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OVERVIEW: WOMEN COUNT PHASE II WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

The issue

Despite significant progress in West and Central Africa (WCA) in Phase I, several challenges persisted in the region:

- The production and use of gender statistics remained underdeveloped, with substantial gender data gaps in the region, particularly time use, violence against women (VAW), gender and the environment, and the use of administrative data for generating gender-related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators.
- Technical gender statistics capacities across the national statistical system (NSS) continued to require strengthening, particularly in data production, analysis, communication and use. National statistical offices (NSOs), ministries of gender and sectorial ministries often lacked adequate institutionalized expertise and resources to systematically integrate gender perspectives into official statistics.
- Limited data uptake constrained evidence-based policymaking. In addition, capacities to communicate gender statistics among national partners, civil society organizations (CSOs) and media needed to be strengthened.

Our response

- **Create an enabling environment:** Partnerships with regional actors such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and African Development Bank (AfDB) were enhanced through strengthened capacity-development, with an emphasis on joint regional training programmes on gender statistics under the Africa Programme on Gender Statistics (APGS) 2022–2025; and gender statistics systems were assessed in various new countries to identify weaknesses and proposed activities to address them.

- **Increase data production:** UN Women provided financial and technical support for new surveys in key priority areas, namely: environment and climate change (in Senegal), VAW (in Senegal), Multi-Indicator Cluster Surveys (in Sierra Leone), women’s economic empowerment (WEE) and unpaid care and domestic work, with time-use surveys (TUS) in Nigeria and Senegal.
- **Improve data accessibility and use:** Regional and national capacities to communicate and leverage data for advocacy and evidence-based decision-making were strengthened thanks to the design and implementation of a regional communication strategy, alongside national and donor communication plans; improved data literacy, analytical and communication capacities enabled institutions and organizations to translate complex data into accessible messaging, strengthening policy dialogue and public engagement; and increased visibility and promotion of national reports and knowledge products significantly enhanced the accessibility, uptake and practical use of data in development planning and advocacy processes.

Where we work

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countries

Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gabon, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

Key results

Creating an enabling environment

- **Across the region, gaps in national planning and coordination for gender statistics have been addressed – strengthening national gender data ecosystems and enabling more coherent, country-led prioritization of gender data needs.** In Phase II, UN Women supported countries in the region to conduct comprehensive Gender Statistics Assessments (GSAs) as diagnostic tools to identify institutional, technical and financial gaps in national gender statistics systems. Importantly, this support responded to country demand and extended beyond UN Women’s formal country presence: all 10 countries covered under UN Women’s West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) that have a country office (CO) have successfully completed a GSA. In 2025, GSAs were also finalized in three countries where UN Women does not have a country office, namely **Chad, Côte d’Ivoire and Mauritania**, demonstrating Women Count’s ability to reach countries seeking support even where UN Women presence does not exist. These assessments are already catalysing concrete improvements, for example, a 2024 assessment in the **DRC** recommended strengthening dialogue between producers and users of gender statistics, which directly led to the establishment of a structured dialogue platform and the creation of a multi-stakeholder committee led by the NSO.
- **Gender has been integrated in statistical and development planning across the region, with dedicated gender statistics strategies developed in three countries and gender mainstreamed in the NSDSs of two countries.** Phase II work was instrumental in advancing the mainstreaming of gender statistics into national planning and development processes. Countries including **Cameroon, Niger and Senegal** were supported to adopt specific gender statistics strategies aligned with their national priorities, improving the production and use of gender data for policymaking. Women Count also provided technical support to integrate gender statistics priorities into **Nigeria’s** third [NSDS](#) and sectoral monitoring frameworks in 2024, and supported Nigeria’s National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) to implement the Integrated System of Administrative Statistics (ISAS), which integrates sex-disaggregated

data and gender indicators into administrative data systems, in alignment with the NSDS. Also, in **DRC**, Women Count strengthened national capacities in gender statistics and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). This progress was formally institutionalized through a decree signed by the Prime Minister establishing an inter-ministerial dialogue and a technical team was established to operationalize gender-responsive planning and budgeting (GRPB) in DRC. According to Christophe Baelongandi, Technical Advisor at the Ministry of Gender: *“Building on this momentum, it was recommended to institutionalize the GRPB process under the authority of the President of the Republic. To this end, experts from relevant ministries – particularly those in charge of Gender, Budget, Planning and Finance – were appointed to develop a technical note and prepare a draft decree aimed at establishing a Technical Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation of the GRPB process.”* Since then, they’ve done awareness-raising among provincial governments on the challenges and opportunities of GRPB, including the Ministry of Gender and Ministry of Budget organizing a workshop dedicated to gender analysis of the 2025–2026 budget and the outlook for the 2027 budget.

- **Gender data have contributed to the development of new environmental and WEE strategies in the DRC.** In the **DRC**, technical support was provided, in collaboration with German cooperation (GIZ), to train officials developing the *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2025–2030*, ensuring the integration of gender considerations and gender-responsive evidence into environmental policy planning. In addition, UN Women supported the development of the *Women’s Economic Empowerment Strategy* in the **DRC**, which was informed by advocacy and gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data to guide policy actions aimed at strengthening women’s economic participation and rights.
- **Capacity-development is reaching more countries, with 1,442 data users and producers enhancing their skills to produce, analyse and use gender data.** UN Women has led trainings for national stakeholders focused on gender statistics concepts and methodologies, SDG reporting, citizen data, gender statistics analysis and gender statistics communication and use, with tailored practical sessions. Over the years, the target audiences have evolved and expanded, eventually integrating six types by 2025: NSO statisticians, CSOs, media, gender ministries, sectoral ministries and Gender Thematic Groups (GTG). By bolstering institutional capacities, these efforts have collectively had the impact of strengthening national statistical systems, promoting gender equality, and supporting more inclusive and data-driven public policies in line with UN priorities. For example, trainings on GRPB in the **DRC** contributed to its institutionalization and the establishment of an interministerial coordination framework that is currently being finalized. Government ownership is also increasing, with training activities now partly financed through domestic resources, enhancing sustainability. In 2025, training efforts reached 539 people in **Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, DRC, Gabon, Mauritania** and **Senegal**, including:
 - 53 CSO representatives and media professionals in **Chad** and **Mauritania** learned how to analyse gender statistics and use citizen data to produce more reliable data. Among them was journalist Harmonie Bealloum, from **Chad**. Before attending the training, she mainly presented data as figures in her reporting. After the training, she began using statistics differently, transforming numbers into powerful tools to help her audience understand the realities faced by women survivors of violence. By connecting data with lived experiences, her stories now shed deeper light on the structural challenges affecting women. *“Statistics have become a way to make hidden issues visible and meaningful to the public,”* she says. Another participant from **Mauritania**, Siham Hamadi, Programme Coordinator at the Mauritanian Association for Mother and Child Health (AMSME) CSO, noted that: *“The methodological tools presented have helped improve our data-collection processes, particularly through better integration of sex- and age-disaggregated data. This has enabled us to produce more accurate and more relevant data.”* Thanks to the training, she says AMSME’s capacity for data analysis has also improved, allowing them to make better use of gender statistics: *“We now make more systematic use of*

the various available sources (population censuses, surveys, sectoral reports), which enhances the quality of our analyses and strengthens our advocacy efforts on gender-based violence (GBV)."

- 48 participants from NSOs and relevant institutional stakeholders in **Chad** and **Mauritania** enhanced their understanding of gender statistics concepts and tools and strengthened their ability to generate and use sex-disaggregated data for policy formulation and monitoring.
- 30 professionals received specialized training on gender statistics and data analysis through the GTG programme in **Gabon, Mauritania** and **Senegal**, improving their technical competencies and fostering a community of practice among gender statistics practitioners.
- 60 parliamentarians in **DRC** strengthened their capacities for evidence-based policymaking and [the use of statistical data for legislative work, policy oversight and accountability](#).
- 348 participants in the 8th African Gender Statistics Forum (AGSF) exchanged knowledge and learned from their peers about inclusive and intersectional data, civil registration improvement, child rights and migration statistics, as well as GBV data-collection challenges and prevention strategies.

Increasing data production

- **Gender-specific SDG data availability for the region has nearly doubled, up from 32% in 2019, to 43% in 2022, to 62.4% in 2025.** Contributing to this, WCARO produced two regional and three country-level versions of the *Gender Snapshot* as a continuation of UN Women's global reference document. Two subregional reports were produced, for [West Africa](#) and [Central Africa](#) that assessed the availability of data on seven priority SDGs and highlighted progress, but also persistent disparities in 26 countries in the WCA region. These first editions of the WCA Snapshot reports are expected to help support governments in planning, budgeting and public policy reform. The Regional Office took advantage of a donor roundtable organized, during a visit by UN Women Deputy Executive Director Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, to officially launch the reports and engage development partners and key stakeholders. In addition, a partnership with the Ending Violence against Women (EVAW) Unit, following the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence 2025, provided an opportunity for the Gender Statistics Unit to formally present the findings of the regional Gender Snapshots to a broader audience, including CSOs and line ministries, further enhancing the visibility and policy relevance of the reports. **Chad, Mauritania** and **Senegal's** Snapshots were also finalized and will be published in 2026. In addition, the **DRC** shared its 2024 report on [progress towards achieving the SDGs and gender equality in the DRC](#), through the Ministry of Planning and the Coordination of Development Aid, with UN Women support. The report, which represents an important tool for strengthening gender data and evidence for public policies, was launched by Prime Minister Judith Tuluka Suminwa, testifying to the country's political commitment to gender indicators.
- **Gender data production has improved significantly, expanding coverage of key policy gaps – including VAW, unpaid care and domestic work, gender-environment and the gendered impacts of conflict – and strengthening the use of evidence in advocacy, national planning and response.** **Senegal** conducted its first-ever [VAW survey](#) in 2024, now informing advocacy and the Ministry of Gender and Family's national plan on VAW. **Nigeria's** [2024 Time-Use Survey](#) (TUS) produced unprecedented gender data on time use and unpaid care work in line with international statistical standards and included a disability module, which are informing policy dialogues on care. The NBS officially launched the TUS report on the International Day of Care (29 October 2025) with 80 attendees at a high-visibility launch presided over by Amina Emike Ibrahim, from the

Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget. The high level of interest and engagement at this high-profile event reflects high interest from stakeholders in using the data to inform policy dialogue and future decision-making on unpaid care and domestic work. WCARO also supported time-use data analysis in **Cameroon** in 2024 and **Senegal** in 2022, the latter of which has had [multiple policy and programme uses and impacts](#). New gender-environment evidence was generated through the first-ever West African [Survey on Environmental Risks and Gender Vulnerability](#) in **Senegal** in 2025 (see Senegal Annex for more). In fragile contexts, UN Women supported rapid assessments in **Mali** (2024) and produced analysis in **Niger** on the gendered impacts of the 2023 coup, with recommendations used to inform humanitarian response efforts.

Improving data use

- **Coherence, visibility and strategic alignment across stakeholders have been enhanced through communications strategies and planning, bolstering advocacy.** During Phase II, the WCA project successfully established a comprehensive set of strategic communication resources, including a regional communications strategy, national communications plan for the first VAW survey in **Senegal**, a donor communications plan for Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the advocacy note for the Gender and Environment Survey and communications strategies for key regional and national events, such as user-producer dialogues (AGSF forums and **DRC** dialogues). These frameworks have harmonized messaging, strengthened stakeholder coordination and reinforced the positioning of gender statistics as a policy priority, contributing to more unified and impactful advocacy efforts. Also, they have ensured a consistent and strategic approach to communicating gender data, enabling stakeholders to leverage gender statistics more effectively for policy influence and decision-making. These messages are now integrated into speeches by senior management, particularly by the UN Women Deputy Representative, and have increased engagement from the Resident Coordinator's Office, which now also incorporates gender statistics in its advocacy. This is reflected in UN Women's new Strategic Note (2026–2029), which elevates gender statistics as the second priority, with a focus on strengthening institutions and partnerships. In parallel, gender data are increasingly being used for resource mobilization, with Women Count results presented in donor roundtables to advocate for increased investments in women and girls. For example, this has helped align priorities during regional user-producer dialogues, leading to the integration of emerging themes such as technology and digitalization into the African Gender Index of the AfDB. In addition, they supported the [regional advocacy note about the gender-environment nexus](#), which in turn helped to inform the first gender-environment nexus survey in Senegal.
- **Knowledge products and capacity-building have expanded access and promoted the use of gender data.** UN Women supported the production of user-friendly assets for studies developed, such as **on Senegal's** VAW survey summary (in collaboration with the NSO) at the regional level, and on the **Central Africa** gender Snapshots. Communication and advocacy materials – including summary briefs, reports, factsheets, social media content, posters, SDG boxes and visual printing materials – were developed and disseminated to facilitate data access, comprehension and use. In addition, an interactive module on the communication and use of gender statistics was developed and integrated into the regional training package. UN Women also reinforced the skills of statisticians, CSO members, gender and development experts within ministries (particularly ministries of gender), journalists and bloggers across the region, enabling them to communicate gender statistics effectively and thereby support their uptake in evidence-based policies and decision-making (see Impact story 4).
- **User-producer engagement was strengthened through the institutionalization of regional dialogues and flagship events.** The AGSF has become a key platform for exchange, peer learning and collaboration on gender statistics coordination, planning and resource mobilization. The most recent edition, held in **Côte d'Ivoire**, brought together 101 in-person and 247 online participants from 45 African and 8 non-African countries, from

NSOs, gender ministries, NGOs, CSOs and development partners, with support from the Korea International Cooperation Agency through AfDB and UN Women. Additionally, regional events organized to launch the 2025 gender snapshots mobilized high-level stakeholders and traditional partners, thereby strengthening interaction on gender statistics among gender equality actors and promoting the adoption of gender data throughout the region to achieve equality for women and girls. Also, in 2024, UN Women supported the first user-producer dialogue in **DRC**, which contributed to raising stakeholders' awareness of gender statistics and their state in the country. The dialogue created a platform for exchange between data producers and users, highlighting gaps in data quality and use. As noted by Albertine Ilunga, Vice-President of a women-led organization, the discussion prompted reflection on existing data practices: *"We need spaces like this for open dialogue, to express ourselves, have our voices heard, engage with statistical experts and strengthen our technical capacities. Only then can we collect and analyse our data effectively, ensuring it is used in ways that truly benefit the women of the Democratic Republic of Congo."* This example illustrates how such initiatives strengthen understanding, improve data practices and enhance the role of stakeholders in evidence-based advocacy. Following the example of Senegal, UN Women is institutionalizing annual producer-user dialogues in other countries supported by Women Count, such as **Chad** and **Mauritania**, with a dialogue planned in Chad in February 2026 and in Mauritania in May 2026.

- A regional [study on gender observatories](#), which play a crucial role in collecting and analysing gender data to inform public policies and strengthen accountability, has enhanced South-South cooperation and expanded reach of the Network of National Gender Observatories for Francophone Africa. The 2025 UN Women study covered 24 countries and demonstrated advanced practices in governance, data collection and dissemination across observatories. At the same time, it pointed out a lack of specialized human resources, limited budgetary autonomy and institutional overlap with other national gender mechanisms. This enabled the identification of concrete actions to improve the functioning and impact of each observatory within a coordinated regional framework. A July 2025 regional workshop organized by Women Count with AFD support to disseminate the report emphasized the importance of these observatories, with participant Blandine Okry, who is in charge of cooperation at **Benin's** Child, Women and Family Observatory remarking: *"We must not let the observatories die; we need to help them become structured."* One of the study's key recommendations – enhancing South–South cooperation – was also implemented immediately, as the momentum generated by the workshop resulted in four new countries (**Benin, CAF, Mali and Niger**) deciding to join the new Network of National Gender Observatories for Francophone Africa ([RONGAF](#)). This expanded its membership from five to nine members, thereby strengthening its regional reach, collaboration and legitimacy. The results dissemination workshop thus provided a platform for the observatories to structure this collaboration by committing to a network-based organization, thereby improving the coordination of their actions. The network's growth has enhanced its capacity to coordinate gender-related actions and positioned it as a credible platform for engagement with development partners. As a result, RONGAF now plays a more strategic role in shaping and advancing regional gender partnerships and initiatives. This expansion, driven by the findings of the study, demonstrates States' commitment to move away from isolated work, share experiences and progress collectively. The study and workshop acted as catalysts, giving new impetus to regional cooperation and reinforcing the role of observatories as key partners in evidence-based public policy.
- **WCARO collaborated with ESARO to produce the [Africa Gender Data Outlook \(GDO\)](#), following the development of the GDO tool by UN Women and PARIS21.** This tool assesses countries' capacity to produce, disseminate and use gender data. The Africa GDO covered 33 countries and evaluated them across three pillars: enabling environment, data production and data accessibility. Africa's overall score was 0.516/1, with the enabling environment dimension showing the best results (score: 0.591), while globally the highest performance was observed on gender data production. The strong results achieved in

Women Count programme countries **Senegal** and **Cameroon** demonstrate that investments in gender data systems are a high-impact strategic lever, enabling the translation of data into evidence-based decision-making and tangible, measurable outcomes for women and girls, compared to the pre-Women Count programme context.

Plans for Phase III

Plans for Phase III¹ in West and Central Africa will focus on consolidating national ownership, strengthening the resilience of gender data systems, and ensuring the sustainability of investments in gender statistics in the context of shrinking development financing and increasing humanitarian and climate-related crises in the region. Specific interventions will seek to:

- Support countries to integrate gender statistics into NSDs and national policy frameworks, reinforcing coordination between NSOs, gender ministries, and planning and finance authorities, while strengthening the link between gender data and gender-responsive budgeting.
- Expand and modernize gender data production by addressing persistent gaps in violence against women, unpaid care work, gender and environment, and humanitarian contexts.
- Greater emphasis will be placed on strengthening administrative data systems and supporting subnational data-generation to promote more sustainable and cost-effective approaches.
- Pilot innovative and citizen-generated data²sources to complement official statistics.
- Intensify efforts to improve data accessibility and use through strengthened dissemination platforms, user-friendly knowledge products, enhanced communication capacities of data producers, media and civil society, as well as institutionalized user-producer dialogues.
- Establish mechanisms to track and promote the systematic use of gender statistics in policymaking, advocacy and budgeting processes.

¹ Plans for Phase III are in the process of being finalized and are subject to the availability of funding