



---

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**  
Committee on Statistics**Fourth session**

Bangkok, 25-27 March 2015

Item 3(g) of the provisional agenda\*

**Regional initiatives: gender statistics****Developing a core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific****Note by the secretariat\*\****Summary*

The present note by the secretariat contains an overview of recent discussions and mandates at global and regional levels concerning the improvement of gender statistics and indicators, including discussions at recent sessions of the Statistical Commission; the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the Asia-Pacific region; as well as related discussions in the context of the development agenda beyond 2015. The present note highlights the importance of having a core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific (or regional core set) within the overall context of the above-mentioned discussions. It describes the process of consultations conducted by the secretariat with ESCAP members and associate members, development partners and experts in proposing the regional core set. The present note also briefly discusses the key elements in a regional approach to capacity development in gender statistics. The Committee is requested to consider endorsing the core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific and adopting it as a guide to improve gender statistics. Guidance is also sought from the Committee on ways to improve the production and use of the regional core set, with an emphasis on the integration of a gender perspective across national statistical systems.

---

\* E/ESCAP/CST(4)/L.1.

\*\* The present document was submitted late owing to the need to include the issues raised during the latest discussions on the development agenda beyond 2015; in particular, the recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on Statistics and Data for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and the Secretary General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development.

## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Urgency to strengthen gender statistics.....	2
II. Why develop a core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific?.....	5
III. Consultative process for the development of a core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific .....	5
IV. Proposed core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific .....	7
V. Regional approach to capacity development in gender statistics .....	13
VI. Summary and conclusion .....	16
<b>Tables</b>	
1. Comparative overview of corresponding domains in recent gender indicator sets .....	9
2. Relevance of the regional core set to policy priorities at national levels .....	11
3. Implementation of national norms related to gender equality and women's empowerment: selected indicators.....	13

### **I. Urgency to strengthen gender statistics**

1. Promoting gender equality and empowering women are priorities in development policy. Most ESCAP members and associate members have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and gender equality has been a key part of the Millennium Development Goals. A comprehensive, stand-alone goal on gender equality, and empowerment of women and girls has also been proposed for the development agenda beyond 2015. That underscores the importance for ESCAP members and associate members to uphold and fully implement commitments made through national policies and programmes, as well as international conventions and development objectives that are designed to ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities concerning participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision-making.

2. At the same time, 2015 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which provided a comprehensive framework to link discussions on gender issues, mainstreaming gender in policymaking, planning and programming, and the need for statistics.

3. Transformative and gender-sensitive statistics are essential for systematic and effective measurement and monitoring of progress towards women's empowerment and the achievement of equality between women and men. Disaggregation of all individual-level data by sex is a necessary first step towards providing better information on women and men. It is also essential to reflect the different perspectives, priorities and needs of women and men throughout statistical work, including as regards definitions, collection, compilation, analyses and dissemination.

#### **A. Efforts to improve gender statistics and indicators at the global level**

4. Despite the importance of relevant, reliable and timely statistics and the 15-year review of the implementation of the goals and commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing+15), the Commission on the Status

of Women noted 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”.<sup>1</sup> Critical areas of concern include women’s education, sexual and reproductive health, violence against women, the feminization of HIV/AIDS, women’s economic empowerment and access to the labour market, social protection and women’s ownership of productive assets.

5. More specifically, the Statistical Commission in 2011 identified four main challenges to improving gender statistics, namely: the availability of quality data and the capacity to produce gender statistics; the ability of users to maximize the use of available information; the level of cooperation among stakeholders; and resource constraints.<sup>2</sup>

6. At the same time, the Statistical Commission also requested the Statistics Division, the regional commissions and other agencies to work intensively with member States to develop appropriate in-country support and to assist them in establishing sound national programmes on gender statistics.<sup>3</sup>

7. In response, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics, comprised of experts from national statistical systems and international agencies, identified a minimum set of gender indicators, or a global minimum set of gender indicators, consisting of 52 quantitative indicators grouped into three tiers and 11 qualitative indicators covering norms and laws on gender equality.<sup>4</sup> The list includes indicators addressing the key issues in gender equality and women’s empowerment that are common across countries and regions. It is intended as a basic set, with indicators specific to regional and national contexts to be added by regional and national entities.

8. The Statistical Commission, at its forty-fourth session,<sup>5</sup> agreed on the use of a global minimum set as a guide for national production and international compilation of gender statistics. It requested further clarification on data collection protocols from countries as well as detailed metadata. It also requested further consideration of indicators on the valuation of unpaid work and on migrants.

9. At the same time it encouraged greater integration of gender statistics into other areas of official statistics, such as sustainable development indicators. It also recognized that additional resources are needed to further develop and implement national work programmes on gender statistics, and requested the donor community to devote adequate resources to this area.

## **B. Call for improvement of gender statistics and indicators in Asia and the Pacific**

10. Both States and development partners have repeatedly expressed concerns about the lack of adequate data to support policies to promote gender equality and empowerment of women. Such a lack of data relates to

<sup>1</sup> E/2010/27-E/CN.6/2010/11, decision 54/101, para. 19.

<sup>2</sup> E/CN.3/2011/3, para. 24.

<sup>3</sup> E/2011/24-E/CN.3/2011/37, decision 42/102, paras. (f) to (i).

<sup>4</sup> E/CN.3/2014/18.

<sup>5</sup> E/2013/24-E/CN.3/2013/33, decision 44/109, paras. (e) to (g).

key policy areas, such as poverty, hunger, environmental sustainability, violence against women, armed conflict and a global partnership for development.<sup>6</sup>

11. In recognition of the gaps in data availability and quality, the Bangkok Declaration on Beijing+15 drew attention 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”.<sup>7</sup>

12. This call for improved data on women and girls was reiterated at the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review, which was organised by the secretariat in November 2014. As a means of accelerating achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment, Conference delegates “emphasized the need for enhanced accountability, requiring monitoring mechanisms, sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics, and increased, adequate and predictable financing, for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment”.<sup>8</sup>

13. The ministerial declaration adopted at the Conference emphasized the need “to strengthen national statistical offices and systems to produce, analyse and disseminate reliable and comparable gender statistics and data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other relevant categories, in a timely manner, through increased financial and technical investment, and strengthen the capacity of policymakers to interpret and use available data for evidence-based policy, programming and planning decisions and to monitor progress in the implementation of the Platform for Action”.<sup>9</sup>

14. The declaration further emphasized the need “to integrate a gender perspective into the production and dissemination of official statistics, including with the support of multilateral and bilateral development agencies at the request of national Governments, guided by the core set of gender indicators recommended by the Statistical Commission”.<sup>10</sup> It was also agreed that nationally appropriate, measurable targets and indicators must be established, taking into consideration international and regional agreements on gender statistics in order to review and assess the application of the renewed commitment made by ESCAP members and associate members in the process of the 20-year review in order to fully and effectively implement the Platform for Action.

---

<sup>6</sup> See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/vaw/docs/finalreport.pdf> and [www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/58/CSW58-CSW58\\_RPM\\_report\\_final%20%20pdf.pdf](http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/58/CSW58-CSW58_RPM_report_final%20%20pdf.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> E/ESCAP/66/14 and Corr. 1 and 2, chap. I, para. 2(i).

<sup>8</sup> E/ESCAP/GEWE/2, chap. II, para. 37.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. I, para. 57(z).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 57(aa).

## II. Why develop a core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific?

15. The development of a core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific<sup>11</sup> serves as a response to the repeated calls for new and improved data, which are necessary for the fulfilment of commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment at national, regional and global levels.

16. The regional core set incorporates the global minimum set as the foundation for facilitating global monitoring, although it goes further by including a region-specific context for common and regional gender issues, and by addressing regional gender policy priorities. Thus the regional core set builds on the global minimum set to address issues that are of particular relevance for Asia-Pacific countries. That approach is similar to the one certain other regions have taken. In Europe, for instance, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians developed a core set of gender equality indicators that incorporates the majority of the global minimum set, while substituting certain indicators for more precise ones that are available in the region.<sup>12</sup> Arab States, on the other hand, developed a framework for a core set of gender statistics that links the Millennium Development Goal indicators with the 12 areas of Beijing Platform for Action through quantitative and qualitative indicators, on the basis of regional priority issues.

17. The Committee on Statistics, at its second session in 2010, set a goal of "ensuring that all countries in the region by 2020 have the capability to provide an agreed basic range of population, economic, social and environmental statistics".<sup>13</sup> This goal will not be fully achieved unless statistics are disaggregated by sex, and gender-sensitive statistics are improved to reflect the status and conditions of both women and men, and girls and boys in all thematic areas of work.

18. While the secretariat aims to promote the integration of a gender perspective across national statistical systems and in all regional programmes, the regional core set would not only provide a starting point but would help to anchor, reinforce and provide strategic direction to such efforts.

## III. Consultative process for the development of a core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific

19. A series of consultations and surveys have been undertaken with national statistical systems, women's machineries, development planning institutions, as well as international development agencies and academia to ensure that the regional core set responds to countries' needs and priorities.

<sup>11</sup> Also referred to as the regional core set.

<sup>12</sup> Economic Commission for Europe, "Indicators of Gender Equality", report of the meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/15), 20 and 21 October 2014, Geneva. Available from: [www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2014/October/15-Final\\_report\\_on\\_Indicators\\_of\\_Gender\\_Equality.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2014/October/15-Final_report_on_Indicators_of_Gender_Equality.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> E/ESCAP/CST(2)/9, para. 1(a).

20. More specifically, the surveys, consultations and mechanisms that were conducted or established by the secretariat include:<sup>14</sup>

(a) Consultative Meeting to Develop a Regional Programme on Gender Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 22 and 23 September 2010;

(b) 2010 Survey of National Gender Statistics Programmes and Activities in the Asia-Pacific Region for participants of the above-mentioned consultative meeting. The national statistical offices of 15 countries in the region responded to the survey;

(c) In-country needs assessments on the status of gender statistics and the capacity of the national statistical system to produce gender statistics in Indonesia (April 2011) and Bhutan (August 2011);

(d) Global Review of Gender Statistics (2012) in collaboration with the Statistics Division. The national statistical offices of 25 countries in the region responded to the survey, in consultation with other relevant national institutions;

(e) Consultation with Asia-Pacific countries on the margin of the Fourth Global Forum on Gender Statistics, Dead Sea, Jordan, 27 to 29 March 2012. National statistical offices and/or national mechanisms for the advancement of women from eight countries participated in the consultation;

(f) Establishment and convening of the Working Group on Gender Statistics as part of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women for inter-agency coordination and consultation;

(g) Regional Consultative Workshop to Develop a Framework and Core Set of Gender Statistics and Indicators in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 4 to 6 November 2013.

21. These successive consultations reviewed the status of gender statistics in the region and identified strategic priorities and the need for capacity-building to improve their availability in support of national policy development and progress assessment. The Regional Consultative Workshop in November 2013 yielded concrete recommendations on developing a regional core set of gender indicators, including: its structure; criteria for the selection of indicators; policy issues to be taken into consideration; and the scope of statistical capacity-building needs.<sup>15</sup>

22. Every effort was made to solicit inputs when drafting the proposed regional core set prior to the workshop, including consultation with the Inter-agency Working Group on Gender Statistics, and a survey of the workshop participants. Consultations during and after the workshop led to a revision of the draft, including intensive one-on-one consultations with sector experts to ensure that priority policy issues of particular relevance for the region were adequately reflected in the regional core set, and related indicators were identified.

23. In addition to the expert consultation, a draft of the proposed regional core set was further circulated to the heads of all national statistical offices in the region in September 2014 for their review. National statistical offices

---

<sup>14</sup> For details of most of the consultations, see the relevant reports to the second and third sessions of the Committee on Statistics, namely E/ESCAP/CST(2)/INF/8 and E/ESCAP/CST(3)/INF/8, respectively.

<sup>15</sup> Full workshop report at [www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Report-workshop-on-gender-statistics.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Report-workshop-on-gender-statistics.pdf).

were advised to complete the review in consultation with the relevant national stakeholders, so that the views of the entire national statistical system on the regional core set could be consolidated. The purpose of the region-wide review was to understand and ensure that the proposed regional core set adequately reflected the national policy priorities; as well as to gauge the preliminary status of data availability and national norms related to gender equality and women's empowerment. An overview of the results of the region-wide review is presented in section IV.C of the present document.

## **IV. Proposed core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific**

### **A. Content, criteria for selection and key features**

24. The proposed core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific with background information on the content and design is presented in E/ESCAP/CST(4)/10.

25. The selection of domains and indicators in the regional core set was based on the following set of criteria agreed by participants at the Regional Consultative Workshop:

(a) The issues should be relevant for gender equality and women's empowerment, and priorities for related national policymaking in the Asia-Pacific region;

(b) The selection of indicators should not be constrained by concerns relating to limited availability, coverage or other difficulties;

(c) Internationally agreed concepts and definitions should be available and uniform, as far as possible, so as to ensure accuracy, reliability and regional comparability.

26. The regional core set is not prescriptive, although it does represent a minimum range of gender statistics that all countries in the Asia-Pacific region can aspire to produce and disseminate on a regular basis.

27. Based on the criteria established above, it is worth noting here that the issues covered in the regional core set are those that are considered to be priority policy issues for countries in the region, as revealed in the multiple rounds of consultations conducted by the secretariat. Clear and consistent definitions or well-defined statistical methodologies may not exist as yet for all indicators on the list.

28. As such, this is a live set of indicators, which may be updated or extended in due course, depending on emerging policy issues, methodological development and improvements, as well as on changes to the global minimum set and on discussions related to the development agenda beyond 2015.

29. Metadata<sup>16</sup> will be subsequently compiled by the secretariat to assist members and associate members in the interpretation and use of the headline indicators.

<sup>16</sup> For regional core set indicators included within the global minimum set, detailed metadata on concepts, definitions, sources and methods are available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/default.html>, together with relevant data.

## B. Comparison with recent global gender indicator sets

30. As stated, the regional core set is an extension of the global minimum set. To facilitate global monitoring, all 52 indicators in the global minimum set are included in the regional core set, in some cases with minor modifications. Additional domains and indicators have been added in the regional core set based on specific regional needs and priorities.

31. Table 1 provides a comparative overview of the domains covered in recent indicator sets, namely the global minimum set of gender indicators, the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) initiative<sup>17</sup> and the proposed core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific.

32. The regional core set has extended the global minimum set with the following changes/additions:<sup>18</sup>

(a) While the five domains in the global minimum set are covered in the basic domains of the regional core set, an additional basic domain (VI) on “Environment and climate change” has been included given the increasing importance of the issue for women throughout the Asia-Pacific region;

(b) The substantive content of domain I of the global minimum set, “Economic structures, participation in productive activities and access to resources”, has been divided into three subdomains, IA, IB and IC in the regional core set, in order to simplify and assist users to locate the relevant issues in the appropriate policy context. Domain IA on “Poverty” has been added as a critical development issue for the region, and as a reflection of the importance of eradicating absolute poverty for women’s empowerment;

(c) In addition, five supplementary domains have been included in the regional core set, reflecting issues of particular importance for a significant number of countries in the region;

(d) Indicators of particular relevance have been delineated from the basic domains for the priority target group “rural women”, given the large proportion of the population in the region that falls within this category;

(e) At least one macroindicator for each domain has been included to assist users and policymakers to link gender-responsive analysis and gender-related policy objectives to the macropolicy context;

(f) While the regional core set is composed of headline indicators that tend to capture key outcomes and determinants for gender equality and women’s empowerment, supporting indicators for each domain will be subsequently compiled by the secretariat to assist members and associate members in the interpretation and use of headline indicators;

(g) The list of qualitative indicators related to national norms has been expanded to cover various aspects of national commitment to gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, gender-responsive statistics and gender equality; institutional mechanisms for women’s empowerment and gender equality; and human rights issues.

---

<sup>17</sup> The EDGE initiative was launched by the United States at the Ministerial Session on Gender and Development of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in 2011 and builds on the work of Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics. See <http://genderstats.org> and E/ESCAP/CST(3)/INF/8 for more details.

<sup>18</sup> Comparison with EDGE indicators has not been specifically discussed here, since EDGE indicators are common to the global minimum set of gender indicators.



Table 1  
**Comparative overview of corresponding domains in recent gender indicator sets**

Global		Asia-Pacific region
Global minimum set of gender indicators	EDGE initiative	Proposed core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific
<i>Quantitative indicators</i>		
<i>Domains</i>	<i>Domains</i>	<i>Basic domains</i>
I. Economic structures, participation in productive activities and access to resources	III. Employment IV. Entrepreneurship V. Assets	IA. Poverty IB. Participation in productive activities IC. Participation in unremunerated productive work
II. Education	II. Education	II. Education
III. Health and related services	I. Health	III. Health and related services
IV. Public life and decision-making		IV. Governance and participation in public life and decision-making
V. Human rights of women and children		V. Human rights of women and girls
-	-	VI. Environment and climate change
-	-	<i>Supplementary domains</i>
-	-	VII. International labour migration
-	-	VIII. Refugees
-	-	IX. Disaster risk reduction
-	-	X. Social protection (special focus: population ageing)
-	-	XI. Peace and security
-	-	<i>Priority target group:</i>
-	-	Rural women
<i>Qualitative indicators</i>		
Gender indicators related to national norms		Qualitative indicators related to national norms

## C. Results of the region-wide review of the core set of gender indicators for Asia and the Pacific

33. Some 36 members and associate members<sup>19</sup> in the region responded to the region-wide review questionnaire, which was circulated in September 2014 to national statistical offices to complete in consultation with the relevant national stakeholders. The national stakeholders most commonly consulted at the national level in completing the questionnaire were ministries of education; health; home affairs; labour; planning; and women, youth and children. The questionnaire consisted of four sections, which were as follows:

### 1. Suitability of domains in capturing national policy priorities

34. The questionnaire solicited feedback on whether the six basic domains, five supplementary domains and the priority target group (rural women) captured priority policy issues and related information needs for countries. For the basic domains, more than 86 per cent of respondents indicated that all domains, except the “Environment” domain (74.2 per cent), captured priority policy issues and related information needs. The “Education” domain received the highest score, followed by “Human rights of women and girls”, “Poverty” and “Governance and participation in public life and decision-making”. The process of consultation with countries and development agencies in the development of the regional core set had previously revealed that gender policy issues in the area of “Environment” were still not adequately clear, and identification of output indicators in this area requires more research and discussion among related sector experts.

35. The supplementary domains scored a bit lower overall with those on “Disaster risk reduction” and “Social protection (population ageing)” marked positively by more than 80 per cent of respondents, while the domain on “Refugees” was the lowest (38.7 per cent) followed by “Peace and security” (44.8 per cent). At the same time, more than 85 per cent of the respondents indicated that the priority target group (rural women) captured priority policy issues (see table 2).

36. Given the high positive response rate for the basic domains and priority target group (rural women) in the region-wide review (more than 85 per cent of respondents), changes in most of the proposed domains in the regional core set may not be required at this time. The fact that the “Environment” domain scored lowest may be more a reflection of lack of appropriate indicators and overall lack of standards and methodological guidelines in this area. In any event, further guidance from sector specialists may be required, as the issue has been emphasized as a policy priority in various consultations prior to the region-wide review. One option is to redesignate the domain as a supplementary domain if it is not considered relevant, at this time, by everyone in the region. The slightly lower positive response rate for supplementary domains confirms the assumption that these domains may apply only to some in the region.

---

<sup>19</sup> Afghanistan; American Samoa; Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Fiji; Georgia; Hong Kong, China; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Macao, China; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Nepal; New Caledonia; New Zealand; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Tonga; Turkey; and Viet Nam.

Table 2  
**Relevance of the regional core set to policy priorities at national levels**

Domains of the regional core set	Percentage
<i>Basic domains</i>	
IA. Poverty	96.9
IB. Participation in productive activities	90.3
IC. Participation in unremunerated productive work	86.7
II. Education	100.0
III. Health and related services	93.8
IV. Governance and participation in public life and decision-making	96.9
V. Human rights of women and girls	97.0
VI. Environment and climate change	74.2
<i>Supplementary domains</i>	
VII. International labour migration	63.3
VIII. Refugees	38.7
IX. Disaster risk reduction	80.0
X. Social protection (special focus: population ageing)	86.7
XI. Peace and security	44.8
<i>Priority target group (rural women) domains</i>	
IA. Poverty	93.3
IB. Participation in productive activities	89.7
IC. Participation in unremunerated productive work	85.7
II. Education	93.1
III. Health and related services	86.7
IV. Governance and participation in public life and decision-making	86.7
V. Human rights of women and girls	93.3

## 2. Data availability

37. Data collection and production of the proposed indicators were strongest for conventional domains such as “Health and related services” and “Education” (more than 62 per cent of respondents),<sup>20</sup> while emerging areas such as “Environment” and “Participation in unremunerated productive work” were the weakest. In domains such as “Environment”, “Refugees” and “Disaster risk reduction”, more than 80 per cent of respondents indicated that they had not collected data, confirming that these domains require more methodological discussion and capacity development. While data on “Poverty” may be available from several respondents, the results of the region-wide review indicate that the proposed indicators were either not

<sup>20</sup> Taken as an average of the response for all headline indicators in the particular domain.

produced or not disaggregated along rural-urban lines by almost 40 per cent of respondents. Similarly in the “Education” domain, over 40 per cent of countries that responded indicated that data were collected but indicators were not produced with rural disaggregation.

38. For some of the basic domains, such as “Poverty”, “Governance and participation in public life and decision-making” and “Human rights of women and girls”, North and Central Asia as a subregion did relatively better than other subregions in terms of the data collected and indicators produced, while for other basic domains, such as “Education”, “Health and related services” and “Environment”, South-East Asia did relatively better. The related results for data availability across subregions were somewhat mixed across supplementary domains.

39. It will be necessary to investigate the causes of lack of data collection — or lack of production of indicators even if data might be available at the national level — in the course of designing regional support for the production and use of the regional core set, so that relevant interventions can be designed to assist national statistical systems.

### **3. Data sources**

40. The most common data sources for the indicators in the regional core set mentioned by respondents include: population and housing censuses; household surveys such as the labour force survey; household income and expenditure surveys; multiple indicator (cluster) surveys; and demographic and health surveys. In some cases, respondents mentioned special surveys, such as employment surveys, ICT surveys, time-use surveys, and violence against women surveys. For a number of indicators, administrative sources or the relevant ministries were cited as data providers. This result suggests that there is great potential in the region to expand the sources of official statistics to address gender equality and empowerment of women, including administrative data as well as big data.

### **4. Status of national norms related to gender equality and women’s empowerment**

41. Through the qualitative indicators, countries were asked to review the status of national norms related to gender equality and women’s empowerment. More than 54 per cent of respondents indicated that they had made commitments on gender mainstreaming, either through institutionalization into national policy, institutionalization in subnational or local planning and/or programming processes, or through a review of new legislation from a gender perspective. A commitment on gender budgeting was, however, indicated by just over 40 per cent of respondents.

42. As regards commitment to gender-responsive statistics, while existence of a law on gender statistics or the explicit mention of gender statistics in the general statistics law seemed to exist in only about 26.5 per cent of cases, about 50 per cent of respondents indicated that they had a gender unit in the national statistical office. Moreover, more than 64 per cent of respondents indicated that they had a national plan of action on gender statistics or gender statistics explicitly covered in a national plan of action on statistics (see table 3 for details).

43. While national commitments to gender equality in employment through the relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) were indicated by more than 67 per cent of respondents, less than

40 per cent had made commitments towards ILO conventions supporting reconciliation of work and family life, which are key for encouraging women's participation in productive activities in order to alleviate women's poverty.

44. In terms of qualitative indicators on "Governance and participation in public life and decision-making", while national women's machineries had been established by about 84 per cent of respondents, the presence of gender quotas in decision-making in national and local governance was still very low and was indicated by less than 33 per cent of respondents.

45. As regards "Human rights of women and the girls", more than 87 per cent of respondents mentioned that they had put in place laws on domestic violence.

Table 3

**Implementation of national norms related to gender equality and women's empowerment: selected indicators**

	Qualitative indicator	Percentage
QI.I.1b	Gender mainstreaming is institutionalized into subnational or local planning and/or programming processes	54.5
QI.I.2a	Gender budgeting is institutionalized in national budget processes	42.4
QI.I.3a	Existence of a law on gender statistics or gender statistics explicitly covered in a general statistics law	26.5
QI.I.3b	Existence of a gender unit in the national statistical office	50.0
QI.I.3c	Existence of a national plan of action on gender statistics or gender statistics explicitly covered in a national plan of action on statistics	64.7
QI.I.4b	Ratification of ILO Convention (No. 111) concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation	67.9
QI.I.5b	Ratification of ILO Convention (No. 175) concerning Part-Time Work	25.0
QI.IV.1a	National women's machinery established by Government	83.9
QI.IV.3	Presence of a gender quota for local government (reserved seats)	32.3
QI.IV.4	Presence of a gender quota for parliament (voluntary party quotas)	33.3
QI.V.2	Existence of laws on domestic violence	87.9
QI.V.3	Existence of data on violence against women from a national survey conducted within the last 10 years	73.5

## V. Regional approach to capacity development in gender statistics

46. Efforts to improve gender-sensitive statistics and indicators in the region could start with a review by national statistical systems of the extent to which their current data collection processes adequately represent the different perspectives and situations of women and men. Where change is required, regional and national strategies need to be developed to progressively modify data collection methods — through methodological development and improved capacity — in order to produce more gender-sensitive statistics.

47. At the Regional Consultative Workshop held in November 2013, participants emphasized that improvement of gender statistics requires the involvement of both producers and users of data, including policy planners and decision-makers, government agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, the media, researchers and academia.

48. The meeting emphasized that improvement of gender statistics must begin with two critical basic steps: gender sensitization of key stakeholders; and the active engagement, commitment and interaction of national statistical offices with national women's machineries and other ministries to identify key gender equality and women's empowerment policy issues in order to produce statistics to address these.

49. The meeting suggested certain basic principles of an implementation plan for the regional approach, namely:

(a) Institutionalization of gender statistics across all ministries and key stakeholders;

(b) Strengthened capacity of national statistical offices and national women's machineries as an initial priority;

(c) Centralized mechanism for training;

(d) Regular monitoring and evaluation;

(e) Public data access;

(f) Integration of gender across all areas of statistical development at national and regional levels.

50. It must be emphasized that funding for collecting gender-responsive data and generating gender-responsive statistics should be provided from the budgets of statistical agencies, and not necessarily from those of national mechanisms for the advancement of women or other ministries.

#### **A. Strengthening statistical methodologies**

51. A key approach could be to design and focus methodological development and capacity-building on the regional core set of gender indicators, as the minimum range of gender-sensitive statistics, which countries could consider producing on a continual basis. The regional core set of gender indicators could therefore serve as a guide not only to coordinate regional cooperation and mobilize support from all relevant regional and national stakeholders, but also to focus national efforts.

52. Participants at the Regional Consultative Workshop suggested that regional support could include training on the basic concepts of gender, gender statistics and policy issues, and integrating these issues into statistics and gender-sensitive interviewing; internationally agreed and accepted concepts, definitions, standards, and methodologies on the generation of gender statistics for every area of statistics; data quality assessment; and data use and dissemination strategies and tools.

53. The participation and contribution of the Asia-Pacific region is also essential in global discussions on statistical standards, methodologies and related testing in various thematic areas, as pursued by Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (for example, violence against women and time-use) and the EDGE project (for example, asset ownership and entrepreneurship), and under the guidance of the Statistical Commission.

## **B. Integration of a gender perspective across the national statistical system**

54. In addition to methodological development and capacity-building in specific areas, a key component of the regional approach should be to integrate a gender perspective into the production and dissemination of all official statistics, guided by the regional core set. Integrating a gender perspective throughout the statistical system requires methodological improvements in both data coverage and data quality, spanning all thematic areas, as well as at all stages and processes of statistical production. It also requires that women are involved in decision-making about what data need to be collected, how they should be collected and how they should be used. In other words, a gender-sensitive perspective is required in the content, structure and methods of data collection, compilation, dissemination and analysis.

55. The Global Review of Gender Statistics,<sup>21</sup> conducted in 2012 by the secretariat in collaboration with the Statistics Division, revealed that success factors in mainstreaming gender in national statistical systems in the region included: improvement of concepts/definitions in existing data collection; regular production/dissemination of sex-disaggregated data; and better collaboration and user-producer dialogue, as well as training of staff.

56. However, the results of the Global Review also revealed that a number of challenges and impediments still exist in mainstreaming gender in national statistical systems, including: lack of awareness of gender issues and gender sensitivity in collection, analysis and dissemination of data; lack of trained statisticians; inadequate new data collection to fill gaps; inadequate user-producer dialogue; and limited budgets.

57. The integration of a gender perspective throughout the statistical system could be facilitated at the national level by national policy frameworks or national strategies for the development of statistics. Participants at the Regional Consultative Workshop highlighted the fact that the following could serve as entry points for the integration of gender across all areas of the national statistical system: national plans and strategies for statistics; gender statistics legislation/regulations; and integrated household survey programmes that ensure that data requirements are incorporated into the regular survey programme and data collection.

58. Similarly at the regional level this could be facilitated by the design and implementation of various regional programmes on sectoral statistics to reflect a gender perspective. It would be important to integrate a gender perspective in core sets of statistics and indicators that are available in other substantive areas of work, such as economic statistics, social statistics and agricultural statistics, for a coordinated capacity development approach to be put in place.

## **C. Strengthening the user base for gender statistics**

59. In addition to issues concerning the supply side, the demand for gender statistics and indicators needs to be strengthened in the region. The processes of collecting gender-responsive data, compiling gender-responsive statistics and generating relevant indicators require considerable investments of time, funding, commitment and statistical competence. Such investments

<sup>21</sup> See E/ESCAP/CST(3)/INF/8.

can only be justified in response to the demands of a large and active user base, including policymakers in all sectors, as well as civil society partners.

60. An approach here would be for national statistical offices to identify the needs and capacities of users and potential users, and to develop their own capacity to present statistics and indicators in ways that are useful for users and can be easily understood and interpreted. For instance, online access at national and regional levels to statistics related to the regional core set would facilitate general user access, which could be a first step in ensuring their use.

61. Based on various consultations already conducted by the secretariat and further guidance from the Committee, a regional implementation plan could be proposed by the secretariat in due course, and further consultations with members and associate members could be conducted to outline the long-term direction for this work.

## **VI. Summary and conclusion**

62. The global minimum set developed by experts from national statistical systems and international agencies was intended as a common basic set across countries and regions in order to facilitate national production and international compilation of gender statistics. The regional core set serves as an adaptation of the global minimum set to reflect regional needs and priorities.

63. Collecting gender-responsive data and generating gender-responsive statistics is the responsibility of national statistical systems, which are supported by regional and international statistical bodies. The secretariat has a crucial role to play in linking national and regional capacity development with ongoing and future global initiatives, including those relating to the development agenda beyond 2015, and other international goals and targets. The regional core set is therefore a step towards the development and improvement of gender statistics in the Asia-Pacific region in accordance with international standards. The secretariat is seeking to assist ESCAP members and associate members in building their capacity to collect the gender-sensitive data that are required to provide a proper foundation for the regional core set.

64. The Committee may wish to:

(a) Endorse the proposed regional core set as the minimum range of gender statistics that all countries in the region can aspire to produce and disseminate on a regular basis, and as a guide for the setting of priorities by national, regional and international entities in enhancing the capacity of national statistical systems;

(b) Provide guidance on improving the production and use of the regional core set, through a regional implementation plan, with an emphasis on the integration of a gender perspective across national statistical systems, namely in all thematic areas of statistical work as well as at all stages of statistical production and dissemination.