

C.5 Women in the world

This section complements the previous section, contrasting facts and statistics about women with the ‘Myths’ explored in **Activity 35**, and providing material from the participants’ own research to reinforce what has been learned about the roles and needs of women. It is important that participants in a longer gender-training workshop come well-prepared with facts about the lives of women and men in the countries or regions in which they work; or in relation to a specific theme, such as conflict, or the environment, if the training is theme-based. This will entail careful and detailed research on either a case-study basis, or in terms of compiling figures and facts about a country or region, and participants should be given plenty of time to prepare this material.

Guidelines should be given for this, such as those in **Activity 40 Women in Our Countries**. Guidelines for drawing up case studies are given in **Section C.7**, in relation to **Activity 56 Using Case Studies**.

Questions sometimes arise in gender training about the reliability of statistics — these have often come from men, suggesting that statistics exaggerate the worsening condition of women. It is useful to explore issues about statistics, and to point out that it is only recently, and in some forms of data, that women’s real work and lives have been taken into account in statistical research at all. The handout attached to activity 38 outlines some of these issues.

C.5 Activities

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Women in our countries

Objectives

- 1 To give an overview of the position of women in some of the countries where participants work.
- 2 To share the research carried out before the workshop.

Method

- 1 **Preparation:** before the training, ask participants to prepare presentations based on the following:
 - a. A short general overview of the situation for women in the countries under discussion, to enable the group to understand the differences (and similarities) in the position of women in different countries.
 - b. Data on women and men such as literacy rates; life expectancy; per day calorie intake for both men and women; women in decision-making; women's access to formal education and employment.
 - c. Child-rearing practices; preferences for boys or girls; the role of men and women, boys and girls in domestic tasks.
 - d. The role of both men and women in agriculture; paid and unpaid work; petty trade and other informal activities. Who has access to land (ownership or other resources) and who controls the land.
 - e. Different forms of discrimination against women (cultural practices such as dowry, bride price, etc).
 - f. Community and political participation. Where and how do men and women participate? Are there women leaders in the community?

- g. Current legislation which has an adverse effect on women.
- h. The relationship of the State to women, and women's rights.
- i. The social and political changes that have occurred to alter, positively or negatively, the status of and value given to women.

(Time per presentation: 30-40 mins)

2 Ask two or three participants to make a presentation .

3 Allow time after each presentation for questions.

(10-20 mins)

Facilitator's Notes

1 The idea of this activity is to have comparable accounts of the situation of women in different countries. If all the participants are from the same country, they could divide the data collection amongst themselves, taking specific sectors such as health, legal and political rights, land and production and so on.

2 The material collected by participants for these presentations can be used at later stages in the workshop when methods of appraisal, analysis and planning are addressed.

*3 You can ask participants to prepare full case studies, and give them clear guidelines, so that these can be used to practise using some of the analytical frameworks presented in **Section C.7 Gender-sensitive Appraisal and Planning**.*

*4 The Handout on statistics for the following activity **Handout 29 Why are women invisible in statistics?** may be useful to send to participants before the training; you could also send them **Handout 28 Sources of data on women** to assist them in their preparation.*

Facts about women and men

Objectives

- 1 To facilitate an understanding of gender imbalance worldwide and within countries.
- 2 To show how certain assumptions about men and women are reinforced in areas such as education, employment, and politics.
- 3 To help participants to see the importance of gender analysis in all aspects of development.
- 4 To consider gender bias in the collection of data and statistics. (Optional)

Method

- 1 Before the session, prepare factual information about men and women in your area/country/worldwide. Information should be simple enough for participants to read, understand and discuss. Write it onto flipchart or OHP-transparencies, dividing the information into sections on specific issues or aspects of life.
- 2 Present each information sheet. Then follow with a short discussion in pairs or large group on what is striking, before presenting another aspect.
(less than 5 mins)
- 3 After you have presented all the aspects ask participants to discuss the following question in groups of three:
 - a. What do the facts tell us about the situation of women and men in this area/country/ the world?
 - b. What assumptions about women and men are being reinforced or challenged?
(35 mins)
 - c. How can we ensure our data is gender-sensitive? (Optional)

Materials

Pre-prepared flipcharts or OHP transparencies. Handouts of key information (based on flipcharts). (See Handouts here as guide — you will need to do your own.)

Facilitator's Notes

1 The handouts included here are a guide. They give some idea of the type of information you need and the way it can be presented. Don't overload people with too much information. Don't try and fit too much onto one sheet. Make sure it is big enough to see — even for those with poor eyesight. Use graphics (graphs or pictures) where possible.

Possible subjects to include:

Wealth: income; property; land ownership

Paid work: farming/agriculture; industry; types of jobs; business/trade

Domestic activities: including child rearing practices

Education: formal; non-formal

Legal system

Migration and refugees

Violence and crime

Health, including mental health; life expectancy; maternal mortality; AIDS

Nutrition

Marriage customs

Community and political participation.

2 It may be difficult in some countries to obtain the relevant up-to-date information. UN agency sources are useful (UNDP reports, UN reports on The World's Women, UNICEF State of the World's Children, etc.) for general statistics — bearing in mind that these only give national, regional or global averages, and are thus restricted — and should be up-to-date. Information should also be sought from national and regional government and NGO sources, as well as from local groups who may have carried out small-scale surveys.

3 The presentation of facts can be done in many different ways, and the handouts attached to this activity can also be used in other contexts (gender and development, project analysis, gender planning).

*4 This activity can also follow **Activity 35 Myths about Women and Men, and their Effects** as a counterbalance to assumptions about the situation of women and men.*

*6 You can also use this session to stress male bias in statistics and data collection methods i.e. the kind of information available from the usual official sources, at local, national and global level, is not usually disaggregated by gender. Nor are the methods of collecting such data gender-aware. Read **Handout 29** and prepare notes from it if you intend to address this question in the training.*

*Handout 26**Activity 40*

Higher mortality rates among girls between two and five years old have been found in demographic and health surveys in a significant number of countries

	Deaths per year per 1,000 population aged 2-5 years	
	Girls	Boys
Pakistan	54.4	36.9
Haiti	61.2	47.8
Bangladesh	68.6	57.7
Thailand	26.8	17.3
Syria	14.6	9.3
Colombia	24.8	20.5
Costa Rica	8.1	4.8
Nepal	60.7	57.7
Dominican Republic	20.2	17.2
Philippines	21.9	19.1
Sri Lanka	18.7	16.3
Peru	30.8	28.8
Mexico	16.7	14.7
Panama	8.7	7.6
Turkey	19.5	18.4
Republic of Korea	12.7	11.8
Venezuela	8.4	7.6

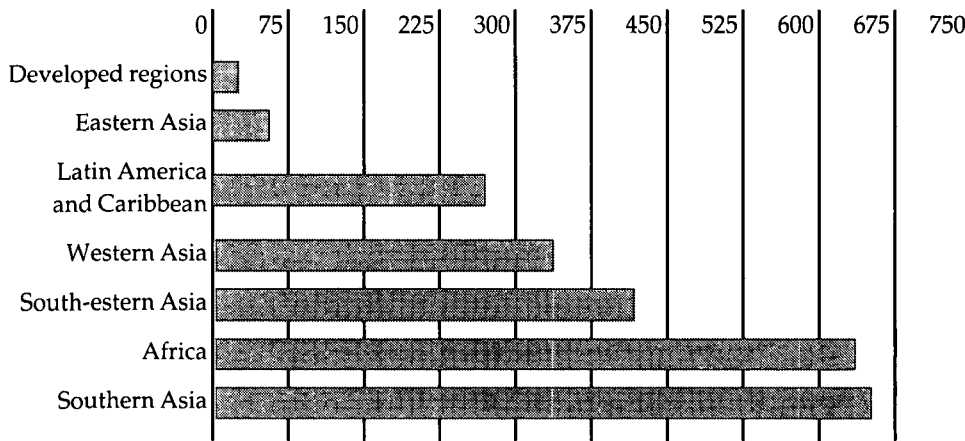
Compiled by UNICEF from national survey reports of the World Fertility Survey programme.

(Source: *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics, 1970-1990*, United Nations, New York 1991.)

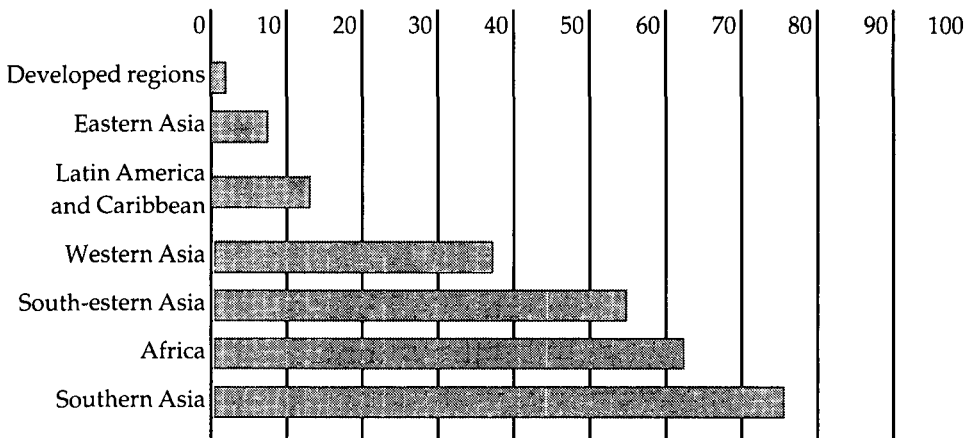
Maternal mortality figures

Maternal mortality is much higher in developing regions, especially where women give birth with no trained attendant

(Source: The World's Women: Trends and Statistics 1970-1990, United Nations, New York, 1991)



Estimated maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births, about 1983
(Note: Rates are based on estimated totals in each region, not country averages.)



Estimated births without trained attendant, about 1985 (%)

Sources of data on the situation of women

	International	National	District/Loca
Agriculture	ILO Yearbook; Labour Force Statistics; FAO World Census of Agriculture	Population Census; Rural Labour Force Surveys, eg Kenya, India; Farm-Household Surveys.	Farm Management Data Bases; ILO Women, Work and Development series; Population Council Cases for Planners. 1985 Kumarian Press Village Studies.
Health	WHO Health Stats; ILO WEP; Population & Labour Policies; Working Papers	National Nutrition Surveys; Ministry of Health Records; Civil Registers	MCH Clinics. Local nutrition and health data. Hospital records. Civil Registers. Missions.
Education	UNESCO Education Statistics	Population Census; Household Surveys; Ministry of Education records	School and University records. Literacy class attendance.
Labour force.	ILO Yearbook; Labour Force Statistics; UN World Survey on the situation of women; ILO lab-force estimates and projections; USAID/US Dept. of Commerce 'Women of the World' 5 vols	Population & census; Household surveys; Lab/employment Surveys	Household surveys. Case studies. Employers' records. Village studies Local aid agencies & missions.

Source: Gender and Third World Development Module 1 (Alison Evans) Socio-Economic Statistics IDS, Sussex. Copyright: CEC

Why are women invisible in statistics?

Disaggregation — before and after

Until the 1970s, mainstream research, policy and planning virtually ignored the economic role of women. Development plans and policies were either based on men and then generalised to all people, or they prescribed a development future in which men were assumed to be the only breadwinners, and women and children their dependants. The practical outcomes of many of these policies and programmes adversely affected the welfare of many women and were shown to be in conflict with the interests of many more.

The dominant view was that women's participation in development was outside the economic mainstream and mainly restricted to activities for which women were stereotypically most suited: family and child welfare, household work, etc. On the other hand, case studies and qualitative research showed that most women in developing countries were crucial participants in economic and social life, although many were at a social and economic disadvantage in making effective contributions to growth and development.

In 1975, at the inauguration of the UN Decade for Women, priority was given to disaggregating by sex all national economic and social statistics. The aim was to make visible to planners the full extent of women's economic participation, particularly in areas traditionally considered to be male-dominated; and the status of women in terms of their income, health and education.

The process of disaggregating national statistics by sex has been fairly uneven, mainly because the changes that have had to be made in census and census-type procedures are slow, cumbersome, and often costly to manage. Data on women is nevertheless increasingly available at national and local levels for researchers and planners to see. However, many problems remain with this data. The process of disaggregation by sex does not in itself reveal the whole picture of women's lives and work. It shows only the tip of the iceberg. This is largely because of two assumptions which underlie the whole process of disaggregation by sex. These are:

- The assumption that all techniques for data collection and measurement are equally valid for men and for women. For example, techniques for eliciting information for men are also presumed to work for women. But the evidence is that women and men experience their economic and social environments differently, and this affects how they respond to questions about their situation.
- The assumption that conventional conceptual categories hold the same meaning for all people. The concept of work, for instance, is often taken to mean the same thing for women and men — and so their experiences in work are held to be adequately represented in unisex categories. *But* work for women may be largely subsumed within household or family unpaid labour; while for men it is socially visible and often economically rewarded.

Techniques of measurement

What is measured by statisticians — and, equally important, what is *not* measured — depends largely on the techniques of measurement that are chosen, such as the unit of enumeration;; and the dominant perceptions and attitudes about what is important or relevant information. For example, a number of recent studies criticise Census and National Income Accounting methodologies that exclude production outside of the market. These studies argue that some aspects of informal sector production and production for use within the household must be assessed in economic terms.

This approach holds particular significance for the economically developing countries, where a great deal of production continues to go unrecognised in estimates of national GDP. These economies are structured in such a way that if estimates of the national product exclude a measure of informal and non-market output, along with the labour effort involved, then the value and composition of national economic activity are grossly misrepresented. This problem is most acute where women's work is concerned. For example, an analysis of the 1976 Peruvian Peasant Survey shows that once non-market production is measured, close to 86 per cent of women, rather than the 38 per cent initially measured, were engaged in agricultural production (Deere 1982).

There are several other factors which influence the accuracy and coverage of data collection, whether quantitative or qualitative data are being sought. These factors include:

- the timing of interviews;
- the length of the reference period;
- the language in which the interviews are conducted.

Example: In Africa, census enumerators usually visit rural communities in the dry season, when travel is easier. However, work is usually at its most intense in the rural areas during the rainy season. If the standard one- or two-week reference period is used, the volume and types of work normally carried out in the community will be underestimated. If rainy season activities are probed, accuracy of answers will depend on the ability of respondents to recall their work patterns. There is some debate as to how well people do recall annual patterns of work: both under- and over-reporting is suggested.

The choice of an unseasonal time of year and a limited reference period are amongst a number of technical explanations for the under-reporting and misrepresentation of women's work in agricultural statistics. Empirical research indicates that this underestimation problem is particularly acute for women whose current activity, at the time of enumeration, may not be on-farm work but domestic work. Consequently, women are classified as non-workers even though, at crucial points in the agricultural cycle, their main activity is in fact farm work.

Women and men also report differently. Generally speaking, it has been found that women report more accurately, as exemplified by estimates of harvest in Sudan, of water usage in Somalia, and food requirements in relief situations in Kenya.

Economic activity is not the only thing affected by seasonal fluctuation and recall difficulties. Cyclical changes also affect income and standard of living; health status; and household composition. Changes in these areas are frequently not visible in annual and decennial data because the information is averaged from a single reference period for the year as a whole.

Conceptual categories

The choice of conceptual categories in censuses and most census-type statistics is influenced by a 'way of seeing or looking at the world'. This generally undercounts and undervalues the position and contributions of women compared to men. Stereotypical 'ways of looking at the world' are best illustrated by some of the conceptual categories used to classify economic activity.

What is 'productive' activity?

The standard concept of economic activity refers to participation in a productive activity. Many aspects of women's work, particularly the unpaid services they provide as family labour, are not considered as productive activity. But why should preparing and processing food for own-consumption be considered any less productive than growing the food? Why should caring for children be considered less productive than caring for livestock?

One answer is that work associated with the household and own-consumption is rarely considered by economists or planners to be income-generating, and therefore essentially non-economic in character. Once this judgement is made, women's work loses its value and is marginalised from the economic mainstream. What would happen if women's 'domestic' work was reflected in national statistical surveys?

Example: A study from India shows that if, in the 32nd round of the National Sample Survey, all the activities assumed to be 'domestic' were deemed economic, the labour force participation rate for rural women above five years of age would rise from 30.5 per cent to 52.3 per cent (the male rate is 63.7 per cent). The state-wise coefficient of variation in the female labour force participation rate would also decline. The latter appears therefore to be an artifact of the exclusion of a wide range of women's tasks from so-called economic activity rather than to reflect real variations in their participation (Sen and Sen 1985).

Despite such evidence, there is general reluctance to change statistical conventions to meet new arguments about the value of women's work and economic activity. This reflects another conceptual obstacle — the assumption that gender roles, and the gender division of labour, are determined by sex differences. Data collection is limited by a stereotyped view of women's roles, and no consideration of gender relations.

Moving towards equity — the implications

Disaggregation by sex, then, does not ensure gender equity in data collection. Disaggregation can be a positive step but it is no panacea.

The equity-oriented model of gender presents new challenges in the collection and interpretation of statistical data. These challenges lie in choosing new concepts and methods with which to collect more accurate data on women, and in using and interpreting existing data in developing planning and policy making.

Two central issues stand out in the equity-oriented approach:

- **Quantitative and qualitative information about women and men can only be made sense of when studied in relation to its social, economic and cultural context.**
- **Disaggregating conceptual categories on the basis of sex is a *necessary* but not a *sufficient* process for improving the data on the situation of women.**

(Source: Adapted from: Gender and World Development Module 1: Socio-Economic Statistics, Alison Evans, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University. Commission of the European Communities, 1991.)