

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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For discussion and
recommendations

Item II(b) of the Provisional
Agenda

COMMENTS ON THE IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF GENDER STATISTICS

Prepared by the Secretariat

The note provides comments from UNECE as input to the in-depth review of gender statistics prepared by Mexico

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This note is intended to support and complement the review of international activities and gaps in gender statistics prepared by Mexico. The Secretariat thanks Mexico for the preparation of the review paper.

2. As noted by Mexico, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are now taking an increasingly important place among global policy concerns, bolstered by the comprehensive inclusion of gender concerns throughout the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The need to monitor the fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on gender equality, as well as to produce sex-disaggregated indicators for the other goals, have created a growing demand for high-quality gender statistics.

3. The in-depth review paper surveys the current gender statistics activities and priorities of some of the key international players in this field, with a particular focus on methodological work dealing with indicators for SDG 5. It draws attention to the fact that there is currently much internationally-coordinated work centred on development of tier II and tier III indicators. Such work is helping to meet two needs:

- (a) the need to fill persistent production gaps, where concepts and methodology exist but collection remains limited, such as violence against women and time-use
- (b) the demand for measuring complex and emerging phenomena, often representing the more subtle and hard-to-define aspects of gender inequality.

II. COMMENTS

Gender statistics and SDG 5

4. While the framework of SDG 5 is a fundamental anchor for enhancing the development and status of gender statistics, it is not the only force guiding the work of gender statisticians. Furthermore, even within the scope of SDG 5, the targets encompass a complex range of gender issues, each of which merits statistical attention beyond the globally-identified indicators. To give one example, target 5.2 is 'eliminate all forms of violence

against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation'. Indicators 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 aim to measure specific forms of violence against women perpetrated in the preceding 12 months. But violence against women is much broader than this, as the wording of the target makes clear, and there are many aspects of it which statistics can measure (for example, lifetime exposure to violence; frequency and intensity of violence; impacts of violence; and so on).

5. Efforts to develop concepts and methodology, improve communication, and raise the status of gender statistics should, correspondingly, focus on these broader issues and not only on the specific indicators of the SDG framework. Hence, to continue the example of violence against women, statistical work should (and does) look at the topic in a holistic way including question design, survey protocols, sampling techniques and interpretation of results. The large number of contributions received for the forthcoming November 2017 UNECE Work Session on Gender Statistics attests to the wide-ranging interest in this topic, which is by no means limited to a consideration of the two SDG indicators.

Priority topics

6. The review paper identifies four topics requiring the attention of the international statistical community (time-use and unpaid work, violence against women, economic statistics with a gender perspective, and decision-making in the home). Indeed, these are already at the centre of the current gender statistics work programmes of UNECE and other agencies. For example, the *Guide on Valuing Unpaid Household Service Work* will be published in early 2018, and the Task Force on measuring intra-household power and decision-making is part-way through its work. Meanwhile, the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) project led by the United Nations Statistics Division and UN Women has so far focused on economic statistics with a gender perspective, and has recently developed guidelines for measuring asset ownership and entrepreneurship from a gender perspective.

7. A call for emphasis on these topics does not necessarily mean that they all require detailed methodological development (and where this is needed, it is in many cases being led by other agencies, as the paper by Mexico makes clear). Much methodological progress has already been made in the measurement of violence against women, time use, and valuing unpaid work, all of which are defined at the global level as tier II. Work is needed, rather, to increase the production of data using these methodologies, and in the dissemination, analysis and use of the data.

Non-thematic priorities

8. While other agencies with subject-matter specializations are best placed to focus on SDG indicator development (and are therefore designated custodian agencies for indicators), the value-added of UNECE's involvement in gender statistics arises from its coordinating and convening role with gender focal points in National Statistical Offices (NSOs), under the oversight of the Steering Group on Gender Statistics¹. Through direct and regular interaction with these focal points, for example at the Work Sessions on Gender Statistics which now take place approximately every 18 months, and sub-regional workshops, UNECE is able to gather direct feedback about the needs and priorities of member States.

¹ The Steering Group on Gender Statistics, established by the CES bureau in February 2005, is currently composed of representatives of Australia, Canada, Georgia, Italy, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom (UK Equality and Human Rights Commission), United States of America, CIS-Stat, European Institute for Gender Equality, Eurostat, OECD Development Centre and UN Women.

9. In addition to *thematic* areas for attention, therefore, the Secretariat also considers the following other aspects of the production, processing, and use of gender statistics to be of a high priority to countries in the region:

- (a) Dissemination and communication of gender statistics, and the ability of users to access, use and interpret them, especially with respect to the use of gender statistics for policymaking and policy monitoring
- (b) Improving availability of individual-level (rather than household-level) data to facilitate the analysis of the gender dimensions of poverty and well-being
- (c) Improving use of administrative records for producing gender statistics.

10. These priorities are proposed on the basis of feedback from countries, including an online survey of gender focal points from NSOs of countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA); feedback received in meetings; a request for information on current practices sent to participants registered for the November 2017 EECCA workshop; and a 2017 review conducted by UN Women to identify gender statistics development needs in Europe and Central Asia².

Gender statistics activities of UNECE and other organizations

11. The review paper gives an overview of the activities of six international organizations whose work touches on gender statistics. In addition to these, other organizations have gender statistics programmes or activities. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is conducting methodological work related to SDG indicator 5.6.1., dealing with informed decision-making in sexual and reproductive health. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has developed a Gender Equality Index and a gender statistics database. The World Bank has a long-standing involvement in gender statistics, having partnered with UNECE in the development of the 2010 manual *Developing Gender Statistics: a Practical Tool*³. It maintains a gender statistics database and is now a partner in the EDGE project.

12. UNECE work in gender statistics includes methodological work, capacity building, the UNECE gender statistics database⁴, and the organization of Work Sessions for exchange of experience. It has produced materials such as the manual mentioned above, the Toolkit for training users of gender statistics⁵ and the 2015 publication *Indicators of Gender Equality*⁶, which builds upon the Global Minimum Set of gender indicators to define a regionally-relevant set of headline and supporting indicators to describe and monitor gender inequalities. Capacity building work has taken place in the framework of several United Nations Development Account (UNDA) projects, and UNECE is currently co-lead of the gender statistics component of the UNDA project on 'Statistics and Data'. As a member of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEG-GS), which coordinates the Global Gender Statistics Programme, as well as a member of the Steering Group for UN Women's

² *Assessment of opportunities for UN Women to support the development of gender statistics in Europe and Central Asia* Commissioned by UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, February 2017, available at <http://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/02/assessment-of-opportunities-for-un-women-to-support-the-development-of-gender-statistics-in-eca>

³ Available at https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/Developing_Gender_Statistics.pdf

⁴ Available at www.unece.org/data

⁵ Available at <https://www.unece.org/stats/gender/toolkit.html>

⁶ Available at http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/2015/ECE_CES_37_WEB.pdf

Flagship Programme Initiative, ‘Making Every Woman and Girl Count’, UNECE is well-placed both to understand and to influence the strategies and priorities in gender statistics at the global level.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

13. The in-depth review paper advises carrying out ‘a diagnosis of the statistical capacities of the countries’, noting that the stimulus provided by the Sustainable Development Agenda may have resulted in improvements. A global review of gender statistics, co-ordinated by the United Nations Statistics Division, was conducted by each regional commission in 2012. UNECE surveyed all member States with a questionnaire developed by the IAEG-GS that contained 30 questions covering institutional arrangements, data collection and statistical production, addressing users’ needs, assessment of mainstreaming gender into the national statistical system, and legal frameworks. This was a comprehensive and valuable exercise, allowing the identification of priorities at the regional level which have driven the work programme in the years since the review. While the situation in individual countries may have evolved since 2012, the overall picture and therefore the implications for the UNECE gender statistics work programme are unlikely to be significantly altered. This impression is supported by the feedback received from other channels, enumerated in paragraph 10.

14. The Secretariat proposes that a comprehensive review of the statistical capacities of all member States with regard to gender statistics is not currently merited, given that the priorities on which we must focus remain largely unchanged. It would be valuable, though, to gather more detailed information about the capacities of some countries *with specific regard to the production and availability of SDG-5 indicators*, as well as their current availability of other indicators identified in the *UNECE Indicators of Gender Equality*. As a step towards this, participants registered for the forthcoming workshop for EECCA countries have been requested to provide information about work undertaken so far towards

- (a) improving the collection of data and production of statistics for SDG 5 as well as for the indicators identified for the UNECE region
- (b) determining a nationally-relevant set of SDG gender indicators
- (c) development of tier III indicators.

They have also been asked to identify the main areas of concern/challenges in producing gender statistics for the SDGs, and those areas in which they have made the most progress. The Secretariat recommends that, when collected, this information be analyzed to determine future capacity-building needs.

15. The Secretariat also proposes undertaking an update of the previous review of countries’ experiences with time-use surveys, including the use of light diaries, novel methods and the measurement of subjective well-being in time-use surveys. Such a review was conducted in 2014 as follow-up to the *Guidelines for Harmonizing Time-Use Surveys*. The resulting repository of information is available on the UNECE wiki platform⁷, and could be developed into a useful tool following an update of countries’ responses.

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⁷ at <https://statswiki.unece.org/display/countrytus>