Summary Findings from Lao PDR, Kenya and Mexico country missions

Country missions in Lao PDR, Kenya and Mexico consisted on a two-day knowledge-sharing workshop with key stakeholders from ministries, statistical offices, international organizations, civil society organizations and academia; and in-depth interviews with national key informants.

The two-day knowledge-sharing workshops contributed to build capacity on the gender-environment nexus and the importance of data to measure gender equality within environmental sectors and also to learn about the current status of data collection, analysis and dissemination in Lao PDR, Kenya and Mexico, across four priority areas. Workshops rendered an opportunity for collaboration between actors from different sectors and with different expertise—that rarely, if ever, work together—to identify national statistical capacities, opportunities and challenges, as well as national priorities, in regard to gender and environment statistics.

Table 1: Priority Areas

A: Right to land, natural resources and biodiversity
B: Access to food, energy, water and sanitation
C: Climate change, sustainable consumption and production, health and well-being
D: Women in environmental decision making at all levels

Indicator priorities in Kenya, Lao PDR and Mexico

Priorities across countries vary due to their different socio-economic context; however, the three countries identified climate change, land ownership and women's participation in decision-making as some of their top priorities. Additionally, Kenya emphasized the need to collect data on water access, while Lao PDR focused on reliance on natural resources. On the other hand, Mexico highlighted the need for more urban-appropriate indicators and proposed additional indicators along the four priority areas discussed during the workshop.

National commitment to gender equality

Lao PDR, Kenya and Mexico are already collecting some sex-disaggregated environmental data, for example, in relation to land ownership. However, each country is at a different stage in data collection and gender-environment statistics given their different socio-economic and cultural contexts that frame their national priorities and their capacities to collect these data. Nevertheless, all three countries are committed to gender equality and subsequently have a strong gender mandate to mainstream gender equality, including in statistics. Kenya has a strong gender equality mandate across sectors and in Lao PDR the national statistics law requires the disaggregation of data by sex. In Mexico, in addition to gender equality laws and strategies, there are specific guidelines for the mainstreaming of gender in statistics.

Women's participation in decision-making, including regarding gender-environment statistics, and the designation of gender focal points also contributes strengthening national statistical capacity. In Lao PDR, the Lao Women's Union (LWU) and the Committee for the Advancement of Women and Mother-Child (NCAWMC) are responsible for the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment and have a role in decision-making by participating in different working groups and committees across the ministries; which provides a strong network to advance gender

within the environment and other sectors. Similarly, in Kenya, gender experts are seconded from the Department of Gender Affairs to other ministries, such as the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

The role of the statistical offices
National statistical offices should also have a strong mandate on data collection, including gender statistics. Mexico, as a leading country in data collection and gender mainstreaming in Latin America and globally, provides a good example of data centralization and coordination among the statistical office and ministries. The National Institute for Statistics and Geography (INEGI) is the main responsible for data collection and coordinates with the ministries through Specialized Technical Committees on different themes, including gender, environment and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) each have a mandate to be responsible for official statistics, though they identified challenges in centralizing and sharing data and could find insightful ideas in Mexico's structure to strengthen the mandate and technical capacity of their statistical offices and to enhance coordination with ministries and international organizations.

Finding opportunities in the international realm
Countries' commitment towards the SDGs provides an excellent opportunity for the strengthening of their capacities, including in the gender-environment nexus. All three countries participated in the voluntary national reviews of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, with Kenya participating in 2017 and Lao PDR and Mexico in 2018. Mexico has developed a platform with existing national data to measure the SDG indicators. In the three countries, ministries are responsible for compiling existing data that can be used to measure SDG indicators, whether collected by the statistical office or the ministry itself. This provides a great opportunity to enhance cooperation among ministries and the statistics offices, for example through committees and working groups, that can be replicated for other statistics beyond the SDGs. National commitment towards the SDGs provides an opportunity for the assessment of existing gender and environment statistics and possible entry points.

Kenya and Lao PDR identified some capacity needs in the gender-environment nexus and in statistics. Additionally, Lao PDR also identified some specific challenges when collecting data in rural areas, particularly in remote areas, due to language, time and budget constraints. They highlighted the significant role that international organizations play in their countries in terms of financial and technical support for the development of surveys and statistics (such as the DHS and MICS surveys) and as collectors of data as part of their projects in the countries.

Moving beyond data collection to data disaggregation and analysis
All three countries mentioned the need to disaggregate data by other factors, including age, ethnicity and region, among others. Mexico, Lao PDR and Kenya are already disaggregating some of their data by some of these variables, including by ethnicity.

Aware of the importance of collecting gender and environment data, Kenya and Mexico particularly emphasized the need to analyze and contextualize the data collected in order to give context to the numbers and tell a gender story, a process that is rarely being done at the moment. Without data disaggregation and a proper analysis of statistics to better understand women's and men's gender differences, data alone cannot contribute to informing policies and addressing gender inequality.