
**Technical meeting to strengthen gender indicators and related data production
and use in response to policy demands in Viet Nam**

19 – 22 March 2019, Hai Phong

Meeting summary

A. Background

In 2011, Viet Nam’s government adopted the first list of National Statistical Indicators on Gender Development (comprising 105 indicators). The indicators supported the monitoring and evaluation of the 2006 Gender Equality Law and the 2011-2020 National Strategy for Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals.

Following the adoption of a new Statistical Law in 2015, as well as major international developments for gender statistics,¹ the Prime Minister mandated the General Statistics Office of Viet Nam to undertake the review and revision of the first set of National Statistical Indicators on Gender Development (NSIGD).² This revised set would also have to address challenges for the production, collection, compilation and use of gender statistics encountered with the first set³ and be more responsive to key national documents on gender equality and women’s empowerment. A preliminary draft of the second NSIGD was developed in 2018 and is expected to be submitted to the Ministry of Planning and Investment for approval by June 2019.

In light of these developments and in order to strengthen relevant capacities, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and UN Women’s Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific co-organized the technical meeting as part of two on-going complementary programmes:

(1) the **UNESCAP Gender Policy-Data Integration Initiative (GPDI)**,⁴ aiming to strengthen data and statistics on gender equality and women’s empowerment via systematic user-producer engagement to identify data and information needs (through the use of the generic policy-data integration tool (called EPIC)) and via the promotion of improved dissemination, analysis and use of existing gender-sensitive data for advocacy.

(2) the **UN Women flagship programme initiative on statistics “Making Every Women and Girl Count” (MEWGC)**⁵ which aims to bring about a radical shift in how gender statistics are used, created and promoted by building a supportive policy and institutional environment to prioritize gender data and effective monitoring of the SDGs, increasing data production and improving access to data to inform policy and advocacy..

B. Objectives of the technical meeting

Against this background, the technical meeting brought together key producers and users of gender data at the national level –the General Statistics Office, the national women’s machinery, relevant line

¹ The UN Global Minimum Set of Gender Indicators in 2013, the Core Set of Gender Indicators for Asia and the Pacific and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015.

² Decisions No. 178/QĐ-TTg (28/01/2016) and No. 668/QĐ-TTg (16/05/2017)

³ Because of these challenges, only about a quarter of the 105 indicators were collected with sex-disaggregation, while data for 40 indicators was not collected at all.

⁴ https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP.CST_2018.INF_2_Transformation_gender_data.pdf

⁵ https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP.CST_2018.INF_1_Strengthening_gender_for_gender_perspective.pdf

ministries, civil society organizations and academicians⁶ to enhance their capacity to identify national gender indicators responsive to policy demands and related data sources and production cycles. In specific, the meeting was designed to:

- Advocate for a common platform for effective user-producer dialogue to improve gender statistics and indicators in Viet Nam.
- Enhance understanding of information needs, including disaggregation requirements, as outlined in the relevant policy documents in the context of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) in Viet Nam.
- Enhance knowledge on quality aspects and necessary considerations for the formulation of national gender indicators.
- Develop recommendations towards strengthening the second draft of National Statistical Indicators on Gender Development.
- Initiate identification of existing/potential data sources for the indicators.
- Assess further needs for capacity development on gender-related data production, analysis, dissemination and use, including in the context of supporting SDG monitoring.

Participants to the technical meeting conducted hands-on exercises on policy-data integration and discussed ways forward for gender data production cycles and gender data communication, dissemination and use.

The technical meeting was considered timely due to the on-going revision of the NSIGD and the upcoming review of the 2011-2020 National Strategy for Gender Equality.

C. Immediate results of the technical meeting

The meeting resulted in:

- 1. Enhanced appreciation and understanding of the policy-data integration process to:**
 - i. Ensure responsiveness of national data to national policies for any sector/national strategy.
 - ii. Ensure policy actions and related data collection are based on international principles and capture multidimensionality across the social, economic, environment and institutional principles of development for any particular policy action.
 - iii. Identify specific data needs (including disaggregation needs by identifying relevant target groups to leave-no-one-behind), data gaps and prevent data waste.
 - iv. Create a one-stop-shop of gender equality indicators to be used by governmental agencies and non-government actors.
 - v. Promote structured collaboration between national data users and producers, beyond governmental agencies.

- 2. Identification of areas for improvement of the draft NSIGD in terms of:**
 - i. Its adequacy to monitor existing gender equality policies in the country.
 - ii. Its expanded scope to go beyond covering only indicators for which data is currently available or can be produced.
 - iii. Extending beyond input and process indicators to adequately cover output and outcome indicators.

⁶ The following national ministries/agencies participated in the meeting: the Ministry of Labor-Invalids and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Planning and Investments, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Agriculture (Viet Nam's Disaster Management Authority), Vietnam Women's Union, the Institute for Social Development Studies, the Institute for Development and Community Health and the Research Center for Female Labour and Gender.

- iv. Being accompanied by a corresponding metadata handbook for use by all relevant national stakeholders.

3. Identification of methodological limitations for the production of gender data: limitations were identified for the production of gender data on specific thematic areas, as well as on cross-cutting areas; namely:

- i. Thematic areas identified as challenging include violence against older women, violence against children, food security, access to/satisfaction with public services, gender and the environment, school attendance rates.
- ii. Methodological limitations were identified as barriers to produce gender data in cross-cutting areas such as simultaneously disaggregated estimates to capture the principle of Leaving No One Behind.

4. Identification of gaps in gender data dissemination:

- i. Lack of central data repository for gender statistics
- ii. Lack of screening mechanism to qualify third party data as official statistics
- iii. Limited data literacy
- iv. Lack of gender data communication and dissemination strategy

D. Areas for consideration/action by national agencies

Meeting participants identified the following areas for consideration/action based on results highlighted in Section C above. Future technical assistance/collaboration on these from ESCAP/ UN Women/other partners is yet to be discussed.

1. For national gender indicators

- The General Statistics Office may consider collecting and consolidating comments discussed during the EPIC exercise of the technical meeting to review the current draft of the NSIGD and will contact national agencies as needed in the process of finalizing the draft.
- The participating Ministries will draw on the structured process provided by EPIC to formulate and provide inputs/comments on the draft NSIGD circulated by the General Statistics Office.
- Instead of limiting the draft NSIGD to indicators that can currently be produced, national stakeholders will seek technical guidance to also include indicators for which data collection/production has yet to be initiated/is still challenging for a variety of reasons.
- Though the NSIGD itself is broader and doesn't exclusively serve as the monitoring and indicator framework for the 2006 Gender Equality Law and the 2011-2020 National Strategy for Gender Equality, it has the potential to serve as part of it.
- The General Statistics Office will consider seeking technical assistance on consolidating a handbook of methodological guidelines and metadata for the NSIGD, including coverage of simultaneous disaggregation needs.
- It was decided to explore the possibilities of conducting trainings on methodologies for data production and analysis, in particular on topics where methodological limitations were identified.

2. *Outcomes for gender data user and producer dialogue*

- The workshop provided an opportunity for users and producers to know each other, share their concerns and understand each other's needs. Both users and producers noted that the experience was useful for indicator selection and further national collaboration.
- Ideas were put forward to establish a national working group or community of practice – potentially starting with participants of the technical meeting and thereby establishing a continuous platform of discussion to address the lack of structured coordination mechanisms between data producers and users.

3. *Outcomes for gender data production*

- There was recognition of the need to enhance availability of gender data through micro-data reprocessing to generate data that is multiply disaggregated, as well as the production of estimates on thematic areas identified as most challenging (as listed above).

4. *Outcomes for gender data dissemination, use and communication*

- Options were explored to make data available online to overcome difficulties faced by users (especially CSOs and academia) to access data from government agencies.
- Set up of an appraisal mechanism for data provided by third parties was suggested, along with clear citing of sources, in order to foster reliability and credibility of data from sources that currently do not come under the purview of “official statistics”.
- Options were considered for developing guidelines and trainings on data literacy to be led by the General Statistics Office and Vietnam Women's Union to enhance effective use and interpretation of gender data.
- Several options were suggested to progressively promote communication and dissemination of gender data starting with training on visualization/infographics, establishing working groups for information sharing to possibly developing a data dissemination center.

E. Proceedings of the technical meeting

The meeting consisted of five sessions, alternating between plenary sessions and group work. The first two sessions introduced the objectives of the gender policy-data integration process, the rationale for policy-data integration in Viet Nam's context, and the national policy-data landscape for gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). The third session was dedicated to the hands-on and comprehensive application of the EPIC tool on the 2006 Gender Equality Law and the 2011-2020 Gender Equality Strategy, using national, regional and global indicator sets. The fourth session touched upon gender data sources and production cycles and aimed to identify gaps and challenges in gender data production and use. Key areas were identified for potential future collaboration and support. During the last session of the meeting, participants discussed ways forward to ensure systematic gender data dissemination and use and initiated corresponding strategies. The proceedings are further detailed below.

The first session began with a presentation from ESCAP on setting the scene on the rationale for policy-data integration in the context of GEWE in Viet Nam, including understanding of vicious and virtuous cycle of policy and data and the need to identify multidimensionality and intersectionalities of issues and target groups in the context of GEWE. The session also included presentations from key national agencies for gender data and policy in Viet Nam:

- The Ministry of Planning and Investment introduced to the audience the Viet Nam's National Action Plan for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and Viet Nam's SDGs indicators (VSDGs), with a focus on goals and targets related to gender.
- The Ministry of Labor-Invalids and Social Affairs gave an overview of existing national laws, policies and strategies on gender, and in specific national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the Gender Equality Law and Strategy.
- The General Statistics Office briefed the audience on the institutional framework for gender data and in particular the process that led to the draft NSIGD.

The purpose of the second session was to present the EPIC tool and its approach to identify data needs and indicators. ESCAP introduced the tool rationale, objectives, conceptual framework and step-by-step process with the use of a dedicated template. Participants experimented the tool on a section of the Law on Gender Equality.

The third session focused on the comprehensive application of the EPIC tool on the Gender Equality Law and the Gender Equality Strategy, using existing national, regional and global indicator sets as the basis. Participants, divided in four groups, started by reviewing issues for action, associating them with core concepts and identifying reference population and target groups in the policy documents. After a brief presentation on considerations to develop a national indicator set on GEWE/WEE, and indicators classification, the four groups initiated the mapping of national indicators (from the NSIGD and VSDGs) to the issues for actions and associated core concepts. The next step also involved indicator mapping, but using the Global SDGs indicators, the Global Minimum Set of Gender indicators and the Regional Core Set of Gender indicators. Lastly, participants were asked to compare identified national, global and regional indicators, to explain potential inconsistencies, suggest modifications if needed and identify national indicators that did not correspond to any issue for action. Based on the results of the EPIC exercise, each group was asked to prepare inputs towards consolidation/finalization of the NSIGD and inputs for future review of the policy documents analyzed.

The fourth session focused on data sources and production cycles. Following a presentation on how to integrate a gender perspective in data production by UN Women, the General Statistics Office explained the functioning of the current gender data production cycle. Through group work and round table discussions, participants reflected on priorities for gender data production and use, taking into consideration the needs of data producers and users, from the government, civil society organizations and academia, before mapping existing data sources to priority indicators identified through the EPIC exercise. This allowed the identification of key gaps impeding the monitoring of progress with the indicators selected.

The last and fifth session was designed around gender data dissemination, analysis, communication and use. After UN Women introduced a few good practice examples on how to communicate and disseminate gender data effectively, participants completed exercises on data analysis, visualization and communication, and thought about strategies for systematic gender data dissemination and use in Viet Nam.

Before the closing of the meeting, participants agreed on next steps and future areas of collaboration with UNESCAP and UN Women.

Meeting documents and presentations can be found at: <https://www.unescap.org/events/technical-meeting-strengthen-gender-indicators-and-related-data-production-and-use-response>
