

***THE WORLD BANK'S COMMITMENT TO GENDER STATISTICS***

Prepared by

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Mr. Virola, Mr. Cheung, Dr. Sondik,, Professor Monrod, colleagues and friends,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of the Philippines and the National Statistical Coordinating Board for organizing and hosting the Third Global Forum on Gender Statistics and the Interagency and Expert Groups on statistics, capacity building, and statistical legislation. The World Bank Group recognizes the importance of this Forum and its many achievements in raising and pursuing gender-relevant issues that help improve development outcomes.

The Bank recognizes that women's well-being and gender equality are essential to achieving its poverty-reduction mission. In this context, the Bank has addressed gender issues since the 1970s, but the emphasis increased following the 1995 Beijing Conference and, soon after, the adoption of the Bank's Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in 2001.

Over the past decades, women's and girls' education and health levels have improved in most poor countries:

- In low-income countries, girls' enrolment improved from 82 percent of boys' enrolment in 1991 to 94 percent in 2008;
- Since 1970, average life expectancy of women in developing countries increased by 12 years to 69 years in 2008.

At the same time there are parts of the world where the situation is changing slowly and gender inequalities remain pervasive. The nature and extent of discrimination varies, but the patterns are striking. In no region in the developing world are women equal to men in legal, social, and economic rights. Gender gaps in access to and control of resources, in economic opportunities, and in power and political voice are widespread:

- In most countries women continue to have less access to social services and productive resources than men;
- In most low-income countries girls are less likely to attend and complete school than boys;

- In industrial countries women in the wage sector earn an average of about 80 percent of what men earn; in developing countries they earn even less.

For many women, life's chances appear to be pre-ordained at birth. This is not only unfair, it is bad economics. Under-investing in women limits economic growth and slows down poverty reduction by lowering the efficiency of labour allocation in households and the economy. It also contributes to the non-monetary aspects of poverty—lack of security, opportunity and empowerment—that lower the quality of life for both men and women.

Evidence links increases in women's productivity and earnings to lower household poverty. To help increase women's economic opportunities, and to speed implementation of its 2001 Gender Mainstreaming Strategy, the World Bank Group in 2007 launched *Gender Equality as Smart Economics*—a four-year action plan (GAP).

Good quality gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated data are critical to learn about the situation and status of women and men in client countries, identify key areas of concern for gender equality as well as gaps in information and knowledge, contribute to gender-responsive policy formulation, and monitor and measure the results and impact of policies and programs. Progress has been made on social and demographic statistics, but improvement is needed in traditional economic areas such as employment, finance and business, agriculture, communication and transport. There are also serious data needs for sensitive or difficult to measure issues, for example, gender-based violence and trafficking in women and girls.

The World Bank Group's gender statistics and data strategy, a key component of the GAP, supports the Bank's commitment to intensify gender mainstreaming, especially in the economic sectors, in order to reduce disparities and enhance women's participation in economic development. The strategy aims to improve the collection and use of sex-disaggregated statistics related to women's economic empowerment and opportunities both within the World Bank and in client countries. To accomplish this, we are collaborating with Bank experts and international partners to (1) increase and

improve gender statistics; (2) help build sustainable statistical systems in countries; (3) provide technical assistance and training; (4) strengthen partnerships and harmonization among international agencies that collect and use gender data; and (5) advocate and increase support for gender statistics.

The World Bank Group is pleased to be part of this Forum and to support its organization and delivery, to work in partnership with the UN, multi- and bi-lateral agencies as well as client countries to promote improvement and dissemination of good quality sex-disaggregated and gender relevant data.

Thank you.