



Fulfilling the Promise of Better Data on Gender and Work:

How the 19th
International Conference
of Labour Statisticians
Impacted the Quality
and Use of Gender Data
in Policymaking

data2x^o

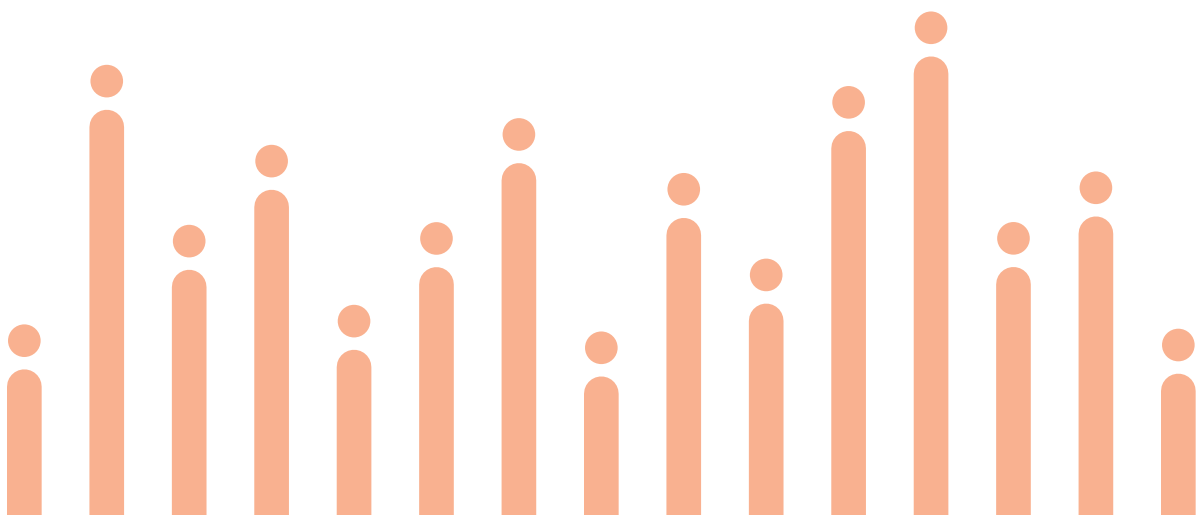


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Executive Summary

In 2013, an international definition of “work” was agreed upon for the first time as a reference concept to support measurement. Importantly for gender equality, the definition recognizes all paid and unpaid forms of work on an equal footing. This was a critical step towards making all the work that women typically do in the home, workplaces, and community clearly visible in statistics.

These changes—based on a resolution adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2013—were significant for other reasons, too. They affected how employment is measured by governments, narrowing the scope to only those activities done in expectation of payment or making a profit.

The new International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) standards on work have had significant impact in the four case study countries (Cote d’Ivoire, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Rwanda). The trends are similar across all countries, except for in Myanmar where there was no real change in the size and structure of the labor force when the 19th ICLS standards were introduced.

For the other countries, common trends include the shrinking of the labor force, more so for women than men, revealing the existence of gender gaps that were previously hidden in the statistics.

In Côte d’Ivoire, labor force participation of men barely changed between 2012 (72 percent) and 2016 (71 percent), but women’s fell significantly from 63 percent to 50 percent.

In Rwanda, labor force participation rates had been the same for women (84 percent) and men (83 percent) prior to the 19th ICLS standards, but fell significantly under the new definitions, especially for women, revealing an almost 20 percentage point gap in participation that was not visible before.

In Lao PDR, the changes were similar to those seen in Rwanda, with men and women having similar participation rates prior to the 19th ICLS standards and then showing a large drop in participation under the new measures.

Introduction

Since Marilyn Waring's 1988 book "If Women Counted" drew attention to feminist economics, the pressure to accurately measure all forms of work and recognize their value has escalated. The need for official statistics to reflect the hours mainly women spend cleaning, cooking, washing, and engaging in childcare and its worth to national economies was clear back in the 1980s. Yet, while the production of time use statistics has increased in the intervening years, improvements in the availability and use of official statistics on all forms of work have been slow to materialize.

In 2013, an international definition of "work" was agreed upon for the first time as a reference concept to support measurement. Importantly for gender equality, the definition recognizes all paid and unpaid forms of work on an equal footing.¹ This was an important step towards making all the work that women typically do in the home, workplaces, and community clearly visible in statistics.

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These changes—based on a resolution adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2013—were significant for other reasons too. They impacted how employment is measured by governments, narrowing the scope to only those activities done in expectation of payment or making a profit. Subsistence production, volunteering in or for organizations, and other selected unpaid activities previously counted as employment in many countries are now excluded. This has the potential to shrink the size of the labor force considerably—more so for women than for men—revealing gender gaps that were previously overlooked in official statistics.

Importantly, the new standards promote the measurement of all forms of work in official statistics. This encourages data producers and users to look beyond traditional measures of employment and unemployment (the labor force) to see the extent of other forms of work and how they interact with labor market participation. These data can be used to support women's economic empowerment by providing a picture of how different groups in the population have access to income-generating employment opportunities and how they combine that with unpaid work in their homes and communities.

Countries are still moving towards adopting these new definitions and changing how they produce statistics on work and on the labor force. The new definitions enable clearer measurement of how many women have gained access to income generating work compared to men. Some countries are seeing major reconfigurations of the labor

1. ILO. 2013. Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment, and labor underutilization, adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_230304.pdf

force because of the new framework. They are also complementing labor force statistics with new data on labor underutilization and time spent in unpaid forms of work to help complete the picture. Powerful gender analysis is now possible. However, the extent to which this is being done and the policy implications are largely unknown.

This report looks at how data on the labor force is changing and how it is being used in policies to achieve gender equality. Drawing on the recent experiences of four first adopters of the 19th ICLS framework in Africa (Côte d'Ivoire and Rwanda) and Asia (Lao PDR and Myanmar), this report explores how the framework has changed key labor force indicators and how new data are impacting gender policies and discussion. This report aims to inspire and support implementation of the 19th ICLS framework in additional countries and to open dialogue between the national statistical system and users of labor statistics about the impact new gender data based on the 19th ICLS framework can have on work-related policies.

Methodology

This report was written in early 2021 based on a combination of desk review and findings from the associated case studies in Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, the People's Democratic Republic of Laos, and Myanmar. The co-authors of the case studies are national consultants Emile Penatien Kone (Côte d'Ivoire), James Byiringiro (Rwanda), Chansathith Chaleunsinh (Lao PDR), and Khaing Khaing Soe (Myanmar). The national consultants collected information in 2020 and validated the draft with stakeholders, incorporating their feedback. The project design initially included face-to-face interviews and in-depth discussions, but with the global pandemic restricting movement internationally and locally, it was an achievement to gather the information virtually and hold limited consultations.

Data used in this report were provided by the national consultants based on national data in published reports from labor force surveys and compared to other household surveys and, in the case of Myanmar, the population and housing census.

Acknowledgements

This report was written by gender statistics consultant Jessica Gardner, with guidance and inputs from Mayra Buvinic, Neeraja Penumetcha, and Elizabeth Black (Data2X) and Deirdre Appel (Open Data Watch). The work of the national consultants on the case studies made this report possible and through them, the contributions of stakeholders in the four countries studied. International Labour Organization (ILO) statisticians Elisa Benes, Yacouba Diallo, Tite Habiakare, Kieran Walsh, and Samantha Watson provided valuable inputs and suggestions to strengthen the report.

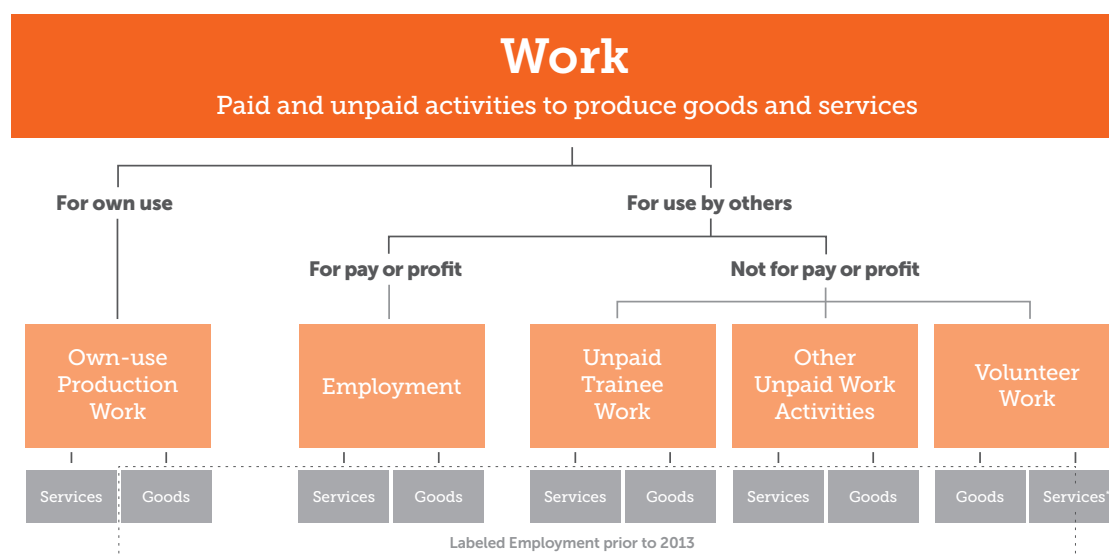
Importance of the 19th ICLS resolution for gender equality in work

The international standard setting body for labor statistics is the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS). Meeting every five years, the ICLS considers new requirements and makes recommendations to the International Labour Organization (ILO) governing body that become international standards for measuring work.

In 2013, the ICLS held its 19th meeting. A resolution on measuring work emerged that opened new opportunities for better gender data.² It recommended a definition of work that includes both paid and unpaid working activities and changed how they were to be measured in official statistics.

The 19th ICLS resolution has many benefits but the impact on measuring the work of women and girls is particularly significant. All five forms of work defined (Figure 1) are to be separately and comprehensively measured and statistics should reflect the fact that a person can be engaged in more than one activity at the same time.³

Figure 1. Types of work to be measured in official statistics



Note: *Those who volunteer for organizations or to produce goods for other households were included in the definition of employment prior to 2013. Only those doing direct volunteer work to provide services for other households were excluded.

2. ILO. 2013. Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labor underutilization, adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_230304.pdf

3. Data2X and ILO. 2019. Measuring women's paid and unpaid work under ICLS 19: Policymaker's brief. https://data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/PolicyMakerBrief_Online-WR-181003.pdf

From a gender perspective, the 19th ICLS resolution was a landmark step towards making all the work that women typically do visible. It recognizes all forms of work and promotes their regular measurement in national statistics, including data on:

- Crucial caring and domestic activities that women are overwhelmingly responsible for, and that households and economies rely on to function (own-use provision of services);
- Work women disproportionately do to produce food and other goods which enables them and their families to survive (own-use production of goods);
- Work women do for pay or profit (formal and informal employment);
- Volunteer work, such as the work women carry out to support their communities, help each other, strangers, and their environment; and
- Unpaid work done in exchange for training and to gain workplace experience that can reveal gender gaps in access to paid training and apprenticeship opportunities.

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A major change for labor statistics is a narrower definition of employment. People who produce goods for subsistence, volunteer their time for other organizations or households, or work for training, are no longer classified as employed.⁴ In some countries this was a significant part of the labor force and these changes impact both labor force participation and unemployment rates. A review of national practices before the 19th ICLS showed a variety of approaches to measuring employment. Forty percent of countries included own-use production of goods in their definition of employment but coverage of activities was limited. Few included those done disproportionately by women or young family members, such as fetching water and collecting firewood.⁵

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The 19th ICLS framework also brought in new measures of labor underutilization that provide valuable data for policymaking. These measures have improved the available information on women's interest in employment and the barriers they may face. They supplement data on unemployment to identify:

4. Adapted from ILO presentation by Monica Castillo entitled The Decent Work Measurement Framework and the ICLS 19 Resolution Concerning Statistics of Work, Employment, and Labor Underutilization given in Baku, Azerbaijan on 23 October 2014. https://www.ilo.org/stat/WCMS_323478/lang-en/index.htm

5. ILO. 2013. National practices in the measurement of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and time-related underemployment, Household-based sources. Room Document 12, 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 2-11 October 2013. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_222950.pdf

- **The time-related underemployed:** those employed but not working as many hours as they want and not having enough hours of work as compared to national thresholds and are available to work.
- **The potential labor force:** people who are not employed and meet only one criterion to be counted as unemployed (either actively seeking employment or are available to start if a job was offered to them).
- **The willing non-jobseekers:** people who are not employed and want to be but do not meet either criteria to be considered unemployed (because they did not seek employment and are not currently available).

Combined, the new concepts of employment and labor underutilization provide a different and potentially more relevant picture of the national labor force and the types of work in which people are engaged.

Progress in applying the new definitions

Widespread adoption of these new definitions has not yet been achieved and policy implications remain uncertain. Countries move at their own pace to adopt the new standards. Some, like Côte d'Ivoire, were ready to begin almost immediately after the resolution was adopted and was one of the first to apply the standards in their 2014 labor force survey. Other countries are still waiting to implement the standards.

Data2X has found case studies of first movers to be an effective tool to inspire similar data collection efforts in additional countries and to open dialogue on policy impact. Four countries were identified in early 2020 to be the focus of a case study on how the implementation of the 19th ICLS framework has impacted gender data uptake in policy processes. The case studies were selected to illustrate a diversity of experiences across two geographical regions: Côte d'Ivoire and Rwanda from Africa and Lao PDR and Myanmar from Asia. As shown in Table 1, each had implemented the 19th ICLS resolution in the last few years and had a baseline survey or census to compare the data before and after applying the new standards.

Table 1. Overview of implementation of the 19th ICLS resolution in case study countries

Country	Lead agency for labor statistics	Introduction of the 19th ICLS resolution	Pre-the 19th ICLS data source(s) used for comparison	Current frequency of labor force surveys	Subsequent use of the 19th ICLS resolution
Côte d'Ivoire	National Statistical Institute	2014 LFS	2012 LFS	Every 1-2 years	2019 LFS 2017 LFS 2016 LFS
Rwanda	National Institute of Statistics Rwanda	2016 LFS	2014 Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey	Quarterly	2019 LFS 2018 LFS 2017 LFS
Lao PDR	Lao Statistics Bureau	2017 LFS	2010 LFS	Every 3-4 years	2021 LFS
Myanmar	Department of Labour, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population	2015 LFS	2014 Population and Housing Census	Annual	2019 LFS 2018 LFS 2017 LFS

Advantages and disadvantages of the new definitions

Globally, women are two-thirds of the paid care workforce and women and girls perform more than three quarters of unpaid care work. Measuring unpaid care work is essential for recognizing, reducing, and redistributing this work more fairly between women and men.⁶ Producing goods for one's own household, providing services, volunteer work for organizations, one's community or other households, and unpaid training work provide a major contribution to the economy and society. The 19th ICLS resolution recognizes this contribution and provides governments and civil society with an international mandate to produce and use evidence on how people engage in all forms of work.

Another advantage of the 19th ICLS resolution is that it provides clear and distinct definitions of the types of work people undertake. When applied consistently within and between countries, users of labor statistics can be confident in how employment has been defined and the resulting labor statistics are internationally comparable. Previously, some but not all countries included own-use production of goods and volunteer work in their definition of employment. What resulted was a range of different definitions of employment and the labor force that relied on the data to be well described with metadata for users to know the precise definitions used.

A third advantage of the new definitions is that they contain new measures of labor underutilization that ask employed people if they are under-employed (want to be working more hours in their paid job), and measure the interest and potential of those outside the labor force to be employed.

6. Elson, D. (2017). Recognize, Reduce, and Redistribute Unpaid Care Work: How to Close the Gender Gap. *New Labor Forum*, 26(2), 52-61. Retrieved June 1, 2021, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26420070>

There are some disadvantages. A consequence of narrowing the definition of employment is that, if data collection focuses exclusively on labor force statistics, other forms of work may be missed. Producing quality statistics on unpaid forms of work must also be a priority.

Employment can be underreported in labor force surveys with respondents' perceptions about "jobs" and "work" influencing which of their activities they report on. Underreporting can be exacerbated when one person is reporting about work activities on behalf of everyone in the household. Good question design, rigorous testing, and technical support can help overcome these challenges. Guidance, including a generic labor force survey questionnaire is provided by the ILO to support countries to ensure all forms of work are well captured in statistics.

It is a challenge for countries to communicate the changes to labor force statistics and explain the break in series that occurs once the new definitions are adopted. Experiences from the four case study countries shows the importance of a strong focus on communication throughout data production from designing the new labor force survey through to disseminating the results.

Changes in labor force participation: results from the case studies

The new 19th ICLS definitions significantly changed the concept of employment and, as a result, labor force participation. The new definition of employment is limited to people working in exchange for an expected pay or profit. In countries where subsistence production of goods is substantial, and people do not complement this with paid work, fewer people will be counted as employed. They will instead shift to being counted either as unemployed (if they are seeking employment work and available to start) or outside the labor force. There are many reasons to be outside the labor force and not everyone is "inactive." In fact, the 19th ICLS resolution removed the use of the term "inactive" to describe persons outside the labor force as many are involved in productive activities, albeit unpaid. The important concept of the potential labor force—people outside the labor force who meet one but not both of the criteria for being unemployed—exists to help policymakers see some of the potential to grow the labor force.⁷

As outlined above, another important change was the additional measures of labor underutilization. For gender analysts, it is progress to see the replacement of the term "economically inactive" with "outside the labor force" to better reflect that people who are neither employed or unemployed can be contributing to the economy through other forms of work.

7. The potential labour force includes people not in employment available but not seeking and those seeking but not available. (ILO, 2019. Persons outside the labour force: How inactive are they really?)

A summary of the concept of employment before and after the 19th ICLS is in Table 2.

Table 2: Changes to the definition of employment before and after the 19th ICLS

Labor Force before the 19th ICLS		Labor Force after the 19th ICLS	
Employed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All who work for pay ▪ All who work for profit ▪ All who work for training ▪ All who work to produce goods for own final use ▪ All who volunteer for organizations ▪ All who volunteer to produce goods for households 	Not employed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Everyone else whether or not they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Provide services for own final use ♦ Volunteer providing services for households 	Employed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All who work for pay ▪ All who work for profit (employers, own-account workers, contributing family workers. etc.) 	Not employed if they exclusively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide services for own final use ▪ Volunteer providing services for households ▪ Work unpaid for training ▪ Produce goods for own final use ▪ Volunteer through/for organizations ▪ Volunteer producing goods for households

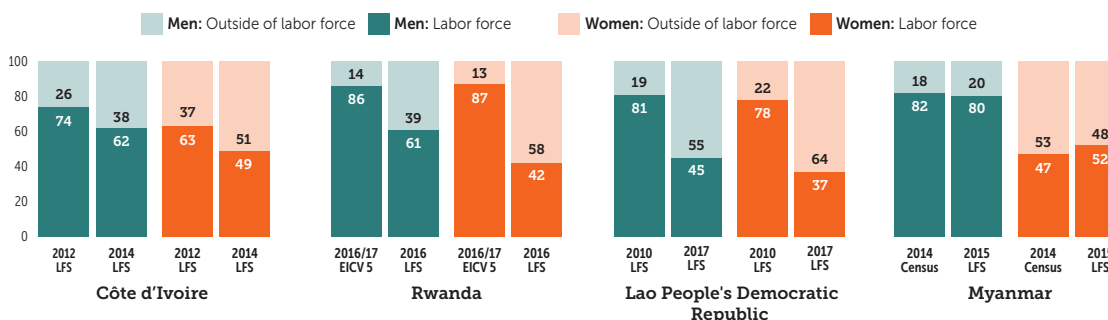
In the four case study countries, the new standards have had significant impacts. The trends are similar across all countries, except for in Myanmar where there was no real change in the size and structure of the labor force when the 19th ICLS resolution was introduced. This could be due to mixed livelihood strategies where a person undertakes multiple activities, some being for income generation and some for own use. In such situations, the boundary of production is blurred and cultural practices—such as a family farm considering all family members as contributing to the family business—may overestimate employment.

For the other countries, common trends include the shrinking of the labor force, more so for women than men, revealing the existence of gender gaps that were previously hidden in the statistics:

- In Côte d'Ivoire, labor force participation of men barely changed between 2012 (72 percent) and 2016 (71 percent), but women's fell significantly from 63 percent to 50 percent.
- In Rwanda, labor force participation rates had been the same for women (84 percent) and men (83 percent) prior to the 19th ICLS, but fell significantly under the new definitions, especially for women, revealing an almost 20 percentage point gap in participation that was not visible before.
- In Lao PDR, the changes were similar to those seen in Rwanda, with men and women having similar participation rates prior to the 19th ICLS and then showing a large drop in participation under the new measures.

Figure 2 shows the changes in labor force participation rates for men and women in the four countries studied. The charts compare the participation rates before and after the new measures were introduced. Changes are most marked for women in Rwanda, and for women and men in Lao PDR. In Myanmar, the rates barely changed and in Côte d'Ivoire, there was a similar reduction for men and women of 12 and 14 percentage points, respectively.

Figure 2. Labor force participation rates (%) before and after implementation of the 19th ICLS, by sex



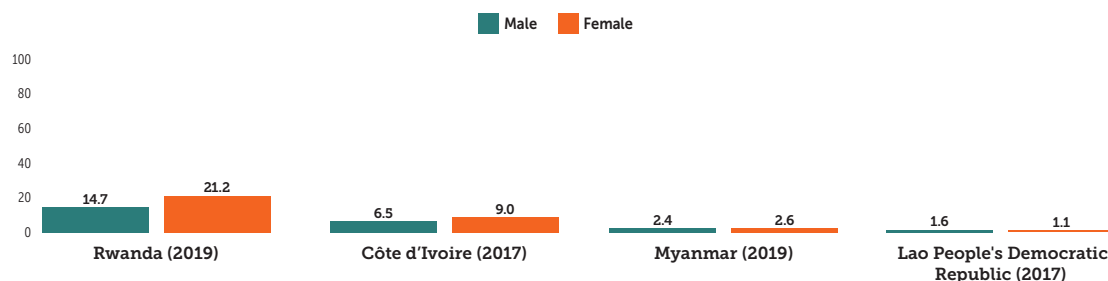
The gender gaps suggest that women have fewer income-earning opportunities than men. This may be due to discrimination in the labor market, social norms that discourage women from employment, the burden of unpaid domestic and care work, or a combination of these and other factors. The data show a clear need for continued investment in women's economic empowerment to overcome real or perceived barriers to employment.

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Labor underutilization data provides new insights

New measures of labor underutilization are useful for highlighting other gaps that can lead to the design of gender equality policies. In Rwanda in 2019, time-related underemployment was higher for women, who were more likely than men to want more hours of employment (Figure 3). One in five (21.2 percent) women were underemployed compared to 14.7 percent of employed men. Time-related underemployment was lower in the other countries examined. A clear gender gap was evident in Côte d'Ivoire where 9 percent of women compared to 6.5 percent of men wanted more paid work hours.

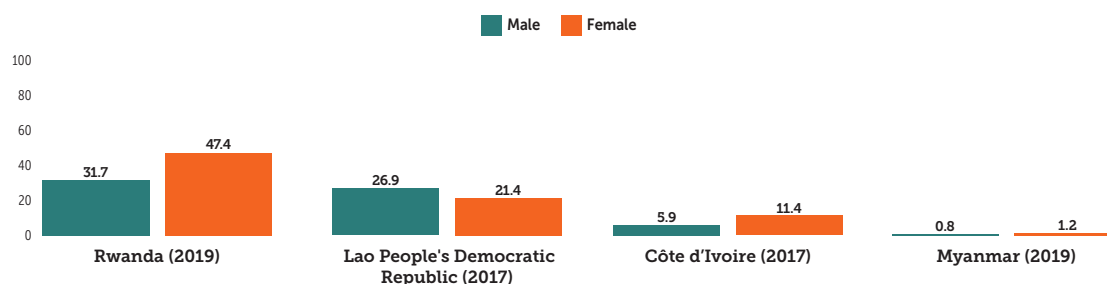
Figure 3. Time-related underemployment rate among the employed population, by sex (%)



With a high proportion of women outside the labor force, the potential labor force is a key measure that can help policies target prospective workers. The results can provide important data for policymakers seeking to reduce barriers and encourage women to enter or re-enter the labor force.

The combined rate of unemployed and the potential labor force is significant in Rwanda and Lao PDR (Figure 4). In Rwanda, nearly half of women in the extended labor force (employed + unemployed + potential labor force) were unemployed or in the potential labor force (47.4 percent) signifying pressure on the labor market to generate opportunities and address barriers for women. The large gap between women and men alerts policymakers that the labor market is not meeting the demand for employment, particularly for women. Opportunities exist to create jobs and enable women to participate. Contrary to the other countries, in Lao PDR the rate of unemployment and potential labor force is higher among men than women at 26.9 percent and 21.4 percent, respectively.

Figure 4. Combined rate of unemployment and potential labor force (LU3) as % of the extended labor force, by sex (%)



Note: the combined rate of unemployment and potential labor force, referred to in the 19th ICLS as LU3, is calculated as $(\text{persons in unemployment} + \text{potential labor force}) / (\text{extended labor force}) \times 100$

Own-use production a significant area of work in many countries

After the introduction of the 19th ICLS resolution, many labor force surveys continue to gather information on a range of own-use production work, including subsistence foodstuff production and domestic and care work. This allows comparison of labor force participation with some of the work done around the home.

Rwanda's 2019 labor force survey included a module of questions on own-use production that identified people who had worked unpaid in their own household or family:

- a) Caring for children or the elderly
- b) Household chores including shopping and preparing meals
- c) Construction or major repairs to their own dwelling
- d) Manufacturing household goods
- e) Searching for fodder
- f) Fetching water
- g) Collecting firewood

The results found that 90 percent of women and 68 percent of men were engaged in these types of own-use production work and that women spent an average of 27 hours a week on these activities compared to 16 hours spent by men. Prior to the 19th ICLS, when the own-use production of goods (activities c through e above) was classified as employment in some countries, these gender gaps in the paid and unpaid work between men and women were often hidden.

The results found that 90 percent of women and 68 percent of men were engaged in these types of own-use production work and that women spent an average of 27 hours a week on these activities compared to 16 hours spent by men.

The Rwanda LFS results were analyzed from a gender perspective and published in a thematic report.⁸ The overlap of own-use production with employment, unemployment, and labor underutilization is, unfortunately, not analyzed or presented in these reports. Doing so could reveal useful findings for gender-related policymaking and take advantage of the analytical potential the 19th ICLS resolution provides.⁹

The Lao PDR 2017 LFS also included a module of stylized questions on own-use production work of goods and services. It measured eight own-use production activities including subsistence foodstuff production, collecting water and firewood, and doing unpaid domestic and care work. The main survey report did not provide any analysis of the results beyond the finding that 87 percent of all people outside the labor force were engaged in own-use production (data was not sex-disaggregated in the report).¹⁰

More emphasis not only on measuring, but also analyzing and using data on all forms of work will help fill gender data gaps. This will also help ensure that collected data are used to paint a clearer picture of all kinds of work people do. Collected LFS data could be better utilized for national policymaking. The Rwanda case study found that data on subsistence agriculture, unpaid care work, as well as statistics on hours of work and income from employment, are not used in employment and gender equality related policies, reports, and documents in the same way as lead indicators on labor force participation.

Important to invest in explaining the changes

Implementing the 19th ICLS resolution brings significant changes, and the new data need to be well presented and explained to data users. Experiences in Rwanda showed that engaging stakeholders throughout the process of transitioning to the new measures was key. Anticipating the significant changes the new conceptual framework would bring to labor statistics, the National Statistical Institute of Rwanda started communications in February 2014, before the new standards were piloted in 2016. Workshops and meetings helped to build understanding and avoid misinterpretation and confusion.

8. Rwanda National Institute for Statistics. 2020. Labor Force Survey 2019, Thematic Report on Gender. <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/publication/labour-force-survey-2019-thematic-report-gender>

9. Discenza, A.R. and Walsh, K. 2020. Closing gender data gaps in the world of work – role of the 19th ICLS standards. ILO: Geneva. https://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_757964.pdf

10. Lao Statistics Bureau. 2018. Survey Finding Report: Lao PDR Labor Force Survey 2017.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the new questionnaire was designed so that key indicators could be produced based on both the old and new definitions. This helped to explain the new measures. The same happened in Rwanda, where publishing key indicators using both standards, continued in the LFS publications until users were familiar with new data and a time series based on new standards was established.

In Lao PDR, there were national workshops supported by the ILO to explain the changes and how to use them for policymaking. When presenting the significant shifts in the size of the labor force, it was a challenge to convince some users of data quality. Sub-national (province) level policymakers welcomed the changes and felt they better reflected reality. Those at central level took longer to understand and accept the changes.

In countries like Rwanda, where subsistence agriculture is important, the new concepts had a big impact on the level of employment in agriculture. With the new standards, persons involved in agriculture are now scattered in different categories. Some are employed, unemployed, or out of the labor force. The statistics on work in agriculture as a whole was still needed to inform policymaking. For example, the Rwandan government still needs to know the proportion of working age population engaged in agriculture, or the share of agriculture work in total population engaged in economic activities. A dedicated chapter on work in agriculture was included in the LFS report to address this need for data, and the scattered categories of agriculture are brought together and analyzed as a whole to present the full picture on work in agriculture to policymakers.

In Côte d'Ivoire and Myanmar, the culture of using data for policymaking is still developing, and the relationship between data producers and users remains weak. There was little invested in disseminating and communicating the changes. Somewhat unexpectedly, it was a challenge to explain the break in series in Myanmar, where the overall labor force participation rates for both women and men remain largely unchanged.

An unintended consequence of preparing the case studies underlying this report is that the process generated discussion between producers and users of gender data and raised awareness of the 19th ICLS resolution where it had been previously lacking. This was especially the case in Côte d'Ivoire and Myanmar, where gender and labor-related data has not been used much in the policymaking process to date. This points to the importance of investing more in user-producer dialogue and in partnerships between national statistical authorities and policymakers.

Policy impact—from data to action

The case studies show that new data based on the 19th ICLS resolution is proving valuable for policymaking although impact on gender-related policies is largely yet to be seen. Most countries are in the early stages of applying the 19th ICLS standards, and the links to policy change may take more time to surface. This is coupled with the fact that many countries are still overcoming common barriers to evidence-based policy analysis and use, such as limited accessibility of statistics and low data literacy. The complexity of labor statistics standards makes this a particular challenge. Those producing the data reported difficulties in explaining the concepts behind the new numbers. It seems there is much more to be done to bridge the communication gap between data users and producers.

Challenges aside, the new measures have ignited discussion and led to some examples of data use and policy change:

- In **Rwanda**, a new employment policy was adopted in 2019 with an overall objective to create jobs to reduce labor underutilization and enhance productivity and competitiveness. Reducing the number of people in the potential labor force is a priority. The policy mentions the need to bridge gender gaps and focus on youth.
- In **Lao PDR**, the National Assembly decided to adopt a new employment structure for the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) based on the revised definition of employment.¹¹ This established new targets for the size of employment in each sector with the target for agriculture falling from 64 percent to 39 percent, the industrial sector growing from 12 percent to 17 percent and services almost doubling from 24 percent to 44 percent. This is intended to better reflect the contribution of paid employment to each economic sector but represents a big shift in characterizing the country's employment structure. The policy is controversial, and in these early stages, many are still unsure how to apply it.
- In **Côte d'Ivoire**, new data have highlighted the informal nature of jobs and provided valuable measures of labor underutilization beyond the unemployment rate. Policy formulation has used the new indicators to highlight challenges in gaining employment and the major gaps that exist for women. Combined with other data on informality, the new measures are supporting the government in developing an action plan to transition more jobs from the informal to the formal economy.
- In **Myanmar**, civil society organizations have used new labor force data as evidence for advocacy, and in shadow reports and policy briefs related to commitments such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. UN Women has been supporting civil society organizations to develop capacity to access and use statistics.

11. National Assembly. (2020). Decree No. 01/NA dated 25 June 2020. *Accepting Government Report on Implementation of NSED during the first five-months, estimation of first six-months implementation, direction for last six-months, and revision of some targets for 2020 NSED.*

- Again in **Rwanda**, new labor statistics are being used to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. A national report on gender equality uses data from the 2019 LFS to describe the gaps and need for gender equality in economic transformation.
- Also, in **Lao PDR**, a government directive calling for the use of inclusive sex-disaggregated statistics in policy and planning has led to sex-disaggregated data from LFS 2017 more widely used. Policymakers highlight rates of labor underutilization in comments and presentations, especially in relation to own-use production workers, youth unemployment, informality, social protection, rural employment, and labor migration. However, data are not analyzed in-depth with a gender lens and the specific implications for women workers are not emphasized.
- And, in **Côte d’Ivoire**, government officials recognize the value in-depth analysis of the LFS data has for informed policymaking and they have requested the ILO to support capacity development in this area.

Some policy changes in response to new data raise cause for concern. In Rwanda, removing subsistence work from the definition of employment is encouraging policymakers to support increased agricultural productivity and facilitate a shift to market-oriented agriculture. While this has a positive impact on growing the economy, there is a risk that the gap between those with access to equipment and technology and those without will be widened. Without gender-sensitive policies, this could disproportionately impact women with less ownership and control of assets than men.

Similarly, in Lao PDR, the rural employment strategy—designed in response to new data on labor underutilization—may overlook many former subsistence producers, most of them women, who are now outside of the labor force. Until the other forms of work—such as unpaid domestic and care work and volunteering—are also measured, communicated, and considered in policymaking, the full benefits of the 19th ICLS resolution for gender equality cannot be realized.

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Common lessons learned

Some common lessons emerged from exploring the impact of new data on gender policy action. There was slower progress in Côte d’Ivoire, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, where key actors were unfamiliar with the new definitions and found the changes confusing. This seemed less so in Rwanda, due to more engagement with data users, who were brought along through the process of implementing the changes.

Gender statistics remains an area where continued investment is needed. In Lao PDR, the concepts of gender versus sex-disaggregated statistics are not yet widely understood, and available gender data is being underutilized. A persistent gap between producers of official statistics and those using them for gender equality and women’s economic empowerment

is a barrier to progress. This was observed in Côte d'Ivoire, Lao PDR, and Myanmar where a culture of evidence-based policymaking is still developing. It will take time for the new statistics on work to have an impact.

It is also necessary to consider the role of the enabling environment. The extent of the legal and policy framework for gender equality and the mechanisms in place for achieving those goals was striking in all the countries studied. Except for Côte d'Ivoire, each country has an active gender equality policy or plan, or has integrated gender into the national development plan, as is the case in Lao PDR. In Myanmar, various groups have been established for advocacy and work on women's economic empowerment. This includes the Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs Association providing a strategic alliance of women in business and academia since 1995, and the Business Coalition for Gender Equality representing a coalition of private sector companies advocating for gender equality practices and providing a center of excellence to support the private sector in Myanmar.

While the enabling environment is clearly important—particularly when coupled with long-standing national policies and institutional mechanisms for gender data—it is difficult to gauge its role in ensuring that gender data are shaping policies on work. Across the countries studied, people working on gender equality policies and programs reported being active users of labor statistics in their work, but the use was mostly limited to mentioning key sex-disaggregated statistics in speeches, policies, and national reports. There were no examples of more in-depth gender analysis of the new labor force survey results except in Rwanda, which produced a thematic report on gender from their 2019 LFS.

Making progress in gender data uptake takes time and requires investment in building data literacy. The case studies demonstrate that the relationship between the national statistical system and policymakers remains weak. Stakeholders in Lao PDR outside the main ministry for labor policy were largely unaware of ICLS-19 and the changed definitions. They had a limited understanding of the official data and reported a low capacity for analysis.

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An ongoing disconnect between data producers and users is hampering progress. In Lao PDR, agencies leading on gender policy are meant to conduct data analysis but lack the capacity to do so. Data producing agencies have the skills but lack resources and see it as the role of policymakers to address the capacity gap. Roles and responsibilities are unclear and a lack of action results. Effective communication of statistics is also a barrier. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, statisticians need to strengthen communication skills to interact with different target audiences, in particular data users without any background in labor statistics.

Conclusion and recommendations

While much of this report examines how the new definition of employment and concepts of labor utilization impact gender policies, a strength of the 19th ICLS resolution is that it encourages measurement of all forms of work, not just employment. That includes work that women are disproportionately engaged in around the world: unpaid domestic and care work, other forms of own-use production, and volunteer work. While most, but not all, countries have regular labor force surveys, few are producing national data on these forms of work as part of the regular production of statistics. Time use surveys are the recommended method for calculating gender gaps in own-use provision of services, but their cost and complexity keeps them from being conducted in many countries.

Increasing women's participation in the labor force and narrowing gender gaps in pay and decision-making roles cannot be achieved without addressing the imbalance in unpaid care work done by women and men. Measurement of own-use production of goods has been a priority of household surveys on income and living standards, but data on own-use provision of services has not received the same attention. There needs to be further exploration of the extent to which the 19th ICLS resolution is leading to better data on own-use production of services and volunteer work, and the use of those data in policymaking.

Recommendation: Quantifying the time spent and value of own-use provision of services is a critical area of gender analysis and a critical but ignored area for policymaking. Major data gaps exist that should be filled through dedicated time use surveys or modules that can be attached to standard labor force surveys (or similar surveys). SDG Target 5.4 and the associated indicator 5.4.1 commits countries to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work. The 19th ICLS resolution renews the focus for producing data on own-use production of goods and services, including subsistence foodstuff production, and other forms of work such as volunteering. In many countries, it is just as important to measure these forms of work as it is employment as they make a contribution that should not go uncounted.

The ILO has been providing technical assistance through regional and national workshops and support. All four case study countries benefited from direct technical assistance to implement the 19th ICLS resolution.¹²

Recommendation: Continue to provide technical assistance to conduct national surveys that produce gender-sensitive labor statistics aligned with the new standards.

Assistance is needed beyond the technical aspects of data collection and production to include dissemination and communication. The data need to be explained clearly, with the understanding that many users may not have understood the previous definitions. Discussions around the new measures are an opportunity to build data literacy from scratch.

12. ILO Department of Statistics. 2018. Report I: General Report, Twentieth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 10-19 October 2018). ICLS/20/2018/1. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_644595.pdf

The 19th ICLS resolution provides opportunities to produce better gender data on work that lead to better policy and decision-making for women in the labor force. As labor force surveys are redesigned to measure a narrower definition of employment, questions can be improved to collect more accurate information and clearly distinguish employment from other forms of productive activity. This can lead to better quality data on gender gaps that exist in the labor market, from rates of participation and underutilization to segregation in occupations and industries, security of employment, and differences in earnings.

The new definitions narrow employment, shifting own-use producers of goods from being employed to outside the labor force. The reasons for those changes in the size and characteristics of the labor force need to be clear. Statistics should show the extent to which changes are real versus being a result of the new measures. This will help avoid a corresponding narrow focus in employment-related policies.

Recommendation: Design labor force surveys to collect data and produce statistics to show labor force participation based on both pre- and post-ICLS-19 definitions, at least during a transition period. This could be done on a smaller representative sample of respondents if it proves costly to administer for the whole survey.

The 19th ICLS resolution expands the possibilities for analysis of patterns and trends in the world of work. Data must be analyzed, communicated, and used in policymaking processes. Limits in national capacity for gender data analysis are well documented and there has been growing emphasis on further investment in this area to fill capacity gaps.¹³ The experiences of the four countries studied demonstrate that investment is still needed. These countries collected data on employment and own-use production but did not analyze the relationship between these different forms of work in their published reports. There has been low uptake of this data in gender-related policies.

Recommendation: Increase support and assistance for gender-focused data analysis of labor force surveys and communication of those findings through products targeted at policy and decision makers. This is best done in partnership between data producers and users, including ministries leading work on employment, women's economic empowerment, and overarching gender equality policies.

Capturing the experiences of early adopters is valuable for countries embarking on applying the new standards. The studies found that the new definitions of work are only just starting to have an impact and clearer links to policy may be more evident in the years to come.

Recommendation: Continue to share experiences adopting new standards and seek opportunities to identify policy impact, document and share the lessons learned.

The International Labour Organization and its partners are developing modules of questions that can be used with labor force and other household surveys to measure unpaid domestic and care work, volunteer work, and other forms of work.¹⁴ This holds promise for supporting

13. UN Women: Women Count. <https://data.unwomen.org/women-count>

14. ILO Resources. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/resources/>

countries to fill data gaps urgently needed for gender equality policies. Gender equality advocates should be aware of the scope for statistics on work and aim to ensure adequate data are produced and used in policymaking. The limited awareness of ICLS-19 revealed in the studied countries suggests this is an area where more needs to be done.