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Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

Group of Experts on Gender Statistics

Work Session on Gender Statistics

Belgrade, 29 November – 1 December 2017

Report of the work session

I. Attendance

1. The UNECE Work Session on Gender Statistics, co-organized with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, was held on 29 November to 1 December 2017 in Belgrade, Serbia. It was attended by participants from Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Finland, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uzbekistan. The European Union was represented by Eurostat and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Regional Coordination Office (UNRCO) in Serbia, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Council of Europe, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), and the Organization for Security and the Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) were also represented. Experts from the University of Belgrade and Data2X participated at the invitation of the Secretariat.

2. A number of participants were able to attend the Work Session thanks to financial support from the United Nations Development Account (10th tranche) project 'Data and statistics' and the UNECE Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation.

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II. Organization of the meeting

3. Ms. Dragana Djokovic Papic of Serbia was elected as Chair of the meeting and Ms. Katja Branger of Switzerland as Vice-Chair.
4. The following substantive topics were discussed at the meeting:
 - (a) Violence against women;
 - (b) Gender issues in vulnerable population groups;
 - (c) Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from the gender perspective;
 - (d) Measuring time use and valuing unpaid work;
 - (e) Economic empowerment and intra-household power;
 - (f) Use of gender statistics in policymaking and policy monitoring;
 - (g) Building partnerships for better gender statistics;
 - (h) Emerging issues and international initiatives in gender statistics;
 - (i) Gender statistics priorities for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region.
5. The following participants acted as discussants: for item (a) Ligia Nobrega (European Institute for Gender Equality) and Linda Laura Sabbadini (Italy); for item (b) Karen Hurrell (UK Equality & Human Rights Commission); for item (c) Amy Symens Smith (United States of America); for item (d) Linda Laura Sabbadini (Italy); for item (e) Nicoletta Pannuzi (Italy); for item (f) Helena Löf (Sweden); and for item (g) Fiona Willis-Núñez (UNECE). The meeting also included a panel discussion on meeting the needs of policymakers.
6. The discussion at the meeting was based on papers that are available on the UNECE website.¹

III. Recommendations for future work

7. The meeting recommended developing guidance on communication of gender statistics with policymakers and with the public, and requested the Steering Group on Gender Statistics to draft terms of reference for a task force on this topic.
8. The meeting recommended exploring the possibility for conceptual and methodological work on the measurement of gender identity, and requested the Steering Group on Gender Statistics to draft an exploratory paper for this purpose.
9. The meeting recommended that the next Work Session on Gender Statistics should take place during the period April–June 2019.
10. The following topics were suggested for discussion in the 2019 Work Session:
 - (a) Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from the gender perspective;
 - (b) Violence against women;

¹ <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2017.11.gender>

- (c) Measuring time use and valuing unpaid work;
- (d) Economic empowerment and intra-household power;
- (e) Use of gender statistics in policymaking and policy monitoring;
- (f) Measuring gender identity;
- (g) Measurement of gender attitudes and their impacts;
- (h) Methodological issues in gender statistics, such as mode effects in time-use surveys;
- (i) Use of administrative data;
- (j) Gender analysis with a focus on the impacts of crisis on gender differences;
- (k) Women in Information and Communication Technology;
- (l) Gender issues in social protection.

IV. Adoption of the report of the meeting

11. The meeting adopted parts I–III of this report before adjourning. A summary of the discussion in the substantive sessions of the meeting will be presented in the annex of this report, to be prepared by the Secretariat after the meeting.

Annex

Summary of the main issues discussed at the substantive sessions

I. Overall observations and conclusions

1. Key observations and conclusions which recurred throughout the work session, and which were noted in the closing comments, included the following:

(a) The importance and status of gender statistics continues to be enhanced as a result of the emphasis on sex-disaggregation and 'leaving no-one behind' in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The whole field of statistics is benefitting from the increased attention to measurement, and this is especially true for gender statistics.

(b) There is a particular need to ensure uptake and understanding of statistical products dealing with gender issues. This must be done by recognizing that effective communication and dialogue with users, especially policymakers, is part of the requirement to facilitate correct interpretation of statistics as enshrined in the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It should therefore be incorporated into the core business of statistical offices and should be considered just as important as data collection and statistical production.

II. Violence against women

2. The session was organized by Ligia Nobrega (European Institute for Gender Equality) and Linda Laura Sabbadini (Italy) who both led the discussion. Papers were presented by Serbia, the University of Belgrade, Italy, OSCE, the Council of Europe, Eurostat, and EIGE.

3. The papers presented made it evident that violence against women (VAW) remains a major issue, and that collecting data on it is a significant challenge. The 'no-one left behind' imperative means that data collection is essential to make the problem more visible, especially with respect to minority groups including ethnic minorities, migrants and people with special needs.

4. There is a great need among policymakers for data on violence against women, but in many cases, they do not know exactly what it is that they need, or what is available. Therefore, the onus is on producers of VAW statistics to engage in dialogue with users.

5. Not only prevalence of violence, but also its impacts, and the impacts of policies, must be measured. It is also important to consider the ways in which attitudes and stereotypes, e.g. about the 'acceptability' of violence, and knowledge about the possible or appropriate course of action when someone is a victim of violence, interact with prevalence rates. The relationships between violence, harassment and sexist attitudes are fuzzy and complex. A standard definition of 'sexism' may be helpful.

6. The principle of doing no harm while collecting statistics poses particular challenges in the case of VAW, necessitating extra care in approaches to design and collection.

7. Policy-relevant conclusions about VAW can most easily be drawn when time series are available. This is especially true when we wish to examine the impact of external factors, such as armed conflict, on the prevalence of violence. It is important therefore to promote the regular conduction of VAW surveys, whereas at present most are one-off

surveys. The push for inclusion of regular surveys on violence as part of the standard programme of social statistics in statistical offices should be considered a key strategic point. Many participants showed their strong support for this suggestion, with EIGE noting that the publication of their gender equality index with the violence domain showing ‘no data’ was a means of advocating on this matter. Eurostat noted that no regulation on conducting VAW surveys is planned, given that any obligation requires countries to commit additional resources – at present the requirements of the Istanbul Convention provide the setting for European Union member countries’ data collection on VAW.

8. Continued efforts are necessary to harmonize methodology and to identify and mitigate against the statistical artefacts of using different definitions, survey questions and collection methods. Against a backdrop of varying policy and legal frameworks in different countries, this is a significant challenge in which Official Statistics must take on a leadership role.

III. Gender issues in vulnerable population groups

9. The session was organized by Cristina Freguja (Italy) and Karen Hurrell (United Kingdom) who chaired the session and led the discussion. Papers were presented by Italy, United States and Israel.

10. The presentations and discussion highlighted the ways in which vulnerabilities interact, with sometimes multiplicative effects, e.g. the combination of age, gender, parental status, partnership status, employment situation, and/or minority status can result in increased vulnerability to poverty, homelessness, discrimination or violence.

11. Capturing gender identity in statistics presents particular challenges, arising from social changes in concepts and definitions; personal changes in self-identification over time; issues surrounding sensitivity and confidentiality; and the imperative to demonstrate programmatic or legislative need for the statistical measurement of gender identity.

12. The discussion drew attention to the common difficulties in defining and measuring the various vulnerable groups considered in the session (homelessness, poverty, ethnicity, gender identity) and noted that different cultural settings across countries mean that these challenges are met differently in each setting. To some extent, apparent changes in rates of these phenomena might reflect changes in other factors, such as public acceptance or recognition, and general understanding of concepts. Mode effects and interviewer effects may also play a part.

IV. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from the gender perspective

13. The session was organized by Amy Symens Smith (United States) who chaired the session and led the discussion. Papers were presented by ECLAC, UNICEF and UNIDO.

14. The presentations drew attention to the need for both quantitative and qualitative data to define the necessary interventions for achieving the SDGs. Although dealing with very different topics, each noted challenges relating to comparability and harmonization, and data availability.

15. Discussion touched on the policy relevance of the statistical indicators considered in the presentations, for example women employed in manufacturing. Context is important in giving meaning to statistics and defining what they can be used for.

V. Measuring time use and valuing unpaid work

16. The session was organized by Dragana Djokovic Papic (Serbia) and Linda Laura Sabbadini (Italy) who chaired the session and led the discussion. Papers were presented by Italy, Albania, Belarus, Serbia, Data 2X and ECLAC.

17. Discussion touched on the actual and potential uses of time use data in policymaking, for example in the formulation of universal care policies. Translating messages about time use (e.g. ‘women spend more time on housework than men’) into messages about the monetary value of that time (e.g. ‘women’s unpaid work is equivalent to X per cent of GDP’) may be better understood by users. It was mentioned that given both the large potential contributions of time use data to evidence-based policymaking, and their significant costs, methodological challenges and burden on respondents, it is especially important to facilitate the use of the data.

18. Participants’ attention was drawn to the newly-published UNECE Guide on Measuring Unpaid Household Service Work.² Eurostat mentioned their ongoing work exploring the potential for modernizing time-use surveys and household budget surveys, and UNSD noted that following the endorsement in March 2017 of the International Classification of Activities for Time Use Statistics (ICATUS), they are also now planning to look at questions of collection mode, standardization and light instruments.

VI. Economic empowerment and intra-household power

19. The session was organized by Carlotta Balestra (OECD) and Clelia Romano (Italy). Nicoletta Pannuzi (Italy) chaired the session and led the discussion. Papers were presented by the University of Belgrade, Turkey, Serbia and Canada.

20. In spite of years of recognition in academia that models treating households as the unit of decision-making are limited, they continue to predominate and to shape data collection methods. Models which assume shared decisions and equal resource allocation by their nature also assume shared hardships. In reality, bargaining power in the household is uneven. There may be a bidirectional relationship between household power, on one hand, and individual employment and income on the other. Gender may also have a direct effect on power independently of economic variables.

21. Discussion considered a range of challenges in conceptualizing and measuring power within households, including which surveys should contain questions on the topic; how the questions should be asked, including probing or follow-up questions; how interviewers should be trained; who should be asked (including whether or not both partners in a couple should be asked, and what to make of discordant responses); and how to interpret responses. It was emphasized that much work is needed on defining concepts, such as decisions made by one person on behalf of another.

22. Participants were informed of the ongoing information-gathering efforts of the Conference of European Statisticians’ task force on measuring intra-household power and decision-making, and were requested to contribute if their offices had relevant materials on this topic.

² available at <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/2018/ECECESSTAT20173.pdf>

VII. Use of gender statistics in policymaking and policy monitoring

23. The session was organized by Helena L f (Sweden) and Sara Demofonti (Italy). Helena L f chaired the session and led the discussion. Papers were presented by the EIGE, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and United Kingdom.

24. The session, like many of the other sessions, highlighted the necessity of good collaboration with users and the importance of making gender statistics available and understandable. Close interactions are needed at various points in the statistical production process. The nature of such interactions varies widely and can range from formalized collaboration to ad hoc exchanges. It was stressed that there is no point in producing even the best gender statistics if they are not found or used. They must therefore be presented to policymakers and others in a format they can comprehend. The presentations showed different ways of doing this: structured user outreach and dialogue campaigns, use of composite indices and measurement frameworks; and layered communication campaigns targeting different audiences.

25. Discussion considered the different types of user groups and noted that for gender statistics to be useful to policymakers the communication does not necessarily have to be only directly between NSOs and government bodies. The general public, civil society and the media are also important user groups, which, in turn, have a role in influencing policy. Each group is a legitimate target for communication and each has distinct needs. Efforts must be made to present gender statistics in a relevant, comprehensible and useful way for each group. For the media and the public, in particular, this will often entail identifying key messages or stories that demonstrate the relevance of statistical findings.

VIII. Building partnerships for better gender statistics

26. The session was organized by Fiona Willis-N n ez (UNECE) who chaired the session and led the discussion. Papers were presented by the Republic of Moldova, Kazakhstan, Finland, Switzerland and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

27. The presentations and discussion drew attention to the fact that many factors still impede the inclusion of a gender perspective throughout all stages of statistical data collection, production and communication, and that overcoming these impediments often necessitates joint work, whether across departments of a statistical office, across agencies of government, among different sectors of society and across countries. The presentations highlighted a wide variety of stakeholders such as ministries, international organizations, private enterprises, holders of administrative data sources, and many others, as well as various reasons for establishing partnerships: the need for financial resources, capacity development, collaborative decisions on what statistics should be produced and how, etc.

28. The session also noted some potential drawbacks of partnering with external stakeholders including slowing of progress, competing priorities, risks to data quality and sustainability. Discussion in the session revealed some approaches to mitigate the risks. It was emphasized that successful partnerships should be promoted internally and externally to raise their profile, showcase what they have achieved, and thereby ensure their sustainability.

29. As in many of the preceding sessions, discussion considered the particular challenges for gender statistics, given the tension between the need for statistical offices to remain policy neutral and the often political nature of subjects dealt with, such as gender pay gaps and violence against women. The importance of dialogue with users and monitoring usage of gender statistics were again emphasized as ways of ensuring that NSOs respond to demonstrated need and demand, rather than making assumptions about what is

needed. In this way, relevance and usefulness is maintained without compromising impartiality.

IX. Emerging issues and international initiatives in gender statistics

30. Papers were presented by UNSD and CIS-Stat, both giving overviews of recent, ongoing and planned activities by the respective organizations.

X. Gender statistics priorities for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

31. UNECE presented an in-depth review of gender statistics in the UNECE region based on papers prepared by Mexico and the UNECE secretariat. Participants discussed and supported the conclusions of the two papers, taking note of the priority areas identified for methodological and capacity development work, and highlighting the important roles of UNECE and other international organizations in undertaking this work.

XI. Panel discussion: meeting the needs of users of gender statistics

32. A panel discussion was guided by the questions ‘How do gender statistics need to improve to better fit the needs of policymakers and other users? How can we do this while reconciling the neutrality required of Official Statistics with the advocacy inherent in gender statistics?’ Panellists were from the University of Belgrade, UN Women Serbia and Ireland. The discussion was moderated by Dragana Djokovic Papić of Serbia.

33. The discussion centred primarily on the need for improved communication and dialogue with policymakers. It was emphasized that such communication must be in the form of a two-way dialogue, with policymakers making their data needs clear, and statistical producers providing the necessary statistical products in useable formats. This means that they should be open and accessible to the greatest extent possible; that they should be produced according to recognized standards; and that interpretation must be facilitated, taking into account the different capacities of users to understand and work with data. This requires producers to identify and highlight key messages, working with the media as a conduit to users.

34. A two-way communication also implies educating users, for example about what data are or are not available and why; how to make sense of data; and the cost implications of the data that are called for. For example, it was noted that if policymakers express a demand for data from time-use surveys or VAW surveys, they must also be guided to understand that such rich and valuable sources are challenging and expensive to undertake. This may in turn increase political and financial support for conducting them.

35. Panellists and participants agreed that the need for capacity development is also two-sided: the capacity of users to understand and use gender statistics needs to be developed, but so does the capacity of producers to understand what is needed and respond accordingly. In order to better fit data to needs, producers need to be active in identifying those needs and monitoring current usage. This can include download monitoring, user satisfaction surveys, citation tracking, etc.

36. The need for gender statistics is not limited to social and health topics; sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data are needed to inform policy development in infrastructure planning, climate change, disaster response, transport, and many other areas.

37. Addressing the question of how statistical offices can fulfil the requirement to remain politically neutral while producing statistics on inherently political topics involving gender, panellists suggested that strict adherence to recognized standards, maximum transparency, and opening up data to researchers are essential. Statistical offices have a duty to provide not merely impartial but also relevant data.

38. Vocal support from international organizations, including the United Nations and Eurostat, was identified as a means of helping countries to fulfil the goal of producing more data for gender statistics.

39. The moderator concluded the panel by identifying the following as prerequisites for making gender statistics fit for purpose: comparability, openness, relevance, analysis, cooperation, telling stories.
