



# Issues Note

## Session 2

### Integrating gender into environmental policies: Data and evidence challenge

**2020 Global Forum on Environment**

**MAINSTREAMING GENDER  
AND EMPOWERING WOMEN  
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

**Paris, 5-6 March**





## Issues Note

### MAINSTREAMING GENDER AND EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

# Session 2: Integrating gender into environmental policies: data and evidence challenges

*Environmental factors may affect men and women differently, due to different physiological characteristics, behaviours and roles in many societies. Case study evidence increasingly shows linkages between gender and the environment (OECD, 2018). However, data collection and indicators on interlinkages between gender and environmental goals are generally scarce both at national and global levels. In order to inform policies to achieve the gender equality and environmental sustainability goals as enshrined in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan, there is a need for more sex-disaggregated data across different areas. In addition to gender, the 2030 Agenda calls for further disaggregation, such as by income, geography, age and disability for targets to be adequately measured and ultimately met.*

#### The gender–environment nexus

The 2030 Agenda acknowledges gender equality and women’s empowerment as a key Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 5) in its own right. In addition, SDG 5 can contribute to the delivery of all other SDGs, and is in turn affected by them. Many countries around the globe have been taking initiatives to address gender inequality from an economic and social angle, focusing on discrimination, education, labour and health policies (OECD, 2017). However, the interlinkages between gender and the environmental goals have not been sufficiently visible nor have they been adequately prioritised.

There are many examples on the differential impact of environmental changes on women compared to men, largely because of differences in behaviours, including the traditional role of women in household and community care. In rural areas around the world, women play a key role in the protection, restoration and promotion of sustainable use of ecosystems, management of forests, combatting desertification, or halting biodiversity loss. Women are also more severely affected by in-door air pollution and natural hazards, both in the Global North and the Global South.<sup>1</sup> There are also many case studies showing that women follow more sustainable consumption patterns or use more sustainable means of transportation than men, yet the design of cities and transport infrastructure often does not take into account women’s social role and needs (e.g. over security and personal safety or scheduling of public transport services) and hence, does not allow women to follow their more environmentally-friendly preferences<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, faster progress in achieving environmental goals could lead to a transition towards a “greener” labour market, creating, if appropriately supported, new more job opportunities for women and men.<sup>3</sup>

Recognising and understanding the gender-environment nexus could allow countries to enhance their efforts in reaching their global, national and local sustainable development commitments. Gender inequality may hinder the transition to green, low-carbon growth, and hamper environmental sustainability. At the same time,

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<sup>1</sup> These points are further developed in the other Issues Notes of this Global Forum, e.g. Issues Note for Session 3 on health.

<sup>2</sup> See Issues Note for Session 4.

<sup>3</sup> See Issues Notes for Sessions 5, 6.1 and 6.2.



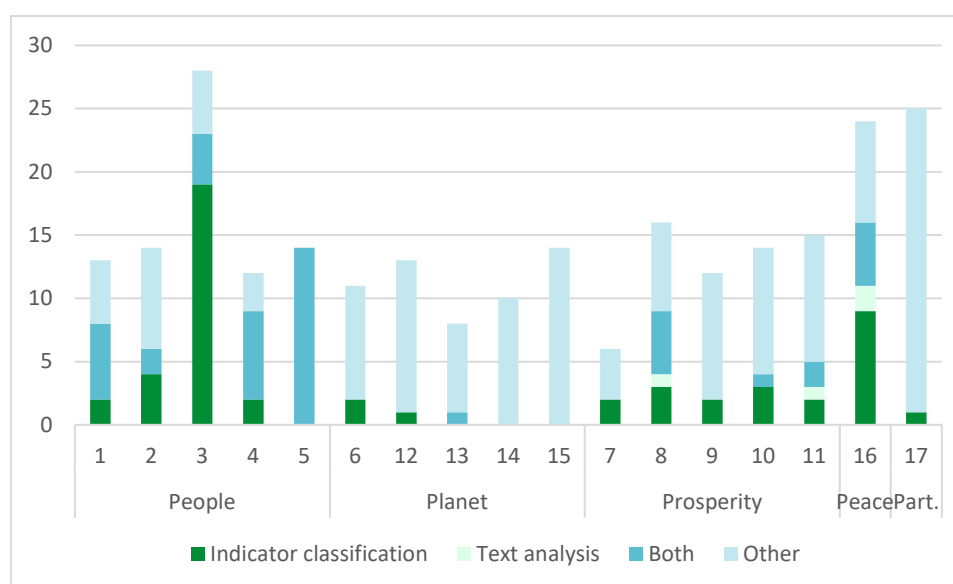
environmental policies that do not take into account the needs of half of the world population are by construction ineffective and unfair.

Unfortunately, there is scant systematic research on the differential impacts environmental degradation (e.g. air, water and soil pollution, loss of biodiversity), climate change or toxic chemicals may have on men and women. The lack or insufficient disaggregation of data by sex impedes analysis needed to shape sustainable and inclusive policies. In general, the gender-environment nexus is much more marked in low-income countries, but there are also a number of important interlinkages in higher income countries, such as access to transport, the impact of chemicals and air pollution on women's health, and the net costs of subsidies to polluting industries by gender.

### Ongoing efforts to collect gender-disaggregated environmental data

Based on the methodology of the Measuring the Distance to SDG Targets (OECD, 2019a) study, the OECD is preparing an assessment of the distances to SDG targets for women and girls, i.e., applying a gender lens to the Measuring Distance study. This paper will include several approaches for identifying gender-related indicators in the UN Global SDG Indicator Framework (United Nations Statistics Division, 2019a). Based on the preliminary analysis, some 41% of indicators in the UN Framework are identified as gender relevant. The analysis is based on a dual approach, using both a text analysis of the indicators, as well as an indicator classification. Figure 1 shows that these indicators are unevenly scattered across the 17 goals.

**Figure 1. Number of gender-related indicators in the UN Global SDG Indicator Framework, by goal**



*Note:* The figure shows the indicators in the *UN Global Indicator Framework* which are identified as gender relevant in the analysis. Blue horizontal stripes represent indicators identified by the indicator classification only, red vertical stripes represent indicators identified by text analysis only and purple represents indicators identified by both. Grey represents indicators, which are not identified as gender relevant.

*Source:* UN Global SDG Indicator Framework

Gender-relevant indicators are identified for goals on Eradicating Poverty, Health, Education, Gender Equality, Economy, and Institutions (goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 16), whereas on the Planet goals (goals 6, 12, 13, 14, 15) almost no indicators are identified as gender relevant. The share of gender-relevant indicators across the goals varies, from Gender Quality where unsurprisingly all indicators are relevant, as expected, Health with 82%, Education



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with 75% to Partnerships with just 4% and Oceans and Biodiversity (goals 14 and 15) with no gender-relevant indicators.

Many of the SDG indicators focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment (mainly under the "People", "Prosperity", and "Peace" goals), such as ending discrimination, ensuring equal rights to property and voice and representation in decision-making are key to allow women to engage in economic activities that protect the environment and promote sustainable development. In this regard, the SDG framework addresses effectively the causality going from gender equality to environmental sustainability (OECD, 2018).

On the other hand, gender-related indicators are almost absent under the Planet goals, meaning that these environmental indicators cannot be disaggregated by gender, their text does not address gender, and that, according to the SDG framework, the indicators are not relevant to gender policies.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the dual approach reveals that there are inconsistencies between the indicator text and the disaggregation, most notably on Health (goal 3), where most indicators are measured at the individual-level and could thus be measured for women and men (or for women only), but are not identified as gender-relevant according to the text analysis, i.e. do not have gender relevant wording.

Furthermore, the full list of environment-related SDGs goes beyond the five "Planet" goals identified in Agenda 2030, and includes also SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), SDG 9 (Industry, innovation, and infrastructure), and SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities). These are part of the "Prosperity" group of SDGs. The SDG framework clearly falls short in embedding a gender perspective in the eight key environment-related SDGs (goals 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15), the last two having no gender specific targets or indicators. Efforts are under way to improve gender-disaggregated environmental data, such as by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in relation to SDG 15, but there is still a long way to go.

There are a number of international initiatives to further develop gender-disaggregation of data, some including also an environment dimension. The Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics, in which the UN Statistics Division along with UN Women and other organisations, has grouped a minimum set of 52 quantitative and 11 qualitative gender indicators, of which only a few are linked to the environment (United Nations Statistics Divisions, 2019b). In March 2019, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) published a report "Gender and Environment Statistics: Unlocking information for action and measuring the SDGs", which proposes 18 gender-environment indicators, across four priority areas: the right to land, natural resources and biodiversity; access to food, energy, water and sanitation; climate change, sustainable production and consumption, and health; and women in environmental decision-making at all levels (UNEP and IUCN, 2018). Some of these indicators are more relevant for developing countries.

There are also important regional level UN initiatives to measure the gender-environment nexus. For instance, UN ESCAP analysis led by Serrao et al. (2019) takes stock of related data and capacity gaps in the Asia-Pacific region and puts forward a proposal for a Gender-Environment Indicator Set (United Nations ESCAP, 2019). This set includes indicators from the global SDG framework and beyond, capturing issues of particular relevance for the gender-environment nexus in the region. Specifically, Serrao et al. identify 19 gender-environment indicators, two of which are directly from the 93 environment SDG indicator framework (identical to SDG indicators 1.4.2 and 5.a.1), seven are modified by extending or merging SDG indicators (similar to SDG indicators) and ten are from outside the SDG framework (non-SDG indicators).

Given the horizontal nature of its work, the OECD could contribute to the recognition of the gender – environment nexus as a useful dimension for the development of environmental data and statistics, in a manner that is internationally harmonised and applicable to all countries.

While the OECD and its member countries have been active in strengthening data gathering on gender aspects of economic and social policies, this is less marked for the environment and environmental policies with only some work done among its members. For example, the 2008 and 2011 OECD Surveys on Environmental Policy

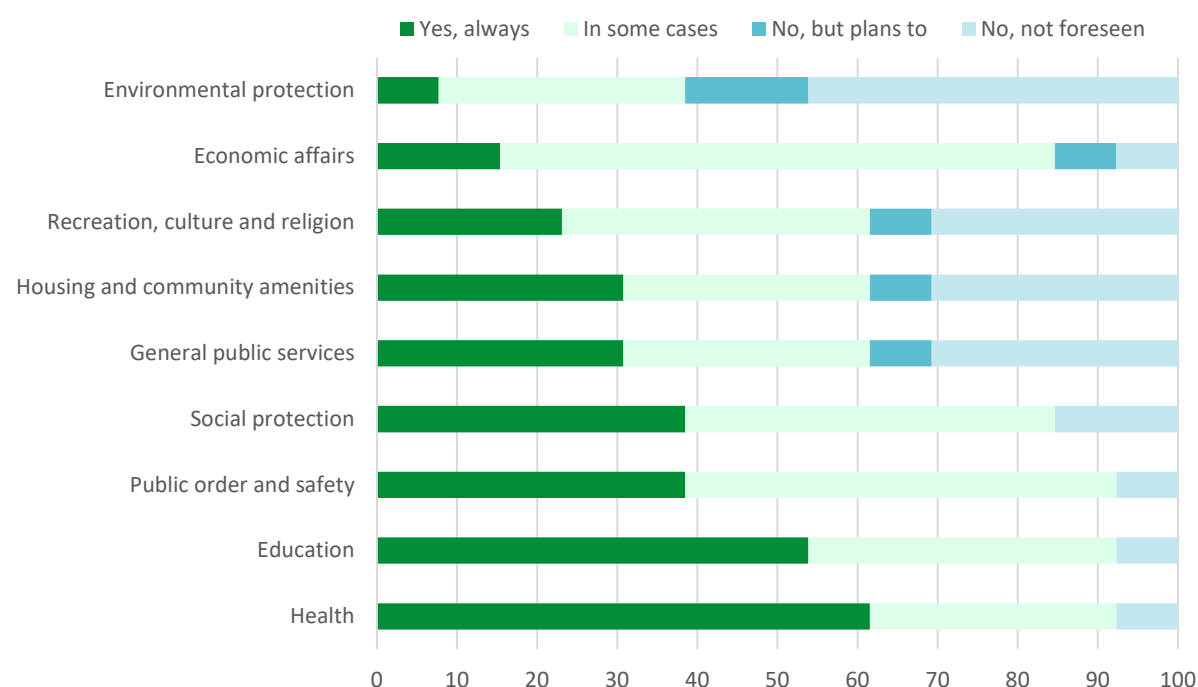
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<sup>4</sup> The text analysis was based on identifying indicators with words relating to gender, e.g. women, girls, boys, gender, sex etc.

and Individual Behaviour Change (EPIC), contained questions pertaining to the collection of some gender-disaggregated data on sociodemographic characteristics, waste, transport, energy, food and water consumption and preference patterns at the household level (OECD, 2011). More extensive work has been done on the gendered effects of chemical exposure through the OECD Guidelines for the Testing of Chemicals, especially on endocrine disruptors (OECD, 2013). However, more efforts are needed to fully integrate gender in environmental policies and to adequately measure the interlinkages of the two.

A 2017 Survey on gender-disaggregated data collection in OECD countries showed that about half of the respondents stated that they do not collect such data related to environmental policies, nor do they plan to do so. Less than 10% of the respondents stated that they collect such data on a regular basis (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Collection of gender-disaggregated data across sectors**



Source: OECD, 2017

In an effort to accelerate the integration of a gender perspective across all policies, the OECD launched a Gender Mainstreaming Policy Platform in 2019. Among other objectives, the Platform aims to advance evidence-gathering on the gender-environment nexus. One of its first initiatives has been the preparation of a survey on “Integrating Gender in Environmental Policies” which was circulated to the Environmental Policy Committee (EPOC) in 2019 to gather information on to what extent and how OECD member countries consider gender in environment-related policy-making, budgeting, and governance.

The survey addressed national strategies, actions or mechanisms to mainstream gender into environmental policy and decision-making, as well as some thematic questions: labour implications of greener economies for men and women, gender and infrastructure, sustainable consumption patterns by gender, and different health impacts on men and women based on exposure to environmental toxins. The Survey asked also whether countries collect gender-disaggregated environmental data.

At the time of preparation of this note, 23 out of the 36 member countries responded to the questionnaire. So far, the results are mixed, and the scope and detail provided by countries varies. Several countries did not fully complete the questionnaire, which may indicate a lack of attention paid to the gender-environment nexus,





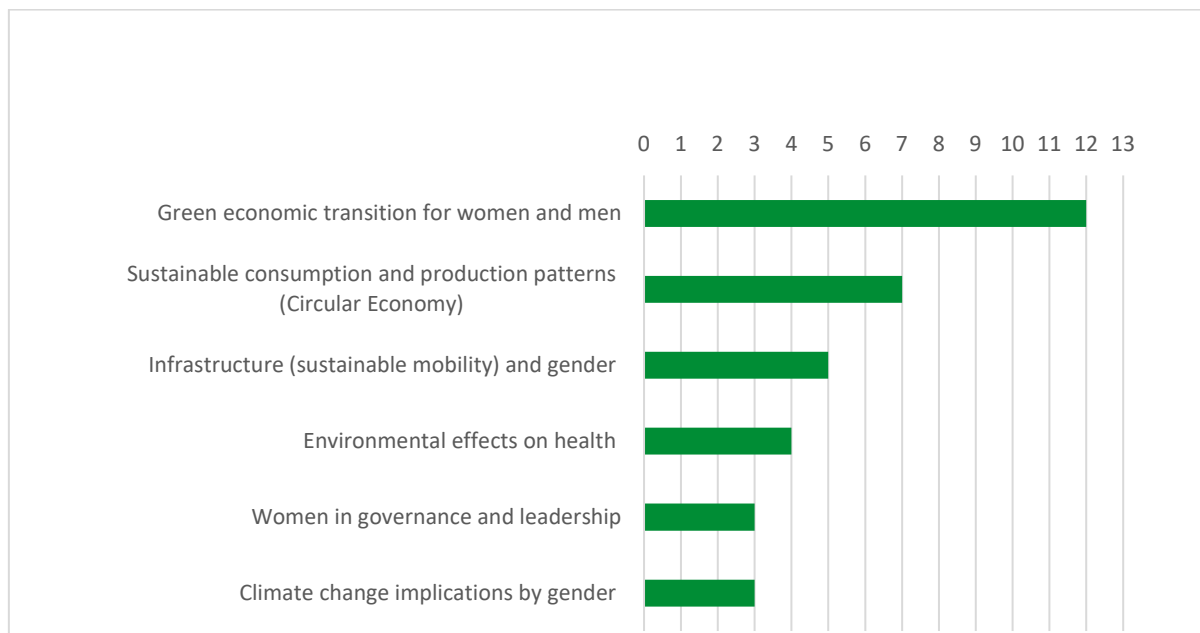
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and/or that gender-environment action is based on a more piecemeal approach whereby policy or data centres around one or two chosen subjects. Only 13 of the respondents identified some gender aspect consideration in their environmental policy-making, with only 4 (notably Belgium, Canada, Finland and Ireland) always considering them.

On data collection, only 8 OECD member countries collect gender-disaggregated data related to environment and/or environmental policy-making. It is less clear whether OECD members are providing such data to other international organisations and databases, or whether they simply do not recognise doing so. Two thirds of the responding countries identified areas which they would like the OECD Secretariat to explore further. These include economic implications of the green transition for men and women, sustainable consumption and production patterns by gender, greening infrastructure and its implications on men and women as well as environmental effects on health by gender (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Prioritisation for possible future work under the gender-environment nexus**



Source: OECD survey on Integrating Gender in Environmental Policies (information available by 31 January 2020)

As part of its Gender Mainstreaming Platform, the OECD has also already identified environment-related indicators where the gender dimension could be further developed. These include: (i) exposure to environmental risks, differentiated by risk type (air pollutant and natural hazards), by sex, age and sociodemographic attributes, (ii) mortality rates from air pollution, differentiated by pollutant, sex, age, country and year; and (iii) development of 'green' technologies, based on patenting activity, differentiated by domain, country, year and sex of the inventor (OECD, Forthcoming).

### Data collection efforts on the gender-environment nexus in development cooperation

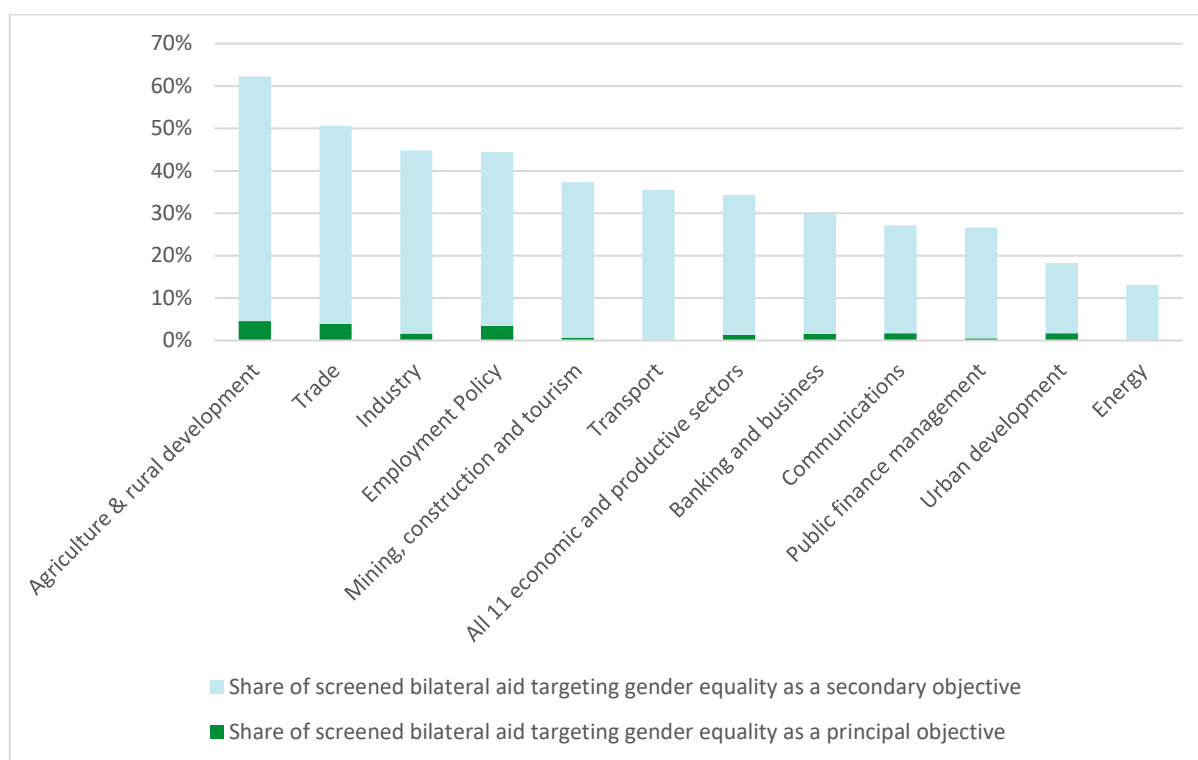
Gender-disaggregated data is key to strengthen the gender-environment nexus in development cooperation. The OECD is able to track Official Development Assistance (ODA) for the environment and for climate change adaptation and mitigation, focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. The most recently published analysis of ODA figures showed an increase in bilateral allocable aid focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment, which reached 38% for 2016-2017, the highest figure yet (OECD DAC GENDERNET,

2019). The figures, notwithstanding the increase, indicate that bilateral allocable aid still remains broadly gender-blind.

At the same time, 11% of the bilateral aid commitments of donors to statistics targeted gender data between 2015-2017. The corresponding percentage for the 2010-2012 period was only 3% (PARIS21, 2019). Sustaining the positive trend can support the collection of gender-disaggregated data.

When looking more closely into the sectoral distribution of total gender equality focused ODA, it is clear that most of the sectors identified have an environmental link, and could support or hamper environmental outcomes (Figure 4). For example, the agricultural sector, where women constitute the majority (East Asia and Southeast Asia) or a growing number of the agricultural workforce, is an evident case where environmental sustainability should be equally taken into consideration. Growing urbanisation and global commitments for more inclusive and sustainable cities, transport and green spaces (SDG 11); or for access to sustainable and affordable energy for all (SDG 7) are also important areas to focus. However, gender equality-focused ODA in these sectors has been limited.

**Figure 4. Gender equality as an objective in the economic and productive sectors on average per year 2015-2016 (all DAC members)**



Source: OECD DAC GENDERNET (2018)

Furthermore, the OECD recently highlighted the need to align development co-operation support to the Paris Agreement objectives (OECD, 2019b). The report noted that even though 75% of developing countries have been identifying sectors such as agriculture, forestry, biodiversity and ecosystems, health and water as priority for adaptation-related action, development financing has not been necessarily following the same track. Considering that some of these sectors have a strong gender component, it would be a good opportunity to work on an integrated approach.



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#### Non-governmental data collection initiatives

Another issue to consider is the array of data being generated by different stakeholders. The universal nature of the SDGs have led not only international organisations and governments, but also the private sector and civil society into generating their own data, either on environment- or gender-related issues. Digitalisation and new technologies are facilitating such data generation and collection. Even though such a plethora of information should be welcome, it also needs to be checked for quality and consistency across countries. The OECD, together with other international organisations, could play a valuable role in reviewing and filtering such 'big data', allowing policy-makers to use it in a systematic way for policy decisions.

Some initiatives like the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) go in the right direction, but set a relatively low minimum standard of disclosure on companies. For instance, there is no specific gender standard, nor any joint reporting on gender-sustainability impact. The main GRI standard relating to women, GRI 405 on diversity and equal opportunity, calls for reporting on the share of female workers performing the organisation's activities, their relative remuneration, and their participation at the highest governance level. On climate-related disclosures, various organisations have been collecting and processing such data. CDP Global runs a global disclosure system, where companies, investors, as well as cities and regions, voluntarily disclose information relating to their activity and the effect on climate, water and forestry (CDP, 2020). The Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), an industry-led initiative established by the Financial Stability Board and supported by the OECD, has developed voluntary recommendations on how to better align existing disclosure regimes and enhance climate-related reporting. In the 2019 TCFD report on the implementation progress, the number of companies that are now implementing (partly) the Recommendations, is constantly increasing (TCFD, 2019). However, there is no specific link made to the gender-specific impact of climate change.<sup>5</sup>

Some reporting initiatives (e.g. taking the GRI example again) seemingly encourage greater economic opportunities for women in the form of higher labour force participation. However, an economic empowerment-related approach that does not take into account the potential challenges that women may face when they lack the necessary physical and social infrastructure and support from their family, may actually be damaging to women's well-being. For example, working women are more often than men in charge of child and elderly care, and the household and they often have different mobility patterns from working men. To give women and men an equal footing to participate in the labour force, their specific needs regarding the frequency of public transport off-peak hours<sup>6</sup> should be addressed. A better understanding of the factors that influence individual travel behaviour can reveal preferences and attitudes, provide insights to existing travel patterns, improve transport planning, prepare for future infrastructure needs and services, and help better design and implement sustainable and inclusive transport policies that will meet different environmental goals. Sex disaggregated data on the labour force in male dominated sectors would also need to be collected and better understood, in order to increase gender equality and to ensure adequate representation of women's needs.

#### Statistical capacity development

In many countries, mainly non-OECD, capacity development is essential in guaranteeing that statistical authorities will be able to construct and monitor gender-disaggregated indicators and collect data. Capacity development is also necessary to facilitate better statistical co-ordination between countries, spreading methodological good practices for quality statistics, and promoting comparability and benchmarking.

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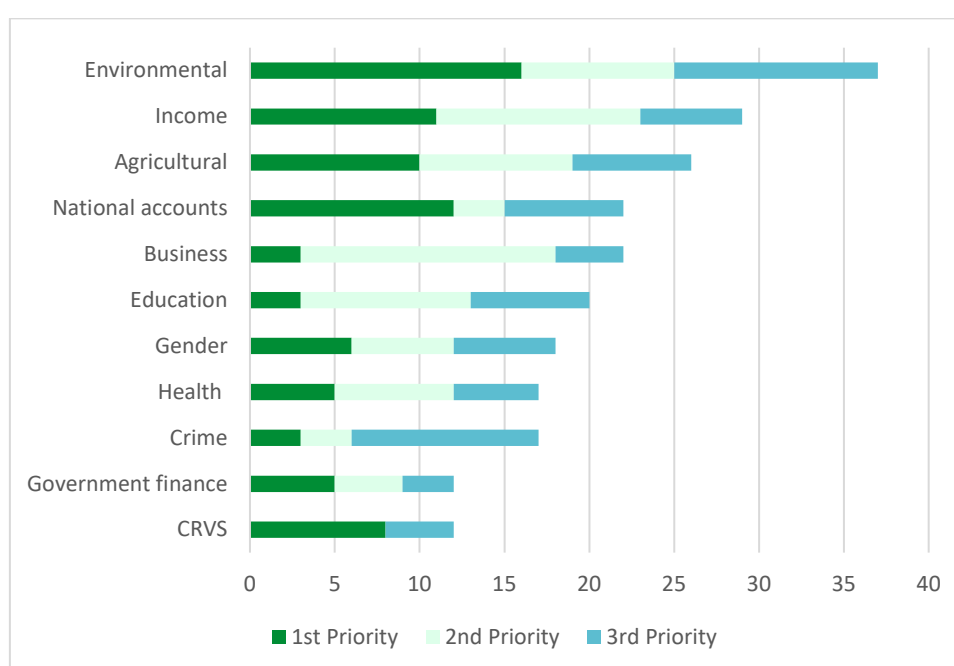
<sup>5</sup> More on this topic can be found in the Issues Note for Session 6.2.

<sup>6</sup> For more information read the Issues Note for Session 4.



PARIS21<sup>7</sup>, based at the OECD, works closely with low and middle-income countries to strengthen the capacity of their national statistical systems. In a 2017-2018 survey addressed to 195 states, of which 47% replied, the environmental sector was the one identified as requiring immediate capacity development efforts for statistical data collection (see Figure 5) (PARIS21, 2018). Over the past 10 years, environment-related statistics have been getting less support when compared to economic and demographic statistics, despite the latter being already more developed (PARIS21, 2019). The aforementioned survey also identified gender-disaggregated data collection as requiring capacity development, even though not at the top of priorities (PARIS21, 2018).

**Figure 5. Priority areas for 87 countries requiring immediate capacity development in sectoral statistics**



Source: PARIS21, 2018

Both PARIS21 and the OECD have identified capacity development for the national statistical authorities as one of the points needing further attention (PARIS21, 2018; OECD, 2019b). As gender-disaggregated data are scarce, more capacity development for new instruments, methodologies, and standards to facilitate gender-responsive data collection is needed. To support truly gender-sensitive policy-making, such data collection would need to take place not only at the monitoring and evaluation phases, but also at the diagnostic and design phases of environmental and climate-related policies.

A new PARIS21 project, supported under the framework of UN Women's flagship programme "Making every woman and girl count", is currently under way, aiming at mainstreaming gender in the national statistical system in Bolivia, Cambodia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, and Senegal. The main objective of this project is to ensure that national statistical systems are equipped to produce, disseminate, and use high quality and timely gender statistics to inform policymaking and support gender equality. The first step of this process is to assess the current state of gender statistics in the country and integrate gender in the

<sup>7</sup> The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) was established in 1999 to support developing countries in better using and producing statistics. The PARIS21 Secretariat is hosted within the OECD's Statistics and Data Directorate. For more information: <https://paris21.org/about-paris21>



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National Strategies for Development of Statistics (5-10 year strategic plans, prioritising data collection for the national statistical system).

#### Questions for consideration

- Which data and knowledge gaps on gender-specific impacts of environmental policies would you identify as requiring immediate attention?
- What are good case studies/examples of ongoing efforts to collect gender-disaggregated environmental data and develop relevant indicators? What are the main challenges of gender-disaggregated environmental data collection?
- To what extent are the capacity development needs of statistical authorities being met, especially in developing countries, to better collect and process data related to the gender-environment nexus?
- How can governments and statistical authorities make use of the growing availability of data from different sources to jointly support gender and environmental goals?
- What could the OECD do to further address the data and evidence challenges with regard to the gender and environment nexus?

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