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IN BRIEF:

MAKING EVERY WOMAN AND GIRL COUNT IN CAMEROON

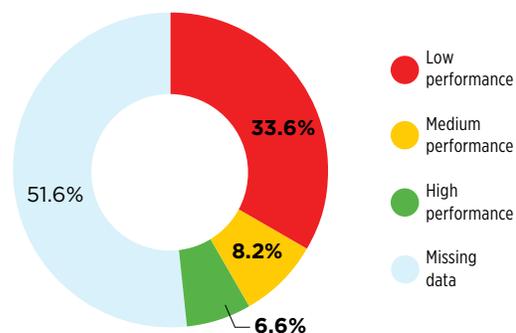
THE ISSUE

A national assessment of gender statistics, conducted in 2018, revealed three interrelated challenges:

- Gender is insufficiently integrated into Cameroon's National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). Within the National Statistical System (NSS), there are no specific laws or regulations governing gender statistics, although general references are made by many statistical regulations and laws on gender.
- Few financial resources are allocated to gender statistics within Cameroon's NSS. There is little understanding of gender-related issues by national statisticians, and poor collaboration between the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family (MINPROFF).

FIGURE 1

How is Cameroon doing on gender data in 2020?



Source: [Women Count Data Hub](#).

- There is poor dissemination of gender statistics, at both national and local levels, as a result of: limited dialogue between statistics users and producers, the absence of a mechanism to facilitate coordination, and an overall misunderstanding of gender statistics and their importance.

WOMEN COUNT RESPONSE:

- **Creating an enabling environment:** Coordination mechanisms were established to improve coordination on gender statistics, and to improve the normative framework through the adoption of a minimum set of gender indicators.
- **Increasing data production:** Technical capacities of the NIS are strengthened to produce gender data in the General Census of Agriculture and Livestock, and the General Population and Housing Census.
- **Improving data accessibility and use:** MINPROFF is being supported to establish a gender information system with a central online database for storing and sharing gender-related SDG indicators, while parliamentarians, media, civil society organizations (CSOs), academics, ministries and the private sector are being trained to use and analyze gender statistics in decision-making.

RESULTS

In response to the pandemic, UN Women, in partnership with Cameroon's Central Bureau for the Census and Population Studies (BUCREP) and MINPROFF, produced a rapid gender assessment (RGA) on the impacts of COVID-19 on women and men. Interventions in 2020 focused on institutionalizing cooperation mechanisms which informed the development of the new NSDS, reprocessing existing data for gender-related SDG indicators, preparing reports and building capacities on data production and use. A special focus was put on advocacy and dissemination of gender data through a new web-based data platform and training for data users and producers on gender data visualization and communication. Key results of 2020 include:

1. Creating an enabling environment

- **Gender-sensitive data collection has been made mandatory in the third NSDS 2020–2030.** Building on the assessment of gender data gaps in the second NSDS 2015–2020, the National Statistical Council (NSC) conducted a consultative process, aiming to prioritize gender statistics in the third NSDS 2020–2030 (adopted in April 2021). As a result, the new

FIGURE 2
Measuring Progress in 2020



Progress was driven by institutionalizing cooperation mechanisms that informed the new NSDS, by reprocessing data for gender-related SDG indicators and by building capacities for gender data production, analysis, dissemination and visualization.

NSDS includes a Gender Action Plan, prepared by the committee with support from UN Women, and a specific objective to collect gender-sensitive data in all surveys in Cameroon. With the NSDS being the only framework for all statistical activities in the country, all institutions producing official statistics are thus required to produce gender data to comply with national requirements.

- **The interministerial committee secured increased funding for gender statistics and was declared the custodian for Cameroon's gender commitments.** Established with support from Women Count, the interministerial committee and the technical committee within the NIS have become driving forces for the promotion of gender statistics, having contributed to the third NSDS, the ongoing General Census for Agriculture and Livestock, and the formulation of the Statistics Law. This mandate was further strengthened through the interministerial committee's nomination in the third NSDS as the guardian for implementing Cameroon's gender commitments. Finally, these committees advocated for financing of gender statistics, resulting in the Government allocating XAF 400,000,000 (USD 728,000) to MINPROFF's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, to finance gender statistics activities and reforms.

2. Increasing data production

- **New gender data were collected on the impacts of COVID-19 on women and men, which informed Cameroon's national response plan.** UN Women, in partnership with BUCREP and MINPROFF, produced an RGA on the impacts of COVID-19. As one of the first countries on the African continent hit by the

pandemic, Cameroon required timely information on the impacts for evidence-based decision-making, particularly on violence against women. The findings have informed the socioeconomic response plan used by the Government and UN agencies to call for special attention to domestic violence and women in the informal sector of the economy. Various women's organizations, mainly those from the CSOs Working Group on Gender and Public Policies, also used the report to develop COVID-19-socio-economic respond related projects.

- **Data reprocessing has strengthened the monitoring of gender-related SDGs.** BUCREP took the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) in 2020 as an opportunity to produce a report highlighting progress on all 53 gender-related SDGs in Cameroon, with support from Women Count, using reprocessed data sets.¹ The findings emphasized Cameroon's progress on commitments to improving the rights of women and girls, education and health, while identifying room for improvement in the areas of employment, land tenure and political participation. The results were further reflected in three policy briefs prepared by NIS on data disaggregation that raise awareness and aim to ensure that no one is left behind. The Government used the reports and policies briefs to position gender as one of the key issues to address in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) that will be conducted in 2021.
- **Regional collaboration improved capacities for preparing the Gender Demographic Dividend Index (GDDI).** UN Women partnered with the Senegalese Centre for Intergenerational Economy (CREG) to train Cameroonian experts on preparing the GDDI. The 18 participants from the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MINEPAT), BUCREP, NIS and MINPROFF benefited from CREG's long-standing experience with the GDDI, having developed the index for all Sahel countries as part of a UNFPA and World Bank partnership. The training followed a request from the Government, which wants to use the index to identify gender inequalities in accessing development opportunities in order to take measures to ensure more gender-equitable participation in national development. As a result of the training, a technical team of five trained participants was formed and tasked with drafting a GDDI report that is intended

to become a reference document to monitor national efforts in capturing gender demographic dividends.

- **Forty-five data producers have improved gender data skills through two trainings, while media coverage and public awareness of gender issues have increased.** Firstly, UN Women trained 15 MINPROFF officials in charge of statistics on how to manage statistical information and present data on gender issues. Secondly, harnessing the Journalist Network created under Women Count, 30 experts from NIS and BUCREP were trained on gender data visualization and statistical inserts in media. After the training, an increasing number of articles and inserts appeared in the media on gender issues, increasing public knowledge and awareness and highlighting the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in Cameroon. This training was widely appreciated by NIS and the MINPROFF, leading to a request to institutionalize the training as an annual session to build the capacities of new data producers that rotate across government positions.

3. Improving data accessibility and use

- **The adopted Minimum Set of Gender Indicators (MSGI) informed policymaking.** Following the adoption of the MSGI by the NSC in 2019, the list of 53 gender-related indicators has since been published and widely disseminated to 200 institutions, such as academia, CSOs and development partners who use them for planning, advocacy and decision-making. The MSGI formed the baseline for the preparation of a framework on gender statistics annexed to the third NSDS, which guides the production of new data. The Ministry of Finance, in partnership with the International Monetary Fund, started using the MSGI to prepare a national reform of gender-responsive budgeting. To strengthen the Ministry's capacities, UN Women also delivered a module on indicators for gender-responsive budgeting during an IMF-organized training in 2020.
- **Advocacy and government planning on gender equality was supported through three policy briefs.** Building on the findings of the gender-related SDG indicators report, the interministerial committee requested the production of policy briefs on three priority topics by the technical committee to inform Cameroonian ministries on gender indicators related to: health

¹ These include the 2018 Demographic and Health Survey, 2017 survey on financial inclusion, 2016 Census of Enterprises, 2014 Household Survey, and existing administrative data.

(SDG4), poverty and financial inclusion (SDGs 1&8), and women’s entrepreneurship (SDGs 5 & 8). Endorsed by MINPROFF as key advocacy instruments for gender equality, the policy briefs provide an overview of gender equality in these respective areas and recommend actions to close gender gaps. Following the finalization of the third NSDS and the Statistics Law, ministries increasingly approach the technical committee for guidance on addressing gender in their policymaking, so these policy briefs are key tools to include gender data in their planning processes.

- **A central online database was launched as a new dissemination tool on gender statistics.** UN Women supported NIS and MINPROFF to develop and launch a central database to serve as a one-stop-shop for users to access all available gender data related to the SDGs, the MSGIs and the BPfA, to inform and improve decision-making on gender equality and women’s empowerment. A special page on gender has been created on the Cameroon official open data web-portal and populated with available data. This achievement gave Cameroon an advantage during the negotiations conducted by the Government with the World Bank to host the Sahel Women’s Empowerment Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) programme, for which it has obtained 5-year financial support worth USD 80 million.
- **Cameroon’s first Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) has paved the way for a National Gender Policy.** UN Women supported the Government through the MINPROFF and Ministry of Economy and Planning in the production of its first CGEP, to be published in 2021. The CGEP highlights gender equality achievements and challenges in the country, across sectors such as the national economy, development of human capital and digitalization. Once validated by the Prime Minister’s Office, it will become the main reference for all gender-related interventions in Cameroon over the next five years. MINPROFF will also use the CGEP to inform the development of the National Gender Policy.
- **A user-producer dialogue promoted the inclusion of gender in the new draft NSDS.** During the preparatory phase of the NSDS 2020–2030, UN Women supported the interministerial committee’s advocacy to increase the importance of gender statistics in all upcoming strategies. A key event was the user-producer dialogue on gender issues related to the NSDS, attended by 60 data users and producers from government institutions, CSOs and development

partners. During the dialogue, the NSS collected important information on users’ gender data needs that informed the development of the third NSDS 2020–2030. Building on this success, the NIS has initiated a permanent user-producer dialogue framework on gender data.

- **More than 100 data users now have the skills to use gender data for advocacy and trained parliamentarians are citing gender data in budgetary discussions.** A total of 110 data users benefited from three trainings on communicating gender statistics and its importance for the promotion of gender equality in Cameroon, including statistics officials, parliamentarians and journalists on using gender data for advocacy and awareness. As a result of the training, more journalists are now including gender-data-related facts and figures in media reports on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, and the Gender Data Journalist Network has established a partnership with BUCREP to develop additional data visualization and further disseminate in the media the gender-related results of the ongoing population and housing census. Moreover, 20 parliamentarians were trained on how to use gender data for advocacy on gender-based budgeting. All trained parliamentarians subsequently used this knowledge to advocate for the effectiveness of gender-responsive budgeting during a parliamentary budgetary session for 2021 in November 2020.

PLANS FOR 2021*

- Continue supporting gender mainstreaming in the NSDS;
- Supporting production and quality control of gender data through surveys, such as on time use and ongoing censuses;
- Building the capacity of national statisticians on collecting, analysing and presenting gender statistics;
- Supporting the production of the GDDI to monitor gender equality objectives in national strategies and plans;
- Updating the central web database on gender statistics with newly released data and knowledge products;
- Continue facilitating user-producer dialogue on gender statistics and collaboration between MINPROFF and the institutions in charge of data production.

* Plans for 2021 may be further adjusted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.