

Introduction

Governments recognized the importance of statistics on women for development planning in 1975 at the World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico, and reiterated the relevance of such data at the second world conference in Copenhagen in 1980. Responses by Governments and international agencies led to the first reports and publications with statistics about women.¹

The recognition that information on men is also needed in order to adequately describe the situation of women has resulted in a shift in focus from statistics on women to one on gender statistics. In 1985, Governments attending the third world conference on women in Nairobi agreed to develop or reorganize their national information systems to compile and disseminate statistics on women and men to better address gender issues.² As a result, many national statistical offices and international agencies began preparing user-friendly booklets with statistics that compared the situation of women and men in many aspects of life.³

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, urged national, regional and international statistical services to ensure that statistics related to individuals are collected, analysed and presented by sex and age and reflect problems, issues and questions related to women and men.⁴ More recently, in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", Governments resolved to provide national statistical offices with the institutional and financial support required to collect, compile and disseminate data disaggregated by sex, age and other factors.⁵

The Commission on the Status of Women, in its ten-year review of the Platform for Action, noted that activities for the advancement of women have been limited by an insufficient understanding of gender equality and gender mainstreaming among government structures, a continuing lack of gender statistics and data disaggregated by sex and age and, in many areas, inadequate methods for assessing progress.⁶ Similarly, the Statistical Commission, at its thirty-sixth session in March 2005, noted that many countries still lack the capacity to produce the statistics necessary for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals, and that indicators currently being produced at the national level need to be reviewed.⁷

Against this backdrop of growing pressure for an assessment of countries' capacity to produce the requisite gender statistics, *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics* examines the extent to which countries are able to provide data in several key areas of concern highlighted by the Beijing Platform for Action. By focusing on national capacity to produce and report gender statistics, *The World's Women 2005* provides Governments and international agencies with crucial information to assess the adequacy of national statistics currently available for policy-making, planning and monitoring. The publication also draws attention to some of the challenges that countries are facing as they strive to meet the growing demand for gender statistics.

Definitions and methods

Gender concepts and gender statistics

Gender refers to socially constructed differences in attributes and opportunities associated with being female or male and to the social interactions and relationships between women and men. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in roles and responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities.⁸

Gender equality means equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities for women and men, girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same but that women's and men's opportunities, rights and responsibilities do not depend on whether they are born female or male. It implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration.⁹

Gender statistics are statistics that adequately reflect differences and inequalities in the situation of women and men in all areas of life. Producing gender statistics entails disaggregating individual data by sex and other characteristics to reveal those differences or inequalities, and collecting data on specific issues that affect one sex more than the other or relate to gender relations between women and men. Gender statistics thus allow for a systematic evaluation of gender issues and of inequalities between women and men. The Beijing Platform for Action outlines the actions that

Governments must take to mainstream a gender perspective into the work of national statistical systems and produce the requisite gender statistics.¹⁰

Gender mainstreaming has been defined by the United Nations as “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal [of mainstreaming] is to achieve gender equality”.¹¹

Statistical capacity and reporting to the United Nations

The World's Women 2005 reviews and analyses the reporting of statistics on women and men by countries or areas to the international statistical system. The present report focuses on official national data collected by countries either through censuses, administrative records or sample surveys. Based on what is available in the databases of the international statistical system, the statistical capacity of countries to produce and disseminate data broken down by sex and other relevant characteristics is inferred.

Countries or areas that have reported the requisite statistics to the United Nations and its specialized agencies are considered to have reported data to the international statistical system. Thus, the numbers presented here represent the number of countries or areas that reported official national statistics to the United Nations and its specialized agencies, rather than the number that have those statistics. Estimates made by the United Nations or its specialized agencies are not considered in the present report.

Countries or areas included

The review covers all Member States of the United Nations as of 31 December 2004 and other countries or areas with a population of at least 150,000 in the year 2000. Thus a total of 204 countries or areas are analysed in the report. Countries or areas are grouped into six geographic regions (Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Europe and Oceania) and into three development groups (more developed regions, less developed regions excluding the least developed countries and least developed countries) in the pres-

entation and analysis. Annex 2 provides the list of countries and areas in each development group. Countries included in the “least developed countries” category are those established by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. They numbered 50 as of December 2004.¹²

It should be noted that the term “countries” refers to political entities that are independent States. The term “areas” refers to geographical entities that have no independent political status; an area is thus generally a portion of one or more independent States.

In the review of changes over time, the following conventions have been observed with respect to countries that have separated or unified during the period covered:

- A country or area that was part of an entity (country) before that entity dissolved into several countries is considered as having reported its statistics if the former entity of which it is part reported statistics to the United Nations. This would apply, for example, to the countries or areas that were part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the former Czechoslovakia, the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or Ethiopia prior to 1993. Therefore, since the USSR conducted a population and housing census in 1989, countries or areas such as Lithuania, Latvia, Kazakhstan and others that were part of the USSR are all considered as having conducted a census in 1989.
- A country that resulted from the union of two former entities (countries) is considered as having reported its statistics only if all of its constituent entities individually reported statistics to the United Nations before unification. That is the case with Yemen and Germany.

Population covered

Since population size varies widely among countries, it was decided to present not only the number of countries or areas that have reported the selected statistics reviewed here, but also the proportion of the population of the world, geographic region or development group that those countries or areas represent.

In calculating the proportion of the population covered, population estimates prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations were used.¹³

Period covered

Considering that national statistical capacity takes a long time to develop, the present report examines progress in the reporting of statistics over a time span of almost 30 years, from 1975 to 2003. For most of the analysis, the time span is subdivided into three periods as follows:

- First period: 1975-1984
- Second period: 1985-1994
- Third period: 1995-2003

In interpreting the results for the most recent period, allowance should be made for the following: (a) the most recent period is shorter than the earlier periods by one year as information for 2004 was still being collected at the time of preparation of the report; and (b) some of the data for the more recent years have not yet been reported by countries to the international statistical system owing to the time lag in data processing and dissemination.

Frequency of reporting

To analyze the ability of countries or areas to report data to the United Nations system frequently within a period, the following categories were used:

- *Frequent reporting*: countries or areas that reported for at least five years within a period
- *Infrequent reporting*: countries or areas that reported for one to four years within a period
- *Reporting at least once*: countries or areas that reported at least once within a period. This group includes those reporting frequently and those reporting infrequently within a period.

In the case of enrolment data, frequent reporting refers to the reporting of data for at least three out of the six academic years considered, whereas infrequent reporting refers to the reporting of data for one or two of the six academic years considered.

Sources of data

The sources of data for the present report are official national statistics compiled by the United Nations and its specialized agencies from countries or areas around the world.

International sources of data

The United Nations and its specialized agencies collect and disseminate information produced by

member countries through various data collection systems. Demographic and social statistics derived from vital statistics systems and population and housing censuses are collected by the United Nations Statistics Division from national statistical authorities. Statistics on diseases, injuries and on causes of death are collected by the World Health Organization from national health authorities. Statistics on student enrolment and other administrative data related to education are collected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization through its Institute for Statistics. Finally, labour and labour-related statistics are collected by the International Labour Office from national authorities responsible for labour statistics. Together, those international sources of official data form part of what is referred to in the present report as the international statistical system. They constitute the main source of data used here to examine countries' ability to produce and report the information needed to monitor the life conditions of women and men.

National sources of data

At the national level, gender statistics are generally derived from three sources of information: population and housing censuses, administrative record systems and sample surveys.

Population and housing censuses

A population and housing census is probably the most comprehensive source of data on population in most countries throughout the world. A population census is defined as the total process of collecting, compiling, evaluating, analysing and publishing or otherwise disseminating demographic, economic and social data pertaining, at a specific time, to all persons in a country or in a well-delimited part of a country.¹⁴

A population census collects data on basic demographic and social characteristics of the population such as age, sex, marital status, place of birth and place of usual residence. It may also include questions on literacy, school attendance, educational attainment, economic activity status, occupation and number of children ever born, among others. It is, therefore, a rich source of data for examining differences between women and men and for studying specific population subgroups such as elderly women and men or those living in rural areas.

Due to its universal coverage, a census can provide statistics on the smallest geographical subdivision, therefore allowing gender analysis at local levels.

A census also serves the important purpose of providing a sampling frame for surveys. Owing to the scale of operations and costs involved, censuses are carried out at long intervals, usually 10 years. The need for frequent up-to-date information to monitor short-term trends and to guide policy and planning can be served by other sources, such as administrative records and sample surveys.

Administrative record systems

Administrative records are an important source of information for studying differences between women and men on a broad range of topics. Employment and unemployment statistics, education statistics, health statistics, criminal justice statistics, vital statistics and a myriad of other statistics are periodically produced from administrative records. Since those types of data are produced by organizations in both the public and private sectors, they have the potential to greatly increase the richness and depth of analysis possible on some gender issues not well covered by census or survey data. If an administrative record system operates effectively throughout the country, it can provide frequent data at both national and subnational levels.

One of the most widely used administrative record systems around the world is the civil registration system. Although the primary purpose of civil registration is to meet legal and civil requirements, it is an important source of sex-disaggregated information on births, deaths and marriages. When functioning properly, civil registration systems allow countries to produce periodic reports on vital statistics, such as number of live births by sex; number of deaths by sex and age; number of deaths by cause; marriages by characteristics of bride and groom; and many more.

Sample surveys

In sample surveys, part of the population of interest (the target population) is selected, or sampled. From the sample, information is collected and the results of the survey generalized to the target population. Sample surveys generally allow more time for each interview than is possible in a census such that any single topic can be explored in greater depth. Consequently, they are often used to obtain comprehensive information on a topic of interest or at a level of detail not suitable for collection through censuses or administrative records.

There are many types of sample surveys, including those conducted on an occasional basis and

those conducted at regular intervals as part of a regular survey programme. When conducted at regular intervals, surveys can be an important source of information over time, thereby facilitating the tracking and monitoring needed for evaluation purposes and helping to inform policy and planning.

It should be pointed out that surveys may not be able to provide results for small local administrative units in the way that censuses and administrative records can. Similarly, depending upon the target population, sample surveys may not be representative of the population at large and may not allow comparisons between population subgroups.

Uses of the report

The World's Women 2005 can be used as a reference by national statistical agencies, the international statistical system and other interested stakeholders to assess progress and identify gaps in the collection and reporting of sex-disaggregated data and other data needed to address gender issues.

National statistical agencies may find the report useful to support demands for the allocation of resources to improve their capacity to collect and disseminate the requisite information and to incorporate a gender perspective into all aspects of their work. Similarly, users of statistics in countries with poor data can use the report as a tool for advocating the production of timely and quality statistics to meet their needs.

Governments, researchers, academics, advocacy groups and others in need of statistics for monitoring, planning, advocacy and awareness-raising will find the latest available data in the annex tables.

Organization of the report

The World's Women 2005 consists of an executive summary, this introduction, six substantive chapters and a conclusion followed by an annex section.

The substantive chapters review in detail the current reporting by Governments of gender statistics, summarize progress in the last 30 years and point out key challenges that remain to be addressed in the following areas: population, households and families (chapter 1); health (chapter 2); education and training (chapter 3); and work (chapter 4). Chapter 5 reviews existing and potential data sources on violence against women and their development in the last 10 years. Chapter 6 highlights three areas for which gender-sensitive concepts and methods of measurement and data collection are much less devel-

oped: poverty, power and decision-making, and human rights. The conclusion offers a number of strategies to help improve the capacity of national statistical systems to meet the demand for gender statistics.

Most of the basic data presented in the substantive chapters are contained in much greater detail in Annex 1 at the end of the report. The first four tables in the statistical annex contain the data analyzed in the chapters on national reporting of selected statistics to the international statistical system, by country. The remaining six tables in the statistical annex present the most recent statistics and indicators on the situation of women and men in the areas of concern reviewed in the present volume. These data are included to allow comparisons over time with data reported in prior editions of *The World's Women*.

Notes

- 1 Examples include the four regional handbooks in the *Women of the World* series published between May 1984 and February 1985 by the Office of Women in Development, Bureau of Program and Policy Coordination, United States Agency for International Development, under contract with the United States Bureau of the Census.
- 2 *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), paras. 122 and 130.
- 3 Sweden has been promoting the development and production of gender statistics nationally and globally through technical cooperation and support provided by Statistics Sweden and the Swedish development assistance agency, SIDA. *Women and Men in Sweden: Facts and Figures*, first published in 1985 by Statistics Sweden, has been a model for publications in countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.
- 4 *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. 206 (a).
- 5 Resolution S-23/3, annex, para. 77.
- 6 *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 7 (E/2005/27 and Corr. 1)*, chap. I, sect. D, resolution 49/4, para. 5.
- 7 See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 4 (E/2005/24)*, chap. VI, para. 24 (a).
- 8 Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, "Gender mainstreaming: strategy for promoting gender equality" (New York, United Nations, August 2001). Available from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet1.pdf>.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 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, paras. 206-209.
- 11 Definition of gender mainstreaming adopted by the Economic and Social Council in July 1997. See *Official Records of the General Assembly, 1997, Supplement No. 3 (A/52/3/Rev.1 and Add.1)*, chap. IV, sect. A, agreed conclusions 1997/2.
- 12 See <http://www.un.org/special-rep/ohrls/ldc/list.htm>
- 13 United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision, Comprehensive CD-Rom edition* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.XIII.11).
- 14 *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8 and Corr.), para. 1.1.

