

# ESCWA Role in Developing Gender Statistics in the Arab Countries

Presented by Ahmed Hussein  
Chief of Social Statistics Section,  
UN-ESCWA

## *Introduction*

### ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/17

*The United Nation's Secretary General's  
communication (October 13, 1997):*

“**H**eads of departments, programmes, funds and regional commissions are urged to formulate specific **s**trategies for gender mainstreaming, to systematically use **g**ender **a**nalysis and **s**ex-**d**isaggregation of data, and to commission sector-specific **g**ender **s**tudies and **s**urveys”

## *Introduction*

### **Platform of Action [Fourth International Conference on Women (Beijing , 1995)]:**

- **Mainstreaming** as a global strategy for promoting gender equality.
  - **Incorporating** gender perspective in all policies and programmes
  - **Producing and disseminating** gender disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation.

## *Introduction*

- Issues of gender **equality, equity** and the **empowerment** of women are increasingly recognized as essential to the process of **sustainable development**.
- It is now clear that to obtain adequate and appropriate data on all individuals, the **statistical** system must reflect **gender** issues.

## *Introduction*

- **Producers and Users** of gender statistics need to work closely together.
- Producers (**Statisticians**) must make efforts to understand the gender issues of concern in collecting data.
- Users (**Policy-makers**) must communicate their needs to statisticians and learn how to use statistics in their work.

## *Introduction*

- Statistical output on gender issues has increased over the past years.
- Steps to improve statistical systems to better reflect gender problems.
- Projects to:
  - Introduce the new field of gender statistics
  - Assist national statistical offices in building gender statistics programmes.

**The Development of National Gender Statistics  
Programme in the Arab Countries  
(Statistics Division, UN-ESCWA, 1997)**

• *Main funding agencies:*

- UNDP
- IDRC (Canada)
- AGFUND

**The Development of National Gender Statistics  
Programme in the Arab Countries**

*Main Development Goal:*

- Building **national capacities** in the **production, use and dissemination of gender statistics** that would **promote action, inform policies and monitor changes** for the benefit of women.

## The Development of National Gender Statistics Programme in the Arab Countries

### *Project Implementation:*

#### **Early stage:**

- *Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Morocco*

#### **Final stage:**

- *Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Syrian Arab Republic, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen*

### *Project objectives & outputs:*

- **Objective I:** To create **awareness** of gender statistics among **national** statistical offices, policy-makers, researchers and women's advocates, to underline the **importance** of such issues in policy formulation, and to identify the **indicators** required to measure the achievement of national gender goals.
- **Output I:**
  - Pamphlet describing activities of the project
  - Minimum list of statistics on women and men
  - Organizing national workshops for producers/users of gender statistics.

## *Project objectives & outputs:*

- **Objective II:** To prepare a gender statistics **publication** in each participating **country**.
- **Output II:** Specialists in the area of gender statistics work together to prepare a national publication that presents the situation of women relative to men, showing the gender gaps by age in different areas of the society, such as education and work.

## *Project objectives & outputs:*

- **Objective III:** To **identify** gender **concerns** in the region, to assess the **availability** and **quality** of data in the national statistical systems and devise **remedy** mechanisms.
- **Output III:** Countries prepare a report on priority gender issues and related statistics, noting the gaps and deficiencies in data as identified during the process of preparing the national publication, then draft a strategic plan for the improvement of gender statistics in their respective countries.

## ***Project objectives & outputs:***

- **Objective IV:** To develop a **regional** gender statistics **database** for Arab countries.
- **Output IV:** Using the national publications as well as other sources, statistics on gender are compiled in a database for the Arab region, and a publication on women and men in the region is produced.

## ***Project objectives & outputs:***

- **Objective V:** To develop a **plan**, including an **implementation mechanism**, and initiate similar projects in **other Arab countries**.
- **Output V:**
  - Holding consultations with other Arab countries
  - Preparing project proposals
  - Seeking donors for their implementation.

## ***Project target group:***

- **Statisticians from national statistical offices**
- **Producers and users of gender statistics in:**
  - High and mid-level staff in Government departments
  - Researchers
  - Members of non-governmental organizations (NGO)
  - Women's advocacy groups

## ***Project Activities (at the national level)***

### ***1) Steering committee:***

- **E**nsure that the project receives high-level support and cooperation from all parties concerned.
- **P**rovide guidance, direction and advice to the national working group in the planning, coordination and implementation of the project's activities.



## ***Project Activities (at the national level)***

### ***2) National working group:***

- **I**dentify the most urgent concerns regarding the situation of women relative to that of men, as well as the necessary statistics and indicators related to those concerns.
- **P**roduce a statistical publication (in Arabic) on women and men in the country.

## ***Project Activities (at the national level)***

### ***3) National workshops:***

- **F**acilitate the exchange of ideas on priority gender issues in the country.
- **P**romote interaction and awareness among producers and users of data.

## ***Project Activities (at the national level)***

### ***4) Report on weaknesses and deficiencies in the existing gender statistics:***

- Long-term strategies for the development of gender statistics at the national level over a five-year period of time.

## ***Project Activities (at the national level)***

### ***5) Meetings at the national level for funding agencies***

- Obtain the necessary additional funding for the implementation of national strategies and plans.

## *National workshops*

### *First workshop:*

- **I**ncrease awareness of the roles of women and men in the society
- **S**upport the efforts of those active in the field of gender equality
- **F**oster interest of policy-makers and encourage dialogue between users and producers of statistical data.

### *Second workshop:*

- **R**eview and evaluate the draft of the national publications that had been prepared, including extent to which they succeeded in addressing priority gender issues and identifying areas for policy intervention.
- **P**romote interaction and awareness among producers and users of data
- **P**repare and publish a report on the weaknesses and deficiencies in existing gender statistics and make recommendations on how the situation can be redressed.

## *Project Activities (at the regional level)*

### **Role of ESCWA:**

- **F**acilitated the network and exchange of information and experiences among participating countries.
- **P**rovided technical advisory services for the implementation of national strategies
- **D**isseminated regional comparative gender statistics.
- **O**rganized three producer-user training workshops at the regional levels to review best practices and progress in national gender statistics programs

## ***First Regional Workshop (Tunisia, 9-14 June, 1997)***

### **Main objectives:**

- Familiarize statisticians and users of statistics with the various aspects of gender issues, including the availability and quality of data and the requirements for developing gender statistics programmes.
- Establish a list of indicators and statistics on women and men that are related to national gender issues.
- Set up a framework and formulate preliminary plans for future work related to gender statistics in the country.
- Prepare the draft of a national publication on the situation of women and men in the country.

## ***Second Regional Workshop (Jordan, 8-11 November, 1999)***

### **Main objectives:**

- Facilitate the exchange of national expertise regarding the compilation of indicators from national sources.
- Identify problems encountered in the preparation of national databases on women and men.
- Share the experiences of participating Arab countries in the preparation of their national publications on women and men as well as dissemination materials like wall charts, brochures, flyers etc.
- Agree on a regional programme of action timed at strengthening cooperation in order to improve gender statistics, promote change and ensure equality between the sexes throughout the region.

## *Third Regional Workshop (Tunisia, 5-7 June, 2001)*

### **Main objectives:**

- Establishing a consensus about the main gender issues in the Arab Region.
- Revising and updating the list of follow-up indicators.
- Emphasizing networking and regular communication among countries of the region.

## *National & Regional Strategies*

1. Capacity-building
2. Institutional arrangements
3. Concepts, definitions & measurements
4. Dissemination

## *Deficiencies in official statistics on gender issues in the Arab Region*

1. Existence of stereotypes in the region with regard to the traditional role of women and men
2. Lack of a clear understanding of gender
3. Problems with gender blindness
4. Lack of a centralized system of data compilation
5. Lack of a unified set of statistical definitions and concepts in the region
6. Poor linkage between producers and users of statistics
7. Uneven coverage of statistical indicators in Beijing's critical areas of concern\*

## *Coverage of indicators by Arab countries\**

	Algeria	Lebanon	Jordan	Syria	Tunisia	Palestine	Egypt	Yemen
<b>Critical areas of concern (Beijing)</b>								
Contextual indicators	P	P	H	P	P	P	P	H
Women and poverty	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Education and training of women	P	H	P	P	P	H	P	P
Women and health	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Violence against women	L	N	N	N	N	N	N	L
Women and armed conflict	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Women and economy	P	H	H	H	L	H	H	H
Women in power and decision-making	P	P	H	P	L	L	L	L
Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Women and human rights	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Women and the media	N	H	N	N	H	P	N	P
Women and the environment	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
The girl child	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

## *Major achievements of the project*

1. Creating gender awareness in the region
2. Capacity-building
3. Publication of national reports (in Arabic)
4. ESCWA regional publications\*
5. Highest priority gender-related issues in the Arab region and related indicators\*\*
6. Strengthening of the national statistical systems
7. Consolidation of gender related statistics in the region
8. Ensuring the sustainability and dissemination of the programme in other Arab countries
9. Creation of gender statistics unit
10. Creation of regional network of gender statistics specialists

## *ESCWA Regional Publications\**

- *Reports of regional meetings:*
- (1) Report for the First Regional workshop on Gender Statistics in the Arab Countries, TUNIS, 9-14 June 1997.
- (2) Report for the Second Regional workshop on Gender Statistics in the Arab Countries, AMMAN, 8-11 November 1999.
- (3) Report for the Third Regional workshop on Gender Statistics in the Arab Countries, TUNIS, 5-7 June 2001.

## ***ESCWA Regional Publications\****

- ***Pamphlets:***
  - (1) Women and Men in the Arab Countries: Employment.
  - (2) Women and Men in the Arab Countries: Education. *(In process)*
- ***Booklets / Abridged national reports (in English):***
  - (1) Women and Men in Tunisia: A Statistical Portrait 2000.
  - (2) Women and Men in the Syrian Arab Republic: A Statistical Portrait 2000.
  - (3) Women and Men in Lebanon: A Statistical Portrait 2000. *(In process)*
  - (4) Women and Men in Yemen: A Statistical Portrait 2000. *(In process)*
- ***Wall chart:*** Women and Men in the Arab Countries
- ***Papers:***
  - Priority gender issues and related statistics and indicators in the Arab Countries.

## ***Highest priority gender-related issues in the Arab region and number of related indicators\*\****

- General background of the population, household, human settlements (20)
- Women and poverty (11)
- Education and training of women (15)
- Women and reproductive health (23)
- Violence against women (9)
- Women, conflicts and war (12)
- Women and the economy (18)
- Women in positions of authority (13)
- Institutional mechanisms to improve the status of women (2)
- Women and human rights (5)
- Women and the media (9)
- Women and the environment (9)
- The girl child (11)



## *Follow-Up plan of action*

- **Revise, update and disseminate** the national publications at regular intervals, ensuring that any new mechanisms or methods that emerge in the area of gender statistics are incorporated in the publications.
- **Bi-annual workshops** for the Arab region will be organized to discuss, share and compare governmental and non-governmental initiatives in addressing gender concerns and issues.
- **ESCWA** will assist national statistical offices in recruiting potential donors to finance the implementation of the strategies required to improve gender statistics in their systems.

## *Future plans*

- **Continuous effort** to increase the scope of the project by recruiting more Arab Countries, and to build national capacities and exchange knowledge and experience in the field of gender statistics, with the collaboration of international and Arab organizations.
- **Conduct of statistical analyses** using available gender-disaggregated data that are relevant to priority issues in participating Arab Countries.
- **Tackling of new issues** in gender statistics that were not studied previously, including: unemployment and under-employment; unpaid work; the informal sector; working conditions related to distribution of jobs, salaries and work opportunities; violence; agriculture.
- **Dissemination of gender statistics** through the creation of national and regional websites on the internet.

## *Conclusion*

- Many countries worldwide are incorporating the gender concept in their development programmes and policies.
- In the Arab region, there is still a need to organize training workshops for users and producers of statistics, where persons working on gender issues can share experiences and develop appropriate plans.
- Efforts to review and harmonize concepts and definitions are also of importance in the process of improving gender statistics and facilitating regional and international comparisons.
- Many topics such as violence, time use and informal sector have yet to be tackled.
- It is essential for countries to institutionalize gender statistics and establish a special unit in their respective statistical offices to follow-up on all gender-related issues.
- The agreed upon gender equality indicators should be continuously revised.

**THANK YOU**