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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 was insufficiently integrated into Cameroon's National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). Within the National Statistical System (NSS), there were no specific laws or regulations governing gender statistics, although general references were made by many statistical regulations and laws on gender.
- Few financial resources were allocated to gender statistics within Cameroon's NSS. There was 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).
- There was 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:** Mechanisms were established to improve coordination on gender statistics and strengthen the normative framework, through the adoption of a minimum set of gender indicators.
- **Increasing data production:** The technical capacities of the NIS were strengthened to produce gender data on time use, the Census of Agriculture and Livestock, and the Population and Housing Census.
- **Improving data accessibility and use:** MINPROFF was 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 were trained to use and analyse gender statistics for decision-making.

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*“Thanks to UN Women, our traditional partner, the Government has improved the quality of its CSW and CEDAW reports with more data. Also, the structural transformation of the gender statistics environment in the country, driven by the Women Count project, has given us the opportunity to really highlight the work the Government is doing to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women in Cameroon.”*

## **Marie-Thérèse Abena Ondoа, Minister of Women’s Empowerment and the Family**

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### **KEY RESULTS**

Since 2019, Women Count has made significant strides in improving how gender data are produced and used in Cameroon. Key results include:

#### **1. Creating an enabling environment**

- **Gender data collection is now mandated in national plans on statistics.** Gender data collection has been made mandatory in the third NSDS 2020–2030 and includes a Gender Action Plan prepared by the Inter-ministerial Committee on Gender Statistics with support from UN Women. 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.
- **Gender data are better coordinated, produced and used as a result of bringing together different actors in the NSS.** Established with the support of Women Count, coordination bodies including the Permanent Working Group on Gender Statistics within the NIS, the Technical Committee on Gender Statistics and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Gender Statistics, have become driving forces for the promotion of gender statistics in Cameroon. The Inter-Ministerial Committee has successfully advocated for gender statistics during sessions of the National Council of Statistics, for the inclusion of gender in the 2020–2030 NSDS, and for its prioritization in the strategy’s 2022–2025 action plan. The Permanent Working Group has improved the quality of statistical operations through a review of the gender sensitivity of all operations conducted by the NIS to ensure that gender issues are well featured, and gender bias avoided or minimized in key surveys.<sup>1</sup>

- **Increased government investment in gender data signals a sustainable future for gender data.** Before the Women Count project in Cameroon, there was no specific funding for gender statistics in the State budget, nor was there any reference to gender statistics in the financing framework for statistics. As a result of UN Women’s advocacy, gender statistics are now inscribed in MINPROFF’s 2020–2023 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and in the financing framework of the 2020–2030 NSDS, and all statistics units are mandated to allocate funding to support the functioning of the Technical Committee on Gender Statistics. In addition, the Government has allocated XAF 400,000,000 (USD 728,000) to MINPROFF’s Medium-term Expenditure Framework, to finance gender statistics activities and reforms. As a result, for the first time since its creation, the statistics unit at the national gender machinery has a dedicated budget to improve statistics work across the NSS. This has enabled MINPROFF to strengthen its statistical capacities by recruiting statisticians for the first time and developing a statistical information system as well as an action plan to mobilize State and non-State funding to sustain the work of the statistics unit.

#### **2. Increasing data production**

- **The adopted Minimum Set of Gender Indicators (MSGI) has 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 gender statistics framework annexed to the third NSDS, which guides the production of new data.

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<sup>1</sup> Such as the Employment and Informal Sector Survey, the Population and Housing Census, and the Agriculture and Livestock Census

The Ministry of Finance, in partnership with the International Monetary Fund, has also started using the MSGI to prepare a national reform of gender-responsive budgeting.

- **New data on women’s unpaid care work will spur action on social protection.** The NIS, with the support of UN Women, integrated a time-use module in its fifth national household survey that kicked off in October 2021 and will continue through 2022. The Minister of Development has already signalled the Ministry’s intention to use the key findings on women’s and men contribution to unpaid and paid work to inform the development of a new national strategy on social protection. The findings will also be used to produce a national satellite account that will determine how unpaid domestic care work is integrated into the calculation of national gross domestic product (GDP) to highlight the contribution of women and men.
- **Gender statistics training has been institutionalized, resulting in more statisticians equipped to produce gender data in six countries.** Thanks to the advocacy and technical advice of UN Women, the Subregional Institute for Statistics and Applied Economy (ISSEA) – which is the school in charge of training roughly 80% of Cameroon’s statistical staff – reviewed its programmes and introduced a course on gender statistics, which is mandatory for graduation. Moreover, ISSEA is training statistical engineers from the statistical offices of six Central African countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon). An agreement has been concluded with UN Women to lecture for the course for the coming two to three years and for ISSEA to recruit a skilled lecturer that will continue in future years. The module on gender statistics was introduced thanks to the seminars on gender statistics that UN Women organized and facilitated at ISSEA schools since 2019.

### **3. Improving data accessibility and use**

- **National reporting on gender quality commitments is now data driven.** For the first time, core statistical institutions such as the NIS and the Central Bureau of the Census and Population Studies (BUCREP), worked together with MINPROFF to prepare key commitments in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2019. BUCREP also 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. The findings emphasized Cameroon’s progress on commitments to improve the rights of women and girls, particularly in education and health, while identifying room for improvement in the areas of employment, land tenure and political participation. The Government used the reports to position gender as one of the key issues to address in the VNR that will be conducted in 2022.

- **Cameroon’s first Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) has informed a Finance Bill and an update of the National Gender Policy.** UN Women supported MINPROFF and the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP) to produce the country’s first CGEP, which was published and validated by the Prime Minister’s Office in 2021. It highlights gender equality achievements and challenges in Cameroon, across sectors such as the national economy, development of human capital and digitalization. The CGEP has become the main reference for all gender-related interventions in Cameroon over the next five years. In particular, it was used by the MEP to inform the 2022 Finance Bill adopted by Parliament in 2021, which includes an annex highlighting gender challenges to be addressed by the finance bill. The CGEP has been the core tool used in advocacy for national reform on gender-responsive budgeting as part of the 2022 Finance Bill. It is also being used by MINPROFF to review and update the National Gender Policy.
- **User-producer dialogues on gender data are now institutionalized, driving national gender data priorities.** UN Women has convened various dialogues on gender issues within the NSS on the margins of key events, such as Africa Statistics Week, to discuss the gender data needs of different users, including CSOs, government bodies and UN agencies. Through these forums, the NIS has recognized the importance of engaging data users in identifying priorities within the country as well as efforts to reduce gender bias in censuses and surveys. As a result, a permanent user-producer dialogue on gender data has been institutionalized in the NSDS, which now recognizes these dialogues as an important part of the NSS. The regular dialogue offers the opportunity to discuss

concepts and methodologies to reduce gender biases that can affect specific statistical operations. Also, gender analysis will be a special issue in the ongoing Housing and Population Census and in two special issues in the ongoing Agriculture and Livestock Census.

## PLANS FOR PHASE II<sup>2</sup>

Plans for Phase II in Cameroon will focus on continuing to support existing coordination mechanisms on gender data to monitor the implementation of the NSDS; increase data production in new areas, such as the gender-environment nexus and violence against women; and scale up efforts to improve data accessibility and use by collaborating with journalists and CSOs to ensure that data are used to inform advocacy and policies. Specific interventions include:

- Supporting capacity-building for data users and producers through training to improve skills on collecting and communicating gender data.
- Advocating for gender to be mainstreamed in key national statistical operations, including the Population and Housing Census.

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



Progress was the result of strong government commitment and investment in gender data, improved coordination, strengthened normative framework and increased data production and accessibility. In 2021, 100% of targets were met by the project.

- Conducting surveys to collect data on violence against women, and on gender and the environment.
- Updating the central online database on gender data to increase access to, and the use of, gender-related SDG data.

<sup>2</sup> Plans for Phase II are in the process of being finalized.