



THE ROLE OF GENDER DATA IN POLICY MAKING: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AND
FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES



MALDIVES
BUREAU OF
STATISTICS

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21

FOREWORD

As we stand at the crossroads of progress and opportunity, this report on gender data use in policy making in the Maldives is a great milestone and step towards gender equality for the country. Gender equality is not just a goal to strive for; it is a fundamental human right that must be upheld in every aspect of society. The strides taken by the Maldives in enshrining equal rights and freedoms for men and women are commendable efforts towards achieving gender parity. However, there is room for more achievements on this front.

This report delves into the crucial role of gender statistics and indicators as tools for promoting gender equality and driving meaningful policy change. By exploring the barriers and enablers of gender data use in policy making, we aim to shed light on how best to harness data to address gender disparities effectively.

We hope that this report serves as a catalyst for action and a roadmap for progress towards measures to promote gender equality as we strive to build a future where gender equality is not just an idea but a reality embraced by all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We extend our sincere appreciation to all the key stakeholders and organisations who played an integral role in the development of this report on gender data use in policy making in the Maldives.

Special recognition goes to the dedicated teams at the Maldives Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of Social and Family Development for their leadership and partnership in spearheading the study on gender data use. We express our deep gratitude to the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) for their joint effort, invaluable support, and guidance throughout the implementation of the study. Your collaborative efforts have laid the groundwork for meaningful insights and recommendations that will shape future policy initiatives toward gender parity.

We are equally grateful to the representatives of government institutions, civil society organisations, academia, and development partners, whose active engagement in the multistakeholder workshops and interviews have greatly enriched the analysis and recommendations presented in this report. We look forward to continuing these invaluable partnerships and fostering new collaborations that will further strengthen the use of gender data in policy-making, ensuring sustained progress toward gender equality in the Maldives.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Maldives has made considerable progress in promoting gender equality. In 2008, equal rights and freedoms for men and women were enshrined in the national Constitution; in 2016, the Gender Equality Act (Law No. 18/2016) was enacted, prohibiting direct and indirect gender-based discrimination and in 2019, a landmark amendment to the Decentralization Act (Law No. 7/2010) formalised a 33 per cent electoral quota for women in local councils. To encourage the enforcement of these normative measures, and to further reinforce the framework for gender equality in the Republic of Maldives, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSFD)¹ introduced the National Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2026² (GEAP), illustrating the Maldives' commitment to strengthening gender equality across policy areas.

Despite progress, significant gender gaps remain in various policy domains and additional efforts are needed to accelerate progress on gender equality in the Maldives. A wide range of tools and approaches, such as gender statistics and indicators need to be developed with the aim of achieving the goal of equality. Gender statistics and indicators are important tools to promote gender equality and implement a gender mainstreaming approach within policy making. The Maldives Bureau of Statistics has made significant efforts in recent years to better understand and address gender issues in the country through better provisions for statistics and data. In 2021, the Maldives launched their gender-responsive

¹ Formerly, and during the majority of the study implementation, the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services.

² <http://gender.gov.mv/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/1/2022/03/GEAPFinal.pdf>

National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) 2021-2030³, in which gender-responsiveness is one of the guiding principles, alongside inclusiveness, trust, and sustainability. The importance of gender data in enhancing gender equality is further emphasized in the GEAP, which sets targets for improved production and accessibility of gender statistics, as well as the development of a dedicated national strategy for gender statistics. Both the NSDS and the GEAP illustrate the importance of the ongoing collaboration between the Maldives Bureau of Statistics (MBS) and the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSFD), to produce gender statistics and indicators at a national level. Despite this recognition among some actors of the importance of gender statistics, limited budget allocation remains extremely pervasive.

Gender statistics and indicators provide an evidence base to develop and monitor policies and programmes oriented towards reducing gender inequality. However, the availability and accessibility of gender statistics can only truly help advance gender equality where this gender data is taken up and used to drive meaningful policy change. Yet, until recently very little was known about the role of gender statistics and gender data in policy making in the Maldives. To address this knowledge gap, in 2023, MBS and MSFD partnered with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) to implement a joint study exploring the barriers and enablers of gender data use in policy making in the Maldives. The study comprised desk-based research, one multistakeholder workshop, key informant interviews, and an online survey to complement the interviews. The findings and subsequent recommendations from the study were then validated during a multistakeholder workshop in December

³<https://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/nbs/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NSDS-Maldives.pdf>

2023. Stakeholders from across government institutions, civil society organisations, academia, and development partners were engaged to draw insights from gender data producers, users, and intermediaries.

While the study explored gender data use across policy making areas in the Maldives, it also drew specific examples and insights from four pre-selected policy cases. The cases, selected by PARIS21 in consultation with MBS and MSFD, were the Gender Equality Action Plan⁴, the Education Sector Plan 2019-2023⁵, the latest amendments to the Decentralization Act⁶, and the prioritisation of health policies to include in the National Resilience and Recovery Plan 2019-2023. This report outlines the key findings and recommendations emerging from the study, as validated by national stakeholders.

⁴<http://gender.gov.mv/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/1/2022/03/GEAPFinal.pdf>

⁵<https://www.globalpartnership.org/node/document/download?file=document/file/2019-05-maldives-education-sector-plan-2019-2023.pdf>

⁶<https://presidency.gov.mv/Press/Article/22835>

1. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This section outlines the key findings emerging from group discussions during the workshop and from the key stakeholder interviews. For this reason, many examples draw on the four pre-selected use cases (GEAP, Education Sector Plan, amendments to the Decentralization Act, and the National Resilience and Recovery Plan). The findings have been grouped into three overarching themes: data production; data sharing and dissemination; and the uptake of data in decision making.

The first theme, *data production*, explores how the availability of gender data (i.e. what data is produced) may make it more or less likely to be taken up and used in policy making. Under the second theme, *data sharing and dissemination*, findings focus on the accessibility of data in terms of the formats, channels, and audiences for sharing gender data, as well as how different types of evidence on gender issues, beyond statistics, can provide important insights for policy making. The final theme, *the uptake of data in decision making*, looks at the wider context around gender data use in policy making, such as the role of social norms, the culture around evidence-informed policy, and the potential importance of aligning policy-making and data cycles, in terms of priority areas and timing. The findings under all of these themes include perspectives from key gender data users within the policy-making cycle and key gender data producers.

DATA PRODUCTION

While most of the study participants involved in policy making did *not* cite a lack of data as such as the most fundamental barrier to use of gender data in policy making, gender **data availability** does remain a challenge in policy development and implementation. The geography of the Maldives makes data collection (as well as dissemination) difficult and often expensive. Already tight resources therefore pose a challenge to enhancing the availability of gender data in the country.

During the development of the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) limited data availability led to significant challenges in establishing baselines for a number of indicators, including women's ownership of land and financial assets. While local councils do collect this data, it had not been digitized. Lack of digitization of local council data is a more general challenge, which Local Government Authority (LGA) is currently working to address. Another challenge faced during the development of the GEAP was a perception that some of the relevant surveys were no longer **up to date**. In this light, administrative data was at times preferred because it was published monthly, providing a more 'current' picture of the realities faced by women and girls. Limited **longitudinal data** poses a further constraint, making it difficult to observe and demonstrate trends over time. We note that since 2008 Maldives has taken notable steps to advance gender equality and initiated substantial legislative and policy reform agenda in key areas concerning women and girls.

More **granular data** is needed to provide the 'in-depth' understanding of a problem required to design policy solutions and interventions. Disaggregating by sex is an important starting point. Some perceive a lack of awareness around why gender data is important or relevant to certain topics or sectors as a key reason for not producing or publishing sex-disaggregated data. Yet policymakers require data that is not only disaggregated by sex but also by other relevant group differences. Policymakers and those designing interventions ask themselves questions such as: Where are the people that need help? Which groups of women

are particularly vulnerable and therefore require assistance? Without providing further disaggregations, in addition to sex, published gender statistics often do not respond to these questions. Further efforts may be needed to disaggregate data not only by sex but also by age (including smaller age brackets), migration status, disability status, location as well as socio-economic background.

Policymakers also call for more granular data on particular sectors. Some of those involved in the development of the GEAP recalled, for instance, that significant information was missing, including on women's role in the tourism sector. They knew that the workforce in the tourism sector only comprises 7 % women and 3 % local women. However, they would have wanted to know in which areas these women were working and if, for instance, cleaning staff was being counted. Similarly, limited granularity in disaggregation by age was seen as a hurdle for data use in policy making in the education sector. Notably, statistics are often presented in age categories (0-5, 6-10 etc.), however disaggregation by year was noted as more useful for policy making. Sharing raw data may allow users to perform their own, more granular calculations.

Some of those involved in policy making raise questions about the extent to which certain gender statistics capture the **reality of power relationships** between men and women. This includes questions about the extent to which women really benefit from formal ownership of assets - and what statistics of ownership really 'mean' in this regard: 'The boat may be in the daughter's name, but is the benefit going to her? When we talk to women in the islands, a lot of land is in their names but it is given to a third person to manage. So often the benefit from growing and selling the vegetables on the land is not going to her'. A similar misrepresentation was noted in relation to the number of women with bank accounts or who own a car. Others question whether statistics of female headed households capture the real power relations in the household: 'According to national statistics, there are a lot of female-headed households. In surveys they ask: "who manages the daily affairs of the household?" The answer will be "women", as women directly run the household while men are out at work in fisheries and tourism. However, if you were to ask directly: "Who is the

head of the household?”, they will point you towards the old bed-ridden grandfather.’ This points to the need for high levels of gender awareness and understanding of the local context both in designing surveys and in accurately interpreting gender statistics in the country.

Human resources are a major challenge in production of gender statistics and, as detailed below, throughout the cycle of data production, dissemination and use. MBS does not have a staff member dedicated to gender statistics who has been specifically trained on gender statistics. Vacancies that are available across the civil service are often not filled for extended periods of time, with limited civil service pay (as compared to private sector, public companies, and UN agency positions) named as one underlying challenge. At MBS for instance, a position under gender and social statistics had been advertised for well over a year. At times, when positions are advertised, there are no applicants. These challenges are not specific to gender statistics and apply throughout statistician positions (and is also common across the civil service system), although some sections within MBS appear to be better staffed than others. In addition to pay, staffing issues were also attributed to the limited opportunities to study statistics within the country. For example, there is currently no university course dedicated to statistics in the Maldives⁷. This not only affects the recruitment of staff with statistical expertise for MBS, but also for ministries.

⁷ MBS is currently working with The Maldives National University to introduce a statistics module. The level of student interest in the future course is unknown.

DATA SHARING AND DISSEMINATION

There is a need for more *analysis* of data, drawing on qualitative and quantitative information. In order to design effective policy responses, data users need to understand not only if there is an issue but also its causes and effects. However, in and of themselves, statistics do not provide information on these connections. To respond to the ‘why’ of a problem, statistics need to be analysed. However, analysis of statistics is often lacking. In the context of the GEAP, for instance, some respondents noted that the main challenge was not the lack of data on gender gaps - but a lack of data on why these gaps exist. MBS does play a role in data analysis and identification of broad policy recommendations based on statistics collected (e.g. from the census). One good practice implemented by MBS’ is their dedicated policy papers and follow-up research (e.g. those developed in relation to declining fertility rates, see below p.11), to identify practical implications of key trends identified in their statistics.

Qualitative data is often needed to understand the *root* causes of gender-related trends (such as social norms) and to identify transformative solutions on this basis. For instance, an important result of the recently released census is that the comparatively large gender gap in labour force participation has persisted. Yet analysis is lacking on the root causes of this problem - including underlying social norms - which could inform policies transforming this issue going forward. In the absence of such analysis, and lobbying on this basis, policies and programmes may address the issue only at a ‘superficial’ level, by increasing cash hand-outs for single mothers, for instance, instead of addressing barriers to employment. Similarly, while government representatives are aware of the level of female representation in higher education in STEM areas, they do not have any grassroots information on what lies behind the lower representation of women in these fields, limiting their ability to design effective policy responses: ‘We just get the ‘surface level’ data’. This issue was pervasive in the education

sector where, for example, there is ample quantitative evidence on critical issues, such as the rate of male school dropouts, but limited evidence on why and which measures could help overcome this. While there are efforts to address this by engaging with communities, government representatives recognize that, as government representatives, the depth of discussion they can have at grassroot level is at times limited. In this light, some called for collaboration with civil society and other stakeholders to collect this more in-depth information from communities.

A number of reasons were noted by respondents, as to why there was limited availability of qualitative analysis. Some attributed this to a perceived lack of appreciation of research - and qualitative research in particular - among politicians and wider society. Qualitative methods were also, at times, seen as less reliable or less of a priority, due to their smaller coverage when compared to most quantitative methods. Others noted that a lack of qualitative research skills prevented both an understanding of why such insights were important, as well as a more frequent application. The final barrier mentioned in relation to qualitative analysis was the often “rushed” nature of policymaking, which did not allow time for dedicated qualitative analyses.

Beyond identifying root causes, qualitative data may also be needed to reliably interpret quantitative trends (such as the extent to which women’s formal ownership reflects ‘real’ power relationships, for instance, see above). Triangulating different sources of information may moreover increase the reliability of analysis, help eliminate bias (including our own personal bias) and support the credibility/legitimacy of information provided to decision-makers. This may be particularly significant when providing information on sensitive gender issues - which decision-makers appear to be more likely to question due to prevalent social norms.

Lack of data sharing and interoperability poses a major challenge. Ministries at times hesitate or take a long time to share data with each other or non-government agencies. They do, reportedly, share data with the president’s office. At times, the office steps in as a ‘mediator’ by making requested data accessible to other Ministries as well. A lack of data sharing posed a challenge in compiling the GEAP, for instance, which had to draw on data

from different Ministries/sectors. Respondents raised a number of potential causes for delays in data sharing, including limited staff capacity, low prioritisation of gender issues specifically, limitations in agencies' confidence in their own data (and consequent concerns that other institutions might criticise them for data quality or performance), a sense that they are being 'investigated' by other government institutions or NGOs, or concerns around the protection of personally identifiable data. High staff turnover and siloes within ministries were said to further complicate data sharing, and even sharing within given teams. This was attributed to there sometimes only being one staff member with knowledge and understanding of a given dataset. Without a standardised format for data collection, such as how Excel columns are labelled and dated, improving sharing and re-using such datasets was perceived as a challenge.

Data may also not 'add up' because different Ministries/agencies are using different problem definitions and methodologies and store data in different ways. This was repeatedly raised in relation to data on violence against women, for instance. Given that data is not shared easily or systematically, data often remains siloed and there can be duplication of data production efforts, as different institutions (including different Ministries, CSOs and academic researchers) may not be aware of each other's efforts. International reporting (e.g. against CEDAW, SDGs) often creates incentives to bring together a range of gender-related data and evidence.

Relatedly, there is no central place where official (gender) statistics, data and other forms of research are available -- no common 'repository' of data. The need to 'run between agency and agency' to gather relevant data, rather than locating it via a central platform, takes up considerable, scant resources for different actors in government and civil society and contributes to duplication. The government does not have a centralized database system and Ministries do not have a functional, coherent digital system of (gender-related) statistics and information. Some Ministries have developed their own sectoral information management systems, such as the Maldives Education Management Information System (MEMIS). While the system has improved data access, it was noted that without the staff capacity to analyse the data, its contribution to policymaking was limited. Despite some progress in

digitalising data, many operate with dispersed records or with excel sheets, which cannot be interlinked through government agencies. The amount of time it consequently takes to 'dig up' individual figures requested is one impediment to data sharing. Some respondents felt that MBS currently lacks the status and authority required to take on leadership in centralized data management. Despite this perception of MBS' authority in practice, the 2021 Statistics Act⁸ explicitly grants them legal authority to coordinate cooperation among different actors within the National Statistical System (Chapter 2, §4(l)) and to coordinate the process of collecting and maintaining designated statistics required at national level through relevant agencies (Chapter 2, §4(f)).

One key factor relating to the usability of gender data was the importance of the format in which it is shared. The preferred format varied among data users, depending on their level of statistical capacity, time pressure, and intended use. Many of those influencing policy making in government and civil society specifically call for **sharing of raw data**. This would allow institutions with relevant capacity to perform their own, potentially more granular analysis of statistics. By providing an opportunity to verify particular data points and averages, sharing of raw data would also increase trust in data published by other institutions. A basic concern is that data is often shared only in PDF formats. A further barrier to inputting data into analysis software is that original data is in Dhivehi. Workshop participants noted that this is often not supported by software and therefore would need transcribing.

However, given the small population of the Maldives, a reluctance to share raw data was also connected to concerns around the data becoming personally identifiable, especially where multiple raw data sets could be triangulated. At times, there appeared to be a difficulty in balancing the mandate to honour citizens' entitlement to public information (UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, Principle 1) and the commitment to not publish any information that may reveal the identity of data collection respondents (Maldives Statistics Act, Chapter 6, §47(b))⁹.

⁸<https://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/nbs/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/MaldivesStatisticsAct-EnglishTranslation.pdf>

⁹<https://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/nbs/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/MaldivesStatisticsAct-EnglishTranslation.pdf>

While raw data was preferred among some stakeholders, others noted the usefulness of different formats. Policy makers highlighted that infographics produced by MBS (e.g. for International Women's Day) are particularly helpful and called for more such **user-friendly formats and engagement for policy makers** and the public. While some policy makers are quite 'technical' and appreciate detailed data and evidence, this is not the case for everyone and policy makers at the highest levels are generally constrained in time to go through long publications. Short policy/information briefs are therefore needed. Sharing raw data/data tables, rather than only PDFs, would allow users to generate their own diagrams and charts as needed. However, some government agencies noted that they lack the technical capacity not only for research/statistical analysis in general but also the distinct capacities to then present data in a way that is meaningful to policy makers ('short and sweet').

Data also needs to be made available/accessible to the public, including via infographics. As the public can hold their representatives accountable for evidence-informed policy making, increased dissemination of data and evidence to the public is seen as one lever for creating a 'culture' of evidence-informed policy making (which is seen as lacking, see below p.13). Following feedback asking for more a user-friendly website, the MBS IT team is currently working on adjusting its online presence. Media and social media also play an important role in reaching the public and generating public attention for gender equality and other issues. While **media has a 'major' impact** on how public issues and statistics are perceived, there can be misrepresentations of data and producers sense a need to provide further explanation of statistics to media representatives. However, MBS does not currently provide training to media representatives and general engagement with media is very limited. While domestic violence cases have received significant attention in the media and on social media platforms, they are often reported in a way that reveals the identity of the victim, risking further harm. Mentioned repeatedly, this suggests a need for further engagement with media not only on data but also on gender relations more broadly. With an increasing shift to social media, respondents also noted a worsening lack of accountability for disseminating accurate data, due diligence, and fact checking, as well as

an expedited dissemination of misinformation that is spread more quickly than it can be rectified.

Local councils are also interested in further dissemination of data at local level. They often note that while they collect the data in many areas, they never hear about the results of their work. While MBS has often had to focus dissemination workshops on Male, they are working to increase dissemination activities on the islands. However, dissemination to dispersed islands can be expensive. Currently, significant dissemination efforts appear to be directed at sharing data with donors/the international community and further efforts may be needed to disseminate to the public and policy makers at national and local levels.

Thematic reports which MBS produces are seen as a good, useful practice from the perspective of those involved in policy making. Thematic, 'women-related' data and infographics published on the occasion of International Women's Day were noted as particularly helpful. It would be useful to build on this by regularly making gender-related data on different topics or sectors available in one document, for instance on women's political empowerment, women's economic empowerment, and so on (potentially drawing on official statistics as well as other data). It may be useful to align the timing and content of such briefs with on-going national policy making processes. However, additional packaging and dissemination of gender data would require additional financial and human resources, and/or the engagement of further actors within the gender data ecosystem, such as CSOs and academia.

Informal, personal relationships play a significant role in shaping how and whether data is accessed and used and need to be leveraged in dissemination. Before going 'the formal route', individuals will seek out their pre-existing contacts for access to relevant information. Those requesting gender data from MBS often call to inquire before sending any formal requests by email. As a result, those aiming to disseminate data should be highly 'visible' and networked among user groups. Data dissemination should involve personal outreach, rather than only publications on a website. It was noted that for students or members of the public, who do not have an institutional name to leverage on, such informal channels are more difficult to navigate and

they generally face longer response times. More generally, Ministries often find out about what MBS does - and what data they have available - during workshops and personal meetings, even if this information is available on the MBS website. MBS often receives email and phone request for data that is readily available on their website, suggesting that this may not be used or as user-friendly as it could be and/or that it is not realistic for time constrained civil servants to go through long lists of data. MBS is working on addressing this by providing those requesting the data not only with the data but also with the link to the data so that they can find it themselves in the future.

While MBS has established good communications and working relationships with some Ministries -- including the Ministry of Social and Family Development -- communication with others could be strengthened further. Personal and power relationships are also significant in that it matters not only what evidence is brought to policy makers but also who brings this evidence. It was noted that data on sensitive gender issues (e.g. gender-based violence (GBV), female genital mutilation (FGM)) is less likely to be questioned when it is 'backed' by a man in a position of authority. This means that data ideally needs to reach not just *any* intermediaries with access to policy making, but the hands of those in a position of power to influence others in view of political and gender hierarchies.

However, **producers of official statistics are often generally unsure who the users are** and what they need. While workshops with potential users (at technical and policy level¹⁰) are conducted before some surveys, there are currently no systematic steps to gather feedback on data demand. In this light, workshop participants encouraged user needs assessments to map users and identify gaps (either via a regular survey or through a simple feedback mechanism on the website where the data is shared). Currently, neither website visits ,nor data requests by email and phone, are being documented systematically, although these could give basic clues as to which statistics are being accessed, when and how frequently.

¹⁰ In the most recent workshops, turnout at decision making level has been limited.

While data producers, including MBS, at times develop broad policy recommendations based on data (e.g. census data), some staff are not always sure how policy-making processes work in practice. This suggests that there may be scope/need not only for statistical training for those involved in policy but also for policy training for those involved in producing statistics. Respondents noted that statistics and data are not produced with policy making in mind, which may hamper their suitability for this purpose. In addition, data producers (including MBS) call for **capacity training in outreach**: 'One thing we have noticed is that we are technical people, we are the number crunchers. The audience that we have don't understand the technical [language]. We need training on how to explain data in laymen terms. We have done a good job with fertility rates, but not with other things'.

Recent MBS engagement on data relating to fertility rates may provide elements of positive practices that could be scaled up. In this context, MBS worked with a UNFPA communications specialist. Together with a local media partner, they supported the development of media articles on social issues, based on population statistics. One of the issues the media partner picked up was the declining fertility rate. In parallel, MBS convened policy dialogues (on the occasion of World Population Day) with the Ministry of Social and Family Development and Ministry of Health, discussing implications of the declining population. MBS also developed materials such as infographics and a video on the issue and disseminated information via social media. A commitment to address low fertility was ultimately reflected in the ruling party manifesto. Having received many questions about how to address the issues they have raised, MBS is currently working on research with UNFPA to explore drivers of the declining fertility rate. The importance of staff capacity and training should again be emphasised in relation to upscaling such good practices in dissemination. While Ministries do have their own, dedicated PR or media officer, respondents noted that staff generally do not hold these positions for long, due to poor pay in the sector.

UPTAKE OF DATA IN DECISION MAKING

Data dissemination needs to be timely, aligned with ‘windows of opportunity’ in policy formulation and implementation. Currently, special dissemination activities for official statistics are often aligned with international days (e.g. International Women’s Day or International Children’s Day). While this may be helpful in generating media attention around statistics (with media at times featuring special reports around those days), these may not be the moments when policy makers and technical staff are particularly receptive to or in need of data. Data is more likely to be impactful where it broadly speaks to existing political timelines and priorities, including those within the manifesto. Overall policy priorities appear to mostly be established by political appointees in line with the political manifesto. Technical staff then have opportunities to advocate for specific issues or priorities within these wider agendas and draw on data in this context. The lack of a National Development Plan was raised as a constraint to evidence-informed policy making. Until now, development strategies were made on a five-year time span, leading to a reported sense within Ministries of having to ‘start from scratch’ every time a new administration came in. This may soon change, as the new Government foresees a twenty-year development plan, which participants noted could support sustainability in government policy and programming action.

To *drive* overall policy priorities, statistics may need to be drawn on in party manifestos, which were reported to play a large role in shaping policy making. In one recent consultation with women for a political party manifesto, national gender statistics were presented to highlight progress and generate discussion. These steps may suggest opportunities to use national (gender) statistics to inform development of manifestos -- and hence overall priorities for national action. While MBS met with heads of political parties prior to the census to discuss data needs (so that they may use statistics for their manifestos), **engagement with political parties** and other political leaders

(including in parliament) is thus far inconsistent and could be expanded, where dedicated human and financial resources can be made available. Participants noted that meaningful and systematic engagement between data producers and stakeholders at political level would require a shift in attitudes within parliament and among political leaders, and therefore should be a long-term ambition. The timing of initial political engagement was also noted by participants as critical, considering the upcoming parliamentary elections, held in April 2024. While engagement early in their term, or before elections, may be more opportune for influencing political priorities and commitments, engagement would likely be competing with other time priorities in that period.

Wider political priorities and incentives generally tend to be the overall driving force of policy priorities and decisions, including on gender equality. The priority placed on gender equality - and accordingly the priority/resources given to the Ministry of Social and Family Development and space for use of gender data - fluctuate from one administration to the next. At times, advocates have been successful in **presenting gender-related data and gender-related research in a way that worked with existing political priorities** and incentives, increasing opportunities for uptake. Advocates for the GEAP, for instance, conscious of the sensitivity of gender issues, framed the plan as a tool to report back on international commitments, particularly the SDGs, and, accordingly, tried to use SDG indicators to measure outcome areas. This helped create an understanding of how the GEAP related to wider goals. In the context of the decentralization amendment that propelled women into local councils, some advocates drew on qualitative and quantitative data demonstrating the positive effects of local women's representation on the quality of wider policies at local level. In this way, they highlighted the benefit of such measures in terms of outcomes which may be of greater interest to decision makers than women's representation in and of itself. It should also be noted that the decentralization amendment act benefited from pre-existing political will.

Tied to political incentives, **social norms** are often a key reason why decision makers do not respond to evidence in the area of gender equality. The term 'gender' itself is controversial among some stakeholders in the local context.

Working on gender equality often means having to change social norms, to change *mindsets*. Data is often insufficient to achieve this - and may often be more likely to be read *through* existing social norms, than to shift these. For instance, low figures of women in management are often met with the response 'women don't want to work in management' and low female labour force participation rates are not seen as a 'problem' by those who consider the home to be the appropriate place for women.

Social norms lead to resistance to change - and to gender data - in some areas more than others. One respondent noted that, in some areas, social norms can mean that gender-disaggregated data can provoke a negative reaction: 'As soon as you make a general issue (such as access to water and sewage or waste management) a 'woman's issue' by presenting disaggregated data, you are more likely to face backlash when advocating for it.' This suggests that, to achieve impact, work on gender data use needs to be embedded in wider, long-term sensitization and awareness-raising on gender relations - not only among policy makers but also among the wider public.

While social norms are resilient and take time to change, quantitative data is reported to have a role in this regard. Several respondents noted that quantitative information often has particular potential in changing perceptions. It is often drawn upon by government agencies in communication and awareness-raising on gender equality, including at local level, such as with island councils: 'When it comes to numbers, people believe it more'. As one institution reported: 'In the atolls I realized, when we show data, they keep quiet. If we talk about experiences of women, they would have some sarcastic comments like "Probably the woman must have done something wrong." [However] when we show the education data, that hits them very hard. The number of high achievers among girls, the number of girls going for higher education [compared to the women in the labour force]. Then they realise: "where are these women who have studied so much, what happened to these women?" Data like that really works.'

Drawing on such data can also be helpful because **having data from a 'reliable' 'official' source (such as MBS), based on a methodology that can be explained, can be particularly important when working on sensitive gender issues.** Audiences are more likely to question gender data than other

data because of pre-existing social norms and opposition to certain gender equality measures. The fact that this appears to happen less when data is 'backed' by a man in a position of authority highlights that this is ultimately not a technical 'data' issue but an issue of social norms and power relations. This means that not only those collecting or analysing gender data, but also those conveying such data to decision makers, need to be equipped with in-depth understanding of how the data was collected (particularly where data relates to sensitive issues, such as GBV or FGM, for instance). What is seen as 'reliable' is highly context-dependent and may also relate to the type of data that a particular audience is more likely to understand and value. At times, providing 'real stories' of individual people in addition can help make statistics more credible -- an observation from both education and gender policy processes.

Overall, participants noted that there is not yet a general **'culture' of evidence use in policy making**. Policy makers do not always understand the significance of using evidence in designing policies. Respondents noted that achieving such a 'culture' may require changes at several levels: Increasing dissemination of data and research to the public (see above) so they can hold their representatives to account for performance against evidence-based criteria; investing in data awareness among the younger population, including in schools and through enhanced (gender) statistics training at university level; and specific awareness raising among policy makers on the significance of evidence use -- and specifically gender data use -- in policy making. MBS has worked on designing a statistics course together with Maldives National University, introducing special modules on poverty or gender or economics and demography, and computing. However, this has not yet taken off¹¹, in part because teaching staff with expertise in these areas are lacking and a perception that there may not be sufficient student interest.

In the case of gender statistics, the lack of a 'culture' of gender data use in policy making is compounded by a limited **'culture' of gender mainstreaming**, that is, limited awareness of gender, understanding of

¹¹ The course is scheduled to begin in August 2024.

gender-related challenges as cross-cutting issues (rather than as something the Ministry of Social and Family Development ‘does’) as well as accountability and capacity for integrating gender in policy. Several respondents noted that the main challenge in gender data use in policy making is not whether there is capacity to use data, but more ‘basic’: the fact that the relevance of gender to policy making is often not yet recognised or understood. Some linked this problem to a lack of representation of women in high-level decision-making positions in government: ‘Political, financial and leadership decisions are all taken by men. The men in these positions don’t take into account the issues of others, including older people, women and children.’

Others highlighted the need to strengthen the system of gender focal points across government institutions. While this system has formally existed for some time, it has not been fully functional, partly because of limited (one-off) capacity training and because gender focal point responsibilities were not included in staff job descriptions. Barriers to mainstreaming gender may also lie in how ‘gender’ and ‘gender equality’ are understood. Often, gender is understood as ‘women’ in the Maldives. What is more, there appears to be a widespread perception that gender equality has already been achieved, due to high levels of female educational attainment. Some study participants added that even if policy makers did want to integrate gender data, they do not necessarily have the relevant skills to do so. Other times, gender data were not seen as relevant to mainstreaming gender in policies as applying a gendered lens was “more about making sure that gender was mentioned in the documentation” to meet donor requirements.

Human and financial resource challenges - in general and in relation to statistical capacity - contribute significantly to many of these barriers in data production, dissemination and use. Gender data production, dissemination, sharing, meaningful data analysis and employing data to shape policy choices (as opposed to just picking individual numbers to illustrate a decision already taken) requires considerable capacity, which is often lacking. In addition to limited staff capacity for gender data production and dissemination at MBS (see above), Ministries also have limited staff in general and limited research capacity in particular. While the Ministry of Social and Family Development’s Policy Unit is responsible for research, it does not have dedicated staff

responsible for statistics and research¹². Few institutions in the social sector have a dedicated statistician. There are also limited training opportunities for existing staff. With some ‘training of trainers’, MBS may have a role to play in further building the research/statistical capacity in Ministries on an on-going basis.

However, sheer limitations in number of staff appear to be an even more significant problem than capacity of individual staff: ‘If there is limited staff, there is only so much capacity you can build’. Around 2011, the civil service shrunk significantly as part of a set of measures to reduce government expenditure. High turnover rates aggravate the problem. Such turnover can mean that those researchers that are available to Ministries may not be highly familiar with the sector and therefore struggle to derive meaningful interpretations of available data, that is, to understand ‘what the figures really mean’. Turnover may also mean that trained staff quickly leave their posts, and training activities have to start over again. Participants did note that turnover rates among staff are lower in some departments than other – notably, staff tend to stay longer in human resource departments than in technical positions. Directing some training (such as awareness on gender issues and sensitisation) towards HR departments, who can in turn work with or train technical staff, could provide an opportunity to better institutionalise awareness within Ministries. However, this would not provide a solution for more technical skills, which may require specific pre-existing skills or training.

Some participants emphasised the lack of sector-specific knowledge and skillsets among Ministry staff. Such a skills gap risks limiting the interpretation and awareness of research and data relating to that sector, as well as its relevance to a certain policy area. In turn, limited capacity contributes to the extensive use of consultants. However, these often only offer a temporary solution and often do not contribute to building the capacity of government staff. More generally, limited staff capacity leads to a culture of ‘firefighting’ in government: A tendency to address issues perceived as most urgent to

¹² Please note this was the reported situation in the former Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services (as it was at the time the study was conducted) and may not entirely reflect the situation in the MSFD. Notably, since the implementation of the research, a staff member has been hired for this position.

be dealt with now, instead of looking towards the future and a reluctance to invest in research.'

In addition to the pandemic, which forced all engagement online and shifted government priorities towards recovery and resilience, human resource constraints appear to be one main reason why the Inter-Agency Working Group on Gender Statistics (IAWG) has not yet taken off. The IAWG was established by MBS, MSFD, and PARIS21 in 2020, following a national Gender Statistics Assessment, which revealed missing protocols for coordination and exchange between MBS and the MSFD and a lack of awareness among line ministries about gender statistics and their usefulness for policymaking. It aims to provide a sustainable coordination mechanism for production of gender statistics in the national statistical system and promote the use of gender statistics among different stakeholders in the country¹³.

Individuals have large portfolios and often sit on a multiplicity of committees. The vast range of their responsibilities can make it difficult to attend Working Group meetings. In fact, it was not easy to even secure nominations to the Working Group - with Ministries noting that their staff already have numerous other responsibilities to attend to. Turnover of staff - with some of those initially nominated leaving their positions - did not help the situation. Managing the Working Group is also a significant commitment for MBS in view of stretched human resources and an international consultant who is being brought on board will help support the re-launch.

¹³ Members of the IAWG include eight line ministries, eight government agencies, and two development partners.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations outlined in this Chapter are designed in response to the barriers and opportunities documented in Chapter 1 of this report. They seek to guide and promote efforts from across sectors, organisation type, and stages of the gender data value chain and policy-making cycle. A set of draft recommendations were proposed by PARIS21, before being finalised based on consultations with the Maldives Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Social and Family Development, as well as a one-day national validation workshop.

Participants of the validation workshop included representatives from government Ministries and Agencies, civil society organisations, development partners, and the research community. During the workshop participants provided in-depth feedback on the proposed recommendations, offering additional suggestions, and ranking them according to **1. Priority level** (*How important is it to address this recommendation?*) and **2. Feasibility** (*How realistic is it to implement this recommendation in the short-medium term, given existing constraints, such as financing, human resources, and other context-specific factors?*). Participants then discussed potential activities to support the recommendations, as well as actors that should be involved in implementing them.

Beyond the specific actions under each recommendation, there are several important vehicles in the Maldives that can help to drive evidence-informed policy in the Maldives. New strategic and action plans at all governance levels, for example, should be seen as important opportunities to ensure the implementation of these recommendations, outlining the country's commitment to

evidence-informed policy change and gender equality. Similarly, the Inter-Agency Working Group on Gender Statistics provides an existing mechanism to promote dialogue between different data producers and users and help build gender data capacity across institutions – both of which are key to addressing the barriers highlighted in chapter I.

At the same time, a lack of funding among some implicated institutions remains a significant hurdle, affecting their capacity to adopt the recommendations. In particular, the findings and validation exercises indicate that often, stakeholders consider MBS the best-positioned to coordinate many of the actions proposed by the recommendations. However, with already significant budget constraints, additional responsibilities must be met with appropriate resources. While a number of shorter-term changes may be achieved without significant funding, the implementation of other, often longer-term recommendations are reliant on overcoming human and financial resource constraints.

In order to encourage the uptake of the recommendations and to support their implementation, they will be integrated into key statistical and gender equality planning activities. Most notably, where relevant, the recommendations will be incorporated into the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics and the National Strategy for the Development of Gender Statistics and used to inform sectoral statistical action plans. Synergies additionally will be sought with existing frameworks, such as the Gender Equality Action Plan and the Gender Strategy, including through targeted communication activities to encourage uptake in their implementation and monitoring.

The recommendations have been organised into four overarching recommendations (clusters): **I. Invest in dissemination and outreach; II. Enhance knowledge and skills; III. Share data meaningfully; and IV. Promote partnerships and networks.**

Within these clusters, each recommendation is accompanied by proposed concrete actions, signalled as either **short, medium, or long term**. Recommendations that were frequently identified as high priority and high feasibility during the validation exercises, have been marked with a star.

CLUSTER I. INVEST IN DISSEMINATION AND OUTREACH

1. STRENGTHEN MEDIA ENGAGEMENT. ★

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|-------------|--|---|
| Short term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSFD and MBS should encourage media attendance at their launch and dissemination events, as well as high level workshops and briefings. • Ensure media attendance serves to sensitise them to key gender issues and provides network opportunities between data producers, gender machinery, and the media. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSFD • MBS • Media |
| Medium term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement training for the media on gender-sensitive and gender-informed reporting. Such training should target online, print, radio, and television media. In the future, social media content producers may also benefit from the training. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBS, MBC, MMC, MSFD, CSOs and development partners (design & implementation) • Media |

2. STRENGTHEN DISSEMINATION TO THE PUBLIC.

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|------------|---|---|
| Short term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender data producers should use user-friendly formats, such as infographics and videos) to reach the public and non-technical experts Particular efforts should be made to ensure that gender data is being disseminated at local level, including through Local Government Authorities and local councils. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media MSFD MBS Ministry of Cities LGAs Local councils |
| Long term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in a common platform or website where reliable, gender-relevant information can be found. MBS would be well-positioned to coordinate such an activity, given the necessary resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS oneGov Development partners Gender Data Producers |

3. STRENGTHEN MBS DISSEMINATION AND OUTREACH CAPACITY.

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|------------|---|---|
| Short term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen MBS' communication planning skills for more systematic and timely communication activities Enhance MBS' oral presentation skills, considering the most audience-appropriate way to present gender data. Explore collaboration with local CSOs on training implementation. Record and replicate positive practices in gender data dissemination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS CSOs Development partners |
| Long term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to employ more staff with dedicated communications backgrounds. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS |

4. ENSURE TIMELY GENDER DATA DISSEMINATION PRODUCTS AND ACTIVITIES.

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|------------|---|--|
| Short term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time data dissemination and re-dissemination according to when policymakers would be most receptive to certain gender data and when the data is most relevant to their work. For example, when government manifestos are being drafted, when policy is being developed, and during budget preparation. • Implement dissemination activities, such as user workshops, in the lead up to, or during, busy policy-making periods. This should make data access easy and reduce the time burden of searching for evidence. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSFD • MBS • Other gender data producers • Policymakers |
| Long term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender data producers should leverage on more systematic engagement with policymakers as a means to disseminate relevant data, such as through regular meetings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSFD • MBS • Other gender data producers • Policymakers |

5. INCREASE PRODUCTION OF THEMATIC REPORTS.

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|-------------|---|---|
| Medium term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase production of reports that focus on gender in relation to different sectors or topics (such as gender and employment, gender and health etc.). These reports should draw on official statistics, as well as other existing information on gender issues (including qualitative research). Potential leading producers of these reports include universities, civil society organisations, MBS, and MSFD. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities and other research institutes • MBS • MSFD • CSOs |

CLUSTER II. ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

6. INVEST IN MBS CAPACITY ON GENDER STATISTICS ★

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|-------------|--|--|
| Short term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS should maximise the benefits of working with expert consultants by ensuring that TORs include capacity building for MBS staff. This way, consultants should contribute to the institutionalisation and sustainability of knowledge and skills within MBS. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universities and other research institutes MBS MSFD CSOs |
| Medium term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maximise time that can be dedicated to data production, analysis, and dissemination, MBS should continue advocating for more up-to-date technologies, most notably, computers capable of running quicker analyses on large data sets. MBS and national education and training institutes should invest in closing gender data skills gaps in the workforce. This includes through the implementation and monitoring of the university course on statistics, as well as awareness raising activities to increase sustained interest in these courses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development Development Partners Universities and training institutes |

7. UPSCALE COMPREHENSIVE GENDER DATA TRAINING FOR GOVERNMENT ACTORS

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|-------------|--|--|
| Medium term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement comprehensive gender data training for government actors, including general awareness-raising on gender inequalities and gender relations in the local context the value of evidence-informed policy making, analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Such training could be implemented by MBS and/or MSFD in coordination with civil society organisations and development partners. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSOs Government Ministries and Agencies Development Partners |

8. INVEST IN CAPACITY TO ANALYSE GENDER DATA, DRAWING ON QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|-------------|---|--|
| Medium term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster relationships between MBS, Ministries' research and policy units, and the research community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universities and research institutes MBS Ministries' research and policy units |
| Long term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build capacity across policymaking processes to analyse and use different types of gender data, in collaboration with MBS and the national gender machinery. In particular, Ministries should invest in enhancing the capacity of their policy and research units with regards to gender data analysis and use in policy design. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universities and training institutes MBS Ministries' research and policy units |

9. INVEST IN PRODUCTION OF QUALITATIVE DATA TO IDENTIFY ROOT CAUSES OF QUANTITATIVE TRENDS, INCLUDING IN COLLABORATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS.

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|-------------|--|---|
| Short term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBS (and other data producers within the government) should increase engagement with civil society, promoting the uptake of existing qualitative research produced by CSOs and universities. This should be part of a wider engagement with civil society within the national gender data ecosystem. • Civil society should raise awareness about the unique insights that civil society research can contribute as a result of their specific relationships at grassroots level. Such insights should include first-hand accounts of gender issues to enhance the credibility of gender issues among certain stakeholder groups. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSOs • MBS • Other gender data producers • Universities |
| Medium term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government actors should contribute to changing the culture around qualitative evidence, raising awareness of its importance in addressing the root causes and consequences of gender issues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSFD and other government Ministries and agencies • President's Office • CSOs • Universities and research institutes |
| Long term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative research skills should be built within data producing agencies and the prospective work force. This should include integration of qualitative research skills into relevant university courses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities and training institutes • Ministries' research and policy units |

10. INVEST IN GENDER AWARENESS AND (GENDER) DATA CAPACITY AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|-------------|--|---|
| Short term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MSFD, as well as MBS, should ensure that gender data is disseminated through channels and in formats that are likely to reach and be understood by younger audiences (e.g. through social media). • Gender data producers should engage with civil society organisations working directly with youth, such as the Scouts or Girl Guides, as an additional dissemination channel for youth-targeted content. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBS • MSFD • CSOs |
| Medium term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBS should continue their work with the Maldives National University to implement a dedicated statistics university course, ensuring that gender statistics are included within the curriculum. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maldives National University • MBS |
| Long term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBS should consider up-scaling and replicating their courses (or selected modules) at the National University at other educational institutions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBS • Universities and training institutes |

11. SUPPORT EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF GENDER FOCAL POINTS, INCLUDING ON GENDER DATA.

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| <p>Short term</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government agencies should consider the most sustainable ways to build institutional capacity, considering fast staff turnover. For example, they may consider selected gender focal points from Human Resource departments, which tend to have lower turnover rates. • Where the necessary skills do not exist within the Maldives, development partners could support in capacity building exercises (such as training of the trainers) or study visits with nearby countries could be organised. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministries and other government agencies • Development partners |
| <p>Long term</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender data advocates and national gender machinery should work to prioritise gender across agencies, ensuring that it is given appropriate recognition and investment within each sector. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSOs • MSFD • Ministries and other government agencies |

CLUSTER III. SHARE DATA MEANINGFULLY

12. INCREASE DATA SHARING IN KEY AREAS RELATING TO GENDER EQUALITY ★

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|------------|---|---|
| Short term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data producing agencies (in particular, government institutions) should allocate a (gender) data focal point so that both internal and external actors know who to reach out to access raw data. Focal points should be aware of their respective counterparts within other agencies and how to reach out to them. • MBS should work with Ministries to support the standardisation of micro-data formats (for example, the labelling of columns, dating, etc). This should help to ensure that raw data is more easily understood by actors not involved in its collection and can be shared between agencies. To support this, MBS could consider providing standardised templates as a basis for data collection. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBS • Other gender data producers • Government Ministries and Agencies (including at local level) |
| Long term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Ministries and Agencies should seek to change the culture around inter-agency data sharing, encouraging rigorous data collection and analysis practices to boost confidence in research, as well as overcoming a culture of “finger pointing” that may make actors reluctant to share the data they have. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Ministries and Agencies |

13. ENSURE GENDER DATA IS QUICK AND EASY TO FIND ONLINE.

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|-------------|--|--|
| Short term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBS should consider which existing platforms or apps could be used to host all official gender data in one place. Existing platforms to explore include the MBS website and .stats suite portal. Good practices could also be sought from other digital platforms, such as eGov and the 'Data Warehouse' being established by the World Bank. • Support production of literature reviews, as means to 'map' available information. Universities, research institutes, and CSOs could support this activity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBS • Other gender data producers • Development partners • Universities and research institutes • CSOs |
| Medium term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the development of a dedicated gender information platform. It would be helpful if this platform could be searched by 'theme' (e.g. GBV). • A dedicated gender data platform should look to include gender-related research beyond statistics, by integrating links to other data sources, as well as qualitative research. This should include data produced by the research community and CSOs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBS • Universities and research institutes • Government Ministries and Agencies • CSOs |

CLUSTER IV. PROMOTE PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKING

14. PROVIDE MBS WITH INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES TO ‘NETWORK’ AND FOSTER STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER MINISTRIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE MEDIA AROUND GENDER DATA

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|------------|--|---|
| Short term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBS and MSFD should reduce the burden associated with the Inter-Agency Working Group on Gender Statistics. They should consider integrating the Inter-Agency Working Group with other committee meetings where there is significant overlap among focal points (for example the GEAP committee and the Statistics Council). • MBS and MSFD should work to increase the value of attendance to the Inter-Agency Group, for example by pursuing particular projects of interest/ value to participants, offering capacity building, and raising awareness of the importance of the Group’s work, or providing networking opportunities through in-person meetings. • MBS and MSFD should promote media presence at key events and launches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender focal points • MBS • MSFD • Media |

15. STRENGTHEN MBS ENGAGEMENT WITH POLITICAL LEADERS (E.G. PARTIES, PARLIAMENT), PARTICULARLY DURING KEY MOMENTS SUCH AS MANIFESTO DEVELOPMENT.

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|-------------|---|--|
| Medium term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS and MSFD should seek to identify “data champions” and “gender champions” within parliament and other government institutions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS MSFD |
| Long term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS, CSOs and MSFD should promote a culture shift around the importance evidence-informed policy making. Awareness raising should be part of a longer-term ambition to maintain systematic engagement between data producers and policymakers. Such a culture shift should leverage on the new administration’s commitment to evidence-informed policy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS MSFD CSOs Parliamentarians Ministries ‘research and policy units |

16. INCREASE STEPS TO GATHER USER FEEDBACK.

| Timeline | Action | Actors |
|-------------|--|---|
| Short term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS should continue efforts to implement user-producer workshops | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS Parliamentarians Government Ministries and Agencies |
| Medium term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS should explore ways to integrate user feedback mechanisms as part of their ongoing updates to their online platforms (MBS website and .stats suite). This could include monitoring of website visits and integrating a simple feedback mechanism for data users. Data requests received via phone, email, or other informal channels should be noted. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS |



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