Open Data Watch: Bridging the Gap

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Introduction

Over the summer I worked on the Bridging the Gap, the project of the joint work of Open Data Watch and Data 2X. Bridging the Gap assesses the availability of data about the lives of women for participating countries. My role at Open Data Watch was to find, record and assess gender-relevant development indicator data.

Objectives

Bridging the Gap assesses the state of data availability of development indicators relevant to the lives of women. This is to identify areas where there is a lack of information about women's lives. I was working on the current Bridging the Gap project research on gender data availability in Central and Latin America.

The purpose of Bridging the Gap is not to compare the participating countries. Rather, the project aims to identify the gaps in the knowledge of the lives of women, specific to each country. Once the assessments are completed for all participating countries and the research is compiled, recommendations will be made for international organisations and national statistical offices on how to improve gender data availability, so there can be greater insight made into women's issues and lives.

Figure 1: Sex-Disaggregation of Indicators by Domain

Method

93 development indicators were chosen to give relevant insight into the lives of women. These were selected from the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a list of indicators proposed by United Nation's Inter-Agency and Expert Group of Gender Statistics (IAEG-SDG) or proposed by UN Women. These indicators were all classified as either Tier 1 or 2 by UN Women and IAEG-SDG, meaning that the indicators all had an established methodology. The selected indicators were classified into six domains:

- Health
- Education
- Economic opportunities and access to resources
- Public life and participation
- Human rights and security of women and children
- Environment and sustainability

Bridging the Gap's focus is currently Latin America and the Carribean. I assessed the gender data availability for Jamaica and Colombia. For each country, the assessments were first conducted for data available from international organisations, and then from national government ministries. Conducting the assessments involved three steps for each indicator: finding the data, recording the data source and then assessing its availability.

To find the data, I would search for open data for each indicator from the relevant source. For data on the international level, this source would be the UN's SDG Global database, alongside the website of the international custodian agency for that specific indicator, such as the WHO, UNICEF, ILO, e.t.c. On the national l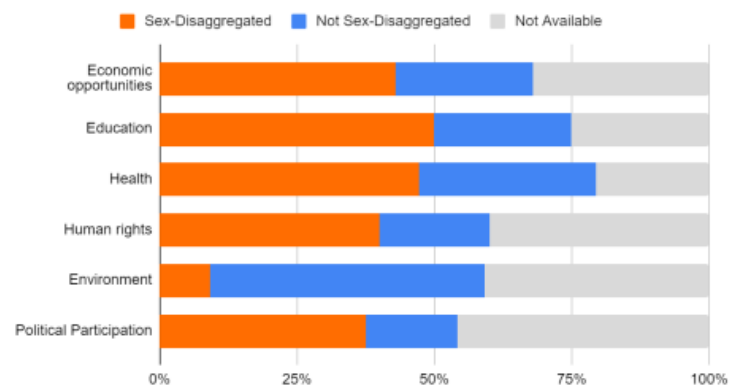evel, the sources I would search for data would be the country's National Statistical Office resources, and then the website of any other relevant Government Ministries. Once data was found, its source was recorded on an Excel spreadsheet used to document the indicator assessments. The data found was then assessed for availability and sex-disaggregation, according to the Bridging the Gap scoring method.

Results and Conclusions

Figure 1 shows the proportion of indicators that had data available with sex-disaggregation, data available but without sex-disaggregation, or no data available at all, according to the domain of the indicator. These are the combined results for both Jamaica and Colombia, at both the national and international level. Health and education were the domains that had the most sex-disaggregated data available, whilst environmental indicators had the least sex-disaggregated data. Based on the data availability found in this research, Open Data Watch will now work to make recommendations on what data gaps need filling, and how to bridge these gaps.

Key Skills Learnt

My internship at Open Data Watch was a great personal learning experience. The research required a keen attention to detail and resilience, and I also learned the 'soft' skills of working in an office environment. I got to meet many people work in international development data, as well as researchers in related fields. I had the opportunity to live in another country for the first time, and got to experience life working in central Washington D.C.