

Making data count for all

Good practices in integrating gender
in national statistical systems



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Foreword

The relationship between gender and statistics is complex and often confusing. Early work was confined to the presentation of statistics about women to inform research and programme development to increase their status and monitor improvements in their lives.

However, identifying gender issues and changes in the status of women requires a comparison with the situation of men. Publications on “Women in Statistics” were replaced by publications on “Women and Men in Statistics” and disaggregation of statistics by sex became the main method for identifying differences between women and men and for the production of gender statistics. In theory at least, it became a requirement for the collection, compilation, dissemination and analysis of all individual-level data.

While disaggregation by sex remains a basic tool for gender statistics, it can only identify differences between women and men and gender issues that are addressed, directly or indirectly, in data collection. As more gender issues reached the policy agenda, recognition of the lack of data on issues such as violence against women, time use, unpaid work and family care demonstrated that gender statistics must do more than just disaggregate existing data by sex. As a result, new surveys such as those on violence against women were developed and others such as time use surveys were reinvented to fill some of these data gaps, expanding our understanding of gender statistics in the process.

Gender differences and gender relations within survey populations and the statistical system as a whole also potentially affect the quality of data, including data not directly concerned with gender issues. Integrating a gender perspective throughout the statistical system to take account of these effects, described as “engendering statistics,” is gradually being recognised as essential for the production of quality data. However, it is a highly complex process involving the entire system and success is very dependent on institutional arrangements.

The collection of good practices presents a number of country studies of good practices, each focusing on a particular aspect of gender statistics. Paper writers were specifically requested to consider the role of institutional factors and arrangements in the success of the good practice. Institutional mechanisms for communications, collaboration and coordination proved to be especially important to ensure that the gender statistics were useable, accessible, and actually used.

We hope that the analysis and innovative examples presented here will inspire and motivate colleagues in other statistical offices to learn from these experiences and emulate their success.

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