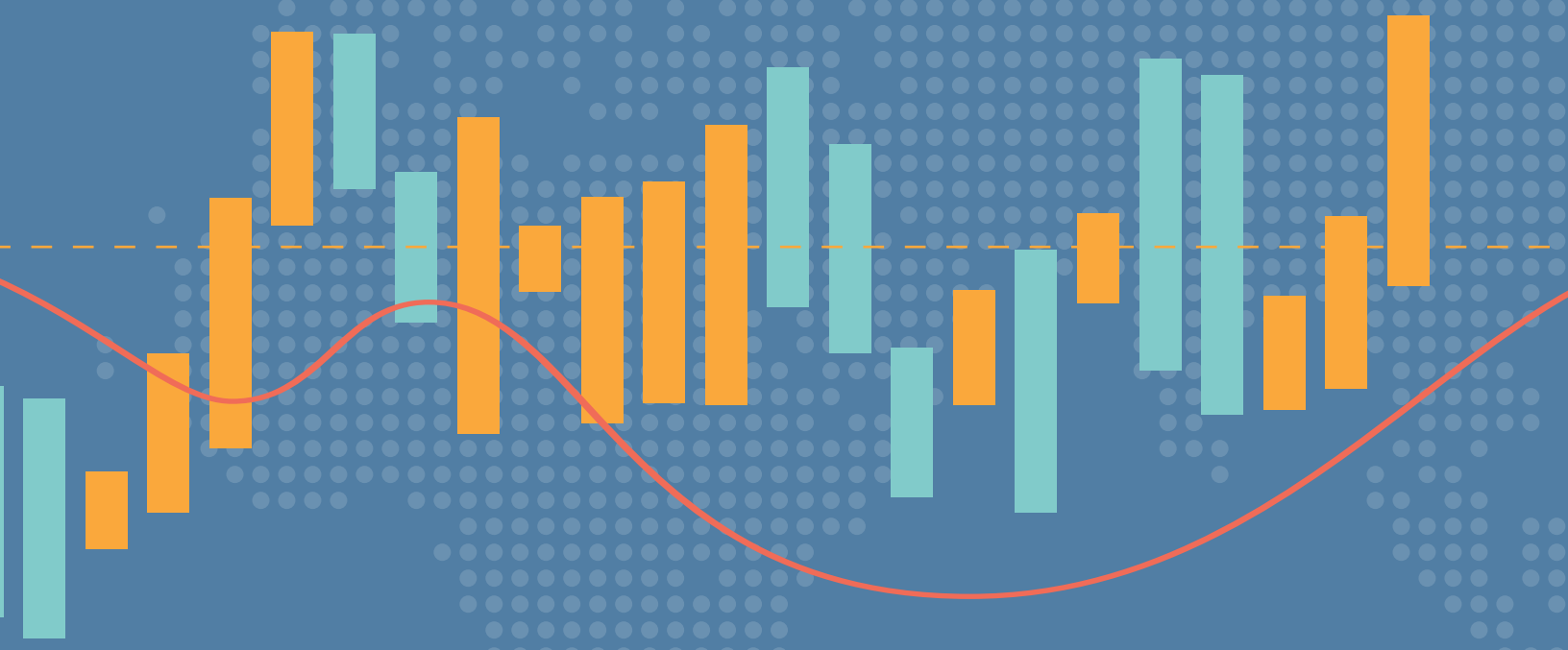


ADVANCING GENDER DATA AND STATISTICS IN AFRICA

A Report for the Gender Data Network, commissioned by UNECA

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Gender Data
NETWORK

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


This report benefited from the insights of a great number of people. Particular thanks to Oluyemi Oloyede, Emma Phiri, Petronella Kaputu, Tinashe Mwadiwa, Dominique Kanobana, Glory Mshali, Sorsie Gutema Deme, Gloria Akoto-Bamfo, Caroline Gatwiri Mutwiri, Dickson Dikoloti Gareoitse, all members of the Gender Data Network, who provided reflections via interview. Thanks also to Meriem Ait Ouyahia and Lauren Harrison of PARIS21 and Shaida Badiie, Jahanara Saeed, Lorenz Noe of Open Data Watch for comments and suggestions on the draft.

This report was commissioned by the UN Economic Commission for Africa. Thanks are owed to Fatouma Sissoko and Shewit Gebregiorgis for their support throughout this process.

ACRONYMS

AfDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CGD	Citizen Generated Data
COVID-19	Coronavirus 19 pandemic
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDN	Gender Data Network
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISWGHS	Inter-secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys
ODW	Open Data Watch
PARIS21	The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMS	Short Message Service
SSA	Sub-Saharan African
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNSC	United Nations Statistical Commission
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
VAWIE	Violence Against Women in Elections

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Acknowledgements.....	1
Acronyms.....	1
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Areas of action from 2019–2021:.....	5
A. Methodologies.....	5
B. Strengthening Understanding, Communications, and Use.....	9
3. Lessons learned across the network.....	13
4. Potential future activities.....	14

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2019, Open Data Watch, Data2X, and partners published a study of gender data availability in 15 African countries. *Bridging the Gap: Mapping Gender Data Availability in Africa* found that sex-disaggregated data were only available for 52 percent of gender-relevant indicators (including gender indicators identified under the Sustainable Development Goals and additional indicators identified by the African Union) (Open Data Watch 2019). Crucial indicators relating to women and men’s economic opportunities, interaction with the environment, and their human security were completely missing. Furthermore, they identified acute infrastructure and capacity challenges, with an overreliance on household survey data, and poor administrative data collection and analysis. Additionally, much of the survey-based data that was available could not be sex-disaggregated as it had been collected at the household level (Open Data Watch 2019).

The African Development Bank’s 2019 African Gender Data Book reinforces these findings. Vital statistics like school enrollment rate, literacy rate, and incidences of violence against women are either missing or are more than five years old for a huge number of sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, including South Africa, Kenya, Liberia and so on. Even when they are available, they are frequently modeled from previous surveys and are therefore estimates (AfDB 2019). Maternal mortality is a particularly infrequently collected dataset, with the latest available data—across the whole sub-Saharan African continent—from 2017 (World Bank 2022).

Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these trends, with interruptions to survey programs and other data collection exercises across the continent. COVID-19 responses also make plain the lack of consideration of gendered data in national policy design. In a recent survey of COVID-19 policy responses, conducted by UNDP and UN Women, only one country on the whole continent (Egypt) was found to have a holistic gendered response to the pandemic, and as many as eight countries had not considered gender at all in their policy responses. All remaining countries on the continent had only partly considered the impacts of the pandemic for both men and women in different economic domains, in spite of evidence suggesting surges in violence against women and girls, an unprecedented increase in unpaid care work, and a large-scale loss of jobs, incomes, and livelihoods for both men and women (UNDP 2022).

As the COVID-19 response shows, the use of gender data in policy and decision-making is extremely challenging. This report was informed by interviews with more than ten national statisticians working actively on the curation of gender statistics. Interviewees stressed that gender data use across their governments was generally poor, both due to low political prioritization of gender and because of limited capacity at national and local levels. Local administrators and statisticians often don’t know how to collect or interpret gender data and convey it to the national government in their reports, meaning these issues are less likely to receive funding in a vicious cycle of under-attention. Persistent underfunding of gender data production, communications, and use was a core concern noted by every informant. To respond to the lack of resourcing and capacity, informants stressed the importance of gender data communications and advocacy.

In response to the acute gender data gaps outlined above, as well as the challenges of gender data communication and use, in 2019 the Africa Gender Data Network (AGDN) was established by UNECA, Data2X, and Open Data Watch with national partners. In 2021, the network was expanded to be a

global Gender Data Network (GDN) under the coordination of PARIS21.¹ The network is comprised of senior government gender statisticians from 15 African countries, which aims to respond to the paucity and underutilization of gender data by improving the production and use of gender data within national statistical systems. Its objectives include raising the standard of continental gender data production, improving the effectiveness of communication about gender data, and encouraging gender data use across participating countries. It does this through a wide range of activities including undertaking research to identify gender data challenges countries are facing and innovative new methodologies; connecting members to the global gender data community; supporting national gender data focal points and encouraging countries to appoint and/or resource these positions; strengthening members capacity through peer learning and training exercises; and seeking to raise the profile of gender data issues across the continent.

As noted by GDN members during a public webinar in January 2022 (entitled “Achieving Better Outcomes with Better Gender Data”), the benefits of collaborative action through such a network include, but are not limited to, strengthening individual skills and confidence, fostering connections between gender data experts across the African continent, encouraging peer to peer learning and development, and providing training to enable collective improvements in regional gender data.

This report provides an overview of the activities of the GDN since its inception in 2019. It draws upon a range of evidentiary sources, including project documents, GDN and partner publications, key informant interviews with GDN members and operating partners, as well as the transcripts of discussions that took place at the aforementioned webinar. The report highlights a range of activities pursued by the GDN relating to data production and curation, as well as data communications and use. It finds that, for a network still in its comparative infancy, the GDN has had a sizeable impact in the field of gender data across Africa. Through collaboration and information-sharing, a range of innovative and experimental projects have been trialed and, where successful, replicated across countries. Furthermore, members of the GDN have gained access to a continental network of gender data practitioners, through which they have been able to develop their skills and self-confidence. In the words of two informants, the GDN “helps us as a country, as the training I receive directly improves national statistics, as well as how I write reports and disseminate information” (Mshali, 2022), and “thanks to the knowledge [I have] acquired from communications training with the GDN, I now have the confidence to do gender communications work” (Phiri, 2022).

¹ The GDN partner countries include Botswana, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

2. AREAS OF ACTION FROM 2019-2021

A. METHODOLOGIES

Since the launch of the GDN in 2019 and its inception meeting in Accra, Ghana, member countries and supporting organizations have pursued a range of projects and activities focused on gender data production. These have fallen into two broad camps:

- a. Strengthening existing methodologies, for example by overlaying datasets, attempting new disaggregation, or employing technologies to speed up enumeration processes.
- b. Innovating with new methods and technologies.

While some of these have been small-scale pilots which have subsequently ended, others have been very successful, resulting in their being taken to scale or replicated across countries. At the GDN webinar in January 2022, a range of successful initiatives were presented and participants noted that there is huge potential to help fill gender data gaps and improve coverage by taking advantage of different data sources including survey, census, administrative, citizen-generated, and big data. Some of the examples cited are featured below, alongside more than 10 other successful and highly replicable initiatives pursued by GDN members and their partners. According to key informants, the compilation and sharing of such methodological advances has been a key benefit of the network for GDN member countries. Through the network, gender data focal points have shared new questionnaires, methodological tips on trialing new approaches like CGD, as well as advice on how to secure support and funding for such innovations.

STRENGTHENING EXISTING METHODS

Since the GDN's inception, members and partners have been looking to strengthen and expand existing methodologies, such as surveys and censuses, to enable greater disaggregation and gender analytics. For example, in 2020, GDN partner organization UN Women released a *Counted And Visible* toolkit as a reference guide for how to produce disaggregated gender statistics in education from household surveys. UN Women worked with the UNSC's Inter-secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys (ISWGHS) to ensure the engagement of all the large-scale international household survey programs and a wide range of national governments. In Africa, Kenya, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Senegal, and Cameroon all partook in the program (UN Women 2021). In Kenya, this initiative spurred the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and UN Women to conceptualize and launch a new Kenya Women's Empowerment Index (WEI), drawing upon data from existing national surveys. The index is Kenya's "first comprehensive and systematic measure for women's and girls' empowerment" It monitors "a) attitudes toward wife beating; b) human and social resources; c) household decision-making; d) control over sexual relations; e) economic domains." Since its launch, the index has received positive coverage in the domestic media, helping to inform public discourse on gender equality (UN Women 2021).

A common ambition of all GDN member countries has been to increase the use of technologies to amplify and expand existing data collection methods, for example using SMS and Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) survey technology. In 2020, Zambia conducted a Labour Force Survey covering a total of 470 enumeration areas across the ten provinces of Zambia. The survey's objective was to measure the size

of the labor force and understand its key characteristics such as age, sex, industry, sector of employment, education, and so forth. 470 enumeration areas were identified and 9,184 households interviewed. An electronic questionnaire configured on CAPI tablets was used to collect information from respondents through face-to-face interviews. The survey generated a huge amount of sex disaggregated data enabling the government to identify women's underrepresentation in the work force, particularly between the ages of 50–54 when 69.8 percent of men are employed, versus only 30.2 percent of women (ZamStat 2020).

Another major priority has been to harmonize existing statistics to enable better comparison between datasets and use of data across Ministries and departments of government. According to Glory Mshali, GDN member and Statistician at the Malawi National Bureau of Statistics, “harmonizing variables is a big challenge. We have different types of surveys and variables often aren't harmonized and comparable” (Mshali 2022). There are various efforts across countries and the Continent as a whole to help harmonize survey and administrative data, for example AfDB, UNECA, and AUC's Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (ShaSA) which aims to help standardize data on governance, peace and security, including various gender data. And a promising example is provided by Sierra Leone where the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) has worked to strengthen the collection of gender and disability data in their national records. More questions on disabilities have been included in both national surveys and annual school censuses to better understand marginalized groups' experiences in the education system and develop comparable data across national datasets. Using this more inclusive, reliable, and granular data, MBSSE overturned a ban on pregnant girls in school and designed policies and campaigns focusing on zero learning poverty, zero makeshift schools, and zero irregularities and exam malpractice (GPSDD 2020). All of these examples have not only helped to fill gender data gaps, but have served to embolden gender data advocates, enabling them to speak out on the benefits of this kind of analysis.

NEW APPROACHES

RAPID ASSESSMENTS

A key interest for many GDN member countries has been how to capitalize upon new technologies and approaches. Thanks to new computer-assisted and telephonic survey methodologies, in recent years there has been a surge in more dynamic interim survey approaches, which can complement large-scale household survey programmes. In 2020, for example, UN Women launched a new Rapid Gender Assessment survey methodology to see how women's unpaid care work burdens were changing as a result of COVID-19. They proposed a flexible survey methodology that could be deployed via phone-call survey, online survey administered through a web browser, with notification of the survey sent via short message service (SMS), or survey directly administered via SMS. As of the end of 2020, they had more than 50 countries undertaking these surveys, coordinated by UN Women's country offices in partnership with national governments, including in Nigeria, Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, and Kenya (UN Women 2020). In Kenya, UN Women's Rapid Gender Assessment was conducted in partnership with the Kenyan Bureau of Statistics, and specifically its gender data focal points, from August to September 2020. The “Rapid Gender Assessment on the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19” covered 2587 people, with 2,482 additional individuals surveyed on gender-based violence issues. The methodology employed the use of Computer Assisted Telephonic Interviews (CATI), guided by a structured questionnaire. This assessment complemented the nationwide COVID-19 survey, entitled, “Assessing the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Households in Kenya,” which surveyed over 30,000 people over two waves from May to June 2020. Key findings of the research included the disproportionate economic impact of the pandemic upon women, through losses of livelihoods and incomes, a declining nutritional intake for many women and increased food security, women's increasing domestic care burden, increased vulnerability of girls

to disruptions in their learning and education, as well as women’s higher mental and physical health challenges (including those related to increasing gender-based violence) (Republic of Kenya 2020).

In South Africa, the new National Income Dynamics Study—Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAM) is another dynamic study that has been used to monitor COVID-19 impacts. NIDS-CRAM is a nationally-representative panel survey of 28,000 South African individuals conducted via phone in 11 national languages. The same individuals are contacted each month to ascertain the changing impact of COVID-19 upon income and employment, their household welfare, receipt of grants, and about their knowledge and behavior related to COVID-19. The survey, which includes questions on men and women’s wellbeing and other gendered dynamics, has helped highlight inequalities resulting from the pandemic, such as women’s increased vulnerability to unemployment and their limited access to income support (Casale and Shepherd 2021). The evidence generated is helping gender data advocates and other gender practitioners to highlight the pernicious impacts of gender inequality and to support a more gender-sensitive COVID response.

GEOSPATIAL DATA

A simple but increasingly used and effective tool, identified by a number of GAD members, is triangulating household surveys and census data with geospatial data so as to identify geographical gaps in coverage and potential spatial inequalities, including how they may affect men’s, women’s, girls’, and boys’ respective access to services. In Sierra Leone, a partnership with an international consortium, called GRID3, has enabled the NSO, Ministry of Education, Ministries of Gender and other relevant departments to review how geographic remoteness of a community (alongside other social, economic, and social factors) can affect access to schooling. School census data is combined with spatial imagery with the aim of identifying “innovative approaches to collecting, analyzing, and using geospatial data that can lead to the improvement of educational outcomes for all students, and especially improve outcomes for girls, students with disabilities, and children living in remote areas” (GRID3 2021).

SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS

One of the more cutting-edge approaches, which has garnered interest across GDN countries, is social media analysis. In 2018 in Zimbabwe, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) worked with local women’s legal associations and CSO groups, training them to recognize all forms of violence against women in elections (VAWIE), including VAWIE online. This was identified by machine-learning software that used artificial intelligence to process millions of online posts to analyze online harassment as it affected politically active women and men in Zimbabwe ahead of the 2018 election. The study found that among cases with an identifiable perpetrator, “the overwhelming majority of perpetrators are men attacking women (76%). The forms of violence women experience across the cyber-sphere are varied and include direct threats of physical and sexual harm, name-calling, denigrating and demeaning comments” (Bardall 2018; 19). At the end of the study period, local organizations had helped a number of survivors bring their cases to the justice system to enable prosecution, including 100 additional cases that were documented with many resulting in pressed charges, multiple arrests, and at least two successful prosecutions. The study design intended for it to be highly replicable and something that could be repeatedly used to gather data on electoral freedoms in future, thereby augmenting official statistics on political activity.

CITIZEN-GENERATED DATA



At the GDN Webinar in January 2022, an illuminating presentation was made by Gloria Akoto-Bamfo, from the Ghana Statistical Services on the potential of citizen-generated data (CGD) to generate gender-based violence statistics. The broad objective of the project was to explore the potential of CGD as a complementary data source for official statistics by looking at CGD methodologies relating to SDGs 5.2.1; 5.2.2; 11.7.2; 16.2.3. In addition, it was hoped that CGD might support evidence-based decision-making at the

sub-national level. The project was rooted in a human-rights based approach to data whereby citizens are involved in the planning and production of data and there is a human-centered design process for the methodological and software development. Project pilots were conducted in three districts across all three ecological zones of Ghana (Ho, Techiman, and Central Gonja). Using the Let's Talk app (a smartphone app and Interactive Voice Response service) users were able to anonymously record information on experiences of GBV to local assemblies and national policy makers for planning purposes. They were also able to report in their own language and provide personal insights, not just stock responses. General findings of the project were that CGD can add value to the production of statistics at the subnational level and to a culture of evidence-informed policymaking. However, there is more work to be done to understand the possible data products, as users often preferred to report via a voice system, rather than standardized text responses, and users also wanted to respond in multiple different languages. One very exciting discovery was that people are willing to report on behalf of others, potentially increasing incidences of reporting and broadening the scope of survey-based reporting and administrative data collection, conducted by the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service (Akoto-Bamfo 2022).

TIME-USE SURVEYS

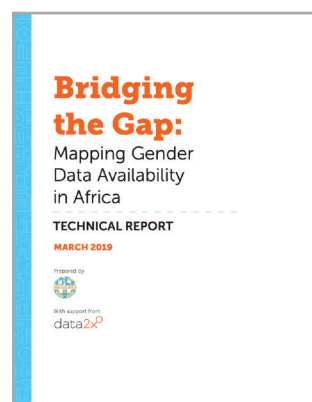
Time-use surveys (TUS) measure the average amount of time people spend on various activities, household chores, family care, leisure time, and so on. They are critical for measuring the value of household production, and they are the main statistical sources for data used to calculate SDG indicator 5.4.1: Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location. As noted by Charmes, “concerns for time-use in Africa are not new. A number of time-use surveys have been carried out at national level throughout the continent, not to mention the surveys of the World Bank program of the Living Standard Measurement Study and other ‘integrated’ surveys that have systematically included a short set of questions in large multipurpose surveys” (Charmes 2017; 1). In recent years, spurred on by SDG 5.4.1, there has been a surge in interest in time-use surveys and GDN members have confirmed this during recent key informant interviews. Positively, numerous members noted that this had been an area of collaboration, with time-use survey templates being shared between NSO staff in Tanzania, Rwanda, and Kenya, and separately between staff in Nigeria, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

B. STRENGTHENING UNDERSTANDING, COMMUNICATIONS, AND USE

As highlighted at a GDN hosted event in January 2022, data improvements are futile if the data is not being actively used. Strengthening gender data across Africa, and around the world, requires a holistic approach which considers not only production but also communications, uptake, and use. Crucially it requires a focus on skill development across government, but also amongst the media and general public. Interview insights and the discussion at the January 2022 GDN webinar point to four key areas that are essential for increased awareness, engagement with, and use of data: research, strengthening accessibility, communications, and skill development. It was repeatedly noted that uptake and use should consider both use by citizens (for accountability purposes) and use by government officials (for consideration in policy design).

RESEARCH: STRENGTHENING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER DATA GAPS AND CHALLENGES

As highlighted in the introduction, there are clear gaps in our knowledge of gender dynamics across Africa. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic and other emerging climatic changes are producing more insecurities and risks which affect men, women, girls, and boys very differently across the continent. To help understand these challenges and identify the most acute gender data gaps, GDN partner institutions,



such as Data2X and Open Data Watch (ODW), have commissioned several research studies. *Bridging the Gap*, written by ODW, systematically mapped gender data availability across 15 sub-Saharan African countries, according to a wide range of essential gender indicators, as well as involving the compilation of detailed national case studies (ODW 2019). According to key informant interviews, the exercise helped national statistical offices across the continent make the case for increased attention to and investment in underserved gender data areas. The exercise has also facilitated cross-country dialogue on the identified gender data gaps and encouraged technical exchange.

To help strengthen gender data capacities, a key activity of the GDN secretariat has been to prepare monthly emails and bulletins, sharing information on new studies, research, and technical resources. Although a simple intervention, GDN members note that they often do not have the time to look for the latest research and technical guidance, amongst their multiple other competing demands, and this curation function makes it easier for them to feel informed about the latest techniques and approaches.

DATA ACCESSIBILITY

A core theme of the webinar on gender data, held in January 2022, was the accessibility of data. Participants noted that while data production is an ongoing challenge, increasing the supply is futile if the data is not open and accessible to policymakers and the general public. Thankfully, several organizations have been working to promote open data across Africa in recent years. The African Open Data Network was established in 2018 by the Open Data for Development Network (OD4D) and Local Development Research Initiative (LDRI), based in Kenya. During the January webinar, Muchiri Nyaggah (Executive Director at LDRI and GDN supporter) presented his organization's efforts to increase the visibility and use of gender data, such as sharing best practices in open data management and dissemination. This included practical actions like improving web functionality that allows users to export the data they want with as little friction as possible (making it easy for government actors, for example, to pull out and use gender data and analytics) and automating basic data visualization so it is readily usable for media and policy makers. Nyaggah also stressed the importance of building open data- and more specifically open gender data-champions, who can work across government to foster interest and commitment and help to integrate gender across the broader national data system, as per the gender focal points who serve as members of the GDN. He also noted the importance of open data monitoring, and drew upon the work of

GDN partner, ODW, to show that the median score of open gender data in Africa has risen by 21 percent since 2016 (ODW 2021). Whilst this is impressive and points to efforts by gender data advocates to make their data more accessible, he also noted that scores on the remaining non-gender-related categories have risen by even more, at 40 percent (ODW 2021).

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A core theme of the GDN's activities over the past two years, and a high priority for its members, is effective data communications. In 2021 the GDN sponsors, including PARIS21, ran a series of data communications trainings, including on data visualization. The courses were well received and resulted in GDN members actively engaging with local media to promote gender data stories. A particularly effective training course, commended by all the GDN members, was the PARIS21 and UN-Women "Training of Trainers on Communicating Gender Statistics for statisticians and Journalists" which was undertaken by all GDN members in September 2021. The 7.5-hour course resulted in a number of GDN members developing strategies and plans to better engage with local media and with other relevant government departments.

Emma Phiri, gender analyst with the Zambian Statistics Agency, shared Zambia's recent experiences engaging with national and local media at the January 2022 webinar, including through joint training and a planned Letter of Intent which will outline ZamStats' ongoing cooperation with the Ministry of Information and Media to strength gender statistics communications.

To apply newfound communications skills, the GDN has been actively supporting its members to participate in regional and international forums and events, where they can present their work and speak to large international audiences. For example, in 2021 two government members of the GDN at the UN World Data Forum engaged in a wide range of events focusing on data investments and gender data gaps. UN Women and Data2X sponsored a large event focused on gender data in Africa to showcase the results of the *Bridging the Gap* study. The event highlighted the power of networks and multi-stakeholder partnerships to drive action on gender data—with specific attention to how they can generate technical, capacity building, networking, financing, and data accessibility solutions. In July 2021, a GDN member also participated in the World Bank's flagship virtual event "Advancing the Vision of the 2021 World Development Report (WDR): How Creating Gender Aware Data Systems is Key to Achieving Gender



Equality.” Finally, in September 2021, four members of the GDN participated in the 8th Global Forum on Gender Statistics (GFGS). The event showcased the work of the GDN and specifically discussed gender data management during crises.

In addition, the GDN has looked for high-profile opportunities with international organizations and media to help amplify and communicate members’ work. In February 2020, two members were featured in the Equal Everywhere campaign. This campaign by the United Nations Foundation featured the voices of women and girls who are advocating for gender equality in their work and personal lives. Their stories were featured on a special website and social media.² Caroline’s story was also selected by Upworthy to be featured on their website, which is dedicated to positive storytelling.³ In addition, in late 2020 a Devex journalist spoke to four GDN members (Gloria Akoto-Bamfo, Oluyemi Oloyede, Babalwa, and Diana Byanjeru) and wrote a subsequent article on the work of the GDN and the challenges gender data advocates face in advancing gender data in Africa.⁴

To promote regional data sharing and communication, in 2020 the UNECA established a Gender Statistics platform under the direction of the African Group on Gender Statistics. The aim of the platform has been to share research and other materials emanating from the various institutions working under the African Program for Gender Statistics (AfDB, AUC, UN-Women, etc.). The GDN has established a series of resource pages on this platform, where members can find information about trainings, new publications, innovations, and funding on gender statistics all in one place. Complementing the dense online resources is a monthly GDN email, through which the coordinator shares relevant information, new research, technical resources, upcoming webinars, and online courses, as well as online COVID-19 resources. In interviews conducted in early 2022, members repeatedly stressed how useful this monthly roundup was and how it helps keep them up to date with other countries’ and organizations’ gender data activities.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Finally, a core priority for the GDN and its members in 2019–2021 has been capacity development and training. In 2020, following the first GDN meeting, a series of webinars were organized to support skill development and methodological advancement. The first webinar, held on March 31, 2020, covered new methodological development in gender data, showcasing the work done by the World Bank and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The webinar provided an opportunity for a discussion on the ICLS international standards on statistics of work, employment, and labor underutilization in order to support the reflection of women’s paid and unpaid work, gender differences in labor market participation, and overall work burden in official statistics. Its goal was also to support the work ILO is doing to develop labor force survey methodology to produce statistics aligned with these standards. In addition, the World Bank shared experiences from pilot countries and preliminary findings, and highlighted the requirements for improving individual disaggregated data collection in national household surveys.

The second webinar, held on May 7, 2020, focused on best practices and success stories from national statistical offices on mainstreaming gender disaggregation. A GDN member set the scene by highlighting the challenges of producing disaggregated data within the National Statistical System. Then, champions of the Inclusive Data Charter shared their experiences of advocating internally for institutional reform, to foster commitment on gender data. And finally, PARIS21 explained why soft skills mattered for data disaggregation and showcased country examples.

2 Their stories can be found here: <https://equaleverywhere.org/story/caroline-mutiwiri/>
<https://equaleverywhere.org/story/marium-j-kitembe/>

3 Available here: <https://www.upworthy.com/equal-everywhere-caroline-gatwiri-mutiwiri>

4 Available here: <https://www.devex.com/news/15-african-statisticians-unite-to-advance-gender-data-across-the-continent-97975>

A third webinar took place on October 14, 2020 as a two-part event in conjunction with the annual virtual meeting of the GDN. The meeting convened development partners and donors in the gender data field to discuss the power of networking, partnership, advocacy, and raising the profile of gender data in the time of COVID-19. The discussions also focused on meeting data user's needs and trust in provision of data services as well as data sharing, specifically the role and challenges of opening and sharing data and how to better use existing gender data when reliable data are needed quickly to make critical decisions.

The last webinar of 2020 was organized on December 15, 2020 and focused on the ILO's recent work to fill gender data gaps highlighted by the pandemic. It showcased the potential of the latest statistical standards, notably those adopted at the 19th ICLS in October 2013. It also showcased some of the key measurement challenges identified by the ILO through recent pilot testing work, thereby raising awareness of the need for good measurement practices alongside applications of the latest standard.

These trainings have continued in 2021, with a focus on data communications, as discussed above. According to Sorsie Gutema Deme from Central Statistics Agency of Ethiopia, GDN members rely on the GDN and the associated African Program for Gender Statistics⁵ 'for training and capacity building' and find the resources that the network provides to be highly effective for their personal development (Deme 2022). According to Gloria Akoto-Bamfo from Ghana Statistical Service, the GDN "is pushing me to learn and challenging me to do a lot of things. It's made me sit up" (Akoto-Bamfo 2022).

5 The APGS is a joint regional program between key gender statistics stakeholders including UNECA, AfDB, UNWomen, AUC, PARIS21, the ILO, various statistics training centers, and other technical partners. The APGS "brings together under one umbrella programme initiatives aimed at the development of gender statistics that need to be undertaken by regional organizations, international agencies, and other institutions at the regional level. The Programme was endorsed by the Statistical Commission for Africa at its third session in 2012, which requested the Working Group on Gender Statistics to coordinate the implementation of the Programme and to report on progress made at in each of its sessions. ECA is also the Secretariat for the APGS" (UNECA 2020; 1).

3. LESSONS LEARNED ACROSS THE NETWORK

In just over two years, the Gender Data Network has established itself as an anchor of the African gender data and statistics community. It has 15 dedicated country members, each with one or more representatives who regularly exchange information, resources, partake in training, and work with partner institutions to foster interest in and actively curate improved gender data. Key informant interviews with members from across the network and concluding discussions from the January 2022 webinar highlight four key achievements to date:

1. First, the value of the network as a **supportive platform**, providing members with a sense of community and a deep well of technical know-how to draw upon. More than four informants stressed that it was a place to connect with peers, ask technical questions, and share ideas. They emphasized that it had given them “a community” and that it was “a place to share experiences” and to overcome the feeling that gender is “being siloed.” They particularly stressed the value of the network during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had helped them “to stay connected,” both to their peers and to the latest research.
2. A key contribution of the network has been the promotion of **technical exchange**. As a result of connections fostered through the network, NSOs have shared time use questionnaires, their experiences trialing new CGD methodologies, tips on building institutional capacity and fostering political buy-in.
3. A common challenge for gender data advocates and practitioners is fostering **political buy-in** and in doing so, securing more domestic resources. According to Caroline Gatwiri Mutwiri of the Kenya Bureau of Statistics “priority just isn’t given to the issue” (Mutwiri 2022). Internal cross-governmental advocacy is therefore vital. The GDN is empowering gender data advocates to do this by providing an international platform to showcase their work, by demonstrating international interest in and resourcing for this issue, and by identifying other authoritative voices who can promote gender data. With this support, national statisticians working on gender said they felt empowered to do more.
4. Finally, the network has helped shine a spotlight on the importance of **data communications, open data, and data use**. While production challenges remain, many members highlighted the communications training conducted in 2021 as particularly beneficial. They stressed that it had equipped them to engage with journalists and media persons, as well as other non-expert audiences, and to ensure that what data is available is clearly understood and can therefore be better used to affect policy change.

4. POTENTIAL FUTURE ACTIVITIES

GDN members are very optimistic about what the future holds for the group. In personal interviews, many stressed their eagerness for its expansion and noted a wide array of activities that they hope it will support. Top of the list is ongoing training, not just through collective webinars and events, but potentially through more personalized and dynamic forms of training tailored to individual members, as well as learning through peer exchange. To which end, more than three members stressed their eagerness to travel to other countries and observe their practices, with the hope that they might provide insights for their own domestic processes; “it would be good to hold up the good performers and learn from them”(Phiri 2022).

“MAYBE WHENEVER A COUNTRY IS PLANNING A NEW ACTIVITY, AT THE PLANNING STAGE, THEN WE COULD VISIT AND GET A FEEL OF HOW IT WAS DONE AND SO ON” (KAPUTU 2022)

Another key priority for members was continuing the focus on data communications and use. As noted by Gloria Akoto-Bamfo of Ghana, “data has its problems but the main issue is understanding and analysis. We don’t need big reports but simple accessible analytics that more people can understand” (Akoto-Bamfo 2022). The training on visualization conducted by PARIS21 was noted numerous times as very helpful for this purpose, but that more could be done to sustain interest in this topic and help members ensure they are applying their learning to timely policy challenges. Of particular interest is ongoing support for engaging with media; “We don’t just want our data to be used by policymakers and academicians. [We] want it to be used by the media and public. Most especially the media” (Kaputu 2022).

A common concern raised in the webinar, through key informant interviews and a range of relevant literature, is the political prioritization given to gender, as many politicians still consider it to be purely a

“WOULD LOVE TO PROMOTE GENDER AT THE EXECUTIVE LEVEL BUT MOST PEOPLE ASSUME IF YOU TALK ABOUT GENDER IT’S JUST ABOUT WOMEN SO IT CAN BE HARD TO ENCOURAGE INTEREST” (AKOTO-BAMFO 2022).

“women’s issue.” While members noted that the GDN was helping to change minds in their NSOs, other departments of government were still reluctant to engage, particularly on the issues of gender mainstreaming and gender

budgeting; “Many [of our government peers] still think gender is a women’s issue...We are still struggling to try and convince others to use gender stats in budgeting” (Mutwiri 2022). To help members overcome colleagues’ preconceived ideas and increase interest in the topic of gender data across government, members expressed interest in working together to create tools and instruments relating to sensitization, and to learn from other regions worldwide. GDN partners such as PARIS21, UNECA, Data2X, and Open Data Watch can also play a pivotal role in helping to raise the profile of gender data concerns and working to change mindsets, through international events, by facilitating high-level meetings for GDN members, and using the strength of the international community to gain the attention of senior policymakers.

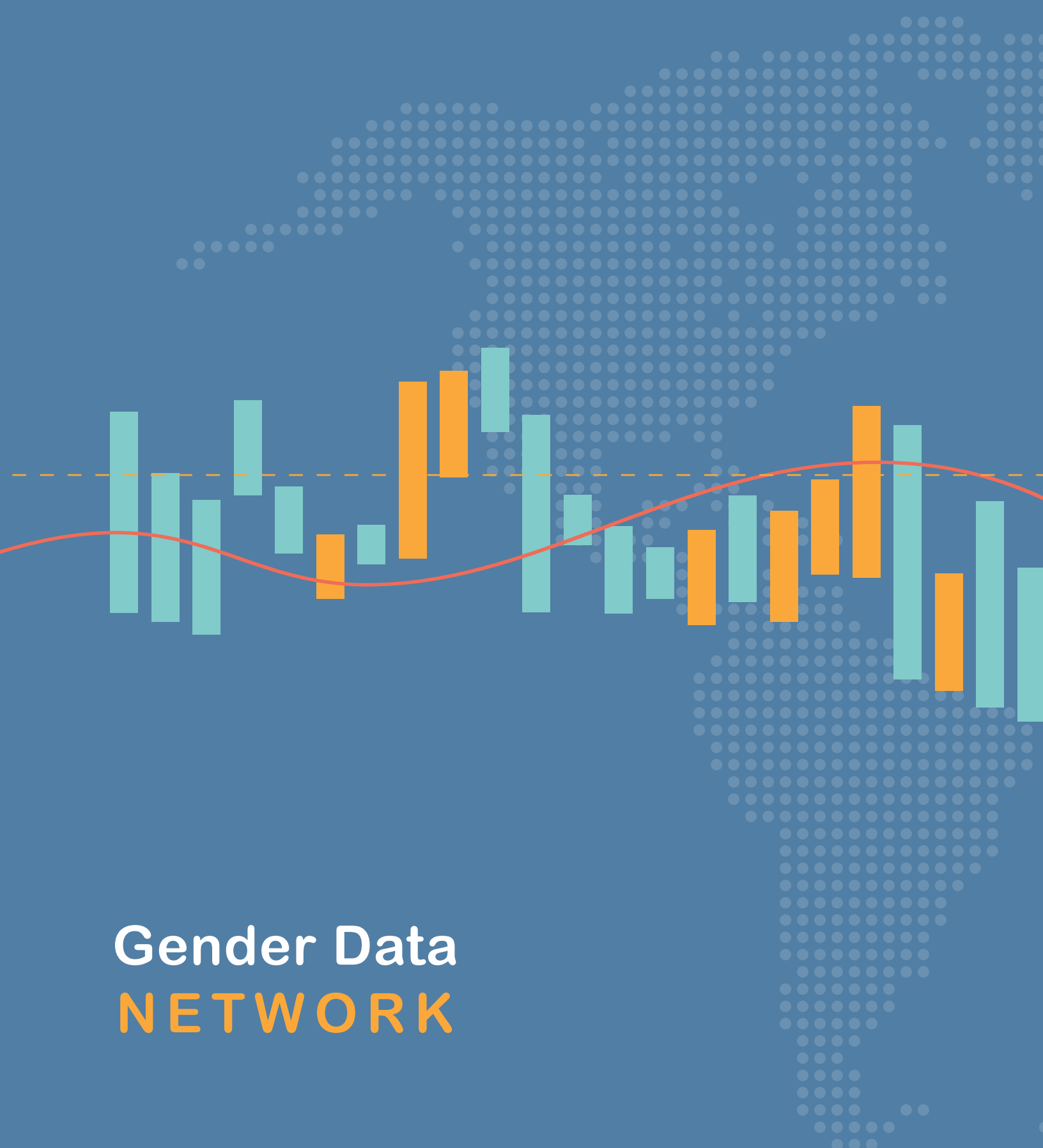
Relatedly, members expressed their deep support and appreciation for the many international organizations supporting the network’s activities and looked forward to the new coordination role to be played by PARIS21. They noted that the international consortium had given them access to new global networks, platforms, and experiences, and they were excited about the potential for increased opportunities moving forward. They were eager to make the most of the rich body of institutional knowledge within these international organizations through even more information sharing, not only via

email but by doing more with the centralized web platform, and through even more training with these entities. As was noted in the concluding remarks of one interview “there is always more to learn and share” (Kanobana 2022)—a statement that could act as a motto for the GDN for many years to come.

The GDN is a young network. It has only been operational for three years, but in that brief time it has added considerable value to its individual members and their national statistical systems. Through training, research, and peer exchange, it has encouraged the adoption of new gender data collection approaches, filling vital gaps in our knowledge. It has supported members to do more outreach and communication, helping policymakers and the public better understand gender inequalities, most notably through the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Key informant interviews have made it clear that members would like to see the Network continue and expand its operations, to enable more capacity development and work with additional countries. Thankfully the network enjoys the ongoing support of a wide variety of technical, international institutions who are committed to ensuring its expansion and success. UNECA, Data2X, ODW, and PARIS21 will have a crucial role to play, helping the network to build on its successes and gather the knowledge, capacity, and political attention it deserves in support of better gender data systems across Africa and the world. For everyone involved, the mission is to build gender data systems that are open, integrated with national priorities, well-funded and sustainable. It is also about building systems that are impactful, providing policymakers and the general public with information they can use to improve the lives of all people and ensure no one is left behind.

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