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Taking Stock – Looking Forward

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**Improving Gender sensitive Data Collection and  
Quality in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities**

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## ***Introduction***

There is international consensus that statistics are a necessary part of the enabling environment for improving decision-making and development outcomes at all levels, supporting business and personal decisions, and facilitating research. In order to achieve a society with equal opportunities, a gender perspective should be applied to all policy areas.

This means that all proposals and decisions must be analysed from a gender perspective in order to map all possible consequences for women and men at regional as well as national and local levels. Gender statistics are therefore required to reflect problems and questions related to the situation of women and men over the life cycle in all spheres of society, social as well as economic and political. Such statistics are needed to:

- Provide evidence and unbiased basis for policies and measures;
- Monitor and evaluate policies and measures with respect to gender dimension.
- Raise consciousness, persuade policy makers and promote changes;

The central aim of the engendering statistics is to get representative and statistically reliable information about the removing of all gender gaps and inequalities, and women's access to social and economic resources. Without statistics, it is difficult to obtain systematic information or to estimate the real situation and to respond to the needs of the women. Lack of accurate information on critical issues such as gender based violence, might have negative results in the development programmes and projects. Data are needed in order to generate awareness of the present situation and a clear picture of the women status and for developing appropriate gender-impact indicators for monitoring progress.

Following the identification of crucial issues and topics, producers of statistics and indicators required to study the situation of women and men with respect to individual issues. The issues reflected in the statistics and indicators vary from country to country, depending on the level of development, culture, traditions and the degree of inequality existing between women and men. Therefore, no set of indicators should be considered final and relevant for all countries.

## ***Gender Disaggregated Data Challenges in Africa***

It is often stated that statistics reflect societies; what is prioritised in data collection, accounted for, documented, disseminated, published is conditioned by our gender identities and our perception of power relations between women and men. The assessment of statistical supply in Africa, identified the following problems, constraints, and challenges when it comes to gender statistics:

- ↺ Inadequate advocacy for gender statistics;
- ↺ Lack of commitment to gender statistics development by the national government;
- ↺ Inadequate level of and lack of continuity in resources;
- ↺ Lack of updated statistical legislations that are in line with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;
- ↺ Statistical programs are not well related to national data priorities because of some competing demands;
- ↺ Under-development of statistical units in line ministries;
- ↺ Inadequate long and short-term planning for gender statistics development;
- ↺ Inadequate technical skills;

- ✦ Inadequate statistical infrastructure (sampling frames, classifications, documented concepts, definitions and methods);
- ✦ Inadequate sex disaggregated data management (archiving, analysis, and dissemination);

In addition to those general constraints, some sensitive sectors are undermined by impervious reaction to publicity. For instance, data on Violence Against Women (VAW) are extremely difficult to obtain at different levels:

- Within the family: intimate partner violence; harmful traditional practices (e.g. Female Genital Mutilation; widow cleansing rites; wife inheritance; banning of some groups.)
  - Within the community: femicide (gender-based murder of a women); sexual violence by non partners; sexual harassment; trafficking in women; forced prostitution;
  - Other: VAW in armed conflicts; sexual slavery; forced pregnancy; forced sterilization;
- There is clearly a Need for creative solutions to overcome such challenges.

The UN Secretary General Report on Violence Against Women highlighted some challenges for reporting and collecting data on VAW, amongst which are:

- Attitude of law enforcement officers that discourage women from reporting cases of VAW;
- High dismissal rates of cases by police and prosecutors;
- High withdrawal rates of complaints by victims;
- Low prosecution and conviction rates; impunity;
- Lack of legal aid and high costs of legal representation in courts;
- Persistence of discriminatory practices and stereotypes that view VAW as a 'private' matter and perpetuate the culture of silence;
- Inadequate legislations:
  - Definitions of rape that specify use of force rather than lack of consent;
  - Definitions of domestic violence that are limited to physical violence;
  - Treatment of sexual violence as a crime against the honour of the family or against decency, rather than against women's rights to bodily integrity...
- Existing data do not tell the entire story. E.g. partial coverage of issues and geographical areas; time use; quality of education; available information on VAW are more on policy responses rather than occurrence; transformational leadership...

### ***ACGS/ECA ongoing work on Gender Statistics***

Analytical work to sharpen gender aspects of policy-making and programme formulation, implementation and monitoring and for tracking progress towards MDG 3 (promote gender equality and empower women) and other commitments towards gender equality requires detailed, reliable and timely gender desegregated data.

National and regional statistical systems in Africa have not made the type of progress in designing systems and operations to generate gender-disaggregated data that are needed to support the advances that have been made in raising awareness of the social and economic implications of gender imbalances. Thus, policy-making and programme targeting aspects of gender in many sectors are not as sharp as could be if gender differentiated data were available.

## The African Gender and Development Index (AGDI)

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), African Centre for Gender and Development has developed, from 2002 to 2004, the African Gender Development Index (AGDI), which provides a framework for collecting quantitative and qualitative data on gender equality and women's empowerment. The AGDI is a composite indicator with two components:

- The Gender Status Index (GSI) that captures quantitatively measurable issues related to gender equality. It is based on three blocs: social power 'capabilities' –education and health; economic power 'opportunities' – income, time use<sup>1</sup>, employment and access to resources; and political power 'agency' –representation at decision making levels in the public sector and in civil society organizations. Each block is based on indicators which are mostly readily available or easy to calculate on an annual or at least on a five-year basis. Each block of the GSI is divided into various components, which in turn are subdivided into a number of sub-components, and then into indicators or variables. Preference is given to flow indicators (with few exceptions: life expectancy, literacy for instance), so as to enable policy makers and activists to see direct results of particular interventions. The indicators will only deal with gender issues, that is, issues that relate to the relations between women and men. For that reason for instance, maternal mortality is not included, (rather it is included in the scoreboard) as it only applies to women.  
At this stage of the research, the various indicators receive equal weight within their sub-component and component; this same principle is upheld for the components within each block. The three blocks receive an equal weight in computing the GSI.
- The African Women's Progress Scoreboard (AWPS) complements the GSI by measuring government policy performance regarding transformation of social institutions that affects women's advancement and empowerment. It tracks Government progress in ratifying relevant conventions on gender equality and women's rights -such as CEDAW, Beijing PfA, African Charter of Human and People's Rights with its Women's Rights protocol, ICPD PoA plus Five- and in implementing policies and programmes in line with such conventions. It focuses on qualitative issues and fills the gap between purely quantitative indicators, such as those contained in the GSI, and more country-specific or sector-specific indicators, or those related to decision-making and well-being at household and individual level. The AWPS is composed of four blocks: women's rights, social power 'capabilities', economic power 'opportunities' and political power 'agency'. The scoring for each indicator is done on a three-point scale: (i) 0 (zero) indicates a zero performance on the measure, (ii) 1 (one) indicates a poor - fair performance and (iii) 2 (two) indicates a good – to excellent performance. The Scoreboard is designed in such a way that the most pressing issues pertaining to African women's empowerment are included.

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<sup>1</sup> Time-use data allows valuing non-market work (like domestic work) mainly performed by women. According to Ironmonger, GNP covers at best 60% of all valuable production and labour market employment statistics cover less than 50 percent of all work performed, the regularly published labour statistics cover perhaps 75 percent of men's work and 33 percent of women's work.

The AWPS captures those elements that are within the mandate of African governments to address and reflects institutional choices of concern for women's situation and gender relations. A major advantage of the AWPS is that it integrates the various points related to gender issues and women's empowerment that so far are scattered through these various documents.

The AWPS aims to capture the mechanisms that governments have put in place to implement gender policies. It fills the gap between purely quantitative indicators, such as those contained in the GSI, and more country-specific indicators, or those related to decision-making and well being at household and individual level. Within this broad space it focuses on those issues that cannot be quantified, such as women's rights. It incorporates for instance issues in the legal and cultural sphere, while touching on several issues related to the religious. It includes those aspects of the physical dimension that fall within the domain of government, such as marriage regulations or laws on violence against women. It also points to particular elements in the economic and social spheres that escape quantification.

National field trials of the AGDI were conducted so far, in 12 countries. The results of the 12 national AGDI studies have been reviewed for publication. The national reports give policy recommendations to member States, highlighting the areas where countries are doing well and the areas where improvement is needed, and indicate the best way forward. National reports also highlighted critical areas where lack or incomplete information has to address. At the national level, the main difficulties can be summarised as:

#### **WHAT IS THE ADDED VALUE OF AGDI?**

A number of indices have been developed to assess the situation of women in all sectors of development and decision-making. The most well known are the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) developed by UNDP in 1995, prior to the World Conference on women. These measures are now commonly used in the UNDP Human Development Report. There are also a wide variety of other indicators that have been developed by different institutions. However, their coverage of gender specific issues is still somewhat limited. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the GDI and the GEM are valuable policy instruments, particularly because they allow a global comparison.

Through the development of the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI), ECA took further the steps initiated by the UNDP by separating the gender status from a country's GDP, making use of data sets that are nationally available and incorporating qualitative issues. The AGDI maps out gender gaps between men and women in all spheres and at various levels and tracks progress towards gender equality and women's advancement in both quantitative and qualitative ways. It provides an effective monitoring mechanism that policy makers can use to assess their performance in implementing the various documents African countries have ratified.

The AGDI is a specifically African index in three respects. First it takes into account the major African charters and documents that have a bearing on gender relations. Second it identifies gender gaps in the selected power blocks and facilitates the review of the underlying gender relations in Africa. Third, its findings are specifically from the African countries, based on nationally available statistics.

A great enthusiasm was shown on the AGDI (African gender and Development Index) by many countries. The AGDI has been successfully piloted in the following twelve countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania,

Tunisia and Uganda. UNECA is currently in the process of extending the index to additional African countries.

#### **LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE FIELD TRIALS:**

The exercise aims to ensure the greatest possible commitment and involvement of researchers and policy makers at the national level and to construct an index that would measure gender relations and policy commitments. The role of UNECA as a supranational body was that of a facilitating, coordinating and training body. National ownership rather than international control was the guiding principle.

A general point of concern is the secrecy that certain country teams were confronted with. Several country reports mention that it was at times hard to get access to data, even while they were available. This is unfortunate as for the sake of transparency the general public should always have access to the data their government institutions collect. Many country teams also reported on technical problems they were faced with. Shifts in personnel, inadequate equipment or training and insufficient resources restricted their access to information. In some cases the researchers themselves prepared tables on the basis of raw data that had not been processed officially.

The field trials shown that the AGDI is clearly a democratic and accessible tool. Although the process of data collection was lengthy, particularly as in this first attempt, it became clear that not all data were readily available; it was carried out without major problems by national multidisciplinary teams.

Civil society and government can easily check the data, and discuss the merits. Tapping the national information sources of the countries proved to open a rich mine of data and generate a consensus binding process. The political blocks for instance, both in the GSI and in the AWPS rely almost completely on data that are nowhere to be found internationally, apart from percentage of women in national parliaments. Although particularly in education, different standards or age ranges were used; going back to the raw data could solve most of these difficulties. International databases have similar problems of harmonisation but these are more invisible. Only rarely had international databases to be used. The use of national data thus allowed the researchers to not only access the most recent data available, but also to provide information at a regionally comparable scale of a large number of variables.

The use of national country teams and the national validation process that accompanied the research process ensures that the information is immediately accessible at the relevant levels. As not only researchers were involved in the process of data collection, but also members of civil society and government, the objective of national ownership was met. The only drawback is that several country teams could not withstand the lure of patriotic scoring of social institutions.

Wherever, data is lacking, AGDI advocates for further research and data collection by pointing out the sector.

### **Development Account Project on Strengthening African Statistical Systems to generate gender sensitive data**

ACGS/ECA formulated a project to assist African Governments to improve gender sensitive policy formulation, programme targeting, including public expenditure programmes and monitoring progress towards gender equality and empowerment of women through sexe-disaggregated data.

#### ENGENDERING PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES FOR THE AFRICAN REGION

The project component “engendering principles and recommendations on population and housing censuses for the African region” intends to review, from a gender perspective, the statistical frameworks for the preparation of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses (2010 RPHC) and provide recommendations on how to take into account the gender perspectives in census undertaking.

The assessment of the current status and gender characteristics of data in national and sub regional statistical databases has shown huge data gaps that need to be overcome. A further review has led to the finding that as long as all the process of data collection is not revised in order to take into account the gender perspective, it will be difficult to succeed in overcoming the gender disaggregating data.

The engendering of the P&R will be guided by the lessons drawn from various experiences related to this issue including;

- The on-going work of the ACGS to develop instruments for monitoring gender equality and women's progress through the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI);
- The on-going work on the African Supplement to the P&R on PHC undertaken by the African Centre for Statistics following recommendations of the Maputo and Bamako workshops on Principles and Recommendations on the 2010 World Programme for Population and Housing Censuses.

The African Gender Supplement to the Principles and Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses will make a contribution to: the process of building capacity in African countries in gender statistics; and the improvement of gender-related analytical work in support of policy-making and programme formulation, monitoring and evaluation of progress towards gender equity in poverty reduction and other development goals in Africa.

#### GENDER STATISTICS NETWORK

The second component ‘Gender Statistics Network’ intends to provide a framework for knowledge sharing, peer learning and networking between all stakeholders dealing with gender statistics issues. It is expected to:

- Advocate for sustained political commitment to integrate gender equality concerns into the policy agenda and the development of standards, frameworks and guidelines such as the Principles and Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses (P&R on PHC), the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa (RRSF) and other statistical initiatives;
- Make substantive contributions in the preparation and organization of various consultative meetings from a gender perspective;
- Participate in expert group meetings and other activities related to the 2010 RPHC;
- Participate in other meetings of statistical bodies such as: the Advisory Board on Statistics in Africa (ABSA); the Statistical Commission for Africa (STATCOM-Africa); the Forum on

African Statistical Development (FASDEV); and the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS);

- Peer review of the national statistical system of two pilot countries as showcase;

The project will take advantage of the ECA Knowledge management infrastructure to design a Web portal that will allow dissemination of information on the web; internal and external access to specific information using secure authentication or Single-Sign-On of the network members; and direct discussions through newsgroups.

The network will make a contribution to: the process of building capacity in African countries in gender statistics; the establishment of a permanent mechanism for promoting a dialogue among stakeholders in this area; and the improvement of gender-related analytical studies in support of policy-making and programme formulation, monitoring and evaluation of progress towards gender equity in poverty reduction and other development goals in Africa.

#### ENGENDERING AGRICULTURAL AND TRADE STATISTICS

Taking forward the success of the AGDI and to develop methodologies for engendering agricultural and trade statistics, ECA/ACGS is developing sectoral African Gender and Development Indexes. The initiative consists in deepening the work already undertaken under the framework of the AGDI by focusing on two areas of major concern: trade and agriculture, mainly because:

- In Africa, women constitute the majority of the agricultural workforce while their access to land, seeds, water, agricultural extension services, training, credit and voice and power is still limited, as compared to men's. Gender statistics in the agricultural sector are critical to understanding the multidimensional aspects of feminized poverty, as they relate to food security, access to capabilities, resources, services and other economic opportunities, 'time poverty' due to heavy workload, etc.
- In the framework of ECA repositioning, a focus is put on promoting regional integration, in which intra regional trade is an important component. Gender statistics and indicators on women and men's involvement in all aspects/dimensions of national, regional and international markets will allow ECA to better address the second pillar of its new priorities on regional integration.
- Most African economies rely heavily on agricultural production, which form an essential part of intra-African and international trade. Working on agriculture and trade will provide the inter-linkages to understand gender related challenges in food security, market access and economic productivity.

The outputs consist of:

(i) – An African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) on trade, which will capture gender equality and women's empowerment in national, African and International trading systems, policies, agreements, programmes and markets.

(ii) - An African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) on Agriculture which will address issues of capabilities, opportunities, political power and voice, empowerment and rights of women and men working in the agricultural sector.

This will allow a greater availability of frameworks to generate Gender Disaggregate Data in agriculture and trade for sharpened and deepened policy analysis and programme interventions towards gender equality, women's empowerment, efficient resource use, equity in the distribution of income and access to markets, and reduction of deep seated poverty pockets;

#### DISSEMINATION OF METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER-DISAGGREGATED DATA

To address the challenge of the general lack of gender disaggregated data in Africa, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), has developed methodologies and tools to support the strengthening of National Statistical Systems to collect, utilize, disseminate gender disaggregated statistics as well as design gender disaggregated database. UNECA has also designed a Guidebook for mainstreaming gender perspectives and household production into national statistics, budgets and policies in Africa. These will go a long way to providing statistical systems with a methodology for collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated statistics.

The guidebook has been introduced to all African countries in 2005, during 6 sub regional workshops in order to improve the skills of statisticians, national accountants and policy analysts, on how to engender national planning instruments and to disseminate these methodologies developed by ECA for the collection of gender-disaggregated data, ECA. It aimed at improving the capacity of National Statistics Offices.

The expected accomplishments of the dissemination workshops are the following:

- (i) A synthesis on the experiences of African member states in generating gender-disaggregated statistics.
- (ii) National Statisticians' capacity further enhanced in order to use the tools and methodologies developed by ECA to generate and develop gender-disaggregated statistics.
- (iii) Guidelines and programmes drafted for the development of a regional and national plan of action to generate gender-disaggregated statistics.

## **Conclusion**

Gender statistics are needed during the whole process of policymaking, planning, implementation and evaluation of the strategies to reach gender equality. For this to be possible, there are three primary requirements for gender statistics:

1. All statistics on individuals should be collected, collated and presented disaggregated by sex. Sex should be the basis for an overall and thorough breakdown of all statistics relating to individuals. In addition, statistics should be presented in such a way that they are easily accessible to users. Mainstreaming gender within the national statistical system at all levels, is of paramount importance on this regard;
2. All variables and characteristics should be analysed by and presented with sex as a primary and overall classification;
3. Identify gender issues and ensure that data addressing these are collected and made available.

A better coordination of donors funding surveys and census, coming up with a common position on engendering data collection process will be valuable for generating gender statistics. It is also recommended that national statistical offices be endowed with adequate resources (skills,

equipment and funds) to coordinate, centralized or generate relevant sex disaggregated data and make them accessible to the public at large.

The building-up of country-level capacity for gender related data collection, and research is crucial and has resulted in many countries formulating comprehensive gender sensitive policies.