

**Inter-Agency and Expert Group Meeting on the
Development of Gender Statistics
12-14 December 2006
United Nations, New York**

Gender Statistics in the United Nations Children's Fund *

Prepared by

Claudia Cappa
Liv Elin Indreiten
Edilberto Loaiza
UNICEF Division of Policy and Planning

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PART A: BACKGROUND

Name: Claudia Cappa, Liv Elin Indreiten, Edilberto Loaiza
Title: Programme Officers
Office: Division of Policy and Planning
Agency: UNICEF

PART B: GENDER STATISTICS MATERIAL AND ACTIVITIES

Gender is a fundamental dimension of children wellbeing. With a view to eliminating gender disparities and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, UNICEF recognizes, among others, data collection and analysis as an area of priority action and underscores the importance of meaningful indicators to address the status of the girl child and her needs, particularly in health, nutrition, education and protection.

UNICEF's role in gender statistics is twofold. First, UNICEF is active in the production of gender statistics, both through the use of and the implementation of data collection tools and through the development of specific indicators and methods to reflect existing gender concerns and differentials. Secondly, UNICEF works to highlight the importance of gender statistics, through the appropriate presentation and dissemination of data via the production of paper publications, electronic media and the Internet including DevInfo.

UNICEF compiles data from different sources including administrative records, vital registration, population census and household surveys. In the field of data collection, UNICEF's main instrument is represented by the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), that is a household survey methodology developed to assist countries to fill data gaps for a set of key indicators to monitor the situation of children and women. The MICS was originally developed in response to the World Summit for Children (WSC) held in 1990 and the commitments made in the Declaration and Plan of Action for Children. It was designed to measure progress towards an internationally agreed set of mid-decade goals. The first round of MICS was conducted around 1995 and more than 60 countries participated in this round of surveys¹.

At the end of the decade, a second round of surveys was conducted to assess progress towards goals and objectives set for the year 2000. This round built on the mid-decade MICS and the results of an evaluation of the surveys, and strengthened many aspects of the survey program. It included an expanded set of indicators to monitor most of the 27 goals of the World Summit for Children (WSC), plus an additional set of indicators to monitor child rights and newly emerging areas of concern including, for example, Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI), malaria, and knowledge of HIV/AIDS. The second

¹ The MICS methodology is harmonized with the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) methodology. DHS surveys are conducted in around 10 countries a year and besides the MICS are the primary sources of data on many health and household indicators. This collaboration ensures that there is maximum coverage of countries in the household surveys and provides comparability across surveys. The MICS surveys are typically carried out by government organizations, with the support and assistance of UNICEF and other partners. Technical assistance and training for the surveys is provided through a series of regional workshops, covering: questionnaire content, sampling and survey implementation, data processing, data quality and data analysis, and report writing and dissemination.

round of MICS produced around 65 surveys, and resulted in an increasing wealth of data to monitor the situation of children and women. Additionally, it permitted, for the first time, the monitoring of trends for many indicators and set baselines for many other indicators.

The current round of MICS (MICS3) focuses on providing a monitoring tool for the World Fit for Children, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as for other major international commitments, such as the UNGASS on HIV/AIDS and the Abuja targets for malaria. In particular, MICS represents a key data source for MDG monitoring: 21 of the 53 MDG indicators can be collected in the current round of MICS – largest single source of data for MDG monitoring. MICS3 surveys collect data on most of the topics covered in the earlier rounds and provide updated estimates and trends for many indicators. In addition, new indicators have been included to provide baseline data or estimates of coverage for UNICEF’s current priorities. In total, 101 indicators are covered by the current round of MICS, with data available by sex to allow comparisons and detect forms of discrimination (see table 1)². In addition, MICS 3 contains specific modules on violence against women and on harmful practices, such as Child Marriage, and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting. In this sense, MICS represents a major source of gender specific data.

TABLE 1. MDG Indicators that can be presented for boys and girls using MICS3 data.

MDG	Indicators for monitoring progress
Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age by sex
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education	Net enrolment ratio in primary education by sex
	Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 by sex
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women	Ratio of girls to boys in primary education
	Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality	Under-five mortality rate by sex
Goal 5: Improve maternal health	Maternal mortality ratio
	Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	Percentage of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS by sex
	Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years by sex

UNICEF’s role in promoting gender sensitive indicators and analysis can be easily perceived in the field of education and child labour. Education is one of the areas identified under the MDGs to achieve universal primary education, and promote gender equality and to empower women. More specifically, these goals aim to eliminate gender disparity in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Data on levels of school participation worldwide for primary and secondary levels show that although boys appear to have greater levels of school participation than girls, the differences between them are below 5%³.

² In addition to sex, MICS data are also available by other background characteristics such as age, ethnicity, household wealth and place of residence.

³ UNICEF (2005), *State of the World Children 2006*, UNICEF: NY.

However, with regard to secondary education, we can notice that the differences between boys and girls are more important if we look at the proportion out of school alone as well as the proportion children in the age of secondary school that attend primary. It is clear that a greater proportion of girls are out of school, while a greater proportion of boys of secondary school age are attending primary school. Variations exist by region and country, as well as within countries.

Another example of UNICEF's action in promoting gender sensitive indicators is represented by statistics on Child Labour. In contrast with ILO's definition that covers only economic activity, UNICEF has developed indicators of Child Labour that go beyond the production of goods and services and to include unpaid domestic work – such as cleaning, cooking, and caring for children. This expanded definition proves to be essential to estimate the burden of work on girls, who are more likely than boys to perform domestic chores in a household.

In the area of data analysis and dissemination, UNICEF statistics are made available in the form of reports and publications and, in the case of MICS data, in the form of national reports, statistical profiles, standard sets of tabulations and micro level datasets. In particular, MICS results are accessible through the UNICEF's web site dedicated to monitoring the situation of children and women at www.childinfo.org. The main vehicles through which UNICEF statistics are disseminated are represented by *The State of the World's Children* (SOWC) and *The Progress for Children*.

Every year, the *The State of the World's Children* report presents the latest economic and social indicators on the countries and territories of the world, with particular reference to children's well-being. Besides including data by sex on HIV/AIDS (table 4), education (table 5) and child labour (table 9), the SOWC contains a specific table (table 8), summarizing women issues, such as life expectancy, adult literacy, gross enrolment ratio, contraceptive prevalence, antenatal care coverage, skilled attendant at delivery and maternal mortality ratio. The SOWC 2007 *Women and Children, The Double Dividend of Gender Equality* is dedicated to investigating the relationship between the situation of women and the well-being of children throughout the life-cycle. The report highlights the vital importance of empowering women to participate fully in all aspects of decision-making that affect their lives and those of children.

The *Progress for Children* reports constitute a series of periodical publications to monitor progress for children towards the MDGs. Since its launch in 2004, five *Progress for Children* reports have been produced. Among them, the report card n. 2 focused on gender parity and primary education (number 2, April 2005) and measured the world's advances towards Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3⁴. In addition, detailed analyses of key statistics and indicators on women have been produced lately in the form of ad hoc studies. Among them, statistical analyses of FGM/C and Child Marriage have been published by UNICEF in 2005⁵.

DevInfo is a powerful database system which monitors progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. It generates tables, graphs and maps for reports and presentations. DevInfo has been developed in cooperation with the UN system and has been adapted from UNICEF ChildInfo technology. The database maintains indicators by time periods and geographic areas to monitor commitments to sustained human development. A total of 104 countries have adapted the DevInfo technology and another 13 applications have been developed at the country, regional or global level.

⁴ UNICEF (2005), *Progress for Children: A Report Card on Gender Parity and Primary Education (No.2)*, UNICEF: New York.

⁵ UNICEF (2005), *Early Marriage: a Traditional Harmful Practice. A Statistical Exploration*, UNICEF: New York; UNICEF (2005), *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: a Statistical Exploration*, UNICEF: New York.

PART C. ONGOING REGIONAL OR COUNTRY PROJECTS

UNICEF is active in promoting and supporting data collection and dissemination activities in several countries around the world, in collaboration with local authorities and partners such as the National Bureau of Statistics, Ministries and NGOs. 18 country offices and two regional offices have contributed with information to this report on what UNICEF is doing in different countries.

Among the country initiatives currently in place, it is worth mentioning the example of **Nigeria**, where UNICEF is single-handedly providing both financial and technical support for the establishment of a National Gender Data Bank as part of the National Centre for Women Development (NCWD) in Abuja for 2006-2007. This initiative promises to harmonize and centralize all available data/information, statistics and indicators relating to women, including gender sensitive data/information. It is planned to be a searchable, updatable and publishable database, as well as the boldest step so far on the documentation of gender statistics in Nigeria.

In **Thailand**, UNICEF is working, together with other UN agencies, on strengthening the national statistical system. UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank and UNFPA are negotiating a formal joint program with the NSO for reinforcing the data collection capacity of the country and increasing the availability of disaggregated data, especially at the provincial level, in which statistical strengthening is seen as an important component of the local governance and decentralization component. Another nationwide project that UNICEF supported in the past 2 years was the introduction of TPDInfo (Thailand Provincial Development Info, a local adaptation of DevInfo). In the databases (gradually to be released over the coming year) that are developed in each of the 75 provinces in the country, data disaggregated by gender are available.

Another example is represented by **Cambodia**, where UNICEF provides technical and financial support to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in the collection, management and analysis of data on education, including data on gender equality and parity in education. UNICEF also provides support to the Ministry of Planning in incorporating indicator/data related to women and children issues into a database containing data at the commune level, with the objective to assist local-level planning. Finally, UNICEF provides technical and financial support to the National Institute of Statistics in developing and managing CamInfo, which contains data on several human development indicators with national data disaggregated by sex.

In Cuba the UN Thematic Group on Gender has supported the government in developing a set of gender sensitive indicators to be included in the national statistics (Information from 2005 Cuba office).

PART D. GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the progress made by international organizations/agencies in the collection, analysis and dissemination of data on girls and women, relevant gaps and challenges continue to characterize gender statistics. Some of them are specific to certain topics, such as gender-based violence against women and girls, while others apply to large-scale surveys.

1. There is a call for improving the comparability of data at the international level and across countries. A closer collaboration among agencies has therefore been claimed as desirable in order to find agreements on methodologies for data collection and thus to increase the comparability of research results.

2. There is a need for historical data to establish trends and of longitudinal data to sort out causality, as well as the need for more in-depth qualitative studies to fill in questions that cannot be covered by standard quantitative tools. Qualitative studies are often neglected by international organizations and institutions, which tend to focus on cross-national quantitative studies.
3. Advocacy efforts are required to increase the number of countries for which data are collected.
4. It is important to create practical tools and training materials on gender sensitive indicators and data. It is important that all UN agency technical assistance in statistical production include gender as part of this assistance. Specific technical assistance is needed for the appropriate generation of gender statistics. It must include the whole cycle of statistical production. The first step must be the analysis of gender issues in a more conceptual approach of gender differences. Once that is clear, the identification of information needed to assess the situation in each country needs to be done, not only by the government, but with social actors. The information required must be included in the statistical instruments, such as the questionnaire, and its processing must be established since the beginning. It is necessary to ensure that the sample is big enough to disaggregate data by sex in a representative manner. Finally, all data must be disaggregated by sex and specific gender indicators need to be built.

The whole statistical process needs to mainstream gender considerations, which requires specific attention to gender issues. Gender sensitization in the statistical production is required. This can only be achieved with an integral intervention in the national information system with actions of the UN system as a whole.

5. Various countries mention that the CEDAW Committee in its concluding comments to the country reports are indicating to some countries the need for improved situation analysis based on gender sensitive statistics and to improve the production of gender sensitive indicators. The UN agencies could support the countries efforts to improve their gender statistics.
6. Another recommendation that come through is support on how to select indicators, to ensure that gender sensitive indicators are included in all surveys and studies, but also to ensure that they are the most useful for monitoring, evaluation and situation analysis of the situation of women, men, girls and boys.
7. There is a need to further develop cost- effective qualitative methods in addition to the more common quantitative methods for data collection. How to apply these in order to cover sensitive and invisible issues and situations such as gender based violence against women and girls, sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking as well as domestic child labour.
8. In the cases when data is in existence, the challenge is to communicate, disseminate, and further analyze findings to influence budgeting activities at the country level that are gender friendly and that achieve results for children and for their rights.
9. It is of very high importance to train statisticians, UN personal, government officials and NGOs on gender issues, the international frameworks such as CEDAW and the Beijing +10 Platform for Action and how to do gender sensitive analysis of a situation, as well as monitoring and evaluation exercises.