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UNDP programme to improve gender statistics in Uzbekistan *

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Part A. Mainstreaming gender statistics into national development planning

Achievement of gender equality and full participation of women in social and economic processes are identified as one of the key objectives and viewed as an important issue in all sections of the Interim Welfare Improvement Strategy. Within the agenda of the Living Standards Strategy (LSS), the Government of Uzbekistan in collaboration with UNDP took important steps in nationalization of MDGs to the Uzbek context. Later the LSS has been transformed into Interim Welfare Improvement Strategy paper for 2005-2010, which is presented by the Government as the first comprehensive development strategy document (PRSP equivalent). This contributed to identifying a set of national goals, targets and time-bound indicators that can be used to monitor the implementation of the welfare improvement strategy.

The Government has adopted a number of respective legislation and specific programmes, including National Action Platform. These documents outline the strategy and priority areas of the national policy regarding women, envisaging adherence to the principle of equal rights and freedoms, and enabling equal opportunities for women and men according to the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, international commitments including recommendations of the IV Global Conference on the status of women, i.e. actions in the interests of equality, development and peace.

The National Action Platform envisages unified efforts undertaken by the government, parliament, civil society institutions, NGOs and private sector to improve the potential of women in development of a democratic society. Analysis and study of the current trends in the area of achieving the gender equality under Millennium Development Goals and National Action Platform have stipulated the following national priorities:

- Improving women's health, including reproductive health and development of the family services;
- Education and advanced professional literacy among women;
- Improving economic status of women;
- Mitigating impact of the environmental degradation;
- Strengthening participation of women in the political processes;
- Establishing special programmes to support girls;
- Developing new image of an Uzbek woman in mass media, culture and arts that overcomes existing stereotypes;
- Ensuring all types of equality for women and elimination of discrimination against them;
- Conducting gender-specific surveys;
- Developing and strengthening the role of women within NGOs;
- Enhancing national mechanism of improving the status of women in Uzbekistan.

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Measures ensuring gender equality, intensified government activities, local NGOs and scientific organizations addressing gender issues contributed to the growth in demand for statistical data related to gender equality and to the increased number of data users.

The change in demand has stipulated adjustment of goals and objectives, forms and methods of statistical data dissemination. Gender statistics principles are reviewed in close coordination with the data users taking into account recommendations provided by the international organizations towards systematization, introduction and development of new indicators enabling comparative analysis of gender disparities. Activities conducive to improving gender statistics are linked with the development of all sectors of national statistics.

Ongoing dialogue with Government on MDGs, specifically gender issues, resulted in designing a full-pledged project aimed at providing technical assistance in elaboration of national MDG statistical monitoring and reporting system. This project, to be implemented during the period of 2006-2009, is intended to support the Government in developing of statistical database and improving the data quality and availability. Also to improve the public awareness and knowledge it is considered to prepare a national MDG statistical monitoring report. It should be noted that the present project will be implemented in close cooperation with recently launched project on Welfare Improvement Strategy (WIS).

Part B: Capacity building and information sharing

B1. Multi-donor funded sub-regional workshop on gender statistics

In June 2005 RBEC Bratislava initiated, in cooperation with UNDP Uzbekistan, to organize a sub-regional meeting on gender statistics from 11 to 15 July, 2005 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Center for Economic Research ("CER") has been selected as a focal point and implementing agency for organization of this week-long workshop.

CER has invited other partners to make contribution to this event. As a result, three other key donor organizations, including U.S. Census Bureau, the World Bank Institute and UN Economic Council for Europe, showed interest in and agreed to contribute to the organization of the workshop. The workshop has been led by the international training team, consisting of Ms. Angela Me and Ms. Jessica Gardner of UNECE and Ms. Dono Abdurazakova of UNDP Regional Centre in Bratislava.

The key beneficiary countries include Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Around 25 representatives of national statistical offices, line ministries dealing with gender issues, NGOs and research institutions of the region are invited to the above training course. The participants recommended that it would be useful for countries to exchange experiences on the development and implementation of national strategies on gender statistics.

In general, the workshop is intended to supplement the on-going efforts of the Governments of above-mentioned beneficiary countries and to address emerging issues in the National Statistical Offices both in the production and dissemination of gender related data. On the other hand, the suggested

workshop will complement the on-going UNDP supported initiatives such as support to achieving the national MDGs. The main objectives of the workshop were identified as following:

- To expose users and producers of gender statistics in the countries in the sub-region to a dialogue on the need to mainstream gender into the production, dissemination and analysis of statistics and to improve the use of statistics for gender-sensitive policy making in these countries;
- To strengthen the dialogue between users and producers of gender statistics in Uzbekistan with the view to identify the relevant gender issues in the country and to initiate the necessary steps for a better mainstreaming of gender into the national statistical system;
- To initiate a dialogue in Uzbekistan and other countries in the region on the need for relevant statistics on unpaid work and violence against women and to identify methodology that could be used to collect relevant data in the region.

The focus of the workshop was to discuss emerging gender issues and how gender statistics can help to make them visible. The workshop was also intended to raise awareness of the need to invest in gender statistics and on issues such violence against women and unpaid work.

As part of this meeting, it was suggested to organize a two-day training course on selected areas of gender statistics. Two areas (topics) of gender statistics, namely, “Gender Statistics on the Labor Market” and “Gender Statistics on Decision Making” were selected and covered in details. The training was organized with lectures and work assignments where participants were asked to develop simple analysis of the data.

B2. MDG statistics workshop

UNDP is supporting the Government of Uzbekistan in strengthening national statistical capacities and improving access to human development statistics. “Statistical Capacity Building for MDG Monitoring and Reporting” is a project (“Project”) executed by UNDP and implemented by the Ministry of Economy of Uzbekistan. It aims to strengthen national statistical capacities and improve access to human development statistics.

Within the framework of the Project, UNDP organized a workshop on “MDG Indicators: Conceptual and Methodological Approaches” that took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan from 9 to 12 October, 2006. The main objectives of the workshop were to train representatives from partner government agencies in classification, methodology, data collection and dissemination, as well as to discuss the problems that transitional countries face in the field of human development and MDG statistics.

The workshop was attended by experts from key line ministries/agencies and other partner organizations. The workshop also brought together stakeholders and beneficiaries to promote inter-agency information and data exchange, to acquire skills to improve coordination among data producer units, line ministries in the process of advocating for preparing national development strategies. The workshop has been led by the international training team, consisting of Ms. Dorothy Rosenberg and Mr. Craig Fagan of BDP/UNDP and Mr. Andrey Ivanov of UNDP Regional Centre in Bratislava.

It was a well rounded learning experience which not only explained the theoretical background and concepts of the MDG/PRSP statistics but provided the workshop participants with an opportunity to share ideas and views. With the assistance of the training team our national experts were able to define both key areas of inter-agency data exchange and common set of indicators ('matrix of indicators') for monitoring progress on the MDGs and PRSP in Uzbekistan.

Thanks to the combined efforts of the training team and project staff, the workshop program has been adapted and continuously customized to the Project needs and objectives. Moreover, the course materials and handouts were well designed and structured, and available in both English and Russian languages. It is also worthwhile to note that the workshop was very well received by the participants in terms of the content, focus and the structure of the training.

One of the main outcomes of the workshop was development of matrix of indicators for each nationalized MDGs. Particularly, with the assistance of international experts The Thematic Working Group 3 members, who is responsible for MDG 3 on Gender Equality, have tried to:

- reveal data gaps, inconsistencies and weaknesses in gender related data collection, indicator production and dissemination;
- analyze data sources and consistency of indicator definition for nationalized gender indicators across involved agencies;
- identify proxy national gender indicators available in country which do not directly correspond to the international definition but essentially measure the same thing.

B3. Statistical bulletin on gender equality

Publication of statistical periodicals on different topics is widely being used by the State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics ("SCS"). In particular, preparation of regular publications on gender statistics seems to be rather effective tools for covering the growing demand for gender statistics. Although the number of such publications is steadily growing the volume and the quality of publications still remain comparatively low and do not meet requirements of the current needs. Taking into account that statistical publications are still in high demand there was a need for increasing the volume and designing newly structured and unified style for the SCS publications.

UNDP, within the Support to Reform Process in Uzbekistan Project ("SRPU/SPI"), has implemented a preparatory phase of the initiative on statistics, begun in April 2005, and aimed at supporting of the SCS in the production and dissemination of statistical bulletins on MDGs.

At the beginning, a number of national consultants – leading experts from the SCS – have been hired for this task. Besides, a local company has been contracted for designing and printing purposes. During 2005-2006 four statistical bulletins on gender, education, environment and healthcare system were published in three languages (including, Uzbek, English and Russian) and disseminated among local public libraries, universities, NGOs as well as government agencies (both central and local authorities). These publications are also available at the UNDP's website (<http://www.undp.uz>) and at web resource "Uzbekistan in Figures" (<http://www.statistics.uz>).

It is not coincident that the first pilot publication was about gender statistics: “Gender Equality in Uzbekistan: Facts & Figures”. The present publication, in fact, was the first edition in tracking MDGs and focuses on socioeconomic status of women and men in Uzbekistan. It attempts to improve the coverage of such statistical areas that are conventionally considered as macroeconomic statistics. In addition to the SCS, the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan, line ministries and agencies were also actively involved into the preparation process.

This statistical bulletin presents sex disaggregated data containing key indicators (with detailed metadata) that reflect gender development in 2000–2004 on the national and regional levels. They include: a) population; b) healthcare; c) education; d) employment and labor market; e) public administration; f) social protection; and g) crime. The publication is intended for a broad readership including government officials, research community, and other interested parties.

It should be noted that there are certain gaps remaining pertaining to lack of information that require special surveys or newly designed methodologies of gender data collection. The available information resources and statistical publications do not meet the user demand for gender statistics. For instance, there is a need in time use surveys and special surveys on living standards, social welfare, and access of women to financial resources, etc. Conducting such surveys is considered an important area of further gender statistics development in Uzbekistan.

Summarizing, the following aspects of the above mentioned publication have made it particularly effective as a dissemination tool and useful source of information:

- promoting networking and inter-agency information exchange through active involvement of leading experts from key line ministries/agencies as well as non-governmental organizations;
- including a brief trend analysis of the key gender indicators and providing detailed metadata;
- increasing the volume (up to 1,500 copies in total against 50 copies usually the SCS produced) and designing newly structured and unified style for all publications, including gender, education, healthcare and environment;
- availability electronically in web resources (for free downloading) and in three languages, including Uzbek, Russian and English.

B4. Data sharing through modern ICT means

Another alternative, mostly complementary tool of information dissemination is usage of modern information technologies means (electronic data sharing through email and net, compact and floppy disks etc.). Development of the advanced information infrastructure and dissemination of information via Internet allows twenty-four-hour equal and free access for a statistical database to all users.

In this regard we initiated to develop an Internet based Data Query System – “Uzbekistan in Figures” available at <http://www.statistics.uz> – within the UNDP-funded SRPU/SPI project activities. This web-resource is intended to provide free, easy and well-organized on-line access to the Uzbek data and statistical information through regularly updated database in Internet.

It allows users to create and generate their own analysis tables using the Table Builder System (TBS) application as well as view and download the selected tables in various popular formats, including HTML, MS Excel etc. TBS tool enables users to create customized tables of available data using data from multiple years and indicators. The generated data can be viewed in two regimes: graphical and formatted table. Moreover, there is a Tutorial and Data Finder applications for the first-time users.

Currently, this web resource has a special thematic section on gender statistics. ‘Gender Statistics’ presents gender disaggregated data containing key indicators that reflect gender development in 2000–2004 on both national and regional levels. This section is solely based on statistical bulletin which has been published with the support of UNDP Uzbekistan in cooperation with the State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics, the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan and other relevant ministries and agencies. At present, it is divided into seven subject areas: population; healthcare; education; employment and labor market; public administration; social protection; and crime.

B5. Reference and training materials on gender statistics

We are extensively using the 2003 United Nations publication on “Indicators for Monitoring the MDGs: Definitions, Rationale, Concepts and Sources” in our daily work. Particularly, it contains basic metadata on the agreed list of quantitative indicators for monitoring progress towards the eight goals and 18 targets derived from the UN Millennium Declaration.

It is useful in terms of the following aspects: (a) it provides a reference point and guidance for MDG country teams about definition, rationale, method of computation and data sources; (b) the most importantly, it gives a clear description of gender issues in each target and indicator; (c) it considers the gender issue as appropriate not only for MDG 3 but also for all millennium goals and targets; and finally, (d) it recommends, per availability of data, disaggregate by gender, age, frequency of use, household income, location of access and other variables.

Another useful source of information we used is the UNECE/UNDP gender statistics website (<http://www.unece.org/stats/gender/>). Its aim is to improve the production, quality and use of gender statistics in countries across the ECE region (with focus on countries in transition) through strengthening national statistical capacity. Particularly, this web resource has the background information and best practices about producing and presenting gender statistics.

Part C: Development assistance

C1. UNDP initiative on MDG statistics

The Government of Uzbekistan is committed to incorporate the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into national development strategies. To ensure successful monitoring and reporting of progress towards achievement of nationalized MDGs and targets it is essential to support the Government in producing and disseminating of regular and reliable statistical information.

In this context, the 2005-2009 United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks for Uzbekistan identified statistics capacity development as a key area for UN country team input. It is

envisaged that the new UNDP Country Programme will support building MDG monitoring capacities through introduction of sound management practices and data analysis methodologies in accordance with international statistical standards.

In April 2006 UNDP Uzbekistan launched a full-pledged project on MDG statistics (technical assistance). The principal objective of this project is to make MDG-related data more accessible by developing a database and by ensuring the production of qualitative data that is tailored to the needs of the policy-makers, business people, civil society and general population. The project also supplements ongoing multi-donor (ADB, WB and UNDP) efforts to help the Government develop an effective and integrated MDG/PRSP monitoring and evaluation system.

Partner government organizations include Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Higher & Secondary Special Education, Ministry of Public Education, State Committee for Nature Protection and State Committee on Statistics. The expected outcomes of the Project will essentially include the following:

- strengthen the capacity of line ministries/agencies and promoting public access to statistical information;
- preparation and publication of country-specific methodological guidelines on the core MDG/PRSP indicators and producing relevant indicators;
- creation of a database to facilitate national MDG/PRSP monitoring in light of the fact that most MDG indicators are not available due to weak statistical collection or complexities related to measurement of specific indicators (e.g. healthcare and environment).

One of the important directions includes support to policy research and monitoring. It is envisaged that the five thematic working groups, cornerstone research groups of the Project, will conduct sectoral studies and based on the research findings prepare regular reports and policy papers. In particular, the third TWG focuses on gender issues and primarily responsible for:

- identification of priority areas and developing recommendations for further actions and appropriate mechanisms to improve gender statistics;
- promotion inter-agency information and data exchange;
- adaptation of gender sensitive concepts, methods and methodologies in data collection and dissemination; and
- incorporating a gender perspective into government's development strategies (e.g. PRSP, mid-term development strategy etc.).

C2. Some thoughts and ideas worth thinking (recommendations)

What kind of activities and initiatives are needed in order to improve the availability and comparability of gender related data?

1. Analytical capacity building in government agencies, national think-tanks and NGOs both at national and regional levels by
 - developing and conducting country specific training courses and workshops on gender issues aimed at linking monitoring, research, and planning;

- developing collaborative research programs in areas of gender-sensitive issues, engendering key policy areas (e.g. macroeconomics and policies, gender and labor market, etc.).
- 2. Promote and strengthen the statistical data sharing system and exchanges among/between both producers and users of statistics through organization of ‘user/producer’ conferences, round table discussions and expert meetings.
- 3. Support and promote partnership among government statistical agencies through developing an integrated “Gender Database”: formulation and strengthening of the statistical basis; improving the quality and analysis of gender related statistics through developing and adopting new methodologies.
- 4. Encourage the governments to convert ad-hoc initiatives in the area of gender statistics into regular programs of data collection and production.
- 5. Promote data sharing through Internet.