

data2x^o

What We Built Together: A Brief History of Data2X



Foreword

Across the world, gaps in data have long obscured the full extent of women's economic and social contributions, limiting the effectiveness of policies intended to advance gender equality. By the early 2010s, this challenge had gained renewed attention, as global efforts around sustainable development and gender equality converged. In 2012, then U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called for urgent action to close gender data gaps, a call that led directly to the creation of Data2X and its mission to improve the availability and use of gender data for policymaking.

Since its founding in 2012, Data2X, hosted by the United Nations Foundation, has helped turn the vision of stronger gender data for better policymaking into tangible progress. Through its partnerships, research, and advocacy, it has demonstrated how better data can inform smarter decisions, bringing greater clarity to women's economic participation, health, financial inclusion, and unpaid work, among other areas. In doing so, Data2X has contributed to a growing body of evidence that argues that strengthening gender data is essential to advancing gender equality. This report reflects on that journey, highlighting key contributions and the partnerships that made them possible.

This progress reflects the commitment and leadership of many. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Data2X's Executive Directors, past and present, whose vision and dedication have guided the initiative; the talented staff who have carried this work forward over the years; the members of the Advisory Board for their stewardship and insight; and the donors and partners whose support and collaboration have made this work possible.

As of May 1, 2026, Data2X begins an important new chapter by joining Open Data Watch. This transition marks an opportunity to build on a strong foundation and to scale this work even further, continuing to strengthen gender data systems and their use in policymaking around the world.

The UN Foundation is proud to have given Data2X its first home, and it has been a privilege to serve as Chair of the Data2X Board. I am deeply grateful to my fellow Board members and to the many partners who have contributed their expertise, energy, and commitment over the years. Together, you have helped shape a lasting contribution to the global gender data and development landscape and built a foundation from which to move forward to secure better outcomes for everyone, everywhere.

Elizabeth Cousens
President and Chief Executive Officer
UN Foundation



Introduction

Good policies depend on good data. Yet for decades, a lack of reliable data on women and girls has limited policymakers' ability to understand and address gender inequality. Important aspects of women's lives, from economic participation to unpaid care work, have been poorly measured or entirely absent from the data that guide development decisions. Data2X was established in 2012 to help change that.

Data2X was created to improve the quality, availability, and use of gender data to make a practical difference in the lives of women and girls worldwide.

Over the past fourteen years, Data2X has worked with partners around the world to identify gender data gaps, convene stakeholders to address them, and promote the sustained production and use of better data for evidence-based policymaking.

This report summarizes the first phase of Data2X's work, tracing the evolution of the gender data ecosystem across three key periods, highlighting major milestones, and examining Data2X's contributions across five domains of influence. The workstreams featured reflect multi-year initiatives that both shaped—and were shaped by—an evolving data landscape over more than a decade of work. While priorities, partnerships, and the balance between advocacy and technical work have shifted over time, Data2X's core mission has remained constant: strengthening the availability and use of high-quality gender data to inform policy and decision-making.

The report concludes with reflections on this journey and what the program achieved as an alliance at the United Nations Foundation, which—as its first institutional home—provided institutional backing, visibility, and connections to broader United Nations (UN) initiatives that have helped expand Data2X's reach and influence. The report also looks ahead to the next phase as Data2X joins forces with Open Data Watch.

At its core, Data2X has always been about partnership: working across organizations to strengthen gender data systems and ensure that data meaningfully informs policy. The lessons learned, while gleaned from Data2X's experience, can be widely applied to organizations working in the gender data system as well as gender equality and development actors.



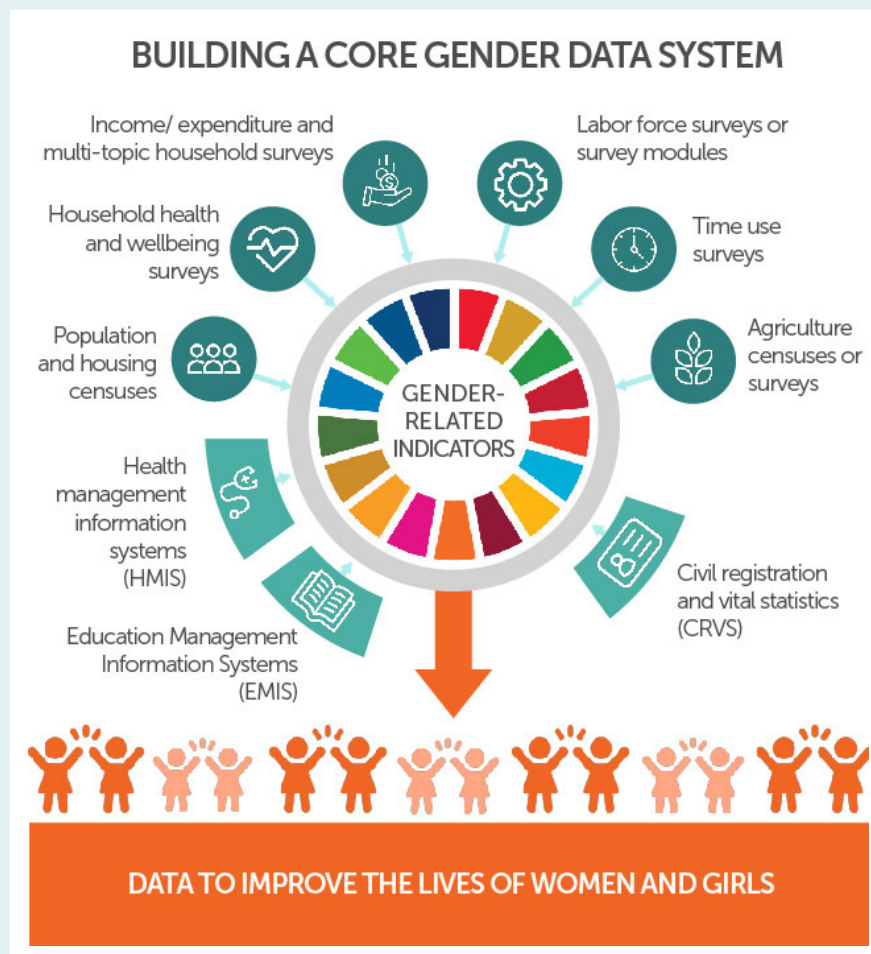
The Evolving Global Gender Data Ecosystem

To understand Data2X’s role over the past decade, it is important to situate its work within the broader gender data ecosystem. This ecosystem encompasses the interconnected set of actors, data sources, and processes involved in producing, disseminating, and using data on gender equality.

A wide range of stakeholders contribute to this ecosystem, including national statistical offices, government ministries, international organizations, civil society, researchers, and donors. Together, they play complementary roles in generating data, setting standards, building capacity, financing efforts, and strengthening the use of gender data in decision-making. Core components of the ecosystem span diverse data sources—from civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems to sector-specific surveys, administrative data, and information management systems.

Over time, the gender data ecosystem has expanded and become more coordinated, though significant gaps persist. Data2X has worked across this landscape—convening partners, identifying priorities, and catalyzing action—to help strengthen both the production and use of gender data globally.

Figure: The Gender Data Ecosystem



Source: Open Data Watch and Data2X (2021). State of Gender Data Financing 2021.

The Early Years

Awareness of the lack of data on women and girls—or the presence of poor-quality data—is not new. It has a long history, dating back at least to Ester Boserup’s seminal work *Woman’s Role in Economic Development* (1970).¹

The gender data problem is twofold:



A lack of information or sex-disaggregated information in areas of crucial importance for women’s wellbeing, such as violence against women and girls and many areas of women’s health, for instance;



Systematically flawed data on women and girls portraying them as significantly less productive and more dependent than they really are. This underestimates women’s value and contributions to the economy, undermines the validity of economic measures, and restricts women’s and girls’ economic opportunities.

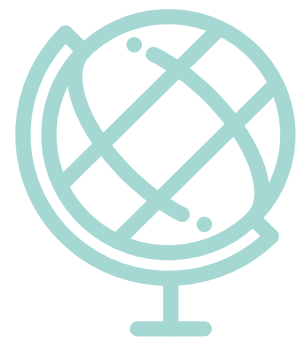
The lack of good gender data was a centerpiece in the deliberations of the first UN Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975.²



“This Plan gives high priority to national, regional and international research activities, and to data collection and analysis on all aspects of the situation of women, since adequate data, and information are essential in formulating policies and evaluating progress and-in effecting attitudinal and basic social and economic change.”

- World Conference of the International Women’s Year, Mexico City (1975)

Following the initial push in the 1970s to improve statistics on women and girls, attention to gender data ebbed and flowed over the following decades but consistently lagged in both priority and investment within the development community.



Renewed global interest in both data for development and gender equality in the early 2010s—spurred by the launch of UN Women (2011), the conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals, and the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (2015)—helped revive attention to gender data. This momentum was further amplified by then U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who, in a 2012 speech at the Gallup Poll offices, underscored the urgent need to close gender data gaps. Data2X was conceived and launched in response to that call to action.³

“Just as investing in women and gender equality has a multiplying effect that brings about positive results for entire societies, investing in collecting and analyzing data on women and gender equality can exponentially increase those benefits.”

- Hillary Rodham Clinton, Gallup 2012 Data2X Launch Event

Data2X’s initial call to action focused on identifying gender data gaps, raising awareness, and mobilizing advocacy, while convening partners to help address these gaps. Alongside and often in collaboration with Data2X, new partnerships formed and additional stakeholders emerged across the gender data ecosystem. The UN’s call for a ‘Data Revolution’ in 2015 further reinforced and accelerated this growing momentum around gender data.

2012

Hillary Clinton’s speech at Gallup resulting in the conception and launch of Data2X.



2012

Data2X’s launch with founding partners: U.S. Government and Hewlett Foundation.

2013

First Data2X collaboration with Open Data Watch (ODW).

2014

New York City meeting with the Clinton and Bloomberg Foundations alongside respective partners to launch actionable partnerships on six key areas.



2015

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), launched amidst the data revolution, reinforce interest in gender data.

Times of Growth & Consolidation

Global awareness of the pitfalls or biases of poor quality gender data and need for robust gender data grew significantly. *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*,⁴ by British author Caroline Criado Perez, became an international bestseller and won the 2019 Royal Society Science Book Prize. Melinda Gates emerged as another powerful emissary of the importance of gender data, and in 2016 committed significant grant resources (USD 80 million) to gender data, partly influenced by Data2X's work and advocacy.⁵

"We can't close the gender gap without closing the data gap."

- Melinda Gates, Women Deliver 2016 Conference

New gender data initiatives emerged alongside a growing set of influential champions. High profile leaders elevated the importance of data in advancing gender equality, reinforcing a clear message that better data is essential for better policy and more inclusive financial systems. Her Majesty Queen Rania of Jordan emphasized the importance of gender data to inform policy at the 2017 We the Future Event.⁶

"Good policy decisions depend on good data."

- Her Majesty Queen Rania of Jordan, We The Future 2017 Event

2016

Sixth Global Forum on Gender Statistics in Helsinki, Finland advances the measurement of gender equality.

2016

Launch of UN Women (UNW)'s Making Every Woman and Girl Count (Women Count) Program strengthens global investment in gender data systems.

2016

Melinda Gates commits USD 80 million to gender data at Women Deliver Conference.



2016

UNW's Women Count Initiative Panel at the UN General Assembly.

2017

We the Future: Accelerating Sustainable Development Solutions, speech by Her Majesty Queen Rania of Jordan emphasizes importance of gender data for policy.

And Her Majesty Queen Máxima of the Netherlands emphasized the importance of gender data as a starting point to address women's financial exclusion at the World Bank 2018 Spring Meetings.⁷

“To solve women’s financial exclusion, our starting point should be data.

- Her Majesty Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, World Bank 2018 Spring Meetings

These years (2016-19) marked a period of significant momentum for gender data—often described as the ‘golden years,’ though more accurately the ‘silver years,’ as funding increased but still fell short of what was needed.



2018

Women’s Financial Inclusion Data (WFID) partnership side meeting with Her Majesty Queen Maxima of the Netherlands at World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Spring Meetings.



2018

Gender Data Impact Stories: From Data to Action panel by Data2X and ODW panel at the UN World Data Forum in Dubai.

2019

“Big Data, Big Impact? The Future of Gender-Sensitive Data Systems” launch at Ford Foundation in NYC.



Advocacy and technical work during this period drove meaningful improvements and consolidation in gender data and data systems. Key international gains, to which Data2X contributed in partnership with others, include:



Aligned International Labour Organization (ILO) and World Bank approaches to measuring subsistence production and agricultural employment, harmonizing methodologies across institutions and contributing to the World Bank's adoption of ILO cognitive testing methods



Motivated IMF-led Financial Access Survey to request sex-disaggregated data, increasing information about women's access to financial services⁸



Strengthened gender-responsive CRVS systems at the national level, in partnership with the International Development Research Centre's (IDRC) Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems through a knowledge-brief series offering country-specific guidance



Advanced global adoption of the data value chain framework, reinforcing the link between data production and policy use⁹

2019

Africa Gender Data Network launch with UNECA creates network to empower gender data champions within national governments.



2019

Gender Data Financing Roundtable at Women Deliver mobilizes financing and partnerships to close critical gender data gaps.



2019

Publication of Data Value Chain provides framework for how data moves from collection to impact.

Improving the Measurement of Women's Work



The joint ILO-World Bank pilot study in Sri Lanka strengthened global approaches to measuring women's and men's work—particularly subsistence production and unpaid household services—by demonstrating how small refinements in questionnaire design can significantly reduce misclassification and reveal previously undercounted forms of work.

The study showed that adding targeted recovery questions and improving wording, translation, and interviewer guidance narrowed gaps between labour force surveys and multitopic household surveys, especially for women engaged in low-hours, informal, or family-based agricultural work. It also highlighted how sensitive unpaid care and domestic work estimates are to question structure, underscoring the need for consistent yet context-adapted tools.

These insights supported greater harmonization of measures across survey types while ensuring they remain responsive to national contexts, ultimately improving the visibility of women's full economic contributions.¹⁰

Growth in the number of initiatives and actors brought, alongside significant gains for gender data, confusion in overlapping mandates and initiatives, partly resulting from insufficient funding for systems-wide coordination and harmonization work as well as competing development priorities.

Challenging Times: Upheavals from the COVID-19 Pandemic and New Geopolitical Realities

The pandemic brought much of the partnership work across the data ecosystem to a halt, disrupting the convenings that Data2X and its partners relied on to raise awareness, collaborate, and advocate. A major global UN conference on women—the Generation Equality Forum, marking the 25th anniversary of the landmark



Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995)—was held virtually in 2021, a year later than planned, limiting its effectiveness as a platform for collaboration and advocacy amidst competing demands and lack of in-person connection.

At the same time, the pandemic heightened global awareness of the importance of health statistics, unpaid care, and other forms of household work—driven by the lived, first-hand experiences of people around the world. Not coincidentally, this has been accompanied by growing interest in measuring and valuing unpaid care work, as well as in designing care frameworks and policies.



The work of Data2X and partners shifted from face-to-face convenings and advocacy to developing practical assessment and solutions tools and to exploring new frontiers in gender data with a focus on data use and data innovations. Solution tools include ILO's 'light time use' modules in labour force surveys, work motivated by the ILO, World Bank, and Data2X partnership in

2020

COVID-19 pandemic impacts highlight the vulnerability of country-level gender data and the dashboards that provide access.



2021

UN Generation Equality Virtual Forum commemorates landmark conference a year later than planned.

2022

BRIDGE assessment tool launched to help countries build responsive investments in data for gender equality.

2023

Expanded Gender Data Network with PARIS21, growing to include representatives from more than 50 countries across Africa and the Asia-Pacific region.



the prior period. The focus on data use, which had been building for some years at Data2X and externally with other gender data partners aided by the data value chain framework, took over and shifted the efforts of the gender data community from production to use of data for policy purposes.

Data innovation included innovating on data frameworks (intersectionality),¹¹ practical uses of data (data cooperatives),¹² technological advancements for data collection and analysis (rapid telephone surveys used by UNW during the pandemic),¹³ and more recently, AI applications.¹⁴

As the pandemic disruption settled, stark new geopolitical realities have in almost no time shrunk development cooperation practices and budgets, as well as overt support for gender equality objectives and gender data. This challenging scenario underscores the strategic importance of strengthening partnerships and 'building together' to operate effectively.



2024

Data Intersectionality Roundtable with ODW and Center for Global Development (CGD) advocates for the benefits of intersectionality for policymaking.



2024

Leveraging Data Cooperatives for Climate Action with Aapti, Rockefeller Foundation explores data cooperatives as a model for inclusive, community-driven climate and gender data.

2024

UN Statistical Commission side event (UNSC55) with ODW, UN Statistics Division (UNSD) and UNW on time use data champions the importance of time use data for policy.

2024

UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) side event with Government of Kenya elevates political leadership and advocacy as essential for gender data.

Data2x's Contributions in Five Domains of Influence

“When we allow biases about women’s roles to color the kind of data we collect, we reinforce those biases, making women seem less capable, less productive, and more helpless than they are. [...] The good news is that there is new momentum for collecting more complete gender data. One leader in this movement is Data2X, a champion for data equality, which works with governments, UN agencies, statisticians, and civil society to fill gender data gaps. Data2X is spearheading research that taps big data sources to illuminate aspects of women’s lives that are otherwise left out of official statistics. When we have the full picture, we can better focus our investments to get results.”



- Her Majesty Queen Rania of Jordan, We The Future 2017 Event

Over the past fourteen years, Data2X and partners have contributed to strengthening gender data and their policy usefulness by raising awareness, offering solutions, breaking down silos, changing the conversation, and documenting financing for gender data.

1 Identifying and Raising Awareness of Actionable Gender Data Gaps

From its founding in 2012, Data2X has led efforts to map critical gaps in gender data and, in partnership with international agencies, elevate them in global development discussions. At the time, the gender data ecosystem was fragmented and

characterized by major blind spots. Data2X focused on ‘actionable data gaps,’ initiating actions in three priority areas where better data could realistically be produced and inform policy, and where partnerships could catalyze practical solutions: civil registration and vital statistics; work and employment; and financial inclusion.



Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)

CRVS systems record key life events – births, deaths, marriages, and divorces— providing governments with continuous reliable population data and women with access to legal identity, helping them overcome barriers that restrict their rights as citizens. While these systems are the backbone of national statistics, in many countries they remain incomplete, especially for women and excluded groups. Data2X and partners, including IDRC, ODW and the World Health Organization (WHO), helped draw attention to the gender gaps in CRVS systems and shape a policy and research agenda leading to reforms to ensure universal CRVS coverage.

Strengthening CRVS Systems for Women and Girls



From 2019 onward, Data2X worked closely with IDRC’s Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems to produce a series of knowledge briefs highlighting persistent gender gaps in civil registration systems, including the under-registration of girls, legal and social barriers to birth and marriage registration, and gaps in death registration data.¹⁵

In parallel, Data2X analyzed Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) data across sub-Saharan Africa, identifying key determinants of birth registration, such as place of birth and maternal education, and reinforcing the need to address structural barriers to access.¹⁶

Complementing this evidence base, Data2X developed targeted advocacy materials and campaigns to elevate the importance of CRVS, helping to translate technical findings into clear messages for policymakers and partners.¹⁸ Together, this work strengthened the case for CRVS investment and supported more coordinated action to close gender gaps in civil registration systems.

Work and Employment

Traditional labor statistics historically captured work for pay or profit and subsistence farm production, overlooking most forms of unpaid work disproportionately done by women. Data2X played an important role in promoting better measures of work. It became the advocacy partner in a three-way collaboration with the ILO and World Bank to test a new work definition—adopted in 2013 by the 19th International Conference of Labor Statisticians (ICLS)—that recognizes unpaid activities. It also developed, in collaboration with academics and other partners, a workstream on time use surveys, exploring methodological questions and their use in informing social and macroeconomic policies.¹⁸

Financial Inclusion

Women have historically faced more limited access to financial services, despite clear evidence that these services are critical for growing businesses, managing risks, and investing in their families—and that women are often highly reliable clients, with strong loan repayment rates. Sex-disaggregated financial data are essential for understanding and addressing persistent gender gaps in access to services such as bank accounts and credit. These data enable regulators to design more inclusive policies that respond to the specific barriers women face, while helping financial institutions tailor products and services to better meet women’s needs. They also support the monitoring of progress toward financial inclusion targets, strengthening accountability and advancing more equitable outcomes.

Yet, despite these benefits, significant gaps remain. Data2X, in partnership with others, has worked to close these gaps and advance the availability and use of sex-disaggregated financial data to drive more inclusive financial systems.¹⁹

Partnering to Strengthen Gender Data for Financial Inclusion

Data2X joined forces with the Financial Alliance for Women and other partners across the public and private sectors, including the Alliance for Financial Inclusion, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the IMF, and the World Bank, to advocate for sex-disaggregated financial sector data. These data can be used to increase women’s access to and use of financial services and demonstrate that this is a sound business proposition for the financial sector. The partnership nurtured champions and established lasting collaborations between individuals, banks, and governments committed to improving disaggregated financial sector measures.²⁰



2

Contributing Solutions to Close Gender Data Gaps

Data2X’s early emphasis on ‘actionable data gaps’ evolved into advancing possible solutions and developing methodological and advocacy tools to help stakeholders navigate and improve the gender data ecosystem.²¹

Solutions: Data2X compiled over 140 solutions across sectors, demonstrating that closing data gaps is feasible through practical interventions that can be scaled. They span improvements in traditional data systems and adoption of new methods, such as rapid gender assessments—used effectively during the COVID pandemic by UN Women’s Women Count Program—geospatial tools, and mobile phone data.²²

Data2X and partners explored big data²³ as a potential rich source of information to close gender data gaps, but also as one that needed validation and ‘ground truthing’ at every step to avoid bad or biased data. Big data, or large volumes of data collected passively from digital interactions, with high variety and velocity, can provide timely, granular sex-disaggregated information that traditional surveys often cannot. They are particularly useful when combined with survey data to verify the validity of the big data estimates. As AI has outpaced the enthusiasm and potential of big data, Data2X began a conversation on AI, its potential and possible biases, advocating for responsible and equitable AI.²⁴



Gender Disparities in Nepal Made Visible by Big Data



In Nepal, Data2X and the Flowminder Foundation combined survey, geospatial and anonymized mobile phone data from about 15 million subscribers and was able to identify localized ‘hotspots’ of gender inequality: communities with significant gaps in access to maternal health care, low female literacy rates, and high dependency on agriculture that were previously hidden in national-level data.²⁵

Tools: Data2X and partners have developed tools, including regional guidelines for countries to conduct data and legal analysis on gender-related barriers to civil registration; a compendium of measures of women’s economic empowerment; a gender data playbook to help countries diagnose their financial services data ecosystem; a handbook on how to build a data cooperative; and an advocacy toolkit for time use data. To help countries assess and strengthen their data systems, Data2X developed a tool (BRIDGE) to help national statistical offices and policymakers evaluate their capacity to produce and use data.²⁶



A Tool for Building Responsive Gender Data Systems

Building Responsive Investments in Data for Gender Equality (BRIDGE) addresses a key challenge: many countries lack clear, actionable pathways to strengthen gender data systems. The BRIDGE tool supports national statistical offices in assessing system maturity, identifying gaps, and prioritizing investments to improve data production and use. Since piloting in 2022, BRIDGE has expanded across Africa and beyond, strengthening capacity, enabling more strategic planning, and supporting countries to develop stronger, more responsive gender data systems that inform decision-making.²⁷

The Gender Data Network (GDN): This network is a global community of gender statisticians in national statistical offices. Data2X and Open Data Watch first established it in 2019 in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), initially covering Africa, and later scaled it globally in partnership with PARIS21. It serves as a key vehicle for strengthening the production, analysis, and use of gender data within national statistical systems, as well as for disseminating solutions and tools. GDN has supported national statistical offices with exchange, capacity building, and implementation of gender data priorities. Since its launch, the GDN has expanded from Africa to Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, with support from PARIS21, ESCAP, and ECLAC, strengthening capacity, fostering collaboration, and increasing the visibility and use of gender data in decision-making.²⁸

Advancing Gender Data Through Regional Collaboration



By fostering a regional community of practice, the Gender Data Network (GDN) supports knowledge sharing, peer learning, and collective advocacy to strengthen gender data systems. This collaborative approach has contributed to tangible improvements in both data production and accessibility. For example, open gender data scores in Africa have increased by approximately 21% since 2016.²⁹

Country-level impacts further illustrate this progress. In Zambia, the adoption of digital data collection (CAPI) revealed significant gender gaps in employment among older age groups. In Ghana, the use of citizen-generated data has enabled anonymous reporting of violence against women through mobile platforms. Together, these efforts demonstrate how regional collaboration can drive innovation, close data gaps, and support more responsive policies for gender equality.³⁰

3 Breaking Down Silos by Bringing Organizations to Collaborate on Data, Harmonize Measures, and Agree on Normative Standards

Harmonizing measures across sectors and countries is both practical and efficient. It is required to build comparative knowledge, but it is also difficult work. Incentives for inter-institutional collaboration on harmonizing data and indicators are often limited. Data2X used convenings and grants to connect organizations and provide motivation and space for collaboration.



Normative standards underpin data quality and harmonization. Over the years, Data2X and partners have advanced standards for embedding gender data across UN global frameworks—the SDGs, the Beijing Platform for Action and climate agreements—advocating at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the UN High Level Political Forum, the UN General Assembly, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.³¹

The three-way partnership between Data2X, the ILO, and the World Bank explored harmonizing the ICLS-19 new definitions of work in ILO and World Bank statistical tools, while the financial inclusion partnership coordinated by Data2X and the Financial Alliance for Women (FAFW), produced a gender data dictionary as a first step towards harmonizing indicators across financial institutions.³²

Data2X supported UNSD to work with partner agencies and countries to guide and harmonize the collection of time use data. Data2X and partners advanced ethics and governance of Big Data for gender and, in collaboration with the Aapti Institute, outlined sovereignty in community-owned data infrastructure.³³ In recent years, Data2X and ODW have launched work on intersectionality data that brings together different interest groups to collaborate under a proposed unified data-to-policy framework that encourages harmonization of measures.



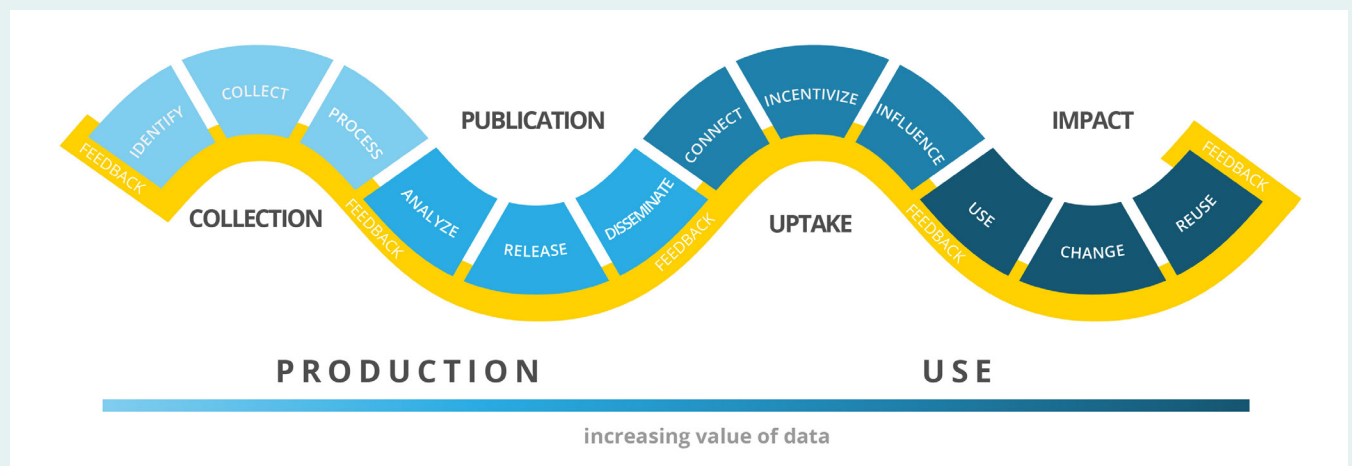
4 Changing the Conversation on the Data Revolution by Introducing the Data Value Chain and the Link Between Supply of and Demand for Data

Data2X has helped shape not only what gender data is collected, but how it is understood and used. In partnership with Open Data Watch, it played a key role in shifting the conversation from simply filling data gaps toward connecting gender data to decision-making and real-world impact.³⁴ This evolution reflected a broader recognition that producing data alone is not enough—data must inform policies, investments, and outcomes to drive meaningful change for women and girls.



Central to this shift was the application of the data value chain, which emphasizes the full journey from data production to use. This approach has proven influential across a range of areas, from intersectional analysis to time-use data and emerging discussions around AI. It has also gained traction beyond Data2X's work, reflected in broader global efforts such as the Inclusive Data Charter.³⁵ Strengthening the link between the supply of and demand for gender data has remained a core driver of Data2X's work, reinforcing the importance of data systems that are both responsive and actionable.

Figure: The Data Value Chain



Source: Open Data Watch and Data2X (2019).

Using Gender Data to Build Uruguay's Care Policy



Unpaid care work—primarily performed by women—was largely invisible in Uruguay's national statistics and excluded from gross domestic product (GDP). A strong feminist movement, early political commitment to gender equality, and demographic pressures (a rapidly aging population and a sizable gender gap in labor force participation) created momentum for reform. Time use surveys in 2007, 2011, and 2013 quantified unpaid work and revealed a national 'care deficit.' Collaboration between the women's ministry, the NSO, civil society, and UN agencies supported data collection, advocacy, and policy design. These data directly informed Uruguay's first National Care Plan (2016–2020),

which established an integrated national care system and recognized "the right to care and be cared for." The plan included fiscal reforms to ensure its sustainability and universality. The seamless translation of data into policy was enabled by having good data, engaged stakeholders across government and civil society, strong collaboration and advocacy, and a pressing policy need. In 2017, Data2X took steps to document time use data and case studies like Uruguay to shed light on the important role time use data can play in informing policymaking, an area of work it has continued to influence.³⁶

5 Documenting and Influencing Financing for Gender Data

A major barrier to strengthening gender data systems has been the lack of clear evidence on how they are financed. In collaboration with ODW, Data2X helped address this gap by defining the components and costs of gender data systems and quantifying a persistent global financing shortfall. Building on this, it analyzed both international and domestic funding flows, highlighting underinvestment and proposing actionable solutions. This work has aimed to inform smarter data financing decisions, strengthen advocacy for increased investment, and lay a foundation that will continue to be built on in the years ahead.³⁷



The Cost of Closing the Gender Data Gap

To better understand the gender data financing landscape, Data2X and ODW conducted a landmark assessment in 2021, estimating an annual global funding gap of approximately USD 450 million. This was the first effort of its kind to quantify the gap—providing a concrete benchmark that has since become an advocacy tool for mobilizing investment.³⁸

The findings also helped shape the Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data's Gender Data Channel, strengthening the ability to track financial flows for gender data. By enabling donors to analyze development data financing through a gender lens, the Clearinghouse has improved transparency and supported more informed, targeted funding decisions.³⁹

The screenshot shows the Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: Funding, Actors, Resources, News, About, Search, Log in, and Register. The main content area is titled "Financing for Gender Data" and includes a sub-header "Want to learn more about gender data financing in IDA countries?" with a button "Explore the data for countries and regions". Below this is a section titled "Investing in gender data systems is an investment in a more equitable and empowered future" with three bullet points and "Read more" links. The bottom section is "Gender Data in Action" with three cards: "Mortality" (Gender data decreased maternal mortality rates through targeted programs), "Financing" (Gender data uncovered unequal access to banking and lead to more vibrant financial services), and "Violence" (Gender data exposed widespread violence and drew Supreme Court attention). Each card has a "View details" link.



Summary and Reflections

Over the past fourteen years, significant progress has been made in gender data, with better data and fewer gender data gaps, and growing evidence of policy use. This brief history reviewed Data2X's and partners' contributions in five domains of influence and pointed to concrete gender data gains.

Progress has been real and measurable, but sustaining it now requires sharper focus and renewed commitment.

As Data2X transitions to a new organizational structure within ODW, the gender data ecosystem is undergoing significant stress from political realignments, shifting development priorities, and funding cutbacks. There is pushback on a progressive gender agenda with additional reductions on already inadequate funding for gender data, combined with a more generalized lack of funding for and trust in data for development. Reflections on what has worked and what has been challenging can help advance the gender data agenda in difficult times:



Success has been intertwined with partnership and collaboration:

Data2X's major accomplishments were done in partnership with others, especially when offering a platform for collaboration between different data producers or between data producers and policymakers, or between governments, researchers, and advocates in civil society.



Gender data champions made a difference: Data2X owes its origins and some of its major wins to gender data champions with a compelling message on the rationale for gender data and supportive legitimacy. In turn, Data2X and partners supported gender data champions, both individuals and institutions, and these champions played similar motivating and legitimizing roles.



Data advocacy grounded in solid technical knowledge was persuasive:

Data2X worked best when gender and data knowledge and policy advocacy were well synchronized. But this was not easy to achieve. Technical and advocacy competencies are different and respond to different incentives. They require structured communication, planned teamwork and built-in incentives to stay on track.



Global evidence-based gender data advocacy proved powerful:

International and intercountry comparisons yielded useful knowledge and found receptive audiences in countries and internationally. Common gender data issues and ways to address them (often for the first time) motivated dialogue between agencies and countries and encouraged learning and replication. As development priorities have shifted and the focus has moved to regional and country levels, ODW/Data2X and similar organizations face the challenge of accommodating regional and country-specific work while continuing to engage in valuable global evidence-based gender data advocacy.

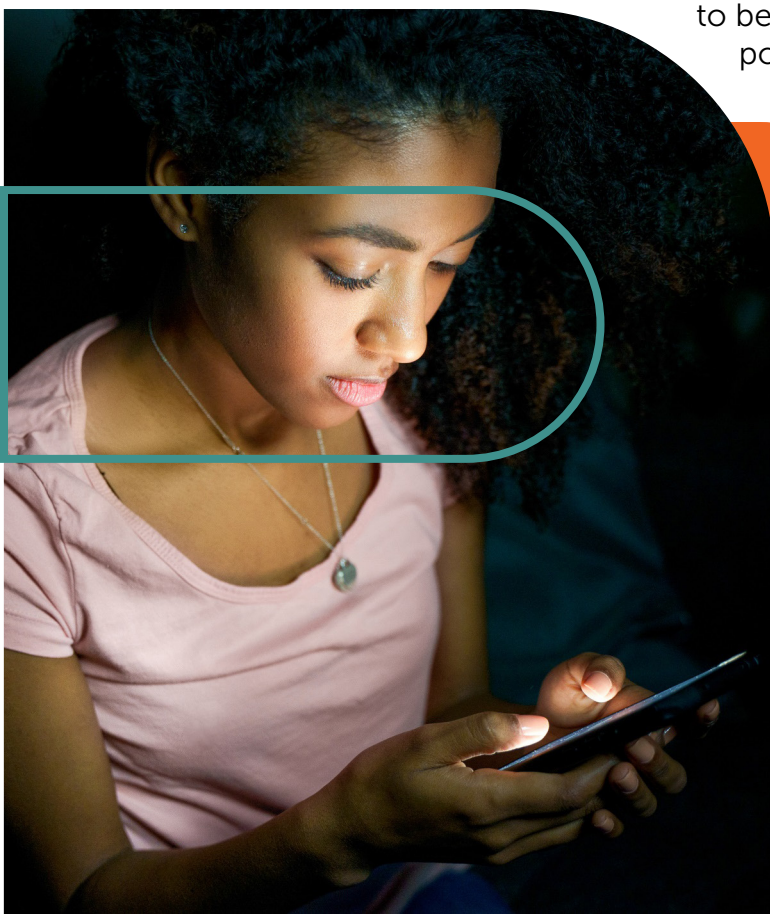


Faced with upheavals in priorities and backlash, going forward a different kind of gender data technical and advocacy work is needed:

This work should emphasize making the instrumental case for gender data and embedding this data into broader data frameworks, which ODW/Data2X are well positioned to do. Further, these frameworks should put data production at the service of policy needs and policy usage, reversing the traditional flow from data production to data use. The work on policy usage of data should be expanded by systematic

documentation of country experiences and research to better understand the factors determining data policy use. This work should carefully balance

technical and advocacy expertise, making sure that they build on each other and that policy messages are crafted for and available to policymakers and a broader non-expert audience. Finally, this work should be undertaken with a practical focus in collaboration and partnership—two main foundations of Data2X’s work to date and into the future.



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