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## IN BRIEF:

# MAKING EVERY WOMAN AND GIRL COUNT IN AFRICA

## THE ISSUE

A regional assessment on gender statistics in Africa was conducted in 2018, revealing three interrelated challenges:

- Despite regular censuses and surveys conducted by National Statistical Offices (NSOs), there were huge gaps in data to track gender-related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators across Africa. Regional stakeholders acknowledged that a lack of coordination and poor communication had been a major drawback, leading to duplication of efforts and missed opportunities to leverage resources.
- Technical challenges limited the production of gender statistics and the ability to inform regional and country-level interventions – on economic empowerment, violence against women and girls, political participation, and peace and security.
- NSOs and other producers of statistics were still using outdated or ineffective methods of dissemination and communication, which resulted in the limited use of gender-sensitive data to influence policy dialogue, planning and budgeting.

## WOMEN COUNT RESPONSE:

- **Creating an enabling environment:** Regional coordination has improved. By working with organizations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB), countries have identified and addressed institutional, legal and financial constraints to mainstream gender in national statistical systems (NSSs) and establish an efficient monitoring and evaluation system for the SDGs.
- **Increasing data production:** Technical capacities of NSSs are being strengthened and quality gender data – on violence against women, unpaid care work, gaps in access to decent work and pay, participation in public life and decision-making, and access to/use of information and communications technologies – are being produced to improve SDG monitoring.
- **Improving data accessibility and use:** The capacities of users are being strengthened to conduct gender data analysis, while the accessibility of gender statistics is increasing through better reporting. Training is also improving capacities to communicate gender data, while data- and metadata-sharing are being encouraged to facilitate data flows, including to regional and global SDG-related databases.

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*“The collaboration with UN Women has been of immeasurable contribution to the effective implementation of the African Programme on Gender Statistics (APGS) [...]. Illustrations of such achievements are among others: (i) Joint trainings and meetings in various areas of gender statistics in Africa that have contributed a lot to the development of capacities of gender and statistics experts; (ii) The Minimum Set of Gender Indicators for Africa, developed under the leadership of UN Women in partnership with UNECA and AfDB through a continent-wide and inclusive consultative process [...] to inform its development; and (iii) the Assessment of APGS 2017–2021 and development of a new APGS 2022–2026. These efforts are essential to the achievement of the APGS objectives.”*

## Fatouma Sissoko, Gender Statistician, UNECA

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### RESULTS

Since 2019, UN Women has made efforts to strengthen the production and use of gender data through a continent-wide approach. Key results include:

#### 1. Creating an enabling environment

- **Regional coordination on gender statistics has been strengthened through strategic partnerships.** Since 2012, the continent’s coordination mechanism for gender statistics, the African Group on Gender Statistics (AGGeS) had been inactive due to technical and financial constraints. UN Women supported UNECA in reigniting AGGeS, which led an evaluation of the first phase of the Africa Programme of Gender Statistics (APGS) and the preparation of its second phase (2022–2026). As a result of collaborative, continued advocacy by UN Women in support of the APGS, more agencies are now actively supporting the production and use of gender data on the continent. With the increasing prioritization of gender statistics, AfDB funded the establishment of a gender statistics unit at the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in 2021. Further, partnerships within and beyond the UN system have led to the development of training programmes and the production of gender data, firmly rooting gender statistics in the continent.
- **New gender data priorities have helped harmonize gender statistics across the continent.** As a result of UN Women’s advocacy and technical support, the Statistical Commission for Africa (SCA) adopted a [Minimum Set of Gender Indicators for Africa \(MSGIA\)](#) providing strategic direction and scope for gender

data actors and strengthening regional collaboration among NSOs. The MSGIA is embedded in the APGS and provides guidance to countries on formulating their own national minimum sets of gender indicators. It harmonizes regional and subregional indicator initiatives into a coherent set of 53 indicators that were jointly developed by UN Women with UNECA and AfDB, after a continent-wide consultative process with NSOs, gender machineries, UN agencies and civil society organizations (CSOs). After training from UN Women, the MSGIA has been used by NSOs in the preparation of Country Gender Equality Profiles.

- **An increasing number of African countries have strengthened gender data production and use as a result of UN Women’s leadership.** Women Count’s regional efforts in Eastern and Southern, Western and Central Africa have enabled more countries to improve how gender data are produced and used. In Rwanda, surveys were conducted to fill critical data gaps on domestic violence and women’s unpaid care and domestic work. Nine countries<sup>1</sup> were supported to conduct gender assessments, which resulted in an increasing national prioritization of gender statistics. Responding to the assessment, governments developed full-fledged gender statistics projects in Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone. In Zimbabwe, UN Women support served to revitalize its dormant Gender Sector Statistics Committee, which led to an evaluation of the second National Statistics Development Strategy (NSDS) that informed the country’s third NSDS, which now includes more specific gender

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<sup>1</sup> Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Sudan, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

statistics plans and strategies than any of its predecessors. Gender data are also increasingly informing national reports, such as Zimbabwe's Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2021, strengthening countries' abilities to monitor and report on the SDGs. This has resulted in an increasing demand for UN Women's support on gender statistics across the continent.

## 2. Increasing data production

- **Alternative data sources now hold greater potential to strengthen SDG monitoring.** The data landscape is ever-changing, with a greater volume of data being produced outside of surveys and censuses. To holistically monitor the 2030 Agenda, UN Women championed the development of regional guidelines and assessments on non-traditional data sources, including administrative and citizen-generated data, which hold the potential to strengthen and harmonize gender data production. Globally, the United Nations Statistics Division and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data have incorporated these guidelines in their work. And national research institutions are following suit. For example, with the support of UN Women the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Ethiopia embarked on a one-year pilot to collect, analyse and use citizen-generated data to report on SDG 5 and other gender-specific SDG indicators. The guidelines have strengthened the capacity of NSSs to use non-traditional data sources for SDG monitoring and strengthened NSO collaboration with CSOs in the region.
- **A regional training programme has scaled up gender statistics capacity-building on the continent.** Building on the momentum for gender statistics created by the APGS, UN Women, in partnership with UNECA and AfDB, developed a virtual training programme on gender data and statistics in 2020. Conducted annually, the programme convenes data producers and users for a workshop addressing gender data literacy, communicating gender statistics and producing SDG indicators and thematic surveys through various modules responding to the needs of NSOs. Kenya and Senegal have applied skills gained from

these trainings in the design of their first time-use surveys. Similarly, Statistics Mauritius has requested the training material on computing MSGIA indicators for its own training replication. Skills gained on communicating data have also contributed to the dissemination of key knowledge products in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.<sup>2</sup>

## 3. Improving data accessibility and use

- **New gender data are fuelling policy action across the continent, including on women's economic empowerment amid the pandemic and on preventing violence against women.** Findings from surveys, assessments and census modules implemented by governments with support from UN Women, are informing gender-responsive policies and programming across the continent. Findings from Rapid Gender Assessments (RGAs)<sup>3</sup> were used to inform United Nations Country Team's emergency response frameworks, making them more gender-responsive in Mozambique, Malawi and Central African Republic. In Ethiopia, the RGA findings informed the design of a UN Joint Project on Sustaining Businesses and Protecting Jobs in the Informal Economy, provided support to Small and Micro-sized Enterprises (SMEs) most affected by COVID-19, including women-owned SMEs. In Rwanda, results from the domestic violence module in the Demographic and Health Survey 2019/20 were also used to develop a National Violence against Women Policy and produce data on SDG indicators 5.2.1 and 5.2.2. A regional study on gender and public transport<sup>4</sup> conducted in partnership with the Stockholm Environmental Institute informed discussions between the Uganda Country Office and the Minister of Transport in Uganda on ways to engender urban transport policies and planning, with a steering committee established that will use the findings to develop an action plan.
- **Gender data analysis is informing national reports on the status of gender equality and contributing to SDG monitoring.** With the increasing prioritization of gender statistics and gender-responsive policy-making in Western and Central Africa, UN Women supported 11 countries and one region<sup>5</sup> to prepare

2 Kenya's RGA, Zanzibar's Gender Indicators Report, and Uganda's revised National Priority Gender Equality Indicators.

3 National RGAs supported by the regional Women Count programme for Africa were conducted in: Benin, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and South Africa. Two regional reports were also produced on the Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Eastern and Southern Africa and on the Potential impact of COVID-19 on achieving the SDGs in East and South Africa.

4 Kampala and Nairobi.

5 National: Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone; Regional: G5 Sahel.

Country Gender Equality Profiles (CGEP), in partnership with the AfDB and the European Union (EU). The CGEPs describe the present situation in a given country based on frameworks – including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development – and contribute to national SDG monitoring and reporting through VNRs. In Rwanda, UN Women supported data analysis of the national Labour Force Survey to produce the National Gender Statistics Report 2019. Together with a thematic report on key labour force indicators for women and men that highlights the disproportional time spent by women on unpaid care work compared to men, the national report informed CSO advocacy efforts directed towards parliamentarians to assess gender-responsive budget statements – a requirement under Rwandan law.

- **Knowledge-sharing between gender data users and producers has been institutionalized through the inter-agency exchange forum, expanding the national production of gender statistics into new areas.** UN Women has enhanced peer-to-peer learning through the establishment of a Community of Practice (COP) on Data and Statistics in the Eastern and Southern Africa region in 2020. The COP, attended by NSOs, Ministries of Women and UN Women Country Offices, has increased visibility for gender statistics and has led to the establishment of stronger ties between gender data focal points. By facilitating knowledge exchange, the COP session on the development of Women Economic Indices presented by the Kenyan NSO inspired Zimbabwe’s NSO, ZIMSTATS, to put the development of their own index in their work programme.

## PLANS FOR PHASE II<sup>6</sup>

Plans for Women Count Phase II will build and further strengthen the regional collaboration established with UNECA, AfDB and the APGS to ensure greater coordination on the production and use of gender statistics across the continent; further address gender data literacy gaps; promote the update and use of the MSGIA; advance the use of non-traditional data sources, such

**FIGURE 1**  
**Measuring Progress during Phase I**



Progress was driven by improved regional coordination, harmonized gender indicators, expansion to new sources of gender data and increased literacy of gender data producers and users. In 2021, 100% of targets were met by the Africa regional projects.

as administrative data and citizen-generated data; and mine existing data sources to produce new gender statistics reports to increase the use of data to inform programmes and policies. Specific interventions will include:

- Continuing to support African countries in developing and evaluating national statistical development strategies.
- Building capacities on MSGIA implementation and citizen-generated data production and use, to strengthen gender statistics.
- Institutionalizing regional training programmes and adapting training materials to growing capacity-building demands.
- Supporting the monitoring and reporting of SDG indicators, including SDG indicator 5.c.1, in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- Advancing methodological work to fill data gaps on women’s economic empowerment and violence against women.
- Strengthening dialogue and developing use plans for gender data reports, such as Country Gender Equality Profiles, focusing on both policy and strategy.

<sup>6</sup> Plans for 2021 may be further adjusted to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.