

Persistent Gaps in Gender Data Will Challenge Movement from Zero Draft Rhetoric to Action

BUILDING GLOBAL MOMENTUM FOR GENDER DATA

United Nations Member States have long recognized gender data as an essential driver of gender equality, critical to guiding a path for action and tracking global progress. Following the landmark Beijing Platform for Action in 1995—in which states outlined the collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data as a strategic objective¹—the annual Commission on the Status of Women has featured gender data and statistics in every set of agreed conclusions since the dawn of the 21st century. Yet high-quality, open and regularly produced gender data remains elusive in much of the world. Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, less than half of Member States have made data available to effectively monitor SDG 5 (gender equality), and fewer still have regularly collected this data over time, hampering efforts to track progress.² This is true across the Sustainable Development Goals, where gender-relevant indicators across the framework suffer from poor coverage. Without further action to meet these global commitments, the unique inequities women and girls face worldwide will continue to remain invisible.

In 2021, the Generation Equality Forum outlined a path for change. Action Coalitions identified gender data as a key tactic to accelerate momentum, broadly calling for greater collection and use throughout the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality.³ This year—as the 66th Commission on the Status of Women meets for the first time following Generation Equality, and considers environmental and disaster risk reduction for the first time in two decades—Member States must build upon Action Coalitions’ ambitions to deliver the data needed for effective policymaking and implementation. This is particularly true of the gender-environment nexus, where gaps in data remain pervasive.⁴

The need for more and better gender data is already well-established in global climate policy. Most recently, UNFCCC’s Enhanced Lima Work Programme, adopted at COP25, calls for increased technical capacity building and availability of sex-disaggregated data under its Gender Action Plan. The Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction also emphasizes the need for decision-making based on sex-disaggregated data. Further, both the Convention on Biological Diversity’s 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification’s Gender Action Plan recognize the need to develop baseline gender indicators toward national climate targets.

1. UN Women, [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), Strategic objective H.3 (1995).

2. Per UNSD’s [SDG Global Database](#).

3. For further analysis of the Global Acceleration Plan, see [Commitment Makers Must Prioritize Gender Data Throughout the Generation Equality Process](#) (Data2X, 2021).

4. For more information, see [Mapping Gender Data Gaps: An SDG Era Update](#) (Data2X, 2020).

Climate and environmental crises exacerbate gender inequality and pose some of the greatest threats to sustainable development of our time. As the world shifts from recognition to policy implementation, the time for the Commission to act in service of gender-environment data is now.

THE 66TH COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION

The annual Secretary General’s report on the CSW priority theme reveals the wide-ranging gendered impacts of climate change, disasters and recent environmental trends. Accordingly, the Secretary sets out a broad and ambitious set of recommendations for change, including proposed text that ultimately serves as the basis of a zero draft for the Commission’s agreed conclusions. But addressing any of the challenges noted by the Secretary General—and successfully implementing any of the draft agreed conclusions—will require dedicated focus and investment in gender data, both to develop a baseline and deliver progress. This is especially true of the gender-environment nexus, where challenges in generating robust data⁵ have led to persistent gaps in knowledge that will hamper movement from zero draft rhetoric to action (see Table 1, below).

Table 1: Gaps in gender data must be addressed to support successful implementation of zero draft recommendations.

Zero Draft Recommendation	Associated Gender Data Gap
<p>(c) “Recognize the disproportionate and distinct effects of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters on women and girls...”</p>	<p>As noted by the Secretary General’s report, no internationally standardized framework to monitor climate change currently exists, impeding efforts to track disproportionate effects on women and girls and develop associated policy interventions.⁶</p>
<p>(h) “Ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women at all levels of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction governance...”</p>	<p>While national governments and international organizations are increasingly monitoring women’s participation in environmental decision-making, information on the full breadth of women’s leadership is inconsistently tracked, including women heads of environment ministries or green parties; women participants in national-level forums and environmental governance; and women’s representation in natural resource sectors.⁷</p>
<p>(i) “Leverage the participation and influence of women in managing the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, including in conflict- and crisis-affected settings.”</p>	<p>Broad country coverage of gender data to track women’s access to and management of natural resources is lacking, and such data collection in conflict- and crisis-affected settings is even more difficult.</p>

5. These challenges include difficulties in measuring women’s unpaid conservation work in households and farms and obstacles in unpacking community- and household-level data to accurately reflect individual-level inequalities. For more information, see: Munoz Boudet, Ana Maria et. al. [“Gender Differences in Poverty and Household Composition through the Life-Cycle: A Global Perspective.”](#) (World Bank, 2018); Buvinic, Mayra and Levine, Ruth. [“Closing the gender data gap.”](#) (Significance, 2016); and [World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development](#) (World Bank, 2012).

6. For more information, see [Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes: Report of the Secretary-General](#) (E/CN.6/2022/3).

7. For information on these and all following gender data gaps, see [Mapping Gender Data Gaps: An SDG Era Update](#) (Data2X, 2020).

Paragraphs (n) – (r): “Building the resilience of women”

Assessing vulnerability and disaster resilience will require gender data improvements across sectors—from economic opportunity and GBV prevention to health and education—to level-set, monitor, and ultimately realize greater resilience.

(v): “Promote the equal access of women to decent work in green and blue economic sectors...”

Data on women’s access to economic opportunities in green and blue sectors, particularly surrounding natural resources, is scarce, limiting the informed creation of targeted work programs and economic policies.

Building a stronger normative framework to measure the gender-environment nexus will require concerted action, and the Commission on the Status of Women is well-poised to elevate calls for investment and innovation. In keeping with past session outcomes, the Commission’s zero draft features a full section on gender data, featuring broad recommendations to strengthen capacity across the [gender data value chain](#). This includes the Commission’s first-ever mention of data use, and promising recognition of the links between climate change and other development outcomes for women and girls. However, in light of the worldwide dearth of data on the gender-environment nexus—and the centrality of quality, regularly produced gender data to operationalizing any of the Commission’s draft conclusions—we urge the Commission to respond to this unique global moment by considering the following recommendations in forthcoming revisions.

Table 2: Existing zero draft recommendation on gender data

Enhancing gender statistics and data disaggregated by sex

- (s) Strengthen the capacity of national statistical offices and government institutions to collect, analyse, disseminate and use data on climate change, environmental and systemic risks and disaster impacts, disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, geographical location and other characteristics, including on links between climate change and child marriage and other areas with distinctive impacts on women and girls, and support developing countries in ensuring high-quality, reliable and timely gender statistics to inform climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes; (E/CN.6/2022/3, para 57 (s))

NEGOTIATED TEXT RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Reinsert critical language on financing for gender data.** Gender data systems suffer from chronic underinvestment worldwide, and solutions must include both greater domestic resource mobilization and increased official development assistance for gender data. Past conclusions have referenced the need to support developing countries via the mobilization of financial and technical assistance from all sources. Without greater investment in gender data systems, Member States cannot achieve the Commission’s ambitious agenda, making reinsertion of language on financing for gender data a policy imperative.
- **Strengthen language surrounding the policy process.** Just as it is critical to support gender data production and use, it is also critical to rely on data throughout the policy process. This is true not only of developing countries—as the current draft implies—but also of all Member States. Subsequent revisions should refer to policy earlier in the recommendation, and note design, implementation, and tracking, as in previous agreed conclusions.⁹ This should also include explicit reference to integrating gender perspectives in climate policies and programs.

8. For more information, see [State of Gender Data Financing 2021](#) (Data2X & Open Data Watch, 2021).

9. For example, see [CSW65 agreed conclusions](#) (E/CN.6/2021/L.3).

- **Retain new language on data use.** When consulted to craft policies and guide investments, gender data can accelerate gender equality and ultimately contribute to climate resilience. As the text highlights, links between national statistical offices (NSOs) and government institutions are key to ensuring that data exists and is used for policy change. While NSOs can support decisionmakers in understanding data and evidence, policymakers across government institutions—not only NSOs—bear responsibility for using gender data to inform climate interventions.
- **Retain language on links between climate change and associated impacts on women and girls.** Gender data has the power to reveal otherwise-obscured inequalities. Illuminating interlinkages between climate change and seemingly unrelated impacts on women girls—including child marriage, as the zero draft outlines, and other areas like migration or sexual and reproductive health and rights—is key to filling knowledge gaps and advancing a comprehensive, intersectional policy approach. This should include dedicated mention of strengthened data on women’s work, which would further support robust measurement of associated climate impacts.