

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# CORPORATE EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S SUPPORT TO GENDER STATISTICS 2018-2022

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The corporate evaluation of UN Women's support to gender statistics between 2018 and 2022 was conducted by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) as part of the UN Women Corporate Evaluation Plan (2022–2025). The evaluation was initiated in September 2022 and completed in November 2023.

## BACKGROUND

The evaluation focused on the support UN Women provided to gender statistics – including through UN Women's flagship programme on gender statistics, Making Every Woman and Girl Count programme (hereafter referred to as "Women Count") and beyond. The evaluation assessed UN Women's strategic positioning in terms of the Entity's gender statistics work across the field of statistics and evaluated the relevance and effectiveness of this work with an emphasis on UN Women's support at national and regional levels; the efficiency of financial and human resources to deliver transformative results; and the sustainability of UN Women's work in gender statistics.

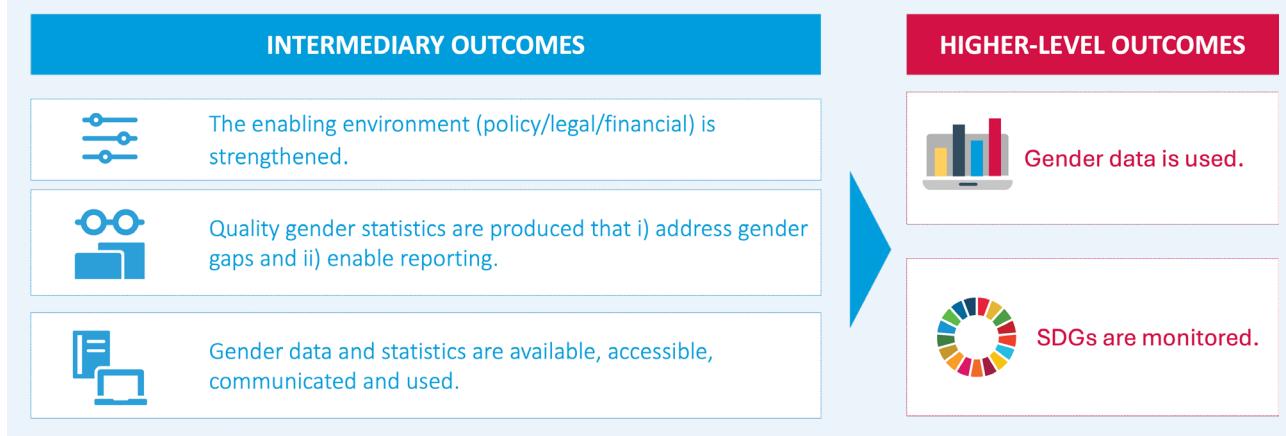
The primary intended users of the evaluation are UN Women senior management and programme and policy personnel. The secondary audience includes other actors who work with gender statistics including country-level statistical offices, civil society, United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), national partners, and international and regional development partners.

## EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation applied a utilization and learning-focused approach, combined with a realist-informed evaluation approach and contribution analysis to assess the support provided to gender statistics across UN Women. The evaluation used a theory-based model. It also applied gender-responsive evaluation principles and incorporated a "no one left behind" perspective, including disability inclusion. The evaluation used a cross-comparative methodology, carrying out six in-depth and eight light-touch case studies which allowed comparison across country contexts and thematic areas, as well as across countries with varying levels of financial support to gender statistics (i.e. countries financially supported by the global Women Count programme, partially supported or not supported). The evaluation team also reviewed the work of six external organizations to assess UN Women's position and value added in the gender statistics landscape.

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach to data collection, combining primary and secondary data qualitative sources, as well as quantitative data..

The evaluation adapted and expanded the programme-based theory of change from Women Count to assess UN Women's support to gender statistics at the global level. The theory of change<sup>1</sup> centered around three outputs, three intermediary outcomes and two higher-level outcomes, including – as the intermediary outcomes: strengthening the enabling environment; producing quality gender statistics that address gender gaps and enable reporting; and ensuring that gender data and statistics are available, accessible, communicated and used – and that gender data is used and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are monitored as higher level outcomes (see Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1. Intermediary and higher-level outcomes**

Source: developed by the Evaluation Team

## CONTEXT

Gender statistics are defined as statistics that adequately reflect differences and inequalities in the situation of women and men in all areas of life.<sup>2</sup> This definition is closely aligned with the Beijing Platform for Action, which recommends that national, regional and international statistical services ensure statistics related to individuals are collected, compiled, analysed and presented by sex and age and reflect problems, issues and questions related to women and men in society.<sup>3,4</sup> Global efforts to increase the availability, quality and use of gender statistics align with key global normative frameworks and international commitments, including the SDGs, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and others in their pursuit of gender equality.

The demand for gender data and statistics has increased over the years due to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and gender mainstreaming policies. Gender statistics have a crucial role in all statistical systems due to the importance of data disaggregation by different variables (e.g. age, disability etc.) to meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda to “Leave No One Behind”.

Despite progress made in recent years to produce, share and use gender statistics, gender data gaps remain and can be linked to three challenges:<sup>5</sup> (1) weak policy space, and legal and financial environments that are barriers to progress; (2) technical and financial challenges that limit the production of gender statistics; and (3) lack of access to data and limited capacity of users to utilize gender statistics to inform policies for gender equality improvements.

Where data is available, it is often not made accessible or shared in user-friendly formats, impeding their use in informing evidence-based advocacy and decision-making. When data are not used to inform policy and advocacy, it leads to low demand, which in turn reduces the incentive to produce gender statistics.

UN Women’s work on gender statistics is conceptualized in both UN Women Strategic Plans for 2018–2021 and 2022–2025, and aims to address the challenges in the production, sharing and use of gender statistics. UN Women’s work in gender statistics was articulated in the UN Women’s flagship programme Women Count developed in 2016 to support Member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda by building supportive policy and institutional environments to prioritize the production, availability and use of gender statistics.

UN Women’s support to gender statistics as highlighted in various reports and assessments has focused on strengthening institutional mechanisms that govern the production and use of gender statistics; improving coordination mechanisms and decision-making on gender statistics; and providing capacity building to national statistical offices and other data producers and users. UN Women has also worked on the creation of data platforms and dissemination of gender data.

<sup>2</sup> *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics* (United Nations publication, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, Paragraph 206 (a) 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> There are several requirements that are included in the definition of gender statistics: first, gender statistics need to reflect questions, problems and concerns related to women and men’s lives, including their specific needs, opportunities and contributions to society. The differences in what is expected, allowed or valued in a woman or a man have a direct impact on their lives, and can determine differences in health, education, work, family life or general well-being. Departing from this premise, producing gender statistics entails disaggregating data by sex and other characteristics to reveal those inequalities in the situation of men and women. UN DESA, Statistics Division, Integrating a Gender Perspective into Statistics, Studies in Methods, Series F No 11, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> See UN Women’s Women Count webpage at: <https://data.unwomen.org/women-count>

## CONCLUSIONS

### CONCLUSION 1:

**UN Women's work on gender statistics is relevant, but the organization needs to more effectively leverage the successes of the gender statistics work to date to strengthen and scale up implementation at all levels.**

UN Women's work on gender statistics responded to global and regional commitments and country-level partner needs, policies and priorities for the production and use of gender statistics. However, UN Women's work in gender statistics needs to leverage the Women Count programme beyond programme-level to operationalize Systemic Outcome 6 of the UN Women Strategic Plan.<sup>6</sup>

Women Count played a large role in the recognition of UN Women as a leader in the gender statistics space. While less visible, efforts beyond Women Count have also fostered transformational change. In order to increase the coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and visibility of UN Women's important contributions to gender statistics, there is a need to build from Women Count programme successful results to scale up implementation of gender statistics work.

### CONCLUSION 2:

**Roles and coordination at the global level are effective. Coordination efforts at the country level in gender, data and statistics had mixed results. Further guidance on mechanisms to support coordination are needed in some country-level contexts.**

While evidence of fruitful cooperation exists among actors (UN and multilateral agencies, Civil Society Organizations [CSOs], academia), case study countries encountered issues related to duplication of efforts; challenging relationships; lack of clarity regarding which organization is responsible for leading certain efforts; and missed opportunities or lack of engagement with relevant actors. Further guidance is needed on mechanisms (e.g., using gender strategies, mapping and methodologies) to improve coordination support to national governments ; create common visions for how gender statistics should evolve; and clarify how actors engage and cooperate within their countries, including clarity around duties and functions. More in-depth support is needed in some country contexts that have had less direct programme support.

UN Women has a proven track record of convening stakeholders and building partnerships to increase coordination of efforts. The skills acquired over time can be applied to supporting national governments' efforts on consensus building around strategy, and the duties and functions of actors working in gender statistics.

### CONCLUSION 3:

**UN Women is well positioned to take on a leading role in gender statistics, but both technical and financial resources must be effectively distributed for the Entity to successfully execute a leading role in this area.**

UN Women's triple mandate, comparative advantage and evidence of effective gender statistics work creates the opportunity for UN Women to become a reference and convening organization for gender statistics. However, financial and technical resources must be effectively distributed for UN Women to successfully execute a leading role in gender statistics. A focus on ensuring (a) adequate technical capacities of UN Women personnel; (b) effective distribution of UN Women personnel at global, regional and country levels; and (c) financial resources are effectively distributed to support gender statistics work across all Impact Areas is critical.

While distribution of UN Women personnel and effectively distributed financial resources are crucial components, adequate technical capacities are also critical as UN Women explores taking on a leading role in gender statistics at the global level. While UN Women personnel in general will not require deep technical expertise in gender statistics, all relevant UN Women personnel could benefit from basic technical capacity related to gender statistics to engage with and commission work. Therefore, it is essential that learning opportunities are built into personnel's professional roles (and are mandatory).

<sup>6</sup> The Strategic Plan 2022-2025 Systemic Outcome 6 is “Gender statistics, sex-disaggregated data, and knowledge are produced, analysed and used to inform policymaking, advocacy and accountability for delivering gender equality and women’s empowerment results.”

**CONCLUSION 4:**

**National priorities and government buy-in underpin the success of larger-scale gender statistics work and are a core component of effective gender statistics work. However, sufficient government capacity (both financial and technical) is required for sustainable results.**

Effective partnership strategies between UN Women and government counterparts led to enhanced government capacities and tailored and contextually appropriate gender statistics monitoring systems and mapping tools. However, high dependency on outside resources to support national efforts related to gender statistics remains a major challenge to sustainability.

UN Women activities such as building government capacity and supporting government ownership of gender statistics methodologies, tools and products is important to fostering sustainability, but national financial sustainability of this work is a more complex issue to tackle.

**CONCLUSION 5:**

**UN Women has effectively contributed to the creation of stronger enabling environments and supported data production activities, but results were varied in countries supported by Women Count and those that were not. In all evaluation case study countries, there was a need to better track the impact of data utilization on women and girls' lives.**

Support through Women Count – both country-level programming and regional technical support – was key to creating stronger enabling environments, supporting data production activities and data utilization. Capturing the impacts of data utilization in both Women Count and non-Women Count evaluation case study countries remained a challenge due to complexities around measurement.

Additional research is required to understand the potential of regional support to accelerate progress in gender statistics efforts, especially in areas without dedicated budgets to support additional on-the-ground personnel focusing on gender statistics.

**CONCLUSION 6:**

**While there is evidence of integrating intersectionality into gender statistics work, UN Women does not have a clear strategy or set of approaches to systematically employ Leave No One Behind principles. This led to uneven coverage of marginalized groups within gender statistics efforts, particularly at the country level.**

UN Women successfully integrated marginalized groups and performed intersectional analyses in gender statistics interventions during the period covered by the evaluation. However, the lack of a strategy to systematically employ Leave No One Behind principles as they relate to gender statistics meant that efforts were often opportunistic and consisted of independent studies that did not inform official government statistics. The lack of concerted efforts around intersectionality, inclusivity and equity within gender statistics led to uneven coverage across case study countries and highlighted the need for further clarity and socialization across the organization.

**RECOMMENDATION 1**

UN Women should build into the results of Women Count and use the UN Women Gender Equality Accelerator 10 – Women Count as the organizational roadmap to guide global, regional and country efforts in supporting the enabling environments, production and use of gender statistics.

**RECOMMENDATION 2**

UN Women should strengthen its coordination and convening support role to national governments, in line with national ownership, to consolidate its strategic position in the gender statistics landscape, particularly at country level.

**RECOMMENDATION 3**

UN Women should strengthen identified areas of work in gender statistics such as gender and climate change, humanitarian action, intersectionality, and artificial intelligence to reinforce and strengthen its competitive advantage and further consolidate its strategic positioning in the space.

**RECOMMENDATION 4**

UN Women should strengthen its internal human and technical capacities, and strive to further diversify its funding sources to advance gender statistics work.