

Chapter 6

Poverty, decision-making and human rights

“The empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty.”

“Equality in decision-making is essential to the empowerment of women.”

“Women’s rights are human rights.”

Beijing Platform for Action

Chapter 6 reviews deficiencies and gaps in the collection, dissemination, presentation and use of data in the following three areas of concern highlighted in the Beijing Platform for Action:

- Women and poverty
- Women in power and decision-making
- Human rights of women

Women and poverty. The Beijing Platform for Action calls on Governments to ensure equal access of women and men to resources, opportunities and public services as a strategy for the eradication of poverty.¹ To support that strategic objective, the Platform for Action stresses the need to collect sex and age-disaggregated data on poverty and all aspects of economic activity. It also underscores the need to develop qualitative and quantitative statistical indicators to facilitate the assessment of economic performance from a gender perspective.² At the same time, the Platform calls for the improvement of the concepts and methods of data collection on the measurement of poverty among women and men.³ The United Nations Millennium Declaration places a priority on the eradication of poverty. Governments have agreed that the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment is an effective strategy to achieve that goal.⁴

Women in power and decision-making. The Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes the goal of equal participation by women and men in political decision-making. It calls on Governments to monitor and evaluate progress in the representation of women at all levels in the public and private sectors through the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative data.⁵ Increasing women’s representation in political office is now a widely held development goal. It is an indicator for tracking progress towards the Millennium Development Goal 3 (promote gender equality and empower women).

Human rights of women. In the Beijing Declaration, Governments affirmed their commitment to promote and protect the human rights of women through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.⁶ The need for better methods to collect, collate and analyse data related to women’s human rights was underlined in the Platform for Action.⁷ Similarly, the United Nations Millennium Declaration emphasized the need to respect and fully uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reminded Governments that economic, social and cultural rights were at the heart of all the Millennium Development Goals, including that of promoting gender equality and empowering women (Goal 3).⁸ More recently, the Declaration adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session recognized that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the fulfilment of obligations under the Convention were mutually reinforcing and essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals.⁹

Various sources can be used to obtain information on the three areas of concern examined in the present chapter. Some gender-sensitive poverty statistics have been derived from household surveys. Data on women in power and decision-making and human rights can be derived from administrative records, censuses or surveys.

Current state of statistics

In many countries, mainstream statistical agencies and programmes do not routinely collect, present and disseminate statistics on women and poverty, women in power and decision-making and the human rights of women. Regular and sustained collection and reporting of data in the above-mentioned areas has been constrained by a lack of statistical capacity. Poorly developed methodologies have also limited the use of existing data to examine gender-based differences in these critical areas of concern.

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The need for better methods to collect, collate and analyse data related to women’s human rights was underlined in the Platform for Action

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Women and poverty

It is generally recognized that poverty is a multidimensional phenomena. Nevertheless, in the measurement of poverty, priority is given to its economic dimension. The primary sources of national poverty statistics are, consequently, income and expenditure data collected through household surveys; those data are used as indirect measures of access to opportunities and resources by household members. Reliance on such data, however, has proved inadequate for capturing differences in poverty among women and men since it focuses on poverty estimates for households rather than on those for individuals. Such estimates do not readily show sex differences in patterns of distribution of food, income and the like, nor do they reveal the experience of poverty by individual women and men within households.

In addition, poverty statistics based on income and expenditure data do not assign an economic value to unpaid domestic work or to caregiving activities that are most often performed by women. Failure to value those unremunerated activities introduces a significant bias in poverty statistics and may lead to underestimating the level of poverty experienced by women and by single-parent households, especially those headed by women. The underestimation can occur for two key reasons: first, unpaid domestic work and caregiving activities performed by women in dual parent households are an economic asset not readily available to single parent households who may instead need to purchase those services from the market. Second, the unremunerated activities also have a direct effect on women's time, limiting their ability to participate in other activities, including wage employment, education and training, and leisure.¹⁰

However, despite the limitations, data collected through household surveys can be and have been used to provide preliminary evidence of the extent to which women may be at a greater risk of experiencing poverty as compared with men. Examples include the work carried out by the Women and Development Unit of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (see box 6.1) and by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), which analysed survey data from countries in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.¹¹

The Millennium Project has also contributed to improvements in the use of existing data on women and poverty, as reflected in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2005 review of gender in national reports on the

Millennium Development Goals.¹² The review found that 22 per cent of the reports included indicators for poverty by sex.

Although differences in poverty among women and men can at times be demonstrated using information available through standard household surveys, there is a need for new concepts, instruments and methodologies designed specifically to measure those differences. For instance, the concept of "time poverty" has been advanced as an alternative approach that captures both the social and economic dimensions of poverty. It can be analysed on the basis of data from time-use surveys that show how women and men apportion their time between various income-earning and other tasks (see also chapter 4). Since 1995, at least 67 countries or areas have conducted a time-use survey. However, time-use surveys are not yet widely conducted by countries around the world.

Women's participation in the informal sector is an important coping strategy for households in poverty, and in that regard the work of the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics is of particular interest. At its sixth meeting, the Group specifically considered the linkages of informal sector statistics with income and expenditure and poverty statistics. The Group's 2004-2005 work programme included identification, definition and development of a core set of indicators on informal sector and informal employment in line with the importance placed on informal employment by the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality of the United Nations Millennium Project.¹³

Women in power and decision-making

The major source of statistics concerning women in power and decision-making is personnel data from administrative records. However, most of the available data, particularly from the private sector, are neither collated nor disseminated owing to the absence of official reporting requirements. The collection and dissemination of statistics by Governments on women's participation in decision-making tends to be ad hoc and in response to specific demands such as the preparation of national reports for the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or the response to the Secretary-General's questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

As a result, monitoring and analysis of women's participation in decision-making has been largely focused on the most visible senior levels in the

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Box 6.1

Assessing gender differences in poverty through existing household surveys

Although data from standard household surveys are, for the most part, inadequate for examining gender differences in poverty, novel approaches have been developed that show various ways in which existing data can be used to document disparities in poverty between women and men. An example is the recent work by the Women and Development Unit of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).^a

Based mainly on existing data from Demographic and Health Surveys, the analysis carried out by the Commission shows how household income and expenditure data can be combined with various kinds of information to address three main questions regarding women and poverty: first, whether women are at a greater risk of living in poor households as compared with men; second, whether female-headed households are more vulnerable to poverty than those headed by men; and third, whether women are, in general, more vulnerable to poverty than men.

To address the first question, the ECLAC study combined household income and expenditure data with information on household size and composition to reveal differences in the proportion of women and men living in poor households versus those living in non-poor households. Through this type of analysis the study was able to document that, throughout the region, women are at a greater risk of living in poor households than men. Further analysis by age and place of residence revealed

that this is particularly the case for women in the economically active years (aged 20 to 59) in both urban and rural areas.

To address the second question, the ECLAC study disaggregated information on household headship by sex to compare the proportion of women-headed and men-headed households that are poor. Results showed that female headship was more common among extremely poor households than among non-poor households in most countries of the region.

Finally, to address the third question, information about own income was introduced into the analysis as a measure of economic dependency that can place women and men at greater risk of becoming poor. This type of analysis revealed that a greater proportion of women over the age of 15 did not have their own income compared to men and that a greater proportion of the women with no income lived in poor rather than in non-poor households.

Overall, the study by the Commission illustrates the ways in which basic data routinely collected through household surveys—the age, sex and economic status of household members combined with information on household size, composition and headship—can be used to gauge gender differences in poverty.

^a "Poverty and inequality from a gender perspective", in *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2002-2003* (United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.03.II.G.185).

public sector and in national politics. For example, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) compiles information on the participation of women in national parliaments through surveys and studies conducted among its member parliaments. Topics covered include the distribution of seats between women and men in national parliaments, women's suffrage and women's exercise of the right to vote. The statistics on women's participation in national parliaments are updated regularly and disseminated through the Union's website (see box 6.2).

Some data on women's participation in local government have also been collected by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), an international organization whose membership comprises individual cities and national associations of local governments from 112 countries. Data on the proportion of women serving as elected representatives, councillors

and mayors in more than 70 countries was collected through a survey conducted by the organization in 2003. The data collection effort is part of the organization's Global Programme on Women in Local Decision-Making and is currently being disseminated through its website.¹⁴

In addition to information from administrative records, occupation data from labour force surveys have also been used to analyse gender disparities in access to decision-making positions. The proportion of women in occupations that usually involve decision-making, such as legislators, senior officials and managers, can provide an indication of gender differentials in access to decision-making (see also chapter 4). For example, the International Labour Office publication, *Breaking through the Glass Ceiling - Women in Management: Update 2004*, makes extensive use of statistics on occupations from

the Office's Yearbook of Labour Statistics to explore women's access to decision-making in the public and private sectors through employment in managerial jobs.¹⁵

Box 6.2

Data on women in political decision-making from the Inter-Parliamentary Union

On the occasion of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (March 2005), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in collaboration with the Division for the Advancement of Women, published an informational poster entitled *Women in Politics: 2005*. The poster provides data on the proportion of women in ministerial ranks, in parliaments and in the highest decision-making bodies (women who are Heads of State or Government and women who are presiding officers of parliamentary bodies). The Union has also published historical information in "Women in politics: 1945-2005", an information kit that presents data on women's participation in politics over the past 60 years, including the following:

1. A historical table on the presence of women in national parliaments;
2. Progress and setbacks of women in national parliaments between 1995 and 2005;
3. Women in the two parliamentary regional assemblies elected by direct suffrage: the Central American Parliament and the European Parliament;
4. A chronology of women Heads of State or Government between 1945 and 2005;
5. An overview of women in the executive and legislative branches;
6. Ten years in review: trends of women in parliaments worldwide.

Source:

<http://www.ipu.org/english/home.htm> (8 August 2005).

Key sources of evidence on discrimination and exclusion are process-oriented data from administrative records collected by government and private agencies

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Human rights of women

Monitoring the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, requires the collection of data, broken down by sex, age and other key characteristics, on many aspects of every day life. The Convention is a comprehensive treaty on women's human rights, calling for equality between women and men in the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. As of 18 March 2005, the Convention had

been ratified or acceded to by 180 countries—over 90 per cent of the member States of the United Nations. Governments that ratify the convention agree to take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of women and men that lead to discrimination or exclusion on the basis of sex.

Even though many countries have taken steps to incorporate the rights covered under the Convention and other human rights treaties in their Constitutions and legislations, the realization of these rights can be guaranteed only when discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex are made evident through monitoring and are removed through policies and programmes (box 6.3). Key sources of evidence on discrimination and exclusion are process-oriented data from administrative records collected by government and private agencies. Additional sources of information include population and housing censuses and sample surveys.

Previous chapters in the present report review the availability of data broken down by sex and age that can be used to document, in four key areas, inequalities in the enjoyment of basic human rights and freedoms between women and men. For example, data on deaths and diseases (chapter 2) can reveal inequalities between women and men in the effective enjoyment of the right to health; data on enrolment and literacy (chapter 3) can provide evidence concerning the effective enjoyment of the right to education; and data on the economically active population and on earnings can shed light on the effective enjoyment of the rights to employment and equal remuneration (chapter 4). The data reviewed in previous chapters are used primarily to monitor inequalities in outcomes between women and men. To implement all human rights effectively, additional information is needed to identify the discriminatory practices that lead to such inequalities. This could be best accomplished with the use of process data from administrative records.

However, efforts to use administrative data to monitor human rights have been constrained in a number of ways. Only a few countries have established official reporting requirements to integrate such data collection into national statistical systems. The lack of reporting requirements has limited the dissemination of existing administrative data. Even when data is disseminated, data by sex are either not collected or, although sex is included in the primary record, omitted from the tabulations. For

Box 6.3

Sex-based discrimination and basic human rights

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women defines sex-based discrimination as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” (article 1).^a

Key political, economic, social, cultural and civil rights covered in major international human rights treaties include the following:^b

- Right to non-discrimination
- Right to employment
- Right to equal remuneration
- Right to social security
- Right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit
- Right to adequate standard of living
- Right to adequate housing
- Right to ownership of, access to and control over land
- Right to health
- Right to education
- Right to participate in cultural life
- Right to equal participation in public and political life
- Voting rights
- Right to nationality

In addition, rights of particular importance to women such as reproductive rights, including access to reproductive health care services and family planning, are covered under the Convention. Other rights explicitly covered under the Convention are those relating to issues that affect women disproportionately, such as trafficking and exploitation through prostitution (article 6), and those issues faced by women in rural areas (article 14).

^a United Nations *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378. Also available from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>.

^b *Ibid.*; and *The United Nations Human Rights Treaty System: An Introduction to the Core Human Rights Treaties and Treaty Bodies*, Fact Sheet No. 30 (Geneva, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2005).

example, data on access to credit, ownership of businesses and utilization of commercial services, which are needed to monitor gender equality in economic rights, are routinely collected by banks, government institutions and other lending agencies. However, the information is not usually reported by sex. As a result, although public and private sector credit, microenterprise and business development programmes initiated in response to the Beijing Platform for Action have specifically targeted women, it is difficult to know how successful they have been since the lack of sex-disaggregated data restricts the identification and monitoring of discrimination in those areas.

In other cases, the requisite data are not yet being systematically collected. For example, it is now widely recognized that the rights to adequate housing and to equal ownership of, access to and control over land are central to the empowerment of women. However, owing to customary practices, deficient land and housing registers, and poor documentation of property transfers and sales, little information exists for monitoring discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex in the channels of property acquisition (inheritance, purchase or transfers from the State).

The information that exists reveals significant inequalities between women and men in the effective enjoyment of the rights to ownership of land and housing in many parts of the world.¹⁶ The available information comes from housing and agricultural censuses and from household surveys that collect information on legal ownership of land and housing by sex of owner. Few censuses, however, collect that information. In Africa and Asia most of the information on land tenure comes from household surveys, such as the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS), but the information is available for only a few countries.

In addition, there is a lack of data, both from administrative and other sources, to monitor the rights of some groups of women who may be particularly vulnerable to human rights violations, including women who are members of minority and indigenous groups, migrant women, women living in poverty, women with disabilities and those living in institutions. One exception is data on women and men who are living under refugee status, which are being compiled by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from national Governments. Such information as sex, age

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and other basic characteristics of refugees are being collected, compiled and disseminated once a year through the UNHCR website and a series of publications, including the UNHCR *Statistical Yearbook*.¹⁷

UNHCR also compiles information on women and men who are members of other vulnerable groups, including asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, and returnees. However, coverage of those groups, and therefore of women living under those circumstances, is limited owing to poor registration by Governments. Similarly, in industrialized countries, where the host country is solely responsible for refugee registration, statistics on the age and sex of asylum-seekers and of refugees in particular are generally not available.¹⁸

Finally, little information exists to monitor acts of violence against women, which the Platform for Action recognizes as violating and impairing or nullifying the enjoyment by women of their human rights and freedoms (see also chapter 5).¹⁹ In general, information about domestic violence, particularly intimate partner violence, is more widely available than information about other forms of violence against women such as trafficking, exploitation, sexual harassment and abuse, forced prostitution and violence perpetrated or condoned by the State. Nevertheless, the available information is scant and thereby severely limits the ability of Governments to guarantee the basic human rights and freedoms of women in general, and of women who are members of disadvantaged groups in particular.

Progress in statistics

Progress in the availability of the sex-disaggregated data that are required to monitor women's status in the areas of poverty, power and decision-making and human rights has been slow. Most publications that include statistics on women and men use data collected and collated for other purposes, usually by methods that are not sensitive to the potential impact on data of gender biases and stereotypes.

Nevertheless, analysts have to some extent been able to address gender concerns using data sources that were not necessarily developed for that purpose. Those sources include household budget and expenditure surveys, informal sector surveys and time-use surveys to examine gender-based differences in poverty; labour force surveys to examine women's access to decision-making positions; Demographic and Health Surveys to gauge human right violations in the case of domestic violence; and the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study surveys to doc-

ument gender-based inequalities in the right to ownership of land through differences in land tenure by sex. Most new data collection exercises in less developed regions have been donor funded and implemented by national statistical offices in partnership with international agencies.

Several global initiatives call for improvement in national data sources to better address the issue of women and poverty. They include further development of time-use surveys and satellite accounts associated with the System of National Accounts.²⁰ The subgroup on poverty and hunger of the Expert Group on Millennium Development Goals Indicators stated the need to develop ways to further analyse the gender dimension of poverty.²¹

Initiatives to improve the quality of data for monitoring the human rights of women are also underway. One example is the collaborative effort between the World Health Organization, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the European Women's Lobby and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to strengthen data collection on the topic of violence against women (see also chapter 5).

Some improvements have also been achieved in the collection and use of administrative data, although progress varies by sector according to demand and technical capacity. Active gender budgeting groups in Africa, Asia and Latin America have achieved some success in using administrative data to monitor the implementation of local and national budgets from a gender perspective. In doing so, they have influenced both the collection and the dissemination of administrative and budget data.²²

With respect to monitoring the human rights of women in particularly vulnerable situations, improvements have been made in the collection and reporting of data by sex, age and other characteristics of those living under refugee status. Between 1994 and 2003 the number of countries reporting data to UNHCR on their refugee populations, disaggregated by sex and age, increased from 71 to 120. Since 2003, UNHCR has also begun to collect detailed statistics on refugee camps, including demographic profiles and indicators on education, health, nutrition, water, sanitation and shelter. The data facilitate monitoring the enjoyment of basic human rights by refugees, including refugee women and girls.²³

Conceptually, a number of countries are now moving away from a focus on collecting and reporting sex-disaggregated statistics per se towards a broader aim of incorporating or mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work of national statistics

Progress in the availability of data required to monitor women's poverty, power and decision-making and human rights has been slow

A number of countries are now moving towards a broader aim of mainstreaming gender in the work of national statistics systems

systems. The move towards gender statistics has important implications for the revision of concepts, definitions and methods used in the collection and reporting of information in all areas of concern reviewed in the present report, and is critical for improving the availability of data in the areas of

poverty, power and decision-making and human rights. Experimental work by a small number of countries, including some in less developed regions, brings out the potential benefits to be gained from incorporating a gender perspective in data collection and associated statistical products (see box 6.4).

Box 6.4

Incorporating a gender perspective in statistics

The National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI) in Mexico was among the first national statistical agencies to adopt a comprehensive approach to mainstreaming gender in statistics. Beginning in 1995, with the Beijing Platform for Action as a guide, INEGI initiated a plan to provide information by sex in every product generated from population censuses, household surveys and administrative records. It also initiated a review of the processes of statistics production from conceptual frameworks and instruments through the processing and dissemination of results. Among the data collection exercises that needed to incorporate a gender perspective were the National Demographic Dynamics Survey, the National Employment Survey and the National Household Income and Expenditure Survey. A system of 1,638 indicators covering nine topics was developed to monitor implementation of a national programme under the Platform for Action. INEGI also provides regular courses to raise gender awareness among general statisticians and, with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the National Institute for Women, organized six regional meetings on gender statistics between 1997 and 2004.

Two other examples of mainstreaming gender in national statistics come from India and Nepal, where the national statistics offices initiated comprehensive processes to incorporate a gender perspective in all aspects of the 2001 national population and housing censuses. In India, a special unit was established to oversee gender issues and to sensitize, through training and discussions, the census functionaries and staff involved in the supervision and conduct of the 2001 census. Steps were also taken to increase public awareness of women's contributions in various economic activities. As a result of those and other activities, compared to the 1991 census, in 2001 there was an increase in the reported female-to-male sex ratio (number of females per 1,000 males) in 77 per cent of districts, suggesting better enumeration of young girls and elderly women. Higher female labour force participation rates as com-

pared with the 1991 census also indicate improvement in the quality of data on women's labour force participation. Special efforts were also made to present the data from a gender perspective. For example, a special section entitled "How Indian Women Live" was added to the census report under "Where and How People Live".

The process in Nepal was part of a larger exercise by the Central Bureau of Statistics to improve the quality of census data. The process was supported by the European Union and involved a United Nations inter-agency group. Activities included gender-orientation workshops for senior and mid-level census management; the establishment of four gender-oriented technical committees, including one to review the questionnaire and manuals and one to review the occupation and industry classifications used; mobilization of female field personnel; training for enumerators; a census media campaign promoting the gender perspective to respondents; and generation of both sex-disaggregated data and special tabulations on gender issues. Gender-specific questions on ownership of housing, land and livestock were added to establish the sex of the owner. The existing occupation and industry classifications were found to be gender biased—with occupations and industries dominated by men classified and specified at more refined levels than those in which women predominated—and were replaced by a new standard classification. Following lobbying by women's groups, the census also implemented the 1993 revision of the System of National Accounts and the International Labour Organization standard of economic activity and work participation to a much greater extent than previous censuses.

Sources:

"Report of Mexico", Economic Commission for Europe Work Session on Gender Statistics, Geneva, 18-20 October 2004, Working Paper No. 36; J.K. Banthia, "Engendering the census: the Indian experiment and experiences", in *Engendering Population Census in South and West Asia: Collected Papers* (Kathmandu, UNFPA Country Technical Services Team for South and West Asia, 2004); and Government of Nepal, Central Bureau of Statistics, "Population census 2001 of Nepal: census engendering experiences", in *Engendering Population Census in South and West Asia: Collected Papers* (Kathmandu, UNFPA Country Technical Services Team for South and West Asia, 2004).

Procedures for the collection of data in the areas of poverty, power and decision-making and human rights are still in the development stage

Challenges

Major challenges remain in the collection of data on all three areas of concern reviewed in the present chapter. In general, procedures for the collection of data in the areas of poverty, power and decision-making and human rights at the national level are still in the development stage. As a result, there is as yet no agreement on the international collection of statistics on these topics.

Women and poverty

The basic challenge for analysis on issues related to women and poverty is the lack of data on the level and incidence of poverty among individual women and men. The existing data do not allow for the examination of differences in the distribution and consumption patterns of individuals within households. Alternative data to address this challenge are already being considered. For example, indirect poverty indicators, such as the consumption of specific goods (for example, items of clothing) that can be linked to individuals and are therefore available by sex, have been piloted in household surveys in some countries with limited success. A second alternative that offers more potential is the use of data on time poverty collected through time-use surveys. However, as stated earlier, at the present time not many countries carry out time-use surveys, especially in the less developed regions where the levels of poverty are greatest.

Underlying the general lack of adequate gender-sensitive data on poverty are also conceptual and methodological challenges that require attention. From a gender perspective, much of the economic data used in poverty analysis are deficient owing to poor recognition of women's economic contributions and/or to conceptual limitations that exclude key elements of women's work. Much of women's unpaid household work and family care are defined as non-market production and are therefore excluded from the System of National Accounts, whereas the same work done by women for other households is defined as market production and counts as economic activity.

Finally, although poverty is recognized to have both social and economic dimensions, poverty measurement and analysis tend to focus on the economic aspects. Both qualitative analyses and quantitative methods need to be used in measuring and assessing poverty. Such analyses would reflect factors related to the way in which poor people view themselves, the

perception of poverty among poor women and men and the way in which they identify and express their needs. Analysing poverty both quantitatively and qualitatively would thus bring visibility to the non-material aspects of poverty.

Women in power and decision-making

Monitoring women's participation in decision-making in the public arena poses a challenge for statistical systems primarily because most of the relevant data are held by decision-making institutions that do not normally compile and collate the information and are not formally required to report it. Those institutions include parliaments, political parties, state and local governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Even information on the number of women and men occupying high-level decision-making positions within national statistical offices, needed for monitoring the process of incorporating a gender perspective in statistics, is not systematically compiled or disseminated.

An additional difficulty has been the lack of data on lower levels of decision-making and on the processes that provide access to positions of power. Statistics are now generally available on women's participation in parliament and at the highest and most visible levels of decision-making in the public sector and, to a lesser extent, in the private sector. However, data on women and men at the lower levels of decision-making, which provide the career path to the higher levels, are often still not readily available in many countries. For example, the Equal Opportunity Commission in the United Kingdom has noted the lack of a method to classify seniority so that women's career progression (or the lack of it) can be compared with men's.²⁴

The more subtle elements of human resource development, such as on-the-job training and mentoring, which contribute to access to positions of power and authority, provide a particular challenge. Monitoring those processes is essential for the development of intervention policies and programmes to overcome the exclusion of women early in their careers and thus have an impact on their access to the highest levels of decision-making. One way to monitor such elements is through better and more extensive use of qualitative data, microstudies and case studies. Qualitative data can enhance the understanding and analysis of quantitative data, while microstudies enable exploration of gender issues not covered by mainstream sources.

Data on women and men at the lower levels of decision-making are not readily available

Although poverty is recognized to have both social and economic dimensions, poverty measurement and analysis tend to focus on the economic aspects

Human rights of women

A major challenge to improve the monitoring of human rights is that of collecting, processing and disseminating gender-sensitive process-oriented data. One way to address this challenge is to demand accountability and transparency of government and private agencies by requiring them to produce and publicly disseminate relevant statistics from administrative records generated as part of the routine performance of their functions. The statistics should be disaggregated by sex and by other key characteristics.

A related challenge is that of improving the availability of information on women who are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations such as those who are members of ethnic minorities and indigenous groups, those living in poverty and those living in rural areas. This requires a concerted effort by Governments to ensure that existing data collection systems properly cover the above-mentioned groups. At the same time there is a need to ensure that information about membership in a disadvantaged group, such as one defined by race, ethnicity, caste or indigenous group affiliation, place of residence and socio-economic status, are also collected and disseminated.

Similarly, there is a dire need to improve the availability of information on the women and men who are internally displaced or who are stateless. Although significant improvements have been made in the availability of sex-disaggregated data on refugee populations, most of the available information refers to officially recognized refugees in countries where the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees plays an operational role. Women and men who live in their own country of birth but who are considered to be stateless, who have been internally displaced or who were refugees but have recently returned as part of a resettlement programme are often not properly registered and are therefore underrepresented in existing data from UNHCR and other sources. Improving the registration of those groups requires a concerted effort between Governments and national and international non-governmental agencies to establish a registration system that complies with international standards, particularly that of confidentiality of data.

General outlook

Overall, improving the availability of the statistics needed for monitoring gender inequalities in poverty, decision-making and human rights depends primarily on activities at the national level. In the face of resource constraints and the limitations of conventional statistics, countries need to maximize the use of a wider range of existing data sources.

In particular, administrative statistics based on data collected outside national statistics offices by government agencies, including the criminal justice system, and by the private sector, including banks, could expand the limited availability of information in the three critical areas of concern. Sex-disaggregated administrative statistics are already used extensively in the education sector; they are used to a lesser extent in the health sector, by gender budgeting initiatives and by women's groups promoting greater participation in politics and governance among women. To expand the use of administrative data for monitoring and planning in the areas of poverty, power and decision-making, and human rights, formal requirements to collect and report data by sex and age have to be institutionalized. Increasing the use of such data may also create incentives for those responsible for their collection, quality and presentation, with consequent benefits to other potential users and to the overall quality of governance.

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Notes

- 1 See *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, para. 47.
- 2 Ibid., para. 68(a).
- 3 Ibid., para. 206(h).
- 4 See General Assembly resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000.
- 5 See *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, para. 190(e).
- 6 Ibid., annex I, item 8, and annex II, strategic objective I.1.
- 7 Ibid., chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 208(a).
- 8 "Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration", report of the Secretary-General (A/56/326), paras. 196-202 and annex.
- 9 *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 7 (E/2005/27 and Corr.1)*, chap. I, section A, para. 4.
- 10 Vivian Milosavljevic, "El enfoque de género y la medición de la pobreza", paper presented at the expert meeting on poverty and gender, Santiago, Chile, 12-13 August 2003, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/International Labour Organization.
- 11 "Women and poverty", in *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.2), chap. 5, box.
- 12 "Looking for equality: a gender review of national MDG reports, 2005", report prepared for the United Nations Development Programme, Bureau of Development Policy.
- 13 See "Report of the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics", note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/2005/10).
- 14 See <http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/ucig/> (18 August 2005).
- 15 <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/292/F267981337/> (18 August 2005).
- 16 See United Nations Millennium Project, "Guarantee women's property and inheritance rights", in *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*, Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (London, Earthscan, 2005).
- 17 <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/statistics> (2 September 2005).
- 18 Information provided to the United Nations Statistics Division by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (January 2005).
- 19 See *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, para. 112.
- 20 Commission of the European Communities, System of National Accounts, 1993 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XVII.4).
- 21 "Indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals and for follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields", report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/2005/20), annex, para. 4.
- 22 *A learning programme in action: UNIFEM gender responsive budgeting programme. Mid-term review summary report* (New York, United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2004).
- 23 Information provided to the United Nations Statistics Division by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (January 2005).
- 24 United Kingdom, Equal Opportunities Commission, "Gender statistics for the 21st century: challenges and priorities", Economic Commission for Europe Work Session on Gender Statistics, Geneva, 18-20 October 2004, Working Paper No. 2, para. 9.