

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

For discussion

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Item 2b of the Provisional
Agenda

GENDER STATISTICS

Report from Italy

PROGRESS BEING MADE BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

1. Gender statistics is a field that cuts across all traditional statistical topics and pertains to the entire statistical system. It's fundamental that gender statistics are produced in close collaboration with users to respond to the needs of policy makers, researchers, the media, NGOs and citizens. It is necessary to examine gender concerns and goals in society and identify useful statistics and indicators to address them with adequate policies and plans and to assess and monitor the corresponding changes.
2. The First World Conference on Women was held in Mexico City in 1975. At that time, the discussion was enlivened by the importance of producing statistics about women. In 1985 in Nairobi during the Third World Conference on Women, the recommendations went beyond women statistics' perspective and embraced gender statistics perspective.
3. But it is the Fourth World Conference on Women of Beijing that marked an important step in the development of gender statistics. For the first time, governments agreed on a set of important actions to generate and disseminate gender disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation. Moreover, other objectives were set concerning such important topics as violence against women, women's economic rights, top management and decision making jobs for women and measurement of unpaid work.
4. During the above-mentioned conference, great emphasis was given to the UN DESA publication "The World's Women", with the intention of analyzing women's situation at the international level.
5. The impact of the Beijing Conference on the work of International Organizations and National Statistical Institutes has been very high. Since the Conference, publications on gender statistics have been issued, gender focal points have been created inside some of the institutes, a Time Use Activity Classification has been developed by UNSD following the recommendations of the Beijing Platform¹, Eurostat has started a revision of the current Harmonized European Time Use survey guidelines and an overview of the gender breakdown in the social statistics domain, Time Use surveys have been developed in many countries², ILO has included gender

¹ International Classification of Activities for Time Use (ICATUS).

² See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/tuse/tu3.aspx>.

statistics as a strategic point in the agenda of the Conference of Labour Statisticians³, WHO committed itself to focusing its work on the topic of violence against women⁴, and FAO has launched an activity in the field of agricultural statistics⁵. Activities on gender statistics have been improved not only in advanced countries but also in developing ones.

ISSUES AND PROBLEMS (KEY ISSUES, GAPS, PROBLEMS AND DEVELOPMENTS)

6. In recent years, a sharp decrease in the level of attention given to gender statistics has been recorded. This was partly due to difficulties in resource availability for Official Statistics both at the level of international organizations and national statistical institutes.

7. No recommendations, standards or handbooks on how to plan surveys on gender-related issues have been recently published (for instance, the only recent handbook on women's violence was produced by WHO⁶).

8. Moreover, the publication "The World's Women" that was so much appreciated at the Beijing's World Conference, has actually changed its nature. It is no longer a volume analysing trends in gender differences in different countries in the world, but rather assesses which countries have a high standard of gender statistics available and which have not. This approach is of little interest for NGOs, policy makers, researchers, media and citizens in general, and is more addressed to official statistics experts.

9. On the contrary, there is an increasing demand for statistical information, both at international and country levels. For instance, the important work of the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), which is the UN focal point for the implementation of the Beijing Platform of action, should be mentioned. DAW carries out research on gender in different areas and a number of other activities aiming to review and monitor countries progress in achieving equality between women and men. There are also a growing number of requests for data on phenomena which are increasingly complex to be measured by policy makers. Very often the information gaps relate to new and emerging themes, such as violence against women, or economic decision-making and economic statistics. There is a high demand for this kind of information but official statistics are not able to give adequate answers.

Some positive steps

10. There are two positive exceptions of continued engagement in gender statistics within the UN: Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Implementing the work of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES), ECE has continued to be very active in the field of gender statistics and has even widened its programme in the past few years. It currently maintains a gender statistics

³ *Final Report of the 17th International Conference of Labour Statisticians*, Geneva 24 November to 3 December 2003, page 9, (see <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/download/17thicls/final.pdf>).

⁴ In 1997 the WHO initiated a research project to undertake a survey on violence against women in selected countries. Within this project a standard survey questionnaire and methodology is developed (WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and domestic Violence against Women, http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/).

⁵ See <http://www.fao.org/Gender/en/stats-e-and-htm> http://www.fao.org/sd/pe3_en.htm

⁶ Last handbook was published from UNSD in 2004 (Guide to producing Statistics on Time Use: Measuring Paid and Unpaid Work, UN Publication Sales No. E.04.XVII.7).

database, the relevance and usefulness of which has been recently reviewed by the CES Bureau. It also supports the work of two CES task forces which are making good progress toward i) the development of guidelines and standards on surveys to measure violence against women and ii) the development of best practices and guidelines on training statisticians on gender statistics⁷. ECE is also currently providing technical assistance to the countries of the region within the framework of a World Bank-funded project. In Latin America, ECLAC has a long history of working in the field of gender statistics and it still is an important catalyst in improving the availability and quality of gender statistics in the region. Among its activities, there are a regional database on gender, the studying of different methods to measure poverty and gender, violence against women and unpaid work. A working group has also been recently established by the Statistical Conference of the Americas to encourage efforts to systematize national statistical information with a gender perspective.

11. Signs of renewed attention came from the Inter-Agency and Expert Group Meeting held in New York on 12-14 December 2006. On that occasion, a strong need was stressed

- to re-launch gender statistics,
- to create a Global Gender Statistics Programme that could guarantee assistance, cooperation, sharing and dissemination of various initiatives at international, national and regional level,
- to set up a High Level Group on Gender Statistics which could guarantee the management of information and sharing of experiences on gender statistics at international level.

12. The Global Gender Statistics Programme and the High Level Group on Gender Statistics will be launched during the Global Forum on Gender Statistics, that will take place in Rome on 10-12 December 2007, and that will be the first of a series of yearly meetings to promote progress and share best practices in the field of gender statistics.

IMPORTANT ISSUES TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE BUREAU

13. It goes without saying that strong support should be given to the process already begun which will lay the foundations for a new re-launching.

14. Gender statistics is facing - and will face in the near future – new and very important challenges which will involve the international community of statisticians, decision makers and users at all levels.

15. It is important to strengthen the role official statisticians have in guiding the development of gender statistics and to promote the publication “The World’s Women” every five years, focussing on trends and statistics as well as on gender differences at international level as was originally the case. It’s also important that the strategic objectives of the gender programme be taken on and monitored by the Statistical Commission.

16. In conclusion, it is necessary that gender statistics occupy once more a central place at a high level in the strategies of official statistics.

⁷ This includes the development of a Manual on how to train statisticians engaged in the thematic areas on how to produce and disseminate statistics that are more gender-sensitive, the development of multimedia presentations on selected areas of gender statistics and other tools to be used by national trainers.

17. The fundamental strategic lines on which to focus attention are the following:
- **Mainstreaming of gender in the entire national statistical system both at national and international levels.** This includes the broadening of existing gender statistics programmes to areas that have been traditionally perceived as not gender-relevant such as economic statistics, business statistics, transport and agriculture. Little is known about the different role of women and men in these areas and in particular in the economy and in the economic decision-making, where the few data available show that women are greatly disadvantaged. In order to assure that gender-sensitive data are produced and disseminated in all possible areas, it is important that statisticians working in all thematic areas are exposed and trained to the benefits of producing more gender-sensitive data, which ultimately improve the overall quality of the statistics. In the past, great efforts were placed in training national statisticians who were responsible for gender statistics programmes. These efforts were successful in establishing and strengthening the role of gender focal points and gender units in national statistical offices. However, the majority of the gender focal points/units are still confined to the social and demographic areas and have little impact in other areas such as business and economic statistics. New efforts should be made to sensitize subject-matter statisticians who do not specifically work on gender on the benefits of producing better statistics by improving their gender-relevance.
 - **Strong commitment to improve the availability and quality of gender statistics by high level managers at national and international levels.** The existing gender focal point/units in national statistical offices have not often made an impact on the overall production and dissemination of statistics. The success of gender statistics programmes is also often linked to the single persons working in national statistical offices who are strongly committed to the relevance of gender-sensitive data. A sustainable gender statistics programme should be institutionalized and supported with regular resources. The commitment of high level managers is a key to its success in the long run. This is also true at international level where the Statistical Commission and the CES should play a leading role in supporting gender statistics and re-launching global attention to this subject.
 - **Development of regional and international standards in areas where the production and dissemination of information is particularly relevant for gender analysis.** These areas relate for example to violence against women, gender attitudes, to economic statistics (that is a field where the gender approach is more difficult to introduce), and to other emerging topics. In the area of violence against women, some international organizations such as WHO and United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) embarked on projects to develop survey methodologies to be implemented in several countries in a standardized format to allow for inter-country comparison. However, these research-type projects have often been implemented at local level and only in a few countries have they been carried out within the framework of official statistics. Some national statistical offices have also engaged in designing and carrying out national surveys but although there is increasing attention in official statistics to this issue, there is still a small number of countries that can provide official estimates of VAW at national level based on surveys. New efforts should be directed toward the development of standard methodologies, taking on board the work done already by the two pioneering organizations. These standards should be developed within the framework of official statistics to help countries design their own surveys or at least considering the possibility of developing short modules to be included in on-going surveys.

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