



Statement of UNFPA
at the
Global Forum on Gender Statistics

ISTAT

Rome, Italy

10-12 December 2007

Delivered by:

Ms. Kourtoum Nacro
Technical Advisor
Population and Development Branch
Technical Support Division

**Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

First and foremost, on behalf of Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director of UNFPA, and of Mr Rogelio Fernández-Castilla, Director of UNFPA's Technical Support Division, I would like to thank the Government of Italy for generously hosting this important Forum, the first of its kind, after the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, in 1995, and at which, gender-related issues were discussed. UNFPA is indeed very pleased to be a part of the inter-agency collaboration, which first led to the organization of the "Inter-Agency and Expert Group Meeting (IAEGM) on the Development of Gender Statistics," held in New York, 12-14 December 2006. The IAEGM took stock and assessed strategies for advancing the development of gender statistics, and recommended, among other things, the organization of this Forum, again with UNFPA collaboration. UNFPA would like to join the Government of Italy and others, in warmly welcoming participants from so many countries and from different regions, and would also like to thank the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) for coordinating the arrangements necessitated by the organization of the event.

UNFPA gives high priority to the production of gender statistics and their utilization for evidence-based policymaking, and therefore Ms. Obaid and Mr. Fernández-Castilla regret that they are unable to be with us because of other prior commitments.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Forum is indeed important because it gives another opportunity to strengthen the partnership and collaboration among international organizations and with their national counterparts, on one hand, and among the countries present at this Forum, on the other. UNFPA looks forward to contributing, as well as participating, in many more of such collaborative efforts aimed at enhancing statistical capacities for the development of gender statistics.

Addressing gender issues is crucial to the success of any development initiative, and the achievement of the MDGs, in particular. National planning must be underpinned by sound sex- and age-disaggregated data across all policy areas. However, sex-disaggregated data alone does not constitute gender statistics and is not enough to inform policy priorities and strategies. Research and analyses must follow to obtain the underlying cultural, economic, social and political factors that play into the discrepant indicators of human development borne by men and women. This is especially important for poverty reduction, so that leading policy frameworks, such as sector-wide approaches in education, health and agriculture, and poverty

reduction strategies, in particular, clearly reflect the different access and opportunities experienced by men and women. Budgeting processes would also largely benefit from the availability of such data and are crucial inputs to gender budgeting initiatives that are currently gaining momentum. There are other compelling reasons to advance gender statistics – to raise public awareness on gender issues for instance; or to target identified vulnerable groups in programming; and as a mechanism to monitor trends and fulfil commitments to gender equality.

The reality is however, that while we are making progress, we still have a long way to go. As discussed at the above-mentioned Inter-Agency and Expert Group Meeting, sex-disaggregated statistics are only systematically available for the most basic topics in social and demographic areas, such as population size, school enrolment and labour force participation. And these more often than not fail to account for vulnerable groups, such as the girl child and adolescents, the elderly, migrants and indigenous peoples. In crucial areas, such as: poverty, access to assets and opportunities, informal employment and on gender-based violence, gender statistics are still desperately inadequate.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Harmonizing methodologies for collecting gender sensitive data are key because if the data collection instruments do not take into account a gender perspective and the methodologies are not standardized, the data collected will not be gender sensitive and comparable.

UNFPA has a long history of supporting countries, in strengthening their statistical capacity, including for the collection and analysis of sex- and age-disaggregated data. This work encompasses engendering censuses; supporting the implementation of surveys, especially the demographic and health surveys, on topics such as domestic violence or violence against women and adolescent reproductive health. UNFPA also hosts knowledge-sharing workshops among practitioners; develops tools in collaboration with other partners and UN agencies; and supports regional level initiatives, including the establishment of integrated management information systems that contain sex-disaggregated data. UNFPA is looking at ways to systematically strengthen its role in improving the availability of data for gender analysis.

UNFPA is therefore pleased to see that the Forum will be discussing these issues and looks forward to seeing concrete recommendations, the implementation of which UNFPA can advocate for through its Country Offices. Such recommendations should also suggest approaches to further develop countries' capacities to produce, analyze and utilize gender statistics for evidence-based policymaking.

Given that both users and producers of data are participating in this Forum, UNFPA hopes that links will be established and maintained to ensure the usefulness of the information collected and the coordination among producers so that in a given country, only one set of statistics is produced on a given indicator. To do that, there is a need for National Statistical Offices to take the lead in liaising with the different line ministries to ensure the accuracy of the information collected, which must be disaggregated by sex and easily accessible, in a timely manner. In this connection and in line with ECOSOC Resolution 2006/6, "Strengthening

statistical capacity,” UNFPA is committed to further supporting countries’ efforts for the creation of integrated and gender sensitive national data systems. We therefore hope that the Forum will provide guidance on approaches to create such national data systems.

Additionally, in order to increase our understanding of gender issues, beyond statistics, which will enable us to develop appropriate programmes and policies, UNFPA suggests that research, within the framework suggested above, should be ongoing and hopes that this Forum, through identifying and discussing the information gaps, will also suggest some directions for research.

To reach these objectives, collaboration among all UN agencies and their partners is crucial. We therefore look forward to continuing and strengthening existing coordination mechanisms, as well as initiating new ones in view of contributing to the elimination of gender-biased inequalities.

Thank you.