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Fostering User-Producer Linkages in Gender-Disaggregated Data for Agricultural and Rural Development: the Experiences of FAO

Submitted by Food and Agriculture organization of the United Nations *

I. Introduction

For over two decades, there has been an increasing demand for improved social and gender statistics, as evidenced in the mandates established by the World Plan of Action by the International Conference on Women in 1975 (ECOSOC1999; Narain 1999), The 1989 World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) and the World Food Summit Plan of Action (1996b). *FAO's World Food Summit Plan of Action* recommended "the improvement of the collection, dissemination and use of gender-disaggregated data in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development." This was in recognition of the importance of gender-disaggregated data to food security policy and planning.

Such mandates have resulted in an increased demand for accurate and relevant gender statistics for agriculture and the rural sector, and have widened the range of potential users for gender and other social statistics. In its publications on gender and agricultural statistics, FAO argues that there should be a permanent dialogue between users and producers of statistics to ensure the relevance and validity of data. The synergy of knowledge and expertise drawn from various categories of users (such as planners, decision-makers and gender specialists) and statisticians helps identify fundamental aspects of gender issues and facilitates the monitoring and evaluation of these issues over time. Such a dialogue is particularly important in the determination of the categories of data to be collected and the selection of indicators. User-producer collaboration can be furthered through workshops, technical committees, expert consultations and the integration of statisticians in policy-making processes (FAO 1999b:21-22).

Consequently, the FAO Gender and Development Service (SDWW) has collaborated since the early 1990s with the FAO Statistics Division (ESS) to provide technical support in gender and statistics **for ministries of agriculture and central statistics offices (CSO) for Member Countries. Conducted**

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mainly within the framework of technical support to the World Census of Agriculture (WCA; FAO 1995b), this support recognizes the need for strong user-producer linkages to identify census needs and ensure use of census data for policy formulation and decision-making. Recent reviews, focussing on the Africa Region, provide a useful overview of this work. (e.g., Curry and Tempelman 2004; Keita and Tempelman 2004; Tempelman 2003)².

This paper describes the SDW-ESS experience with fostering better user-producer linkages and working with policy makers and senior government officials for wider use of gender-sensitive data and information in policy and planning. The contexts in which such engagement with users and producers occur include national agricultural censuses, training in Gender-Disaggregated Data for Agricultural and Rural Development, and mainstreaming cross-cutting development issues such as gender, HIV/AIDS impacts and food security. Although many of these experiences come from Africa and other regions, special attention in this paper is given to efforts by SDW in the European region to incorporate gender statistics and information into national planning processes. These include FAO support to developing national action plans for the empowerment of rural women in Eastern Europe, and the retabulation of the Hungarian National Agricultural Census 2000 in order to produce a gender-sensitive agricultural data base at sub-national level. Present plans are for the preliminary findings of the Hungarian agricultural census retabulation to be presented later in this year to policy makers for consideration in future rural policy formulations. Such events can serve to strengthen user-producer linkages and help shape national statistical programmes and products based on expressed user needs.

II. User-Producer Linkages in Agricultural Censuses and Surveys

The Programme for the World Census of Agriculture (WCA), for which FAO is responsible, is aimed at encouraging countries to carry out an agricultural census during every decade and provides for the basic **concepts, definitions and methodological issues**. The current Programme for the WCA (2000) has three basic characteristics: a) Uniformity in concepts, definitions and classifications with those from other data sources; b) Limited data coverage within the agricultural census, and; c) Minimal changes in relation to the previous WCA Programmes. However, some changes from the 1990 round have been necessary to reflect current priorities and to improve the presentation. In WCA 2000, these included gender and environmental issues and reference to the need for geo-referencing data³.

The FAO-produced WCA 2000 guidelines for conducting agricultural censuses recommend the establishment of a committee to act as a steering group for successful implementation of the census and to provide guidance and approval of the census work plan, scope and coverage, methodology, questionnaires, manuals, budgetary and personal requirements, plans for the publicity campaign, logistical needs, pre-test and pilot censuses, post-enumeration survey plans, tabulation plan, data processing and data dissemination. This committee should consist of representatives from all important federal government agencies directly or indirectly concerned with census taking or are possible users of census results, as well as non-governmental organizations interested in the census (FAO 1996a: 14-15).

The guidelines also emphasize that data users should be consulted during the census planning, particularly during preparation of the questionnaire and the tabulation plan. In order to give adequate consideration to both national and international data needs, FAO recommends that communications between producers and users of statistics should therefore, be established early in the preparatory stages of the questionnaire (FAO 1996a: 71).

² SDW officers in other regions have also produced overviews of their work in gender and statistics for regional workshops and other meetings. These include presentations on activities in the Asia-Pacific region for the UNIFEM-ESCAP Training Workshop on an Integrated Approach to Gender Statistics (RAP 2003), and in the Middle East-North Africa region for the ECSWA Workshop on Social Indicators (RNE 2003).

³ For more information on WCA, please consult: <http://www.fao.org/es/ESS/census/agcenp12.asp>

The FAO's Gender and Population Division (SDW) collaborates with the Statistical Division (ESS) to provide direct technical support in Gender to Members Countries implementing an agricultural census or survey. Assistance is provided to Bureaus of Agricultural Statistics to review potential gender biases in their preparations of:

- the organisation of a user-producers workshop, ensuring that also potential users of 'gender statistics' are invited to express their data requirements to be collected;
- the definitions used;
- the publicity campaign supporting the census;
- the tabulation plan;
- the contents and phrasing of the questionnaires;
- the instructions and training manuals of supervisors and interviewers;
- the analysis of the resulting data; and
- the information dissemination strategy used.

Details on the majority of the forms of such assistance fall outside the scope of the present paper and are discussed elsewhere (e.g., Curry 2002; Curry and Tempelman 2004; Keita and Tempelman 2004).

III. Promotion of User-Producer Dialogue on Gender: Regional Contributions

User-producer dialogue on gender statistics issues is directly supported through SDW participation in the user-producer workshops. During these workshops, the national gender consultant or the SDW backstopping officer usually prepares a paper and makes a presentation that highlights the availability of and need for gender disaggregated data in the specific country, and serves as a resource person in the discussions of data needs and technical issues.

Examples of participation in user-producer workshops related to censuses can be found in all regions, but especially in the Africa region. From 1991 to 2001, the Senior Officer for Gender and Development in the Regional Office for Africa (RAFS-SDWW) joined the Regional Statistician in 'his' National workshops in Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Senegal, and Zimbabwe (1997), promoting the development of agricultural statistics through enhanced user – producer contacts. The objective was to determine the availability of GDD in a specific country and to promote awareness on the need for GDD. A document on availability of, and need for, GDD was prepared for each country by a National gender consultant, under technical supervision of regional Gender and Development Officer. In 1997, the regional Gender and Development Officer's participation in the user-producer workshop in Zimbabwe had the objective of enhancing the production and use of GDD through improved user – producer contacts. A workshop report was produced (Tempelman 2003). To date, the regional officer has continued this pattern of active involvement in user-producer workshops, including those in Mauritania and Niger.

Although not so frequently as in Africa, similar sorts of gender support to agricultural censuses and user-producer workshops have been provided in other regions. In the Latin America and Caribbean region (RLAC) since the 1990s. The Senior Officer (Women in Development) based in the RLAC office in Santiago has assisted the regional statistician and the FAO Statistics Division in identifying appropriate national gender consultants to work with census teams on gender mainstreaming, as was the case in Nicaragua (2001) and Guatemala (2003). Such support has included national consultant participation in the user-producer workshop. The Gender and Development Senior Officer for the Asia-Pacific Regional Office (RAP) has collaborated with the RAP Senior Statistician and other regional statisticians on a variety of activities designed to promote increased use of gender-sensitive statistics and better producer-user linkages, including presentation of papers at the user-producer workshops and offering technical advice to the census team. The Officer has presented papers to, and actively participated in, agricultural census user-producer workshops in Myanmar (2003), Vietnam (2003) and Malaysia (2004). In the Near East Region (RNE), the Women in Development Senior Officer has provided technical support in gender to the agricultural census in Algeria (2003), but did not participate in the user-producer workshop. She

has, however, been active in promoting greater awareness of gender issues among data users through her participation in activities in the field of the integration of gender issues in the training of policy makers (Kyrgyzstan/Kazakhstan-ongoing), the formulation of a project for the preparation of a framework and plan of action for the integration of gender dimension in agriculture and rural development (Morocco 2004), and the establishment with other organizations of joint activities related to the formulation of a data base on rural women and agricultural development in the Near East Region (ongoing).

IV. User-Producer Linkage Activities in the Central and Eastern European Region

In the Central and Eastern European Region (CEE), opportunities to work directly on user-producer linkages through the agricultural census have been relatively rare, when compared to the other regions. SDW support to national agricultural censuses in the present round of WCA has been limited to the Georgia Agricultural Census 2004, the first round of which has just been completed. This support did not include participation in the user-producer works hop held in August 2003, but focussed instead on recommendations to the first-round tabulation plan and long-form questionnaire for the second round of enumeration.

However, despite this relative lack of opportunity to work directly with user-producer linkages through agricultural census, SDW has been able to exert influence on this relationship, primarily on the user side, through other activities. These activities include in training and capacity-building in socio-economic and gender analysis, support to the development of National Action Plans for Rural Women in Development (NAP) in the region, and retabulation of existing agricultural data sets to produce gender-disaggregated data for agricultural and rural development planning and policy formulation.

The FAO Socio-economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) Programme is a collaborative effort of multi and bilateral international development agencies and research institutions. The goal of SEAGA is to build capacity to incorporate socioeconomic and gender analysis into development strategies in order to ensure that all efforts address the needs and priorities of women and men. This is achieved through the quantitative and qualitative analysis of gender relations within the development context, defined as the inter-related influences of socio-cultural, environmental, institutional, political, economic, and demographic factors at different levels of analyses.

The Programme provides technical support to regional and national institutions and individuals for training of trainers (ToT), the development or adaptation of training materials and tools, dissemination of training and follow-up to training, as well as networking. Workshops range in format from 3-day sensitization efforts to two-week training of trainers' sessions, and are tailored to the cultural contexts of participants and their professional needs. Participants (men and women) are selected for the training activities from a wide range of stakeholders, including existing training institutions, ministries, NGOs, and local communities. They include gender focal points, researchers, academics, extension agents, and mid-level government personnel.

To date, SEAGA workshops have been carried out in over 70 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe. In the European region, the program has conducted 21 training and sensitization workshops (including training of trainers) in Spain, Italy, Greece, Kosovo and Slovenia. Ten other technical activities have been held, including: a regional expert consultation on gender and participatory research methods for CEE countries (Bulgaria), a regional training workshop on gender-disaggregated data for agricultural and rural development (Romania), and a gender-disaggregated retabulation of data from the Hungary Agricultural Census 2000. The events mentioned have included both users and producers of statistical data.

As part of its role as a focal point for rural women in the UN System, FAO, particularly its Gender and Population Division, has provided support to the development of National Action Plans for Gender Mainstreaming (NAP) to approximately 15 countries in Eastern Europe, Africa and the Near East

In Eastern Europe, the Division has worked closely with NAP stakeholders in Bulgaria and to a lesser extent in Hungary and is currently supporting the NAP process in Slovenia under a FAO Technical Cooperation Project.

In both of these areas of activity, FAO advocates and supports an integrated approach to gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis using both quantitative and qualitative methods and the involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders. When viewed from the perspective of promoting user-producer dialogue, however, some of these efforts have met with limited success. For example, as part of its support of the NAP process in Bulgaria (Hristova 2001), SDWW commissioned a special study in 1999 on women and men in Bulgarian agriculture. This study was carried out by the Bulgarian Institute of Sociology, used a quantitative survey to collect statistical information, and was intended to address the lack of available gender-disaggregated data on the agricultural sector at the time. However, the study encountered numerous problems that included difficulties in data processing and the subsequent lack of thorough analysis of a large portion of the data set (much of it at nominal and ordinal levels of measurement). Consequently, there was little incorporation on the study's findings into the draft action plan.

Another attempt to generate gender-sensitive agricultural data for use by gender-oriented stakeholders in the region is the on-going retabulation of data from the Hungary Agricultural Census 2000. This activity, planning for which began in late 2002, was the direct result of interest for gender-disaggregated data generated during the regional workshop on gender-disaggregated data for agricultural and rural development held in Romania in 2001. The retabulation has been undertaken by the Agricultural Statistics Branch of the Hungarian Central Statistics Office (HCSO), assisted by an agricultural economist from the Institute of Rural Development (IRD), Szent Istvan University, Gödöllő. The census data were retabulated in 2003. Key grouping variables include sex of head of holding, farming type, holding size (determined by the value of agricultural output), size of settlement in which the holding was located, and administrative unit (in this case, county). The initial tables provided the "raw" data for the analysis and form the basis of the summary tables and graphs for the final report. These "raw" tables have also been put into a geographic information system on a trial basis by SDWW in Rome and a series of thematic maps have been produced. The final report is currently in draft form and it is hoped that the final version will be produced by the end of this year. It is also hoped that the results of the retabulation exercise can be presented in 2005 to a seminar involving both statisticians from HCSO and other stakeholders including academics, policy makers and representatives of NGOs concerned with gender and rural development issues.

V. Results and Lessons Learnt

Perhaps the most important lesson that can be drawn from FAO's experiences, both positive and negative, with gender mainstreaming in user-producer workshops held during preparations for an agricultural census is that such workshops can serve as an important catalyst for establishing a user-producer dialogue on gender-sensitive agricultural statistics. Participation by national gender consultants and FAO Gender and Development officers from the regional offices and headquarters in a number of these workshops in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America-Caribbean regions has helped to raise awareness among traditional stakeholders (users and producers) in the census regarding the importance of gender considerations in agricultural policy and planning, the potential of the agricultural census in addressing data needs/gaps, and the potential sources of gender bias in the collection and analysis of census data.

However, there is still a wide lack of familiarity among data producers and users about what 'gender' concepts actually entail and prevailing perceptions are often based on distorted prejudices or traditional stereotypes. Representatives from women's organisations / Ministries are often omitted in such workshops, thus being an opportunity to make their data needs known. This contributes to an overall weak demand from users of gender specific data, as can be seen from the experience of the first Namibia Agricultural Census in 1994-95. Although the census collected data on both male and female headed households, gender-specific agricultural information reported by the census remained limited. Gender-disaggregated data were not a priority for the Central Bureau of Statistics. This is understandable since

there was no substantive representation either on the census planning committee or at the preparatory workshop from the National “women’s machinery” or other users interested in gender-specific data.

Such experiences suggest that, besides initial raising awareness in gender issues, the impact of these workshops on gender statistics can often be limited without follow-up and support from external organisations. Such support can take the form of further capacity building in the use of socio-economic and gender analysis tools in the production and use of agricultural statistical data, as in the case of FAO’s SEAGA Program and training in gender-disaggregated data. Unfortunately, lack of follow-up is often the case, due to limited human resources.

User-producer dialogue can also result from spontaneous efforts by stakeholders. For example, a user-producer group for GDD was formed spontaneously by participants at the conclusion of the GDD training workshop in Uganda in 2001. The group met several times without external support before a series of events rendered the network dormant. Nevertheless, participants have continued to communicate through email and to work on gender mainstreaming in statistics. This has led one former member to observe that despite its short life, the network has produced some good results and facilitated change in management of data such that sex-disaggregated data, as a first step to gender-disaggregated data, “. . . is now a reality within the institutions at the national and district level,” (Olinga: Personal Communication). Networks of the type formed in Uganda are rare, but underscore the need for grassroots ownership in the process if the momentum for user-producer co-operation generated during training and sensitization workshops is to be sustained.

VI. Conclusion

FAO provides both direct and indirect support to user-producer dialogue on gender issues and agricultural statistics through direct participation in user-producer workshops, most often associated with agricultural censuses, through training and capacity building in socio-economic and gender analysis and gender-disaggregated data, as well as through support to the preparation of national action plans for the empowerment of rural women in development.

As part of the now-routine collaboration between the Gender and Population and the Statistics divisions of FAO, gender issues in the agricultural census are often highlighted during the user-producer workshop, usually held during the early stages of census preparation. Either the national consultant or the FAO gender specialist prepares a paper/presentation on gender considerations in agricultural census, focussing on the need for gender-disaggregated data for planning and policy decision-making, and where gender issues need to be addressed during census planning and execution in order to ensure valid and reliable gender-sensitive data and results. However, this support to the user-producer workshop does not always happen, depending on budget constraints and the stage of the census process in which FAO (and SDWW) becomes involved.

More indirect support for user-producer dialogue comes from training and capacity-building activities of the programs in Socio-economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) and Gender-Disaggregated Data for Agricultural and Rural Development (GDD). These programs build capacity for a range of stakeholders (both data users and producers) in quantitative and qualitative analysis of gender relations within the development context, and may include follow-up activities such as training of trainers and data retabulation that expand stakeholder interactions and produce gender-disaggregated agricultural data. Sometimes these activities are linked to support for the development of national action plans for empowering rural women and further bring together gender-sensitive stakeholders and data producers in order to generate the data need for the action plans.

The FAO experience with users-producer dialogue in Central and Eastern Europe has occurred during training and action plan formulation activities, rather than through work on agricultural censuses, often with mixed results. Given the problems encountered in Bulgaria with the incorporation of the findings of the commissioned survey into that country’s national action plan, the ongoing formulation of a national

action plan in Slovenia has included gender data identification and retabulation into the project workplan. This should help promote user-producer dialogue on gender data tabulation and analysis during the numerous training and other workshops in the NAP process. In Hungary, it is anticipated that the results of the gender-sensitive retabulation of the Hungarian Agricultural Census 2000 data will form the basis of a dialogue between policy makers, statisticians and other stakeholders on the implications of the findings and future directions. Interest in the Czech Republic has been shown for undertaking a similar retabulation of their Agricultural Census 2000 data, as part of a training exercise in socio-economic and gender analysis for data users.

From these experiences, SDWW recognizes that, in all regions, there needs to be an overall approach to addressing user-producer linkages that is both general, yet sensitive to national and regional situations and trends in data production and use. It therefore recommends that:

- Technical support in gender and agricultural statistics to national statistical systems continue to be provided during national agricultural censuses and surveys. Where possible, this should include providing input to the user-producer workshop in the form of preparation of a paper/presentation on gender issues, and recommending that gender and other non-traditional stakeholders are invited to participate in the workshop.
- National statistical systems and the organizations that support them (including FAO) should work harder with potential users of GDD to increase demand for gender-sensitive data and data products. This may include a greater focus on training of data users (especially gender advocates, etc.) as well as producers on gender-disaggregated data analysis and interpretation, rather than just on production techniques.
- More gender sensitization should be done with agricultural policy makers and other traditional data users to improve their awareness of the value added by adopting a gender perspective in policy analysis/formulation. Retabulation of existing agricultural data sets, and using them in to generate statistician-policy maker dialogue and build capacity among policy makers and other stakeholders can be useful in this process.

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