



**Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-second Session**

**Participation in and access of women to the media, and
information and communications technologies and their
impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and
empowerment of women**

INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

**Innovative data approaches for measuring progress on
gender equality and women's empowerment**

**Data governance and the role of state and non-state actors in support of gender
equality and the empowerment of women and girls: Best practices**

by

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

Let me start by thanking UN Women for organizing my participation in this important event. I strongly believe that good quality data can improve people's life. It can contribute to the acceleration of action for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. In my contribution, I would like to draw your attention to the role that state and non-state actors can play in the improvement of data governance in the digital age.

The traditional role of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and National Statistical Systems (NSS) has been challenged, on one side, by a huge demand for data and statistics requested, among others, by the Global Indicators Framework¹ and, on the other hand, by the emergence of new data suppliers from the private sector, academia and the civil society. By using new data sources and new technology, most of them are able to produce data that is faster, more disaggregated and more easily to use. It means that the data availability and usability can be improved with new data suppliers.

What about integrity, sustainability, comparability, security and other ethical principles? The official statistical organizations have to adhere to the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics². Statisticians as professionals also adhere to the International Statistical Institute (ISI) Declaration of professional Ethics³. To which principles new data suppliers have to adhere? The World that Counts Report⁴ has already suggested a set of basic principles for harnessing the data revolution in 2014. How, given the evolving data ecosystems, data standards should evolve in parallel to users' needs and new technologies (i.e. around privacy, data ownership, data access and use etc.)? The new European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)⁵ is a good example of ways to expand existing data principles to non-traditional data sources.

If NSOs and NSS's still want to remain the major providers of statistics for defining and monitoring policies, they should modernise the way that they collect, produce and disseminate statistics. Instead of mostly using primary data collection, they have been trying to integrate traditional and new data sources.

Good administrative infrastructure proved to be an excellent source for disaggregated statistics. Here is an example of good practice of Slovenian National Statistics, which is mostly based on admin data sources. In 2011, the first register-based census was conducted by linking several statistical and administrative sources and without any fieldwork.⁶ This action is possible to repeat every three years and also offers a great opportunity to analyse gender related issues.

While several statistical modernization projects⁷ started in the developed regions already a few years ago, many NSOs in the developing world are still lagging behind. Especially in the field of gender related statistics, users are faced with serious data gaps. This is caused mainly by a low

¹ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>

² <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/FP-Rev2013-E.pdf>

³ <https://www.isi-web.org/index.php/activities/professional-ethics/isi-declaration>

⁴ A World that Counts Report (2014), <http://www.undatarevolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/A-World-That-Counts.pdf>, page 22

⁵ The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a new European privacy law due to become enforceable on May 25, 2018. More at <https://gdpr-info.eu/>

⁶ <http://www.stat.si/StatWeb/File/DocSysFile/8033>.

⁷ An example is UNECE Modernstats project, more at: <https://statswiki.unece.org/display/hlgbas/Statistical+Modernisation+Community>

priority of gender statistics, a lack of resources for very expensive surveys and methodological challenges, a lack of administrative sources (e.g. data on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics) or weak institutional and professional capacity in general. Less than one quarter of the SDGs requested indicators related to gender is currently available. Some research projects try to close the gap. The Data2X report: “Big Data and the Well-Being of Women and Girls”⁸, a summary of pilot projects led by the UN Global Pulse and individual academic researchers, explores how different sources of big data can close global gender data gaps. The projects demonstrate how satellite imagery, call detail records, credit cards, and social media improve the understanding of the needs of girls and women. These types of research projects are also very important for testing the usability, quality and methodology of new data sources. NSOs have to be involved to gain knowledge and experience on how to work with new data sources and new technology. It is a pity that in the regions where it is needed the most NSOs lack institutional, professional and legal capacity to be an equal partner in developing projects. The modernization of national statistical systems and the national statistical offices has to be considered as an important political priority within the national development plans.

NSOs and NSS also face new challenges in terms of how to build a partnership with state and non-state actors. One of the good practices is the Slovene Statistical Advisory Committees⁹. Since the 1980s, the advisory committees for different fields of statistics are proved to be an excellent forum for discussing users’ needs, sharing information about potential data sources, explaining methodological issues and presenting statistical results.

At the global level, the official statistical community had been a “relatively closed group” until the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Due to the interests of a wider data community, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD)¹⁰ was established in 2016 as a global network bringing together governments, the private sector and the civil society organizations dedicated to using the data revolution to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Another good practice of a cross-sectoral cooperation at the global level is the UN World Data Forum¹¹. It is the platform for intensifying cooperation with various professional groups, such as information technology, geospatial information managers, data scientists, users, and civil society stakeholders. At the first inaugural World Data Forum, the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development data was agreed. The second UN WDF will take place in Dubai on 22-24 October 2018.

The third example of an international statistical network is the International Statistical Institute (ISI). The ISI is one of the world’s oldest statistical societies¹². Its mission is to promote the understanding, development and good practice of statistics worldwide. Statistical capacity building in developing countries has been a major focus of the ISI over the last few years. The ISI Committee on women in statistics¹³ and the Statistical Literacy Project (ISLP)¹⁴ should be

⁸<http://www.data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Big-Data-and-the-Well-Being-of-Women-and-Girls.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.stat.si/statweb/en/NationalStatistics/AdvCommittees>

¹⁰ <http://www.data4sdgs.org/about-gpsdd>

¹¹ <https://undataforum.org/WorldDataForum/about/>

¹² [The ISI was formally founded in 1885. More at https://www.isi-web.org/](https://www.isi-web.org/)

¹³ <https://www.isi-web.org/index.php/news-from-isi/131-isi-committee-on-women-in-statistics>

¹⁴ <https://iase-web.org/islp>

mentioned in this discussion. The first one promotes and strengthens the role of women statisticians. The ISLP “promotes statistical literacy across the world, among young and adults, in all walks of life”. Statistical and data literacy help people to make the right choices.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by citing the recommendations of the Open Data Watch and the Data 2X project¹⁵. “Five critical elements necessary for strengthening statistical capacity and mainstreaming of gender statistics within statistical systems are: (i) a sustainable funding mechanism, both internationally and domestically resourced, (ii) strong skill development to take advantage of innovative sources and methods, (iii) partnerships and alliances inside and outside the national statistical office, (iv) political support and commitment within country governments to support gender statistics as a core component of smart, gender-informed policy-making and (v) an organizational strategy for incorporating a gender statistics ethos into the statistical system. To accelerate the implementation of gender equality within the SDGs, a comprehensive approach to improve the data as well as the statistical systems is necessary.”

Gender Statisticians should talk “different languages¹⁶” to initiate evidence based policies decisions on gender equality. Providing our policy makers with gender statistics will foster accountability and transformation towards more equality among women and men. Both qualitative and quantitative gender data should be used to inform about gender inequality policies. This kind of work should involve as many partners as possible. Including partners from outside the Governments.

Thank you for your attention.

¹⁵ <http://opendatawatch.com/knowledge-partnership/ready-to-measure-phase2-sdg-gender-indicators/>

¹⁶ [Communication skills and new statistical data presentation tools](#)