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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

REPORT

**SECOND INTER-AGENCY AND EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON
GENDER STATISTICS IN THE ARAB REGION
BEIRUT, 12-14 OCTOBER 2009**

Summary

The second Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Gender Statistics in the Arab Region was convened at the United Nations House, in Beirut, from 12 to 14 October 2009, and was organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in collaboration with United Nations agencies.

The objectives of the meeting are to discuss the revision of the Arab Gender Issues and Indicators “G Is In” framework; measurement issues; strategies for data compilation and dissemination in addition to the harmonization of statistical terms on gender in the Arabic language. The meeting also provided an opportunity to exchange information on national priorities, gender equality issues, and current challenges in the compilation of gender sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data including best practice.

The three main outputs of the meeting are: a “Handbook on “G Is In” Framework”; a Glossary of Terms on Gender Statistics; and Guidelines for the Development of a National Gender Statistics Website for knowledge base and information sharing in the Arab region.

The current report includes the recommendations made and a summary of the meeting’s discussions.

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) organized the second Inter-agency and Expert Group (IAEG) Meeting on Gender Statistics in the Arab Region from 12 to 14 October 2009, in collaboration with regional and international organizations. Twelve agencies participated in the meeting as follows: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for the Near East, International Labour Organization (ILO- Geneva), Regional Office for the Arab States (ILO-Beirut), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund MENA Regional Office (UNICEF- MENA), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Arab States Regional Office, World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO) EMRO, United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Participants from 14 Arab national statistical offices and six women machineries including representatives from the Center of Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR) and the League of Arab States attended and participated in the meeting.
2. The meeting was convened under the auspices of the inter-agency project 'Towards More Gender-Responsive MDG Monitoring and Reporting in the Arab Region' which is being coordinated by ESCWA. The project aims to achieve a common understanding among stakeholders in the Arab region on ways to engender monitoring and reporting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly in the preparation of gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data.
3. This meeting comes as a follow up to the first IAEG Meeting on Gender and the Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region (Cairo, September 2007) to fulfill the recommendations set then. The objectives of the second IAEG Meeting are to discuss the revision of the Arab Gender Issues and Indicators "G Is In" framework; measurement issues; strategies for data compilation and dissemination in addition to the harmonization of statistical terms on gender in the Arabic language. The meeting also provides an opportunity to exchange information on national priorities, gender equality issues, and current challenges in the compilation of gender sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data including best practice.
4. The three main outputs of the meeting are: a "Handbook on "G Is In" Framework"; a Glossary of Terms on Gender Statistics; and Guidelines for the Development of a National Gender Statistics Website for knowledge base and information sharing in the Arab region. In addition, a revised "G Is In" will be finalized in line with the discussions and methodologies agreed upon during the meeting.
5. The current report outlines the main discussion points and recommendations of the meeting.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

6. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group made the following recommendations:

(a) Request the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) to:

- (i) expedite the development of a national website on gender statistics to be hosted on national statistical offices official websites, in close collaboration with line ministries, women's machineries and non-governmental organizations; and urge countries to create their own inventory of studies, reports, publications and technical material related to gender and disseminate it on the national website;
- (ii) assign a focal point for Gender Statistics; in addition the NSOs are highly encouraged to establish a specialized Unit on Gender Statistics tasked to mainstream gender equality issues and apply monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;
- (iii) continue issuing the publication on Women and Men on a regular basis and disseminate it electronically on the website;
- (iv) make concentrated effort towards publishing other specialized and thematic gender based studies derived from the results of household surveys and censuses;
- (v) make use of the "G Is In" framework towards disaggregating and localizing indicators in MDG reports to better reflect national priorities and gender issues;
- (vi) compile data for "G Is In" rev1 framework and apply concepts, definitions and methodologies as per the draft Handbook on "G Is In" and provide ESCWA with a feedback on data in 2010, and present experiences and challenges in the 3rd IAEGM;
- (vii) create national database on gender statistics and commend on Qatar women machinery partnership with NSO towards the development of gender statistics and related databases;
- (viii) adopt ESCWA English/Arabic "Glossary of Statistical Terms on Gender" for use in Arabic gender related terminologies in publications and presentations;
- (ix) establish a Trust Fund for the Task Force on Gender Statistics at ESCWA to fund its activities and fulfil its commitments.

(b) Request the Commission to:

- (i) regularize the organization of the Arab IAEGM and Task Force on Gender Statistics meetings of the Statistics Division programme and provide required resources to implement them;
- (ii) present the outcomes of the meetings IAEGM and Task Force on Gender Statistics meetings to the Statistical Committee for adoption, and use towards the preparation of the Executive Secretary's report on resolution 286(xxv): Gender Statistics for Equality and Empowerment;
- (iii) follow up on the global program on Gender Statistics through continuing its participation in the IAEGM on Gender Statistics and the global forum and report to the Arab IAEGM and Task Force on Gender Statistics on the findings and recommendations made;
- (iv) finalize the "G Is In" framework revision and related metadata to produce the Handbook as per the feedback received during the meeting;

- (v) provide training for gender focal points at the country and agencies level in the Arab Countries on DevInfo in 2009;
- (vi) further enhance the capacity building and networking among experts and statisticians in gender statistics at the national level for NSO, United Nations Country Team (UNCT), women machinery etc.;
- (vii) disseminate ESCWA English/Arabic “Glossary of Gender Statistical Terms” through the web to make it available for users and producers and to elicit further contributions;
- (viii) publish the “Glossary of Gender Statistical Terms”, in collaboration with the regional and international agencies after completing the definitions of terms;
- (ix) submit the “Glossary of Gender Statistical Terms” to the ninth Statistical Committee to be held in 2010 to for adoption by the Economic and Social Council and the region to standardize the Arabic terms used in gender statistics;
- (x) hold an exhibition on Gender Statistics products in the Arab Countries in parallel to the IAEGM on Gender Statistics;
- (xi) approach regional and international agencies and private institutions to support the activities of the Gender Statistics Programme led by ESCWA.

II. TOPICS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. REVIEW OF STATISTICAL WORK CARRIED OUT SINCE THE FIRST IAEGM ON GENDER STATISTICS IN THE ARAB REGION (Session I)

7. The session included three presentations. The first presentation was on “Follow-up on the Recommendations of the first Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Gender Statistics in the Arab Countries, Cairo, 2007” (E/ESCWA/SD/2009/WG.2/4). ESCWA reported to the meeting on actions taken for each recommendation, which included: publishing the Booklet on Gender in Millennium Development Goals: Information Guide for Arab Millennium Development Goal Reports in 2009; developing and maintaining a website on Gender Statistics on the Virtual Library hosted on the Statistics Division’s website <http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/main.asp?division=sd>; developing the first Arab Gender Statistics database “Arab GenInfo_09”; and holding the first regional task force meeting on gender statistics.

8. The second presentation was on “Progress made on Gender Statistics activities since the first IAEGM on Gender Statistics, Cairo, 2007 (E/ESCWA/SD/2009/WG.2/5). ESCWA reported to the meeting on accomplishments made, including: translation and production of the Arabic version of the Booklet on Gender in MDG: Information Guide for Arab MDG Reports in 2009; and mainstreaming gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data in two main recurrent publications; namely, Population and Vital Statistics Bulletin (11th issue), and the Annual Statistical Abstract . More specifically, the 28th issue of the Annual Statistical Abstract (2008) includes a new chapter on Gender Equality. The Division also completed four main technical materials during 2008- 2009 which included two databases, a Virtual Library on Gender Statistics and a wall chart. The Division implemented the project on “The Development of National Gender Statistics in Iraq” in collaboration with the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT). Furthermore, a Professional post with general temporary assistance were established at the Statistics Division to strengthen the capacity of the Division in collecting, verifying and developing gender statistics in member countries. The Commission adopted a gender statistics-related resolution at its twenty-fifth session. Resolution 286 (XXV) on Gender Statistics for Equality and Empowerment is the first resolution in the UN system dedicated to Gender Statistics.

Finally, in 2008, the eighth Statistical Committee of ESCWA issued a number of gender-related recommendations for its future work.

9. The third presentation was made by Ms. Suliekha Patel, World Bank, on the Outcome of the second Global Forum on Gender Statistics held in Accra, 2009. The presenter briefed the meeting on the objectives, focus and outcomes of the Forum and the IAEG. There are two working groups; the first is on Global Gender Statistics and Indicator Database and the second on Gender Statistics Training and Curricula Development. A strong case was made by member countries for having a core set of gender indicators for the database. In addition, there was a need to establish a Gender Portal at the global level to post relevant training and other material for all regions and countries to use and modify as required. Finally, the IAEG noted the importance assigned by country participants to having a legal or executive mandate to engender national statistical systems; a new advisory group was created to deal with the legal aspects of engendering statistical systems.

B. COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS (Session II)

10. Nine country representatives made presentations on national experiences in gender statistics. Those countries were: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Qatar, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen. In addition, the women machinery of Yemen made a presentation as well. The presentations provided an overview of achievements made since the first Arab IAEGM on Gender Statistics; processes in compiling gender statistics; availability of data, and challenges encountered.

11. Data availability, reliability, accuracy, and accessibility were the main points of discussion in this session. The meeting also highlighted the need to conduct time use survey as well as the need to develop national gender websites.

C. REVISED ARAB GENDER ISSUES AND INDICATORS “G Is In” (Session III)

12. This session discussed the revision made on “G Is In” framework and presented it in the meeting paper entitled “Revised Arab gender issues and indicators “G Is In” (E/ESCWA/SD/2008/WG.2/6). ESCWA briefed the participants on the revision made on the framework which was the result of many factors. Some indicators were renamed to align with proposed methodologies for measuring them. Newly added indicators to the 2008 revised MDG framework were considered in the revision of the Arab “G Is In” framework. In addition, some indicators were deleted due to repetition or similarity to other indicators. A number of indicators were shifted from one goal or issue of concern to another to align and adjust in accordance with the related subject and the revised MDG framework issued in 2008.

13. The meeting discussed emerging issues that may need to be reflected in the framework and requested the Task Force and concerned agencies to make proposals before finalizing the framework. ESCWA in collaboration with agencies will review the areas of women in conflict and women’s health with UNFPA/United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) and WHO, respectively. A working group will be established within the Task Force to present countries’ proposals on the framework to be finalized by the Statistics Division.

D. PRESENTATION OF “G IS IN” METADATA (Session IV)

14. ESCWA presented a zero draft of the Handbook on “G Is In” framework. The Handbook aims to build on synergies from ongoing work in this area by forging a common methodological knowledge among stakeholders to produce comparable statistics for evidence-based policymaking and planning. It provides guidance on the definitions, rationale, concepts and sources as well as methods of calculation for each of the indicators of the ‘G Is In’ framework (summarized as metadata).

15. Session 4 included a review of the metadata for each of the indicators in the “G Is In” framework. ESCWA and the respective agencies presented the methodology for each indicator under the eight Goals. Presentations on income and poverty, property rights, employment, education, media, women in power and decision making, human security, institutional mechanisms, women in conflict and war, violence against women and human rights, health, environment and Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The presentations revolved around the proposed list of indicators, their definitions and methods of calculation, interpreting changes; in addition to conceptual limitations and data sources.
16. Discussions under this session focused on the need to conduct time use survey in all Arab countries to provide information on women’s contribution to the economy in non market activities. Adding a time use module to a household survey was also recommended as an alternative and cost-effective method. It was suggested that ESCWA would facilitate compiling the experiences of Palestine, Iraq, Morocco and Oman and best practice in time use survey to be shared with other Arab countries.
17. The participants highlighted the importance of compiling child labour statistics through labour force surveys currently being implemented in Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon, Egypt. ILO expert, Ms. Adriana Matta proposed using the terminology “*Children in productive activity*” instead of “*Child labour*”.
18. Indicators on the disabled were also highlighted as an important category that needs to be considered within the framework. This is particularly important due to the high prevalence of disabled people as a result of conflict in many Arab countries. Participants agreed that the current framework could accommodate the issue of disabled groups by disaggregating data to include this group and for different age groups. In line with international standards, the terminology “*People in special needs*” should be used instead of “*Disabled group*”.
19. It was also proposed to consider measuring the informal sector. The report entitled “The regional meeting of experts: informal employment in Arab states” would serve as a good reference on methodologies used. Measurement issues related to identification of managerial positions across all economic sectors need to be clearly defined. However, the participants agreed on using international occupational classifications to resolve those issues. Egypt representative informed the meeting that statistics related to women in managerial levels have been published since 1990.
20. Regarding education statistics, Egypt representative informed the meeting that dropout indicators were regularly produced from a gender-based perspective in Egypt. On the other hand, Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic mentioned that due to different educational systems, some indicators related to education may be challenging to calculate and comparability among countries might be an issue.
21. Participants agreed to provide related data for the framework along with national definitions at the current stage. Comparability at the regional level would be discussed in the following stage. Pending issues, including naming of indicators such as UNESCO indicator on “*Gender parity index*” or “*Gender parity ratio*” will be discussed with relevant agencies to complete the framework in its final form.
22. With respect to legislative and policy related indicators; the participants highlighted the gap between endorsement of legislation or policy and its implementation. Furthermore, the participants stressed the importance of identifying impact indicators.
23. Indicators related to Goal 5 were discussed thoroughly including prevalence of contraception (modern methods); cervical vis-a-vis ovarian cancer indicators; breast cancer age group (24 vis-a-vis 35 years); and stating the cause of morbidity. Early marriage, should include both girl and boy marriages.

E. PROPOSED ARABIC- ENGLISH GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR GENDER STATISTICS
(Session V)

24. ESCWA briefed the meeting on the preparation steps that took place to compile the Glossary of Terms for Gender Statistics. The Statistics Division faced difficulties in translating the Booklet on Gender in MDGs due to unavailability of any references or glossaries on gender statistics in Arabic. The Statistics Division at ESCWA took the initiative and compiled the first draft of terminologies and presented it to the meeting for discussion and feedback.

25. The objective of preparing the Glossary is to harmonize gender-related terms in the Arabic language at the national, regional and international levels. Some of the early translations made and cited in UN documentations were not accurately translated into Arabic. Those mistakes have not only affected the quality of publications, but also hindered the conceptualization of gender statistics in Arabic.

26. The participants commended ESCWA on its initiative towards compiling a unified set of gender-related terms in the Arabic and English languages. The participants provided some feedback on the draft during the meeting and would be sending individually their contributions. Issues such as gender-sensitive terminologies should be taken note of such as recommending the use of "*Female headed household*" instead of "*single*" in "*Female single household*". It was recommended to establish a special working group within the Task Force to work on finalizing the proposal and complement it with the French terms due to the need in Maghreb countries.

27. ESCWA informed the meeting that the Division is currently carrying out the development of a general Glossary for Statistical Terms for around 30 fields. The present proposed Glossary on Gender Statistics, once finalized, would make an important addition to the general Glossary. Various statistical dictionaries from national, regional and international sources are being used for referencing.

F. THE USE OF GENDER INDICATORS IN POLICYMAKING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION
(Session VI)

28. The meeting discussed the importance of statistics in formulating legislations/policies as well as redirecting country's resources towards effective interventions. National experiences on how statistics were used for evidence-based policy making were shared during this session.

29. Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Yemen stated that statistical findings showed that there was an increased risk of disease transmittal through marriage. A decree was issued in these countries requesting those who wish to get married to undergo a pre-marriage test in order to avoid blood transmitted diseases.

30. Egypt reported that due to the low prevalence of women's participation in the political life especially in parliament, a decree was issued to assign a quota for women in parliament in order to increase women's representation.

31. Moreover, due to the high rate of dropout in the Syrian Arab Republic, a law was issued making basic education compulsory.

32. While in Yemen, findings showed that infant mortality rate is notably high; thus a decree was issued to provide free of charge delivery healthcare services in government hospitals. This is basically to encourage all pregnant women to use professional delivery healthcare services.

33. Jordan has achieved impressive results on a host of social indicators, including women's high literacy and the bridging of gender gaps in education. Yet, women's participation in the economic sphere has not kept pace with these impressive gains, mainly due to host of barriers that women face in access to opportunities in the public sphere. The results of the Employment and Unemployment Survey revealed the low participation of

women in the formal sector; however it is presumed that women are the majority of informal workers, with anecdotal information indicating that women work in Jordan as unpaid rural workers and petty traders. This is a key area requiring further analysis for a major reason: the rights of women workers in the informal sector are unprotected. Accordingly, Jordan issued a new law giving employment rights to those working in the informal sector similar to those working in the formal sector.

34. Participants agreed to send ESCWA their national experiences on the role of gender statistics and in evidence-based policymaking to be compiled into a regional report. The information would include the issue; the evidence provided through statistics/publication and date of issuance; the impact it made including issuance of a decree/policy including its reference; and whether there was a change in the issue at hand.

G. CAPACITY BUILDING IN GENDER STATISTICS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING (Session VII)

35. The discussions in this session emphasized the need to train statisticians on gender statistics and equip them with the expertise needed and skills to develop gender statistics at the agency level and to mainstream gender concepts in all statistical activities. Those activities would include areas such as the development of questionnaires, definitions of indicators, training of field staff, tabulation of data, development of indicators, and dissemination of information etc.

36. To acquire that knowledge, the participants emphasized the need to organize more workshops and exchange national experiences, as well as engage experts at the country level.

H. PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR WEBSITE ON GENDER STATISTICS (Session VIII)

37. This session focused on providing the participants with a framework for developing national website on gender statistics. The objectives of developing a national website of gender statistics are as follows: to reinforce national capacity to produce and disseminate gender statistics; and to enhance mainstreaming of gender perspective in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring. Jordan and Iraq shared their experiences on the development of their national websites on gender statistics.

38. Participants reiterated the importance of making gender statistics visible through a national website dedicated for that specific purpose and requested ESCWA support in that regard.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. DATE AND VENUE

39. The second IAEG Meeting on Gender statistics in the Arab region was held at ESCWA from 12-14 October 2009 and organized by the statistics Division in collaboration with United Nations agencies .

B. OPENING

40. The meeting was opened by Ms. Neda Jafar, Statistician, ESCWA, who welcomed the participants and outlined the objectives of the meeting and its expected outcomes, namely, to discuss the revision of the Arab Gender Issues and Indicators “G Is In” framework; measurement issues; strategies for data compilation and dissemination in addition to harmonization of statistical terms on gender in the Arabic language. Ms. Jafar also underscored the importance of the meeting in providing an opportunity to exchange information on current challenges and best practice in the region.

41. In his speech, Mr. Hussein Gezairy, the Regional Director of WHO-EMRO, highlighted the importance of gender indicators and health data disaggregated by sex and age to uncover the specific situations and health needs of men, women, boys, and girls, across different demographics.

42. Ms. Sulekha Patel, Senior Demographer at World Bank consequently stressed the need for good quality gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated data in traditional economic areas such as employment, finance and business, agriculture, communication and transport as well as the serious needs for sensitive or difficult to measure issues, for example, gender-based violence and trafficking in women and girls.

C. PARTICIPANTS

43. The IAEG Meeting was attended by 43 participants from fourteen Arab countries, namely, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Qatar, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen

44. The meeting was also attended by representatives from eleven specialized UN agencies: ILO Regional Office for the Arab States, UNFPA-Lebanon, UNESCO-Regional Office for Education in the Arab States, UNICEF-MENA, UNIFIL, UNIFEM-Arab States Regional Office, WHO-EMRO, FAO-RNE and OHCHR; one regional commission of the United Nations, namely, UN-ECA; and one sister organization, the World Bank, in addition to representatives from the League of Arab States and CAWTAR.

45. Arab women machineries from six countries have participated in the meeting, including representatives from the Supreme Council for Women (Bahrain), The National Council for Women (Egypt), Ministry of Women's Affairs (Iraq), National Commission of Lebanese Women (NCLW) (Lebanon), Supreme Council for Family Affairs (Qatar) and Women National Committee (Yemen). A full list of participants is available in annex II to this report.

D. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

46. The IAEG adopted the agenda.

E. EVALUATION

47. 28 participants completed the evaluation forms of the meeting. The outcome of the evaluation is presented in annex I.

F. DOCUMENTS

48. A list of documents presented to the IAEG Meeting is included in annex III to this report.

Annex I

EVALUATION

Of the participants in the meeting, 28 completed evaluation questionnaires rating the organizational and substantive/technical aspects of the meeting on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good).

- 86% of the respondents gave the meeting an overall rating of good or very good
- 82% of the respondents stated that the meeting was good or very good in providing a forum for the exchange of information and knowledge
- 79% of the respondents rated the quality of the presentations as good or very good and 74% gave the same rating to the quality of the written material circulated
- Organizational arrangements for and during the meeting were deemed good or very good by a significant majority of the respondents (72%)
- More than two-thirds agreed that they could make use of the knowledge obtained in their work and/or share it with their peers
- Almost all respondents requested follow-up action to the meeting and this included:
 - (a) Finalizing the handbook on definitions and concepts for the proposed gender indicators and circulating it to participants;
 - (b) Sharing recommendations and revised proposed indicators with the participating heads of national statistical offices;
 - (c) Sharing country experiences in collecting 'G Is In' indicators;
 - (d) Organizing capacity building workshops for the collection and dissemination of "G Is In" indicators by area and for the mainstreaming of gender statistics in national statistical strategies.
- Respondents made some recommendations which include: allocating more time for discussion sessions; foster the participation of more statisticians; focus on gender issues rather than women issues; and ensure dissemination of nationally compiled data on 'G Is In' indicators through a regional database.

Annex II

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Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Procedural Documents

Agenda

Proposed organization of work

Information Note

Session Documents

Follow-up on the Recommendations of the 1st Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Gender Statistics in the Arab Countries, Cairo, 2007 (E/ESCWA/SD/2009/WG.2/4)

Progress made on Gender Statistics activities since the 1st IAEGM on GS, Cairo, 2007 (E/ESCWA/SD/2009/WG.2/5)

Revised Arab Goals, Issues And Indicators Framework “G Is In” (E/ESCWA/SD/2008/WG.2/6)

Zero Draft Handbook on “G Is In” Framework: Metadata (E/ESCWA/SD/2009/WG.2/7)

Proposed Glossary of Terms for Gender Statistics

Development of a National Gender Statistics Website: A Proposed Framework

Background Documents

Final Report: Inter-Agency And Expert Group Meeting On Gender And The Millennium Development Goals In The Arab Region (Cairo, 10-11 September 2007) (English and Arabic)

ESCWA Resolution on Gender Statistics (E/ESCWA/SD/2008/2) (English and Arabic)

Gender in MDGs: Information guide for Arab MDG Reports (E/ESCWA/SCU/2007/Technical Paper 1) (English and Arabic)

References

Final Report: Interagency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (Rome, 13 December 2007)

Final Report: Second Meeting Of The Interagency And Expert Group On Gender Statistics (Accra, 29 January 2009)
