



PHASE 1

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IN BRIEF: GLOBAL

MAKING EVERY WOMAN AND GIRL COUNT

THE ISSUE

The Women Count global policy support project aims to address three interrelated challenges:

- A weak policy space, as well as legal and financial environments, continue to be barriers to progress. In many countries, the production of gender statistics is not specified in statistics laws and policies, and as a result, the sector remains underprioritized and underfunded in national budgets.
- Technical and financial challenges limit the production of gender statistics. Areas such as violence against women (VAW), and unpaid care and domestic work, are important to measure but continue to be underresourced. Also at-risk are emerging areas, such as gender and poverty, gender and the environment, and women's participation in decision-making, where more methodological work is needed. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these existing challenges.
- Lack of access to data and limited capacity to make use of gender statistics limit their ability to inform policies remains. Where data are available, they are often not shared in user-friendly formats, impeding their uptake, analysis or use to inform evidence-based advocacy and decision-making. When data are not used, this leads to low demand, which in turn reduces the incentive to produce gender statistics.

WOMEN COUNT RESPONSE:

- **Creating an enabling environment:** UN Women has provided programmatic and technical guidance to pathfinder and non-pathfinder countries to implement gender statistics activities. Technical guidance has been developed on key areas, including the production of SDG indicators from existing household data and data collection amid COVID-19. Collaborating with key partners such as PARIS21 has facilitated the inclusion of a gender perspective in national strategies.
- **Increasing data production:** Global monitoring of the SDGs has improved thanks to the successful completion of methodological work and the compilation of gender-related SDG indicators led by UN Women. Partnering with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), UN-Habitat, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Bank, UN Women has generated new data on women's economic empowerment and other areas.
- **Improving data accessibility and use:** The Women Count Data Hub launched in 2019 has become a global one-stop-shop for gender data. Knowledge products, statistical briefs, interactive dashboards and research on gender and the SDGs have been produced and widely disseminated through partnerships with media to increase access and use of gender

“Our three-year collaboration with UN Women has been catalytic. Our partner countries have a deeper understanding of the importance of mainstreaming gender in national statistical systems. Building on Women Count, we mainstreamed gender in our own organizational strategy, as well as in many of our tools, guidelines and approaches.”

Johannes Jütting, Executive Head, PARIS21

data. Global advocacy on gender data has also improved through UN Women’s participation and organization of major global and regional events.

- **Monitoring, learning and evaluation:** The End-line Evaluation, Mid-Term Review and Annual Review Meetings have provided important opportunities to take stock of progress, lessons learned and to inform the future direction of Women Count Phase II.

KEY RESULTS

Since the start in 2016, UN Women has actively driven the international dialogue on gender statistics, strengthening the organization’s position as a global leader on gender data. Key results include:

1. Creating an enabling environment

- **Women Count has expanded UN Women’s global footprint on gender data.** Since 2016, UN Women has supported at least 62 countries in implementing various gender data initiatives. As a result, national statistical systems are now more gender-responsive and are prioritizing gender data in national planning, policies and programmes, which has in turn enabled more gender data to be produced and used. For example, an assessment of gender statistics in Lesotho led to the holistic gender mainstreaming of the National Statistical Development Strategy (NSDS) through the inclusion of gender-specific objectives in all 14 sector plans, which has increased ownership to address data gaps. Similarly, technical support provided to UN Women’s Multi-Country Office in the Caribbean resulted in six countries agreeing to integrate questions about unpaid care and domestic work in upcoming censuses, enabling reporting on SDG indicator 5.4.1. Practical guidance and tools have strengthened the capacities of National Statistical Offices (NSOs), UN agencies and other key stakeholders to collect data on the impacts of COVID-19; to utilize existing data to fill gender data gaps to monitor the SDGs and to assess data and statistical capacity

gaps to improve gender statistics in a more unified way. Phase I has deepened UN Women’s gender data work, making the organization a trusted, influential and sought-after partner on gender data, cementing its leadership in this space. Gender data production is also now recognized as a cross-cutting institutional priority in UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

- **Global inter-agency coordination has influenced others to take action on gender data.** UN Women has contributed to various initiatives, including the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics and SDG Indicators, the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the UN System, the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys (ISWGHS) and the UN Geospatial Network – all of which are mandated by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) to increase the coordination of international statistical activities. UN Women’s participation and contribution to the ISWGHS, including as co-chair (alongside the World Bank), was critical to ensuring that gender statistics are now one of the working group’s core areas of work.
- **More funding for gender statistics has strengthened UN Women’s ability to inform data-driven policies and improve monitoring of the SDGs.** The implementation of the Women Count programme is rooted in strong, consistent and diversified financial commitments that have enabled UN Women to expand the reach and depth of support that could be provided to countries and regions. UN Women’s catalytic mobilization of resources has led to a total of USD 44.4 million funding for gender statistics since 2016. Despite this unprecedented investment, gender data remain chronically underfunded. The pandemic underscored the importance of timely gender data, and while calls and the demand for gender statistics increase, funding remains stagnant. For example, only 11% of funding for data during the

pandemic included a gender dimension. Without increased resources for gender statistics, there will be very significant gaps in the ability to track progress on global commitments and to monitor how data have been used to inform policies and advocacy on gender equality and women's empowerment (for more information see chapter 3).

2. Increasing data production

- **There is more SDG gender data being produced than ever before, with more countries now able to monitor progress on SDG 5.** As the custodian/co-custodian agency on SDG 5 indicators, UN Women led the completion of the methodological work and successful reclassification of SDG indicators 5.1.1 (existence of legal frameworks to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex), 5.5.1b (women's representation in local governments) and indicator 5.c.1 (gender-responsive budgeting) in 2017–2018. As a result, all 14 gender-related indicators in SDG 5 can now be measured, 80% of data are available to track 5.2.1 (up from 45% in 2019), 45% of data are available for SDG 5.4.1, and 32 countries are able to track 5.a.1. As of June 2021, 42% of the data needed to monitor the various gender-related SDGs are now available – up from 26% in 2017. Moreover, each of the countries Women Count has supported have now achieved at least 40% of gender data availability. UN Women and UNSD have annually taken stock of progress on data availability across the SDGs. With these new data in-hand, the latest edition of the SDG 5 tracker reveals that only 1 of the 18 SDG 5 indicators is 'close to target', spurring calls for urgent action to accelerate progress to achieve SDG 5.
- **Catalytic partnerships with the FAO, ILO, UNDP, UN-Habitat and World Bank have resulted in new data on women's economic empowerment and on socioeconomic disadvantages.** UN Women partnered with the ILO and UN-Habitat to produce two new global databases on women's labour force participation by marital status (SDG 8) and on gender and slums (SDG 11), shedding additional light on key issues. The ILO has made the data available on their dashboard and both organizations will continue to regularly update the data as part of their regular work. Collaboration with the World Bank resulted in the first global estimates on poverty by sex and age, now publicly available on the new Poverty and Inequality Platform, to support closing data gaps

for monitoring SDG indicator 1.1.1. Using these data, UN Women collaborated with UNDP and the Pardee Centre to generate poverty forecasts and advocate for an integrated policy approach to achieve SDG 1. In addition, UN Women's partnership with FAO increased the number of available SDG indicator 5.a.1 estimates (on women's ownership or secure rights over agricultural land) from 10 to 33 and provided technical capacity to 16 countries to produce and report on this indicator, by reprocessing existing household survey data and increasing the number of countries that can produce such estimates.

- **Women Count rose to the COVID-19 challenge to address the need for new gender data, including on the shadow pandemic.** Despite the challenges of collecting data amid a pandemic, the programme pivoted to support more than 77 RGAs in 59 countries to collect data on gender-related socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, with many influencing government responses and policies. Building on the success of these RGAs, in 2021 UN Women conducted 13 RGAs with a focus on VAW. Findings confirm that violence against women increased as a result of COVID-19, with a shocking half of all women surveyed reporting that they or a woman they know had experienced VAW since the pandemic. The VAW RGA methodological tools will also be used to inform the VAW prevalence surveys to be conducted in Colombia and Bangladesh in 2022.

3. Improving data accessibility and use

- **The Women Count Gender Data Hub has been recognized as the leading UN Women portal to access data and resources on gender data.** Following its launch in 2019, the Data Hub has been recognized within the global gender statistics community as the 'one-stop shop' for gender data. It has been especially crucial in increasing the accessibility of gender data on the SDGs and on the impacts of COVID-19. Country fact sheets have been used as a key resource to measure country performance on the status of women and girls and to assess the gender data availability needed to improve SDG monitoring. The Hub has amassed over 1 million unique views from 224 countries and territories as of May 2022 – a monumental increase over the 44,400 views in its first three months after launching in 2019. A recent UN Women evaluation also revealed that among all UN Women websites, the Hub is the most frequently used knowledge platform by headquarters and field

office staff. The Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) [regional gender statistics portal](#), launched in 2021, also enhances access and visibility of key gender data, statistics resources and normative frameworks of the subregion.

- **UN Women has influenced global conversations on the need for more and better gender data.** Since 2016, UN Women has strengthened awareness of the importance of gender data by organizing and participating in global advocacy events on the margins of the UNSC, UN General Assembly, Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), World Data Forum, etc. At the [SDG Moment](#), UN Women's findings from the [Gender Snapshot 2021](#) and the SDG5 tracker were cited in the [Economist Impact's keynote speech](#), the unanimous call for urgent action needed to achieve SDG5 and the UN Secretary-General's [report on progress on the SDGs](#). At the two high-level events on gender data at the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico and in Paris, UN Women equally advocated for advancing a data-driven accountability agenda to propel the delivery of the six Action Coalitions in particular, and policy action more broadly. With more than 1,800 participants at each session, both events garnered among the highest attendance at the Forum. The gender data event in Paris was the second-most attended high-level session, signalling the global importance of gender data to fulfil the ambitious commitments of the Action Coalitions to drive progress on gender equality (see Chapter 3 for more).
- **Partnerships with media have increased the visibility of Women Count and the latest data and resources.** UN Women has strengthened the use of gender data for outreach and advocacy in different media outlets, achieving wide reach through its engagement with print and social media. Great visibility for the work completed in Phase I was achieved by publishing a [focus area on gender data](#) in partnership with Devex and partnering with the BBC to use findings on unpaid work in the BBC's 100 Women initiative. Featured articles recapping [COVID-19 and gender](#) (BBC) and [gender data fuelling generation change](#) (Devex) garnered more than 1 million views. Social media has grown in importance during the pandemic, by harnessing the power of telling stories to make the invisible visible to more global and more diverse audiences.

4. Monitoring, learning and evaluation

- **Evaluation dubs Women Count a best practice.** UN Women's corporate [evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of UN Women's 12 Flagship Programme Initiatives](#) (FPIs) reveals that Women Count was one of the most successful programmes, maintaining consistently good results across regions and being regarded as a good practice. The programme stands out among the FPIs for its timing and positioning of UN Women, strong governance and operational effectiveness, effective donor engagement, calibrated approaches and strong advocacy. The Women Count end-line evaluation further confirms these findings, revealing that the programme's design and approach effectively responded to and met the needs and priorities identified in the gender assessments of NSSs, while being aligned with national development plans and global initiatives. The evaluation notes that the implementation strategy was largely successful because of its holistic theory-based approach that targeted the entire system, covering the full data cycle and statistical processes while simultaneously addressing existing barriers to efficient production, dissemination and use of quality gender data and statistics. The programme achieved more than 90% of its results at outcome and output levels. The Women Count programme was also deemed to have been successful in addressing policy and legal frameworks, and to have accelerated the increased production of gender-related data across the different regions and countries by strengthening the institutional capacities of NSOs (see Chapter 4 for more).
- **Critical lessons learned from Phase I are informing the future of Women Count.** Regular reviews of programme effectiveness and strategic guidance have contributed to the success of Women Count. Systematic stock-taking and lessons learned through commissioning country case studies, quarterly reviews, annual review meetings and a Mid-term Review have promoted opportunities for Women Count staff and partners to share experiences and lessons learned and to identify the necessary programmatic shifts needed. This has been instrumental in mitigating unforeseen risks, especially amid COVID-19. Lessons learned have also been used to inform the development of Women Count Phase II.

PLANS FOR PHASE II¹

At the global level, Women Count Phase II will continue to: scale up its support to regions and countries to develop and implement gender data initiatives; deepen strategic partnerships with UN agencies to produce new data and analysis on key areas to monitor the SDGs; produce global guidance to equip countries with the tools needed to produce and use gender data for policies and advocacy; as well as systematically document data uses cases. Key activities will include:

- Participating in inter-agency meetings and strengthening partnerships, for example with FAO, ILO and WHO to monitor and report on the gender-specific SDGs.
- Providing technical and programmatic support to countries and regions to develop Phase II projects.
- Expanding partnerships with academia and research institutions to develop new measures and improve monitoring of the gendered impacts of COVID-19.

FIGURE 1

Measuring Progress during Phase I



Progress was driven by strong global technical support, including oversight and implementation of surveys, partnerships with UN agencies and increasing accessibility of gender data. In 2021, 100% of targets were met by the global project.

- Producing global guidance and tools that contribute to modernizing national statistical systems through the use of non-traditional data sources (big data, artificial intelligence, geographic information systems), and by integrating gender into global statistical methodologies and standards.

¹ Plans for Phase II are in the process of being finalized.