

Participation for Transformation of Gender Data

Developing a Framework for Transformative Production, Use and Reuse of Gender Data





PARIS21

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Foreword

2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the most progressive blueprint for advancing women's rights. It called for whole-of-society actions and improving the monitoring of the progress towards gender equality, recognising the importance of generating robust evidence on gender issues to promote accountability and transparency. The Beijing Platform for Action emphasised the importance of the participation and contribution of all actors of civil society, particularly women's groups and networks and other non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations, in co-operation with governments, for its implementation and follow-up.

Gender-responsive indicators emerging from various development agendas, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are essential for measuring and comparing progress. They also serve as the foundation for establishing global norms, standards and effective policies to advance sustainable development. However, civil society organisations' (CSOs') participation in implementing these agendas has largely been limited to monitoring and accountability. The evidence provided by CSOs has not yet been recognised as a valid input for policy making, representing a missed opportunity to ensure cohesive, locally adapted progress toward gender equality.

Over the past nine years, UN Women's global gender data programme, Women Count, has been at the forefront of efforts to strengthen gender data systems and promote the uptake and use of gender data produced. UN Women and PARIS21 have individually and jointly advocated for better data systems to ensure that women and girls across the globe benefit from progress towards development goals. In this spirit, the Participation for Transformation framework (P4T) reimagines the gender data ecosystem as the environment that sees participation as a necessary component of transformative action for gender equality. The P4T framework introduces three categories of participation in the gender data value chain: 1) engagement; 2) involvement; and 3) empowerment. The P4T has been developed against the background of the new initiative – the Collaborative on Citizen Data – and its Copenhagen Framework, which aims to set conceptual frames of civil society's contribution to official statistics. Another important factor influencing this framework has been the *2024 Gender Data Outlook*, which emphasised data use as the primary purpose of data production, underlining the need to extend the focus beyond the collection and/or processing of data to also explore their use and impact.

The P4T is a tool for the gender data community and for gender data advocates to advance gender equality through participatory approaches towards improving the lives of women and girls around the world. This framework presents various practical examples of how government, civil society and development partners have worked together to increase the relevance and transformative use of gender data. Further work on the implementation of this framework is proposed. UN Women and PARIS21 look forward to engaging with the gender data community with a view to collaborating for greater gender data ownership and impact.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

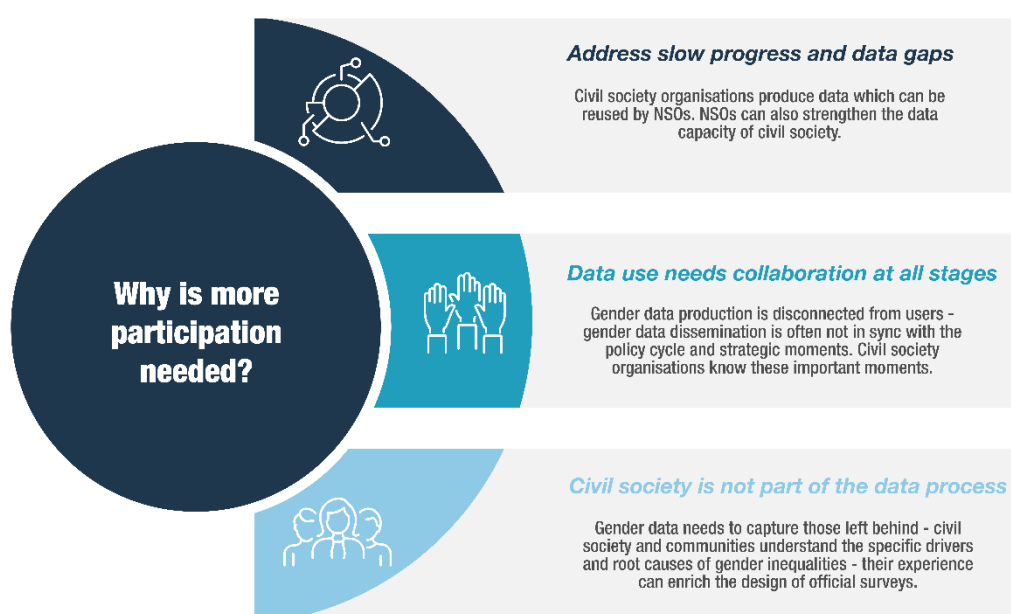
AI	Artificial intelligence
CSBAG	Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (Uganda)
CGD	Citizen-generated data
CSO	Civil society organisation
HCP	National Statistics Office (Morocco) <i>Haut-commissariat au Plan</i>
NSO	National statistical office
NSS	National statistical system
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PARIS21	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
PNSD	Plan for National Statistical Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAWG	Violence against women and girls

Executive summary

An inclusive and collaborative gender data ecosystem is needed to address multi-faceted and multi-dimensional gender inequalities. The Participation for Transformation (P4T) Framework reimagines the process of gender data design, production, dissemination and use and encourages collaboration across the entire gender data ecosystem.

The framework introduces three categories of participation in the gender data value chain – engagement, involvement and empowerment – and provides a set of examples from all regions to inspire governments, national statistics offices, civil society organisations and development partners in fostering collaborative gender data models. The P4T Matrix provides examples of how various gender data partnerships can be started and provides a vision and principles of how stakeholders and the evidence generation process can be transformed to ensure broad-based ownership and trusted partnerships. The framework draws conceptually from two important knowledge products. The first is the *2024 Gender Data Outlook*, launched by PARIS21 and UN Women, which reimagines the gender data capacity. The second is the Copenhagen Framework developed by the UN Collaborative on Citizen Data, of which PARIS21 and UN Women are part. It sets the conceptual frames of civil society’s contribution to official data and provides some guiding principles. The framework is a living document. The final section, “Next steps”, proposes research directions to advance the implementation.

Infographic 1. Rationale for more participation in the gender data value chain



Note: NSO: national statistical office.

1 Why do we need more participation in gender data?

Gender data¹ are still lacking despite considerable progress

Despite a growing awareness that gender equality is a powerful driver of economic growth, strengthens democracies, fosters social cohesion and enhances the well-being of all members of society, gender biases and inequalities persist in all societies (UNDP and UN Women, 2023^[1]; Ali, 2021^[2]; Mishra, Mishra and Sarangi, 2020^[3]; Agénor and Canuto, n.d.^[4]). International frameworks like the [Beijing Platform for Action](#), [Agenda 2030](#) and regional development agendas such as the [Africa Agenda 2063](#) recognise the importance of generating robust evidence on gender issues to promote accountability and transparency. Gender-responsive indicators emerging from these development agendas serve to measure and compare the progress made and are the basis for setting global norms, standards, and effective policy and development assistance to advance sustainable development (UN Women, 2013^[5]). Timely gender data are critical to provide evidence on key social, economic and environmental concerns or to increase public awareness and international engagement around often-ignored issues such as gender-based violence and unpaid care work and their impact on women's rights and opportunities (UN Women, n.d.^[6]). As such, gender data are not only a monitoring tool but should also be recognised as a key driver of sustainable and efficient decision making.

Thanks to improvements in the measurement of gender indicators, we currently know that progress on gender equality globally is too slow to achieve the SDGs (UN Women and UN DESA, 2024^[7]; Equal Measures 2030, 2024^[8]). As evidenced by the 2022 Global Survey on Gender Statistics, the proportion of countries with specific legal mandates for gender-focused data collection has increased substantially from 15% in 2012 to 44% in 2022.² However, the improvement in data availability has not necessarily translated into gender data use and the implementation of effective policies that address the root causes of gender inequality (The Sex, Gender and COVID-19 Project, n.d.^[9]). Policies and official data collection often remain gender-blind and perpetuate inequality, as policy makers lack awareness and tools for implementing gender-sensitive policies (OECD, 2023^[10]; Weber et al., 2021^[11]).³ Official data collection methodologies must account for cultural norms to ensure accurate and relevant data. For instance, gender-sensitive adaptations in fieldwork, such as considering cultural barriers for female interviewers, are vital to ensure that gender is addressed at all stages of evidence gathering.

Despite important improvements in data availability, persisting data gaps still hinder our ability to understand the extent of gender inequalities fully. A critical challenge exists – as of March 2024, none of the 193 country signatories of Agenda 2030 had comprehensive data on all 52 gender-specific indicators across the 17 SDGs. The global average data availability for these indicators is 56%.^{4, 5} In most countries, the provision of official gender data is not granular or timely enough to effectively report on these frameworks or inform policy design and programming. Discriminatory social norms and structural challenges of official statistics continue to shape what data are produced and what evidence is used (OECD, 2023^[10]; PARIS21, 2023^[12]; forthcoming^[13]), constraining policy space to empower women to

exercise their freedoms and fully benefit from opportunities. Challenging this status quo requires stronger accountability mechanisms, including monitoring existing government commitments.

Traditional data systems may underrepresent marginalised groups due to historical biases, the cost of revising sampling methods or exclusionary criteria (Badiyee and Buvinic, 2024^[14]). Transformative change is needed to ensure that gender data are collected in a way that captures the complexities of gender-related issues in their local contexts and acknowledges intersectionality, the interplay of different dimensions of lived experience and identity such as age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location (IAEG-SDGs, 2019^[15]). For example, a UN Women study, *From Insights to Action*, revealed that Black women were 4.3 times more likely than white women to die from COVID-19 in the United Kingdom (UN Women, 2020^[16]). Yet only 60 of 193 countries (31%) were reporting data on infections by sex and age to the World Health Organization at that time, and even fewer reported infections by gender and race (UN Women, 2020^[16]). Very few subnational authorities have enough evidence, including local gender data, to support planning and budgeting in their respective areas.

Integrating a gender lens across thematic areas of statistics and policies requires adopting multidisciplinary strategies, which require diverse skills, knowledge and capabilities (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2023^[17]). Evidence suggests that gender mainstreaming is more successful when advanced by engaging civil society and women's movements rather than bureaucratic approaches (Chaney, 2016^[18]; Behr, Perrin and Hyland, 2024^[19]). This “participative democratic model” of mainstreaming emphasises involving those targeted by initiatives in both policy design and delivery (Chaney, 2016^[18]). Multiple side events around the 55th UN Statistical Commission have emphasised the importance of participatory approaches to data and multidisciplinary collaboration across all phases of the “data value chain” through various initiatives (Open Data Watch, 2018^[20]), including, for example, the work of the Collaborative on Citizen Data (2024^[21]) and a call for more participation in the development of gender data (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2023^[17]; Open Data Watch Team, 2024, 3 March^[22]).

Civil society actors need to be strengthened in their accountability role

Civil society plays a special role in forging a societal consensus on how to steer national development towards gender equality. In the context of the SDGs, Agenda 2030 reinforced the importance of civil society in fostering a strong connection with communities that are first in line to be impacted by the SDGs. Whether acting as an information provider, data innovator, watchdog or advocate of those left behind, civil society is key to advancing gender equality and ensuring impactful and sustainable results are achieved for communities through political participation (Espinosa and Rangel, 2022^[23]), conflict resolution, and policy design and implementation (Nilsson, 2012^[24]; Fraisl et al., 2022^[25]). A growing number of studies demonstrate that the participation of non-state actors in public processes improves the quality of policy formulation and implementation (Tantivess and Walt, 2008^[26]; UN-PRAC, 2020^[27]). It helps to achieve a “closer fit” between the needs and demands of beneficiaries and the design of policy objectives (Brinkerhoff, 1999^[28]). Participation creates “[co-]ownership for policy solutions among beneficiaries and implementors, which can lead to higher use rates of policy goods and services, reduced maintenance and operating costs, and better conformity between policy intent and outcomes” (Brinkerhoff, 1999^[28]). Empowering CSOs in their data production processes and incentivising national statistical offices (NSOs) and national women's machineries to use CSO data and engage CSOs in the design and dissemination of data are important transformative actions to scale up the potential of gender data.

However, shrinking civic space affects feminist organisations in low- and middle-income countries (WOUNGNET, 2021^[29]; Garlick and Jaber, 2020^[30]; Kassa and Sarikakis, 2021^[31]). For example, almost 90% of women's rights and civil society organisations working in the realm of peace and security face a moderate to very high risk of shutting down their operations due to a lack of long-term funding (UN Women, 2023^[32]). Governments and the development community need more examples of how civil society

contributes to impactful developmental outcomes. Especially in contexts where statistical capacities in the government and democratic safeguards are less developed, governments should tap into opportunities for including civil society in the policy and data cycle. Integrating CSOs' perspective in official data processes has thus far been hindered by a lack of trust. The reuse of data produced by actors supporting the most marginalised to fill gaps in official reporting has been identified as a challenge, due to varying levels of representativeness, quality assurance or the focus on qualitative research (UNSC, 2022^[33]; Maldives Ministry of Social and Family Development, Maldives Bureau of Statistics, and PARIS21, 2024^[34]). Conversely, CSOs often feel that their inclusion in public decision making is merely symbolic, and that they have little influence over the outcomes of policy processes (UNECLAC, 2019^[35]). The absence of gender equality movements in setting or monitoring the development agenda may have significant consequences on the implementation of sustainable and equitable policies (Ada Lovelace Institute, 2023^[36]).

The links in the gender data value chain are often broken and data production is disconnected from users' needs (PARIS21, 2023^[37]). The gender data value chain encompasses assessing data needs; designing data collection tools; collecting and processing data; compiling statistics; and analysing, disseminating and using data.⁶ The lack of the feedback loop between data producers and users creates ineffectiveness, which negatively impacts policy making and other areas of transformative action: survey design does not always adequately capture users' needs or the local context, and data users may not always interpret the data correctly, since the data collection methods, with their caveats and limitations, are not published. Or the disseminated data products do not allow for a quick understanding and uptake of statistics. A non-inclusive data collection, which is detached from users' needs and does not consider local cultural norms, is a lost opportunity. Without local knowledge and expertise, some of the intricacies of the gender roles and social relationships may not be easily understood. Civil society actors, including feminist movements and grassroots organisations, possess the knowledge and skills but also evidence on gender issues.

The latest technological advances pose a growing challenge to gender equality. Governments eagerly turn to technological innovations, increasing the use of big data or adopting solutions based on artificial intelligence (AI). A 2024 study by UNESCO found that AI-based systems often perpetuate and even amplify human, structural and social biases, which can harm women and girls at the individual, collective or societal level (UNESCO, 2024^[38]). The accountability gap in AI use by governments (if a computer or program takes a decision, who is held accountable?) becomes increasingly prominent as technologies become more capable and take decisions that the maker of the technology could not have foreseen (Pautz, 2023^[39]). The accelerating AI revolution further obscures the visibility and relevance of official statistics just when trustful institutions and granular information are needed the most. This calls for strengthening women's rights organisations, whistleblowers and other accountability actors.

Reinforcing gender data use: Collaboration and local relevance

The cross-cutting nature of gender data requires the collaboration of diverse stakeholders to translate data into impactful actions, since no single stakeholder or institution has the complete mandate and skillset to address gender issues alone. For example, ministries focused on women's empowerment often lack the data capabilities of NSOs, which in turn may not fully understand how gender data collection influences the analysis of gender issues. This disconnect limits the advocacy and application of gender data. Low gender awareness, organisational barriers and a poor data culture hinder the public administration's effective use of gender data. Supporting an ecosystem for collaborative data creation, emphasising "soft skills" like communication, experimentation and collaboration, is critical for public institutions to capitalise on new opportunities for further learning (Mazzucato and Ryan-Collins, 2022^[40]).

Advanced countries foster NSOs as data stewards, ensuring ethical and effective data use. However, in resource-constrained environments, outdated statistical frameworks and limited co-ordination mechanisms impede the use of gender data in policy making. Despite favourable policy environments, local actors are

often excluded from adapting international data standards, weakening the connection between national efforts and local needs. The 2022 UN Global Survey on Gender Statistics highlights this gap: while NSOs frequently collaborate with ministries and international organisations (57% and 48%, respectively), engagement with CSOs remains minimal (6% regular collaboration) (Mbogoni, 2022^[41]).

Over-reliance on international standards without local adaptation weakens data quality and utility. While NSOs increasingly adopt global methodologies and technologies, they often deprioritise local inputs like citizen-generated data, as revealed by the 2022 Cape Town Global Action Plan Survey (Fu, Jütting and Schweinfest, 2022, 2 February^[42]). This disconnect risks isolating gender data from many users. Breaking silos through collaborative, locally informed policy making can build trust and promote equitable outcomes, empowering non-state actors throughout the data value chain.

2 The Participation for Transformation of Gender Data Framework

The Participation for Transformation of Gender Data (P4T) Framework presents a model of collaboration and participation for state and non-state actors on generating and communicating evidence to drive positive change in gender equality. Building on complementary skills and strengths to advance gender equality, state and non-state actors can engage, involve and empower each other along the data value chain to address existing challenges in gender data uptake (Table 1).

Table 1. Areas and results of transformation in the gender data value chain

Stages of the gender data value chain	Specify needs	Design and build	Collect and process	Analyse	Disseminate	Use and reuse
Examples of joint activities	Joint workshop when drafting the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics	Joint design of a survey	CSOs training national statistical office (NSO) enumerators	Workshop to analyse citizen-generated data or data from joint surveys	Joint dissemination workshop and press releases	Participatory gender budgeting
Results of introducing participatory approaches	Civil society organisations (CSOs) and the gender machinery are co-authors of statistical capacity development	CSOs' expertise applied in the design of data collection tools	CSOs empowered to become data actors NSOs equipped with new data quality approaches and skills	Better quality data provide a more relevant analysis for gender machineries and advocates	NSO, gender machinery and national statistical system (NSS) gain new communication skills, gender data disseminated and communicated in strategic moments	Users supported with more user-friendly gender data; NSO gender machinery and NSS capacitated to reuse local data

The framework was inspired by examples of participatory collaboration, including on collecting data on violence against women (Ross, 2020^[43]), the initiatives around the reuse of citizen-generated data as well as climate change collaboratives where research addresses complex and urgent social-ecological questions (Bojovic et al., 2021^[44]). The purpose of the P4T Framework is to:

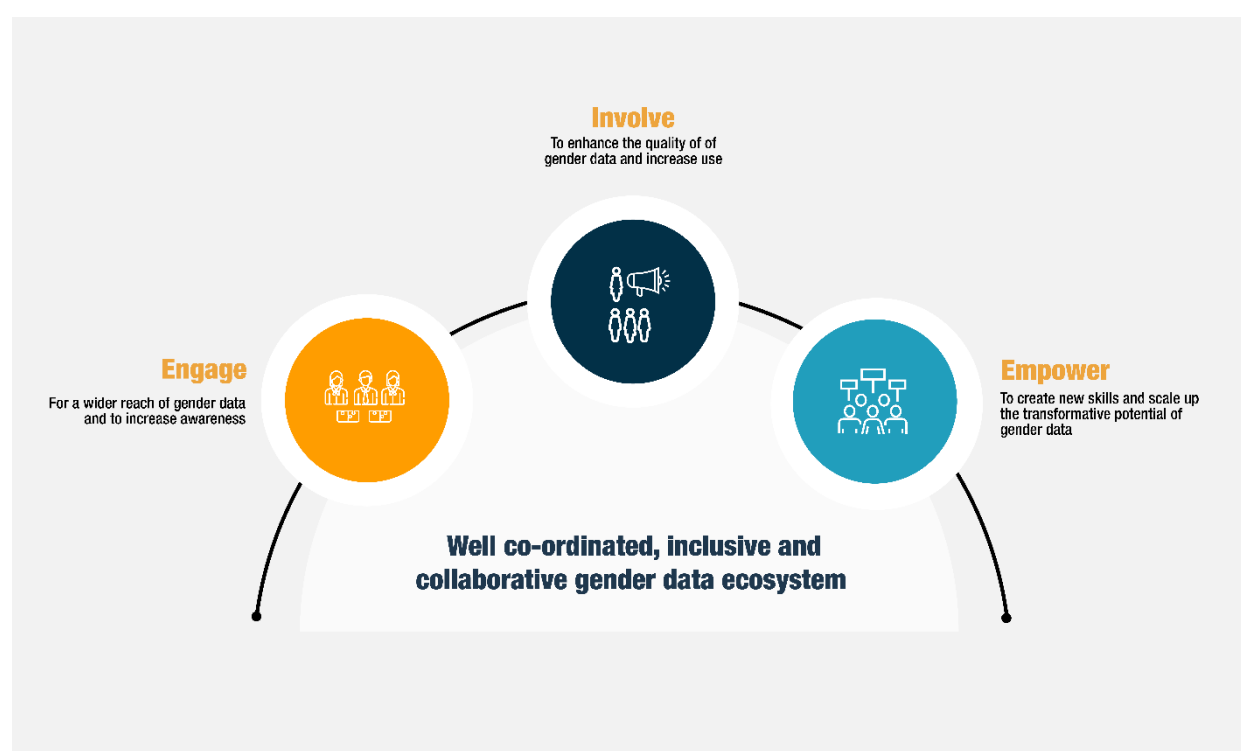
- inspire NSOs, gender machineries in government, civil society actors and development partners to build more effective gender data partnerships
- clarify how different depths of participation relate to different activities so that there is a shared understanding on civil society participation
- uncover the linkages between increased participation and transformative outcomes.

Participatory collaboration in data opens avenues for new, mutually reinforcing initiatives to amplify and advance gender data use to drive change (KNBS, P4R and PARIS21, 2022^[45]). The transformative potential of participation does not stop at the level of processes, awareness or skills, as its impact can

bring value to the lives of women and girls. For example, participatory initiatives introduced at the level of data collection on violence against women facilitate the uptake of those data by policy makers and consequently more sensitisation and better service delivery for survivors (MRA, 2020^[46]; Ross, 2020^[47]).

The P4T Framework consists of three categories of participation: engagement, involvement and empowerment (Figure 1). Engagement is developed using various communication tools and is based on identifying mutually beneficial and achievable gains. A more impactful involvement takes place when a deeper understanding of respective skills and powers allows for an exchange of knowledge and results for a longer term collaboration. Involving stakeholders in knowledge exchange and co-learning happens in moments of strategic importance for gender data. Finally, empowerment takes place when actors strengthen their collaborator's strategic position, skills or influence to drive change through data in vital areas of gender equality such as policies, societal perceptions, laws or accountability measures (for examples, see the section "P4T matrix"). The following section describes various participatory activities that can take place alongside the gender data value chain for each P4T category.

Figure 1. Participation for Transformation categories



P4T categories

Participatory approaches to gender data mean that often overlooked civil society actors and knowledge holders (e.g. indigenous populations) become engaged, involved and empowered by the power-holders (NSOs and governments) to become contributors and eventually co-creators of evidence, taking an active part in the development agenda of their country. The framework comprises three groups of activities cutting across the gender data value chain:

1. engagement using various communication channels, to raise awareness about the power of gender data or start an initial dialogue and collaboration with new stakeholders

2. involvement through joint activities such as workshops that disseminate knowledge on tools and methodologies needed for planning, analysis and use of gender data or the involvement of CSOs during the survey design or dissemination
3. empowerment of stakeholders through focused relationships, mutual skill-building and sustainable data partnerships.

CSOs can also engage, involve and empower the NSOs, women's machineries and the NSS in their ability to use CSO data and insights, adjust methodologies to local settings, and communicate impactfully to increase the likelihood of gender-transformative policies and actions.

Engagement

Engagement is the primary step towards inviting participation in the gender data value chain. The objective is to initiate evidence-based dialogue about gender equality and identify collaboration opportunities. It should increase awareness of stakeholders' role in the gender data ecosystem. It may include incremental awareness-raising on both sides (e.g. civil society actors can raise the NSO's awareness about gender issues in local communities and the NSO can raise CSOs' awareness about the statistical methodologies and the functioning of the NSS).

Engagement can take various forms, such as:

- identifying key stakeholders and building a network of influencers and messengers
- conducting awareness-raising campaigns through various channels (community meetings, social media, etc.)
- organising workshops to educate community members about gender data and its relevance and use (workshops, webinars, international days)
- engaging parliamentarians and their staff in information sessions about gender data
- establishing transparent communication channels for information exchange between CSOs and the official gender machinery
- the NSO participating in community-based gender data collection and use processes
- disseminating community-level gender data to local communities
- disseminating gender data or press releases (ministry, NSO, CSOs, media).

The depth and breadth of engagement can vary depending on the adopted style and readiness of all actors to work collaboratively. Engagement should be a broad activity, covering all the relevant stakeholders. Open communication between stakeholders is crucial for fostering initial collaboration. When successful, engaged individuals gain new knowledge about their role and the basis for potential partnership is formed. The initiators of engagement should propose a plan for further collaboration, which can lead to more regular and deeper forms of collaboration (see the sections on "Involvement" and "Empowerment"). Box 1 presents an example of engagement introduced by the National Institute of Statistics of Paraguay.

Box 1. Engaging civil society in the monitoring of the Gender Statistics Strategy in Paraguay

In Paraguay, the National Institute of Statistics and the Ministry of Women, supported by PARIS21 and UN Women, engaged civil society actors in the monitoring of the implementation of the national Gender Statistics Strategy 2021-2025 during a national workshop. This move has invited civil society organisations to take a monitoring role with regards to the progress on statistical capacity building and priority gender data collections. The engagement started with the following steps:

- identifying key stakeholders of gender data or gender equality
- listing priority policy frameworks that require gender data
- mapping data and capacity gaps for gender data
- identifying development partners' interest in supporting gender data and participatory engagement
- conducting awareness-raising activities through various channels (workshops, social media).

Following the launch of the strategy, civil society organisations supported the government in tackling the epidemic of violence against women by developing various approaches to harmonise data collection on the topic.

Sources: PARIS21 (2022^[48]; 2023^[49]); Ojeda A. and Barrios L. (2024^[50]).

Involvement

Involvement is a more in-depth form of participation, where experts, knowledge brokers and power-holders are invited to contribute to increasing the impact of gender data. Involving experts and practitioners leads to more profound interaction and creates more impactful gender data products, advocacy or partnerships. The underlying interdisciplinary exchange within this partnership is, therefore, crucial for smooth and effective interaction between gender data production and data use. For example, a local CSO can involve an NSO statistician in designing a scientifically robust survey.

This category seeks to involve state and non-state actors in the planning, data collection and decision-making processes; fostering collaboration; and developing advocacy skills to increase the impact of regular activities. Involvement activities have greater outcomes than engagement, since they lay the foundation for a longer term capacity development in terms of data and gender awareness as well as partnership building.

Examples of involvement activities include:

- participatory planning workshops for community involvement
- collaborative models around data dissemination (e.g. statisticians and journalists)
- joint data collection initiatives involving community members
- joint analysis of community-level data to inform advocacy initiatives
- provision of training programmes for advocacy and communication skills development
- inter-agency co-ordination mechanisms, communities of practice, gender data assessments and the development of gender data strategies
- advocating for the inclusion of community perspectives in identifying gender data needs
- involvement in the design of community-based data collection methodologies.

Box 2 describes an example of how the Moroccan National Statistics Office involved civil society actors.

Box 2. Involving civil society organisations to support the design and deployment of a Violence Against Women and Girls Survey in Morocco

Following the adoption of a national law to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) in 2018, the Moroccan government expressed the need to update 2009 VAWG prevalence figures to establish priorities, inform the enforcement of the new law and monitor its progress. To do so, the National Statistics Office (Haut-commissariat au Plan, HCP) sought international and local support for the development of the second national VAWG prevalence survey and to strengthen its implementation and dissemination. During the design of the survey, the HCP worked with UN Women to organise user-producer dialogues and capacity building of data producers through training on VAWG data. The aim was to involve data users at the earliest stages of the survey design. The training sought to expand the survey's scope beyond the areas of the first survey and ensure that enumerators are trained on sensitive data collection – including how to help interviewees recall violent events, ethical procedures, and referrals to services and support for survivors. The training was provided by an expert from a civil society organisation (CSO) specialised in gender-based violence – the Moroccan Association for Women's Rights (Association Marocaine des Droits des Femmes). The workshop emphasised the importance of tools, knowledge and precautions that HCP enumerators had to take to conduct VAWG interviews, in accordance with United Nations standards. Recognising the particular challenge of collecting VAWG data in traditional villages, the HCP engaged 35 civil society VAWG service providers to serve as “listeners” and to work alongside HCP enumerators to collect the data. Prevalence data were thus collected by a pair of enumerators – one from the HCP and one from civil society – both of whom had been trained to work together on data collection. This approach allowed the HCP and the participating CSOs to learn from each others' expertise, which resulted in a more gender-responsive survey tool while increasing trust in the resulting data.

Source: Robertson (2020^[51]).

Empowerment

Empowerment is “the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals, and the process by which, individually and collectively, they are able to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives” (Adams, 2008^[52]). In the case of institutions or individuals working in these entities, it can also be interpreted as the process of becoming stronger and more effective by gaining the skills, confidence and knowledge to overcome obstacles in executing their mandates and functioning in the gender data ecosystem.

Empowering stakeholders leads to creating gender data champions through the development of new skills, a change in mindsets and a multiplication of incentives. The objective of empowerment is to create leaders who can advance a positive change, solidify advocacy skills and facilitate engagement with their networks, driving sustained initiatives for gender equality beyond short-term timelines. Empowered champions develop new leadership skills and influence models. Owing to the effort this category requires, it generates a sense of shared ownership and the expected outcome of co-development taking place at this stage is greater and more impactful than any individual contribution could achieve (Bojovic et al., 2021^[44]; van Breda and Swilling, 2019^[53]). Empowerment requires more time and effort but is the most impactful and mutually beneficial investment. Both state and non-state actors can empower one another. In this category, the participating partners become co-learners and new skills are created on both sides.

Empowerment activities could include:

- joint training programme co-developed by the NSO and CSOs to empower new data champions (e.g. journalists or parliamentarians), who could use their mandate, outreach or position to raise important gender issues in their area of influence (e.g. in the media or when proposing new laws)
- implementing leadership and data literacy initiatives through a joint co-developed plan, e.g. to support the NSO's CSO data collection efforts, and the subsequent reuse of those data by the NSO
- encouraging and supporting community-led research initiatives to address a specific gender data gap and helping other communities replicate it (if successful)
- creating opportunities for community representatives to engage with policy makers at the national level and using local evidence
- involving CSOs or community members in decision-making processes related to resource allocation, based on gender data.

Empowerment can take place at an institutional or individual level. In many low- and middle-income countries, gender data function on a so-called “champion model”, where a small number of motivated individuals play a disproportionate role in building connections between data and policy, mobilising stakeholders and accelerating progress in the NSS or among CSOs (PARIS21, 2023^[37]). While a “whole-of-society” approach is needed for dismantling deeply ingrained cultural norms and stereotypes that harm women and girls, empowering individual gender data champions plays an important role in advancing gender equality through data. Box 3 provides an example from Uganda, demonstrating how the NSO moved from engagement to empowerment to strengthen gender data.

Box 3. Uganda's P4T journey from engagement to empowerment for better gender data

In 2020, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) developed the third Plan for National Statistical Development (PNSD III 2021-2025) supported the design of strategic plans for statistics for ministries, departments and agencies and some civil society organisations (CSOs). UBOS engaged CSOs in the validation of the PNSD III. To institutionalise the collaboration with civil society, UBOS continued to involve CSOs in quarterly inter-agency technical working group meetings of the PNSD and the Sustainable Development Goals data working groups. With support from UN Women, UBOS trained CSOs to produce and use data for evidence-based policy, planning and decision making, and reporting country commitments.

In 2021, UBOS, with support of UN Women, published a [Citizen-Generated Data Toolkit](#) (CGD Toolkit). The toolkit provides comprehensive guidelines for CSOs on compiling high-quality citizen data using the data value chain framework. The implementation of the CGD Toolkit has significantly empowered and refocused CSOs to enhance their understanding of the need for quality gender data. Quality gender data provided a litmus of lived cases of inequality, exclusion and a violation of rights in targeted communities.

UBOS worked closely with a CSO network, the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), to facilitate the dissemination and implementation of the CGD Toolkit. CSBAG is a coalition of national and district level CSOs to influence government decisions on resource mobilisation and data use for equitable and sustainable development. With support from UN Women, CSBAG has been empowered in the data journey and is partnering with UBOS and other CSOs to harmonise diverse efforts to ensure the availability of citizen-generated gender data in a centralised online repository, the [Gender and Research Data Hub](#). Through this partnership, CSBAG is enhancing the co-ordination and integration of gender data initiatives, fostering a more comprehensive and accessible data ecosystem.

In 2024, two CGD co-ordination mechanisms were established to support these efforts: the CSO-CGD Leaders Group and the CSO-CGD Technical Working Group. These groups have agreed on terms of reference, an action plan and a strategic direction for CGD. Additionally, CSOs are now represented on the revitalised Gender Statistics Advisory Group and the Gender Statistics Technical Working Group, further integrating their efforts into the national framework.

Sources: UN Women (2023^[54]); UBOS (2022^[55]).

The next section presents a matrix of examples to support stakeholders in imagining various activities, results and outcomes of participatory approaches alongside a simplified gender data value chain.

P4T Matrix

The P4T Matrix supports gender data stakeholders in identifying a range of collaborative activities alongside the gender data value chain (or a simplified Generic Statistical Business Process Model) to enhance the adoption of participatory approaches. Through practical examples from all regions, it aims to clarify possible outputs of different forms of participation and each stakeholder's desired effort. It demonstrates that participation can occur in all areas of the data value chain (see Table 1).

The participatory initiatives alongside the stages of the gender data value chain can be summarised as follows:

- Specifying the needs – the priority in setting official gender data collection plans will depend on the government's agenda and the availability of financial resources. CSOs are closer to the communities and can support the government and development partners in specifying the needs and challenges of the most marginalised. Their input can help identify data gaps and ensure that statistics address the most pressing societal issues. The specification of needs can take place through existing or new instruments, such as national strategies for the development of statistics, annual action plans and collaborative mechanisms, such as user-producer dialogues, inter-agency meetings or technical working groups.
- Upstream stage of designing and building data collection conception – Participatory approaches to gender data are not limited to social or demographic statistics, which are perceived as home to gender data. Instead, and given the cross-cutting nature of gender issues, the participation of non-state actors in the data policy cycle is the first step towards improving the quality of all the NSS' outputs and processes as well as those of the public administrations. Co-production has often been applied as a desired process to achieve greater usability or quality of statistical products (Bojovic et al., 2021^[44]). However, it can also be understood as “a complex meeting place where several different academic traditions and practices converge, overlap, affect each other, come into conflict, or cooperate toward describing and effecting co-production” (Bremer and Meisch, 2017^[56]).
- During the analysis, disseminating and communicating data and statistics to the users are still an overlooked nevertheless critical phase of the data value chain. Strategic partnerships among state and non-state actors when disseminating data can amplify the power of evidence in achieving gender impact, when tapping into the mandates and power of media, civil society or champions in the parliament. For example, UN Women's guidance on measuring time-use surveys stresses that more emphasis and more means should be allocated to the stage of dissemination and policy uses, as well as to the prior stage of sensitisation of stakeholders. The advocacy of CSOs can be indispensable support to government's efforts (UN Women, 2021^[57]).

- In the operationalisation of citizen data use and reuse, where data produced by civil society actors can be used by the NSS in the absence of official statistics (Cázarez-Grageda, Schmidt and Ranjan, 2020^[58]). It is important to stress that participatory approaches for gender data can complement and enrich the evidence base of official statistics, with data on specific subpopulations or mixed methods approaches (qualitative and quantitative). Opening the doors of official gender data to citizens and data amplifiers and helping them to take an active part in accelerating action for gender equality and sustainable development requires a shift in the mindset of many public institutions. While participatory approaches to gender data may be perceived as requiring a lot of effort, their gains span across all areas of statistical capacity development. Innovation, broad ownership, building trust and knowledge spillovers are some of the key results of introducing participatory approaches.

Table 2. P4T Matrix

Category	Specify needs	Design and build	Collect and process	Analyse	Disseminate	Use and reuse
Engagement	Case study from Paraguay: The National Institute of Statistics engaged civil society organisations (CSOs) by national statistical offices (NSOs) and gender machinery to participate in the assessment of gender statistics or during the design and implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Gender Statistics, which then led to an improvement in violence against women statistics.	Case study from Malawi: CSOs belonging to the Leave No One Behind Partnership collected data on the government's national Social Cash Transfer and Affordable Input Programmes to hold the government to account. Following the successful data collection by CSOs, the National Statistics Office of Malawi invited coalition members to contribute to the Job Market study, which was a stepping stone towards the institutionalisation of community-driven data in the country.	Case study from Kenya: Twaweza Kenya contextualised statistics with local insights and engaged the Ministry of Education in the design of data collection tools and the actual data collection. Case study from Rwanda: Access to Finance Rwanda worked with the National Institute of Statistics to conduct financial inclusion surveys.	Case Study from Colombia: La Ruta has used the SDG Gender Index produced by Equal Measures 2030 and other gender data to directly engage with over 400 policy makers in Colombia, particularly in 9 regions of Colombia, and mobilised significant subnational buy-in.	Case Study from Indonesia: Indonesia's National Statistics Office was engaged by a CSO KAPAL Perempuan to use Equal Measures 2030's Index in their global reporting on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.	Case Study from Cameroon: Various women's organisations in Cameroon, mainly those from the CSOs Working Group on Gender and Public Policies, also used an NSO report to develop COVID-19 socio-economic response-related projects.
Involvement	Case study from Maldives: The Maldives Bureau of Statistics involved various non-governmental organisations to assess the state of gender statistics in 2020 and then in 2022 to raise awareness among migrants of the importance of the Census.	Case study from Albania: The Institute of Statistics involved CSOs in the design of survey questions on violence against women to increase CSOs' ownership of the data and the likelihood of using them for advocacy. Case study from the Netherlands: Since 2014, Statistics Netherlands has been working with CSOs to design the sexual health indicators in their annual data collection.	Case study from Uganda: The Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), Uganda NGO Forum, the Advisory Gender Data Hub Initiative and UN Women have established a Citizen-Generated Data Technical Working Group and developed comprehensive terms of reference; see also Box 3.	Case study from the United Republic of Tanzania: In 2017, the government of Tanzania engaged CSOs in the design and implementation of the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children in Tanzania (2017/18-2021/22).	Case study from Ghana: National Workshop on Communicating Gender Statistics to Enhance Data Use and Policy Relevance.	Case study from Indonesia: KAPAL Perempuan combined citizen-generated data and official data and involved the district governments to issue a circular letter supporting the prevention and elimination of child marriage. In Ethiopia, the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction Ethiopia involved the Ethiopian Statistics Service in the development of the guideline on citizen-generated data.

Empowerment	Case study from Colombia: The government of Colombia empowered CSOs to co-develop the Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan (NAP 1325). An Inpulse Committee was established to oversee the creation of NAP 1325, including the Foreign Ministry, UN Women, the Council for Women's Equality and various CSOs.	Case study from Tonga and Solomon Islands: Equality Insights partnered with the Tonga Statistics Department to deliver a survey in Tonga. In Solomon Islands, Equality Insights collaborated with Dignity Pasifik with support from the Solomon Islands NSO and the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs.	Case study from Kenya: Operationalisation of citizen-generated data by the NSO in Kenya: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with PARIS21, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, UN Women, SDGs Kenya Forum, Open Institute and the National Gender and Equality Commission supported CSOs' capacity to produce quality citizen-generated data. Case study from Morocco: The HCP and UN Women engaged CSOs to collect data on violence against women in Morocco. See also Box 2.	Case study from Uganda: UN Women, in partnership with CSBAG and the Advisory Gender Data Hub Initiative, successfully trained and enhanced the capacity of 27 CSOs on citizen-generated data production and the Citizen-Generated Data Toolkit.	Case study from Kenya: Equal Measures 2030 empowered GROOTS Kenya to disseminate the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics' official gender statistics as well as those of other state agencies and CSO data in 11 critical areas of development for grassroots women and girls. The GROOTSmart Gender Data Dashboard presents a user-friendly data visualisation of gender indicators.	Case study from the Latin America: The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean involved Articulación Feminista Marcosur by using the latter's classification ISO Quito with different indicators to measure gender inequality in the region in accordance with the consensus reached by countries at regional conferences.
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P4T stakeholders and their skills

The P4T Framework recognises that state and non-state actors each have unique strengths and influence which, when combined, can advance gender equality through the production and use of gender data. These actors form the so-called “gender data ecosystem”, which can be understood as the NSS in charge of gender data (in most countries comprising official gender data producers such as the NSO, ministries and state agencies) and all non-official data producers and amplifiers, including civil society, the media, development partners, etc. While the framework directly references civil society actors as the default actors of participation, the engagement, involvement and empowerment of and by other non-state actors such as scientific communities, academia or local media is also encouraged.

For **NSOs** but also for government ministries and other state agencies, the engagement and involvement of women's right organisations can improve the former's awareness about the wider context of gender issues that they intend to measure as well as local practices of evidence production (for example, qualitative data gathered during focus group discussions), and expand their understanding of the role that gender plays in budgeting, policy making and development policies, to name a few. While statisticians excel in sampling and data collection, (gender) data communication skills are not necessarily their strongest asset. Civil society actors in general have better communication skills than NSOs, since they apply outreach and advocacy techniques in their daily activities to ensure their message reaches a broad audience. Close and regular collaboration with CSOs can also strengthen other skills of the NSO or the official gender machinery such as networking, persuasiveness and creativity, as these skills are often needed to navigate the uncharted areas of the gender data partnership between state and non-state actors (Espey, 2022^[59]). Allyship building and awareness of when policy makers seek data for decision making is essential for ensuring data uptake. This requires knowledge about how to translate complex problems into actionable insights. Effective monitoring and evaluation practices and a creative mindset allow CSOs to adapt to a resource-constraint environment and changing political circumstances. For example, CSOs can significantly increase the value of data and statistics when they can use it for advocacy, sensitisation and in other areas of their work. Creativity can also help NSOs and the gender machinery develop new approaches to addressing funding gaps, as a usual lack of resources limits the traditional data collection possibilities. Finally, CSOs often benefit from collaborating with various experts and practitioners from other fields, such as technology, law or public health. Networking and partnership building are some useful skills to help statisticians expand the quality and relevance of their work.

In many countries, **ministries in charge of women's empowerment** and other agencies that form the official gender machinery may have an established network of civil society partners who are subject-matter experts or engage directly with specific groups left behind. The participatory partnerships should also include other key government agencies, as their participation in the early stages of the data value chain is crucial from the standpoint of the future data use for decision making. Gender machineries, apart from collecting administrative records, typically have a better understanding of how and when gender data should be communicated.

For **CSOs**, the practice of data collection and applying quality assurance standards in their regular work depends on their capacity and available funding. Grassroot movements may have less developed data management practices, for example due to their focus on direct service provision to communities. Learning how to store, organise and secure data effectively to ensure its integrity and privacy is important knowledge that CSOs can learn from statisticians. Moreover, more advanced statistical literacy, including knowledge about how to store and analyse data, compile indicators, and find gender data (e.g. on the NSO website) can help them leverage new insights for strengthening their advocacy. Since open data practices are rare in low- and middle-income countries, the direct relationship building between gender machineries and CSOs can help CSOs to identify and obtain access to the datasets they need. The role of the international community (such as PARIS21, UN Women, other UN organisations, etc.) in supporting participatory

engagement is not only limited to setting standards, normative frameworks or guidelines for gender data, it also includes:

- **Incentivising community engagement:** Development partners' projects should incentivise CSOs' participation in official data processes, ensuring entries for a meaningful participation in the project design aimed at government institutions. Incentives could also include grants for CSO networks to engage local communities in participatory mapping or focus group discussions. Development partners can organise policy dialogues and sponsor forums or roundtable discussions that bring together NSOs, gender machinery, policy makers and CSOs to discuss findings from NSO- and CSO-led data collection and their implications. This creates a space for CSOs to advocate for community needs based on data, strengthening the influence of civil society in policy making. When such meetings are organised at an international level, they can encourage the sharing of information and best practices and peer learning. For example, an international organisation could support a series of workshops aimed at enhancing CSOs' ability to understand gender data collection methodologies, visualise and analyse data, and communicate findings effectively.
- **Promoting open data initiatives:** Development partners can support efforts to promote open data policies within NSOs and governments, encouraging them to make datasets accessible to the public. This transparency can enhance data use. When coupled with capacity building and collaborative analysis, open data can empower communities to engage with the data.
- **Supporting evaluation and feedback mechanisms:** Donors can fund evaluation processes that assess the effectiveness of participatory data initiatives. This might involve supporting independent assessments that gather feedback from CSOs and communities on how their input influenced policy changes.

Donors, including bilateral ones (e.g. development agencies from high-income countries and private philanthropies) supporting governments, NSOs, CSOs and other stakeholders in low- and middle-income countries are crucial enablers of participatory transformation. This takes place through **specific funding for participatory programmes supporting gender data**. Participatory approaches require significant investment in capacity development, especially for CSOs, and therefore specific projects and funding should address their data literacy and access to technology and tools that facilitate gender data collection. Donors can provide funding for platforms that allow CSOs to submit data directly to NSOs and other data producers in the NSS, enhancing data accuracy and timeliness.

Guiding principles

Fostering participatory and collaborative models does not come without challenges linked to the work culture or bureaucratic traditions of openness. The overall political environment, including current or past events, is important, especially in situations where these events have been a cause of mistrust. Understanding the influence of contextual factors on participatory approaches is vital for the success of engaging, involving and empowering civil society. To guide gender data stakeholders in navigating the new areas of collaboration, the following principles are proposed:

- **Nothing about us without us:** Access to gender data helps policy makers and CSOs to design policies that tackle some of the biggest inequalities, violence and discrimination. However, most people affected by these issues are not meaningfully involved in collecting, using and sharing data about them. Women and girls who have been left behind suffer from data marginalisation, with some of them being completely invisible in national statistics. The active involvement of women's groups in the data processes constitutes the principle of full participation which must be put into practice to develop truly inclusive societies, in which all voices are heard. It should ensure the inclusion and participation of representatives from marginalised communities in the entire process

of gender data production, dissemination and use. Their insights contribute to more comprehensive data collection and analysis (UNSC, 2024^[60]).

- **Inclusiveness:** Encouraging the active participation and collaboration of various multidisciplinary stakeholders in the gender data value chain must start with an open mind and inclusive approach, whereby different actors (e.g. state and non-state) recognise the limitations of their knowledge and strength and seek to learn from one another. This approach is based on acknowledging partners' diverse areas of interest and capacities, promoting engagement through awareness raising, knowledge exchange and co-creation to drive meaningful impact. An excellent example of institutionalised inclusiveness for official statistics (including gender statistics), which also promotes participatory approaches, was introduced by the Colombian NSO DANE. A principle and a framework of "inclusiveness" has been specified in the [Law on Official Statistics 2335 of 2023](#) and further developed in the official [Guide for the Inclusion of the Differential and Intersectional Approach](#).
- **Strategy and impact:** Identifying and understanding the primary roles and interests of key stakeholders involved in gender data collection and use. This helps foster strategic partnerships and collaboration to identify mutually beneficial areas. An example could be to link gender data production and dissemination strategies with the government's budgeting cycle. Aligning data collection with the specific demands of policy makers enhances its relevance and impact.
- **Intersectionality:** Recognising the interplay of gender with other social identities to produce more nuanced data. The experiences of women and men differ due to their personal characteristics and intersections of their individual circumstances. Such intersections include, but are not limited to, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability or geographic location. For example, capturing migrants in censuses or surveys can be difficult due to several factors, including language barriers or fear of the consequences of engaging with state data collection processes.
- **Investing in skills:** Participatory practice means continuous engagement and changing of the business-as-usual organisational practices. Lack of collaborative practices and data user engagement is visible across the entire gender data value chain, from the design to communication and uptake. The P4T categories rely on a mutual learning process that stems from a goal-oriented participation and knowledge exchange. Inviting stakeholders who represent significant parts of civil society and who can play a productive role in the dialogues is a complex task, requiring a set of new skills and capabilities. For true interactive participation to occur, a learning process needs to take place in the participating institutions, which "develops and promotes new methodologies and changes the prevailing attitudes, behaviour, norms, skills, and procedures within the agency" (Thompson, 1995^[61]). Examples of skills necessary to introduce and maintain participatory approaches to data include leadership, prioritisation, networking and creativity, among others.
- **Data ethics:** Prioritising ethical practices in gender data collection and use, ensuring privacy, confidentiality and informed consent and addressing potential harm and unintended consequences to protect the rights and well-being of the participants and stakeholders involved.
- **Transparency and fairness:** A fair, equal and transparent process that promotes equity, learning, trust and respect among gender data stakeholders.

Next steps

Further alignment with global trends

In an effort to add value to the framework and make it more actionable and meaningful to stakeholders looking to incorporate participatory approaches into the gender data value chain, next steps for PARIS21 and UN Women and partners include supporting the UN Collaborative on Citizen Data in finalising the Copenhagen Framework. The framework has been developed to leverage the power of the citizen contributions to data. It conceptualises and defines “citizen data”, outlines the many roles that citizens and NSOs can play in data processes, and formulates action points for the sustainable production and use of citizen data. The Copenhagen Framework is expected to help to ensure global consistency in promoting and applying citizen data, and as such is seen as a key contribution to supporting the P4T due to the complexity in ensuring the transformative, and not only symbolic, collaboration of state and non-state actors. Many of the proposed P4T activities do not have a fixed depth of participation and could be undertaken within varying categories and effort. For example, a user-producer dialogue workshop could be aimed at engaging a wide set of stakeholders, through a basic design of activities and data products (engagement). It could be made more participatory if civil society actors are contributing with their knowledge and views to the design of the data product (involvement). Finally, it could also lead to the empowerment of stakeholders, when long-term and institutionalised collaboration is consequently set up in its course and nurtured over time or at tipping points of policy cycles.

Moreover, the conceptual developments in the statistical community aiming to deepen the research and guidance on intersectionality as well as the integration of qualitative insights in official statistics will be beneficial for further application of the P4T.

Identifying implementation tools

To support a practical process of participation in data processes, deliberate and targeted techniques must be determined, including the existing wealth of frameworks and approaches developed by various countries, including governments and CSOs:

- mapping stakeholders according to their prior data collection and subject-matter experience, interest, etc.
- identifying and evaluating aspects of the institution’s outputs and practices that are not meeting its objectives – or the users’ needs – and can benefit from participation
- conceptualising participatory approaches by agreeing on the degree of desired participation and testing it on a small scale
- analysing and integrating lessons into forms and procedures that can be applied widely across all levels of the institution, in line with local cultural and social norms
- drawing lessons of relevance to applying the approach on a broader scale following a period of experimentation, assessment and adjustment (Luyet et al., 2012^[62]; Thompson, 1995^[61]).

Consolidating case studies

The P4T Matrix has provided only a few examples of participatory approaches to transform gender data. Gender machineries and development partners should undertake consistent efforts to document these examples and share them with a broader audience.

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Notes

¹ For the purpose of simplification “gender data” refers to both gender data and gender statistics.

² The 2022 Global Survey on Gender Statistics has found that the proportion of countries with specific laws or regulations requiring NSOs to conduct specialised gender statistics surveys increased significantly, from 15% in 2012 to 44% in 2022 (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2023^[17]).

³ See Chapter 2 in PARIS21 and UN Women (2024^[63]).

⁴ As of March 2024, there were 52 unique gender-specific SDG indicators. The data availability analysis was based on 51 indicators identified in 2022.

⁵ Performance is better, at 68%, for indicators specifically under SDG 5, which focuses on gender equality (UN Women and UN DESA, 2024^[7]).

⁶ The *Gender Data Outlook* identifies a vast array of gender data use types, including, for example: resource mobilisation, policy development, budgeting, strategy and planning, intervention or programme design, advocacy, public awareness, monitoring of international or national commitments, use in further research or academic articles, monitoring and evaluation of programme or policy interventions. See Table 2.1 in PARIS21 and UN Women (2024^[63]).

Participation for Transformation of Gender Data

Developing a Framework for Transformative Production, Use and Reuse of Gender Data

Progress towards gender equality is slow and gender data gaps persist. The increase in data availability has not translated into effective use of gender data in policy making. A transformation is needed not only in how gender data are produced, but also in how they are designed, disseminated and used to address gender inequalities.

Public institutions in charge of advancing gender equality need to collaborate to a greater extent with civil society at all stages of the gender data value chain. Civil society participation in official data processes ensures that official statistics are fit-for-purpose: they capture the complexities of gender-related issues in their local contexts, they are understandable to various audiences and provide timely and actionable evidence for decision makers.

This report explores the linkages between increased participation and gender data impact and provides examples of successful partnerships. The report proposes a participation framework to guide and empower governments, civil society actors and development partners in building gender data partnerships that strengthen gender data capacity.

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