

## International Workshop on Household Satellite Accounts

### Gender and Health,

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Dr Marilyn Waring  
Professor of Public Policy  
Auckland University of Technology  
[Marilyn.Waring@aut.ac.nz](mailto:Marilyn.Waring@aut.ac.nz)

Good Morning. I am very privileged to be here, and I thank you for this invitation and opportunity to participate and learn. I apologise that I do not speak Spanish, and I offer my thanks at the outset to the interpreters who will assist in my presentation, and enable me to understand those that follow.

I understand that you have copies of my paper *Counting for Something! Recognising women's contribution to the global economy through alternative accounting systems*.<sup>1</sup> It is not my intention to repeat all the content of this paper this morning, but to take the opportunity to reflect on the key questions to be addressed in these two days, so that I might make a contribution to moving from talking and theorising to front line application. I do this as the 'agent provocateur', and also because I am also bored with saying the same thing for three decades, and encountering the same old tired arguments.

Some years ago I served as a member of the New Zealand parliament, (my first election campaign cost NZD\$800) and for two terms I chaired the Public Expenditure and Public Accounts Committee. For the past three years I have been a member of the Board of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand. So I do know what purposes the SNA and the GDP can serve, as instruments conveying useful patterns of information at a macro economic level, for both national analysis and international comparability. However that information is only useful if the user understands the wide range of caveats that must be entered in such use. These include the observations that the single largest sector of a nation's economy, the unpaid household sector, is absent; GDP statistics can pathologically demonstrate that participation in war is good for growth; the analytical framework allows that exploitation, despoilation and extraction of natural resources is good for growth; depreciation is treated as income – and these are just a few of the reservations that have to be entertained. Few key policy makers in any country understand this clearly.

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<sup>1</sup> *Gender and Development Vol.11, No.1, May 2003, 35-43*

The SNA measures market exchange without a debit side. Yet each edition of the rules of the UNSNA claims that the statistics measure 'well being' and are an indispensable framework for public policy formation.

It's important that you understand that my interest in this area is from the standpoint of a strategic policy maker. I am interested in the potential end use of statistics. Furthermore, as a social science academic, in particular one who teaches research methods to Doctoral and Master's thesis candidates, my interest is in the rigour and transparency of the process, and the expertise that is drawn on at each part of the process. I will return to these matters a little later in my address.

I have also been influenced, as we all are, by those with whom I have worked, and whose work I have observed. I think of particular of Len Cook, who was for twelve years the Chief Government Statistician in New Zealand, and subsequently the UK Chief Government statistician for a similar period. In 1984-6 Len had the experience of sitting on the *Royal Commission on Social Policy* established by the New Zealand Government. (Initially he was not appointed as a Commissioner, but simply as a statistician to support the Commissioners). This experience taught him that statisticians who did not understand how their data was used and abused at end use level are very irresponsible. As a result, on several occasions I was then invited to address staff at all levels of each of our national statistical offices, on the end use of nationwide survey data in scoping policy, and in adoption, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

As a further consequence of his experience, Len was also of major importance in ensuring that New Zealand's first nationwide time use survey was undertaken. The New Zealand survey was not supported in Cabinet by the Minister of Statistics and, as Chief Statistician, Len had to recruit a number of policy agencies, in particular those for women, children, and Maori (the indigenous people of New Zealand), as well as other Government Ministries or Departments, as both advocates and resource providers for the survey. For example, the Director General of Health could understand how important such material would be to her sector, and so did the Chief Executive in the Ministry of Agriculture, but the Ministry of Education refused to participate in this way. However, this did mean that there were Ministers at the Cabinet level who supported a time use survey.

To enable the survey to go ahead, the Len 'stole' household labour force cells that had been prepared for the HLFS. He cut out the reporting of business statistics from monthly to quarterly to provide additional resources for the time use budget. There were no complaints ever received from the business community or other stakeholders who had had access to

monthly data. New Zealand undertook the most sophisticated time use survey that had, at that time, ever been completed, and the undertaking was very much a Chief Statistician's initiative. Len then went on to include questions on time use in the UK Census of Population, which had never been included before. I tell you this story because I do know what the commitment of a few well placed individuals, whose positions 'at the top' is the result of fortuitous timing, can accomplish in spite of political opposition.

In respect of the New Zealand time use survey, it would be obvious to say that my earlier work on the SNA provided major ammunition for advocacy and lobby groups who wanted to see a time use survey. I was one of a number of people called on to participate at various points in the process, including the establishment of the coding framework, the decisions on the lower age for response and for interpretation of the data at the end of the survey, as well as being active in decisions made around the nature of dissemination of the data.

As a consultant, I have worked with the regional FAO office in Bangkok on piloting time use surveys and, as an academic, I have used the New Zealand time diary in my own research around the portfolio lives of artists, and I have also been the supervisor of significant doctoral theses which have had, as one of their analytical streams, measurement of unpaid work. I have also been a consultant to governments at various stages between scoping and piloting through to end use of the data in respect of time use studies. Now, I do not lay all of this information out for you to assess my credentials, but so that my motivations and strategies are quite clear. I also want you to see clearly that I have no expertise at all at various points of the process which are on the agenda for this meeting. However, I have plenty of opinions.

A number of you will be familiar with the publication *Guide to Producing Statistics on Time Use: Measuring Paid and Unpaid Work*.<sup>2</sup> I believe this is available in Spanish, and in the comments to follow I have often noted a page or paragraph reference to this publication, so that you can independently read the wider discussion of issues in respect to my comments.

It will not surprise some of you familiar with my work to say that I have an extraordinary problem with what is always specified as one of the major purposes of such Guides (and perhaps meetings such as this), (see comments in the *Guide* Preface, also page 8) about the aim '**to facilitate harmonisation of methods and practices** in collecting and processing data, in disseminating it and ultimately to have **an international classification of activities** that is an international standard' (my emphasis).

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, United Nations, New York, 2005.

Well, that's actually the problem with the UNSNA. This pursuit of international standards around methods and practising, and the need for international comparators, is really such an outdated colonising approach, and such an impediment to strategic policy purposes, that I am intolerably impatient with this. This closed architecture, with the classification determined by people who sit in head offices who never, ever go to the front line to attempt to collect data, makes me impatient. The imposition of the classification system established in the North (or West or developed countries) and imposed on others regardless of relevance, because international comparability is of domestic political importance for highly abstracted contested rankings, makes me impatient. The absence of any understanding, that for front line policy purposes there is a need, from country to country, to use different methods, at different times, with different populations, to get the data, makes me impatient.

However, as a political strategist, I have never been afraid to use the language and political opportunities provided by such as the Beijing, Rio, or Copenhagen Conference Declarations, to pursue a policy instrument which could cause the data I wanted and needed to be collected, even though the need was framed in a different end use. So you will find me moving the amendment at the 1980 UN Mid Decade Conference on Women to measure women's unpaid productive, reproductive and service work; you will find instances of my supporting satellite accounts, and various other manifestations of such activity, because strategically targeted public policy interventions, for example in public health, would be radically enhanced by access to the data that would be the outcome of adoption of such recommendations. (You might be very surprised at what I really think about satellite accounts). It means that when I read in the *Guide* (page 13, para 38) that the production of time use data is "now generally motivated by two general objectives: a) to provide indicators of the quality of life or well-being of the nation in terms of time use patterns of people; and b) to improve estimates of the value of goods and services with particular emphasis on increasing visibility of women's work through better statistics on their contribution to the economy" I am quite comfortable. It seems to me that such language allows that a key reason why parliaments are then prepared to provide budgetary support for time use surveys is because of the assistance that they will deliver for strategic policy interventions in particular regions, or to particular populations nationally, and not because they want to be able to undertake an internationally replicable and comparative survey with the same classifications.

At this point it's probably good to tell you what I do agree with. I agree that we need to know where the activities are taking place with whom and for whom. All the temporal considerations information has to be available – the time of day, the day of the week, the month in which the activity is undertaken, which year the activity is undertaken, are all important.

My own preference is that the reference population should be individuals, not households, because there is no way in which one person can speak for a household in respect of the activities that have been undertaken. There are always differences between the reports of an individual on the activities of a household, and those that were actually observed as being undertaken. Simultaneity of activities is rarely captured when the one person reports for all. We have known for decades that men over report their activities and underreport those of women. Even women tend to under report their own activities, and the number and simultaneity of them, when time use is recalled as opposed to recorded in real time, and the greater the time gap between the activities and the recall, the larger this discrepancy. I find the recall approach insufficiently rigorous, and the savings costs of this method do not, in my mind, justify the loss of accuracy and texture.

My own preference is for respondents to be individuals aged over 12, and thus any time use survey should not be aligned with a labour force survey which would lose younger 'workers' from the opportunity to participate in the time use responses. In respect of classifications, I guess that I can say that I do support harmonised classification provided the classification architecture is open; that is, that the most important form of classification is one that makes sense inside the nation state. (I'll also talk a little more about open architecture shortly). By all means, later, and if the budget is available, reconfigure the data to make international comparisons harmonious and available, but this is absolutely one of the **least** important strategies when budgeting for a time use survey. Besides, it may well be that you never conduct a 'national' time use survey.

What do I mean by this? The Guide reminds us (page 19) that we have to answer the question: what are the strategic aims and objectives for the survey? This will tell us what to consider re survey content, population coverage, and time coverage. I am completely unapologetic about a need for the strategic focus of surveys, and to ensure resource savings in this way. Let's take the area of primary health care. It shouldn't have to be stated that in the populations of concern, primary health care is usually undertaken by members of the household or extended family or neighbours or the immediate community. For most people on the planet 'primary' health care does not mean medical intervention by a professional. We know that the economics of health demonstrate that the earlier the health intervention, the less the economic costs of the illness or accident to the community - and by 'economic' in this context I include the loss of the production, reproduction and service work of an unpaid worker who is ill or injured. Savings can be made by removing high and upper middle class cells from the survey population respondents, and using these resources to over sample in cohorts that traditionally have poor response rates. In terms of different health situations, in

particular those focussed on how to improve and assist with the unpaid care burden and those working at this coal face, it is just not necessary to collect the same sized sample of male respondents compared with female respondents. Pre test and pilot studies will show how much data is needed, and from which cohort of men, to be reliable for strategic policy interests. Such an approach also completely complies with the *Guide* (para 101, page 25 ) that the standard should be “the minimum number of representations of a particular day of the week that will produce tolerable standard errors given specific analytical objectives” as the smaller population targeted gives more ability to get a valid temporal coverage.

The *Guide* (page 20) raises the question as to whether or not prioritisation of simultaneous activities should be made by the respondent or the analyst. Wow! To read this in 2005 I was truly shocked! I thought that in the social sciences we were well past thinking that the analyst was the interpreter and expert compared with the person whose lived experience was the subject of the data collected! As an international examiner of doctoral theses I can tell you that such an approach would be highly contested, unless, for example, the candidate also belonged to the population cohort being researched, and that is highly unlikely in this context. I have no doubt that such prioritisation, if indeed it is at all necessary, should be done by the respondent. However prioritisation is a male thing. It reflects that old Census question: ‘what is your primary activity?’ That’s easy for a class of people, overwhelmingly male, who usually only do one thing at a time. It is a nonsense for those who spend most of their time in simultaneous activities, most of which cannot be postponed until some other time. You cannot prepare a meal, care for the unwell and the elderly, offer counsel to a child, and answer to visitors to the household in a sequence of individual activities, nor can you say that one was more important than another. It is just a ridiculous approach to reality, and you cannot target efficient policy interventions around the abstract and unreal data that results from any approach that asked for priorities in such circumstances.

And it’s just too bad if the end result is more than the requisite number of minutes in a day. The *Guide*, (para 110,page 26) says “there is a consensus among time use experts that primary activities must add up to 1,440 minutes per day”. It is then claimed that this increases the accuracy and completeness of reporting very significantly. Note that the *Guide* only claims a consensus, and I’m interested to know just who these **time use experts** are, because in this particular instance I presume they are not social scientists or public policy strategists who do not find that primary activities must add up to that many minutes, especially if simultaneous activities are to be recorded. It has been my experience as a policy maker, that the simultaneity, with all the roles visible, is more important for strategising, than is the fact that the activities add up to a specific number of minutes a day. It’s no more difficult to read such material, with the caveats entered, than it is to make sense of SNA

figures in a policy context. (Think for a moment about the treatment of services or invisibles in the SNA in a nation state context). Why on earth ‘experts’ think there should be more difficult standards when the picture that emerges is about women’s activity, as opposed to men’s, is problematic to me.

The simultaneity is also important to be captured because, of course, it demonstrates an up-skilling of activities. This comes into play during the imputation of unpaid work argument, where the favoured position is that of replacing all of the work with one imputed wage or salary, normally that of a housekeeper or cleaner or domestic, as opposed to somebody in a paid work place position, who combines major strategic management and logistical analysis with consistent outputs seven days a week, is constantly on call, and who would be remunerated at a far more significant level if she had to be replaced in the market. (Insurance policies are instructive in this particular. Major corporations who purchase ‘key man’ insurance make USD six figure sums available for the loss of the spouse/woman in the home, so that a number of trained and skilled people would be paid to replace this woman in every 24 hour period).

Who are the ‘experts’ is also important at every step of a time use survey. Other than the technical and logistical requirements of such a survey, the ‘experts’ are actually those who are filling in the time diaries on their own lives. They are not often seen in this way. As much as possible, particularly in the work that is done before the administration of the survey, these people, rather than visiting academics, bureaucrats or anybody else, are the best analysts of the socio-environmental area in which they live and the way they work. The *Guide* also suggests (page 45) that this can be collected “without asking the respondents themselves but rather by collecting information from maps and local authorities”. By all means collect this data, but subject it to verification from the local people. Much of it, for all sorts of reasons – politics, resource shortages, incompetence, corruption – is completely unreliable, and local people can tell you why very quickly. Sometimes all this requires is several life history interviews and a village meeting.

The *Guide* (para 95 page 24) leaves out entirely the option of the leave-behind diary being completed where there are respondents who are pre literate (I do not use the term ‘illiterate’ – everyone would read if they were given the chance) in the household. This approach presumes that the observation method, using a diary, is not available. That is only the case if the presumption is that only outside adults who are paid observers collect the data. In the pilot work we conducted in Asia in an FAO project, we found that in most communities that were identified as ‘preliterate’, there were children aged 12 + who were very literate, and who were available to be trained as observant enumerators for members of their own

immediate family households, and their extended family households. They were extremely accurate at recording simultaneous activities every five minutes in 48 hour time diaries. Boys followed men and girls followed women. The major impediment to overcome was to have the family accept that the child was not available for family work activities during these 48 hours. The activity was treated as a major education input for the children, who filled in their own diaries in the week beforehand as part of their training, and who also assisted in the construction of the village profile. 'Payment' was by way of the provision of school lunches and equipment for all children at the school they attended. (Not only did we find that 12 year olds were fabulous participant observers, but in the New Zealand survey we found that young people were much more reliable in general than adults, at filling in their diary. They took it very seriously and they felt very responsible and honoured that they were participating in this way). To think that a lack of literacy levels means that a recall has to be the response leaves out a number of options.

It's also vital to be realistic about the kind of data that would be collected when the 'official' collector calls at the door. It's patently obvious that significant populations are not counted in the most sophisticated of Statistical offices: no one has any idea of how many illegal migrants are not counted in the North. In countries where oppressive regimes are or have been in office, there's an extraordinary reluctance to participate in surveys, and even where there is participation, the data is not at all reliable. You will notice that almost every UN or other agency publication pretends these are not vital issues.

In respect of coding and the diary approach, I do think that the pilot can assist pre-coding and resources can then be saved by having particular options available for the most time-consuming of activities; for example travel, sleeping, eating - and the respondent can be asked to enter those activities by way of a code.

I also believe that fixed intervals in a 24-hour diary help to capture specificity and simultaneity with the caveat that a 24-hour diary will often have to be presented in a different way for those whose sense of the time of day is not driven by Greenwich Mean Time.

The *Guide* (para 163 page 40) also deals with the problem of separating market from non market work for the purposes of the SNA production boundary, and there is other commentary about when people are not working. As I have explained, I think it is quite justified to use the satellite accounts as a justification to collect time use data, but this end use is well down the list of strategic policy priorities once you have that data. And somehow, UN agency publications on the boundary of production always offer opportunities for a little fun. For example, the *Guide* says :“reporting work paid activities may help to distinguish non paid

activities that are performed for work. For example, self-employed persons may carry out various activities that are important for their business but are not formally remunerated, such as socialising”. Yes isn’t that fun! You can count ‘socialising’ as work if you are in paid work, but if you are just the wife, cooking or preparing the food and drink, and cleaning up afterwards, is unpaid work, neither remunerated nor counted as work. Of course, time spent on household and care work during paid work continues to be counted as paid work – you text your children, you do online shopping, you read a newspaper which can generally, sort of, be justified as business, but there are very perverse notions about the boundary of production. Anybody I know who has a Blackberry is constantly shifting backwards and forwards across the boundary of production.

But I also find the question purely academic. Rigorous time use data means we can see the real picture for strategic policy-making. The SNA boundaries are irrelevant at that point.

There are country-specific needs and situations in respect of the limitations and the politics of time use surveys. Never underestimate *machismo*. There will be patriarchal gatekeepers at all points. We also have to understand that, once someone has filled in a time-use diary, their behaviour will change. I have been administering the NZ time use diary in 48-hour lots to artists, and they have commented in the follow-up interview that they were much more efficient by day two in their behaviour because the diary was teaching them about the times that they were inefficient or when they were ‘wasting time’ in periods of the day which they did not consider down time.

Decisions made about the nature and type of time use diary are a question of trade-offs. Piloting is vital. Pre-testing in the field is vital, and those at the centre who are designing the survey, those who will enter the data, those who will lead analysis and interpretation of the data, and those in charge of the dissemination plans, should all be hauled off for a week as a minimum, to the countryside or the poor areas of town, which are not in the cell blocks, and observe and participate in assembling the geo/eco/political and other data, and conducting time use surveys in modern rigorous participatory methods, before they are considered safe to be let loose on the real thing.

Now, let me finish by showing you possible ways of analysing and interpreting the data in a wholly transparent and accessible way, which I speak of in the AWID paper which you have. In particular I want to show you the well being indicator analysis. Now this is also available to use as an alternative to the SNA.

See power point presentation