

Item 3b of the provisional agenda
Programme Review: Gender Statistics

Report on the work of the secretariat on gender statistics

Prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Summary

The present report provides information on various initiatives being undertaken to improve the capacity of national institutions to produce, disseminate, use and analyse gender statistics in the Asian and Pacific region. It describes the specific steps being taken by the secretariat to identify regional priorities and needs in capacity-building for gender statistics, as well as the secretariat's ongoing work to improve statistics on violence against women. Though the current programme of work of the secretariat already integrates gender issues in all statistical activities, in order to strengthen the gender component of the work programme, the secretariat is in the process of conducting consultations for the development of a dedicated regional capacity development programme on gender statistics, aimed at improving awareness and understanding of the various forms of gender inequalities and promoting the advancement of women.

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I. Background

1. The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, marked an important step in the development of gender statistics. For the first time, an international instrument comprehensively linked discussions on gender issues, mainstreaming gender in policymaking, planning and programming, and their specific needs for statistics. In its outcome document, the Beijing Platform for Action,¹ a wide representation of stakeholders representing governments, civil society and development partners clearly laid out 12 priority areas where data on women and men should be made available. Based on the set of actions outlined, Governments agreed to “generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation”.²

2. Fifteen years after the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted, the need and demand for gender statistics have continued to grow at the national, regional and international levels, and remain unmet. Progress assessment on various gender equity goals and targets, including the Millennium Development Goals, has highlighted the lack of data in key areas, such as maternal mortality, time-use and unpaid work, violence against women, women and disability, and women in the informal sector. In addition, even where data are produced, such as through censuses, population surveys and administrative records on health, employment and income, these have not been fully utilized to generate gender statistics or adequately analysed, used and disseminated.

3. A strong reminder of such persisting issues emerged in the Asia-Pacific regional review of the Beijing Platform for Action, which was held in Bangkok in November 2009 (see E/ESCAP/66/14). In the Bangkok Declaration on Beijing +15, attention was drawn to the need “to intensify support for statistical capacity-building efforts on the generation of gender statistics and to provide timely, reliable and disaggregated data by sex, ethnicity, age and location and the development of methodologies for the collection and processing of these gender statistics; and to ensure that gender statistics inform policy and programme decisions and effectively monitor and assess gender gains and gaps” (see E/ESCAP/66/14, chap I, para 1 (i)).

¹ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

² See www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf.

4. Likewise, the eleventh Triennial Conference of Pacific Women in August 2010 highlighted the need for improving the availability of and the use of gender statistics and research as a mechanism for the advancement of women, and endorsed the development of a multi-year programme for the institutionalization of a gender statistics framework.

5. The secretariat's current programme of work mainstreams gender aspects in all its statistical activities. However, in order to strengthen the gender component of the work programme, the secretariat is in the process of planning the development of a regional capacity development programme on gender statistics. The plan to develop such a programme was brought to the attention of the Commission during its sixty-sixth session, in May 2010. The Commission was advised that the programme of work to be proposed by the secretariat on gender statistics will take forward the global initiatives prioritized by the United Nations Statistical Commission by implementing them at the regional level, taking into account specific regional realities and country needs. The technical cooperation strategy to be adopted for the regional programme will ensure that the work is carried out in close coordination with international and regional statistics development partners.³

6. The secretariat has also been actively involved in activities related to violence against women statistics as a relevant and priority component of gender statistics in the region. Much of the ongoing methodological work on statistics on violence against women is guided by the United Nations Statistical Commission based on recommendations of the Friends of the Chair on Statistical indicators on Violence against Women (FoC). The secretariat is implementing the United Nations Development Account Project entitled "Enhancing capacities to eradicate Violence against Women through networking of local knowledge communities," together with the other four United Nations Regional Commissions and in cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women.

II. Developing a gender statistics programme for the Asia-Pacific region

A. Consultations with ESCAP members

7. The regional programme on gender statistics is being proposed in response to clear and repeatedly stated demands with respect to gender statistics including the need for more and better data, statistics on women and men, gender-based indicators, maximum utilization of existing resources and tools towards better gender-based analysis and the development of new statistical standards and methodologies. Although there have been some advances at the subregional level in this area of work, for example the gender statistics programme in the Pacific led by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the region as whole needs to take on and accelerate this work on a sustainable basis with stronger linkages to ongoing global initiatives.

³ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2010, Supplement No. 19 (E/2010/39-E/ESCAP/66/27)*, para. 150.

8. The aim is to review the status of gender statistics in the region and to identify strategic priorities and needs for capacity-building to improve the availability of gender statistics in support of national policy development and progress assessment, including the progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

9. As an initial step towards the development of this regional programme the secretariat is in the process of undertaking a series of consultations and surveys involving statistical systems, women's machineries and national development planning institutions. The Statistics Division of the secretariat organized a "Consultative Meeting to Develop a Regional Programme on Gender Statistics in Asia and the Pacific" on 22 and 23 September 2010. National statistical offices and national women's machineries of fourteen countries in the region participated in the meeting in order to take stock of existing gender statistics programmes and activities in the countries; to identify national priorities in the area of gender statistics in the context of country development plans, as well as the needs for statistics expressed in the Beijing Platform for Action, 2009 Bangkok Declaration on Beijing +15, Millennium Development Goals and other international development goals; to identify obstacles in this area of work at the national level; and to seek specific solutions and recommendations to overcome these obstacles, and how this would benefit from a region-wide capacity development programme.

10. In order to facilitate this exercise, a survey of national gender statistics programmes and activities in the Asia-Pacific region was designed. National statistical offices that participated in the consultative meeting were asked to provide information about their gender statistics programmes, activities, materials and training needs through this survey. The secretariat is planning to extend this survey to all countries in the region over the next few months during the process of developing the proposal for the regional programme.

11. At the consultative meeting there was strong consensus among participating countries that there is a need for a framework on core gender statistics, not only addressing requirements under international gender-related commitments, but also accounting for national priorities and needs. Country participants proposed a broad list of gender-related indicators. It was agreed by participants that this list would need to be narrowed down to a core set of indicators, making it as widely applicable as possible, and which countries in the region should have the capacity to produce and disseminate these statistics.

12. At the meeting, it emerged that there is a significant need for new standards and methodologies in certain thematic areas, such as on time-use and unpaid work, women in the labour force, violence against women, trafficking and the gender dimensions of persons with disabilities. It was recognized that the regional programme would need to be linked with other global, regional and subregional initiatives to review what standards and methodologies are available and what needs to be built upon or taken forward at the regional level. Better utilization of available and existing resources in the form of national capacity, data, processes, instruments and so on, will be encouraged in designing the regional approach for this work.

13. Participating countries expressed the need for guidelines and training materials, including training of trainer courses, in order to facilitate more sustainable capacity development within national institutions. Capacity-building is not only required in areas such as gender-related data collection and dissemination, but also in gender analysis, for national statistical offices as well as for national women's machineries. The need to develop advocacy materials was emphasized as an essential element to promote the use and analysis of data in shaping policy decisions.

14. It was recognized that strengthening of coordination mechanisms is not only important at the national level among national statistical offices, national women's machineries and relevant line ministries, but countries also expressed a strong desire to coordinate with each other with the view to share good practices and to strengthen South-South cooperation.

B. Linking with global initiatives

15. Relevant inputs for the development of the regional programme were also gathered by the secretariat through its participation in the Global Forum on Gender Statistics and the meeting of the Interagency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEG-GS), organized by the United Nations Statistics Division in coordination with the National Statistical Coordination Board of the Philippines, in Manila, from 11-14 October 2010. This year, the global forum on gender statistics discussed the gender dimensions of health statistics with a view to strengthen the capacity of countries to collect, disseminate and use quality health and gender statistics, and to review and discuss new initiatives and data collection tools for the improvement of health and gender statistics globally.

16. Several countries from the Asia-Pacific region participated in the global forum on gender statistics, and some of these countries are also contributing to the work of the advisory groups under the IAEG-GS. Countries emphasized the need for standards and methodologies in specific thematic areas, such as maternal mortality and causes of death, time-use and the care economy, gender-based violence, and measuring the gender dimensions of persons with disabilities. The need for strengthening national capacity in gender analysis and dissemination, as well as strengthening of coordination mechanisms among relevant stakeholders was reiterated.

17. The secretariat is now part of sub-group under the IAEG-GS advisory group on global gender statistics and indicators database, working on developing a core set of indicators for gender statistics at the global level.

18. The programme review of gender statistics that will be conducted by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its forty-second session, in February 2011, supported by the global review of national gender statistics programmes and activities undertaken by Ghana, in collaboration with Italy and the Philippines, is expected to also provide important inputs for the Asia-Pacific regional programme on gender statistics. This review will contribute towards outlining the next steps, in particular, the areas where there could be some programme interventions that would generate "quick wins" for national gender statistics programmes.

C. Next steps for the Regional Programme on Gender Statistics

19. A draft proposal for the regional programme will be developed by the secretariat, on the basis of the recommendations and inputs gathered from countries so far, and in close consultation with the Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment as well as other relevant agencies such as SPC, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank Institute (WBI). Countries in the region will be invited to provide comments and further inputs on the draft proposal so that the regional programme is specifically tailored to what countries identify are the priority areas of concern. A regional network of experts will be established to support the development and implementation of the regional programme.

20. As a first step to mobilize funds for this work, the secretariat has submitted a concept note for a proposal under the eighth tranche of the United Nations Development Account. A three-year interregional project is proposed in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division, the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. The project aims to improve the capacity of relevant national institutions (statistical offices, national mechanisms/machineries for the advancement of women, development planners, policymakers, and legislators) to use data and statistics to objectively monitor, measure and analyse progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. The secretariat has recently been informed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs that this project has been included in the short-list for funding under the eighth tranche of the United Nations Development Account. If the concept note obtains final approval for funds, a detailed proposal will be developed and submitted for review later in 2011 and implementation of the project is expected to start in early 2012.

21. The ESCAP Committee on Statistics, at its second session in December 2010, decided that a technical advisory group on social statistics should be formed, and entrusted its Bureau to develop a draft terms of reference for the work of this technical advisory group. The regional programme on gender statistics is expected to be part of the secretariat's future work on social statistics. The work on developing the core set of gender statistics at the regional level will be advanced through the establishment of a sub-group under the technical advisory group on social statistics.

III. Other recent gender statistics development activities at the regional level

22. A number of other initiatives at the regional level have also contributed towards addressing the challenges with respect to gender statistics. Through recent interregional cooperation among statistics development partners, methods and tests for improving the measurements of the informal sector,⁴ disability,⁵ vital statistics,⁶ and violence against

⁴ Active in this regard are ESCAP, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

women,⁷ as well as training on engendering data collection in censuses and surveys, have provided the means to improve the availability and quality of gender statistics.

23. As part of the interregional project “Enhancing capacities to eradicate Violence against Women through networking of local knowledge communities”, ESCAP organized a “Workshop on Strengthening National Capacities to collect Violence against Women Statistics in the Asia-Pacific Region”, Bangkok, 20-21 September 2010. The regional workshop was co-organized by the Social Development Division and the Statistics Division of the secretariat, and brought together representatives of national women’s machineries, national statistics offices and civil society from nine countries in the region to enhance their technical capacity in the measurement of violence against women.

24. The workshop provided a platform to share national experiences of Asia-Pacific countries in collecting, disseminating and using data on the nature, prevalence, causes, consequences and impact of violence against women. An overview of the global initiatives on statistical data and indicators of violence against women, with a special focus on the indicators proposed by the FoC and the survey module developed by Economic Commission for Europe were introduced to the participants. Although some countries in the region had collected data on the prevalence of violence against women through the DHS module, the WHO methodology or other ad hoc surveys, in most cases countries had relied heavily on administrative sources, such as police records, to obtain data. Such records are vital for monitoring judicial and support systems, but as cases of violence against women often go unreported by the victims, these records do not indicate a prevalence of violence against women.

25. Joint strategies and collaboration were encouraged between national counterparts in the use of the recommended indicators and module in order to strengthen the link between the production of statistics on violence against women and the use of these statistics. Countries stressed the need for the standardization of definitions and methodologies to collect data on violence against women. It was emphasized that coordination was not only required among national institutions within countries, but regional and subregional cooperation was also essential for capacity development and sharing of information and good practices, including through the use of ICT. Countries recognized the need to prioritize the eradication of violence against women in national budgets, in order to avoid dependence on external funds to collect and disseminate data on the subject.

26. Based on discussions at the workshop, the secretariat has since been working on the creation of an electronic workspace for sharing information in an effort to establish an online regional knowledge community on violence against women statistics and related information.

⁵ Active in this regard is ESCAP.

⁶ Active in this regard is ESCAP, ECA, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

⁷ Active in this regard is ESCAP, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

27. The secretariat has also begun providing technical assistance on the development of gender statistics in several countries in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Work has begun in Fiji, and will be extended to Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste during 2011. This work aims to strengthen national statistical systems to meet national and international data demands for gender statistics. It includes the collation of existing data within a framework of core indicators developed by SPC; development and delivery of training on the production and use of gender statistics; advice on creating mechanisms to oversee the maintenance and further development of gender statistics; and guidance on methods of dissemination and communication of gender statistics.