

*Current Activities aimed at improving
Gender Statistics in the ESCAP Region*

Prepared by

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Over the past year, the ESCAP Statistics Division has promoted work on gender issues by encouraging and supporting the development of a clearly-defined gender statistics framework in countries. This framework will serve to outline what data countries should produce and disseminate, including the assessment of already available data and conversion of the same into a form which will be more useful for data users. Thus, efforts are being directed towards statistical capacity-building to increase the region's ability to produce better gender statistics. Given the diversity of the situations of countries in the region, and their varying needs for support in improving gender statistics, the ESCAP Statistics Division has been focusing on working together with other key partners, such as with ADB, UNDP and UNIFEM, to outline the way forward and to develop a committed programme in this area, which could in turn influence effective policy advocacy towards promoting gender equality.

Towards this end, an Expert Group Meeting on Gender Statistics and the Use of Violence against Women Indicators in Support of the CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action was co-organized by the Gender Equality and Empowerment Section of the Social Development Division and the Statistics Division of ESCAP, 1-3 October 2008 in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting brought together senior officials from National Women's Machineries (NWMs) and National Statistical Offices (NSOs) representing the governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Philippines, Samoa and Thailand. Experts from the Korean Women's Development Institute, UNDP, UNIFEM, OHCHR and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) also participated in the meeting.¹

The meeting was organized with the specific objective of supporting and building the capacity of NWMs on advocating for the collection of statistics on gender, and violence against women in particular, and encouraging increased use of statistics and analysis for national monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of key gender equality mandates such as the CEDAW, BPfA and the MDGs. The meeting intended to also identify country-specific needs and possible future areas of work in gender statistics, and in this regard to build and enhance strategic partnerships between NWMs and NSOs on the use of gender statistics and indicators on violence against women towards promoting gender equality through national policy and programme interventions.

Information on existing work done by UN bodies on indicators to measure violence against women was disseminated to participants. This included work being done by the Friends of Chair Group (FoC), established during the 39th session of the UN Statistical Commission in February 2008, involving evaluation and improving compilation of a set of indicators on violence against women which would contribute to the development of a framework to eradicate violence against women. At the expert group meeting, country experts provided feedback on the relevance and viability of these indicators in measuring violence against women and suggested stronger advocacy efforts to encourage the use these indicators as part of countries' efforts to meet obligations outlined in CEDAW and BPfA.

Participants agreed that without statistics it is difficult, if not impossible, to monitor and evaluate the progress and impact of projects and programmes dedicated to women's equality, as well as to measure change brought about. The benefits of effective collaboration and coordination among NWMs, NSOs and other stakeholders, such as non-government organizations, academia and research institutions with regard to data generation, analysis and use, were emphasized at the meeting. The meeting proved to be a critical opportunity for NWMs and NSOs to reinforce an ongoing dialogue

¹ For more information visit www.unescap.org/stat/meet/egm2008/index.asp

and work together in a long-term partnership devoted to promote gender equality, empower women and eliminate violence against women.

Another activity on this subject involves the Statistical Institute of Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) in collaboration with ESCAP, ECE, the World Bank Institute and selected National Statistical Agencies (NSAs). An Outreach Project for Gender Statistics and Gender Mainstreaming of Statistical Information in Asia and the Pacific Region (ORGENSTAT Asia) is being planned for implementation from 2009-2011. This project will support selected countries of three Asian sub-regions: South Asia, South-East Asia and Central Asia, in capacity building related to gender statistics, in gender mainstreaming of statistical information in accordance with internationally agreed recommendations, and in better monitoring of the Millenium Development Goals. The project aims to improve gender sensitivity of National Statistical Systems in order to increase availability, raise quality and improve access to data for developing, monitoring, and evaluating gender policies. It also aims to increase capacity of users to utilize statistics for policy making and to judge the quality and availability of data at the national and regional levels.

The objectives of this project will be achieved mainly through the organization of training workshops and study visits. An expert group meeting will also be organized at the start of the project to raise awareness on, and to evaluate the usefulness of the abundant materials on gender statistics already produced in the framework of the ECE – World Bank Institute project. It will also provide an opportunity to review other materials to be used in the training workshops of the project and to gather recommendations to develop the detailed content of these workshops. SIAP will have an important role to play in this project in facilitating trainings on advocacy skills, data production, dissemination and the use of data.

These efforts are at early stages and the ESCAP Statistics Division considers it very critical to build gender statistics work in the region and to continually seek possibilities of working in close collaboration with key stakeholders in this regard.
