



PHASE 1

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IN BRIEF:

MAKING EVERY WOMAN AND GIRL COUNT IN NEPAL

THE ISSUE

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

- Despite political will to monitor gender equality and women's empowerment commitments, gender statistics were weak or lacking in Nepal. The National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) did not specifically mention gender statistics. Due to ever-increasing demands for data and recent reforms, the mandate to produce statistics had been extended to several institutions, rendering the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) less effective as a leader and coordinator.
- Nepal lacked mechanisms to monitor many SDG targets, with data available for only 37% of all gender-related global indicators. Most data were extracted from national censuses and surveys, which were undertaken only every 5 or 10 years, limiting their effectiveness.
- Data accessibility was a key challenge for non-governmental users, with many stakeholders relying on personal and informal contacts to access gender data. When data were available, they were not always used effectively.

WOMEN COUNT RESPONSE:

- **Creating an enabling environment:** Partnership with the CBS was strengthened to improve coordination around the production and use of gender statistics in the national statistical system.
- **Increasing data production:** The technical capacities of the CBS were strengthened to produce quality data on gender identity in the 2021 Census round and to measure the impact of COVID-19.
- **Improving data use accessibility and use:** Advocacy and communication tools were developed, which have improved how data are communicated and used to inform policy action and advocacy on gender equality.

“The Government of Nepal[’s] Central Bureau of Statistics highly acknowledges the partnership with UN Women Nepal[’s] Women Count project, to engender the National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) 2021. [...] CBS is grateful that the project was able to finalize the [gender equality and social inclusion] GESI advocacy and communication strategy for the NPHC 2021, the documentaries, the audio and video public-service announcements (PSAs) and communication products in [our] 11 most-spoken languages. This partnership has enabled CBS to achieve the meaningful participation of all sectors in the NPHC 2021.”

Nebin Lal Shrestha, Director General, CBS

KEY RESULTS

Since 2018, progress on implementation was slow due to administrative delays in finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CBS. Although the process took two years, UN Women’s continuous efforts to secure national commitment through negotiations with government counterparts emphasizes the critical importance of having a formal partnership agreement in place. Due to the slow pace of progress, the Women Count Nepal project was phased out and concluded in December 2020. Despite this, UN Women has made efforts to facilitate coordination within the NSS and successfully supported CBS to engender the 2021 Census and disseminate its key findings. After its close in 2020, UN Women has continued to support gender statistics, providing a significant impetus for the country to prioritize gender data. Key results include:

1. Creating an enabling environment

- **National commitment on gender statistics has been strengthened in Nepal.** As a result of the partnership established between UN Women and CBS in 2019, gender data is an area of priority for Nepal’s NSS. The partnership was instrumental for the inclusion of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in the planned 2021 Census and it has helped fuel interest in developing an analytical report on gender and social diversity after the Census. A formal acknowledgment letter was received from CBS commending UN Women on the results achieved, the quality of partnership, and the inclusive process that engaged a wide range of partners and operationalized the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’. Nepal’s 15th periodic plan signals the need to develop a data system to measure gender equality and women’s

empowerment, further cementing the Government’s commitment to improve gender data as a means to more effectively measure progress on gender equality in the country. It also makes gender data collection compulsory for all surveys in Nepal.

- **Bringing together different actors within the NSS has resulted in more coordinated efforts to fill gender data gaps.** Under Women Count, a Gender Statistics Working Group was established and tasked with improving the coordination of gender-related statistical activities. This Working Group was instrumental in providing a platform for coordinated action to engender the Census 2021 and advocate for the inclusion of a question to identify lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other (LGBTIQ+) peoples. The group has been dormant since the COVID-19 pandemic, but work on gender data is now being led by the Development Partners Statistics Coordination Group, which was reinstated in 2022 to identify key data priorities within Nepal, including on gender data. Inspired by Women Count’s efforts to bring together data users and producers, after the project’s closure, CBS has continued efforts to organize user-produce dialogues to identify data priorities that reflect the needs of data users to ensure that more inclusive data are produced, moving forward.

2. Increasing data production

- **LGBTIQ+ people were counted for the first time in the Nepal Census, an important step in Nepal’s efforts to ‘leave no one behind’.** As a result of UN Women’s advocacy efforts, and after close consultation with LGBTIQ+ groups, Nepal’s 2021 Population and Household Census included the

option to indicate one's sex as male, female or 'other' for the first time. Previously, the lack of specific or agreed-upon questions or methods to collect data on LGBTIQ+ persons rendered this population invisible in official national statistics. UN Women supported CBS to deliver training, organize user-producer dialogues with civil society, engender the supervisors/enumerators manual and develop a GESI manual for CBS staff. As a result of such efforts, more than 55,000 government officials now have the skills needed to collect gender equality and social inclusion data in a sensitive manner. The Census data and final report, to be released in 2022, will help Nepal monitor progress on the SDGs by generating data for 58 SDG indicators disaggregated by sex, in line with the principle to 'Leave No One Behind'. These data will also enable decision-makers to evaluate the need for targeted policies and programmes for the LGBTIQ+ community. Consulted LGBTIQ+ groups have praised those involved in the process for listening, allowing their voices to be heard and for even hiring LGBTIQ+ staff as Census enumerators.

- **Gender data have revealed the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on women in Nepal.** Under the leadership of the Ministry of Women Children and Senior Citizens, in April 2020, UN Women Nepal jointly with the Regional Office for Asia-Pacific administered an RGA that received more than 8,000 responses in Nepal and fed into a broader regional report. Among other things, it found that 68% of informal women workers in Nepal had lost their job or worked fewer hours, compared to 72% of women (and 59% of men) in formal employment. These findings have informed programme interventions on COVID-19. For example, in 2020, UN Women Nepal designed and implemented a comprehensive relief package and advocated to ensure that the voice, needs and interests of women (and especially those from the most excluded groups) were at the forefront of the COVID-19 response, with aim of achieving lasting, empowering change in the lives of women and girls in Nepal. The comprehensive relief package was able to address their practical needs as the crisis evolved in terms of supplying cash, food and non-food items, while addressing specific gender-based vulnerabilities such as gender-based

violence, unpaid care work, and a lack of access to information, services and resources.

3. Improving data accessibility and use

- **Nepal's first Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) provides the data needed to spur policy action for women and girls.** UN Women supported the inclusion of key statistics on Nepal's gender equality commitments to produce the Gender Equality in Numbers document, for CGEP's Statistical Annex in 2021. The Annex serves as a consolidated reference on the status of Nepal's commitments to gender equality, key gender-related SDG indicators, and the minimum set of gender indicators on population, demographics, health, education, leadership, labour, economic empowerment, poverty reduction and ending all forms of gender-based violence. Once published and disseminated in 2022, the CGEP will allow a better national understanding of progress towards Nepal's international, regional and national commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment and provide the critical evidence base to inform the country's next Periodic Plan. It will equally support the design of interventions to tackle gender inequalities and discrimination that are grounded in local realities and that reflect the needs of girls, women, and those who are gender non-conforming.
- **Increased advocacy and visibility of gender data have resulted in greater awareness of how to use gender data to trigger change.** To promote the use and visibility of gender data, UN Women developed various communication and advocacy tools to improve how gender data are communicated. In 2019, UN Women created a new 'using gender data' award to improve statistical literacy among students, which inspired new and innovative ways to use data to visualize Nepal's progress towards achieving the SDGs.
- **Inclusive communications materials are rendering dissemination efforts more effective.** In line with the advocacy and communications strategy prepared for the Census, UN Women developed a range of inclusive advocacy and communications materials, including documentaries, audio and video public service announcements, posters and brochures to

disseminate and generate awareness around the GESI manual and preliminary findings of the Census 2021. A survey revealed that the radio PSAs have reached over 75% of respondents, which demonstrates how using various inclusive and innovative means can be an effective mode of delivery to effectively generate awareness on the importance of using gender data for advocacy.

FUTURE PLANS¹

Following the mid-term review in 2019, Nepal's Women Count project was closed in December 2020, with the partnership agreement concluding in December 2021.

- UN Women Nepal will continue to support activities to generate gender-related data for informed decision-making to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, including by:
- Continuing to provide technical support and training for CBS in the conduct, analysis and dissemination of the findings of the engendered Census 2021.

FIGURE 1
Measuring Progress during Phase I



A strengthened national coordination mechanism was instrumental in filling gender data gaps and advocacy improved awareness of the power of gender data to produce lasting change.

- Supporting CBS on data collection efforts to prepare a time-use survey, including by developing a survey protocol, training, organizing user-producer dialogues, forming a steering and technical committee and mobilizing resources.

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