



Gender Data for ALL Women and Girls in African and Arab States

Pre-IWD 2025 Policy Roundtable

KEY TAKEAWAYS

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

One of the biggest challenges in achieving gender equality remains the **lack of gender-disaggregated data** to inform policy-making. The **2025 International Women's Day (IWD) theme, "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment,"** underscores the need to strengthen data systems to ensure women and girls are counted in policies and governance structures.

To address this, **UN Women East and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa, and Arab States**, in partnership with **Data2X, the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), and Plan International**, convened a **high-level policy roundtable** on March 6, 2025. The event sought to explore strategies for improving the use of gender data in Africa and Arab States.

ABOUT THE EVENT

The roundtable featured expert discussions on three core themes:

- 1. The state of adolescent girls and young women based on available gender data**
- 2. Gender data gaps and barriers**
- 3. Successes in gender data use for policy action and opportunities for improvement**

The discussions aimed to:

- Identify **gaps in gender-disaggregated data** and barriers to data access

- Enhance **citizen-led data collection** to support advocacy and policy reforms
- Strengthen **media engagement in gender data storytelling**
- Increase **collaborations between policymakers and gender data institutions**
- Encourage **open data approaches for governance**

The session was moderated by investigative journalist John-Allan Namu and featured insights from key policymakers, gender advocates, researchers, and journalists.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The State of Adolescent Girls and Young Women Based on Available Gender Data

- **Perception vs. Reality:** While attitudes on access suggest a push for equality, reality shows a **wide disparity across countries**, with **Sudan and Mauritania** ranking poorly in gender data availability. In some of the countries under study, women are lagging behind in participation in local politics and policy making, **materially affecting their individual rights** such as inheritance rights. *(Anne Okello, Afrobarometer)*
- **Data Gaps Widen Inequalities:** Policymakers' failure to collect and analyze gender-disaggregated data leads to **widening socio-economic disparities**. Entrenchment of crimes against women continue to feature as some of the negative outcomes of this widening divide e.g. 1 in 3 women face gender based violence. A call was made for more focused gender statistical planning to ensure that **knowledge gaps are filled** with data that tells the correct story *(Annah Katuki, Plan International)*
- **Lack of Awareness:** Many young women and girls **do not know that gender data exists**. A **call to action** was made to enhance **citizen-led data collection** to fill these gaps and ensure the data informs **citizen action and policy shifts**. Closer collaboration with decision makers at all levels was also suggested as a possible remedy to gaps in knowledge about gendered data *(Faith Jwenge, Plan International)*
- **Workplace Barriers:** Structural barriers limit young women's participation in leadership and formal employment, contributing to **underrepresentation in the workplace**. *(Faith Jwenge, Plan International)*

2. Gender Data Gaps and Barriers

- **Data Biases:** Most gender data collected **defaults to male perspectives**, deepening gender inequalities and reinforcing structural barriers. For instance, rare deployment of time use surveys deny policy makers and the general public insights about how men and women use their time, making it easier for policy to remain focused on the needs most often spoken about. Incomplete datasets also reinforce negative public perceptions and prevent social gains from being made. On a continental scale, the same variables that are used in measurement is important to have more robust comparative studies between countries. *(Florence Machio, Data2X)*
- **The Impact of Not Counting:** Failing to measure gender-specific indicators **widens societal gaps**, as data omission leads to exclusion from policy considerations. *(Annah Katuki, Plan International)*
- **Media and Data Journalism:** Journalists struggle with **upskilling** to analyze and interpret gender data effectively, limiting their ability to **extract meaning and craft compelling narratives**. *(Malemba Mkongo, Mediamax)*
- **Bridging Media and Data Institutions:** Journalists are slowly but surely moving towards **data driven storytelling** as well collected data lends credibility to reporting. Gendered data helps problematize various issues for the public in general, but **governments and policy makers have been gatekeepers to datasets** that are important for the public. Organizations collecting gender data must collaborate more with media houses to **integrate gender data into storytelling**, ensuring that journalists have access to **accurate and relevant datasets**. *(Malemba Mkongo, Mediamax)*

3. Successes and Opportunities for Improved Use of Gender Data

- **Policy Communication:** Gender data must be communicated in a way that **resonates with policymakers and legislators**, ensuring that the insights translate into concrete **policy decisions**. (*Florence Machio, Data2X*) The storytelling behind datasets is just as crucial to moving the needle towards influencing policy change as the data collection itself.
- **Launch of a Gender Data Fellowship:** The event announced the **launch of a Gender Data Fellowship for African Journalists**, aimed at **building capacity in gender data reporting and supporting countries in implementing time-use surveys** to improve data granularity. (*Florence Machio, Data2X*)
- **Open Data for Governance:** Transparent, **open-data systems should be encouraged** to promote accountability and evidence-based policymaking, ensuring **gender data is widely accessible**. Time use surveys, for instance, can help **quantify women's contributions to the GDP of a country**, influencing both public policy changes and giving evidence in private claims such as in divorce cases. (*Florence Machio, Data2X*). However, governments must be pushed to adopt more open data policies.
- **Case Study - Tanzania:** Physical, social and economic barriers that exist in public spaces have prevented women from participating in public decision making. For example, a lack of

access to information, verbal and physical abuse in workplaces and public spaces such as markets is a perennial problem in Tanzania. Gender data played a role in transforming **marketplaces into safer spaces for women traders** through legal and policy interventions, demonstrating the **power of data-driven advocacy**. Eg the **“Give payment, not abuse”** campaign piloted by Equality for Growth was successful in Dar es Salaam and is being rolled out across Tanzania. Women who chose to become change champions drove the changes. A **multisectoral approach to the use of gendered data** to address specific issues like gender-based violence led to more robust and longer lasting responses to the problem, led by local leaders who engaged in dialogues that stemmed from good data. (*Jane Magigita, Equality for Growth*)

- **Innovative Use of Data:** Research-driven **gender policies** are proving to be effective in shaping socio-economic changes across Africa, with data-led programs influencing **women's economic empowerment and leadership representation**. Time use surveys have helped inform the public on the **differences in how men and women use their time in various spaces**, be they private or public. This has informed policymaking on gender discrepancies in paid labour. Initiatives that have used data have impacted usage of funds, driving these funds towards more efficient and focused uses. Citizen generated data can be used as complimentary data to official sources of the same. (*Faith Tsuma, ICRW*)

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

1. Strengthening Citizen-Led Data Collection

- Empower grassroots organizations to **fill gender data gaps** through community-led research.
- Expand **data action initiatives** to help craft **compelling narratives** that can drive policy shifts.

2. Capacity Building for Journalists

- Invest in **training journalists on data-driven storytelling** to enhance reporting on gender disparities.
- Establish **stronger linkages between gender data institutions and media organizations**.

3. Policy and Legislative Engagement

- Encourage **governments to adopt gender-responsive budgeting** using data-driven insights.

- Prioritize the **communication of gender data** to policymakers, ensuring alignment with legislative goals.

4. Mainstreaming Gender Data in Governance

- Increase **collaborations between policymakers, media, and data research organizations** to ensure gender statistics are widely used.
- Advocate for **institutionalized use of time-use surveys** to improve data **granularity**.

5. Encouraging Open Data Initiatives

- Develop **accessible gender data platforms** to enhance visibility and public participation in policy processes.
- Promote **open-data approaches** for governance, ensuring **inclusivity and transparency** in gender data dissemination.

CONCLUSION

The roundtable emphasized that gender data is **a crucial driver for policy change** and a **powerful tool for gender equality advocacy**. While strides have been made, continued investment in **gender-responsive data systems, media engagement, and policy alignment** remains critical in ensuring all women and girls are counted, heard, and empowered.

Report Compiled By:

Sylvia Maina *Regional Gender Statistics Communications Specialist*
& **John-Allan Namu** *Moderator – IWD roundtable*

For: UN Women East and Southern Africa

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Link to event recording: <https://bit.ly/IWD2025RecordingAndPresentations>

ANNEXES

SPEAKERS & PANELISTS BIOS



Isabella Schmidt is Regional Gender Statistics Advisor for East and Southern Africa at UN Women where she leads on supporting countries in creating an enabling policy environment for

gender data and statistics.

Previously, Isabella served as Chief Director, Social Statistics, at Statistics South Africa for 10 years where she oversaw the production and promoted the use of social statistics. Isabella previously worked as an international consultant specializing in monitoring and evaluation in various countries in Africa, the Middle East, and South America in diverse sectors including food security and rural development.



Sylvia Maina leads strategic communications for gender statistics for UN Women in East and Southern Africa. Her expertise helps drive the uptake and use of gender data for evidence-based

policies and decisions to improve the lives of women and girls in the region.

With nearly 25 years shaping communications for multilateral and bilateral development organizations including the World Bank, USAID, the EU, and GIZ as well as some government agencies, Sylvia has helped position organizations as thought leaders on diverse subjects ranging from food security and livelihoods to good governance, water, sanitation, and hygiene, public policy, and public health in Africa with some experience on Asia.



John-Allan Namu is an award-winning investigative journalist (CNN/Multichoice African Journalist of the Year 2009, TRACE Prize winner 2019, Kenya Human Rights

Defender of the Year 2022), and Founder/CEO of Africa Uncensored, Africa's only indigenous dedicated investigative journalism media house.

The Human Rights Defender of the Year Award recognized John Allan's extraordinary and outstanding contribution towards the promotion and protection of human rights by defending freedom of the media, access to information and mainstreaming the protection of journalists as human rights defenders.



Chrystin Afifu is Gender Women's Economic Empowerment Technical Specialist at the International Center for Research on Women - Africa Hub. With a strong background in

gender, governance, and public policy, Chrystin has more than 16 years of experience working at the intersection of research, policy, and practice to advance gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

At ICRW, he plays a key role in conceptualizing, implementing, and providing technical oversight to research and evaluation projects across various sectors where he helps to ensure that policies and programs are evidence-based and gender-responsive. A HEforSHE Champion, Chrystin is committed to driving sustainable C inclusive change.



Florence Machio currently serves as Gender Advisor, Africa for Data 2X, an international civil society organization and gender data alliance that works with partners including UN agencies governments, civil society, academics, and the private sector to improve the production and use of gender data.

A development communications and campaigns expert with more than 20 years of experience advocating for gender equity, reproductive health rights, and health issues across Africa, Florence is adept at translating research on gender-based violence, FGM, and reproductive health rights into impactful advocacy campaigns that influence policy change at national, regional, and international levels.



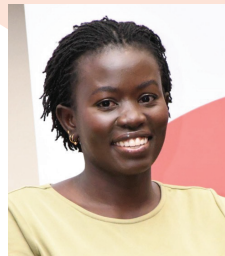
Roger Yates is Regional Director for Plan International covering the Middle East, East and Southern Africa region. He previously worked as Director for Disaster Risk Management at Plan International.

Prior to Plan International, Roger worked for local and international NGO's, the UN, and governments of developed and developing countries mostly across East and Southern Africa. Roger is also a qualified engineer and started his career as a volunteer with a local NGO in Botswana in the 1980s working on a project providing solar desalinization of water for remote communities in the Kalahari.



Antonia Ngabala-Sodonon is currently UN Women Representative Kenya following her previous stint as UN Women Special Representative and interim Head of UN Women Liaison office to the African Union (AU) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

With over 30 years experience in international development, Antonia has also served as UN Women Resident Representative in Cote d'Ivoire. She is based in Nairobi.



Anne Okello has been involved in project management for Afrobarometer in East Africa since 2021. Stationed at the University of Nairobi's Institute of Development Studies,

Anne is experienced in survey methodology, questionnaire indigenization, country-specific questions design, sampling, survey management, and dissemination both in stakeholder interface and publications.

Anne has a deep appreciation for the role of research and data in facilitating socio-economic and political change. Her academic background is in Development Studies (M.A.) and Finance (B.Com).



Annah Katuki is Gender Inclusion Advisor at Plan International-Kenya. Annah has extensive experience in shaping national and regional policies on gender equality,

women's rights, and social inclusion and has been instrumental in advancing gender mainstreaming in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa.

Annah has led ground-breaking initiatives to enhance women's leadership, economic empowerment, and protection from GBV, helping to ensure that gender equality remains central to national development efforts.

By working with government agencies, civil society, and international organizations to influence policy, strengthen institutional capacity, and drive systemic change, Annah has made significant contributions to gender mainstreaming, strategic advocacy, capacity-building, making her a key voice in Kenya's gender equality movement.



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Faith Jwenge is the Kenyan representative of the Regional Youth Advisory Panel member at Plan MEESA and a digital marketing professional. A passionate youth advocate,

digital strategist, and communications professional, Faith is passionate about meaningful youth engagement and inclusion in decision-making spaces.

Her work focuses on peace and security, climate action, and gender equality helping to ensure that young people, especially young women and girls, have a voice in shaping policies and solutions that impact their lives.

With a background in Information Science and expertise in digital marketing, Faith leverages media and storytelling to drive meaningful change.



Malemba Mkongo is a multiple-award winning journalist with nine years' experience in reporting for print and digital media on gender, health, and science. She currently

works as an editor for the People Daily handling gender, human rights, and development. Prior to this, she worked as a Features Writer at the same media house.

Malemba learned the ropes at Radio Africa Group's The Star daily where she corresponded for close to 7 years.

Some of her winning articles are on gender and awards include the AU-Media award on Ending Child Marriages in Africa, Reachout Center Trust Media Awards, finalist at Media Council's AJEA Awards, and, most recently, SOJO Media Awards by Right Here, Right Now Coalition.



Jane Magigita is a passionate women's rights activist, lawyer, and social entrepreneur dedicated to empowering women in Tanzania's informal sector. As the Founder and Exec-

utive Director of Equality for Growth (EfG), she has more than 16 years of experience in legal aid, advocacy, and policy reform. Her work focuses on dismantling gender barriers, promoting economic justice, and ensuring women traders have equal opportunities.

A recipient of the Martin Luther King Jr. (Drum Major for Justice) Award (2014), Jane has designed and led groundbreaking programs such as 'Voices for Visibility, Rights, and Livelihood', and 'Give Payment, Not Abuse', a campaign against gender-based violence in market areas. Her efforts have influenced national policies and impacted over 10,000 women, equipping them with leadership skills and economic independence.



Faith Tsuma is a researcher and economist specializing in policy analysis, gender, and economic development. She is currently a Research Officer at the International Center for

Research on Women (ICRW) working on projects cutting across themes such as unpaid and paid care work, women economic empowerment, social protection, childcare, and SRHR.

With experience in quantitative and qualitative research, Faith has contributed to gender and economic policy studies for organizations such as CIMMYT, ECOWAS, and UNECA. She is skilled in data analysis and is passionate about using research to drive policy and socio-economic change.