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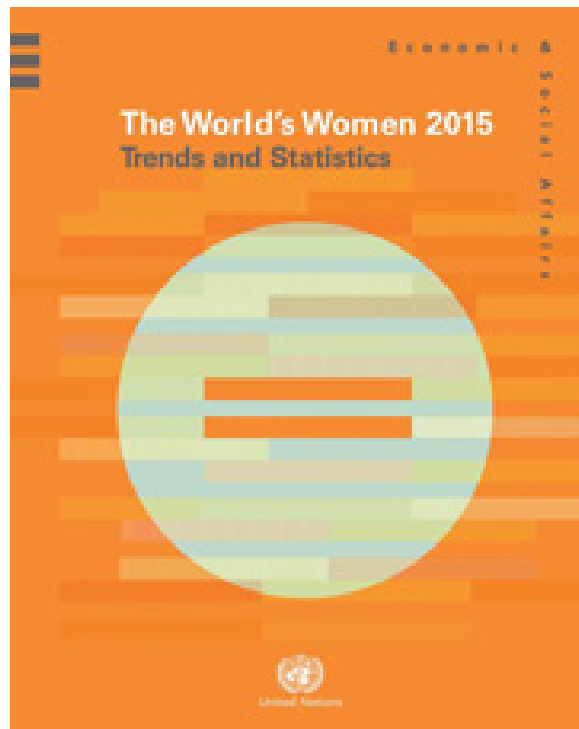
"Data Revolution Needed for Good Policy-making" says UN Francesca Grum

Posted By *OnuItalia* On 20/10/2015 @ 10:16 pm In Development, Human Rights, Newsmakers | [No Comments](#)

(By *Valentina Ieri*)

NEW YORK – In a global world that relies more than ever on technology and data, numbers are vital more than ever before. "You need statistics to come up with policies that are relevant. You need statistics to get evidence about what needs to be done and how," said to OnuItalia Italian Francesca Grum, Chief of the Social and Housing Statistics Section at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).

In occasion of the [World Statistics Day](#) ^[1], on October 20, UNDESA released the [2015 World's Women Report](#) ^[2], to highlight the importance of statistics in helping policy-makers to develop new programs to improve the living conditions of people in the world.



[3]

Source: unstats.un.org

The report, which is guided by the principles of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women, in 1995, shows the status of gender inequalities at the regional level – in developing and developed countries – in critical areas, such as health, education, work, poverty, environment and power and decision-making.

The theme for this year's World Statistics Day is "Better Data, Better Lives", in line with the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the U.N. Agenda 2030.

"Monitoring the success of the Sustainable Development Goals – the U.N. Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, said in a message marking the Day – poses a significant challenge to even the most developed countries. We need a data revolution. We need to strengthen statistical capacity and tap into

the potential of new technology."

The relevance of the 2015 *World's Women Report*, explained Grum, who has worked with UNDESA since 2000, is that contrarily to other U.N. agencies, every five years, UNDESA publishes a document, that offers a detailed snapshot about the general situation on women's progress.

Improvements of the condition of women and girls in the past decades are very slow and equality is way too far from being achieved.

According to the report [5], nearly two thirds of the world's 781 million illiterate adults are women. Although primary school enrolment is nearly universal in most regions, in Sub-Saharan Africa 75 percent of girls and 81 percent of boys are out of school. Since 1995, child marriage has declined from 31 percent of women aged 20-24 married before turning 18, to 26 percent. However, 44 percent of Southern Asia women, aged 20-24, and 40 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa, marry before age 18.

The list of exceptions carries on in the health, environment, and working sectors. "Without knowing how many people, or where they are, how can governments plan the right actions and programs?" Ms. Grum said.

Statistics are necessary for real policy actions, based not only on national official statistics, but also on local household surveys, in collaboration with academia experts and other international agencies. UNDESA works closely with national governments, promoting international standards, quality and transparency of data.

"Our next challenge is to reach the most vulnerable and less visible people. Our goal for the near future is to make sure that everybody is counted and that our statistics are the most solid and relevant for everybody."

Strikingly enough, even in developed countries, where women are free to get an education, when looking at the transition from school to work, rates of gender bias are shockingly high.

Unfortunately, "Participation in the labour force is very low," remarked Grum, "Because women are still in charge of the family. So the distribution of work is still unequal...women



[4]

Keiko Osaki Tomita, Lenni Montiel, Francesca Grum at the Press Conference on Launch of World's Women Report by UNDESA. Source: UN Photo/ Eskinder Debebe

work at home and the husband outside, worsening economic dependency."

It is reported that globally, 75 percent of all men and 50 percent of all women participate in the labour force [6], with women's unemployment rate remaining higher than men's (121 countries out of 177, which accounts for 68 percent).

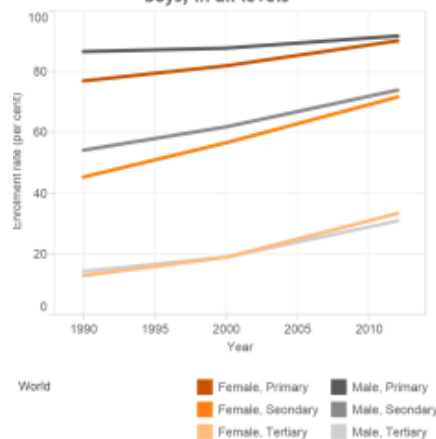
Grum highlighted that while women in developed countries have more access to work, working conditions in terms of contracts, responsibilities and salary are very limited. "Women are sort of stuck at certain levels. It is alarming that less than 4 percent of CEOs in the top 500 corporations in the world are women," she added.

The most dramatic trends of the *World's Women Report* are on sexual violence.

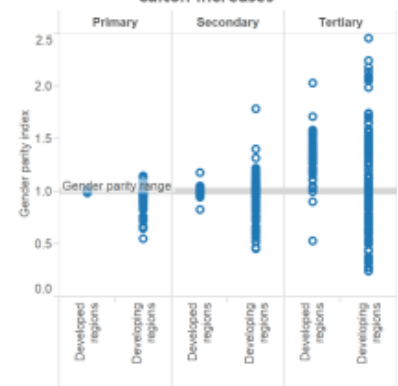
"Everywhere" – Ms. Grum told OnuItalia – "Regardless of social status, or the level of education, women everywhere in the world are experiencing violence and in most of the cases from their partners."

"It is even worse", she continued: "We fear that we may go outside and get abused, but it turns out that it is inside the household that a woman is at a higher risk."

Faster improvement in enrolment for girls than boys, in all levels



Gender disparities widen as the level of education increases



[7]

UNDESA/ World's Women Report 2015

One in three women has experienced physical or sexual violence at some point of her life, with less than 40 percent of them seeking help, and less than 10 percent reporting abuses to the police. Two out of three women are victims of intimate partner or family related homicide.

125 countries worldwide have adopted laws on sexual harassment, and 119 have passed laws on domestic violence, shows the 2015 report. However, protection to women is not fully guaranteed. In Europe between 13-46 percent of women are abused, figures [8] report.

But a positive example of the benefits of using statistics comes right from Italy.

"For our statistics" – remarked Grum – "We relied on the extensive result of the 2006 survey on violence against women in Italy."

Those 2006 data were the same used by national advocates and agencies to push Italian ministers to change the situation.

"Thanks to the evidence provided by that survey, the [2012 law](#) ^[9] on sexual harassment was passed in the country," concluded Grum, "This is a way to show how important it is to produce data for change." (VI, October 20, 2015)

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[1] World Statistics Day: <https://worldstatisticsday.org/>

[2] 2015 *World's Women Report*:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>

[3] Image: http://www.onuitalia.com/eng/wp-content/uploads/WorldsWomen2015_digital_cover.jpg

[4] Image: <http://www.onuitalia.com/eng/wp-content/uploads/650193.jpg>

[5] report: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/chapter3/chapter3.html>

[6] labour force: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/chapter4/chapter4.html>

[7] Image: <http://www.onuitalia.com/eng/wp-content/uploads/Youth-Education1.png>

[8] figures: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/chapter6/chapter6.html>

[9] 2012 law: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/heather-mcrobie/unsafe-house-of-italy-violence-against-women-does-not-break-for-summer>

[10] Twitter: <http://www.onuitalia.com/eng/2015/10/20/data-revolution-needed-for-good-policy-making-says-un-francesca-grum/?share=twitter>

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