Bridging the Gap: Mapping Gender Data Availability in Asia and the Pacific

GENDER AND DATA POLICIES | BANGLADESH

APRIL 2021

Bangladesh's broadest statement on gender equality is contained in the *Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2021–2041* (Bangladesh Ministry of Planning 2020). Also known as *Vision 2041*, its goals are to transform Bangladesh into an upper middle-income country, to achieve the SDGs, and to eradicate poverty altogether by 2041. The section on gender equality notes Bangladesh's success in improving the lives of women and the challenges ahead.

Bangladesh has made immense gains in female education, infant mortality, maternal mortality, fertility, and access to credit but these have not translated into gains in terms of property rights, inheritance, entry to business, access to financial services, government service, parliament, local government, access to public space, law enforcement, legal profession, sports, violence against women, reproductive autonomy, fertility preferences, divorce, parental authority, a gender-sensitive budget, and more. It is government policy to maintain and enhance the pace of change in this area through gender empowerment (Bangladesh Ministry of Planning 2020, page 16).

In 2019, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) member states, including Bangladesh, conducted a national review of their implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. According to the review, challenges in attaining progress towards the SDGs and gender equality include insufficient sex-disaggregated data and limited capacity to monitor progress towards existing laws or policies. (ESCAP 2019).

This report reviews the data available to support Bangladesh's commitments on gender equality as it works toward *Vision 2041*.

Policies and Strategies
In 2020, the Bangladesh Planning Commission released its *Gender Diagnostics, Policy, Strategy and Action Plan for the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh*.
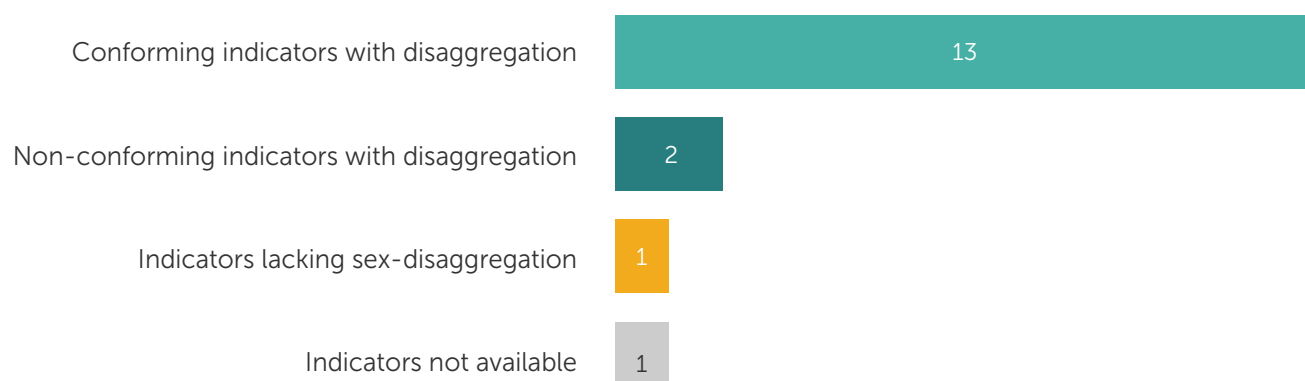
According to this plan, Bangladesh targets women and girls in many social security programs and in the absence of concrete guidance and planning, improvements in gender equality were less than their potential. Therefore, a Gender Policy was developed and approved by the Central Management Committee (CMC) of National Social Security Programmes under the Chair of the Cabinet Secretary in 2018. This Strategy and Action Plan is a step forward in realizing the objectives of the NSSS towards reducing the gender gap (Bangladesh Planning Commission 2020, page xi).

The Plan has eight detailed policy commitment and actions. Here we consider seven commitments that can be mapped to the *Bridging the Gap* indicators, which includes both SDG and non-SDG indicators.

POLICY COMMITMENT 1: CHILDHOOD SUPPORT

The purpose of this commitment is to ensure that boys and girls have adequate access to health, education, and other relevant skills and knowledge that will prepare them for adulthood. Seventeen indicators included in *Bridging the Gap* support this commitment, where fifteen indicators are from the SDGs and the remaining two supplemental indicators are from UN Women's *Turning Promises into Action* (2018). Of these, all but three are available in national databases with sex disaggregation.

Figure 1: Indicators for policy commitment 1

Sex-disaggregated and conforming indicators:

- 2.2.1 Prevalence of stunting (height for age < -2 standard deviation from the median of the World Health Organization (WHO) Child Growth Standards) among children under 5 years of age

- 2.2.2 Prevalence of malnutrition (weight for height > +2 or < -2 standard deviation from the median of the WHO Child Growth Standards) among children under 5 years of age, by type (wasting and overweight)

- 3.b.1 Proportion of the target population covered by all vaccines included in their national programme

- 4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex

- 4.1.2 Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)

- 4.2.1 Proportion of children aged 24–59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning, and psychosocial well-being, by sex

- 4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex

- 4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

- 4.4.1 Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill
- 4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated
- 4.a.1 Proportion of schools with access to (a) electricity; (b) the Internet for pedagogical purposes; (c) computers for pedagogical purposes; (d) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities; (e) basic drinking water; (f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic handwashing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions)
- 16.2.1 Proportion of children aged 1–17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month
- 16.9.1 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age

Sex-disaggregated, non-conforming indicators:
- 4.1.X4 Illiteracy rates, by sex
- 4.3.X Primary and secondary out of school rates, by sex

Lacking sex disaggregation indicators:
- 4.6.1 Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex
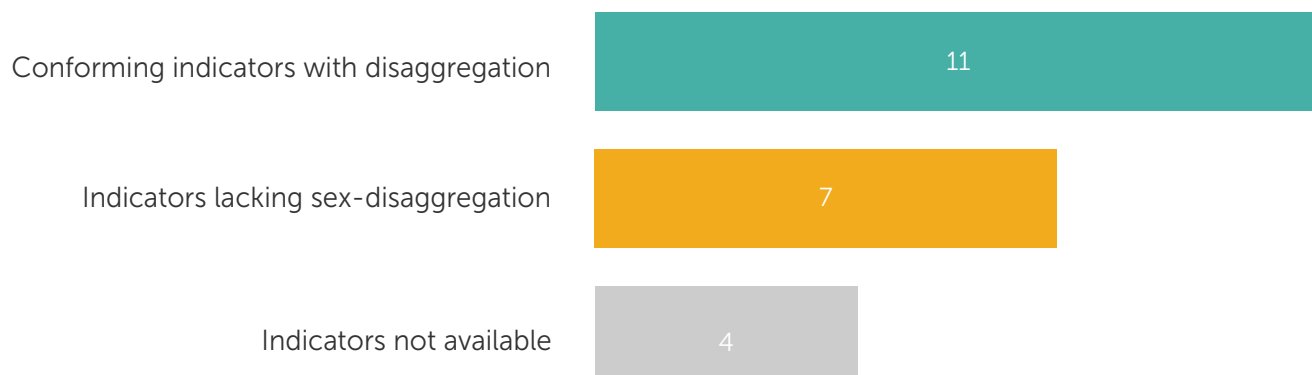
Data not available:
- 2.2.1 Prevalence of stunting (height for age < -2 standard deviation from the median of the World Health Organization (WHO) Child Growth Standards) among children under 5 years of age
- 4.c.1 Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by education level

POLICY COMMITMENT 2: SUPPORT FOR WORKING AGE WOMEN

This commitment is focused on women's access to the labor market, along with opportunities to pursue decent work. There are 22 indicators of relevance; 20 indicators are from the SDGs and the remaining two are supplemental indicators from UN Women's *Turning Promises into Action* (2018). Overall, seven lack sex disaggregation and four are unavailable.

Figure 2: Indicators for policy commitment 2

Conforming indicators with disaggregation	11
Indicators lacking sex-disaggregation	7
Indicators not available	4

Sex-disaggregated, conforming indicators:

- 4.1.X6 Education inequality indicators: (a) Proportion of women with less than 4 or 6 years of education; or (b) proportion of women with less than secondary education
- 5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age, and location
- 5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
- 8.3.1 Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex
- 8.5.1 Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age, and persons with disabilities
- 8.5.2 Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities
- 8.5.X Labor force participation rate, by sex
- 8.6.1 Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training
- 8.7.1 Proportion and number of children aged 5–17 years engaged in child labor, by sex and age
- 9.2.2 Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment
- 17.8.1 Proportion of individuals using the Internet

Lacking sex disaggregation indicators:

- 1.1.1 Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status, and geographical location (urban/rural)
- 1.2.1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age
- 1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work- injury victims, and the poor and the vulnerable
- 8.10.2 Proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider
- 9.5.2 Researchers (in full-time equivalent) per million inhabitants
- 10.1.1 Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population
- 10.2.1 Proportion of people living below 50 per cent of median income, by sex, age, and persons with disabilities
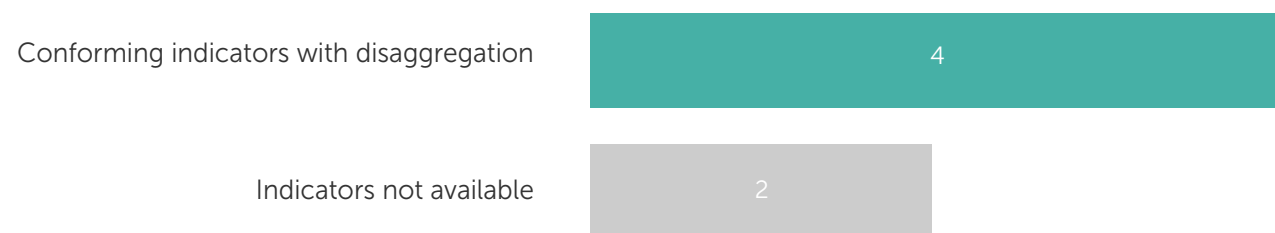
Data not available

- 1.2.2 Proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
- 1.4.2 Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognized documentation, and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure
- 2.3.2 Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status
- 5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure

POLICY COMMITMENT 3: CHILDBEARING AND MATERNITY

This policy commitment is focused on supporting women's maternal health and the prevention of HIV/AIDS. There are six SDG indicators of relevance, two of which are not available.

Figure 3: Indicators for policy commitment 3

Conforming indicators with disaggregation	4
Indicators not available	2

Sex-disaggregated, conforming indicators:
- 3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio
- 3.1.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
- 3.2.1 Under-five mortality rate
- 3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate

Data not available:
- 2.2.3 Prevalence of anemia in women aged 15–49 years, by pregnancy status (percentage)
- 3.3.1 Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations
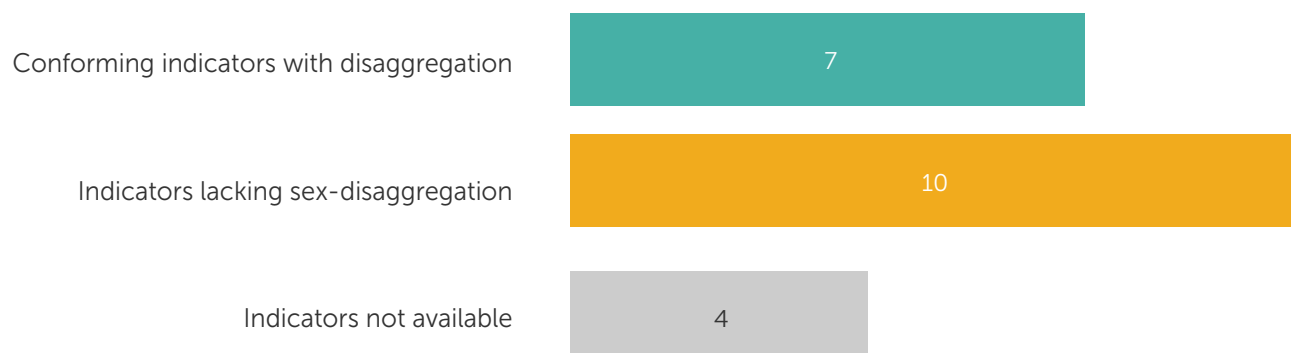
POLICY COMMITMENT 4: OLD AGE AND ELDERLY CARE

There are no *Bridging the Gap* indicators that are of relevance to this commitment.

POLICY COMMITMENT 5: AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE

This commitment focuses on women's access to affordable health care and services. This commitment also references access to family planning and access to sexual and reproductive health for adolescent girls. There are 21 indicators of relevance, where 20 indicators are from the SDGs and the remaining supplemental indicator is from UN Women's *Turning Promises into Action* (2018). Overall, only seven are available with sex disaggregation.

Figure 4: Indicators for policy commitment 5

Conforming indicators with disaggregation	7
Indicators lacking sex-disaggregation	10
Indicators not available	4

Sex-disaggregated, conforming indicators:

- 3.3.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population
- 3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate
- 3.6.1 Death rate due to road traffic injuries
- 3.7.1 Proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15–49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods
- 3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group
- 3.a.1 Age-standardized prevalence of current tobacco use among persons aged 15 years and older
- 5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care

Indicators lacking sex disaggregation:

- 2.1.1 Prevalence of undernourishment
- 2.1.2 Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)
- 3.3.3 Malaria incidence per 1,000 population
- 3.3.4 Hepatitis B incidence per 100,000 population
- 3.3.5 Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases
- 3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease
- 3.5.2 Alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in liters of pure alcohol
- 3.9.2 Mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, unsafe sanitation and lack of hygiene (exposure to unsafe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH) services)
- 6.1.1 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services
- 6.2.1 Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services, including a hand-washing facility with soap and water
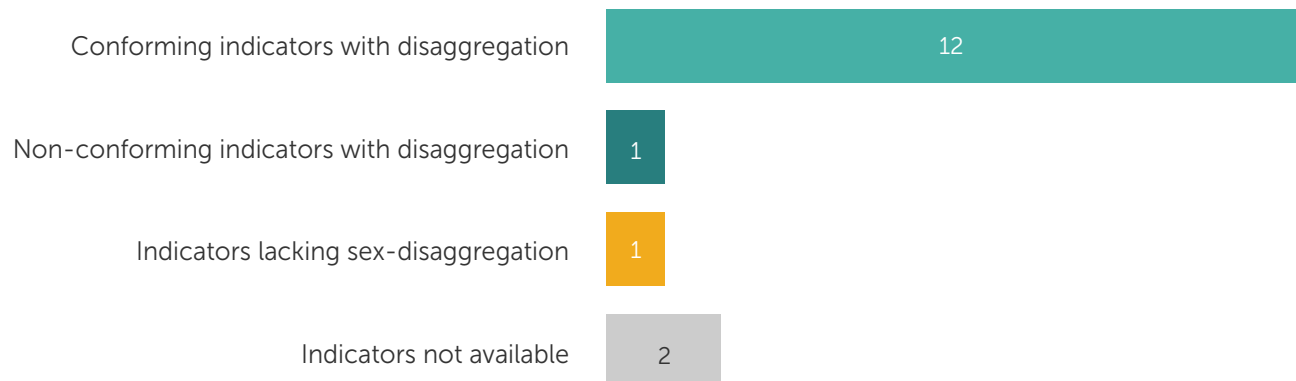
Data not available:

- 3.9.3 Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning
- 5.6.X Proportion of women who have an independent/joint say in own health care
- 8.8.1 Frequency rates of fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries, by sex and migrant status

POLICY COMMITMENT 6: PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE, CHANGING GENDER ROLES, AND SOCIAL NORMS
This commitment focuses on changing "the social norm of women's subordination and the role of women and men and promote equality." There are SDG 16 indicators of relevance, 13 of which are available with sex disaggregation.

Figure 5: Indicators for policy commitment 6

Conforming indicators with disaggregation	12
Non-conforming indicators with disaggregation	1
Indicators lacking sex-disaggregation	1
Indicators not available	2

Sex-disaggregated, conforming indicators:

- 5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
- 5.2.2 Proportion of women (aged 15−49) subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner, since age 15
- 5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20−24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
- 5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments
- 5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions
- 16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age
- 16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months
- 16.1.4 Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live
- 16.2.2 Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation
- 16.2.3 Proportion of young women and men aged 18−29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18
- 16.3.1 Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms
- 16.7.1 Proportions of positions in national and local public institutions, including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, by sex, age, persons with disabilities, and population groups

Sex-disaggregated, non-conforming indicators:

- 11.7.2 Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months

Indicator lacking sex-disaggregation:

- 16.3.3 Proportion of the population who have experienced a dispute in the past two years and who accessed a formal or informal dispute resolution mechanism, by type of mechanism

Data not available:

- 5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age
- 16.7.2 Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group

POLICY COMMITMENT 7: SUPPORT FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITY, MINORITY, ETHNIC, AND OTHER MARGINALIZED GROUPS
This commitment is to "ensure that persons with disability and from other marginalized groups are assured of their basic rights and receive opportunities for development and leadership."

There are a handful of *Bridging the Gap* indicators that recommend disaggregation by disability status. These include: 8.5.2 (Unemployment rate) and 16.7.2 (Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive). Indicators 8.5.2 and 16.7.2 are already mapped to the second and sixth policy commitments.

The indicators that are already listed can showcase where women with disabilities or women from marginalized ethnic, religious, or income groups, for example, are disproportionately affected. The key distinction is whether the underlying data sources adequately collect data on women based on disability status, ethnic backgrounds, income backgrounds, and so forth.

Aside from the aforementioned indicators, the following SDG indicator could be of relevance, which is available as a conforming indicator with sex disaggregation:

- 10.3.1 Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law

POLICY COMMITMENT 8: RESILIENCE FROM CLIMATIC AND OTHER SHOCKS AND VULNERABILITIES
This policy commitment is focused on protecting women from the impacts of climate change. Only one SDG indicator is of relevance, which lacks sex-disaggregation:

- 1.5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons, and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population

Bangladesh's Gender Statistics in Regional and Global Perspective
Our review of indicators to support the gender commitments of *Vision 2014* has found some data gaps. Of the 82 gender indicators that could be used to support Vision 2041, 14 are not available in national databases and 19 more lack sex disaggregation. And most of these indicators have no more than two observations from 2010 to 2020.
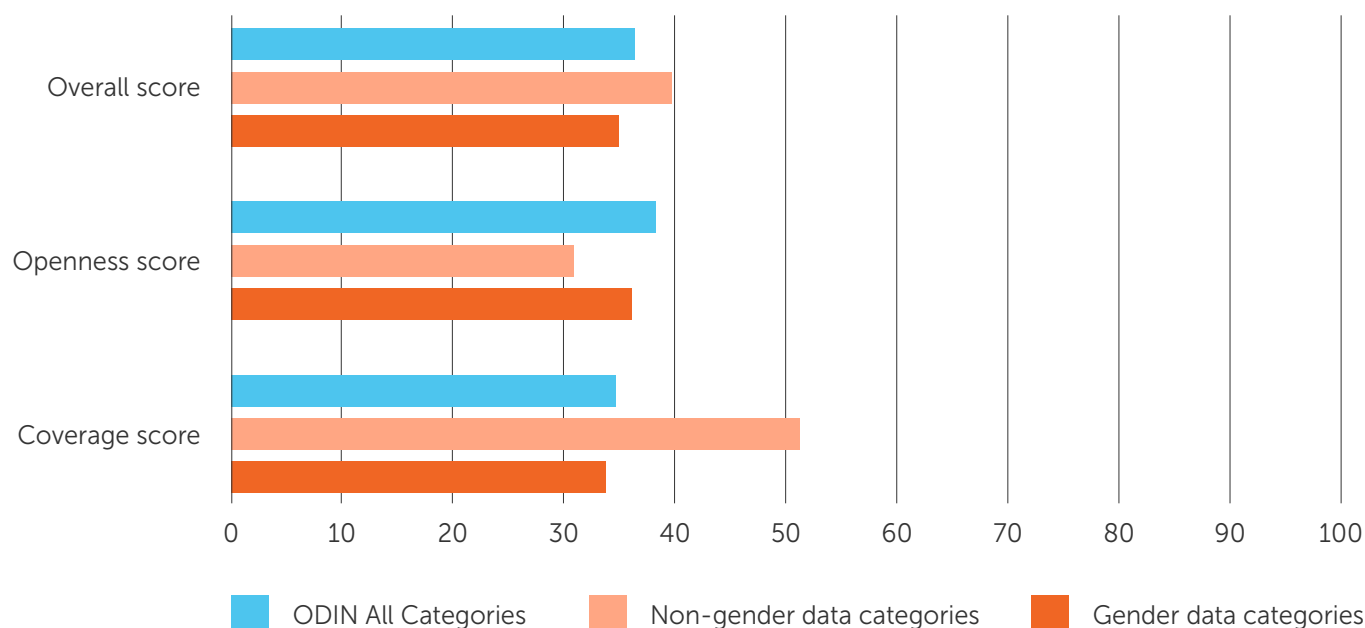
Are gender indicators different in their availability than non-gender indicators? The Open Data Inventory (ODIN) provides a broad assessment of the coverage and openness of national statistics

across a wide range of statistical topics and 22 statistical categories. Its ratings provide a comparative index of the statistical system's ability to provide open access to the data and statistics needed to monitor social, economic, and environmental development.

In 2020, Bangladesh had an overall ODIN score of 36.4, ranking eighth among the nine middle-income Southern Asian countries (ODW 2020). Globally, the country was ranked 147th out of 187 countries and 32nd out of 43 lower-middle-income countries. Bangladesh scores better on the measure of data openness (38.3) than on the coverage of its official statistics (34.5). Weaknesses in Bangladesh's statistical offerings were found in measures of population and vital statistics, education facilities, health facilities and outcomes, food security and nutrition, gender statistics, crime and justice, national accounts, labor, price indexes, pollution, and the built environment. Its strongest categories were in the government finance, money and banking, balance of payments, agriculture, and energy. While Bangladesh generally scores well on the availability of indicators at the national level, it does not provide data for sub-national administrative units.

ODIN includes ten categories of statistics that are of particular relevance to monitoring the health and wellbeing of women and children. Taken together, this subset of the overall ODIN index identifies strengths or weaknesses in the production and dissemination of gender statistics. As shown in figure 6, the overall score for non-gender data categories is about five points higher than for gender data categories. The difference is much larger when we consider data coverage, which accounts for the availability of disaggregated data, subnational data, and the number of observations available from the preceding ten years. These results confirm our finding of gaps in Bangladesh's gender indicators and a shortage of time series data needed to measure trends. In contrast, the openness score—which measures whether data are available in machine-readable formats that can be readily downloaded by users with adequate documentation accompanied by an open license—is higher for gender data categories.

Figure 6: Bangladesh gender and non-gender data categories, 2020

Source: Open Data Inventory 2020/21

The ODIN scores show that Bangladesh falls short of providing a robust set of statistical indicators needed to guide policy development and measure outcomes. This is particularly true of its gender indicators. But the relatively high coverage score for non-gender indicators suggests that with adequate resources, significant improvements could be made in gender data.

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