

Gender Sensitization

Gender disaggregated data is the basis for gender sensitive policy formulation and programme planning. The need for gender statistics in formulating policies and programmes can hardly be over-emphasized. The Census of India is a veritable mine of information on demographic, social and economic aspects of population. It is the only source of population characteristics at the lowest administrative levels; village in rural areas and ward in urban areas.

Conceptually, information collected at the census is gender neutral and compiled and tabulated for both men and women separately. The Questionnaire and Instruction Manual for collection of information in the field have been carefully designed to avoid any bias on the basis of gender. The training of Census functionaries also focuses on this aspect of neutrality. Evaluation of Census data indicate that while the coverage error for females was slightly higher in 2001 Census, than that for males, in the Censuses prior to 2001, there was a need to improve the data regarding the economic activity of females.

Towards this end, the last three decades have seen special efforts. In Census 1991, emphasis was laid on netting of women's contribution in the economic activities. Main emphasis was on unpaid work done by women. Question on 'Work' was amplified to include unpaid work in family farm and family enterprise. This was followed by publicity campaigns on television, radio and the print media to generate awareness. This had a significant impact that was reflected in the female work participation rate, which improved from 19.7 percent in 1981 Census to 22.3 percent in 1991. However, the data continued to show regional disparities in gender statistics on Work Participation Ratio and adult Sex Ratio.

During Census 2001, special efforts were made to address gender concerns. Gender sensitization activities were initiated right from the stage of planning. These included modifications in the Instruction manuals, special modules on gender, media campaigns and other modes of mass mobilization to raise awareness on the vital issue. Great emphasis was laid on the need to ensure that each question should be canvassed for each individual member of the household and that women's individuality should not be compromised or conditioned by any bias. Possible causes for gender bias creeping in the data collection and dissemination were evaluated. At the same time changes were made in the wording of questions and focused training was thought of to reduce gaps in understanding and to ensure accurate information and coverage to the extent possible.

With a view to review the past experience and fine-tune the strategies it is pertinent to understand gender gaps in data. The National Workshop on Gender mainstreaming held on 30 July 2010 looked at data sets on key gender indicators

and deliberated on all sensitive issues, which could affect accurate netting in the field due to any prevailing cultural or other bias, shared local concerns of States / UTs and proposed a strategy to improve gender statistics in Census 2011. A national consultative workshop held in July 2010 was followed by number of group workshops which had participation of different DCOs and UN agencies supporting this initiative. Gender mainstreaming activities of Census 2011 encompassing gender responsive training and publicity is an outcome of detailed data analysis and subsequent deliberations and consultative processes involving different stake holders.

Some of the key parameters concerning Gender disaggregated data in Census are highlighted below:

- The overall growth rate during the 1991-2001 has been 23.1 per cent for female population, which is slightly higher than that of male population (22.2%) at the national level. The trend is similar in case of rural and urban areas. In majority of the States also this trend was noted which in fact has been reversal of trends seen during 1981-1991 when female population growth was lower as compared to male population growth.
- The Census 2001 also registered a higher sex ratio (i.e. females per thousand males) of population (933) over the Census 1991 (927), an increase of 6 points at national level. In 23 states/union territories, increase in the sex ratio of total population was observed as compared to 1991. Similar trends were seen in rural and urban areas of 23 and 25 states/UTs respectively. The increase was more pronounced in 7 + age group not only at national level but also in 29 states.
- Notwithstanding increase in the overall value of sex ratio of total population, the child sex ratio in the age group 0-6 has plummeted from 945 in Census 1991 to 927 in 2001 at the national level. The trends were alarming in some of the major States like Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and the union territories of Chandigarh and Delhi. 477 districts comprising of 70% of total districts (593) had shown a decline in the value of child sex ratio (0-6) and in 118 districts child sex ratio had fallen below 900. This shortfall of girl child population in early childhood may reflect in higher age groups in the years to come.
- The female work participation (i.e. percentage of female workers to total female population) at the National level increased from 22.3 percent in 1991 to 25.8 percent on 2001, however increase was distinct in the category of marginal workers. Similar trends were seen in many states while male Work Participation Ratio remained almost unchanged during 1991-2001. In the 15-59 age group 80.7 % male population was economically active against 40 % females during 2001 Census. Despite increasing trends, the gaps in female workers are noted in certain districts at the 2001 census. As many as 36 districts reported less than 10 % female work participation rate. A point to be noted in the context

of work and non-work is that the Census does not define these concepts. It is the National System of Accounts that does so. The Census merely enumerates as per the definition laid down. Controversies regarding the netting of work especially of females in the Census are therefore misdirected.

The Post Enumeration Survey of Census 2001 has shown that while there was no gender bias in coverage, the overall omission rate was 23.3 per thousand persons, which is higher than that in the Census 1991 (17.6 per thousand). The first and foremost aim of Census 2011 would be to ensure complete coverage without omission or duplication. An analysis of the net omission rate per thousand populations in selected age groups has shown a relatively higher female omission rate up to age of 24 years in rural areas. It is also noticed that the male /female gap in omission rates show a sizable differential of eight and six percentage points in the 60+ age group in rural and urban areas respectively. There is a need to focus on these age groups and ensure that the gap is narrowed if not eliminated.

The Juvenile Sex Ratio and Sex Ratio at Birth are vital parameters and it would be the endeavor of the Census organization to net these accurately.

In addition to the basic count, special efforts will also be taken to accurately net the socio-cultural, demographic and economic characteristics, which inter-alia would include correct netting of head of the household, age, age at marriage, marital status, literacy, and economic activities in unorganized and unpaid work. A number of activities involving female workers and real pictures of women at work have been added in the Instruction Manual to help probing about the female economic pursuits. The gender component will be an integral part of all training programmes.

Special focus will be directed towards areas that returned abnormal gender parameters such as sex ratio, literacy and female work participation at Census 2001, by developing special gender modules and training strategies for sensitization of Census functionaries. These efforts would be more focused in 262 districts, which have returned very low gender parameters as per 2001 Census. These districts will have Gender Master Trainer Facilitators (GMTFs) who will support Master Trainers and impart special training to Enumerators with the aid of special modules and kits specially devised for training at different levels. This module will focus to reduce stereotypes and apathy with the help of handouts on Gender and Data Sheets to make 2011 census a gender responsive Census.

It is equally important to create awareness among the general masses about the gender issues to facilitate correct reporting of information about each member specially women. Steps will also be taken to reach out to respondents through gender sensitive publicity campaigns and outreach programmes. The ultimate aim will be to create an environment that will sensitize both enumerators as well as respondents.

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