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Sixtieth Session**

Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development

INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

Key strategies for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda

**Gender-responsive data and statistics to monitor and achieve
the gender dimensions of the 2030 Agenda in Ghana**

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.

Introduction

Borne out of an impressive participatory process, the 2030 Agenda and its flagship, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are far more inclusive, wide-ranging and nuanced than their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The goals are also interconnected, such that the achievement of one will depend on progress in others, and with the overarching aim to “leave no one behind”, it is clear that there will need to be a concerted effort on all fronts in order to achieve the World we want. In particular, the preamble of the UN Resolution announcing the 2030 Agenda puts the achievement of gender equality at the heart of this effort, stating that the SDGs “seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls” (UN 2015a). In translating these goals to action then, it is vital that national policies, financing mechanisms, and data collection become more sophisticated, looking across the goals to find common points of leverage and be more gender-responsive throughout.

At the national level, countries must align all development planning to the 2030 Agenda and ensure that there are gender advocates within the structures established to carry out implementation. The inclusion of standalone gender policies or a budget line for individual women’s projects are no longer satisfactory; the thrust of the SDGs is that policies must cease to be gender-blind, and from design to implementation they are expected to take into account the potentially different starting points of and impact on men and women. The goal of these voices for gender equality then must be to build consensus at all levels of the policy-making infrastructure to ensure that the importance of gender, along with other dimensions of disaggregation, is fully appreciated.

Financing for the gender dimensions of sustainable development will come from a number of different sources. Official Development Assistance (ODA) can act in a catalytic role, while the onus of the financing burden must be on country-level resources. In addition, a conducive macroeconomic environment is crucial to ensuring that the gender imbalance in both the public and the private spheres is redressed.

The 2030 Agenda offers a unique opportunity for statistics. More complex goals call for more disaggregated data which will allow for keener insight into not only the dichotomies of men vs. women, poor vs. rich etc., but also into the lived experience of those suffering from intersecting disadvantage and strengthen our ability to tackle multi-dimensional suffering. We must also capitalise on the opportunities afforded by the data revolution to provide better coverage and quality of disaggregated statistics to truly ensure that no one is left behind.

National institutional arrangements and policy frameworks

For any developing country, there are myriad frameworks at the national, regional, sectoral and global levels that any new development agenda must align with. In addition, the SDGs are ambitious in their scope and their implementation will necessitate participation from a wide range of stakeholders, including government bodies, civil society, and private sector actors.

The Ghanaian government has established an institutional structure to oversee the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This consists of a National Technical Committee, overseen by a High-Level Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee, both of which are supported by the Committee on Financing for Development. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the key policy machinery charged with the responsibility of overseeing gender mainstreaming, sits on this High-Level Committee.

Ghana is currently working on a new medium-term development framework, the third Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA), and is in the process of drafting a 40-year development plan, both of which will align with the SDGs. The current GSGDA includes a specific gender goal, which aims to promote gender equality and equity in political, social and economic development systems and outcomes (NDPC 2014). In addition, in 2015, Ghana announced a comprehensive national gender policy with 5 policy commitments in the areas of: empowerment and livelihoods; women's rights and access to justice; leadership and accountable governance for women; macroeconomics, trade and industry; and a commitment to transform gender roles and relations within the Ghanaian society (MoGCSP 2014). Since gender inequality exists in many forms, this type of all-encompassing approach is vital; progress towards gender equality must be made in all policy areas to be mutually reinforcing.

In an analysis of the current situation, however, Ghana's national gender policy found that the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the body charged with safeguarding and promoting gender equality, was unable to perform its coordination role effectively due to budgetary constraints (MoGCSP 2014). If gender is going to be effectively integrated into the policies and structures established to carry out the SDGs, the bodies charged with this task must be properly resourced.

With regard to statistics, 2016 will see the completion and adoption of Ghana's second National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). There are also a number of sectoral strategies either in place or under discussion. As a result, now is a critical time to act to ensure that each of these strategies and policies are sufficiently gender-responsive and well integrated. The GSS, as the lead coordinator of the NSS, has a key role to play in this respect.

Gender-responsive data and statistics

Gender statistics are key for evidence-based decision making and for monitoring trends in gender inequalities and assessing progress in gender related-issues. Data collection for the SDG indicators represents both an immense challenge and a rare opportunity. The SDGs demand increased capacity in data collection and analysis with over 300 indicators that currently most countries, both developed and developing, will struggle to meet (UNESCO 2016a). Globally, current data is insufficient, for example, to provide baselines in a number of areas including unpaid labour, domestic violence, and access to public services (UNESCO 2016a). However, with the advent of the data revolution and with more attention and resources directed at disaggregated data collection and analysis, there is an opportunity to provide the evidence base for sound policy-making.

To ensure high-quality disaggregated data, there is a need to agree on globally accepted standards for measuring in particular the gender-related SDG indicators (UN Women 2015a). At the national level also, the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) must have as a central focus on the production of high quality disaggregated data (UN Women 2015a).

It is also necessary to consider the feasibility of some disaggregation in relation to sensitivity, cost, the larger sample sizes required and the need to build capacity at national level (UNSD 2015). A recent review of the approaches to collecting data for the SDGs by Alkire and Samman asserted that data must be "of a high quality yet affordable, timely and available and comparable across time and (where relevant) across countries. Data should be disaggregated by social groups, including missing populations, and give insights into intra-household dynamics" (2014, 1). The authors further recommend a combination of complementary data collection methods, with household surveys forming the bedrock of the statistical infrastructure. Short powerful surveys conducted using

Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) can complement with high frequency data, while administrative data with its large sample sizes and Big Data provide some new and cheaper data sources (Alkire and Samman 2014).

Each country will need to find its own balance of these methods of collecting data in accordance with its circumstances. However, there are some skills that will be vital to any data collection regimen. Financial and capacity investments need to be made in the acquisition and use of CAPI, which will allow for more complex interviewing and speed up the longer questionnaires that disaggregated data will demand. Funding to up-skill statistical staff to use Big Data will also be necessary. Administrative data continues to present challenges particularly in developing countries and investment in modern systems to capture and analyse this data will also be crucial. Support for more effective data dissemination and communication, for example through Open Government Data Initiatives, will also help to increase the demand for and use of gender-disaggregated statistics (Data Revolution Group 2014).

In Ghana, as in other developing countries, many national indicators and statistics are not disaggregated enough to provide information on marginalized population sub groups. In view of this, key gender indicators were proposed in 2011 for inclusion in the Core National Indicators for programme monitoring and evaluation. Recognizing that many MDAs still lack the capacity to produce gender statistics, the MoGCSP, in collaboration with the National Statistical System (NSS), constituted the Gender Statistics Working Group (GSWG) to assist various MDAs in articulating gender issues relevant to programme planning. The group has also helped in developing indicators and data collection templates for measuring and monitoring gender issues. The MoGCSP is currently in the process of building database on gender and it is hoped that it will drive the various actors within the NSS to put emphasis on gender disaggregated data generation.

The NSS is also taking advantage of the revision of the Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy to set out the need for a national database on reproductive health rights and secure ring-fenced budget allocation for the exercise. Additionally, the GSS, in collaboration with the National Technical Steering Committee on the SDGs, has initiated a process of mapping the SDG indicators to the various MDAs that constitute the NSS to improve their commitment towards responding to the SDG data needs. The availability of data, the frequency of compilation, and current level of disaggregation, among others, are also being compiled to help the NSS identify data gaps and seek partnerships in the monitoring of the indicators.

Given that GSGDA II specifies a commitment to “promote the effective integration of gender considerations at all stages, and in all dimensions of data production and creation of statistical knowledge” (NDPC 2014), disaggregated data must be a core focus of the NSDS, which in turn should be used as the primary vehicle for funding statistical activity (SDSN & ODW 2015). There are numerous funding approaches for NSDSs, for example, the setting up of basket funds that draw in dedicated amounts from government, development partners and, in some cases, private sector players with an interest in supporting the delivery of specific statistical products such as accurate business registers.

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