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OPEN DATA WATCH: MAPPING GENDER DATA GAPS

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Open Data Watch is an organisation based in Washington DC, USA, dedicated to analysing and advocating for, open data. Whilst interning at Open Data Watch I worked on their Data Gaps 2.0 project in collaboration with another organisation, Data 2X, to map the availability of gender data in international databases. My work will form a part of a final report written by Data 2X, discussing the issue of gender data gaps, and advising the future avenues for international actors to rectify this issue.

Objectives

The term 'gender data' refers to data which describes central aspects and issues of gendered inequalities across the globe. Many such data are not appropriately disaggregated, so the reality of gender inequality is not truly realised and cannot be addressed.

The Data Gaps 2.0 project was designed to show which data gaps exist in gender indicators, in both national and international databases. We aimed to document the international and national availability of data, whilst also recording the consistency of data with international indicators and level of sex disaggregation.

This project intends to show where the data gaps are so solutions are able to form.
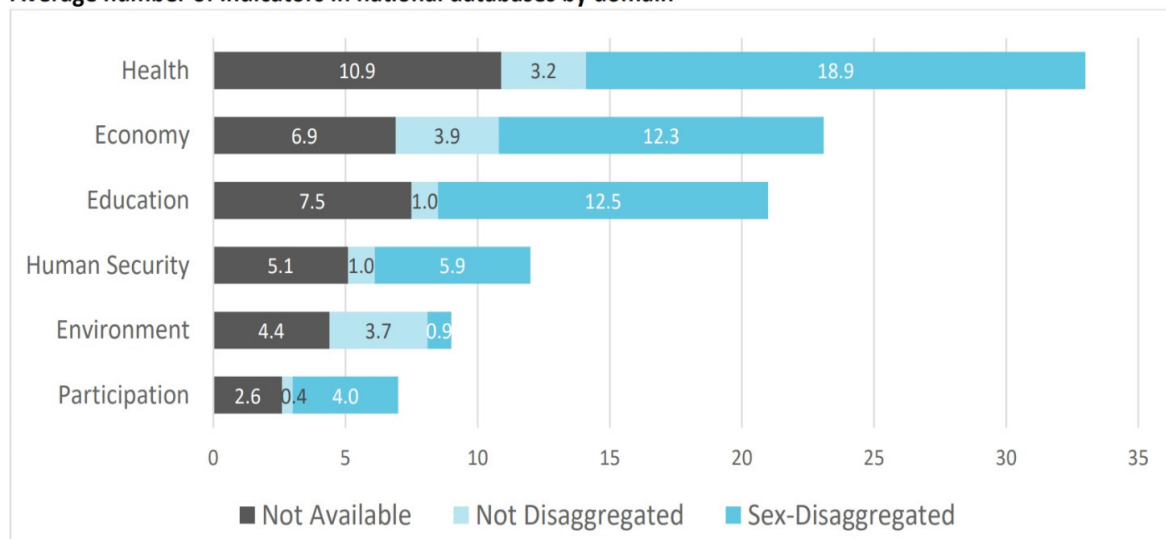
Method

For each of the 15 countries five aspects of the 105 indicators were recorded: availability, source, metadata, consistency of data with indicators, and degree of sex disaggregation. National and international data were recorded separately.

All details of the data were recorded in an excel spreadsheet, and ratings of availability, consistency and disaggregation were coded according to the aforementioned methodology.

After the documentation process had been done for each country the various analyses began. I was able to assist in creating typologies to use in the analysis, and some preliminary analyses. However, much of the analysis is still to published in the final report.

Average number of indicators in national databases by domain

A graph to show the availability of consositent and suitably disaggregated national level gender data

Findings

The study provided essential insight to the status of national gender data within the case countries, as can be seen in the above graph.

- Within the 15 countries, 48% of all gender indicators were missing.
- The proportionally greatest gap is within the 'Environment and Sustainability' category, with only 10% of indicators having sex disaggregation
- The health domain with the greatest number of indicators (32) only has 58% of indicators available with sex disaggregation. This is the most complete coverage of all categories.

International databases are no more optimistic, with 50% of gender indicators missing, and 34 indicators have no sex disaggregation in any country. only 6 indicators are available and fully disaggregated.

Reflections

It is clear to see that gender data gaps are a prevalent and truly global issue. The report from Data 2X and Open Data Watch should go some way to rectify this issue and provide effective solutions in the future.

I am grateful to have taken part in this project, and have learnt many skills in the process. I was taught data literacy, in order to find and reference the data needed for the project. I was able to run analyses in order to answer the curiosity of the organisation. From looking through hundereds of data sources, the importance of appropriate data presentation has been emphasised to me, and I will use these tools in my university research in the future. I also garnered softer skills of working in a professional environment, an invaluable experience I will surely remember.

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