

**51st session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
26 February to 9 March 2007**

**Joint Parallel Event organized by
the Statistical Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women
1 March 2007**

Moderators' Summary

1. The Commission on the Status of Women and the Statistical Commission held a joint panel discussion on the development of gender equality indicators. The panel was jointly moderated by Ms. Heli Jeskanen-Sundstrom, Vice-Chairperson of the Statistical Commission and Mr. Balázs Csuday, Vice-Chairperson, Commission on the Status of Women. The other panelists were Ms Annette McKenzie, Deputy Director-General, Statistical Institute of Jamaica; Ms. Anna Majelantle, Government Statistician, Central Statistics Office, Botswana; and Mr. Rusman Heriawan, Director-General of Statistics, Indonesia.
2. The panel provided an opportunity to build upon previous collaboration between the two Commissions. It focused on the development of gender indicators to assess progress in the implementation of the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action and the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women under its programme of work. It was also an opportunity for the producers and users of statistics and indicators to share experiences, good practices and lessons learned. The panel set the stage for future discussions on the development of indicators on violence against women by the Statistical Commission, in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, as mandated by the 61st session of the General Assembly.
3. Participants acknowledged that gender statistics and indicators were necessary to monitor progress in the implementation, at the national level, of gender equality goals and targets including the Millennium Development Goals and those set out in the Beijing Platform for Action. It was pointed out that the Wall Chart on “The World’s Women: Progress in Statistics 2005” included nine gender indicators that were identified within the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
4. It was noted that the development of new indicators was a long-term undertaking that required input and suggestions from users, as had been the case with the development of any internationally accepted indicators, such as MDG indicators. To

initiate the process, users had to identify areas that required the development of indicators. The Statistical Commission, in collaboration with the UN Statistics Division, could then assist by identifying appropriate data sources. It was pointed out that the collaboration between producers and users of data was critical both in the development of indicators and in the collection of the required data. Participants indicated that quantitative data were mostly obtained from surveys, censuses and administrative records and that adequate methodology was key to producing relevant gender statistics and indicators.

5. Participants discussed the collection of data at the national level. Data had, for many years, been collected at the national level on major sectors such as population, education, health and employment, for policy and programme development. Prior to the international world conferences on women that raised the importance of addressing gender issues with relevant statistics, data were generally collected as part of the administrative requirements of line ministries and the routine functions of the national statistical offices. The purpose of these data collection activities, however, was not necessarily to produce statistics for the assessment of gender equality. Following the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, and the global commitment to gender equality, Governments were called on to mainstream gender perspectives in their policies, planning processes and monitoring and evaluation procedures. This commitment had led to increased requests for data disaggregated by sex and data on specific gender equality issues.

6. Participants indicated that the national statistical offices focused more on aggregation of data to produce statistics at the national level than on disaggregation of data. Some noted that disaggregation of data by sex, including at the sub-national level, was mostly done by the Ministry of Women's Affairs. It was pointed out that developing gender indicators and disaggregated data by sex could be challenging for some national statistical offices. Challenges included the need for harmonizing definitions and concepts across economic and social sectors. Furthermore, lack of political support, impeded progress in gender statistics. Development of indicators required commitment at the highest political level and the allocation of necessary human and financial resources. Recognizing that fragmented statistical systems existed in some countries, participants noted that better coordination among the relevant institutions was necessary in order to improve the development of gender statistics and indicators. The effective use of advocacy and publicity to facilitate data collection activities and enhance user-producer dialogue was also underlined. Concern was expressed about privacy and confidentiality in data collection. Participants explained that ethics governed the collection of data and all national statistical offices tried to adhere to the rules of confidentiality and maintaining the public trust.

7. Efforts had been made to collect data on various forms of violence against women at the national level, such as physical, sexual, and psychological violence, through comprehensive surveys. Participants, however, drew attention to the challenges in collecting data on violence against women and children, including the lack of a conceptual framework and harmonized concepts, as well as challenges relating to the

reporting of such a sensitive topic. Violence against women remained a largely underreported phenomenon. Data were mainly collected from police records, which only reflected reported cases. In addition, data collected through reported cases were often inconclusive because the victims themselves were reluctant to provide the required information, especially if the violence occurred in the home. Household surveys were an alternative source of data on violence against women. However, it was also subject to underreporting. Data disaggregated by sex were also lacking on specific groups particularly vulnerable to violence such as street children and the homeless.

8. Participants acknowledged the work being carried out at the regional and international levels on the development of statistics and indicators. It was pointed out that the United Nations Statistics Division had compiled information, including methodological developments, on national time-use surveys to capture women's and men's paid and unpaid work and it continued to prepare the five-yearly publication on the progress of the world's women. The Division also continued to provide technical cooperation to developing countries on the development of gender statistics and indicators. Plans were underway to further promote the development of gender statistics and indicators through the setup of an inter-agency and expert group on gender statistics as well as thematic task forces to review challenges, and examine emerging needs at all levels, primarily the national level. In addition, the Statistics Division was involved in the development and conduct of gender statistics training for producers and users of statistics; and the establishment of a bulletin board for gender statistics.

9. Participants expressed interest in further opportunities for learning from others about the development of gender statistics and indicators.

10. It was noted that collaboration and cooperation between national statistical offices and international organizations was needed in order to harmonize methods used to collect data. Participants felt that quantitative data, especially on the situation of women and girls, were insufficient. The need to supplement these with qualitative data was raised. While recognizing the value of qualitative data, participants stressed that it was not the responsibility of national statistical offices to collect qualitative data as collecting qualitative data was not possible when dealing with large-scale surveys. Such data could be obtained from research institutes and academic institutions.

11. Finally, it was recognized that already existing data disaggregated by sex was often underutilized. Participants called for the increased utilization of available data. It was also noted that efforts should be made to increase the utilization of existing indicators.