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Items for information: Gender statistics

Report on the work of the secretariat on gender statistics

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present report provides information on various initiatives being undertaken to improve the capacity of national institutions to produce, disseminate, use and analyse gender statistics in the Asian and Pacific region. It describes the specific steps being taken by the secretariat to identify regional priorities and needs in capacity-building for gender statistics, as well as the secretariat's ongoing work to improve statistics on violence against women. Though the current programme of work of the secretariat already integrates gender issues in all statistical activities, guidance is sought from the Committee on the development of a dedicated regional capacity development programme on gender statistics, aimed at improving awareness and understanding of the various forms of gender inequalities and promoting the advancement of women.

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I. Background

A. Gender statistics: what and why?

1. The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, marked an important step in the development of gender statistics. For the first time, an international instrument comprehensively linked discussions on gender issues, mainstreaming gender in policymaking, planning and programming, and their specific needs for statistics. In its outcome document, the Beijing Platform for Action,¹ a wide representation of stakeholders representing governments, civil society and development partners clearly laid out 12 priority areas where data on women and men should be made available. Based on the set of actions outlined, Governments agreed to “generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation”.²

2. A large part of gender statistics has to do with collecting, processing, and presenting data on women and men separately—i.e., sex- or gender-disaggregated data. Such data capture the differing roles of women and men in society (economic and political empowerment, care work, and so forth) and shed light on issues that affect women and men differently such as migration and work, access to education, and disability. As the Beijing

¹ *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.

² See www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf.

Platform for Action highlighted, gender statistics also refers to collecting and analysing data on issues that affect women exclusively, such as maternal health and maternal mortality, or on issues that affect women in greater numbers than men, such as trafficking and gender-based violence.

3. Fifteen years after the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted, the need and demand for gender statistics have continued to grow at the national, regional and international levels, and remain unmet. Progress assessment on various gender equity goals and targets, including the Millennium Development Goals, has highlighted the lack of data in key areas, such as maternal mortality, time-use and unpaid work, violence against women, women and disability, and women in the informal sector. In addition, even where data are produced, such as through censuses, population surveys and administrative records on health, employment and income, these have not been fully utilized to generate gender statistics or adequately analysed, used and disseminated.

B. Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action - regional level

4. A strong reminder of such persisting issues emerged in the Asia-Pacific regional review of the Beijing Platform for Action, which was held in Bangkok in November 2009 (see E/ESCAP/66/14). In the Bangkok Declaration on Beijing + 15, attention was drawn to the need “to intensify support for statistical capacity-building efforts on the generation of gender statistics and to provide timely, reliable and disaggregated data by sex, ethnicity, age and location and the development of methodologies for the collection and processing of these gender statistics; and to ensure that gender statistics inform policy and programme decisions and effectively monitor and assess gender gains and gaps” (see E/ESCAP/66/14, chap I, para 1 (i)).

5. Likewise, the eleventh Triennial Conference of Pacific Women in August 2010 highlighted the need for improving the availability of and the use of gender statistics and research as a mechanism for the advancement of women, and endorsed the development of a multi-year programme for the institutionalization of a gender statistics framework.

C. Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action - global level

6. At the global level, a 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing +15) was undertaken at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in March 2010. In reviewing the implementation of internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women, the report of the Commission highlighted the fact that “progress still cannot be measured sufficiently in several of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals because of limited or non-existent data”.³ Some critical areas of concern highlighted in the report include women’s education, sexual and reproductive health, violence against women, the feminization of HIV-

³ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council*, 2010, Supplement No.7, (E/2010/27), decision 54/101, para. 19.

AIDS, women's economic empowerment and access to the labour market, social protection and women's ownership of productive assets.

7. It was recognized by the Beijing + 15 review that, though there are efforts to develop gender-sensitive indicators and to improve the collection of data disaggregated by sex and age, there is need for increased investment in more data collection and analysis, as well as to continue to "strengthen the capacity of national mechanisms for gender equality to participate effectively in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of all policies, programmes and strategies, as well as in the collection and analysis of data".⁴

8. It was noted specifically that the availability of credible and reliable data and the development of gender-sensitive indicators can also contribute to strengthening accountability for implementation, including through better monitoring and evaluation of actions taken.⁵

9. With respect to the analysis and outcomes of the Millennium Development Goals, the Beijing +15 review emphasized that "gender equality and the empowerment of women should not be confined to Goal 3 but should be considered for all of the Millennium Development Goals".⁶ Thus, in reviewing the implementation of goals at the national level, opportunities should be sought for including sex disaggregated data and analysis, and for mainstreaming gender equality perspectives in national Millennium Development Goal reports.

D. The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics

10. At the launch of *The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics*⁷ in October 2010, it was highlighted that methodological difficulties were still being encountered by statisticians worldwide when compiling gender statistics, and difficulties were still encountered in gathering comparable and quality national data. In preparing the report, it was realized that adequate and comparative statistics in certain areas were not available for some countries in the areas of poverty, environment and migration. Furthermore, the quality of data varied among countries. Increasing the capacity to produce reliable, accurate and timely statistics, in particular, gender statistics, remained a formidable challenge for many countries.⁸

11. The *World's Women 2010* report itself reflects some improvements in gender statistics over the 2005 report. For instance, surveys on time use were increasingly conducted in developed as well as in developing countries, yet improvements were needed in many other areas. Regarding statistics on women in power and decision-making, the report indicates that the identification of trends and cross-country comparisons was limited due the lack of data at the international and national levels. Statistical agencies in many countries do not routinely collect and disseminate data on the subject.

⁴ Ibid., paras. 19 and 23(d).

⁵ Ibid., para.10.

⁶ Ibid., para.13.

⁷ United Nations publication, Sales No. 10.XVII.11.

⁸ See www.un.org/News/briefings/docs//2010/101020_DESA.doc.htm.

E. Violence against women statistics: an important component of gender statistics

12. Violence against women is a human rights issue. The Beijing Platform for Action emphasized that “violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace”.⁹

13. The improvement of statistics on violence against women has been gaining momentum in the last few years with growing numbers of national and international initiatives to address violence against women. Laws, policies and institutions to end violence against women are being developed and strengthened at the national level, with an increasing need to be monitored for effective implementation.

14. The General Assembly, in its resolution 58/147 of 22 December 2003 on the elimination of domestic violence against women, called upon States to, among other things, collect, update and improve the collection of data on violence against women.

15. In its resolution 61/143 of 19 December 2006 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, the General Assembly emphasized the increasing demand for statistical indicators to contribute towards strengthening a knowledge base on violence against women to assist States in assessing its scope, prevalence and incidence.

16. Furthermore, in its resolution 62/133 of 18 December 2007 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, the General Assembly requested the United Nations Statistical Commission to undertake work on identifying statistical indicators on violence against women. In response, the United Nations Statistical Commission established the Friends of the Chair on Statistical indicators on Violence against Women (FoC), currently comprising representatives from 15 countries.¹⁰

17. The group is entrusted with the tasks of: analysing and evaluating the set of international indicators to measure the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women proposed at the Expert Group Meeting on Indicators to Measure Violence Against Women, Geneva, 8-10 October 2007; enhancing and strengthening the indicator set at the international level by specifying the type and nature of violence; making a proposal for the basic indicator set to measure the main types of violence; and generating recommendations for the proposed indicator set, that might assist countries to measure the scope, prevalence and frequency of violence against women.

18. The Secretary-General’s campaign “UNiTE to End Violence against Women”, launched in 2008, is a multi-year effort aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls in all parts of the world. By 2015, one of the goals that the UNiTE campaign aims to achieve is to “strengthen data collection on the prevalence of violence against women and girls”.

⁹ *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. 112.

¹⁰ The current FoC members are: Australia, Bangladesh, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, Ghana, Italy, Mexico, Thailand, Turkey and United States of America.

19. The *World's Women 2010* nevertheless reports that current statistical measurements of violence against women provide a limited source of information. Statistical definitions and classifications on the subject require more work and harmonization at the international level.

II. Some recent statistics development activities at the global and regional levels

A. Recent development activities for gender statistics

20. In order to address the challenges with respect to gender statistics, a number of initiatives have been taken at the global and regional levels. Through recent interregional cooperation among statistics development partners, methods and tests for improving the measurements of the informal sector,¹¹ disability,¹² vital statistics,¹³ and violence against women,¹⁴ as well as training on engendering data collection in censuses and surveys, have provided the means to improve the availability and quality of gender statistics.

21. ECE has applied its broad approach to capacity-building in a soon-to-be concluded five-year project to engender national statistical systems of selected Central Asian and Eastern European countries. Working closely with the World Bank Institute (WBI) and the UNDP, the project established a network of national statistical focal points, systematized the work process for improving gender statistics, and developed tools and resources including a manual and training videos.

B. Recent development activities on statistics on violence against women

22. Much of the ongoing methodological work on statistics on violence against women is guided by the United Nations Statistical Commission based on recommendations of the FoC. The FoC submitted a report to the fortieth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in February 2009. The report proposed a set of six indicators on physical and sexual violence, including intimate partner violence, as a starting point for initiating further work on identifying the most appropriate measurements. This set of indicators was adopted as an interim set.

23. Subsequently, during the Meeting of the Friends of the Chair of the United Nations Statistical Commission on Statistical Indicators on Violence against Women, held in Mexico in December 2009, the interim set of indicators was expanded to constitute a set of nine core indicators. Indicators on psychological violence, economic violence and female genital mutilation were added. A set of additional topics for statistical indicators requiring further work and elaboration was also proposed covering

¹¹ Active in this regard are ESCAP, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

¹² Active in this regard is ESCAP.

¹³ Active in this regard is ESCAP, ECA, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

¹⁴ Active in this regard is ESCAP, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

economic violence, early marriage, forced marriage, experience of abuse during childhood and trafficking of women.

24. The report of the meeting stressed that the instrument of choice for producing accurate and relevant statistics on the first nine core statistical indicators on violence against women is a dedicated statistical survey on violence against women representative for the national and major subregional levels. However, since this recommendation might be difficult to apply in all national circumstances due to a lack of statistical capacity and/or funding, a module attached preferably to a health and demographic survey would be a viable alternative.¹⁵

Survey module on violence against women

25. The United Nations Development Account Project entitled “Enhancing capacities to eradicate Violence against Women through networking of local knowledge communities,” is currently being implemented by all five United Nations Regional Commissions in cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women. The Statistical Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was assigned the task of developing a survey module to collect data on the six interim indicators on violence against women proposed by the FoC and approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission in February 2009.

26. The statistical component of the project aims to promote the use of common methodologies and indicators among countries in the five United Nations geographical regions and to strengthen the capacity of national entities to centralize, systematize and consolidate existing information. In particular, the aim is to encourage and involve countries in the testing of the survey module, preferably in all the five United Nations geographical regions, to test the effectiveness of the module for collecting data on violence against women, as well as to enhance capacity on associated procedures such as the sensitization and training of interviewers. Depending on the sample size in the test setting, countries might attempt to test prevalence and disclosure rates on violence against women, and generate statistics for the indicators proposed by the FoC.

27. Though the module was designed to collect a minimum set of information to measure the prevalence of physical, sexual and intimate partner violence through appropriate population-based surveys, it could constitute a dedicated survey as well. The questions used in the draft module build on existing instruments, in particular the WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women,¹⁶ that have been well tested and validated across cultures.

28. A manual with detailed a description of questions, a facilitator’s manual for training field workers, an interviewer manual (including ethical and safety recommendations) and a code book and analysis plan for the violence against women indicators are being developed by ECE to support

¹⁵ See *Report on the Meeting of the Friends of the Chair of the United Nations Statistical Commission on Statistical Indicators on Violence against Women*, Aguascalientes, Mexico, 9-11 December 2009, (ESA/STAT/AC.193/L.3), <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/vaw/docs/FinalReport.pdf>, paras. 86 and 87.

¹⁶ Available from www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/.

the application and use of the module. The outcomes of the testing of this survey module will inform the development of a set of Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women which are currently being drafted by the United Nations Statistics Division and is planned for submission to the United Nations Statistical Commission for approval in 2011.

Capacity-building on violence against women statistics in the Asia-Pacific region

29. As part of a United Nations Development Account project, ESCAP organized a “Workshop on Strengthening National Capacities to collect Violence against Women Statistics in the Asia-Pacific Region”, Bangkok, 20-21 September 2010. The regional workshop was co-organized by the Social Development Division and the Statistics Division of the secretariat, and brought together representatives of national women’s machineries, national statistics offices and civil society from nine countries in the region to enhance their technical capacity in the measurement of violence against women.

30. The workshop provided a platform to share national experiences of Asia-Pacific countries in collecting, disseminating and using data on the nature, prevalence, causes, consequences and impact of violence against women. An overview of the global initiatives on statistical data and indicators of violence against women, with a special focus on the indicators proposed by the FoC and the module developed by ECE were introduced to the participants. Although some countries in the region had collected data on the prevalence of violence against women through the DHS module, the WHO methodology or other ad hoc surveys, in most cases countries had relied heavily on administrative sources, such as police records, to obtain data. Such records are vital for monitoring judicial and support systems, but as cases of violence against women often go unreported by the victims, these records do not indicate a prevalence of violence against women.

31. Joint strategies and collaboration were encouraged between national counterparts in the use of the recommended indicators and module in order to strengthen the link between the production of statistics on violence against women and the use of these statistics. The establishment of a knowledge community on violence against women statistics and related information was discussed, together with plans for the creation of a regional website/electronic workspace for such information sharing.

32. Countries stressed the need for the standardization of definitions and methodologies to collect data on violence against women. It was emphasized that coordination was not only required among national institutions within countries, but regional and subregional cooperation was also essential for capacity development and sharing of information and good practices, including through the use of ICT. Countries recognized the need to prioritize the eradication of violence against women in national budgets, in order to avoid dependence on external funds to collect and disseminate data on the subject.

III. Developing a gender statistics programme for the Asia-Pacific region

A. Consultations with ESCAP members

33. The secretariat's current programme of work mainstreams gender aspects in all its statistical activities. However, in order to strengthen the gender component of the work programme, the secretariat is in the process of undertaking a series of consultations and surveys involving statistical systems, women's machineries and national development planning institutions. The aim is to review the status of gender statistics in the region and to identify strategic priorities and needs for capacity-building to improve the availability of gender statistics in support of national policy development and progress assessment, including the progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

34. A regional programme is being proposed in response to clear and repeatedly stated demands with respect to gender statistics including the need for more and better data, statistics on women and men, gender-based indicators, maximum utilization of existing resources and tools towards better gender-based analysis and the development of new statistical standards and methodologies. Although there have been some advances at the subregional level in this area of work, for example the gender statistics programme in the Pacific led by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the region as whole needs to take on and accelerate this work on a sustainable basis with stronger linkages to ongoing global initiatives.

35. The plan to develop a regional programme on gender statistics was brought to the attention of the Commission during its sixty-sixth session, in May 2010. The Commission was advised that the programme of work to be proposed by the secretariat on gender statistics will take forward the global initiatives prioritized by the United Nations Statistical Commission by implementing them at the regional level, taking into account specific regional realities and country needs. The technical cooperation strategy to be adopted for the regional programme will ensure that the work is carried out in close coordination with international and regional statistics development partners.¹⁷

36. As an initial step towards the development of this regional programme, the Statistics Division of the secretariat organized a "Consultative Meeting to Develop a Regional Programme on Gender Statistics in Asia and the Pacific" on 22 and 23 September 2010. National statistical offices and national women's machineries of fourteen countries in the region participated in the meeting in order to take stock of existing gender statistics programmes and activities in the countries; to identify national priorities in the area of gender statistics in the context of country development plans, as well as the needs for statistics expressed in the Beijing Platform for Action, 2009 Bangkok Declaration on Beijing + 15, Millennium Development Goals and other international development goals; to identify obstacles in this area of work at the national level; and to seek specific solutions and recommendations to overcome these obstacles, and how this would benefit from a region-wide capacity development programme.

¹⁷ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2010, Supplement No. 19* (E/2010/39-E/ESCAP/66/27), para. 150.

37. In order to facilitate this exercise, a survey of national gender statistics programmes and activities in the Asia-Pacific region was designed. National statistical offices that participated in the consultative meeting were asked to provide information about their gender statistics programmes, activities, materials and training needs through this survey. The secretariat is planning to extend this survey to all countries in the region over the next few months during the process of developing the proposal for the regional programme.

38. At the consultative meeting there was strong consensus among participating countries that there is a need for a framework on core gender statistics, not only addressing requirements under international gender-related commitments, but also accounting for national priorities and needs. Country participants proposed a broad list of gender-related indicators. It was agreed by participants that this list would need to be narrowed down to a core set of indicators, making it as widely applicable as possible, and which countries in the region should have the capacity to produce and disseminate these statistics.

39. At the meeting, it emerged that there is a significant need for new standards and methodologies in certain thematic areas, such as on time-use and unpaid work, women in the labour force, violence against women, trafficking and the gender dimensions of persons with disabilities. It was recognized that the regional programme would need to be linked with other global, regional and subregional initiatives to review what standards and methodologies are available and what needs to be built upon or taken forward at the regional level. Better utilization of available and existing resources in the form of national capacity, data, processes, instruments and so on, will be encouraged in designing the regional approach for this work.

40. Participating countries expressed the need for guidelines and training materials, including training of trainer courses, in order to facilitate more sustainable capacity development within national institutions. Capacity-building is not only required in areas such as gender-related data collection and dissemination, but also in gender analysis, for national statistical offices as well as for national women's machineries. The need to develop advocacy materials was emphasized as an essential element to promote the use and analysis of data in shaping policy decisions.

41. It was recognized that strengthening of coordination mechanisms is not only important at the national level among national statistical offices, national women's machineries and relevant line ministries, but countries also expressed a strong desire to coordinate with each other with the view to share good practices and to strengthen South-South cooperation.

B. Linking with global initiatives

42. Relevant inputs for the development of the regional programme were also gathered by the secretariat through its participation in the Global Forum on Gender Statistics and the meeting of the Interagency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEG-GS), organized by the United Nations Statistics Division in coordination with the National Statistical Coordination Board of the Philippines, in Manila, from 11-14 October 2010. Several countries from the region participated in the global forum on gender statistics, and some of these countries are also contributing to the work of the advisory groups under the IAEG-GS.

43. This year, the global forum on gender statistics discussed the gender dimensions of health statistics with a view to strengthen the capacity of countries to collect, disseminate and use quality health and gender statistics, and to review and discuss new initiatives and data collection tools for the improvement of health and gender statistics globally.

44. The global forum on gender statistics was organized as part of the global programme on gender statistics, which was launched by the United Nations Statistics Division following the recommendations of the meeting of the IAEG-GS in 2006. The global programme on gender statistics aims to promote advances in gender statistics by providing guidance, stability and linkages among the various initiatives at the international, national, regional and subregional levels. Among other activities, there are efforts to strengthen collaboration among stakeholders, develop and implement training activities, and disseminate gender statistics and indicators in key areas of concern.

45. As part of this global programme, the overall objectives of the global forum on gender statistics were to promote the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in national statistical systems, and to highlight the need for statistics to respond to requirements in monitoring progress of gender equity goals and targets such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action.

46. At the global forum on gender statistics, countries emphasized the need for standards and methodologies in specific thematic areas, such as maternal mortality and causes of death, time-use and the care economy, gender-based violence, and measuring the gender dimensions of persons with disabilities. The need for strengthening national capacity in gender analysis and dissemination, as well as strengthening of coordination mechanisms among relevant stakeholders was reiterated.

C. Next steps for the Regional Programme on Gender Statistics

47. The United Nations Statistical Commission will carry out a programme review of gender statistics at its forty-second session, in February 2011. In support of this, a global review of national gender statistics programmes and activities is currently being undertaken by Ghana, in collaboration with Italy and the Philippines. The review will outline the next steps, in particular, the areas where there could be some programme interventions that would generate “quick wins” for national gender statistics programmes. This, in turn, would provide important inputs for the Asia-Pacific regional programme.

48. A draft proposal for the regional programme will be developed by the secretariat, on the basis of the recommendations and inputs gathered from countries so far, and in close consultation with the Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment as well as other relevant agencies such as SPC, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank Institute (WBI). Countries in the region will be invited to provide comments and further inputs on the draft proposal so that the regional programme is specifically tailored to what countries identify are the priority areas of concern. A regional network comprising interested countries and agencies will be formed to guide and monitor the development and implementation of the regional programme.

49. As a first step to mobilize funds for this work, the secretariat has submitted a concept note for a proposal under the eighth tranche of the United Nations Development Account. The three-year interregional project being proposed aims to improve the capacity of relevant national institutions (statistical offices, national mechanisms/machineries for the advancement of women, development planners, policymakers, and legislators) to use data and statistics to objectively monitor, measure and analyse progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Work on developing the core set of gender statistics will be advanced through this project. If the concept note is approved for funds under the Development Account, a detailed proposal will be developed and submitted for review in 2011.
