



Measuring, Managing and Evaluating Progress in Gender Equality The Role of Statistics and Indicators

International Seminar
Summary record

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Introduction

1. The seminar aimed to share insights and stimulate debate about the use of gender statistics and indicators for managing, measuring and evaluating development results. It focused on practical experiences, with the first session presenting international initiatives of gender statistics and the second session featuring national case studies. The seminar concluded with an expert panel which addressed the seminar's overall question of how gender statistics can be applied to create better policies.

Opening remarks

2. The State Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Mr. Joakim Stymne, formally opened the seminar. In his address, Mr. Stymne referred to the political context of the seminar: the severe financial crisis and rising food and fuel costs. He presented his ministry's aims at promoting sustainable global development and an effective use of international aid and financial flows, and affirmed the need for measurements and results. Mr. Stymne insisted on the need for reliable statistics and qualitative data, sharing knowledge to track performance and measure the gender gap in areas such as gender based violence or sexually reproductive rights. He outlined three priorities of his ministry: democracy and human rights, climate change, and gender equality and the role of women in development. The latter one can be decomposed into 4 parts: economic empowerment, sexually reproductive rights, political empowerment and security for women and girls, notably in the area of trafficking. Mr. Stymne concluded that statistics played a key role in shaping policies. In this respect he mentioned his Sweden's continued support to the OECD Development Centre and its initiatives, namely the Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB) and Wikigender.

3. Mr. Johannes Jütting (OECD Development Centre), chair of the seminar, explained that the seminar brought together two different crowds: those interested in gender statistics and those working in the area of evaluation. He reminded participants that the seminar was very timely as increasing interest in gender equality and gender statistics is continuously increasing. This trend is illustrated by the creation of new measurement tools and the rising number of related conferences. The OECD is also playing an important part in these developments: The GENDERNET of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and the work of the Development Centre both add value to the current debates and complement each other's areas of work.

Keynote: Monitoring Poverty Reduction and Equality: Using Statistics to Assess Results

4. Ms. Ana Revenga (Director of the Poverty Reduction and Development Effectiveness Group, the World Bank) brought forward the central role of monitoring tools, in the context of assessing progress and the global fight against poverty. She started with an overview of how the process of measuring, managing and evaluating can enhance development outcomes, and argued that non-income dimensions of poverty were particularly difficult to capture. She presented several World Bank initiatives as solutions to address those challenges: the Human Opportunity Index, a tool to measure inequality of opportunities among children, and the so-called Poverty Maps. Referring to Sri Lanka, Ms. Revenga explained how poverty maps can improve the design of policies. By overlaying poverty maps spatial patterns of poverty can more easily be detected, which allows to target programmes and funding, and to monitor progress and communicate results. Poverty maps can be used in areas as diverse as malnourished children, access to education, primary completion, gender equality in education, and women in wage employment. Ms. Revenga emphasised the importance of monitoring systems at the country level to increase accountability and transparency, and gave the example of the Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) in Uganda.

Discussion

5. Ms. Revenga's presentation stimulated an interesting discussion. First, the issue of triangulation and interpretation of data was brought forward. Ms. Gita Sen (IIMB) remarked that the trends in global poverty would look quite different if India was taken out of the picture, hence the need to cross-check results. She also raised concerns related to data reliability and appropriateness; poverty reduction should be understood as a process, so headcounts would not tell us about the fluctuations, Ms. Sen remarked. Following this intervention, Mr. Jorma Paukku (MFA Finland) wondered whether "chronic poverty" belonged more to the qualitative or quantitative side of data. As became evident in the discussion both quantitative and qualitative approaches should be used. It was furthermore pointed out that several countries (e.g. Cambodia) offer interesting lessons in the area of accountability for local institutions.

6. Ms. Nyaradzai (YWCA) emphasised the importance of knowing what methodologies could be applied in crisis and post-crisis countries, such as Sudan or Zimbabwe. Priority should be given to fragile states, in particular as regards to the training and methodological aspects of each specific situation. She furthermore wondered how the interface between political decision makers and donor mobilisation could be used best. She furthermore highlighted the crucial role of democracy and human rights to gender equality and women's empowerment, alluding to the lack of space for civil society in those processes. Overall the discussion highlighted the need for better data and analysis and reminded participants that not all indicators have the same relevance in every context.

Session I: International Initiatives: The Role of Gender Statistics in Managing and Evaluating Results

7. Mr. Andrew Morrison (World Bank) presented various aspects of monitoring and reporting on gender equality results. He addressed three points: new measures through the 3rd Millennium Development Goal (MDG), World Bank initiatives to improve data on gender, and monitoring progress under the World Bank's Gender Action Plan. He presented the outline of a new publication, entitled "Equality for Women: Where Do We Stand on Millennium Development Goal 3?" Mr. Morrison emphasised the added value of an expanded set of indicators, which must comply with following conditions: (i) data are available for a relatively large number of developing countries, (ii) evidence links these indicators to progress in reducing poverty or spurring growth, and (iii) indicators can be affected by policy interventions in the short to medium term. Mr. Morrison drew attention to the measurement of assets on the household level and in particular to the individual control of assets. In effect, while capabilities have increased in the past couple of years, women's opportunities and access to resources have often decreased. He also mentioned that policies need to be used adequately: in the area of education, for example, completion rates could capture development results better than enrolment rates. Finally, Mr. Morrison introduced the World Bank's Gender Action Plan, which has a new approach to gender mainstreaming. Through this Action Plan, the Bank could identify own weaknesses and ways to better monitoring.

8. Mr. Roberto Bissio (Instituto del Tercer Mundo) then presented the Gender Equity Index (GEI), developed by Social Watch. The GEI is based on comparable data, classifying countries according to a selection of indicators relevant to gender inequity in three dimensions: education, participation in the economy and empowerment. Mr. Bissio stressed the important role of indicators in lobbying for policies. The GEI illustrates that still significant gaps prevent achieving full gender equality, notably in education (10%), economic activity (41%), and empowerment (65%).

9. In his presentation, Mr. Denis Drechsler (OECD Development Centre) emphasised the role of the Development Centre in raising awareness on gender equality, informing key actors and stimulating mutual learning and peer pressure. First, he introduced the OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB), a comprehensive data collection that allows users to identify focus countries and key areas of intervention. Mr. Drechsler also informed the audience of the GID-DB's latest developments, including a new composite index, detailed country notes and improved data visualisations. He then presented Wikigender, an online platform to share and exchange information on gender equality. Wikigender is not only a rich resource of gender-related information, but also invites users to discuss or comment on articles, or post new material. In this way, the site combines a bottom-up with a top-down approach: although open to anyone who wishes to contribute, content is verified to ensure the highest level of quality. In conclusion, Mr. Drechsler emphasised the need for better statistics, diversified sources of data, and the involvement of new actors for data collection and dissemination.

Discussion

10. In the subsequent debate, Ms. Lucie Slengesol Senftova (UNDP Oslo Governance Centre) presented a new user guide, which links the areas of gender statistics/indicators, governance and service delivery. Ms. Slengesol Senftova emphasised the need to measure service delivery, which is so far badly captured. However, she also reminded participants of existing tools to gather governance data, such as gender budget analysis. The focus of the user guide, to be published in 2009, will be on tools to improve data availability. It will look at gender gaps that the MDGs are failing to address, following a notion of basic services and using a human rights perspective.

11. Ms. Hanny Cueva-Beteta (UNIFEM) mentioned the issue of gender budgeting, and the need to know the amount of money allocated for gender projects. Gender budgets were insufficiently tracked and civil society insufficiently involved in the process, including on the monitoring level. On gender statistics, Ms. Tare Noori (Statistics Sweden) argued that mainstreaming a gender perspective in statistics meant evaluating the quality of statistics in terms of definitions, concepts, methods of measurement and coverage. Hence, gender-based stereotypes and biases existing in reality are often reflected in the production of statistics, and a wide range of problems may occur in the different stages of the production process (in designing surveys, defining methods, preparing and processing data, or presenting and disseminating results). She concluded that gender statistics is not solely to present statistics on women and men. As for indicators, Ms. Anja Nordlund (EnGender Development Consultancy) suggested to consult directly with countries to identify existing problems prior to using an indicator. On aid effectiveness, the harmonisation principle was highlighted. Ms. Margaret Chenda Mashinkila (AfDB) wondered about ways to improve capacity building, progress monitoring, and accountability enforcement. How can independent monitoring evaluation mechanisms be strengthened? How can public disclosure mechanisms be identified? How can global accountability be realised?

12. The Wikigender project was very well received by the audience. Several participants, including Ms. Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda (YWCA), showed strong interest to use this tool and even become a partner of this initiative. She praised Wikigender in promoting the link between communities and policy-makers, and saw great opportunities to involve youngsters in the project.

Session II: Evaluating Gender Equality on the Ground: Case Studies

13. The second session narrowed the debate to the national level, with a series of case studies. Ms. Mercy Kanyuka (National Statistical Office, Malawi) illustrated the use of gender statistics to inform, monitor and evaluate education policy and programmes in Malawi. Access to primary

education is free since 1994, a measure that significantly increased enrolment rates, including those of girls. Gender imbalances could furthermore be reduced through the National Education Sector Plan, as illustrated by recent statistics that show an increase of the proportion of girls attending school between 1994 and 2007. Ms. Kanyuka highlighted the Child Friendly School Programme, which responds to statistics showing that girls were more likely than boys to drop out of school. Improvement of sanitation facilities as well as the school feeding programme aimed at keeping girls in school. She concluded that more reliable statistics are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes already put in place, in order to both achieve the set targets and intervene when necessary.

14. Ms. Ratna Sudarshan (Institute of Social Studies Trust, India) then proceeded with a presentation on the role of gender statistics within the policy process in India, with specific reference to the area of employment and women's work. Ms. Sudarshan mentioned the persisting gender gaps in India. She presented findings from evaluations of the Support for Training and Employment Programme (STEP) which was started in 1986 and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme started in 2006 to illustrate the ways in which gender disaggregated data can be used in impact assessments of programmes, and emphasised the difficulties of finding good indicators for assessing women's empowerment through employment programmes. Ms. Ratna Sudarshan concluded that more qualitative data were needed to understand realities on the ground and adapt evaluation methods accordingly, especially in a country as large and diverse as India.

15. Taking the case of Ethiopia, Mr. Tamirat Yacob (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development – MoFED) presented the role of social statistics in Managing for Development Results. Mr. Tamirat Yacob reinforced the importance of collecting and using statistics at the national level to feed into the managing and evaluating system. He furthermore reminded participants that more reliable and timely data would facilitate the process of mutual accountability. In the case of Ethiopia, the government has implemented a managing and evaluating system since 1996, which includes the MoFED, the Central Statistical Agency and federal line ministries. Mr. Tamirat Yacob highlighted recent achievements in the area of gender and development, such as the adoption of a new penal code on female genital mutilation, more representation and participation of women in decision-making processes, and new laws against gender-based violence. Mr. Tamirat Yacob concluded by acknowledging the growing importance of statistics in informing development interventions and measuring achievements, and recommended more gender-disaggregated data, and strengthened national statistical systems.

16. In a similar vein, the presentation of Mr. Solomon Mhlanga focused on the role of social statistics in MfDR in Zimbabwe. A gender policy was launched in 2004 and has since been strengthened by the appointment of gender focal persons, with the ultimate goal to mainstream gender into all policies and ensure that all data produced is gender disaggregated. A results-based management programme was launched in 2006, followed by a gender-based budgeting programme in 2007. Mr. Mhlanga pointed out the important role of social statistics in MfDR, as they help identify areas that require policy action and represent a tool for transparency and accountability to the public. However, weak institutional systems and a lack of resources and leadership remain important challenges ahead.

Discussion

17. In the general discussion, the question of harmonisation of indicators between donors and partners was brought forward Ms. Eleanor O'Gorman (Centre of International Studies, Cambridge) argued that there are some hidden explanations between better gender statistics and MfDR. She doubted of such a strong correlation, and strongly argued for the need for quantitative indicators in

order to get qualitative information. Mr. Paukku wondered what factors could enable a gender focus at the statistical level to impact on policies. Ms. Slengesol Senftova wondered whether National Statistical Offices could make data gender sensitive, and explained that disaggregating data by sex would not be enough in this regard.

18. Further concern was raised regarding the role of civil society in those processes. Ms. Astronaut Bagile (Association of African Women for research and Development) asked about the role of civil society organisations and mentioned the lack of indicators to track progress in the area of gender-based violence. On the methodological side, Ms. Gumbonzvanda wondered how education and economic challenges could be addressed, given the difficulty of the situation at the macro level. She wondered what tools could be used to facilitate data availability, and argued for the need to push for policy dialogue and humanitarian assistance.

Session III: Roundtable: From Good Numbers to Effective Policies and Programmes

19. In the final roundtable discussion, Ambassador Fredrik Arthur (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) started by suggesting that more research should be carried out in private institutes, for instance, to develop more indicators on gender issues; however this strongly depends on good access to gender statistics on the country level. He insisted that evaluation reports should be used as a tool to identify gaps, since they facilitate the decision-making process and help implement policies at country level. Furthermore, gender issues have to be part of a wider and broader development agenda that also includes attitudes of men. In this regard, Mr. Arthur shared the enthusiasm concerning the Wikigender initiative as this could be an important tool to involve both men and women in the information exchange.

20. Ms. Hanny Beteta Cueva mentioned the necessity of corrective actions such as sanctions, at the country level. She illustrated a need to create a system that incorporates two discourses, one that is specifically directed for advocacy purposes, and another that is committed to monitoring progress. Both are necessary in order to turn good gender statistics into good policies. Finally, she insisted on the importance of monitoring the gender budget and reinforced the centrality of “accountability” in achieving better policies

21. In her intervention, Ms. Gita Sen insisted on the important role of civil society and the media to improve knowledge on gender equality. She presented several examples to illustrate how a more significant involvement of civil society and the media can improve results. One notable example is the SPARK initiative in Bombay that helped to rectify results of a population census. Specifically, based on the insights of SPARK numbers could be corrected upwards as the censuses only captured one of the three families that shared a dwelling in slums in time shifts.

Summing Up and Looking Forward

22. Summarising the workshop, Ms. Estelle Loiseau (OECD Development Centre) reinforced the increasing importance of gender statistics and indicators, especially as regards the aid effectiveness agenda. She outlined four different ways in which we could best use statistics and indicators to assess and manage for results: by diagnosing and tracking progress and by developing evidence-based policies for advocacy or research purposes. She then briefly summarised the various challenges ahead, following the seminar’s discussions. Specifically, she outlined limitations of conventional approaches to data collection and emphasised the need to open up a bottom-up dialogue in order to give voice to civil society. She further recommended that sources in providing gender statistics be more diversified. As for challenges in the field of aid effectiveness, Ms. Loiseau encouraged the use of mixed methods, which should be adapted to each individual situation.

Similarly, data need to be more diversified, readily available and of higher quality. Finally, she highlighted capacity building as a central concern, both in north-south and south-south cooperation.

23. Mr. Espen Prydz (OECD Development Centre) reasserted the importance of ownership, which should be strengthened through a national approach to dealing with statistics. In order to ensure an optimum use of statistics in evaluation, problems need to be identified before adequate indicators could be selected. Finally, Mr. Prydz argued that there are different indicators for different purposes, and reviewed some of the barriers to turn improved statistics into better policies. In his concluding remarks, he announced upcoming international initiatives and outlined further innovations. Finally, he shared his hopes for this seminar to be an important step towards future collaboration and follow-up meetings, as well as continued dialogue.