

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

For discussion

Second Meeting of the 2007/2008 Bureau
Helsinki (Finland), 18-19 October 2007

Item 2b of the Provisional
Agenda

**COMMENTS ON GENDER STATISTICS: REPORT FROM ITALY
(ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/3)**

AUSTRALIA:

1. From an Australian perspective, gender relevant statistics are seen as an important part of the national statistics program. There is no longer a single focal point for ABS gender statistics, although there is a focal group for population groups across topic areas. Rather responsibility for gender related topics, for example violence against women, work and pay, and time use, have been mainstreamed to the relevant topic areas. While there is always scope for improvement in any field, gender statistics are seen as being relatively well developed in the ABS statistical program.

BRAZIL:

2. We agree with all points discussed in the paper. We must register that it is very well organized and each issue has good approaches.
3. We would like to suggest that the point referring to commitment of the national institutes of statistics to provide the gender perspective should be reinforced. In the developing countries, it is strategically important to integrate gender statistics in the economic and social areas.
4. In case of Brazil, the change of the focus from the woman's perspective to the gender perspective is quite recent. The role of the national institute is very important to facilitate this change. Demands for gender statistics are also growing in the country. It is necessary to produce and disseminate gender statistics. IBGE has been disseminating social indicators on women in the last few years. In 2005, the Institute had one experience in producing indicators on women from the demographic census database for public policies by the federal government. The Brazilian Institute is developing studies about the issue of time use with a gender perspective. In October 2007, our experts are going to participate in an important workshop held by International Association for Time Use Research (IATUR) in Washington D. C.

GERMANY:

5. We would like to thank Italy for its well structured and detailed report on gender statistics.
6. The Federal Statistical Office Germany strongly supports work in the area of Gender Statistics. Today data related to persons in German Federal Statistics is in most cases

disaggregated by gender. Numerous publications of the Federal Statistical Office of Germany give a comprehensive overview of the living conditions and the situation of women and men in Germany.

7. We fully agree with the analyses undertaken under the three points of the document and do not have mayor additional notes for the in-depth review on gender statistics. Nevertheless we would like to an additional comments on the three strategic lines listed at the end of the document.

8. Violence against women is accentuated on page 4 bullet point 3 as an area where the production and dissemination of information is particularly relevant for gender analysis. This is beyond doubt. As mentioned in the text, this area is part of the framework of official statistics only in a few countries. However, it is good to point out that some attempts described in the report break the limits and the prospects of the framework of official statistics. Thus we should make a shift in our work from these areas not fully covered by official statistics to areas where there are still some shortcomings, as for example business and economic statistics. This would also have the advantage that work could be brought in line with decreasing financial and personal resources in the National Statistical Offices.

9. We would like to remark that the development of regional gender statistics seems also to be a matter of particular interest. In the case of Germany a working group that deals with regional gender indicators will start its work in the middle of October.

LATVIA:

10. We would like to express the general support to the Italian paper for the in-depth review of gender statistics.

UNITED STATES:

Bureau of Labour Statistics:

11. In general, the tension between emphasizing gender data (such as by establishing gender programs) and "mainstreaming" gender data seem to be at odds with one another. The UNECE documents on this would benefit from directly addressing that tension – it is not clear what is asked from countries.

U.S. Census Bureau:

12. The "Gender Statistics" report from Italy highlights the need for the continued advancement of producing statistics based on gender at national and international levels. In order to generate gender statistics of optimum value, it is necessary to understand the needs of those who use them and address those needs to the best of the statistical organization's ability.

13. One purpose of the report is to illustrate how the focus on the importance of gender statistics has waned in recent years. The call to remember the impact of the Beijing Conference on the development of gender statistics should not go unheard. The report raises warranted concerns regarding the decreased amount of emphasis placed on gender statistics.

14. With regard to the aforementioned, as the report implies, many official statistical agencies have experienced a decrease in resources. It may be useful to additionally highlight specific programs that have had resources decreased and how the decrease has impacted the availability of gender data.

15. While “The World’s Women” has changed its “nature,” it is still relevant to the goal of improving gender statistics. The importance of evaluating the progress of gender-based data collection is that it allows government agencies to determine where the pitfalls are and address them. This knowledge can lead to improved survey designs and better collection of gender statistics. This can benefit gender-based policies and programs.

16. With regard to the need for “broadening of existing gender statistics programmes to areas that have been traditionally perceived as not gender-relevant”, the knowledge of statistical organizations that have begun this work-- for instance those who have incorporated a gender focus in their business economics statistics-- may be of benefit in the guidance of survey development. For instance, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a survey based on women-owned businesses and a survey on minority-owned businesses. These surveys combined provide the public with valuable economic data on business owners' race, ethnicity, and gender. Experience conducting and reporting the results of such surveys can help “sensitize” subject-matter statisticians as called for in the report.

UNECE:

17. The ISTAT paper makes very useful remarks and highlights the main issues related to the development of gender statistics at national and international level. Reacting to some of the points made, ECE would like to make the following additional remarks:

- There is the need to identify more concretely what are the gender-related information needs in those fields that have been highlighted by the ISTAT paper as traditionally not linked to gender statistics (economic, business, agriculture statistics, etc.). An example of a specific area in economic statistics is income and access-ownership of resources. Data on these issues are in general collected and analyzed at household level. Available studies have shown that the inter-household distribution of resources is not gender neutral and an equal allocation of data to women and men living in the same household would not provide data allowing to analyse gender differences. New methodology needs to be developed in order to better reflect the allocation of income and other resources to men and women within the household. Another economic area that is often singled out for the lack of gender-sensitive statistics is entrepreneurship. There is a pressing request from users to study gender differences in entrepreneurship in order to understand, for example, if women and men have the same opportunities to set up a business, or have different rates of business survival. This information is needed to help in developing more targeted policies to support entrepreneurship.
- How to make the current systems of data collection, processing and dissemination more gender-sensitive is a matter of national priorities and circumstances. Only subject-matter specialists can identify the process to make the statistics more gender sensitive. They need to be trained, as pointed out in the ISTAT paper, to understand what are the users’ needs in terms of gender-relevant information and how they can produce statistics that better meet these needs. As suggested in the comments by the U.S. Census Bureau, reporting the results of data collections able to provide gender-sensitive

information can help subject-matter specialists to see how gender-sensitive data can increase the quantity of the information that a given system can produce.

- The use of administrative records can increase the feasibility of adding a gender dimension into existing data collection processes. Countries that heavily rely on administrative records for statistical data collection may find it easier to include a gender dimension. All individual data, even if related to economic units (being the owner of the business or the income recipient) may be easily linked to a population register where sex and other personal characteristics can be found. In this case, the effort to produce more gender-sensitive data relate to the processing, dissemination and analysis stages where people still need to understand the value-added of producing gender-sensitive data against gender-blind data.
- Gender statistics is not about women only, but about the role of both women and men in the society. It aims at identifying, producing, disseminating, and analyzing statistics to understand how gender issues affect individuals and society. Therefore it is at the heart of gender statistics to present data for both women and men¹. Unfortunately, sometimes there is the perception that gender statistics is only about women and that it only serves the purpose of advocating for women. There is also sometimes some misunderstanding in the use of certain indicators that are perceived to be “women-biased”. The gender pay gap is an example. This indicator is often criticized because it does not measure a “real” discrimination but only the fact that women work less hours than men and in different positions. Indeed, the purpose of this indicator is not to measure discrimination but to simply measure the difference between women and men on the overall average income that they take from employment. The indicator “gender pay gap” is the same kind of general indicator as could be the “gender gap in life expectancy” which describes a general difference without explaining the reasons for the difference. Terminology can be perhaps improved in order to make it clear that the measured “gap” relates to the overall participation in the labour market and not to the pay gap in identical employment circumstances.
- Gender statistics as part of official statistics is confronted more often than other areas with user requests that are not compatible with the principle of impartiality. National and international statistical agencies have therefore to pay particular attention to:
 - presenting data for both women and men, and presenting gaps not only in areas where women are worse off;
 - limiting comments strictly to statistical and evidence-based analytical comments, thus leaving advocacy comments to other institutions, making a separation between these two types of comments clearly visible to all users;
 - choosing carefully the terminology for indicators, with explanations to users what a specific indicator does and does not express.

THE WORLD BANK:

18. We can not find anything to disagree with in the paper which is well written. We are in full agreement with the three strategic areas to focus on. We would like to note, however, that for the third area, "Developing regional and international standards" for indicators, the emphasis appears to be only on violence against women. We feel that equally important are economic indicators at both the policy level, which aim to make markets work for women,

¹ Although, depending on the status of women and men in a country or in a particular field, women or men can sometimes be singled out because they are in a particularly disadvantaged situation.

and the agency or individual level which empowers women to take advantage and compete in these markets. The Bank's Gender Action Plan and our related Gender Statistics Programme are centered around four markets: product, financial, land and labor. The rationale is that women's economic empowerment will lead to shared growth and accelerate progress towards achieving the MDG goal 3: promote gender equality and empower women. Such an approach will also lead to integration of gender statistics in other areas such as business, economic, and infrastructure.

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