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GENDER STATISTICS TRAINING FOR STATISTICIANS

Comments on the Manual “Developing Gender Statistics: a practical tool”

Note by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany*

I. THE GERMAN WAY TO AN OUTPUT-ORIENTED APPROACH

1. The importance of gender issues and of gender-related data is clearly seen by German policy-makers as well as by German statisticians. To take account of the special importance of Gender Mainstreaming, the Federal Statistical Office shifted responsibilities within the Office in 2006. The overall responsibility for the cross cutting issue of Gender Statistics was transferred to only one unit which is the microcensus – the largest household survey in Germany.
2. This shift of responsibilities was on the one hand a reaction of a Coalition Treaty of the German Government. A targeted gender equality policy has been laid down there. On the other hand it was a result entailed by a reorganization of the German Federal Statistical Office that is not yet completed.
3. In the past, the Federal Statistical Office of Germany followed an input-oriented approach. That means that the focus was on the data source. Numerous statistics were produced and each statistic had its focus on a certain topic. Hospital statistics for example concentrate on stays in hospital, diagnosis and expenditures. Causes of death statistics deal with diseases or accidents. Person related data are provided by sex.

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4. Over the last few years a development towards an output-oriented approach has been initiated. Special units were implemented that stress a certain topic. For example, there is a special unit that deals with all data available concerning the labour market irrespective of the data source. This unit incorporates lots of different data sources, for example the microcensus and the employment statistics as well as other not official data sources.
5. In German official statistics, person related data is disaggregated by gender in most cases. Beyond that the first steps towards an output-oriented approach are already made. Actually there is one unit that has beside other tasks the overall responsibility for the cross cutting issue of Gender Statistics. The manual demonstrates that there is still potential to continue that means that this unit should exclusively be responsible for gender issues.

II. AN EXAMPLE OF BUILDING ALLIANCES

6. Building alliances was mentioned in the manual as a specific step to either start or strengthen an existing gender statistics program. One example of building alliances outside the German Federal Statistical Office is the Conference of Ministers on Equalization that decided at the end of 2006 to develop a system of gender-related indicators. These indicators should cover different topics. They should be available primarily for the 16 federal states, the German “Länder”, and if possible for administrative districts. Furthermore they should be based on existing surveys to avoid additional expenses.
7. A task force was built consisting of federal and federal states members. The members of the task force were both politicians and statisticians. The Federal Statistical Office was represented by two Office’s staff members. The policy makers expressed their special interests in regard to make sensible policy. The statisticians brought in their expertise, for example concerning feasibility and availability of data.
8. The result was a set of nearly 30 indicators that can be subdivided into four categories. One category is “participation”. It includes the fields of decision making as well as women and men in policy. The second one is “education”, followed by “employment, income and child care”. The fourth category is entitled as “life style”, exemplified by life expectancy or elderly people living in single-person households. On the above named conditions for sure some important issues had to be dropped, for example gender based violence.
9. The core set of indicators will be presented this month to the Conference of Ministers. By agreement further steps will go on.

III. BOTTOM UP OR TOP DOWN?

10. A question to raise is whether a bottom up or a top down approach in implementing new surveys is more effective. Chapter 5 of the manual describes the bottom up approach. The German experiences are different. A top-down approach would probably be more effective. The following example will illustrate this statement.

11. An often discussed issue in the public is the decreasing number of births and families in Germany. The German parliament legislated for a new system of parental allowance and for more and better childcare services. It especially enhanced childcare for children up to three years in order to improve the compatibility of family and career. In regard to gender issues both aspects are important.

12. To evaluate the amendment's impact official statistics are needed. Two new surveys based on legal foundation were implemented in 2006 and 2007. Since 2006 the so called statistics on childcare provide for example data on the number of children under the age of three years taken to day care facilities or professional childminders. The statistic on parental allowance provides data on the number of applications for parental allowances, on the length of parental allowance and the employment before the child was born. In both cases the funding is a governmental one, staple and long term.

13. The example shows that implementing new surveys must not be a tedious procedure. The same applies to inserting new questions in an existing survey. It is the top down approach that makes the procedure that easy. There are no policy makers, there is no top management to be convinced, because they are already persuaded of the importance of gender issues. They have the power to initiate further steps like legislation and funding.

IV. MEETING STATISTICIANS NEEDS

14. The last point refers to statisticians needs. It is important to identify the topics that are significant with respect to gender issues. Chapter 4 of the manual contains a guideline that helps to identify the gender relevant topics. One can get through this list of selected topics and investigate if gender related data do already exist or if there is a lack of information. It also includes advice of how to improve existing data.

15. Chapter 4.1 concentrates on gender employment statistics. The manual indicates different types of employment where there are differences between women and men. One is part time employment. Without a doubt, women are more likely to be part time employed than men. Part time employment can easily be identified. In the labour force survey people were asked whether they are working part time or full time. In addition there is a question on the number of working hours per week.

16. Casual work, unpaid work, seasonal work and work that is carried out close to, or in, the home are types of employment listed in the manual with regard to gender issues. Many of them are difficult to identify, for example unpaid work. There are questions the manual does not give an answer to. Are family workers or housewives, or househusbands respectively, included in the group of unpaid workers? What about people who worked in the last month but didn't get any salary because of the entrepreneur's insolvency? The question asked in the labour force survey simply is: Did you work paid the last week? Are all the people who negate this questions then unpaid workers? Of course not.

17. Furthermore there are types of employment not mentioned in the manual, but with importance to gender issues. One example is temporary work. With the help of the ad hoc-module 2007 we can get information about temporary work. The people were asked if they entered into a contract of labour with a temping agency. The data show that men are more likely to be temporary worker than women.

18. The above mentioned types of employment are for sure all important in regard to gender statistics. The raised questions demonstrate that it is not a straightforward process to develop complete instructions in the manual that are interpreted by the users in the same fashion. The manual may provide helpful suggestions. Without a doubt it is very difficult to formulate detailed instructions, in particular considering the different backgrounds of the individual addressee coming from different nation.
