NUMBERS TELL A STORY. OR DON’T, IF THEY ARE MISSING, as is the case with sex-disaggregated statistics in much of the world. Too often, statistics fail to measure the specific issues and obstacles women, men, boys and girls face, such as why women are in or out of the labour market, and how pervasive the problem of domestic violence really is.

UN Women leads a global initiative, “Making Every Woman and Girl Count”, that marshals considerable technical expertise and a number of influential partners. The programme is committed to developing data that tells women’s and girls’ stories on all issues, and informs policy and budget choices that accelerate gender equality.

Collaboration with the World Bank, for example, produced the first ever global estimates of poverty by sex. Partnership with the International Labour Organization has resulted in new figures for 88 countries breaking down labour force participation rates by sex and marital status. The exercise has provided some of the first compelling evidence of how marriage, often linked to high burdens of unpaid care and domestic work, keeps women out of labour markets.

In 2018, UN Women joined the Government of MEXICO to launch the Center of Excellence on Gender Statistics, which will push forward the frontiers of gender statistics around the world by sharing research and innovation. Mexico also hosted the first Global Conference on Gender Equality and the Measurement of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work, a dynamic exchange on gender, data and the global goals among representatives of national statistical agencies, international experts and leading academics. COLOMBIA is among the countries already moving forward with a new national agreement on innovative gender measurements capturing women’s status according to their level of income.

Six pathfinder countries under Making Every Woman and Girl Count – BANGLADESH, KENYA, MOROCCO, NEPAL, TANZANIA and UGANDA – conducted national assessments of gender statistics in 2018. KENYA, for example, has committed to integrating gender dimensions in all data-collection activities, including at the county level, where governments have a central role in making choices related to public services.