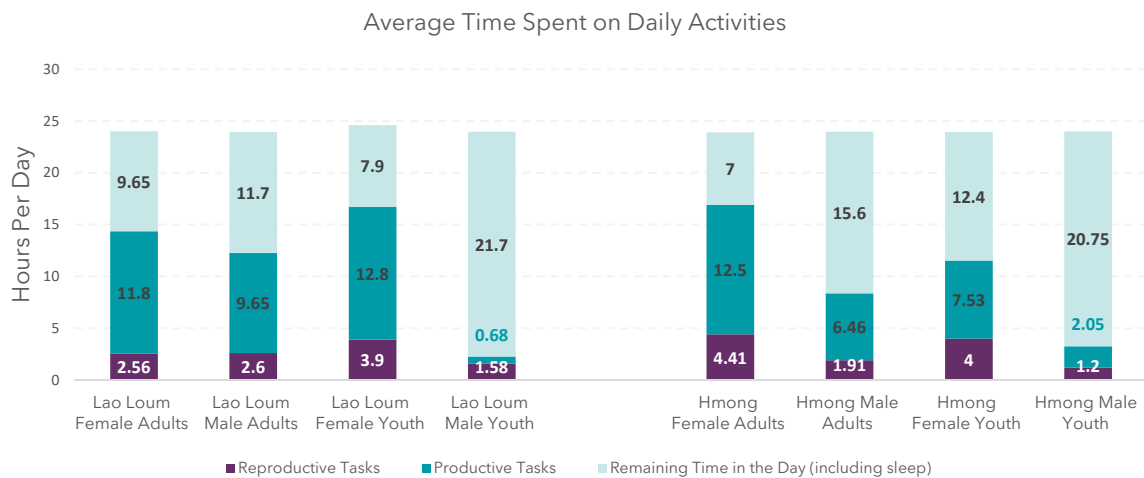


Male youth (15 – 18 years old) reported working less time overall on both productive and reproductive tasks than all other groups and have significantly more time remaining once all daily tasks are completed.

### Recommendations/Adaptions:

These findings provided each program with a better understanding of how much time participants spent each day on any given task. With this information, they adapted their programming, making informed decisions and recommendations to improve activities to further support participants and have more successful program outcomes. Data from both NAFKA II and the Laos Microenterprise Activity indicated women carry most of the reproductive work burden and have productive work responsibilities. This limits their time for self-care and leisure and makes them vulnerable to time-poverty and other health issues, such as the intimate partner violence some NAFKA program participants faced.

Figure 1. LME Time Use Findings by Ethnic Group



### NAFAKA II Response:

As an immediate first step, NAFKA II sought support by connecting those affected by gender-based violence (GBV) to GBV support services. NAFKA II also reached out to local government authorities to push for the creation of a gender desk at the local police station, which is in line with the Tanzanian government's GBV support system.

GBV occurs largely because of gender and social norms, which ACIDI/VOCA addresses within all their programs. In the areas where NAFKA implements the activities, there is a perception that women are less capable of doing certain activities or activities considered "men's" work. They are confined to reproductive tasks and have less access to economic generating activities, and their decision-making is restricted, particularly over income and spending. To address these issues, and as a part of a longer-term approach, the program decided to do three things to tackle the unequal balance of power and gender dynamics that the research exposed.



- Provide women's empowerment trainings to challenge the pre-established roles in society
- Increase the number of women in capacity-building training
- Promote greater participation of women in leadership positions in producer organizations

### The Laos Microenterprise Activity Response:

This study's key recommendation is for the Activity to carefully consider how to encourage men to increase the amount of time they spend on productive activities, to increase family income. This approach would avoid women increasing their time for animal rearing activities at the expense of making handicrafts, which would inevitably come with the loss of that

income. Like NAFKA II, the Activity implements in communities that have deeply rooted cultural perceptions of gender roles. The Activity will need to take a strategic approach to encourage men to increase time spent on productive activities while mitigating the challenges and risks. The program has made the following recommendations to address these issues:

- Program activities should focus on engaging men and boys in income production and encourage project participants and their families to look at family labor and how income generation is factored into the labor, and how income is disbursed amongst household members.
- The program should provide technology training and promote equitable division of labor to improve the competitiveness in farm production.
- The program should conduct participatory sessions and trainings to raise awareness of culture-based perceptions on gender roles to examine assumptions about the gendered division of labor and the differential value of labor inputs.

### Scaling These Methods

NAFAKA and the Laos Microenterprise Activity have benefitted from conducting time-use studies because this data has allowed both programs to understand time-use patterns and intrahousehold dynamics better. Although each program used a different methodology, they gained valuable information for their programming to better promote equity between men and women.

Depending on time, budget, and human resources, the chosen data collection methodology can look different from one program to another, with **pros** and **cons** for each one. For example, as we saw with NAFKA's time-use diaries, the program was a) able to gather a lot of rich data over a long period of time, b) built the capacity of the research participants so they could be enumerators c) did not rely on participants using memory to record their time use, and d) built strong relationships between the staff and participants. However, this methodology is time-consuming and requires more engaged staff for a more extended period.

In comparison, the Activity was a) able to conduct and finish the data collection within four days (less time-intensive), b) requiring less staff and a smaller budget; and yet c) the methodology does require



*Women completing their time-use diary entries for the NAFKA time-use study.*

participants to recollect their time use based on memory, in focus groups, which could lead to error and less detailed/comprehensive data.

Regardless of the methodology used, time-use studies help us understand how people allocate time between work, family, leisure, and other activities. Time-use helps us measure time spent on productive and reproductive tasks that can increase awareness about power dynamics within a household and how program interventions might add additional unintended inequalities. For these reasons, programs should take the time to conduct this research to equip the right knowledge to make informed decisions on the programming and how it may or may not be beneficial to program participants.