

51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women
Joint Parallel Event with Statistical Commission and the
Commission on the Status of Women
Thursday, 1 March 2007, 1.15-2.45 p.m.

ISSUES PAPER

I. Introduction

The Commission on the Status of Women adopted new methods of work¹ in 2006 that will allow it, starting with its fifty-first session in 2007, to dedicate more attention to ways and means of accelerating the implementation of global commitments at national level. As part of its increased focus on measurement of progress in implementation, the Commission decided that its deliberations should be supported by reliable statistics, sex-disaggregated data and other quantitative and qualitative information to illustrate monitoring and reporting. The Commission requested proposals for possible indicators on its priority themes, elaborated in cooperation with the Statistical Commission. The Commission also encouraged all States to consider including technical experts and statisticians, including those from ministries with relevant expertise on the themes under consideration, as appropriate, on their delegations to the Commission.

The Statistical Commission has been instrumental in developing a global statistical system comprising national statistical offices and supported by institutions at regional and international level. It has a central role to play in promoting the development of national statistics and indicators. The Commission on the Status of Women can benefit from the technical expertise in the Statistical Commission in the development of indicators on the priority themes under consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women in its current work programme (2007-2009): “Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child” in 2007; “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women” in 2008; and “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS” in 2009.

The General Assembly also requested the Statistical Commission to develop and propose, in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, and building on the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, a set of possible indicators on violence against women in order to assist States in assessing the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women. This panel gives us an excellent opportunity to begin collaboration in this area, particularly since the Commission on the Status of Women, at this session, is focusing on “Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child” and the emerging theme “Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women: Follow-up to the Secretary-General’s in-depth study on violence against women.

¹ See Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women, adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 25 July 2006 in resolution 2006/9.

The objective of the panel is to, building upon previous collaboration on statistics between the two Commissions, focus on the development of indicators to monitor implementation of agreed commitments adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women in its current work programme. The panel also sets the stage for future discussions on development of indicators on violence against women by the Statistical Commission, in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, as mandated by the 61st session of the General Assembly.

II. Background

Statistics and indicators were identified at a very early stage in the work of the United Nations on gender equality and empowerment of women as critical to assess progress in implementation. The Beijing Platform for Action called upon national, regional and international statistical services and relevant governmental and United Nations agencies, to, inter alia, collect, compile, analyze and present, on a regular basis, data disaggregated by age, sex, socio-economic and other relevant indicators, for utilization in policy and programme planning and implementation.

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Commission on the Status of Women has highlighted the importance of developing statistics and indicators in follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action in areas such as, inter alia, the eradication of poverty, information communication technologies, and the enhanced participation of women in development.

At its 43rd session in 1999, the Commission on the Status of Women focused on institutional mechanisms and called on governments to provide assistance, as appropriate, to agencies, including those outside government, in formulating gender-sensitive performance indicators necessary to measure and review progress made in the field of gender equality, including gender mainstreaming. The Commission also called for the continuous improvement of the collection and disaggregation of data and the development of statistics and indicators in all critical areas of the Platform for Action for use in analysis, policy development and planning. At its 48th (2004) and 49th (2005) sessions, the Commission also focused on development of indicators and statistics for measuring progress in implementation at national level within the context of follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly called on Governments to provide national statistical offices with institutional and financial support so that they can collect, compile and disseminate data disaggregated by sex, age and other factors, in formats that are accessible to the public and to policy makers for use in gender-based analysis, monitoring and impact assessment. It called on Governments to support new work to develop statistics and indicators, especially in areas where information is particularly lacking. Governments were also urged to develop collaboratively an international consensus on indicators and ways to measure violence against women.

Efforts to achieve the time-bound targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have further heightened the need for more relevant gender statistics and gender-

specific indicators to monitor progress. MDG 3 on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women calls for elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and at all levels by 2015. The four indicators associated with Goal 3 concern the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; the ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old; the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. Providing data disaggregated by sex and qualitative information on gender equality issues, across the goals and targets in the Millennium Development Goals country reports, is an effective approach to ensuring attention to gender equality in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

In reviews carried out at national level for the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2005, many countries recognized the importance of collecting data disaggregated by sex and developing gender-sensitive indicators in order to set priorities, formulate policy and design programmes. Despite these advances made, inadequacies in development of statistics and indicators remain an important obstacle to gender-sensitive planning, monitoring and evaluation.

III. Format of the panel

Opening statements will be made by a Vice-Chairperson of the Statistical Commission and a Vice-Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women. Representatives of the Statistical Commission will make presentations from the perspective of the producers of statistics and a representative of the Commission on the Status of Women will present the users' perspective. Each panelist will make a presentation of no more than seven minutes. Following presentations by panelists and an interactive dialogue will be held. Speakers intervening from the floor will be given three minutes to briefly share their experiences. A summary of the discussion will be prepared.

IV. Issues for consideration

The participants at the panel may wish to share, inter alia, national level experiences, including lessons learned and good practices on the development of indicators. Participants may illustrate their interventions with specific examples related to the priority theme of the session – “Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child” – or to the emerging issue “Elimination of all forms of violence against women: Follow-up to the Secretary-General’s in-depth study at national and international levels”. They may also provide examples from other areas of gender equality which can illustrate achievements, gaps or challenges in developing and utilizing indicators.

The following list of issues may guide participants in their interaction in the panel:

- Examples of achievements and good practice in developing and utilizing indicators at national level.

- The gaps and challenges in utilizing existing indicators and ways in which they have been addressed.
- The gaps and challenges in developing new indicators and ways in which they have been addressed.
- Further indicators needed to measure progress in the priority areas under consideration by the CSW in its current work programme:
 - “Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child”
 - “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women” and
 - “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS”
- Further indicators needed to measure progress in violence against women.
- The future actions required to further enhance the collaboration between the producers of statistics, in particular the national statistical offices, and the users of statistics, including national machineries for the advancement of women and non-governmental organizations.
- Ways in which the Commission on the Status of Women and the Statistical Commission could increase their collaboration on the development of indicators related to the priority themes of the Commission on the Status of Women and to violence against women.