



**WOMEN LEADERS IN ASIA:**  
**BUILDING ON PROGRESS, CONFRONTING CHALLENGES**  
**APRIL 12-14, 2013**

SUGGESTED READINGS



## SATURDAY, APRIL 13

### Session 1: Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women: The post-MDG Agenda

- “Rising to the Top? A Report on Women’s Leadership in Asia,” Astrid S. Tuminez, Asia Society and Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS, April 2012  
<http://sites.asiasociety.org/womenleaders/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Rising-to-the-Top-Final-PDF.pdf>
- “The Millennium Development Goals Report: Gender Chart 2012,” UN Women, 2012  
<http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/MDG-Gender-web.pdf>
- Executive Summary of “Progress of the World’s Women: In Pursuit of Justice,” UN Women, 2011  
<http://progress.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/EN-Summary-Progress-of-the-Worlds-Women1.pdf>
- “Gender equality and the post-2015 development framework: Perspectives from civil society,” remarks by Anita Nayar at CSW, March 2013  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/panels/panel3-paper-anita-nayar.pdf>
- “After 2015: Progress and Challenges for Development” Claire Melamed and Lucy Scott for the Overseas Development Institute, 2011  
<http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7061.pdf>
- “Localizing Sustainable Human Development: Consideration for Post-2015 Global Development Agenda,” UNDP, 2012  
<http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/297943>
- “Parliament’s Role in Defining and Promoting the Post-2015 Development Agenda,” UNDP, 2013  
<http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/328868>

### Keynote Conversation: Violence Against Women: India as a Case Study

- Agreed Conclusions from Commission on Status of Women, March 2013 (Advance unedited version)  
[http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/CSW57\\_agreed\\_conclusions\\_advance\\_unedited\\_version\\_18\\_March\\_2013.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/CSW57_agreed_conclusions_advance_unedited_version_18_March_2013.pdf)

## Session 2: Expanding Economic Opportunities for Women: A Prerequisite for Smart Economics

- “The Global Gender Agenda,” Joanna Barsh, Sandrine Devillard and Jin Wang, *McKinsey Quarterly*, 2012  
[https://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/The\\_global\\_gender\\_agenda\\_3027](https://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/The_global_gender_agenda_3027)
- “The Challenge of Closing the Gender Gap in Developing Countries,” Dwyer Gun, *The Guardian*, 2012  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2012/12/the-challenge-of-closing-the-gender-gap-in-developing-countries/266617/>
- “Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific : A Companion to the World Development Report,” World Bank, 2012  
[http://wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2012/11/01/000333037\\_20121101011811/Rendered/PDF/734380PUBoBox3owardogenderoequality.pdf](http://wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2012/11/01/000333037_20121101011811/Rendered/PDF/734380PUBoBox3owardogenderoequality.pdf)

**SUNDAY, APRIL 14**

## Session 4: Increasing Women’s Political Participation: Turning Policies into Practice

- “Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments” Chapters 1 & 5, IPU, 2008  
<http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/equality08-e.pdf>
- “Raising Female Leaders,” Abdul Latif Jameel, Poverty Action Lab, April 2012  
<http://www.povertyactionlab.org/publication/raising-female-leaders>
- “Changing Realities for Asian Women Leaders,” Hu Shuli, *Global Asia*, September 2011  
[http://www.globalasia.org/V6N3\\_Fall\\_2011/Hu\\_Shuli.html?PHPSESSID=ef85fc711b68d13dedb381616cf52b73](http://www.globalasia.org/V6N3_Fall_2011/Hu_Shuli.html?PHPSESSID=ef85fc711b68d13dedb381616cf52b73)



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- “After 2015: Progress and Challenges for Development” Claire Melamed and Lucy Scott for the Overseas Development Institute, 2011
- “Localizing Sustainable Human Development: Consideration for Post-2015 Global Development Agenda,” UNDP, 2012
- “Parliament’s Role in Defining and Promoting the Post-2015 Development Agenda,” UNDP, 2013



# **RIISING TO THE TOP?**

A REPORT ON WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN ASIA

**Astrid S. Tuminez**

*with the assistance of*  
Kerstin Duell and Haseena Abdul Majid

*Foreword by*  
Vishakha N. Desai



The author, contributors, and Asia Society gratefully acknowledge funding for this report from The Rockefeller Foundation.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Women’s leadership” is a theme I have lived for over three decades since I first entered the workforce as a young secretary in a freon company in Manila, Philippines. Hence, this is a work of faith and passion.

I would like to thank the dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKY School), Prof. Kishore Mahbubani, who introduced me to Vishakha N. Desai, the president of Asia Society, and who supported this project from the start. Dr. Desai urged me to do research on the topic of women’s leadership in Asia and to participate in Asia Society’s “Women Leaders of New Asia” summit in Singapore in 2011. For generously funding this report, I would like to thank the LKY School, National University of Singapore, and the Rockefeller Foundation, especially its president, Dr. Judith Rodin.

Kerstin Duell wrote a very helpful scholarly literature review that fed my initial thinking on this report. Haseena Abdul Majid persevered through days, nights, and weekends to help me put together charts, find best practice stories, check footnotes, and assist in all aspects of making this report a reality. Elizabeth Ong and Mariyam Midhfa Naeem helped me put together the bibliography and data sources, and Elizabeth edited sections of the report. Aigerim Bolat and Louise Beehag also helped with research and comments on an early draft.

I would like to thank Paul Lachine for the beautiful illustrations, Chris Koh from the LKY School for the terrific lay-out, and Juliana Wilson for copy-editing. Claire Leow deserves special thanks for going over the draft thoroughly at least three times and helping me with all the final edits before this report went to print.

Finally, because of my heavy administrative duties that took the day hours, I would like to thank my family for forgiving me for being absent from their lives for too many nights and weekends. To them I owe always the most thanks: Jeffrey S. Tolk, Michal F. T. Tolk, Whitman D. T. Tolk, and Leo Emerson Tolk (who is only two and a half, and does not yet keep grudges).

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# FOREWORD

Asia lies at the heart of global growth, and women lie at the heart of Asia. Over the course of the last thirty years, nowhere has the progress been so rapid and yet the contrasts run so deep. While women have made significant advancements in health, education and employment, they continue to lag their male counterparts in reaching leadership positions. The reasons for this are many and varied, but to continue in this direction would put in peril Asia's many achievements. Numerous studies have now shown that countries with greater numbers of women in leadership positions, across sectors, outperform those that do not. Building on women's achievements of recent years, now is the time to push forward and to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the state of women's leadership in Asia.

In that effort, the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Singapore and the Asia Society undertook the writing of this report, *Rising to the Top? A Report on Women's Leadership in Asia*, which looks at published data on gender equality and women's leadership in Asia, develops a pathway for thinking about women's leadership, and draws conclusions with an eye toward the future. While the relationship between the two organizations goes back many years, especially through our connection to the Dean of the School, Professor Kishore Mahbubani, the idea for this report stems from interactions at previous iterations of the Asia Society's Women Leaders of New Asia Summit.

As women enter the Asian workforce in large numbers and step into leadership positions at institutions across the public and private sectors, there is a growing need for new forums to explore the important role of women's leadership in Asia. Few professional networks of Asia-Pacific women currently exist to explore and address these issues. To address this gap, in 2010 the Asia Society launched the Women Leaders of New Asia (WLNA) initiative, which is fast

becoming the premier cross-sector women's leadership network in the Asia Pacific region.

Each year, the WLNA Summit fosters discussion around a new paradigm of leadership that recognizes the contribution that women leaders in Asia can make. As Asia's global influence in the political, cultural and economic spheres continues to strengthen, the Summit seeks to explore the new role that women leaders of "New Asia" can play. It is around these Summit discussions that the idea for a report on the state of women's leadership in Asia first took root and it is at the 2012 Summit, to be held in China with the report launch in Shanghai and the conference in Zhenjiang, that these discussions will continue.

I wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, and to Astrid S. Tuminez, the Vice-Dean (Research) and lead author of the report. Astrid's tremendous commitment to women's issues and this report shines through on each page. With the assistance of Kerstin Duell and Haseena Abdul Majid, the report will both stand the test of time, while providing ideas for future research and collaboration. I also owe special thanks to my Asia Society colleagues from the Global Leadership Initiatives team for all of their efforts to bring the report to print.

The authors and Asia Society gratefully acknowledge funding for this report from The Rockefeller Foundation and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

At such a time of unprecedented change in the global conversation on women's issues, we hope that this report will be informative and instructive. The road forward is bright, but it would be brighter if we can work together to address the many outstanding issues. Together with the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy we take this first step with plans for many more.

Vishakha N. Desai  
President  
Asia Society



# WHAT THIS REPORT COVERS

This report presents published data on gender equality and women's leadership in Asia. The data comes from multilateral, private and academic institutions (see Bibliography and Data Sources). *The Global Gender Gap Report 2011 (GGG Report 2011)*, which synthesizes data from a range of original sources, is heavily referenced.<sup>1</sup> This report extracts salient findings on Asia-Pacific countries and provides qualitative insights from secondary research. It also highlights some best practices and provides illustrative stories.

The following three sections of this report address: 1) the general challenge of women's leadership in Asia; 2) the *pathway* of women's leadership, divided into what the report calls Foundation, Pipeline, and Outcomes; and 3) conclusions, policy recommendations and notes on further research. In the *pathway* section, *Foundation* refers to the initial survival, health, and education of girls, and examines how countries rank in creating the baseline from which women leaders might emerge. *Pipeline* covers labor force participation, employment opportunities, and other intermediate indicators that show how easy or difficult it is for women to leverage their health and education to move into the professions. What do various indicators say about women's ability to sustain participation in the labor force and advance to leadership positions? Finally, *Outcomes* will report what we know of women's leadership in specific sectors in Asia as a whole. The final section will synthesize insights from the data, articulate policy implications, and suggest areas for further research.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The rise of Asia has become a powerful thesis. China, once dismissed as poor and backward, is now the world's second largest economy. India, with its own billion-strong population, advanced science, and powerful entrepreneurs, is yet another engine of Asia's rise. Add to this the powerful economies of Japan and South Korea, and the dynamic countries of Southeast Asia—and a picture emerges of rising wealth, rising confidence and rising leadership.

Yet, Asia's breathtaking economic growth and demographic strength are inextricably intertwined with deep inequality, endemic poverty, environmental degradation, political instability, and other threats. To address these problems, Asia will need all its human talent, including women. Unfortunately, in Asia, leadership remains male-dominated, with few women attaining top positions in the public and private sectors.

Among the key findings of this report are:

- Asia's rising prosperity has narrowed the gender gap in many countries and bodes positively for the future rise of women leaders. The gender gap is closing on health and survival, educational attainment, economic opportunity, and political empowerment. This implies that the women of Asia can leverage rising personal endowments as well as increasing structural opportunities for future leadership. Family and dynastic factors have also catapulted some women in Asia to the highest levels of political leadership. Indeed, Asia has seen more women heads of state than any other region in the world. Asian women have also joined the ranks of the world's most rich and powerful. All these create an impetus that will help change dominant perceptions of women as subordinate to, and/or less competent than, men.
- But despite overall progress in women's attainments, significant variation remains among Asian countries and territories. Of 22 Asia-Pacific countries ranked in the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*, the top five performers are New Zealand, the Philippines, Australia, Sri Lanka, and Mongolia. The bottom five are Pakistan (at the very bottom), Nepal, India, Republic of Korea, and Cambodia.
- Data for actual indicators of women's leadership in Asia are limited and do not consistently cover the same set of countries. With these limitations in mind, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand consistently rank among the top three in women's leadership. When singling out economic and corporate parameters such as women in senior management, female advancement,

remuneration, and wage equality, the general top three performers are joined by Singapore, Mongolia, Thailand, and Malaysia.

- In the political sphere, the countries of South Asia, which perform worst in overall gender equality and women's attainment, actually lead among the top five countries in political empowerment (Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India); number of women in parliament (Nepal, Pakistan); number of women ministers (Bangladesh); and women leaders in subnational government (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh). This contradictory picture is partly due to the region having the most number of women who have become heads of state because of family and dynastic connections (and *not* because of greater gender equality). Moreover, affirmative action has significantly increased women's representation at different levels of government. For women in South Asia, ongoing challenges include sustaining political leadership gains, translating these into genuine benefits for greater numbers of women, and engaging more support to fight new discrimination and persecution that sometimes arise in response to affirmative action.
- Development in general is beneficial to women's leadership, but the relationship between human development and women's leadership is not directly proportional. Some economies in Asia with the highest human development rankings (e.g., Japan and South Korea) also perform most poorly in some measures of women's leadership (e.g., women in senior management, women on boards, wage equality, remuneration and political empowerment). Others, such as Singapore and Hong Kong SAR, China, continue to have significant gender leadership gaps despite their high human development.
- In Asia, concrete measures are needed to address the "leaking pipeline"—i.e., many women opt out of their professions when facing the transition from middle- to senior-levels of management. In one survey, the percentages of women dropping out in the transition from middle- to senior-level management are as high as 70.24 percent (Japan), 52.88 percent (China), 48.83 percent (Hong Kong SAR, China) and 45.90 percent (Singapore). More systematic support is needed to facilitate women's choice to persevere in their professional lives without giving up their roles as mothers and caregivers. This can include mentoring, maternity and paternity leaves, better childcare and elder care, and more gender-equal retirement and pension schemes.

- Culture and entrenched social norms are intractable obstacles for women's leadership in Asia. To address cultural and social norms that impede women's leadership, a broad campaign is needed to educate people and push for change in the *valuation and perception* of girls and women. Three shifts need to happen: 1) societies must perceive girls to be as valuable as boys; 2) societies must view women as having roughly similar abilities and potential to lead as men; and 3) societies must be more open to gender roles that involve women leading outside the home and men doing more in the home. These shifts will give women more equal voice and agency in the home and in society at large, and facilitate their role as leaders.
- There are no easy answers or quick steps to changing social norms. Education for men, women and youth is part of the equation. Affirmative action programs are also part of the answer, but change will take time. For example, in India, over time, exposure to female leaders at the local level reduces bias and boosts the aspirations and educational achievement of young women. Besides affirmative action, governments, particularly China and India, can increase media campaigns and other steps to end sex selection against baby girls. More laws (and better implementation) are also needed to reduce domestic violence against women and to enhance women's bargaining power through greater property ownership, access to legal and other support services, and ability to leave marriage. In Pakistan and Indonesia, encouraging examples show how partnerships among government, police, women's groups, paralegals and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) add up to strengthen women's voice and agency, and thus their potential to contribute more fully to society. □





# THE PROBLEM OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN ASIA

## Rising Asia, Rising Women?

The rise of Asia,<sup>2</sup> defined in terms of Asia becoming the world's dominant economic power, has become a powerful thesis. China, once dismissed as poor and backward, is now the world's second largest economy, with an annual gross domestic product (GDP) of nearly US\$5 trillion. In recent times wealthier and more established nations have gone to China hat-in-hand, asking for assistance during financial and economic crises. India, with its own billion-strong population, advanced science and engineering, and powerful entrepreneurs, is yet another engine of Asia's rise. Add to this the powerful economies of Japan and South Korea, and the post-dictatorship, post-communist and post-independence countries of Southeast Asia—and a picture emerges of rising wealth, rising confidence and rising leadership.

Yet, Asia's breathtaking economic growth and demographic strength are inextricably intertwined with deep inequality, endemic poverty, environmental degradation, political instability, and other threats. In other words, a dark shadow looms alongside Asia's rise.<sup>3</sup> This contradictory context highlights the need for diverse and capable human capital and leadership to continue driving Asia's growth and competitiveness, while also skillfully managing and addressing the thorniest problems that confront the region.

This report is driven by the premise that, in Asia, as in the West, the talents and ambitions of women are needed to drive progress in all spheres of human activity. Women have already contributed to Asia's rise, but have more to contribute to a diversified and sustainable Asian human capital pool. What is the story of women's leadership in Asia? To

what extent are women in Asia now contributing to top levels of strategy, decision-making and innovation? In the past five decades, Asia has seen more women at the apex of political power than any other region in the world; girls are becoming healthier and better educated; and more women than ever before are entering Asia's workforce. Women in Asia are closing some of the gap with males in health, education and employment, but they continue to be severely under-represented in the top echelons of formal leadership. Women also continue to be paid less than men for similar work, and more women in Asia are dropping out in the transition from middle to top management roles, thus creating a "leaking pipeline" of leadership.<sup>4</sup> Finally, cultural and social norms continue to disadvantage women who aspire and work towards positions of leadership.

What is the overall state of women's leadership in Asia today? Does the rise of Asia also mean the rise of women leaders? How many women leaders are there in the public and private sectors in Asia? What insights can we glean on women's leadership in the non-profit sector? What are the critical junctures in women's pathway to leadership and what challenges do they face? What best practices and policies help women sustain their professional journey and enhance their chances of attaining senior leadership positions?

## The Persistent Gender Gap

Asia is home to two-thirds of the global population and two billion of the world's women. Although Asia's women have contributed significantly to growth, efficiency, and productivity in the region, they continue to face disadvantages in formal leadership. Often,

in public discourses, mass media, religious practices, and traditional policies, women in Asia are portrayed less as visible and effective agents of change and progress, but as subjects of sexual predation, victims of conflict and war, or recipients of microfinance and other assistance. Leadership in Asia, as elsewhere, tends to be associated with men. Although corporate research has amply documented the immense loss that Asian (and all other) economies and public administrations suffer by ignoring or under-utilizing their female labor pool, yet gender stereotyping persists. In view of the many challenges Asia faces and will face in the coming decades, the inattention to female human capital appears shortsighted and unaffordable. Tapping female leadership talent thus becomes an imperative for survival and competitiveness in a global economy fraught with demographic imbalances, severe inequalities, limited resources, and unpredictable challenges.

To be sure, Asia's economic rise in the last two decades has benefitted girls and women. But a significant "gender gap" persists. This refers to disparities in the distribution of resources between women and men (regardless of the overall level of these resources) that ultimately translate into economic, political, educational, health and other disadvantages for women. The annual *Global Gender Gap Report (GGG Report)*, sponsored by the World Economic Forum, has tracked these disparities across the world since 2006, examining four specific areas: health, education, economic opportunity and political empowerment.

The *GGG Report 2011* ranks 135 countries, representing 90 percent of the world's population. The bullish news is that more

than 96 percent of the gender gap on health outcomes and 93 percent of the gap on educational attainment have been closed. However, in economic participation, only 59 percent of the gap has been closed and in political empowerment, only 18 percent.<sup>5</sup> For the Asia-Pacific region, the *GGG Report 2011* notes that 65 percent of the gap has been closed and that the region ranks highest (among six regions compared<sup>6</sup>) on political empowerment. However, Asia-Pacific comes in last on health and is second-to-last on economic participation. It ranks fourth on educational attainment. These rankings, which cover the regional average, also mask substantial country variations. They include not only high scorers such as New Zealand (6) and the Philippines (8), but also laggards such as Malaysia (ranked 97), Japan (98), Cambodia (102), Republic of Korea (107), India (113), Nepal (126), and Pakistan (133).<sup>7</sup>

A United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report in 2010 notes that Asia-Pacific countries remain behind the curve on gender equality. Individual country efforts to correct gender disparities have not been sustained, and women remain chronically under-represented in political, economic, and legal institutions. Entrenched notions of female second-class status are difficult to overcome, even when public policy measures are formally taken. As a result, women in the Asia-Pacific region experience a “deficit in power and voice.”<sup>8</sup>

### Many Opportunities, Limited Talent

According to UNDP, limits in women’s participation in the workforce cost the Asia-Pacific an estimated US\$89 billion per year. This is especially acute in South Asia, where gender gaps in education and employment account for lower annual per capita growth rates compared to East Asia.<sup>9</sup> Such limits are at odds

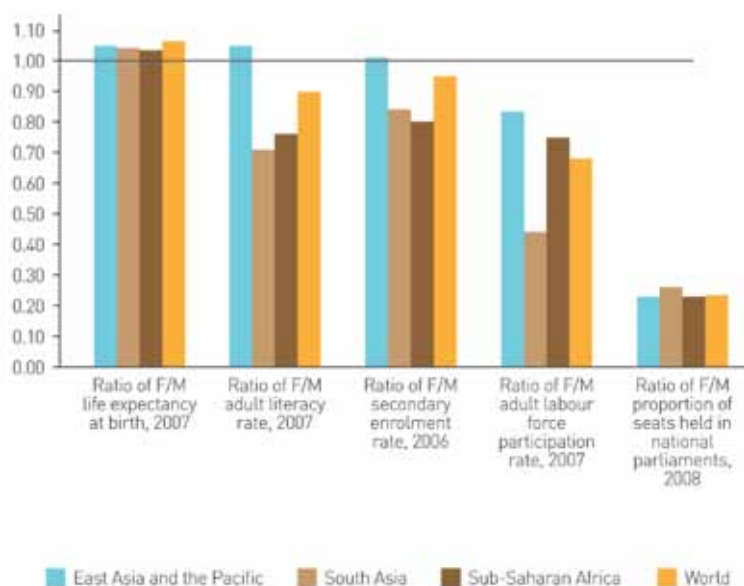
with women’s increasing qualifications and the acute need for talent in the Asia-Pacific region, where 45 percent of employers report difficulties in filling job vacancies due to lack of available talent. This lack of talent matters less in China, where only 24 percent of employers report difficulties in hiring qualified personnel, but is particularly acute in Japan and India, with 80 percent and 67 percent of employers reporting similar difficulties, respectively.<sup>10</sup> This problem is expected to worsen with shifting economic and demographic trends, signifying that overwhelming demand for talent in Asia will continue significantly to outweigh supply.<sup>11</sup>

Economic growth in recent decades has facilitated women’s access to education and training. At the secondary and tertiary school levels, girls often outperform boys. In a few Asian countries, general health and development indicators have also reached, or are

near, parity with the Western world. Thus, a pipeline exists of well-educated and increasingly ambitious women who are, theoretically, poised to take on leading roles. Yet, many of these women fail to make the transition from education to professional life or from lower-level to top professional positions. In other words, women in Asia are increasingly equipped to lead but still face obstacles in reaching and sustaining formal positions of leadership. Integrating the female half of the available talent pool into leadership structures in the public and private sectors is particularly relevant in developed countries, where women account for more than half of university graduates.<sup>12</sup> In Japan and Singapore, two nations with ageing societies and low birth rates, the matter of women’s talent and leadership becomes a compelling issue.

The solution to the talent gap in Asia may be “hiding in plain sight”<sup>13</sup>; there are millions

**Figure 1: Asia-Pacific Often Ranks Low on Gender Indicators**



Source: World Bank 2009, cited in UNDP, *Power, Voices, and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific* (2010), p. 2

of women in the workforce, many of whom are highly skilled and ambitious. Indeed, as Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Ripa Rashid contend, “As we enter the second decade of the new millennium the face of top talent in emerging economies is most likely to be that of a woman.”<sup>14</sup> This vision, however, is far ahead of reality.

### Culture, Tradition, and Social Norms

Tradition, culture, and social norms play an important role in determining whether girls are born, educated, enter the workforce, and, ultimately, exercise leadership. Cultural norms are highly resistant to change, and herein lies a thorny challenge for Asia. Paradoxically, women in Asia are preservers of culture and tradition, but they are also victims of cultural practices that undervalue female identity and undermine female roles and contributions. Moreover, traditional gender roles remain strong in Asia, particularly for married women, who are expected to bear the bulk of domestic responsibility towards children, spouses, and ageing parents. In this context, societal change must happen without vilifying entire cultures or religions that, not least, tend to be integral to personal and national identity. Such change must also happen without pitting men and women in a bitter, adversarial relationship. For women who aspire to be leaders, this means navigating a complex personal and socio-cultural journey to leadership.

One impediment to women’s advancement in Asia is the much-analyzed sex ratio imbalance, particularly in China, South Korea (where the situation is improving), India, Vietnam, Hong Kong SAR (China), Taiwan, and Singapore. This imbalance reflects and perpetuates a gender bias against girls and women. Sex-selective abortion due to a culture of preference for sons, for example,

eliminates many girls outright and creates a shrinking pool from which to draw future female leaders. In addition, research shows that women face formidable obstacles in societies with a surplus of (unmarried) males. These include increased gender-based violence, human trafficking, and broader socio-economic instability.<sup>15</sup>

Culture and social norms tend to be resistant to change, but modernization and economic development—processes long underway in Asia—do challenge traditional norms and expectations. For example, while divorce remains relatively rare in Asia compared to the West, increasingly Asian women who enter the workforce are opting out of marriage entirely. Financial independence, greater education, and general pessimism about marriage are some of the factors contributing to the decline of marriage among Asian women. Rates of non-marriage are especially striking in Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, and Singapore, but this is not (yet) the case in China or India.<sup>16</sup> Greater education (especially for women), urbanization, industrialization, and physical mobility are also re-shaping familial relations and expectations in ways that undermine female-unfriendly traditions, such as a preference for sons. This is well-documented, for example, in the case of South Korea.<sup>17</sup>

In many Asian countries the concept of the family as society’s bedrock appears to be eroding due to a silent flight from marriage, migration, urbanization, and other factors.<sup>18</sup> Tensions involving culture and traditional norms on one hand, and modernization, economic development, and globalization on the other will impact the trajectory of women’s leadership. Although tradition still favors male leadership hierarchies and may stigmatize women who work and lead in non-traditional spheres, the situation in Asia is becoming more fluid. Women are finding a surer

footing in the workplace and their “power of the purse” is increasing.<sup>19</sup> In coming years, men and women, and Asian societies in general, will be required to renegotiate and redefine roles in ways that, hopefully, will improve women’s representation in leadership.

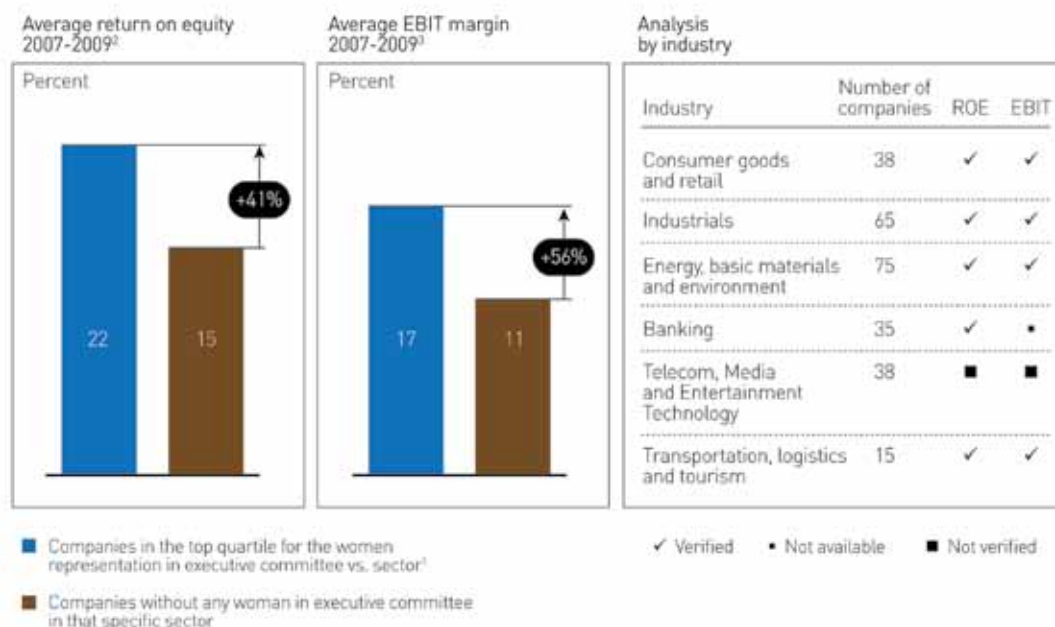
### The Case for Women’s Leadership

Since the 1960s, scholars, advocates and public figures have built up a compelling case for gender equality and women’s leadership. In 2000, when 189 nations agreed on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s), gender equality and women’s empowerment were singled out as “effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.”<sup>20</sup> The literature on women’s leadership tackles the matter as a case of gender rights and social justice. Increasingly, however, many articulate a business case and a development-sustainability case for women’s leadership.

### The Business Case

- A number of studies provide evidence correlating a strong record of promoting women into the executive suite with higher profitability compared to sector competitors.<sup>21</sup> McKinsey & Company (2007) also reports that, gauging by nine criteria of organizational excellence, companies with women representing at least a third of their senior teams outperform those with no women in senior leadership. Further, leadership behaviors observed more frequently in women than men also positively impact a company’s performance.<sup>22</sup>
- Market capitalization is significantly higher in companies with women on their boards than those without.<sup>23</sup>
- McKinsey’s *Women Matter 2010* study examines 279 companies and finds that

**Figure 2. Companies with A Higher Proportion of Women in Their Executive Committees Have Better Financial Performance**



<sup>1</sup> Top quartile: 25% of the companies of the sector with the highest share of women in the executive committee.

<sup>2</sup> ROE: Average calculated on 2007-2009 period for 279 companies.

<sup>3</sup> EBIT: Sample of 231 companies: Banks, insurance and financial services have been excluded.

Note: Scope: 6 European countries (UK, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Norway) and the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China).

Source: Corporate websites; Datastream; McKinsey analysis.

Source: McKinsey&Company, *Women Matter 2010. Women at the Top of Corporations: Making It Happen*, p. 7.

the Return on Equity (RoE) of top-quartile companies (i.e., those with the highest share of women in their executive committees) exceeds by 41 percent the RoE of the bottom quartile (i.e., companies with no women on their executive committees). At the same time, operating results for 231 companies show the companies with greater diversity exceeding by 56 percent the results of the group with no women in leadership roles.<sup>24</sup>

- Companies with significant numbers of top female managers not only perform better in terms of profit, but also in innovation. The same argument applies to

countries with women in leadership roles and better performance in national economic stability and growth.<sup>25</sup>

- Reducing gender inequality could play a key role in addressing problems posed by ageing populations, shrinking labor pools, and mounting pension burdens.<sup>26</sup>
- Diversity (including gender) is a strategic advantage for companies because diverse groups tend to outperform homogeneous groups if both groups' members have equal abilities. This is especially the case when solving difficult and complex tasks that require innovation in competitive environments.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Development-Sustainability Case**

- Countries with high levels of discrimination against women tend to be those performing most poorly on the UN Millennium Development Goals.
- The UNDP's *Human Development Report* (HDR) makes a strong case for the correlation of gender equality and women's empowerment with equity, sustainability, poverty, and environmental degradation. The 2011 report notes that "[new] analysis shows how power imbalances and gender inequalities at the national level are linked to reduced access to clean water and improved sanitation, land

degradation, and deaths due to indoor and outdoor air pollution, thus amplifying the effects associated with income disparities. Gender inequalities also interact with environmental outcomes and make them worse. At the global level governance arrangements often weaken the voices of developing countries and exclude marginalized groups.”<sup>28</sup>

- Countries with higher female parliamentary representation are more likely to set aside protected land areas, as a study of 25 developed and 65 developing countries reveals.<sup>29</sup>
- Countries with higher female parliamentary representation are more likely to ratify international environmental treaties, according to a study of 130 countries constituting about 92 percent of the world’s people.<sup>30</sup>
- Of 49 countries that reduced carbon dioxide emissions between 1990 and 2007, 14 belonged to the Very High Human Development Index countries, 10 of which had higher than average female parliamentary representation.<sup>31</sup>
- The number of women’s and environmental NGOs per capita was negatively correlated with deforestation in a study of 61 countries between 1990 and 2005. That may be partly because of women’s incentives to avert the negative effects of deforestation on their workload, income, and health.<sup>32</sup> □

### Mixed Results from Including Women on Corporate Board Tables

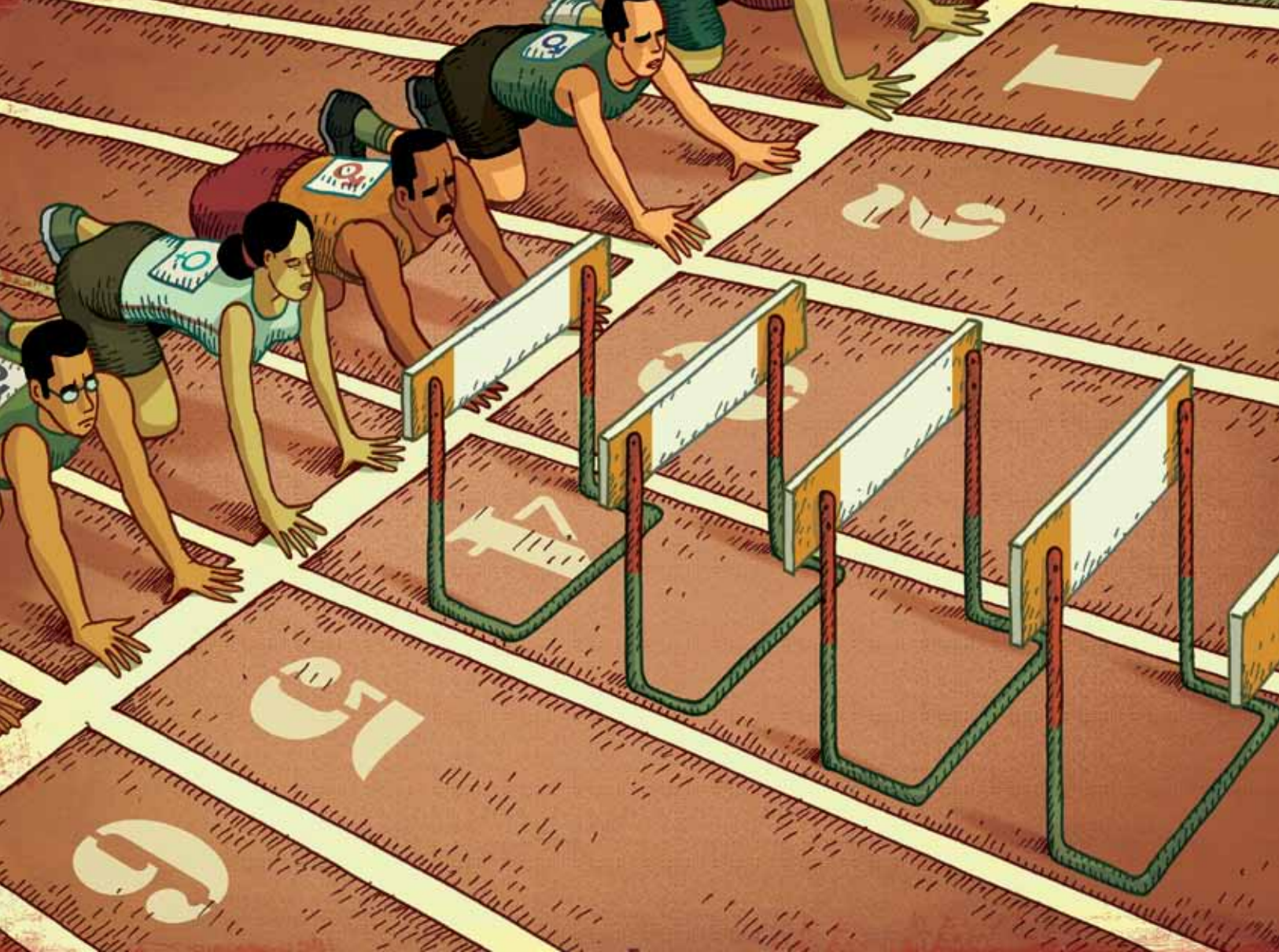
Some studies show mixed results from including women on corporate boards. Having women on corporate boards, for example, does not necessarily lead to better performance at the firm. However, the literature underlines the following benefits from women’s participation on boards and in senior management teams:

- Women tend to bring a skill set that benefits different aspects of team work: empathy, flexibility, communication and collaboration;
- Women tend to be more risk-averse (with implications for firms endangered by excessive risk-taking);
- Women contribute to “social sensitivity” and collective intelligence by bringing varying perspectives, opinions and expertise that would otherwise not be found on all-male teams; and
- Women are more diligent in attending board meetings and influence male board members to improve their attendance.

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Sources: “Limited Seating: Mixed Results on Efforts to Include More Women at the Corporate Board Table,” Knowledge@Wharton, 26 October 2011, in <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/articlepdf/2861.pdf?CFID190216711&CFTOKEN=24169347&jsessionid=a830d97945ad7a3766f24c79b224e2b57015> (accessed 3 March 2012); Siri Terjesen, Ruth Sealy, and Val Singh, “Women Directors on Corporate Boards: A Review and Research Agenda,” *Corporate Governance. An International Review* 17 (3):2009, pp. 320-37; and Clara Stigring and Frida Lyxell, “Is There a Business Case for Women on Boards?,” Goteburg University, School of Business and Law, Bachelor Thesis, in [http://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/26850/1/gupea\\_2077\\_26850\\_1.pdf](http://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/26850/1/gupea_2077_26850_1.pdf) (accessed 6 March 2012).





## PATHWAY TO LEADERSHIP

### Foundation: Women's Survival, Health and Education

#### Survival and Health

Early survival, health and well-being, followed by education constitute the foundation of women's leadership. In Asia, foeticide and neglect threaten the survival of girls and diminish the pool from which to draw future female leaders. Amartya Sen, the Nobel laureate in economics, initiated the discourse on "missing girls" when he noted the paradox that women generally had higher life

expectation than men, yet between 60 and 100 million "women" were missing from the demographic matrix. Subsequent research linking demographics, gender, and cultural norms highlight that women *disappeared* because they were terminated *in utero* or soon after birth; their births were not registered; or they were fatally neglected as infants.<sup>33</sup>

The norm for son preference, combined with medical advancement and one-child or two-children policies in China and India, respectively, have had significant demographic and socio-economic consequences.

Sex-selective abortion has engendered highly unbalanced sex ratios at birth, with long-term implications for fertility, availability of marriage partners, social unrest, and state security.<sup>34</sup> China has the highest ratio at 1.133 males for every female born, followed by India (1.120), Vietnam (1.117), Taiwan (1.084), and Hong Kong SAR, China (1.075).<sup>35</sup> As a result of their "missing women," India and China rank second-last and third-last, respectively, of 135 countries in the *GGG Report 2011's* health and survival sub-index.<sup>36</sup>

In the Global Gender Gap rankings, girls'

survival and health in Asia are most precarious in India (ranked 134 of 135 countries), China (133), Vietnam (130), Pakistan (123), Bangladesh (123) and Nepal (111). In India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, malnutrition is a key factor, with these countries having the highest number of underweight children below the age of five. Other important variables are poor sanitation, scarcity of medical personnel, and lack of antenatal care. In China or Vietnam, some health indicators are significantly higher, but sex-selective abortion (as in South Asia) drastically lowers these countries' overall ranking on girls' health and survival.<sup>37</sup>

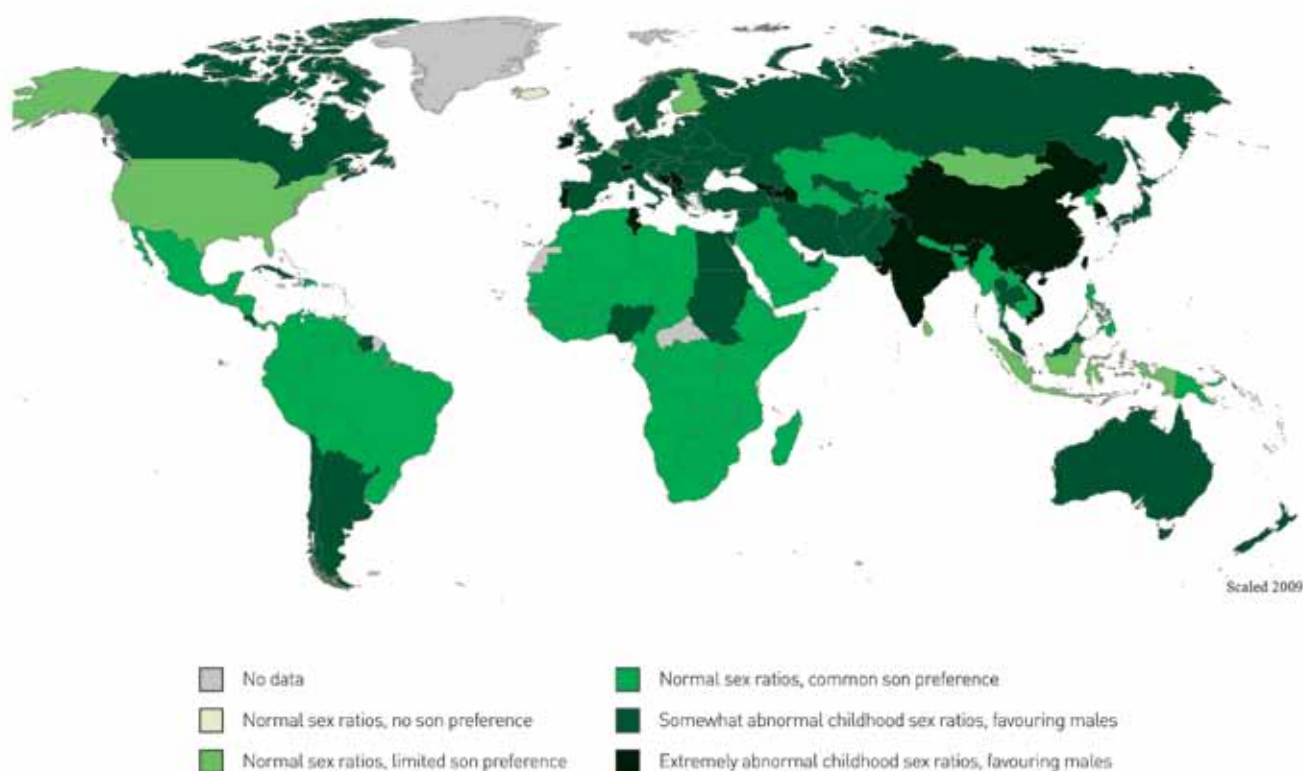
The female adolescent fertility rate is another key indicator for health, as well as education. Higher adolescent fertility rates

are correlated with a cascade of negative outcomes, including poor health, discontinued education, and restricted employment opportunities and career choices. This implies that, in societies with high adolescent fertility, the pool of future women leaders may be narrow. World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics on Asia show that the highest numbers of adolescent mothers are found in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Laos, and Nepal, while the lowest numbers are in South Korea, China, Japan, and Singapore.<sup>38</sup> The highest maternal mortality ratios in Asia also correlate with adolescent fertility and are found in Afghanistan (1,400 per 100,000 live births), Laos (580), Nepal (380), Timor Leste (370), and Bangladesh (340). Asia-Pacific countries

with the lowest maternal mortality ratios are Japan (6), Australia (8), and Singapore (9).<sup>39</sup> Although serious problems in women's health remain, women's life expectancy in South Asia (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) over the last 20 years has actually improved due to increased public expenditure on health, changes to divorce and inheritance laws that give women more control, and a higher minimum age for marriage.<sup>40</sup>

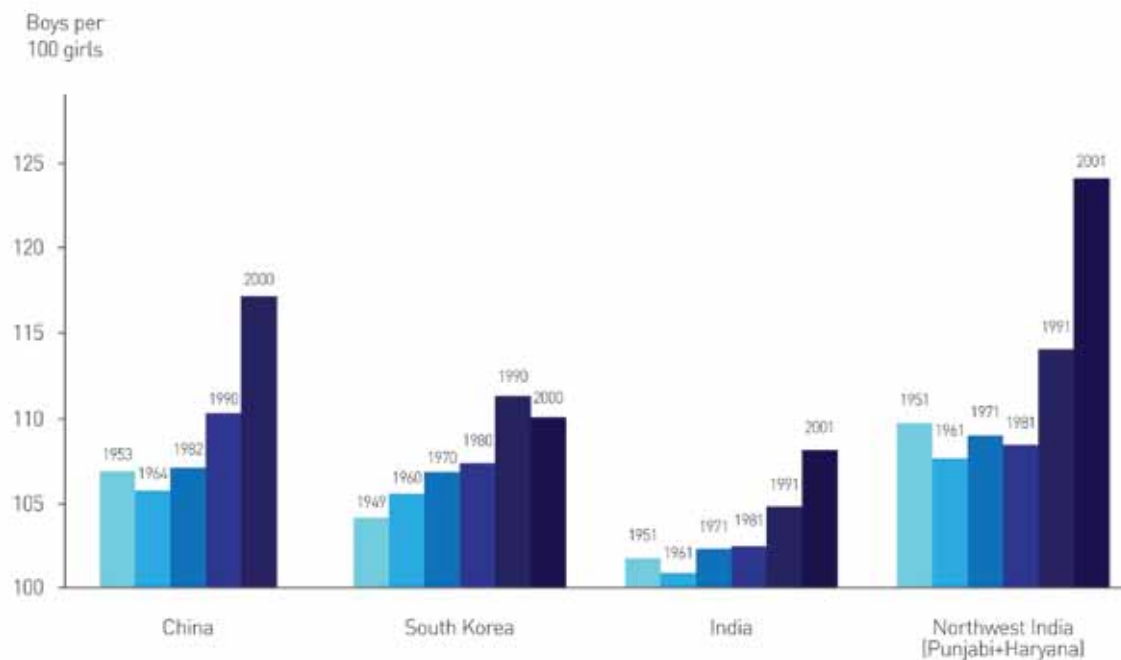
Figure 3 captures son preference in Asia compared with the rest of the world. Accompanying tables show data on women's health and survival, healthy life expectancy (gender gap), female adolescent fertility, and maternal mortality rates in Asia-Pacific countries.

**Figure 3. Son Preference and Sex Ratio**



Source: WomanStats Project Database, in <http://womanstats.org/mapEntrez.htm>

### South Korea—reversing traditional son preference



Notes: The numbers above the bars indicate the year in which the census was taken.  
The data for India are for the age group 0-6.  
Sources: Official national censuses for each country

Until recently, family law in South Korea reinforced Confucian traditions of son preference. The Korean Civil Code of 1958, for example, stipulated that families must be headed by eldest sons, and inheritance ran exclusively through the male line. Women were transferred to their husbands' family register upon marriage, with all children born belonging to the family of the father. In 2005, the Supreme Court abolished the legal basis for male dominance over South Korean families.

Scholars argue that in South Korea factors associated with development have helped reverse traditional norms for son preference. Development created normative changes throughout society, causing the norm to decline. Further, industrialization, urbanization and education led to an increase in portions of the population that could earn a living independent of their lineage—i.e. they could acquire jobs purely on the basis of their skills and qualifications and could also prepare savings for old age. Urbanization also broke highly inflexible customary rules of inheritance. To implement greater gender equity and give a daughter land, for example, would have involved the radical action of passing land out of the lineage framework. Under rural living conditions, the entire male lineage would have violently resisted such a move. However, in urban areas, non-farm occupation parents could easily share savings and assets with a daughter, with the aid of legal recourse. Finally, women's higher education and older age at marriage were also associated with a diminished preference for sons.

Source: Woojin Chung and Monica Das Gupta, "The Decline of Son Preference in South Korea: The Role of Development and Public Policy," *Population and Development Review* 33, No. 4 (2007):757-83.



### **All Girls Allowed (AGA)—*opposing entrenched prejudices against female offspring***

The preference for male offspring is a long-standing, persistent, and prevalent global phenomenon in traditional societies in which sons carry the family line across generations and bear the responsibility of caring for their parents in their old age. Daughters, on the other hand, are lost through marriage, and in many societies, marrying off a daughter means parting with a sizeable portion of hard-earned family savings in the form of bride payment or dowry.

Preferences for male births over female births has led to pre-natal sex selection (resulting in the destruction of female fetuses), abandonment and trafficking of young females, forced abortion and forced sterilization. Population control measures, such as China's one-child policy, may lead to unintended amplification of such aggression and threat to the survival and plight of women and girls in their countries.

All Girls Allowed (AGA), a non-governmental organization based in the People's Republic of China, seeks to address these ills by countering persistent negative societal attitudes towards female offspring in China. An initiative of the Jenzabar Foundation based in Boston, Massachusetts, AGA counters the strong community and familial dismay, displeasure, and disapproval that accompany the news of a female offspring yet to be born, or already born. It does this by heralding both events with celebratory gifts: women expecting female babies are given an initial one-off cash gift of 100 yuan in their second and third trimesters of pregnancy, and a monthly stipend of the same amount after the birth of child. These cash gifts not only save females from being aborted and abandoned, but also provide a tangible and practical means of financial support to their families to alleviate child-rearing costs. Most importantly, the program sends a robust and revolutionary message of respect for, and recognition of the value and worth of a female child, and in turn, of women of all ages.

Source: <http://www.allgirlsallowed.org/>

**Table 1. Health and Survival (based on sex ratio at birth and female/male healthy life expectancy ratio)**

Country	Rank	Score
Thailand	1	0.9796
Fiji	1	0.9796
Philippines	1	0.9796
Japan	1	0.9796
Sri Lanka	1	0.9796
Cambodia	1	0.9796
Mongolia	1	0.9796
Australia	74	0.9739
Malaysia	78	0.9736
Korea, Rep.	78	0.9736
Iran, Islamic Rep.	85	0.9714
New Zealand	92	0.9697
Singapore	101	0.9677
Indonesia	106	0.9663
Brunei Darussalam	108	0.9658
Maldives	111	0.9658
Nepal	111	0.9612
Pakistan	123	0.9557
Bangladesh	123	0.9557
Vietnam	130	0.9458
China	133	0.9327
India	134	0.9312

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*

Table 2. Healthy Life Expectancy

Country	Female (years)	Male (years)	Female-Male Ratio	Rank
Mongolia	62	55	1.13	7
Thailand	65	59	1.10	11
Korea, Rep.	74	68	1.09	16
Philippines	64	59	1.08	19
Cambodia	55	51	1.08	25
Japan	78	73	1.07	36
Fiji	64	60	1.07	39
Sri Lanka	65	61	1.07	42
Malaysia	66	62	1.06	44
Vietnam	66	62	1.06	44
Singapore	75	71	1.06	60
China	68	65	1.05	74
Australia	75	72	1.04	82
Iran, Islamic Rep.	62	60	1.03	91
New Zealand	74	72	1.03	98
India	57	56	1.02	111
Indonesia	61	60	1.02	113
Brunei Darussalam	67	66	1.02	116
Maldives	64	64	1.00	118
Nepal	55	55	1.00	118
Bangladesh	55	56	0.98	131

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*

**Table 3. Adolescent Fertility Rate <sup>41</sup>**

Country	Births per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	1
Korea, Rep.	2
China	2
Japan	5
Singapore	5
Malaysia	12
Maldives	14
Myanmar	17
Australia	18
Mongolia	19
Pakistan	20
Sri Lanka	28
Brunei Darussalam	31
Vietnam	35
Thailand	43
India	45
Bhutan	46
Cambodia	52
Indonesia	52
Philippines	53
Timor-Leste	59
Papua New Guinea	70
Nepal	106
Lao People's Democratic Republic	110
Bangladesh	133
Afghanistan	151

Source: See footnote 41. The table shows the number of births per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years per year from 2000–2011.

**Table 4. Maternal Mortality Ratio**

Country	Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,000 live births)
Australia	8 [6-10]
Bangladesh	340 [170-660]
Brunei Darussalam	21 [13-34]
Cambodia	290 [180-480]
China	38 [23-60]
Fiji	26 [14-48]
India	230 [150-350]
Indonesia	240 [140-380]
Iran, Islamic Rep.	30 [18-50]
Japan	6 [5-8]
Korea, Rep.	18 [16-20]
Malaysia	31 [14-68]
Maldives	37 [21-64]
Mongolia	65 [27-150]
Nepal	380 [210-650]
New Zealand	14 [12-15]
Pakistan	260 [140-490]
Philippines	94 [61-140]
Singapore	9 [8-10]
Sri Lanka	39 [26-57]
Thailand	48 [32-68]
Vietnam	56 [27-120]

Source: See footnote 41. Bracketed numbers show the range between the uncertainties estimated to contain the true maternal mortality ratio with a 95 percent probability.



### Education

Globally, women constitute two-thirds of nearly 867 million illiterate adults. Three quarters of the world's illiterate population resides in Asia, and five of the eight countries that host two-thirds of the entire global illiterate adult population are Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan. Women in rural areas in Asia also have particularly low literacy rates—e.g., Pakistan (16 percent), Nepal (25 percent), Bangladesh (31 percent) and Bhutan (10 percent). Among six regions ranked in the *GGG Report 2011*, Asia-Pacific ranks fourth overall on educational attainment. The Philippines (ranked 1) is singled out as the only country in the region to have closed the gender gap in education.

Significant gender gaps remain in Nepal (ranked 128 of 135), Pakistan (127), India (121), Cambodia (116), Bangladesh (108), Sri Lanka (103), and even in wealthy Singapore (100). But, in tertiary education, the gender gap is narrowing in places such as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.<sup>42</sup>

Research has consistently shown that the returns on investment in girls' education are highest in developing countries. As *TIME* magazine reports:

“An extra year in primary school boosts girls' eventual wages by 10 percent to 20 percent. An extra year of secondary school adds 15 percent to 25 percent. Girls who stay in school for seven or more years typically marry

four years later and have two fewer children than girls who drop out. Fewer dependents per worker allows for greater economic growth. And the World Food Program has found that when girls and women earn income, they reinvest 90 percent of it in their families. They buy books, medicine, bed nets. For men, that figure is closer to 30 percent to 40 percent.”<sup>43</sup>

In Asia, parents continue to regard the payoff from girls' education to be lower than that for boys. In some cases, sending girls to school means a double burden, not only because of school fees that must be paid, but also because girls, not boys, are traditionally expected to substitute for women in housework.<sup>44</sup> Surveys



taken by the Pew Global Attitudes project show a significant undervaluing of girls' education, with a solid majority in India (63 percent) and about half of those surveyed in Pakistan (51 percent) and China (48 percent) indicating that they view university education as more important for a boy than for a girl.<sup>45</sup> Across Asia, societies undervalue girls' enrollment in school in large part because of the common practice that women "transfer out" of their own families upon marriage, allowing their husbands' families to reap the returns on investments made in their education.<sup>46</sup>

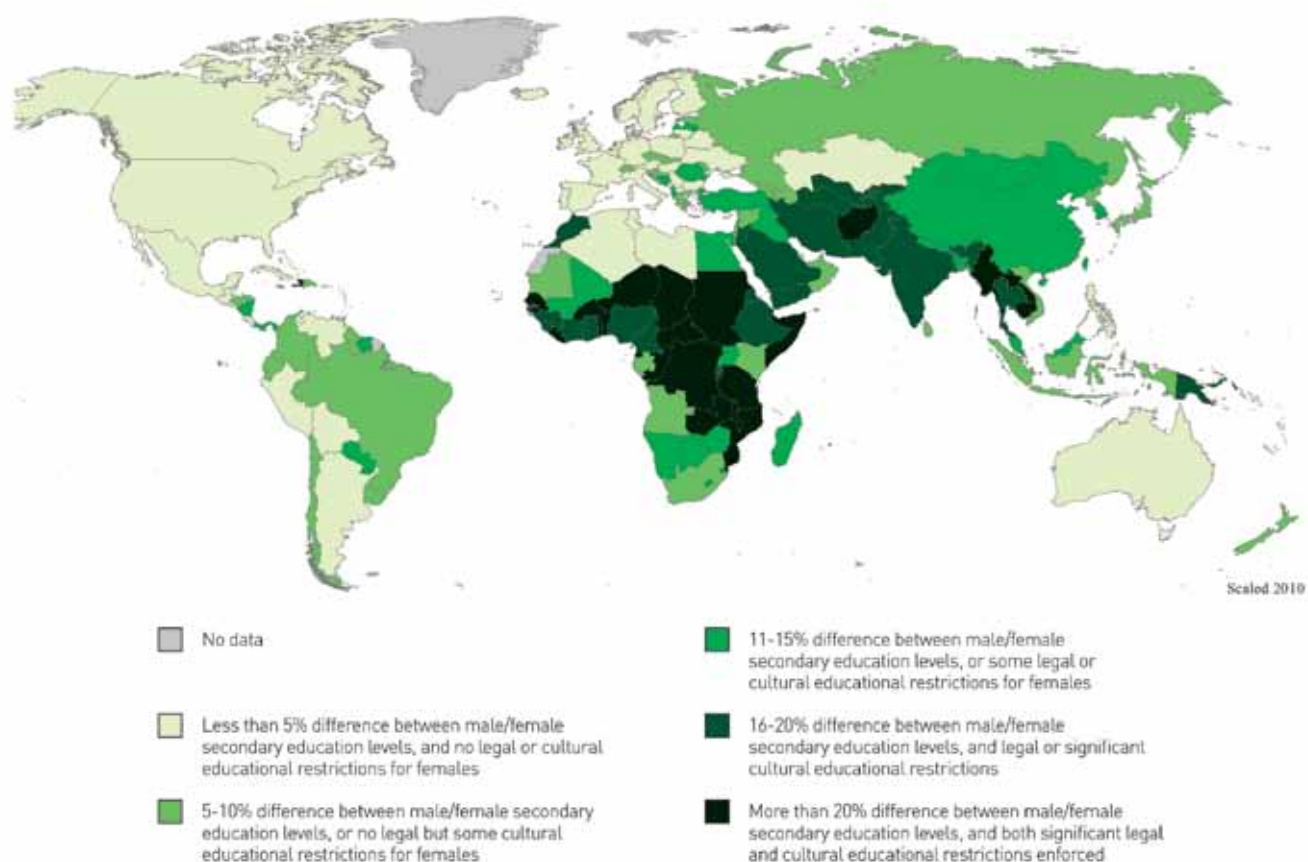
Increased family income and affluence, however, mitigate beliefs and practices that obstruct investment in girls' education. In Asia, tertiary education has become a marker of the "middle class," with girls' secondary and tertiary education being highly sensitive to income in places such as India and Malaysia. This dynamic can feed a virtuous cycle in which tertiary education leads to higher wages, thus further reinforcing family income that, in turn, supports more education. In India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam, the benefits of tertiary education are evident in the

significantly rising wage gap favoring those with a tertiary education over those without.<sup>47</sup>

Unsurprisingly, women's educational attainment is highest in the industrialized countries of Singapore, South Korea, Japan, and the economy of Hong Kong SAR, China and lowest in the developing countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Laos, and India.<sup>48</sup>

Figure 4 shows discrepancy in education globally. Tables 5 and 6 following show the *GGG 2011* rankings on educational attainment and tertiary enrollment (2006 and 2011) in the Asia-Pacific region.

**Figure 4. Discrepancy in Education**



Source: <http://womanstats.org/mapEntrez.htm> (accessed March 17, 2012)

**Table 5. Educational Attainment**

Country	Score	Rank
Australia	1.0000	1
New Zealand	1.0000	1
Philippines	1.0000	1
Mongolia	0.9946	47
Brunei Darussalam	0.9938	52
Malaysia	0.9906	65
Maldives	0.9896	69
Fiji	0.9893	70
Japan	0.9862	80
Thailand	0.9855	82
China	0.9815	85
Indonesia	0.9671	93
Korea, Rep.	0.9481	97
Singapore	0.9381	100
Sri Lanka	0.9329	103
Vietnam	0.9257	104
Iran, Islamic Rep.	0.9251	105
Bangladesh	0.9168	108
Cambodia	0.8651	116
India	0.8369	121
Pakistan	0.7782	127
Nepal	0.7589	128

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*

Table 6. Tertiary Enrollment

Country	2006				2011			
	Female	Male	Female-to-Male ratio	Rank	Female	Male	Female-to-Male ratio	Rank
Maldives	—	—	—	—	0	0	2.40	3
Brunei Darussalam	—	—	—	—	22	13	1.76	11
Mongolia	48%	29%	1.64	1	64	41	1.55	22
New Zealand	74%	53%	1.40	1	99	68	1.45	29
Australia	80%	65%	1.23	1	94	71	1.32	46
Thailand	45%	38%	1.20	1	51	39	1.31	49
Malaysia	38%	27%	1.41	1	41	32	1.30	51
Philippines	32%	25%	1.28	1	32	26	1.24	62
Fiji	—	—	—	—	17	14	1.20	66
China	17%	21%	0.85	78	25	24	1.07	81
Iran, Islamic Rep.	—	—	—	—	38	35	1.07	82
Indonesia	15%	19%	0.79	83	23	24	0.96	93
Japan	51%	57%	0.89	76	55	62	0.89	96
Pakistan	3%	4%	0.80	82	5	6	0.85	99
Vietnam	—	—	—	—	8	11	0.73	106
India	9%	14%	0.66	86	11	16	0.70	109
Korea, Rep.	69%	109%	0.63	89	82	117	0.70	110
Bangladesh	4%	9%	0.50	97	6	10	0.56	116
Cambodia	2%	4%	0.46	101	5	9	0.54	117
Sri Lanka	—	—	—	—	3	6	0.50	120
Nepal	3%	8%	0.40	103	3	8	0.40	130
Singapore	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2011

**PACOS TRUST—*using education and community involvement to enhance the quality of life of indigenous communities, particularly women and children***

PACOS TRUST is an NGO in Sabah, Malaysia that focuses on enhancing the quality of life of indigenous communities, especially women and children. Founded in 1987 by two schoolteachers, the Lasimbang sisters, the organization became fully registered in 1997 and now receives funding from international agencies, private donors, and members. It has helped create job opportunities for young women as well as employment for women who have been victims of domestic violence. A distinctive program run by PACOS is the Early Child Care and Development (ECCD) training and support program. Through ECCD, PACOS gives basic and advanced training for indigenous preschool teachers to enable them to start up and run their local community preschools consistent with the educational standards and curriculum mandated by the Ministry of Education. At the same time, ECCD trains teachers to integrate and emphasize indigenous knowledge and culture in their schools. PACOS believes that providing equal educational opportunity is crucial for a generation of indigenous children who will be facing complex challenges in Sabah. PACOS works with many in the local communities to refine indigenous concepts and constantly adapt to suit the needs and aspirations of the communities being served. Through this initiative, parents are able to understand better the challenges of modern society. Instead of putting their children to work as early as the age of six, they have an opportunity to educate them instead, thus building a better foundation for future alternative employment for their children. This is particularly important given that many indigenous communities have lost their access to natural resources and traditional means of livelihood.

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Source: <http://www.sabah.net.my/PACOS/> and Haseena Abdul Majid, Personal Notes from Working with PACOS.

**Room to Read—*educating children to promote world change***

An advocate of poverty alleviation through the educating of girls and women, **Room to Read** partners with communities across the developing world to promote literacy and gender equality in education by establishing libraries, constructing classrooms, publishing local-language children's books, training educators and supporting girls' education. An award-winning non-profit organization with its headquarters in San Francisco, **Room to Read** was founded on the belief that World Change Starts with Educated Children.

Operating in ten countries in Asia and Africa, the organization's five core programs are adapted to suit the needs of the population of each of these countries. To ensure a personal commitment to each country's educational progress, local teams familiar with the challenges ahead are employed. The organization also partners with national ministries of education to ensure that programs are sustainable and that teachers and librarians are provided for the schools and libraries built. **Room to Read** receives funding and volunteer support from many individuals, families and institutions internationally.

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Source: <http://www.roomtoread.org/>

**Table 7. Economic Participation and Opportunity**

Country	Rank	Score
Mongolia	3	0.8500
New Zealand	11	0.7747
Philippines	15	0.7632
Singapore	16	0.7585
Australia	18	0.7565
Brunei Darussalam	20	0.7552
Vietnam	40	0.7106
Thailand	41	0.7090
China	50	0.6825
Cambodia	75	0.6315
Maldives	86	0.6019
Malaysia	95	0.5941
Japan	100	0.5673
Indonesia	101	0.5642
Sri Lanka	102	0.5598
Fiji	116	0.4972
Korea, Rep.	117	0.4934
Bangladesh	118	0.4932
Nepal	121	0.4606
Iran, Islamic Rep.	125	0.4443
India	131	0.3960
Pakistan	134	0.3446

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*

**Table 8. Women's Economic Opportunity Index**

Country	Rank	Score
New Zealand	8	81.2
Australia	10	80.5
Japan	32	68.2
Singapore	34	66.7
South Korea, Rep.	35	66.2
Thailand	48	56.8
Malaysia	49	55.3
Philippines	63	50.4
China	65	49.4
Sri Lanka	73	47.5
Vietnam	79	43.7
Indonesia	82	43.1
India	84	42.7
Cambodia	92	39.2
Iran	103	33.0
Bangladesh	104	32.6
Pakistan	108	29.9

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit, *Women's Economic Opportunity Index*, June 2010. Un-weighted Total of All Category Scores (0-100, where 100=most favorable)

## Pipeline: Women's Employment and Economic Participation

Employment and economic opportunity are crucial steps to women's advancement. More women have been joining the workforce for decades, but women's participation in the formal labor market continues to lag significantly behind that of men. As summarized by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU):

“ Women's economic opportunities are influenced not just by a country's regulatory environment but also by social attitudes and customs. ...[Women's] participation in the formal labor force remains well below that of men. Women are also paid less than their male counterparts, and men continue to dominate in sectors with higher wage-earning potential, such as technology and finance.... [Even] where legislation is intended to help women, implementation is often weak and opportunities remain limited.<sup>49</sup> ”

### Economic Participation and Opportunity

How large is the gap in economic participation and opportunity between men and women? The *GGG Report* measures this gap by examining five variables (using International Labor Organization [ILO] data plus calculations and an opinion survey conducted by the World Economic Forum): 1) ratio of female labor force participation over male value; 2) wage equality between women and men for similar work; 3) ratio of estimated female earned income over male value; 4) ratio of female legislators, senior officials and managers over male value; and (5) ratio of female professional and technical workers over male value.<sup>50</sup> As Table 7 shows, Asia shows significant variance, with the highest

**Table 9. Labor Force Participation Gap**

Country	Female	Male	Female-to-Male ratio	Rank
Vietnam	74	81	0.92	13
Mongolia	71	80	0.88	27
China	74	85	0.88	34
Cambodia	76	87	0.87	35
New Zealand	72	85	0.85	43
Australia	70	83	0.85	45
Thailand	70	85	0.83	52
Nepal	66	82	0.81	58
Brunei Darussalam	62	78	0.80	63
Maldives	59	79	0.75	75
Singapore	60	82	0.74	78
Japan	62	84	0.73	80
Bangladesh	62	85	0.73	83
Korea, Rep.	55	76	0.73	84
Philippines	51	80	0.63	94
Indonesia	53	87	0.61	100
Malaysia	47	82	0.57	106
Fiji	40	80	0.50	117
Sri Lanka	38	80	0.47	119
Iran, Islamic Rep.	33	76	0.44	122
India	35	85	0.42	123
Pakistan	22	88	0.26	135

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*

rankings going to Mongolia (3 of 134 countries), the Philippines (15), and Singapore (16); followed by Vietnam (40), and Thailand (41); and trailed in the lowest rankings by Pakistan (134), India (131), Nepal (121), Bangladesh (118), and South Korea (117).

The EIU's Women's Economic Opportunity Index (WEOI) is a broader index that tracks 26 indicators, including: (1) labor policy and practice, (2) access to finance, (3) education and training, and (4) women's legal and social status. In short, the index seeks to capture the "set of laws, regulations, practices, customs and attitudes that allow women to participate in the workforce under conditions roughly equal to those of men, whether as wage-earning employers or as owners of a business."<sup>51</sup>

The WEOI covers 113 economies, but, unlike the *GGG Report's* Asia-Pacific coverage, it does not include Brunei, Fiji, Mongolia, Maldives or Nepal. Its rankings are listed in Table 8.

Both the *GGG Report* and WEOI rank New Zealand, Australia, and Singapore as the best countries in the Asia-Pacific region for women's economic opportunity. Both indices roughly overlap in the rankings of Thailand, Malaysia, and China, but diverge in rankings on the Philippines, Japan, and Cambodia. They converge again on lower rankings for Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. The nuances of these rankings may be debated, but it is worth noting South Asia's lagging status, which is consistent with most parameters highlighted in this report.

### Labor Force Participation

The Labor Force Participation Rate, or LFPR, measures the proportion of a country's working-age population that engages actively in the labor market (by working or looking for work). This rate provides an overall

**Table 10. Advancement Gap: Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers**

Country	Female	Male	Female-to-Male ratio	Rank
Philippines	55	45	1.21	2
Fiji	51	49	1.04	4
Mongolia	47	53	0.90	6
New Zealand	40	60	0.67	17
Australia	37	63	0.58	25
Brunei Darussalam	35	65	0.54	34
Singapore	31	69	0.46	48
Malaysia	24	76	0.32	75
Sri Lanka	24	76	0.32	76
Thailand	24	76	0.31	79
Vietnam	22	78	0.28	83
Indonesia	22	78	0.28	85
China	17	83	0.20	90
Maldives	14	86	0.17	97
Nepal	14	86	0.16	100
Cambodia	14	86	0.16	101
Iran, Islamic Rep.	13	87	0.15	102
Bangladesh	10	90	0.11	109
Korea, Rep.	10	90	0.11	111
Japan	9	91	0.10	112
India	3	97	0.03	123
Pakistan	3	97	0.03	124

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*

**Table 11. Advancement Gap: Professional and Technical Workers**

Country	Female	Male	Female-to-Male ratio	Rank
Philippines	62	38	1.64	12
Thailand	56	44	1.25	26
New Zealand	55	45	1.25	27
Mongolia	55	45	1.20	31
Australia	54	46	1.16	34
China	52	48	1.08	46
Vietnam	51	49	1.05	52
Maldives	49	51	0.95	67
Sri Lanka	47	53	0.89	71
Japan	47	53	0.87	73
Singapore	45	55	0.82	78
Indonesia	45	55	0.81	80
Malaysia	42	58	0.71	83
Korea, Rep.	41	59	0.69	87
Brunei Darussalam	37	63	0.58	91
Iran, Islamic Rep.	33	67	0.50	98
Cambodia	33	67	0.48	101
Bangladesh	22	78	0.28	108
Pakistan	22	78	0.28	109
Nepal	20	80	0.24	112
Fiji	9	91	0.10	116
India	-	-	-	-

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*

indication of the available supply of labor. The ILO reports that the gender gap in LFPR rates has narrowed from 32 percent to 26 percent between 1980 and 2008. Moreover, women's share in vulnerable employment has decreased in the same period from 55.9 percent to 51.2 percent. However, higher female LFPRs indicate progress only in economic participation, but do not measure equality of wages or quality of employment. Thus, a high LFPR may simply hint at a large number of working poor due to female part-time and non-traditional employment, unemployment, and under-employment. Overall, ILO found a continuing gender disparity, in that:<sup>52</sup>

“...the circumstances of female employment—the sectors where women work, the types of work they do, the relationship of women to their jobs, the wages they receive—bring fewer gains (monetarily, socially and structurally) to women than are brought to the typical working male.”<sup>53</sup>

In Asia, the female LFPR is highest for East Asia and lowest for South Asia, where more than six in ten women of working age remain economically inactive. In East Asia, 64 percent of women are in the labor force, the highest percentage of employed women in the world. Southeast Asia and the Pacific follow, with 54 percent female LFPR.<sup>54</sup>

The latest figures for women's LFPR in the Asia-Pacific region are found in Table 9. But historically, a few details are worth noting:

- Asian Tiger Story (Hong Kong SAR, China; Taiwan; Republic of Korea): From the 1960s to 1990s, female LFPRs increased dramatically in these countries—26 percent for Singapore and approximately 10 percent for the others. Women became preferred workers for light, labor-intensive manufacturing in electronics and other low-wage sectors. Female labor participation rose,



**Table 12. Percentage of Women at Senior Level Positions**

Country/Economy	Average (percent)
China	20.72
Hong Kong SAR, China	22.77
India	9.32
Japan	7.77
Malaysia	27.57
Singapore	21.5

Source: Community Business, *Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia 2011*.

**Table 13. Percentage of Women Dropping Out from Middle to Senior Levels**

Country/Economy	Average (percent)
China	-52.88
Hong Kong SAR, China	-48.83
India	-37.49
Japan	-70.24
Malaysia	-32.89
Singapore	-45.90

Source: Community Business, *Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia 2011*.

but women did not necessarily benefit in terms of equality of wages and working conditions.<sup>55</sup>

- Thailand: In 2008, women's LFPR was 65.9 percent, compared to 81.0 percent for men. The gender wage differential in 2010 was 5 percent, and highest among the most highly skilled of the occupations—e.g., accountants and computer programmers. Gender segregation between industries and sectors was low compared to other countries. Between 1997 and 2007, a

fairly sharp decline occurred in the share of women engaged as contributing family workers, with more women shifting into self-employed, wage, and salaried work. Still, the share of women in unpaid family work remained high at 29.9 per cent in 2007.<sup>56</sup>

- South Asia: In Sri Lanka, female LFPR was 34.6 percent compared to 75.1 percent for men (2008). This is in line with South Asia as a whole, where the regional figure is 35.1 percent, but

**Google—providing a safe and comfortable commute for women**

To address the primary reason why women consider quitting their jobs, the US-based technology company Google provides a shared cab service for all workers at its sites in Hyderabad, Bangalore, and Gurgaon in India. Clean and air conditioned cabs in which commuters are able to plug a data card into a laptop and connect with the Internet or take meetings via teleconference, are part of Google's solutions to the stress of commuting. This fully subsidized service is extended to employees who use the company-subsidized child care facility: both parent and child enjoy the company cab ride home. A female staff member who leaves work alone after 8 p.m. and uses the shared cab service is accompanied by a security guard. Both the transport supervisor and the female employee have the driver's identification number, and the supervisor knows what time she plans to leave, and keeps track of her ride home to ensure her safety. If she leaves with others, the male employee gets dropped off last regardless of where he lives.

Source: Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Ripa Rashid, *Winning the War for Talent in Emerging Markets: Why Women are the Solution* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2011), pp. 219-21.

**Goldman Sachs India—supporting women with maternity leave, flexible work arrangements and work-life skill development**

Indian women, like their Asian counterparts in other countries, bear much of the care-giving and household responsibility in nuclear and extended families. Unable to cope with this and the heavy demands of a career, many drop out of the workforce. The arrival of a newborn is a strong trigger for such transitions, despite the government-mandated 12 weeks of maternity leave.

Goldman Sachs India goes a step further by allowing for an extra four weeks of maternity leave. This benefit is enjoyed by approximately 4 percent of the company's female staff at any one time, a percentage that will rise as more women join the workforce. To promote better work-life balance, the US-based financial services organization also provides flexible work arrangement, such as working from home or working on a half-day schedule.

In 2009, the firm launched a cross-divisional maternity mentoring program that pairs new mothers with experienced working mothers. The latter explain maternity benefits to the new mothers, discuss with them how to make a successful transition back from maternity leave to the work place, and provide advice on balancing motherhood with a full-time career. Managers, most of whom are men, are trained to be supportive of the needs of their female employees and encouraged to provide "flextime arrangements," which include formal or informal work-from-home options and extended maternity leave.

Source: Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Ripa Rashid, *Winning the War for Talent in Emerging Markets: Why Women are the Solution* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2011), 217-19.

**Table 14. Female Labor in Agriculture**

Country	Percentage of Female Labor Employed in Agriculture
Nepal	90.5
India	89.5
Pakistan	79.4
Cambodia	65
Vietnam	53
Bangladesh	45.6
Sri Lanka	41.5
China	41.2

Source: Sustainable Development Department (SD), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in <http://www.fao.org/sd/WPdirect/WPre0107.htm> (accessed March 17, 2012).

displaying high variance. Nepal's female LFPR is 63.2 percent, while Pakistan's is 21.2 percent. In India, only one in three women above the age of 15 is considered economically active versus 83 percent of men. Poverty-induced child labor is also a severe problem. Adult women (aged 15 and above) comprise only 27 percent of all employed persons in India, while girls account for 42 percent of all child employment. Young girls bear the brunt of poverty, while women's economic activity is limited. In Bangladesh, the female LFPR is 58.7 percent (2009). The country has strong gender-based occupational segregation, with women concentrated in lower-paying industries and without access to the same types of jobs as men.<sup>57</sup>

- China: Women's LFPR in China is very high at 74 percent.<sup>58</sup>

**Wipro—retaining, supporting and enabling female staff**

At Wipro, an Indian global IT services and consulting company provider headquartered in Bangalore, women make up nearly 30 percent of the 120,000-strong workforce. Yet, only 5 percent working in management at the vice presidential level or higher, and fewer than 20 percent are managers. Women of Wipro (WoW), an initiative that enables women to strategically build their careers at Wipro, was created as a reflection of the company's belief in the profitability of having more women in its workforce.

WoW began with a series of ongoing self-defense workshops for women employees across India and brochures on personal safety for new employees across the company in 2008. Subsequently, on-site vacation camps were organized for employees' children during the long spring school holidays to allow female staff to spend more time with their children.

The company conducted an in-depth research project to understand the needs of high-potential female employees. The results showed that different interventions are required at different life stages. It was found that women in the early stage of their career benefited most from being exposed to varied, challenging roles and female role models, while those in the mid-career stage needed child-related and work-life balance support. Wipro's WoW program sponsored mentoring experiences, career advice blogging, outside speakers, and other inspiring programs for the company's early-career female staff, while offering extended maternity leave, with six extra unpaid months following the standard three months' paid leave to mid-career women. About 90 percent of the women who take maternity leave now take a full nine months off, and the implementation of a digital newsletter to keep women better informed of company developments persuaded 75 percent of women who had taken extended leaves to return to the company when the leave period ended.

To ensure that the new mothers who return to work have the child care they need, Wipro sourced top day care centers with commuting services near its workplaces and secured subsidized rates. WoW also reshaped the company's annual succession planning to bring more women into the leadership pipeline, hiring senior female talent from outside the company to increase the number of high-level role models for its female workforce.

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Source: Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Ripa Rashid, *Winning the War for Talent in Emerging Markets: Why Women are the Solution* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2011), 225-27.

**Ernst & Young India—strengthening support and encouragement for female staff**

Ernst & Young organizes Family Day for the families of female employees. The aim is raise families' awareness and understanding of the work that their female family members do at the organization. Such events include show-and-tell sessions about the work environment and day-to-day work experiences.

The company also offers a minivan service for its staff. Women constitute 90 percent of the users of this subsidized door-to-door pickup-and-drop-off service. To further retain its female employees, an on-site playroom has been constructed with a desk for mothers of small children to use when they return from maternity leave.

Ernst & Young also has a RAVE (a Random Act of Value and Excellence) program. RAVEs come in the shape of paper hearts, presented to staff for a job well done. To further create an atmosphere of positivity, a bell is rung in the office whenever a major company accomplishment milestone is reached.

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Source: Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Ripa Rashid, *Winning the War for Talent in Emerging Markets: Why Women are the Solution* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2011), 168-70.

## Work Quality and the Feminization of “Bad Jobs”

The quality of female participation in the formal labor force is captured in part by the “Advancement Gap” between women and men, as shown in Tables 10 and 11. Among the ranks of legislators, senior officials and managers, women in most Asia-Pacific countries still have a substantial gap to close. The picture improves among professional and technical workers, where 8 of 22 Asia-Pacific countries have either closed, or nearly closed, the gap between men and women.

The *Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia 2011* report,<sup>59</sup> published by Community Business based in Hong Kong SAR, China, provides texture on the “advancement gap” by showing how women are dropping off from management ranks between middle and senior levels. Culling data from 21 participating companies in China and its territory Hong Kong SAR, India, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore, the report finds that:

- Women’s representation in corporate organizations is highest at junior levels, and lowest at senior levels across all countries.
- Many companies have a female majority at the junior level of employment, but women’s representation at the senior level is far below the national female labor force participation rate for all countries.
- The highest percentages of women employed are in China, followed by Malaysia, Hong Kong SAR, China and Singapore. India has the lowest percentage of women employed.
- Malaysia performs best with an average of 27.57 percent women at senior level positions, while the worst performing is Japan, with 7.77 percent (See Table 12).
- On average, women drop out of the workforce when going from middle to senior level positions at a rate of 48.04

**Table 15. Remuneration Gap: Estimated Earned Income (Purchasing Power Parity US\$)**

Country	Female	Male	Female (with 40,000 cut-off)	Male (with 40,000 cut-off)	Female- to-Male ratio	Rank
Brunei Darussalam	38,656	62,967	38,656	40,000	0.97	3
Singapore	35,060	66,054	35,060	40,000	0.88	6
Australia	32,861	46,295	32,861	40,000	0.82	10
Mongolia	3,141	3,912	3,141	3,912	0.80	12
New Zealand	23,856	34,258	23,856	34,258	0.70	25
Vietnam	2,409	3,511	2,409	3,511	0.69	29
Cambodia	1,532	2,315	1,532	2,315	0.66	38
China	5,331	8,215	5,331	8,215	0.65	43
Thailand	6,185	9,865	6,185	9,865	0.63	51
Philippines	2,642	4,429	2,642	4,429	0.60	60
Maldives	3,969	6,952	3,969	6,952	0.57	68
Bangladesh	1,000	1,823	1,000	1,823	0.55	80
Japan	20,572	44,892	20,572	40,000	0.51	87
Malaysia	8,365	19,486	8,365	19,486	0.43	107
Indonesia	2,487	5,915	2,487	5,915	0.42	109
Korea, Rep.	15,830	38,590	15,830	38,590	0.41	113
Iran, Islamic Rep.	6,564	16,386	6,564	16,386	0.40	114
Fiji	2,455	6,536	2,455	6,536	0.38	117
Nepal	628	1,689	628	1,689	0.37	118
Sri Lanka	2,542	7,070	2,542	7,070	0.36	120
India	1,518	4,960	1,518	4,960	0.31	121
Pakistan	—	—	—	—	—	—

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*

**Table 16. Remuneration Gap: Wage Equality Survey**

Rank	Country	Survey Data*	Female-to-Male Ratio
4	Malaysia	5.67	0.81
5	Singapore	5.65	0.81
10	Mongolia	5.46	0.78
17	Thailand	5.37	0.77
23	Philippines	5.32	0.76
27	Brunei Darussalam	5.25	0.75
29	New Zealand	5.22	0.75
30	Sri Lanka	5.21	0.74
33	Cambodia	5.16	0.74
50	China	4.82	0.69
53	Vietnam	4.80	0.69
58	Indonesia	4.72	0.67
76	Australia	4.50	0.64
86	India	4.35	0.62
93	Japan	4.21	0.60
96	Iran, Islamic Rep.	4.19	0.60
103	Pakistan	4.03	0.58
105	Bangladesh	3.99	0.57
118	Nepal	3.72	0.53
126	Korea, Rep.	3.57	0.51
—	Fiji	—	—
—	Maldives	—	—

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*. \* (1 = Not at All – Significantly Below Those of Men; 7 = Fully – Equal to Those of Men)

percent, with Japan performing worst at 70.24 percent (see Table 13).

Another gloomy aspect of female labor participation is the fact many women remain trapped in insecure employment, while unpaid family work limits their access to labor markets.<sup>60</sup> Employment of low-skilled women tends to be clustered in the lowest-paying and low-productivity sectors (even when compared to equally low-skilled men). This includes subsistence agriculture, which remains the primary source of livelihood for many women in developing countries.<sup>61</sup> The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that, in many Asian countries, women comprise the majority of agricultural workers (See Table 14). Many are illiterate. They carry the burden of dual responsibility for farm and household production and management, while their family labor contribution is undervalued or not counted at all.

#### **Wage Gap, Maternal Health, and Retirement Policy**

Globally, women earn 20–30 percent less than men for similar work performed. This unequal situation reflects female disadvantage at the work place and is thus an impediment to women's leadership. In Asia, the lack of policies mandating equal pay for equal work, and virtually non-existent enforcement mechanisms where such policies do exist, make the region a wage policy laggard.<sup>62</sup> The World Economic Forum notes that women in BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China) and N-11 countries (including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines, Pakistan, South Korea and Vietnam) earn less than half of what men earn.<sup>63</sup> In South Korea, in professions such as accounting, the wage differential is such that women could earn as much as 33 percent less than men. In Bangladesh, women in the (male-dominated) construction, hotel, and restaurant industries earn an average

**Figure 5. Women among Asia's Rich and Powerful (part 1)**

*Forbes'* "The World's 100 Most Powerful Women" in 2011 includes 12 Asian women from business, politics, and multilateral organizations, compared to only five in 2010.

Rank	Who
#4	Indra Nooyi, Chief Executive, PepsiCo, India
#7	Sonia Gandhi, President, India
#20	Cher Wang, Cofounder, Chair, HTC; VIA Technologies, Taiwan
#26	Aung San Suu Kyi, General Secretary, National League For Democracy, Burma
#33	Chan Laiwa & family, Chair, Fu Wah International Group, China
#43	Chanda Kochhar, CEO, ICICI Bank, India
#48	Zhang Xin & family, cofounder, CEO, SOHO, China
#59	Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister, Thailand
#65	Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Managing Director, World Bank, Indonesia
#68	Margaret Chan, Director-General, World Health Organization, China
#72	Ho Ching, CEO, Temasek Holdings, Singapore
#99	Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Founder, Chair, Biocon, India

Source: "The World's 100 Most Powerful Women 2011," *Forbes*, August 2011, in <http://www.forbes.com/wealth/power-women/list> (accessed November 15, 2011).

**Table 17. Asia-Pacific Economies/ Percentage of Women in Senior Management Positions**

Country/ Economy	Percentage of Women in Senior Management
Thailand	39
Philippines	39
Hong Kong SAR, China	33
Malaysia	28
New Zealand	28
Taiwan	27
Vietnam	27
China	25
Australia	24
Singapore	23
India	14
Japan	5

Source: Grant Thornton International, International Business Report, March 2012.

of 30 percent less than men per hour, while the smallest wage gaps are found in the (female-dominated) service industries, such as education, health, and social work.<sup>64</sup> The *GGG Report 2011* tracks the "remuneration gap" among countries through two measures: Estimated Earned Income and an Executive Opinion survey on wage equality for similar work. Its rankings are shown in Tables 15 and 16.

Another impediment to women's advancement is poor protection of maternal health, which correlates with low and disrupted female employment and high maternal mortality. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA)

estimates that one woman dies every minute from pregnancy complications or childbirth, with the direst situations in the world's poorest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Elsewhere, the ILO reports that Asia-Pacific countries (along with the Middle East) have "particularly low" levels of conformity with the latest ILO standards on maternity leave (duration of leave, benefits provided, and source of funding). And though 65 percent of Asia-Pacific countries provide statutory maternity leave of at least 12-13 weeks (as of 2009), actual implementation is an open question.<sup>65</sup>

On the matter of retirement policy, Asia has the highest percentage of countries (52 percent) that impose three or more years' difference between the statutory (pensionable) retirement age between men and women, according to the EIU. Women are forced to retire younger than men despite a longer life expectancy. The usually mandatory pensionable age, combined with typically lower wages and fewer years in the labor market due to family responsibilities, severely disadvantages women. Their career span is cut short, reducing the time to accumulate retirement savings and/or pensions and curtailing overall



**Figure 5. Women among Asia's Rich and Powerful (part 2)**

Fortune's international list of the "50 Most Powerful Women in Business 2011" (excluding the US) includes 22 women from Asia (8 from China, 6 from India, 3 from Singapore, 2 each from Hong Kong SAR, China and Japan, and 1 from Taiwan)

2011 Rank	2010 Rank	Name	Company	Country/Economy
#5	#10	Chanda Kochhar	ICICI Bank	India
#8	#14	Sock Koong Chua	Singapore Telecom	Singapore
#11	#16	Ho Ching	Temasek	Singapore
#17	#21	Yafang Sun	Huawei Technologies	China
#19	#20	Deborah Henretta	Procter and Gamble	Singapore
#20	—	Cher Wang	HTC	Taiwan
#24	—	Zhang Xin	SOHO China	China
#25	#23	Umran Beba	PepsiCo	Hong Kong SAR, China
#26	#17	Mianmian Yang	Haier Group	China
#29	—	Fengying Wang	Great Wall Motor	China
#33	—	Shikha Sharma	Axis Bank	India
#34	—	Junko Nakagawa	Nomura Holdings, Inc	Japan
#35	#36	Neelam Dhawan	HP	India
#36	#37	Yoshiko Shinohara	Tempstaff	Japan
#37	#38	Shumin Yu	Hisense Group	China
#41	—	Naina Lal Kidwai	HSBC	India
#42	#46	Wei Sun	Morgan Stanley	China
#43	#45	Li Xiaolin	China Power Int'l	Hong Kong SAR, China
#45	—	Hera Siu	SAP	China
#46	#47	Jing Ulrich	JPMorgan Chase	China
#48	#48	Preetha Reddy	Apollo Hospitals Group	India
#49	—	Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw	Biocon	India

Source: "50 Most Powerful Women in Business – International 2011," Fortune, October 17, 2011, in <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/most-powerful-women/2011/global/> (accessed November 15, 2011).

**Table 18. Women on Boards (Catalyst)**

Country/ Economy	Score (percent)
New Zealand	9.3
Hong Kong SAR, China	8.9
Thailand	8.7
China	8.5
Australia	8.4
Singapore	6.9
Malaysia	6.3
Taiwan	6.1
India	5.3
Indonesia	4.5
South Korea	1.9
Japan	0.9

economic opportunities. Women's shorter time in employment also limits their professional experience and opportunities for promotion, thus stunting the chances for leadership.<sup>66</sup>

### Outcomes: Women's Leadership in Asia Today

In a recent report, *The Economist* notes that:

“[Women] have made great strides in all kinds of careers, but they still find it much harder than men to bag the most senior jobs... [Men] and women fresh out of college or university are being recruited in roughly equal numbers; half-way up the ladder a lot of the women have already dropped out; and

### Singapore's "Meritocracy"

A study of all Singapore Exchange-listed firms from 2008-2010, covering more than 730 companies and over 5,000 director positions, casts doubt on the proposition of a gender-blind meritocracy. More than 60 percent of SGX-listed firms had no women at all on their boards, while overall, women held only 6.9 percent of boardroom seats in 2010. Compared with six other Asia-Pacific countries/territories in the study (see Table 19), Singapore came in at second to last in boardroom gender diversity, with India in the lowest position. The study also identifies other patterns: Most female directors were young, i.e., under 40 years old, and retired earlier than men. Among directors aged 65 and above, only 1.5 percent were women. Little indicates a trend change any time soon, particularly when considering that 158 more board seats will have to be given to women for Singapore to achieve at least a 10 percent female representation in the boardroom.

Singapore does better in terms of higher representation of women among executive managers, especially corporate chief financial officers. Data from KPMG show that 28 percent of companies listed on the Singapore Exchange have female CFOs. Among Singaporean companies, female CFOs jump to an even higher percentage—44 percent.

Some question the idea of meritocracy and argue that it may actually impede women's advancement. Specifically, merit is often assessed subjectively by individuals with their own internal and often unconscious biases. In interview panels, men tend to present better and are more authoritative and directive; they may thus be regarded as superior not necessarily by how they will perform but by how well they present themselves.

**Table 19. Women on Boards (percent)**

Country/ Economy	Women on Boards (percent)
Australia	10.1
Hong Kong SAR, China	8.6
China	8.1
Malaysia	7.8
Singapore	6.9
India	4.7

Sources: Marleen Dieleman and Sherwin Lim, *Singapore Board Diversity Report: Gender Diversity in SGX-listed Companies*, Singapore: Centre for Governance, Institutions and Organizations, 2011; Ang Fung Fung and Mak Yuen Teen, "Bigger Representation in Business," *Business Times*, March 8, 2012, 13; and Deborah May, "Where East Meets West," *Today* (Singapore), December 17, 2010, 22.

at the top there are hardly any left...  
[The] most senior jobs remain almost  
exclusively male.<sup>67</sup> »

Despite the rising visibility of Asian women leaders, the conclusion that only a few females reach the top holds true in Asia, as elsewhere in the world. What are the high-lights of women's leadership in Asia today?

### Women's Leadership in the Private Sector

In its 2012 International Business Report (based on a survey of 12,000 business leaders in 40 economies), Grant Thornton notes that women globally hold only 21 percent of senior management positions, down from 24 percent in 2009 (See Table 17). The wealthy G7 countries lag behind the global average, with only 18 percent of women holding senior roles. Southeast Asia ranks highest, with

**Table 20. Categories of Women Entrepreneurs in Asian developing countries (by reasons/motivations for starting the business)**

Category	Main reason/motivation
Chance entrepreneurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To keep busy</li> <li>• Was hobby/special interest</li> <li>• Family/spouse had business</li> </ul>
Forced entrepreneurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial/needed the money</li> <li>• Control over time/flexibility</li> <li>• Challenge, try something on one's own</li> <li>• Show others I could do it</li> </ul>
Created or pulled entrepreneurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be independent</li> <li>• Self satisfaction</li> <li>• Example to children</li> <li>• Employment to others/do something worthwhile</li> </ul>

Source: Tulus Tambunan, "Women Entrepreneurship in Asian Developing Countries: Their Development and Main Constraints," *Journal of Development and Agricultural Economics* 1, No. 2 (May 2009):033.

### **SHARE –empowering women with microfinance**

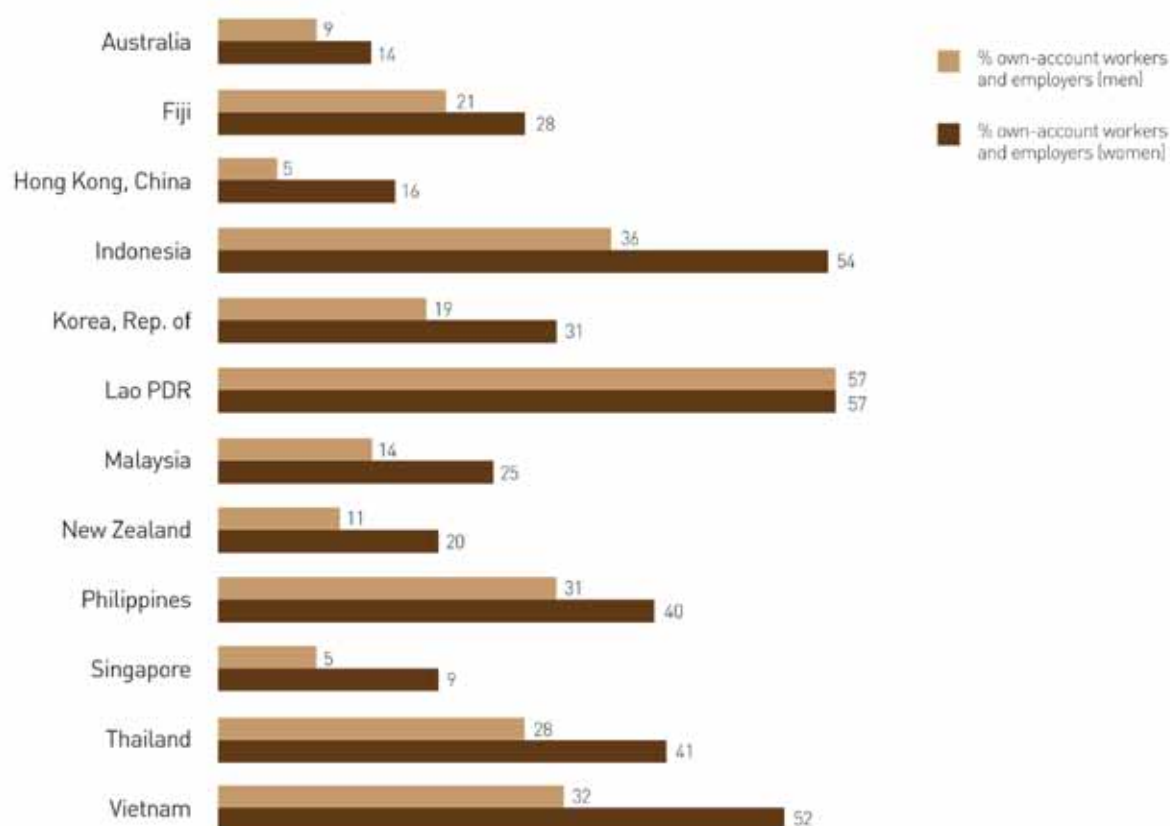
SHARE (Society for Helping, Awakening Rural Poor through Education) is a micro finance institution that operates mostly in the rural areas of Andhra Pradesh and in Chhattisgarh and Karnataka in India. Its mission is poverty reduction by providing financial and support services to the poor, particularly women, for viable and productive income-generation enterprises enabling them to use their skills and reduce their poverty.

SHARE provides loans to rural women whose income is less than US\$8 a month, far below the World Bank's poverty line of US\$30 a month. These loans range from US\$50 to US\$100, and are used to fund entrepreneurial projects. These could be small businesses such as a grocery, market stall, or internet kiosk. Some clients use the much-needed cash to purchase equipment for existing family enterprises. For example, one bought a bicycle for the purpose of transporting wheat to the market. The transport costs saved allowed her to 50 percent of the profits from the sale of the wheat.

SHARE loans money to eight-member women's groups belonging to the same community. This creates strong social pressure as all are aware that the other members would have to make up for any defaults. Perhaps because of the community factor, since 2004, SHARE has an impressive repayment rate on the more than US\$71 million it has disbursed in 3,000 villages of India. Seventy-seven percent of its 197, 000 clients have experienced a significant reduction in poverty over the past four years with 38 percent no longer being considered poor. As is often highlighted with the mention of microfinance, the women grow empowered, changing not only their financial status but also their mental attitudes.

Source: <http://mixmarket.org/mfi/share#ixzz1pjAYIb5r>

**Figure 6. Proportion of Men and Women Engaged in Entrepreneurship, Formal and Informal, Selected East Asian and Pacific Economies**



Source: International Labour Organisation Key Indicators of the Labour Market, latest available data, 1998–2008

32 percent female participation in senior management. Among individual rankings globally, Thailand and the Philippines rank second, with 39 percent women in senior management. Asia also performs better than the rest of the world in the number of companies with female chief executives. While the global average is 9 percent, Southeast Asia has 15 percent, with Thailand leading at 29 percent, followed by Vietnam (14 percent), and the Philippines (13 percent). Japan ranks last among 40 economies, with only 5 percent women in senior management, and India third from the bottom with 14 percent.<sup>68</sup>

A 2011 study of Women on Boards in 44 countries (conducted by Catalyst, a non-profit research and advocacy group) reports the highest percentages of female board representation in Norway (40.1 percent), Sweden (27.3 percent) and Finland (24.5 percent). Of 13 countries and economies covered in Asia, New Zealand (9.3 percent) and Hong Kong SAR, China (8.9 percent) lead, but these numbers are relatively low. South Korea and Japan, two of Asia's most economically developed countries, perform dismally, with 1.9 percent and 0.9 percent, respectively. India (5.3 percent) and Indonesia (4.5 percent) rank low as well, and could theoretically do better, given

their large populations and the implied pool of potentially qualified women (See Table 18).

A 2009 study of companies on the Hang Seng Index (HSI) in Hong Kong SAR, China showed 47 different women holding 52 of 585 directorships. This was comparable to Australia (8.3 percent), but lower than that of the UK (11.7 percent), U.S. (14.5 percent) and Canada (15 percent). Of 42 companies listed on the HSI, 28 (66.7 percent) had women on their boards, while 14 companies (33.3 percent) had none.<sup>70</sup> In India, among 100 companies on the Bombay Stock Exchange in 2010, 48 different women held 59 (5.3 percent) of a total of 1,112 directorships. Only 46 or less

than 50 percent of the companies had women on their boards, while 54 companies had no female representation at all.<sup>71</sup>

Worldwide, women directors cluster in specific sectors. The largest percentages of companies with at least three female directors are in media (19.8 percent), insurance (18.3 percent), banking (17 percent), and retail (16.7 percent). The lowest percentages are in automobiles and parts (3.8 percent), chemicals (3.8 percent), and industrial goods & services (3.9 percent).<sup>72</sup> Changes in policy and practice to promote more women in senior management are taking place, but slowly. In a 2010 Accenture survey of 524 senior executives from 20 countries (including Asia-Pacific), 57.8 percent of senior executives from Australia, China, India, Malaysia and Singapore indicated that they were preparing more women for senior management roles than in the last five years.<sup>73</sup> In Australia, as of 1st January 2011, revised Corporate Governance Principles and Recommendations require companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange to report specific information on gender diversity. This is hopeful given that women's representation in senior management positions in Australia and New Zealand has been practically stagnant since 2004.<sup>74</sup>

Entrepreneurship is another area where, theoretically, women could advance in leadership positions. However, systematic data on women's leadership in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are difficult to find. In China, women have made great strides in entrepreneurship, constituting 29 million or a quarter of the national total of China's entrepreneurs. Further, 7 of the 14 women in *Forbes'* 2010 list of the "The World's Richest Self-Made Women" are from China.<sup>75</sup>

Scholarly studies of SMEs and women's economic opportunity in Asia underline the following:

- SMEs are a critical sector of many Asian developing country economies, accounting for an average of more than 95 percent of companies and providing 90 percent of all livelihood, especially for women and youth.
- Women in Asia do not enjoy the same economic opportunities as men, including opportunities to take on entrepreneurial risk and become their own bosses.
- Most women entrepreneurs work in micro-enterprises (defined as fewer than five full-time employees) characterized by low barriers to entry and exit; low capital and skills requirements; and low technology needs.
- In Indonesia, 85 percent of women entrepreneurs own small-scale businesses and women decrease in number the larger the enterprises get; it is assumed that bigger and more complex enterprises in Asian developing countries operate predominantly under a "man culture."
- Most women go into entrepreneurship not because of "pull" factors but "push" factors, including poverty, unemployment, emergency needs, or precautionary motives in case the men are unable to provide for family needs (See Table 20).
- Positive developments for women include reform in property rights law that remove discriminatory provisions; simplified business entry procedures and e-government processes; and increasing opportunities for productive women entrepreneurs to scale their businesses above the micro and small sectors.
- The low representation of women entrepreneurs in Asian developing countries can be attributed (but not limited) to: low education and lack of training; heavy household duties that constrain the time women entrepreneurs can devote

to business; unequal laws or inadequate implementation of more gender-equal laws; cultural attitudes and discrimination against women as paid workers, business owners and asset holders; and lack of access to formal credit and other facilities.<sup>76</sup>

### Women's Leadership in the Public Sector

In the public sector, women's political participation precedes leadership. Women have had a long history of voting in Asia-Pacific, with New Zealand granting women voting rights as early as 1893 (after Maori men in 1867, and European men in 1879). Australia followed in 1902, with most other Asia-Pacific countries introducing universal suffrage by the 1950s. Bangladesh is a latecomer, but only because it did not become independent until 1972. Although Asian women have consolidated enormous voting power in many countries, they hold only a fraction of appointive or elective offices.<sup>77</sup> Large variation may also exist in women's representation at different levels of political leadership. In China, for example, at the national level, only 13 of the 204 elected members of the Chinese Communist Party's central committee are women. Moreover, the percentage of female central committee members shrank from 11.4 percent in 1977 to 7.6 percent in 2002. However, at the provincial level, female official representation is more than 80 percent.<sup>78</sup>

Tables 21–24 and Figure 7 capture snapshots of women's political participation and empowerment in the world, in general, and in the Asia-Pacific region, in particular. "Political Empowerment" from the *GGG Report 2011* refers to "the gap between men and women in political decision-making at the highest levels." Three ratios underpin "political empowerment": 1) ratio of women

to men in ministerial-level positions; 2) ratio of women to men in parliamentary positions; and 3) ratio of women to men in terms of years in the executive office (president or prime minister) in the past 50 years.<sup>79</sup>

#### Women Heads of State

The Asia-Pacific region has had more women at the peak of political power than any other region, beginning with the world's first female head of state, Sirimavo Bandaranaike (Sri Lanka), in 1960. Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Sri Lanka and the Philippines have all had female political chiefs, in some cases more than once. This has been remarkable, given Asia's long association with patriarchy and women's subordination. The rise of women to the apex of political power, however, has little to do with gender equality in political participation. Rather, women's rise to power has been "historically more distinctive than leadership routes for men."<sup>80</sup> In particular, in Asia, family or dynastic connections appear to be the strongest factor for women's rise to the top. In many cases, women inherited the political mantle from fathers, husbands or other male relatives who were imprisoned, killed or martyred.<sup>81</sup> Asia thus features the paradox of women rising to the heights of power in staunchly patriarchal and paternalistic societies with less empowerment of the general female population. Asia has the world's highest number of female heads of state while also having a low percentage of females in its parliaments.

#### Women in Parliament

Globally, the percentage of women in legislatures has increased to 19.5 percent. In Asia-Pacific, New Zealand and Nepal lead, followed by Australia. The laggards are Sri Lanka, Mongolia, and Myanmar.<sup>82</sup> Asian countries that have adopted constitutional and/or

**Table 21. Political Empowerment**

Country	Score	Rank
Sri Lanka	0.4126	7
New Zealand	0.3797	8
Bangladesh	0.3591	11
Philippines	0.3314	16
India	0.3119	19
Australia	0.1861	38
Nepal	0.1745	43
Pakistan	0.1547	54
China	0.1496	57
Indonesia	0.1400	61
Vietnam	0.1107	76
Cambodia	0.1093	78
Singapore	0.1014	83
Korea, Rep.	0.0972	90
Thailand	0.0828	97
Japan	0.0724	101
Malaysia	0.0517	115
Maldives	0.0392	119
Fiji	0.0358	123
Mongolia	0.0318	125
Iran, Islamic Rep.	0.0166	130
Brunei Darussalam	0.0000	132

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*



Table 22. Years with Female Head of State

Country	Female	Male	Female-male Ratio	Rank
Sri Lanka	23	27	0.85	1
India	18	32	0.56	4
Bangladesh	18	32	0.54	5
Philippines	16	34	0.46	6
New Zealand	11	39	0.28	9
Pakistan	5	45	0.10	20
China	4	46	0.08	22
Indonesia	3	47	0.07	24
Australia	1	49	0.02	37
Korea, Rep.	1	49	0.02	40
Mongolia	0	50	0.00	51
Brunei Darussalam	0	50	0.00	52
Cambodia	0	50	0.00	52
Fiji	0	50	0.00	52
Iran, Islamic Rep.	0	50	0.00	52
Japan	0	50	0.00	52
Malaysia	0	50	0.00	52
Maldives	0	50	0.00	52
Nepal	0	50	0.00	52
Singapore	0	50	0.00	52
Thailand	0	50	0.00	52
Vietnam	0	50	0.00	52

Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2011

**Table 23. Women in Parliament**

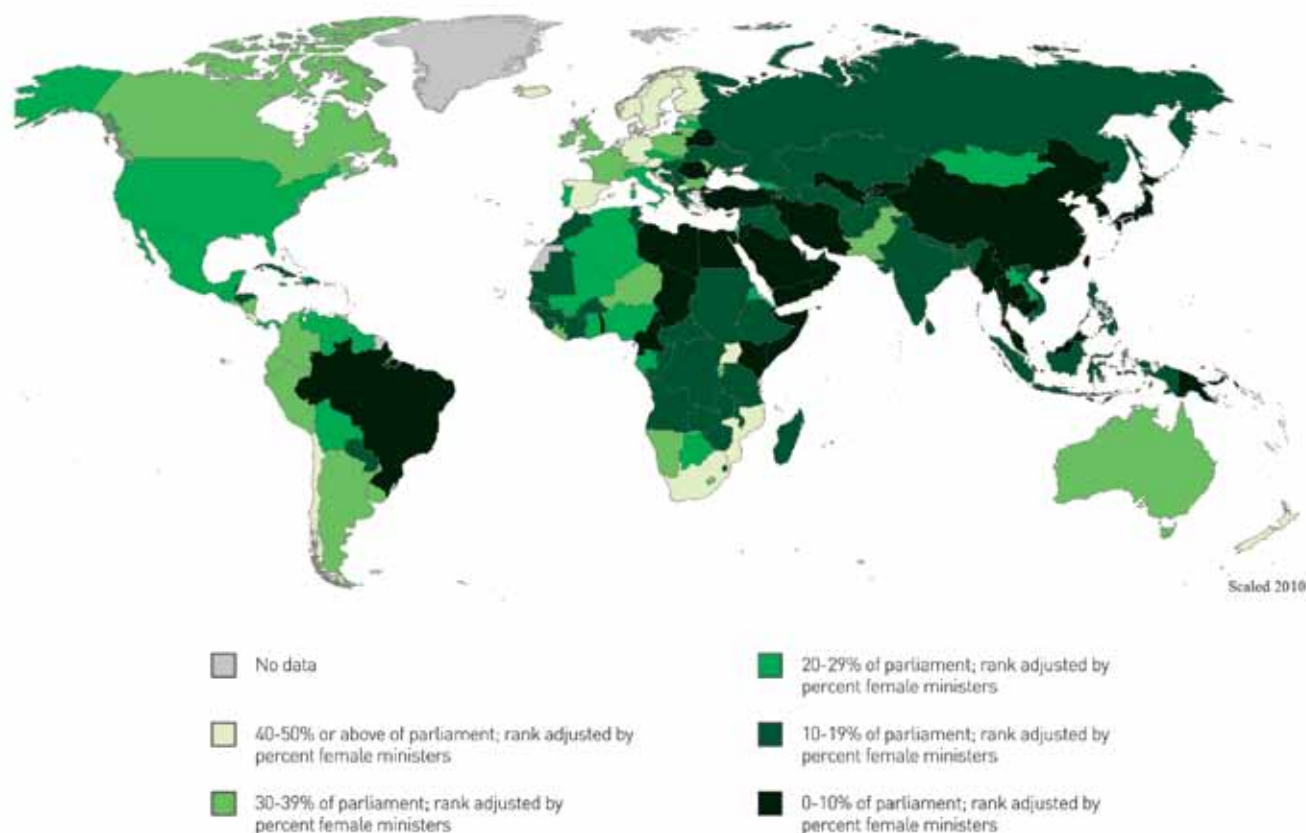
Country	Female	Male	Female-male Ratio	Rank
New Zealand	34	66	0.51	17
Nepal	33	67	0.50	18
Australia	25	75	0.33	32
Vietnam	24	76	0.32	34
Singapore	22	78	0.29	41
Pakistan	22	78	0.29	41
Philippines	22	78	0.28	43
China	21	79	0.27	48
Cambodia	21	79	0.27	50
Bangladesh	19	81	0.23	66
Indonesia	18	82	0.22	67
Korea, Rep.	15	85	0.17	79
Thailand	13	87	0.15	87
Japan	11	89	0.13	97
India	11	89	0.12	98
Malaysia	10	90	0.11	104
Maldives	7	94	0.07	120
Sri Lanka	6	94	0.06	122
Mongolia	4	96	0.04	123
Iran, Islamic Rep.	3	97	0.03	126
Brunei Darussalam	—	—	—	—
Fiji	—	—	—	—

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*

**Table 24. Women in Ministerial Positions**

Country	Female	Male	Female-male Ratio	Rank
New Zealand	29	71	0.40	26
Australia	23	77	0.30	41
Bangladesh	16	84	0.19	65
Indonesia	14	86	0.17	69
Philippines	14	86	0.16	71
Korea, Rep.	13	88	0.14	75
Thailand	13	88	0.14	75
Japan	12	88	0.13	79
China	12	88	0.12	82
India	10	90	0.11	87
Cambodia	10	90	0.11	90
Fiji	9	91	0.10	95
Nepal	8	92	0.08	99
Pakistan	8	93	0.08	101
Mongolia	7	93	0.08	103
Malaysia	7	93	0.07	108
Maldives	7	93	0.07	108
Sri Lanka	6	94	0.06	115
Singapore	5	95	0.05	121
Vietnam	4	96	0.04	124
Iran, Islamic Rep.	3	97	0.03	127
Brunei Darussalam	0	100	0.00	129

Source: *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*

**Figure 7. Governmental Participation by Women**

Source: <http://womanstats.org/mapEntrez.htm>

election law quota regulation for their national parliament include Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines. While these countries perform respectably in female representation in parliament, they are not among the top-ranked in closing the gender gap for women in parliament.

#### Women at the Ministerial Level

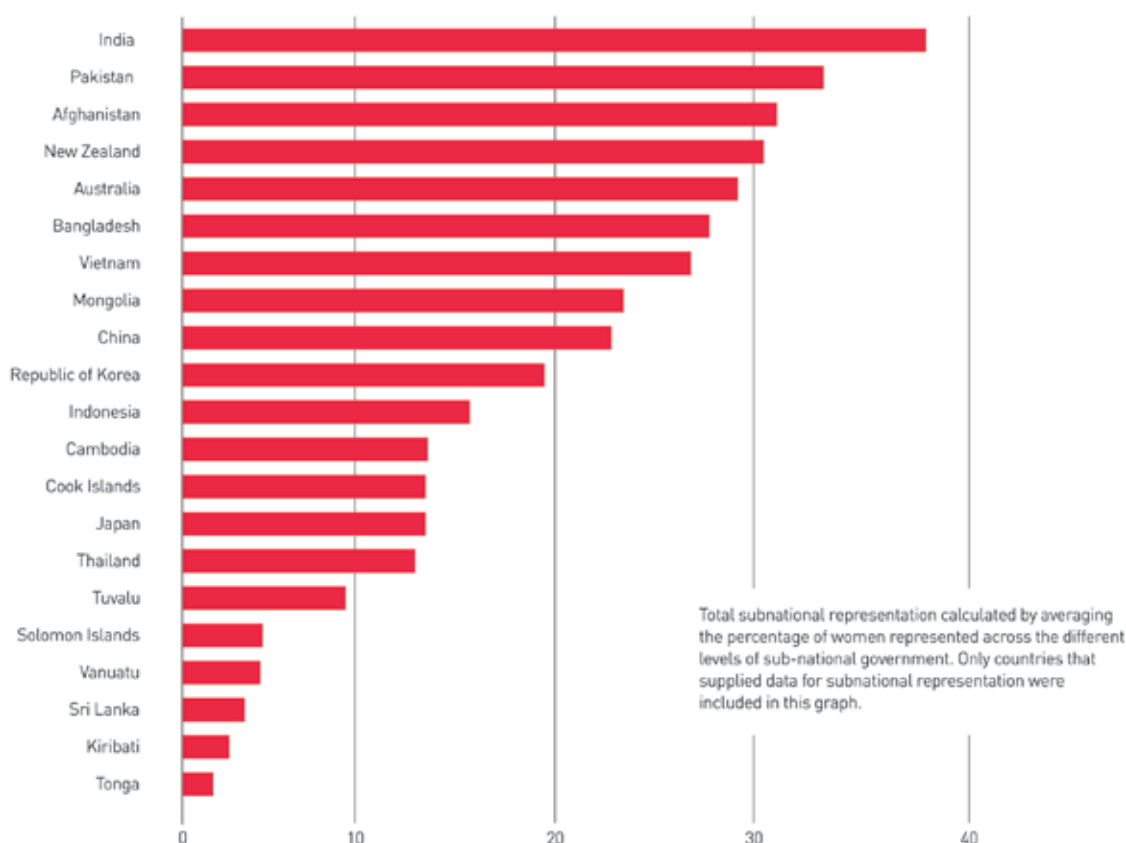
The Asia-Pacific region features few female ministers, with New Zealand ranked 26 of 135 countries covered in the *GGG Report 2011*. Australia (ranked 41) and Bangladesh (65) follow, while countries at the bottom include Sri Lanka, Singapore, Vietnam and Brunei Darussalam.

#### Women in Subnational Governments in Asia-Pacific

Women presidents, ministers, and parliamentarians often draw the most attention, but female leaders at the subnational level are also important. For many citizens, these leaders are their only point of contact with government. Subnational leaders also tend to have responsibility for basic services that have a direct impact on people's lives (e.g., water and health services). Government policy, specifically, affirmative action, has significantly augmented women's leadership below the national level. In India, for example, a 1994 constitutional amendment reserved one-third of the seats in

village-level government bodies for women. Because of such policies, South Asian countries including India (1<sup>st</sup>), Pakistan (2<sup>nd</sup>), and Bangladesh (6<sup>th</sup>), rank among the highest in women's average representation in subnational leadership. This is a positive development, but one that has not yet translated into a more consolidated political power base for women in general in South Asia.

Comprehensive data on women's leadership in subnational governments are not readily available. But in 2010, UNDP published the first status report on women's representation in local governments in the Asia-Pacific region, covering rural, urban, district, and provincial or regional councils.

**Figure 8. Total Subnational Women's Representation (percent)**

Source: UNDP, *Women's Representation in Local Government in Asia-Pacific. Status Report 2010*, p. 8.

### **Women's Leadership in the NGO and Non-Profit Sector**

Women's leadership in the non-profit sector in Asia has not been systematically tracked. However, women have traditionally been more active than men in the NGO and non-profit sector. In Asia, women leaders have engaged in decades of charity work, social activism, research, and advocacy. They have addressed issues including livelihoods for women, health, education, environmental degradation, conflict resolution, human trafficking, domestic violence, water and sanitation, and others that affect women and children disproportionately. Women leaders

in the non-profit sector have also leveraged international networks, funding, and platforms (including UN-sponsored conferences, World Bank initiatives, and others) to change policy as well as societal values and mindsets. Women in Asia, like their counterparts in the West, are likely to have used the non-profit route as an alternative pathway to leadership (outside of the traditionally male-dominated government and corporate sectors).<sup>83</sup>

### **Women's Leadership in Conflict Resolution**

The majority of casualties in modern wars are women and children. Indeed, women are

disproportionately affected by conflict, and a small but growing body of research highlights women's pivotal agency in conflict resolution and peace-building.<sup>84</sup> Yet women are starkly under-represented in peace negotiations. Only 2 percent of signatories to 21 major peace agreements between 1992 and 2009 were women, and no women have been appointed chief or lead peace mediators in UN-sponsored peace talks.<sup>85</sup> In Asia, a high number of violent conflicts exist. Women may not lead in the traditional sense in peace negotiations, but they do *exercise* leadership in unconventional but effective ways to advance peace. This includes, for example,

***“Sex Strike” for Peace—women doing leadership  
without formal authority***

In the southern Philippines, women from the rural village of Dado in the province of Maguindanao staged a “sex strike” in July 2011 to bring peace and a little bit of prosperity to the 102 families in their village. The southern Philippines has been the scene of violent conflict for many decades. In addition to an insurgency against the government by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the area is also witness to many clan and family conflicts over land, money and political power. In Dado, the women had formed a sewing business to help support their families, but could not bring their products to market because sporadic shooting and other threats of violence made the village road impassable. The head of the women, Hasna Kandatu, said she and her colleagues warned their husbands that they would be cut off from sex if they continued to cause trouble. Her husband recalls being told, “If you do bad things, you will be cut off, here,” indicating the area below his waist.

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Source: “Maguindanao Women Stage ‘Sex Strike’ for Peace,” *Philippine Star*, September 17, 2011, 8.

the greatest barriers to women’s progress in organizations” throughout Asia.<sup>87</sup>

Confucian cultural values and norms are linked to societal lack of support and even disapproval of women’s leadership. In Vietnam, after the war, for example, women began moving into leadership roles in their villages but faced resistance by men. Underlining traditional gender discrimination, women were accepted as workers, but not as people who governed.<sup>88</sup> In Japan, too, women executives who broke the traditional mold of women as quiet followers, consumers, and service providers, have suffered vicious public insult. In the words of Japanese filmmaker, Juzo Itami, “For a woman [in Japan] to achieve real power, she has one of two choices. She can renounce men forever and launch herself on the rough road to corporate success, which means universal unpopularity for the rest of her life. Or she can become geisha and get some powerful men to support her along the way.”<sup>89</sup> Despite significant advances in

women’s health and education (half of Japan’s university graduates are women), Japan lags in women’s leadership. Government statistics show that, in the private sector, only 6.2 percent of women hold positions as section managers or higher. And, in the central government, women hold only 2.2 percent of director-level positions and above.<sup>90</sup>

In Malaysia and Indonesia, social pressures related to Islamic guidelines may also take their toll on women’s ability to climb up the rungs of professional success. A study of female managers in Malaysia notes, for example, that restricted mixing between the sexes prevent women from tapping into powerful male networks and mentoring opportunities. Malaysian female managers report social pressure as the second most common career barrier (in contrast, male managers did not mention social pressure as a barrier

women using traditional law to resolve conflict in parts of Indonesia; “Mothers for Peace” using the emotive power of motherhood to advocate for peace in the Philippines; women’s use of “kitchen politics” or meals in private homes in Nagaland, India to facilitate dialogue between armed groups; and threatening a sex boycott to stop men from fighting in the southern Philippines.<sup>86</sup>

**Revisiting Culture, Tradition and  
Social Norms**

Culture, tradition, and social norms can be slippery concepts. But when the World Economic Forum polled women from 600 companies in 20 BRIC and OECD countries, the respondents cited their “country’s general norms and cultural practices” as one of the top three barriers to women’s rise to leadership. In Asia, scholars have examined

such cultural factors as the dominance of the Confucian tradition in China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Vietnam, and the economies of Hong Kong SAR, China and Taiwan. Research on women in management highlights Confucian-informed patriarchal hierarchy as an impediment to women’s leadership at the work place. Embedded normative beliefs about male dominance and female subordination influence gender role stereotyping, negative social attitudes towards rising female managers, unfriendly work environments, relegation of wives’ careers to second class status (as opposed to their husbands), and lower earnings for women. In China, gender equality embedded in communist ideology has mitigated the impact of Confucian patriarchy. Notwithstanding changes in politics and legislation, “deeply entrenched cultural values and traditions appear to pose



**Figure 9. Social Institutions & Gender Index: South Asia**

Country	Score	Family Code	Civil Liberties	Physical Integrity	Son Preference	Ownership Rights
Sri Lanka	0.05914	46th 0.23	98th 0.30	15th 0.17	1st 0.00	66th 0.35
Bhutan	0.16251	43rd 0.21	84th 0.30	54th 0.35	118th 0.75	1st 0.00
Nepal	0.16723	62nd 0.37	84th 0.30	48th 0.30	101st 0.50	79th 0.52
Bangladesh	0.24465	95th 0.58	103rd 0.60	47th 0.28	118th 0.75	79th 0.52
Pakistan	0.28324	64th 0.38	103rd 0.60	47th 0.28	118th 0.75	79th 0.52
India	0.31811	100th 0.61	103rd 0.60	15th 0.17	118th 0.75	79th 0.52
Afghanistan	0.5823	110th 0.72	121st 0.81	91st 0.52	122nd 1.00	109th 0.68

Source: OECD, My SIGI: Region—South Asia, in <http://my.genderindex.org/ranking/> (accessed April 3, 2012).  
(0=low/no discrimination; 1=high discrimination)

**Figure 10. Social Institutions & Gender Index: East Asia and Pacific**

Country/Economy	Score	Family Code	Civil Liberties	Physical Integrity	Son Preference	Ownership Rights
Philippines	0.00788	8th 0.04	1st 0.00	3rd 0.09	1st 0.00	53rd 0.17
Thailand	0.01068	41st 0.16	1st 0.00	15th 0.17	1st 0.00	1st 0.00
Hong Kong SAR, China	0.01465	26th 0.10	1st 0.00	1st 0.00	89th 0.25	1st 0.00
Singapore	0.01526	25th 0.10	1st 0.00	34th 0.26	1st 0.00	1st 0.00
Cambodia	0.02202	38th 0.14	1st 0.00	48th 0.30	1st 0.00	1st 0.00
Viet Nam	0.03006	6th 0.03	1st 0.00	60th 0.39	1st 0.00	1st 0.00
Lao PDR	0.03577	51st 0.32	1st 0.00	23rd 0.22	1st 0.00	43rd 0.17
Mongolia	0.03912	30th 0.12	1st 0.00	48th 0.30	89th 0.25	43rd 0.17
Myanmar	0.04629	35th 0.14	1st 0.00	60th 0.39	89th 0.25	1st 0.00
Fiji	0.0545	8th 0.04	1st 0.00	60th 0.39	1st 0.00	66th 0.35
Indonesia	0.12776	59th 0.35	103rd 0.60	79th 0.39	1st 0.00	1st 0.00
Papua New Guinea	0.20936	50th 0.28	1st 0.00	60th 0.39	118th 0.75	78th 0.51
China	0.21786	1st 0.00	1st 0.00	48th 0.30	122nd 1.00	1st 0.00

Source: OECD, My SIGI: Region—East Asia and Pacific, in <http://my.genderindex.org/ranking/> (accessed April 3, 2012).  
(0=low/no discrimination; 1=high discrimination)

### Chinese Entrepreneurs and Billionaires

In China, the heritage of Mao Zedong's "women hold up half the sky"—a view of women as a resource that ought to be deployed outside the home—fueled the rise of many women in professional fields. As a result, Chinese women, who make up 49 percent of the population and 46 percent of the labor force, have achieved a higher proportion in the top layers of management than women in many Western countries. In East Asia, China leads in terms of women in senior management. During China's economic reform period, communist values met the capitalist market system and a flexible business environment became the norm. In this context, Chinese businesswomen started to thrive. 29 million (a quarter of the national total) of China's entrepreneurs are female. Five of the *Financial Times*' "Top 50 Women in the World of Business 2011" are Chinese. Half of the 14 billionaires on Forbes magazine's 2011 list of the world's richest self-made women are from mainland China (one UK-based, and one in Hong Kong SAR, China). Many of them are property magnates; the others focus on retail and consumer goods. The pathway for female entrepreneurs tends to lead from excellent universities to high posts at large, state-owned enterprises, allowing women to build up business acumen, managerial skills, and networks that later enable them to raise capital for their new enterprises.

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Sources: "The Sky's the Limit," *The Economist*, November 26, 2011; Financial Times, *The Top 50 Women in World Business 2011*, 30.; and "World's Richest Self-Made Women Billionaires 2011," *Forbes*, March 3, 2011, in <http://www.therichest.org/world/forbes-richest-self-made-women-billionaires/> (accessed November 15, 2011).

at all). Social pressure in the work place arises because women are single, married late, are divorced, don't have children, and hold a man's job. In other words, they are not conforming to traditional notions of womanhood. Women managers also report that their jobs are treated as secondary to their husbands' careers, and they fear that their husbands would follow the social norm that values successful men but punishes successful women.<sup>91</sup>

In Thailand, social attitudes also hinder women's advancement. This is, in part, rooted in Buddhist cultural norms that endow men with higher status and greater authority than women. Women are often compared to the "hind legs" of an elephant, while the men are the "front legs." In other words, men lead and women follow. This results in widespread gender stereotyping, and little support for, and even stigmatization of, women who do end up in top management positions. More

damaging, women themselves internalize cultural norms and may develop low ambition, low assertiveness, and low self-confidence—thus forfeiting their chances for leadership.<sup>92</sup>

In Asia, tradition and social norms dictate that women be the primary caretakers and caregivers at home, meeting the needs of husbands, children, elderly parents and in-laws. Despite the abundance of affordable domestic help and the availability of assistance from relatives, women continue to feel tremendous family pressure. In 2011, the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy did two informal surveys on two separate occasions, involving approximately 50 women leaders from throughout Asia. When asked to pick the three greatest challenges to women's rise to leadership in Asia, "Constraints of Family Life (Husband, Children, and Parents)" was by far the respondents' top pick, followed by "Organizational Policies and Practices Favoring Men Over Women." "Cultural

Barriers" came in third in one survey, and fourth in the other.<sup>93</sup> While these were informal polls, it was telling that a majority of women leaders from diverse professional backgrounds felt similarly challenged by their family duties. Thus, even while women's qualifications, income, and independence are dramatically improving, their status and roles at home remain entrenched. Japan presents a powerful illustration: although women are well-educated and many have careers, statistics show that, at home, Japanese working women work an average of 30 hours a week compared to only three for their husbands.<sup>94</sup>

An important index that may be used as a proxy for culture, tradition, and social norms is the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), which covers 102 non-OECD countries. Instead of measuring gender equality by showing inequality in outcomes (e.g., in educational attainment, health, or economic and political participation), SIGI measures the

inputs that lead to gender unequal outcomes. Social institutions are defined as “long-lasting codes of conduct, norms, traditions, and informal and formal laws that impact on gender equality.” The variables captured include family code, son preference, physical integrity (i.e., violence against girls and women), ownership rights and civil liberties. For Asia-Pacific, South Asian countries show the highest discrimination against women, while East Asia and the Pacific show mixed results (See Figures 9 and 10).<sup>95</sup> □







# CONCLUSIONS, POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS, AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

## Conclusions

In its *World Development Report 2012*, focused on “Gender Equality and Development,” the World Bank recognizes that the equal rights of women and men are an independent, priority value in development and not just an instrument for economic growth and efficiency. In its report, the World Bank highlights women’s progress in education, life expectancy and labor force participation. At the same time, it notes continuing problems: the excess death of girls and women in low- and middle-income countries (estimated at

3.9 million girls under the age of 60 per year); disparities in girls’ schooling; unequal access to economic opportunities; and unequal voice and control in households and in society.<sup>96</sup>

The continuing problems highlighted by the *World Development Report 2012* are also echoed in this present report. The norm of son preference, for example, still prevails in parts of Asia; although the number of “missing girls” has declined overall in Asia between 1990 and 2008, in China and India alone, the World Bank estimates that more than 1.3 million girls are not born every year due to overt

discrimination and the availability of ultrasound technologies that allow households to determine the sex of the fetus before birth.<sup>97</sup>

Thus, from the very start, girls in Asia face significant obstacles to fulfilling their human potential, in general, and their potential for leadership, in particular.

The data presented in this report highlight a few generalizations about women’s leadership in Asia at this juncture:

- Asia’s rising prosperity has narrowed the gender gap in many countries and bodes positively for the future rise of

## Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Nepal—*integrating gender sensitivity to the budgeting process*

To enhance aid effectiveness, countries and international organizations have advocated or adopted Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB). GRB aims to: 1) hold governments accountable for their commitments to gender equality and women’s rights, and 2) ensure regular monitoring of progress in mainstreaming gender into development programs (as captured in the annual budgeting process). Under the leadership of the Ministry of Finance, Nepal introduced GRB into its budgeting process in 2007/2008. The Ministry organized a GRB Committee, whose membership includes representatives from the National Planning Commission, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Ministry of Local Development and United Nations Development Fund for Women. The committee’s mandate includes designing a methodology for monitoring budget allocations and expenditures from a gender perspective; assessing the impact of development policies on women and men; and providing sectoral ministries with policy guidelines for implementing GRB.

The Finance Ministry analyzes budget allocations using five equally-weighted indicators:

1. Women’s capacity development;
2. Women’s participation in program formulation and implementation;
3. Benefit incidence of public expenditures on women;
4. Support to women’s employment and income generation; and
5. Positive impact on women’s time use and care work.

Although GRB implementation in Nepal has many challenges to overcome, the institutionalization of GRB is helpful towards enhancing gender sensitivity in policy-making and promoting more deliberate and targeted programs that address gender inequalities. The GRB initiative can strengthen Nepalese women’s welfare and access to leadership opportunities as GRB conceptualization is further refined, practical capacities for implementation are augmented, execution and monitoring are conducted more systematically, and policy attention shifts more from inputs to results. GRB coverage also needs to expand to larger economic policies such as taxation and privatization, and to sectors such as law, home and police, and communications.



women leaders. Progress can be measured in the areas of women's health and survival, educational attainment, economic opportunity, and political empowerment. This implies that the women of Asia can leverage rising personal endowments as well as increasing structural opportunities for future leadership. Family and dynastic factors have also catapulted some women in Asia to the highest levels of political leadership. This gives greater visibility to female leadership role models, even if it does not necessarily change the overall structure of gender inequality. Further, Asia's economic rise has pushed Asian women into the ranks of the world's most rich and powerful, creating an impetus for changing perceptions in the region of women as being subordinate to, and/or less competent than, men.

- Despite women's overall gains in Asia, there is significant variation among individual countries in terms of progress in closing the gender gap. Among Asia-Pacific countries ranked in the *Global Gender Gap Report*,<sup>98</sup> the top five performers are New Zealand, the Philippines, Australia, Sri Lanka, and Mongolia. Pakistan ranks lowest, followed by Nepal, India, Republic of Korea, and Cambodia. The data for actual indicators of women's leadership in Asia are limited and do not consistently cover the same set of countries. With these limitations in mind, data on leadership in the private and public sectors show the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand consistently among the top three. When singling out economic and corporate parameters such as women in senior management, female advancement, remuneration, and wage equality, these three top performers are joined by Singapore, Mongolia, Thailand, and Malaysia.

- On the political front, the countries of

South Asia, which perform worst in overall gender equality and women's attainment, actually lead among the top five countries in political empowerment (Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India); the number of women in parliament (Nepal, Pakistan); the number of women ministers (Bangladesh); and the number of women leaders in sub-national government (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh). This contradictory picture is partly due to the region having the most number of women who have become heads of state because of family and dynastic connections (and *not* because of greater gender equality). Moreover, affirmative action has definitely increased women's representation at different levels of government. For women in South Asia, ongoing challenges include sustaining political leadership gains, and translating these into genuine benefits for greater numbers of women; and engaging more support to fight new discrimination and persecution that sometimes arise in response to affirmative action.<sup>99</sup>

- Development in general correlates positively with gender equality. Development is thus beneficial to women's leadership, but the relationship between human development and women's leadership is not directly proportional. Some economies in Asia with the highest human development rankings (e.g., Japan and South Korea) also perform most dismally in some measures of women's leadership (e.g., women in senior management, women on boards, wage equality, remuneration and political empowerment). Others, such as Singapore and Hong Kong SAR, China, continue to have significant gender leadership gaps despite their high human development. A key contention is that culture and social norms remain intractable obstacles for women's leadership in these and other Asian economies.<sup>100</sup>

## Policy Recommendations

Policy has its limits, particularly where the human and institutional resources for implementation are inadequate. However, efforts to change practice must continue. Several policy recommendations arise from this report:

- Governments in Asia (many of which have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW]) should commit more deliberately and explicitly to advancing women's leadership in the next decade. Women now make up 40 percent of the global labor force, 43 percent of the world's agricultural labor force, and more than half of the world's university students. Governments need to act more systematically to develop and harness this human capital for sustainable development and greater human welfare. One concrete step that more governments in Asia can implement toward this end is Gender-Responsive Budgeting, which integrates a gender perspective in planning, drafting, implementing and evaluating government spending. This helps ensure that public resources are not used directly or indirectly to discriminate against women or men.
- The highly developed (but also highly male-dominated) economies of Japan and the Republic of Korea must do more to enhance women's representation in employment and leadership. For Japan, a widely-cited Goldman Sachs study argues that deploying women's talent (through employment) could increase Japan's labor force by 8.2 million and its GDP by 15 percent. For South Korea, a Harvard Business School study highlights the advantages that accrue to foreign firms willing to hire talented Korean women managers who may be locally overlooked due to traditional discrimination. The finding was that a 10

percent nominal increase in the percentage of female managers correlated with a 1 percent nominal increase in profitability, after controlling for other factors.<sup>101</sup>

- More countries and territories in Asia should consider affirmative action measures over a specified number of years as the fastest way to increase women's leadership representation in the public and private sectors. Among the 46 nations in the world with political quota systems, for example, women comprise 21.9 percent of elected offices; in contrast, those without quota systems have only 15.3 percent. Evidence shows that affirmative action in general can be done without adverse effects on efficiency.<sup>102</sup> Potential leaders in this area might include Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong SAR (China) and other Asian economies.
- In Asia, public and private sector institutions must take concrete measures to address the "leaking pipeline" by more systematically supporting and facilitating women's choice to persevere in their professional lives without giving up their roles as mothers and caregivers. With the right support, more women in Asia would be able to better manage the pressures of home and career, and make the transition from middle to senior levels of responsibility. Support for working women can include systematic mentoring, maternity and paternity leaves, better childcare and elder care, and more gender-equal retirement and pension schemes. Research shows that in countries where it is relatively easy for women to work *and* have children, female employment and fertility both tend to be higher.<sup>103</sup>
- As Asia rises in affluence, pioneering women leaders in the corporate sector should take the initiative to develop and apply a "pay it forward" ethos in their

respective countries, territories or regions. This means that a few women leaders must take on the challenge of creating and put into operation networks to mentor the next generation of female leaders. In Asia, family networks tend to be paramount in cultivating the next generation of leaders, but it is crucial that Asian elites go beyond kinship and invest more broadly in developing female talent and nurturing future leaders (See highlight on W.O.M.E.N. in America).

- Women feature heavily in two spheres of economic activity in Asia: agriculture and entrepreneurship. In both spheres, women's work tends to be particularly low in productivity and scale. Women are also often pushed into these sectors because of poverty, unemployment, and emergency needs. These sectors, however, represent an opportunity to nurture female leadership, especially at local levels. In both agriculture and entrepreneurship, women's productivity and leadership may be improved through policies that provide women greater access to capital, skills training (e.g., in budgeting and financial planning), technology, and networks. Governments, corporations, banks and NGOs can all play a role in this area.
- To address cultural and social norms that impede women's leadership, a broad campaign is needed to educate people and push for change in the *valuation and perception* of girls and women. This is a complex and slow process that will require long-term commitment and resources so that three shifts can happen: 1) societies will perceive girls to be as valuable as boys; 2) societies will view women as having roughly similar abilities and potential to lead as men; and 3) societies will be more open to gender roles that involve women leading outside the home and men doing more in the home.

These shifts will definitely give women more equal voice and agency in the home and in society at large, and facilitate their role as leaders.

- There are no easy answers or quick steps to changing social norms. Education for men, women and youth is part of the equation. Affirmative action programs are also part of the answer, but change will take time. For example, in India, despite the fact that women village council leaders delivered improved public services, their constituents expressed less satisfaction and a lack of appreciation. However, over time, exposure to female leaders reduces bias and boosts the aspirations and educational achievement of young women.<sup>104</sup> Besides affirmative action, governments, particularly China and India, can increase media campaigns and other steps to end sex selection against baby girls. More laws (and better implementation) are also needed to reduce domestic violence against women and to enhance women's bargaining power through greater property ownership, access to legal and other support services, and ability to leave marriage. In Pakistan and Indonesia, encouraging examples show how partnerships among government, police, women's groups, paralegals and NGOs add up to strengthen women's voice and agency, and thus their potential to contribute more fully to society.

### Further Research

Moving forward, a few themes for further research include:

- Why are women politicians in Asia unable to do more to promote women's rights and empowerment?<sup>105</sup> Is this true of leaders from dynastic backgrounds as well as those who worked their way harder and longer to the top? What can be learned

**W.O.M.E.N. IN AMERICA, INC. (W.omen O.ptimizing M.entoring E.ducation and  
N.etworking)—*learning from outside Asia on the power of networks and mentoring***

The W.O.M.E.N. in America Leadership Program was conceived by a core group of 11 Senior Executive female leaders from various organizations who met at the 2008 FORTUNE Most Powerful Women's Summit in San Diego, California. These women share a passion for helping professional [American] business women, early in their career lifecycle to advance through unique mentorship, education, and networking opportunities.

The objective of W.O.M.E.N. in America is to position women early in their careers for future success by providing an exclusive three-year experience that builds targeted leadership skills, creates a valuable support network to be leveraged over time, and leaves mentees feeling inspired to “Pay It Forward”—i.e., help develop the new generation of professional women leaders.

W.O.M.E.N. in America targets aspiring, high potential women with:

- Four to seven years of post graduate business work experience;
- Demonstrated leadership potential to “breakthrough” to a high influence, executive leadership position;
- Diverse personal backgrounds and professional experiences;
- Clear career direction and aspirations;
- Careers in industries/functions in which significant barriers to success have historically existed;
- Highest integrity; and
- Desire to learn and “Pay It Forward”

The mentoring program contains three clusters, pairing mentors and mentees in the same industries:

- Professional & Corporate Services (e.g., Finance, Banking, Law, Consulting);
- Business Entrepreneurs and Marketing (e.g., Marketing, Small Business Owners); and
- S.T.E.M. (e.g., Science, Technology, Engineering and Math industries)

Mentees have access to an exclusive network of high profile and successful female executive leaders who provide practical and authentic leadership advice that addresses mentees’ specific needs. The Program has three phases:

**Phase 1 - Mentoring & Development (Years 1 and 2)**

Mentees engage in active Cluster participation, education, and mentoring. They attend Cluster gatherings (generally every six to eight weeks), Subject Matter Expert led Tri-Cluster events (includes all mentees and mentors as well as special guests providing unique experiences and learnings), and other events addressing leadership development needs and current challenges.

**Phase 2 – “Paying It Forward” and Transition to Alumnae Network (Year 3)**

Mentees are required to “Pay It Forward,” and are invited at the end of the year to present updates on their “Pay It Forward” initiatives to the Board or at a Tri- Cluster meeting. Mentees play a special role in the orientation of the subsequent class of new mentees, acting as informal mentors to the newest members and being available to answer questions and expand their network. Upon successful completion of their “Pay It Forward” year, Mentees will be formally inducted into the W.O.M.E.N. in America Alumnae Network.

**Phase 3 – W.O.M.E.N. in America Alumnae**

All graduates remain in the Alumnae Network and independently continue to “Pay It Forward” in their professional lives. Through the Alumnae Network, graduates will take advantage of the natural networking that has formed with fellow Alumnae and the Mentors they have met through the program.

about, and from, female political leaders who did take on women's agendas? What are their successes and how did they succeed? Do women leaders at local and regional levels address more gender-focused problems than their counterparts at the national level?

- How do women *exercise* leadership without formal authority? A series of case studies from Asia on this question might elucidate differences between western and Asian notions of leading, and could be instructive on how women effectively navigate leadership in highly patriarchal societies. Areas for research may include women in academia, women in art, women in conflict and post-conflict situations, women in healthcare, and women in religious organizations.

- Research is also needed on women's self-perception and internalization of the culture, tradition, and social norms that relegate them to second-class status. On one hand, for example, women participate in son preference, marginalize younger women within punitive kinship structures, and otherwise perpetuate practices that reinforce patriarchal norms and practices. On the other hand, women also challenge prevalent gender discourses and norms that favor men and boys for social, economic and symbolic reasons. How do women's attitudes and discourses change? In addition to macro processes such as urbanization, what local measures and examples have effectively diminished the legitimacy and impact of gender-biased norms and practices?<sup>106</sup>

aided? Can leaders (especially men) extend the much-vaunted "Asian pragmatism" to women so that their potential and talent are used more fully? At present, many Asian countries still do not take the most pragmatic approach towards their women, leaning more on old cultural, traditional, and social norms. It is high time to change this. It will not only benefit women, but society at large and Asia as a whole. □

### Asian Pragmatism

Women have contributed significantly to Asia's rise. In turn, what are the women of Asia owed? How can they be rewarded and

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# ENDNOTES

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This report is sponsored by the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore and Asia Society. The author, contributors, and Asia Society gratefully acknowledge funding for this report from The Rockefeller Foundation and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.





The Millennium Development Goals Report

# Gender Chart

2012



UNITED NATIONS

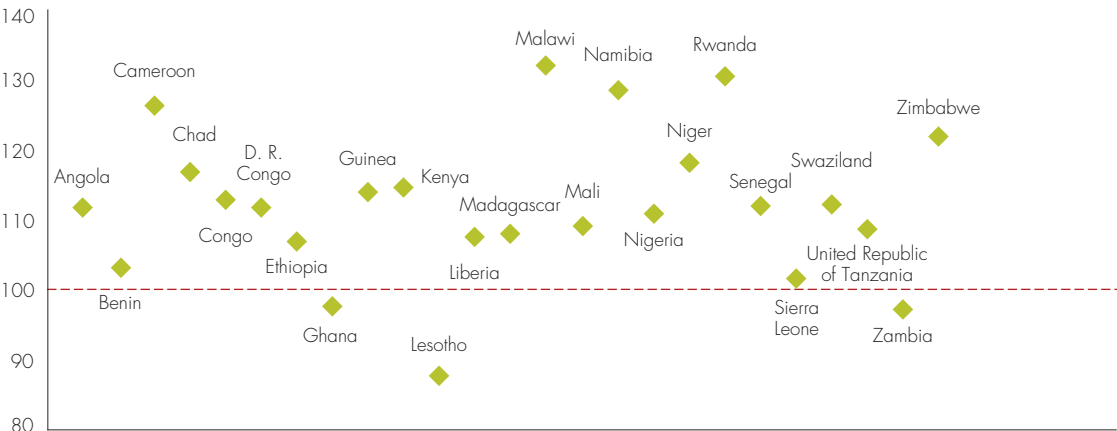


Photo: Quoc Nguyen/ UNDP Picture This

**GOAL 1 | Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

**Women in sub-Saharan Africa are more likely than men to live in poverty**

Ratio of women to men of working age in the poorest households in sub-Saharan Africa, selected countries, 2004-2009

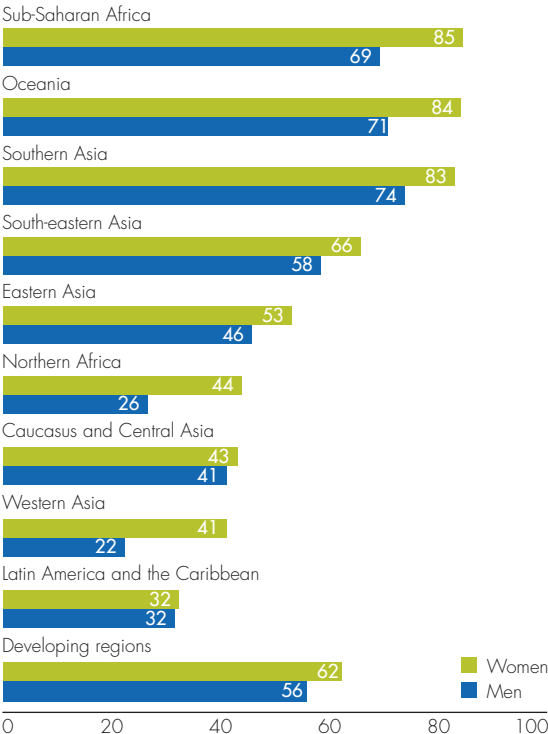


Despite the global reduction of more than 800 million people living in extreme poverty from 1990 to 2008, women continue to be more likely to live in poverty than men. Women in sub-Saharan Africa are over-represented in poor households, mainly because they are less likely to have paid work, and when they do they are, on average, paid less than men.

Household poverty figures furthermore underestimate the extent of women's poverty. Within-household income distribution is typically unequal, and a large number of poor women may be living in households that are not categorized as poor. Accurate measures and proper understanding of poverty incidence and dynamics require income and consumption surveys to be fully sex-disaggregated.

**The proportion of workers in vulnerable employment is slowly shrinking, but women remain the most affected by far in nearly all regions**

Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment in developing regions, women and men, 2011 (Percentage)

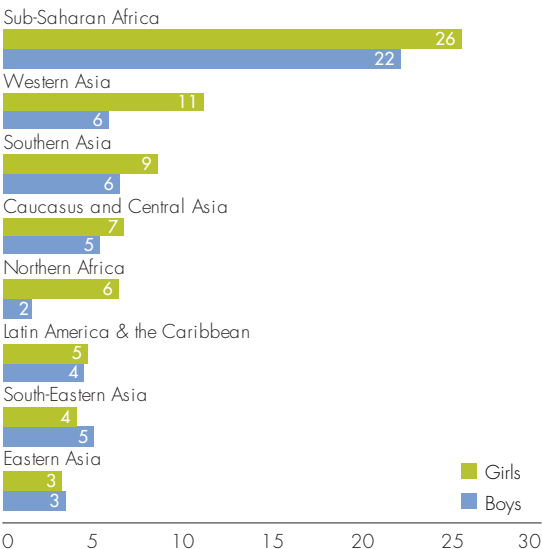


The proportion of women and men engaged in vulnerable employment – either as own-account workers or as contributing family workers -- has improved slowly in developing regions between 1991 and 2011. The rate fell 6 percentage points in the case of women and 7 for men. Despite this decline, the absolute number of people in vulnerable jobs has increased by 136 million since 2000, bringing the total to 1.52 billion.

Gender disparities remain large in Northern Africa, Western Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Women in these regions are often faced with low income and lack of job security and benefits.

**GOAL 2 |** Achieve universal primary education  
**More children are in school, but gender gaps still exist**

Primary-age out-of-school rate in developing regions, by sex, 2010 (Percentage)

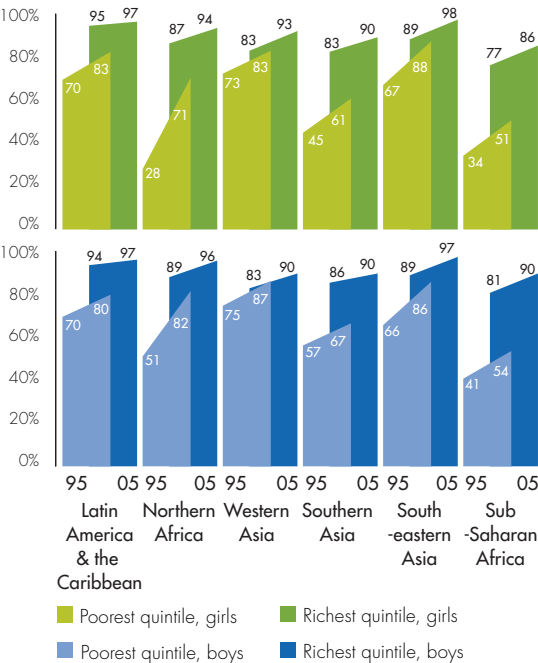


Globally, the number of primary-age children not enrolled in primary or secondary education dropped from 108 million to 61 million between 1999 and 2010. Girls represent 53 per cent of the primary-age out-of-school population, barely down from 58 per cent in 1999.

Gender parity in primary schooling worldwide has officially been achieved. At the regional and national levels, however, gender disparities persist. Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest rate of girls out of primary school, 26 per cent. However, other regions with better overall enrolment have wider gender gaps. In Southern Asia, Western Asia and Northern Africa, girls account for 55, 65 and 79 per cent respectively of the total share of primary-age out-of-school children.

**Girls are catching up to boys in terms of primary attendance, but wealth based disparities persist**

Net attendance ratio in primary education, by sex and wealth quintile, 1990s and 2000s (Percentage)



**Note:** Data plotted at 1995 may be for any year between 1990 and 2000. Data plotted at 2005 may be for any year between 2001 and 2011

**Note:** These figures are unweighted averages of attendance rates in the countries where data were available. As a result, they may differ substantially from official global and regional figures reported by UIS. In addition, different sources have been used.

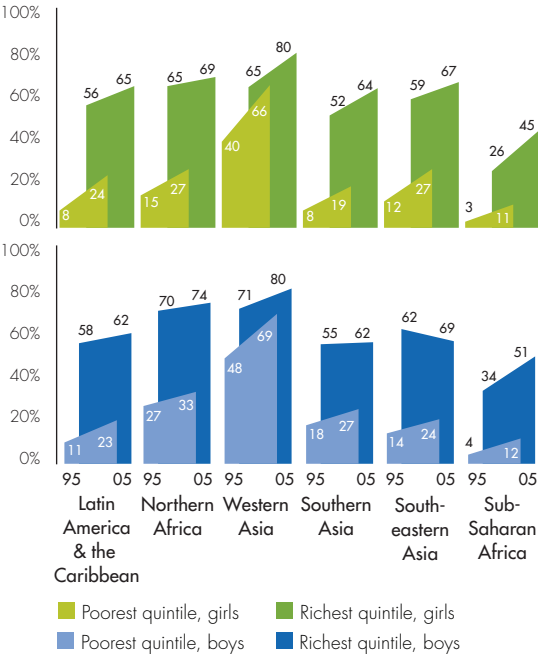
There has been major progress across all developing regions in reducing gender gaps in primary school attendance. In the 1990s girls had lower attendance rates but, due to faster progress, the gaps have closed in most cases. In Northern Africa, for instance, the attendance gap between poor boys and girls was reduced by more than half between the 1990s and 2000s.

The increase in poor girls' attendance has contributed to a 59 per cent reduction in the gap between the richest and poorest girls. However, large differences in attendance persist between rich and poor in all regions.



## Little progress made since the 1990s in closing secondary attendance gender gaps

Net attendance ratio in secondary education, by sex and wealth quintile, 1990s and 2000s (Percentage)



**Note:** Data plotted at 1995 may be for any year between 1990 and 2000. Data plotted at 2005 may be for any year between 2001 and 2011

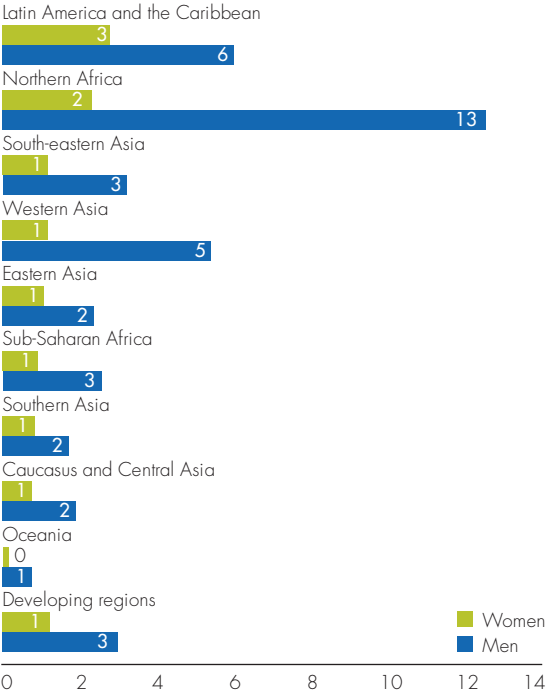
**Note:** These figures are unweighted averages of attendance rates in the countries where data were available. As a result, they may differ substantially from official global and regional figures reported by UIS. In addition, different sources have been used.

Advances in secondary attendance are less encouraging than at the primary level. Globally, net attendance rates have increased by about 10 percentage points since the 1990s, to 36 per cent, with progress evenly distributed between rich and poor, girls and boys alike. The gender gap consequently remained relatively narrow, at less than five per cent. At the regional level, the much larger attendance gaps of over 30 per cent between rich and poor girls and between rich and poor boys have barely changed in most regions.

## GOAL 3 | Promote gender equality and empower women

### Large gender gaps in business ownership

Share of employers in total employment, by sex, 2011 (Percentage)

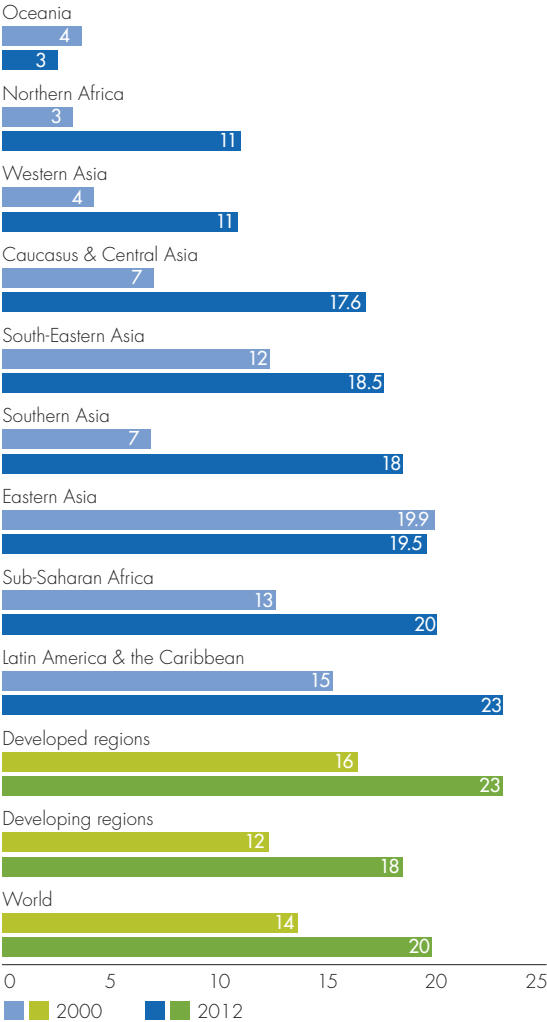


Women’s share of paid employment outside the agricultural sector increased from 35 to 40 per cent between 1990 and 2010. But women still enter the labour market on an unequal basis to men, even after accounting for educational background and skills levels. Globally, women occupy only 25 per cent of senior management positions and, in 2008/2009 were on average paid 23 per cent less than men.

Business ownership is concentrated in men’s hands throughout the developing world. Only between 1 and 3 per cent of women employed in developing regions are ‘employers’. While the highest percentage of female business owners is located in Latin America and the Caribbean, the largest disparities are seen in Northern Africa and Western Asia.

## Women continue to gain representation in parliaments, but the pace of change is slow

Proportion of seats held by women in single or lower houses of national parliaments, 2000 and 2012 (Percentage)



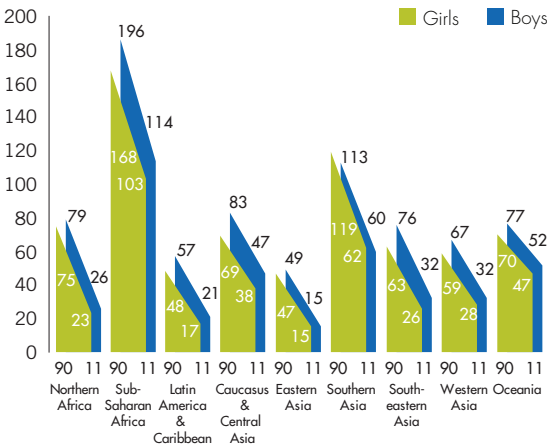
Women account for approximately 20 per cent of all parliamentarians worldwide and progress towards fairer representation is slow. At the pace registered during the last 15 years, it will take nearly 40 years to reach the parity zone.

Temporary special measures such as quotas are mandated by the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to increase women's representation in politics. A number of countries recovering from conflict have introduced quotas with impressive results. In sub-Saharan Africa, women's representation in lower and upper houses averages 27 per cent in 14 post-conflict countries, of which eight have used some form of quota. This compares to a 14 per cent average representation for non post-conflict countries in the region.

## GOAL 4 | Reduce child mortality

### Under-five girls are more likely to survive than boys, except in Southern Asia

Under-five mortality rates by sex, 1990 and 2011 (Deaths per 1,000 live births)



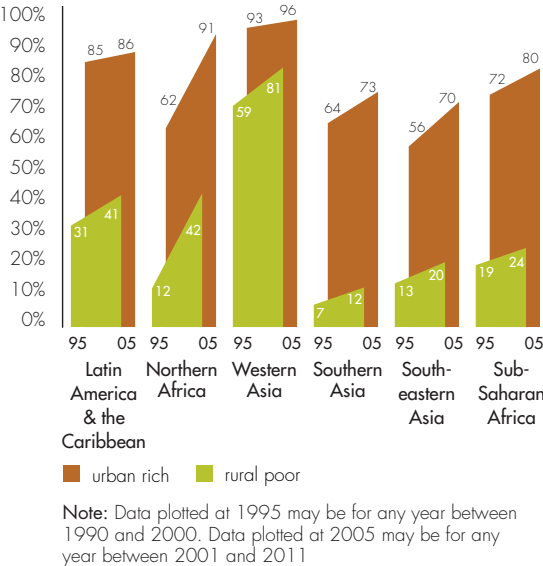
Global child mortality rates have declined by 35 per cent, from 97 to 63 deaths per 1,000 live births, between 1990 and 2010.

Physiologically, boys have a survival disadvantage relative to girls, reflected in the continuing increase in the ratio of boys' to girls' under-five mortality. Southern Asia provide exceptions to this trend. Recent analysis of gender gaps in under-five mortality in countries where data are available shows that the gap narrowed in Southern Asia between 1990 and 2011. But mortality rates still reflect practices related to son preference in some countries.

Educational attainment of mothers is a strong determinant of under-five survival. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, children of mothers with primary education are one and a half times more likely to survive than children whose mothers have no education. The chances of survival more than double when mothers have secondary education.

**GOAL 5 | Improve maternal health**  
**Urban rich women are much more likely to be assisted at delivery by a skilled health professional**

Proportion of pregnant women who were assisted by skilled health personnel during delivery, by location and wealth, 1990s and 2000s (Percentage)

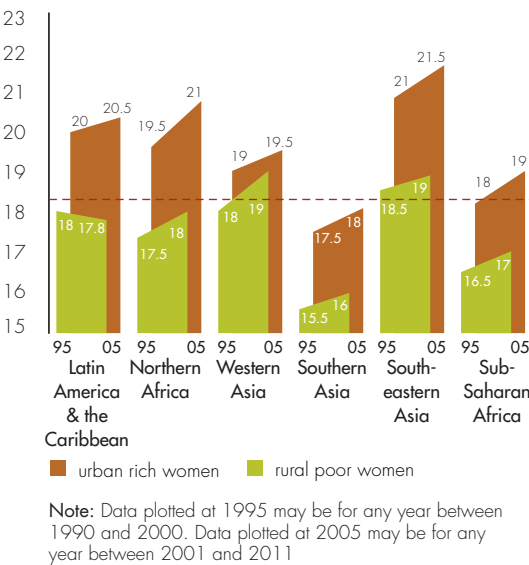


An estimated 287,000 maternal deaths occurred in 2010 worldwide, a decline of 47 per cent from 1990. Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia together accounted for 85 per cent of the global total.

Attendance by skilled health personnel can substantially reduce the risk of death or injury during delivery. Rural poor women have the least access to this service. In general, large gaps can be observed between rich and poor women, and between women living in urban and rural areas. Figures for developing regions with available data show that, on average, rich urban women are three times more likely than poor rural women to have skilled assistance during delivery.

**Age at the time of first marriage is rising, but women in poor and rural areas continue to marry young**

Age at first marriage, by location and wealth, 1995 and 2005



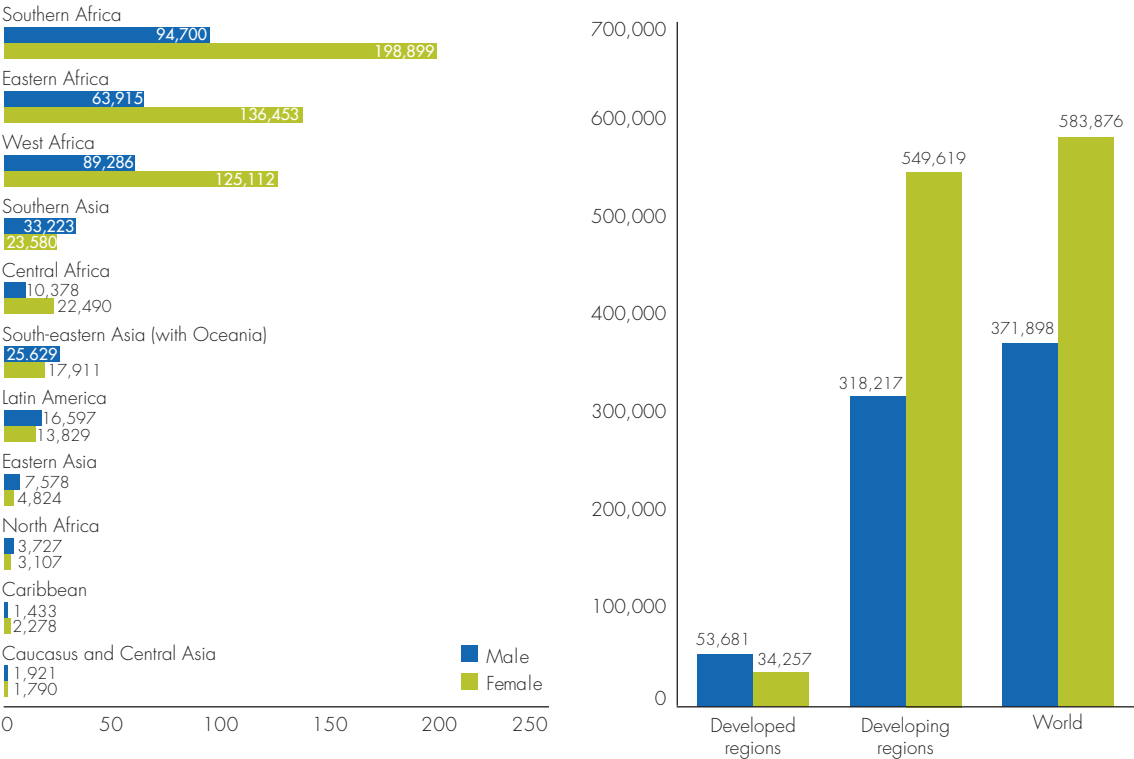
Early marriage has an important bearing on women's autonomy and reproductive health. Girls who marry young have fewer opportunities to go to school, less say in household decision-making, and are more likely to experience domestic violence. They are exposed to the risks of early pregnancy and childbirth, the leading cause of death for girls aged 15 to 19 in developing countries.

Although the median age of marriage is rising over time in every region, important disparities remain between wealth quintiles and urban-rural areas. Average age at first marriage is lowest in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. But the largest disparities between rich urban women and their poor rural counterparts are found in Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Africa and South-eastern Asia, where the gap averages three years.

GOAL 6 | Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Every year, more than one in five new HIV infections take place among young women

Number of new HIV infections among people aged 15-24, by region, 2010 (Thousands)



The global number of new HIV infections is declining, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, one of the hardest hit regions. The Caucasus and Central Asia is the only region where new infections have risen, mainly as a result of injecting drug use.

Challenges remain in all regions. Every year, nearly 600,000 young women are newly infected with HIV. Of the total 2.7 million new HIV infections in 2010, close to one

million were among young people aged 15-24, of whom more than 60 per cent were women.

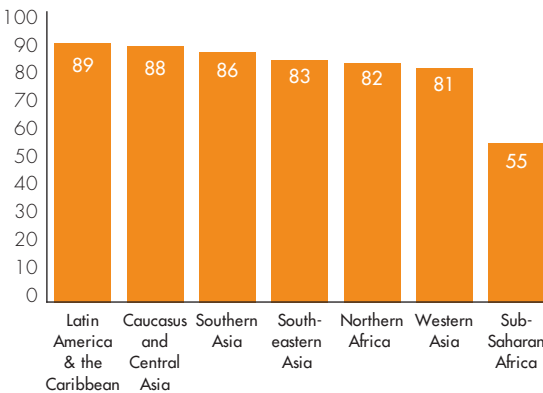
Young women are vulnerable to HIV infection due to a complex interplay of physiological factors and gender inequalities. With their lower economic and social status in many countries, women and girls are exposed to gender-based violence and are at a disadvantage when it comes to negotiating safe sex and accessing HIV prevention information and services.



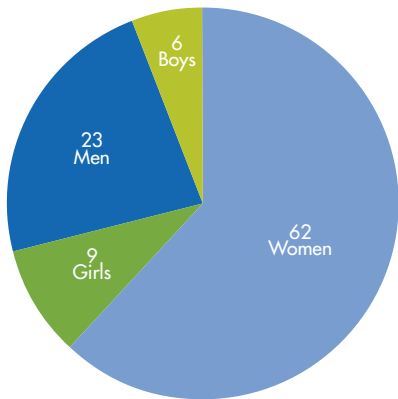
**GOAL 7** | Ensure environmental sustainability

**Sub-Saharan Africa lags behind the rest of world in access to water**

Proportion of households within 15 minutes of nearest water source, 2010, (Percentage)



Distribution of the water collection burden among women, children under age 15 and men, in households without piped water on premises, sub-Saharan Africa, based on population-weighted averages from 25 countries, 2006/2009 (Percentage)



The MDG target of halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water has been achieved five years ahead of schedule. But as of 2010, nearly 800 million people still lacked access to improved water sources. Most of them were poor people in rural areas.

Where water sources are not readily accessible, women and girls often bear the burden of collection and must walk long distances to satisfy household needs. In sub-Saharan Africa,

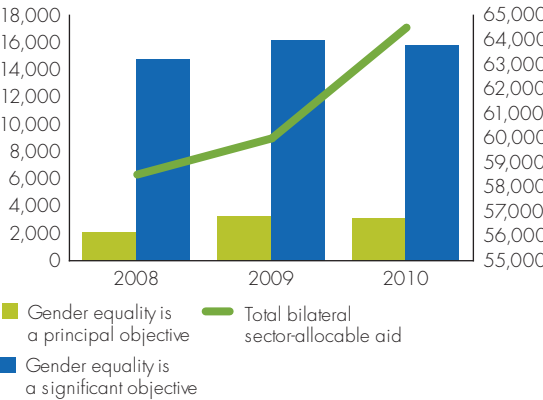
only about half of the households live within 15 minutes of the nearest safe water source.

A study carried out in 25 countries in 2006/2009 in sub-Saharan Africa suggests that in 62 per cent of the households that did not have water on their premises, women bore the burden of collecting water. In an additional 9 per cent of these households it was the responsibility of girls.

**GOAL 8** | Develop a global partnership for development

**Bilateral sector-allocable aid increases, but gender-focused interventions stall**

Bilateral sector-allocable aid to gender equality, from Development Assistance Committee countries, 2008-2010 (USD million, constant 2010 prices)



The total amount of bilateral sector-allocable aid increased every year between 2008 and 2010. But while the proportion of this aid devoted to gender equality objectives increased in 2009, it decreased slightly in 2010. Because of the cross-cutting nature of the gender goal, assistance to gender programmes should be increased in order to pave the way for attainment of the MDGs.







EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2011–2012  
**Progress**  
of the World's  
**Women**

IN PURSUIT OF  
**JUSTICE**



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality  
and the Empowerment of Women

# Progress of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice

This volume of *Progress of the World's Women* starts with a paradox: the past century has seen a transformation in women's legal rights, with countries in every region expanding the scope of women's legal entitlements. Nevertheless for most of the world's women, the laws that exist on paper do not translate to equality and justice.

In 1911, just two countries in the world allowed women to vote. A century later, that right is virtually universal and women are exercising greater influence in decision-making than ever before. Alongside women's greater political influence, there has been a growing recognition of women's rights, not only political and civil, but also economic, social and cultural rights. Today, 186 countries worldwide have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), signalling their commitment to meeting the human rights of women and girls, breaking down the barriers to gender equality and justice.

And yet, while examples of countries making immense strides in promoting gender equality abound, all too often women are denied control over their bodies, denied a voice in decision-making and denied protection from violence. Some 600 million women, more than half the world's working women, are in vulnerable employment, trapped in insecure jobs, often outside the purview of labour legislation. Despite major progress on legal frameworks, millions of women report experiencing violence in their lifetimes, usually at the hands of an intimate partner. Meanwhile, the systematic targeting of women for brutal sexual violence is a hallmark of modern conflicts.

Pervasive discrimination against women creates major hurdles to achieving rights and hinders progress on all of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – the benchmarks that the international community has set to eradicate extreme poverty – from improving maternal health, to achieving universal education and halting the spread of HIV and AIDS.

Although equality between women and men is guaranteed in the Constitutions of 139 countries and territories, inadequate laws and implementation gaps make these guarantees hollow promises, having little impact on the day-to-day lives of women. In many contexts, in rich and poor countries alike, the infrastructure of justice – the police, the courts and the judiciary – is failing women, which manifests itself in poor services and hostile attitudes from the very people whose duty it is to meet women's rights.

*Progress of the World's Women* shows that well-functioning legal and justice systems can be a vital mechanism for women to achieve their rights. They can shape society by providing accountability, by stopping the abuse of power and by creating new norms. The courts have been a critical site of accountability for individual women to claim rights and to set legal precedents that have benefitted millions of others.

This report highlights the ways in which governments and civil society are working together to reform laws and create new models for justice service delivery that meet women's needs. It demonstrates how they have risen to the challenge of ensuring that women can access justice in the most challenging of situations, including in the context of legal pluralism and during and after conflict.

*Progress of the World's Women* outlines ten recommendations to make justice systems work for women. They are proven and achievable and, if implemented, they hold enormous potential to increase women's access to justice and advance gender equality.

## Support women's legal organizations

Women's legal organizations are at the forefront of making justice systems work for women. Where government-funded legal aid is limited, women's organizations step in to provide the advice and support that women need to pursue a legal case, to put a stop to violence, to seek a divorce or to claim land that is rightfully theirs.

These organizations have spearheaded law reform efforts and strategic litigation cases that have transformed the landscape for women's rights nationally, regionally and internationally (see Box 1).

They have also been leaders in successful interventions in legally plural environments, showing that it is possible to engage with plural legal systems while simultaneously supporting local cultures, traditions and practices.

For example, in Ecuador, where the right of indigenous people to determine their own justice systems is enshrined in the Constitution, women in two indigenous Kichwa communities have developed Reglamentos de Buena Convivencia (Regulations for Good Living), which bring together customary norms and human rights principles to address violence within the family and women's access to justice.

In Indonesia, PEKKA, a local non-governmental organization (NGO), has trained community-based paralegals to support women to use the religious courts to legally register marriage and divorce, which enables them to access public services and benefits. PEKKA has also lobbied the Government to increase the number of circuit courts and waive fees to make courts more accessible to women.

### Box 1: Balancing the Scales: Landmark cases that have changed women's lives

**These cases have increased women's access to justice in countries all over the world. Some have advanced the legal understanding of women's human rights under international law; some have enforced or clarified laws already on the books; some have challenged laws that should be repealed; and some have created new laws. All have led to positive changes in women's lives.**

#### ***Meera Dhungana on behalf of FWLD v HMG***

In Nepal, the law exempted men from being prosecuted for the rape of their wives. In 2002, in a case taken by the Forum for Women, Law and Development, the Supreme Court ordered Parliament to amend the rape law. To date, 52 countries worldwide have explicitly criminalized marital rape in their penal codes.

#### ***Judgment of the Constitutional Court of Colombia***

In 2006, Women's Link Worldwide took a case on behalf of Martha Solay to challenge the law prohibiting doctors from performing an abortion to save her life. The Court held that the ban violated women's fundamental rights and affirmed that abortion must be accessible in certain cases.

#### ***Unity Dow v Attorney General of the Republic of Botswana***

Despite being a citizen born and raised in Botswana, the law stated that because Unity Dow had married a foreigner, their two children required residence permits and were denied their rights as citizens. This landmark 1992 case confirmed that the guarantee of equality in the Constitution applied to women's citizenship rights.

#### ***Velez and others v Novartis Pharmaceuticals***

In the largest gender discrimination class action ever to go to trial in the United States of America, 12 female employees of the pharmaceutical company Novartis alleged they were discriminated against on pay and promotions. The jury found unanimously in their favour and Novartis agreed to pay US\$175 million to settle the matter, including \$22.5 million for improvements to policies and programmes to promote equality in the workplace.

## Implement gender-sensitive law reform

Gender-sensitive law reform is the foundation for women's access to justice. Without a solid legal foundation, attempts to make courts more accessible to women, police less hostile to their complaints and other necessary reforms to the administration of justice are likely to founder.

CEDAW provides the internationally agreed gold standard for legal reform to achieve gender equality. Action is needed to repeal laws that explicitly discriminate against women; to extend the rule of law to the private domain, including to protect women from domestic violence; and to address the actual impact of laws on women's lives.

There has been progress in every region, so that in 2011:

173 countries guarantee paid maternity leave

139 constitutions guarantee gender equality

125 countries outlaw domestic violence (see Figure 1)

117 countries have equal pay laws

115 countries guarantee women's equal property rights

But despite significant advances, discriminatory laws, gaps in legal frameworks and failures of implementation mean that women continue to be denied their rights.

127 countries do not explicitly criminalize rape within marriage

61 countries severely restrict women's rights to abortion

53 percent of women work in vulnerable employment

50 countries have a lower legal age of marriage for women than for men

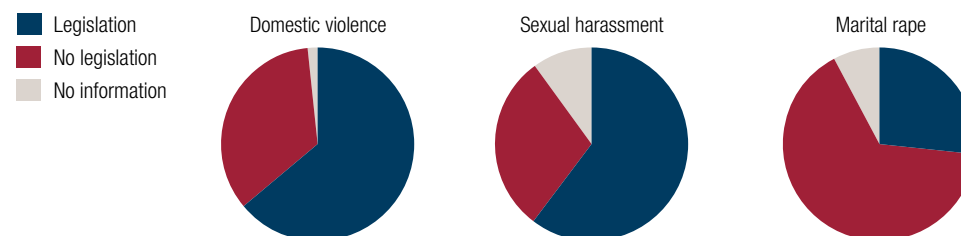
10-30 percent is the average pay gap between women and men

While CEDAW has been ratified by almost all United Nations Member States, it is also one of the treaties with the largest number of reservations. The most common reservations are on article 16, which guarantees women's rights within marriage and the family (see Figure 2). Removing these reservations is a critical step to putting in place a legal framework that supports women's rights.

Laws must be drafted to drive implementation, including clear mandates, procedures, funding and accountability mechanisms. For example, in 45 countries, laws on domestic violence include guarantees of free legal aid for women. In Nepal, tax exemptions on land transfers have helped to ensure implementation of laws on equal inheritance rights, which has led to a threefold increase in women's property ownership. In Sweden, non-transferable 'daddy months' have increased the uptake of paternity leave, helping to address the gender pay gap.

FIGURE 1: Laws on violence against women

Two thirds of countries have laws in place against domestic violence, but many countries still do not explicitly criminalize rape within marriage.



Source: Annex 4, *Progress of the World's Women 2011–2012*

FIGURE 2: Reservations to CEDAW

30 countries have entered reservations in relation to equal rights in marriage or the family.



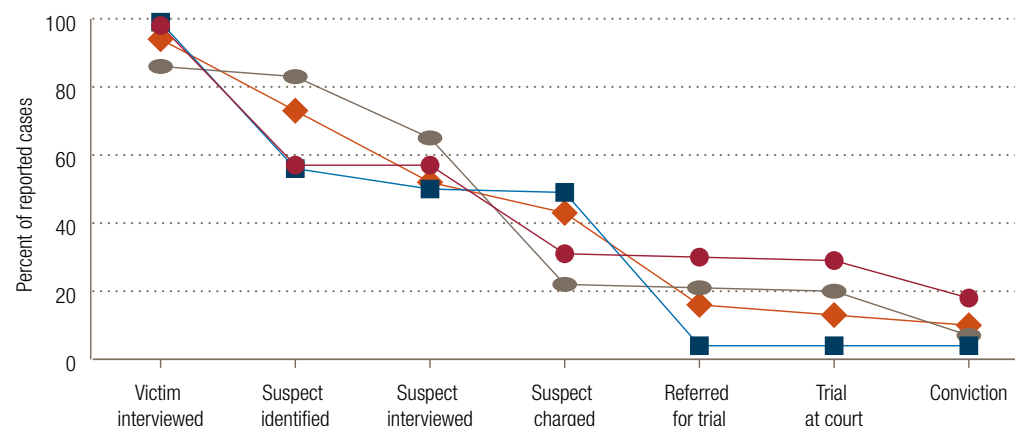
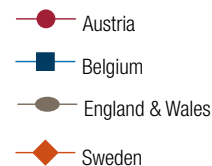
Source: Annex 5, *Progress of the World's Women 2011–2012*

## Support one-stop shops to reduce attrition in the justice chain

The justice chain, the series of steps that a woman must take to seek redress, is characterized by high levels of attrition, whereby cases are dropped as they progress through the system. As a result, only a fraction of cases end in a conviction or a just outcome.

FIGURE 3: Rape case attrition in a sample of European countries

Only a fraction of reported rape cases result in conviction.



Source: Lovett and Kelly 2009.

A 2009 study of European countries found that, on average, 14 percent of reported rapes ended in a conviction, with rates falling as low as 5 percent in some countries (see Figure 3).

One way to reduce attrition is to invest in one-stop shops, which bring together vital services under one roof to collect forensic evidence, and provide legal advice, health care and other support for women. The Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs) in South Africa are one successful example of this approach.

These Centres are located in public hospitals and provide emergency medical care, counselling and court preparation in an integrated and survivor-friendly manner.

They aim to address the medical and social needs of sexual assault survivors, reduce secondary victimization, improve conviction rates and reduce delays in cases.

TCCs are staffed by specialized medical personnel, social workers and police, who are on call 24 hours a day. Conviction rates for rape cases dealt with by the Soweto TCC in Gauteng Province have reached up to 89 percent, compared to a national average of 7 percent. The Thuthuzela model is now being replicated in other countries, including Chile and Ethiopia.

## Put women on the front line of law enforcement

Under-reporting of crimes against women is a serious problem in all regions. Across 57 countries, crime surveys show that on average 10 percent of women say they have experienced sexual assault, but of these only 11 percent reported it. This compares to a similar incidence of robbery, on average 8 percent, but a reporting rate of 38 percent.

Employing women on the front line of justice service delivery can help to increase women's access to justice. Data show that there is a positive correlation between the presence of women police officers and reporting of sexual assault (see Figure 4). In post-conflict Liberia, the deployment of an all-women Indian police brigade has led to increased reporting and has also boosted recruitment of women into the force. Despite these benefits, women's average representation in the police does not exceed 13 percent in any region.

The gains from employing women in the police are not automatic: investment is essential. The experience from Latin America and elsewhere is that women's police stations and gender desks must be adequately resourced, and staff should be expertly trained, properly rewarded and recognized for their work.

Furthermore, recruitment of women police officers and resourcing of gender desks must be part of a broader strategy to train and incentivize *all* police to adequately respond to women's needs.

FIGURE 4: Women in the police and reporting of sexual assault

There is a clear positive correlation between women's representation in the police and reporting of sexual assault.



Source: UN Women analysis based on police representation data from UNODC 2009 and reporting of sexual assault calculated from ICVS (latest available).

## Invest in women's access to justice

Making justice systems work for women – whether through catalysing legal reform, or supporting legal aid, one-stop shops and training for judges – requires investment. Recognizing the importance of strengthening the rule of law, governments spend a significant amount on justice aid. However, targeted funding for gender equality remains low.

In 2009, donors on the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC) allocated \$4.2 billion to justice, with the United States and the European Union (EU) together accounting for 70 percent of this total. Iraq, Afghanistan, Mexico, the occupied Palestinian territory and Pakistan were the largest recipients of this aid. Of this total, \$206 million (5 percent) was allocated to programmes in which gender equality was a primary aim. A further \$633 million (15 percent) was allocated to programmes in which gender equality was a secondary aim. The EU allocated no funds to justice programmes in which gender equality was a primary aim in 2009.



Sweden, Canada, Denmark, Norway and Germany were the largest donors to programmes in which gender equality was a primary aim, supporting activities including training for judges; legal aid for survivors of violence; women's participation in peacebuilding and reconciliation; reintegration of victims of trafficking; and awareness-raising campaigns to reduce early marriage. Guatemala, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan and Colombia received the most gender justice aid in 2009.

Over the decade 2000 to 2010, the World Bank allocated \$874 billion to 6,382 grants and loans, of which \$126 billion (14 percent) was allocated to public administration, law and justice. Over this time, 21 projects included components on gender equality and the rule of law, supporting activities such as improving women-friendly court infrastructure; recruitment and capacity building of paralegals; and policy advocacy for legal reforms. The total allocated to the gender equality components of these projects amounted to just \$7.3 million.

In December 2010, the World Bank concluded the process of replenishing the International Development Association (IDA) fund, with 51 donors pledging \$49.3 billion to support the poorest countries between 2011 and 2014. In this round, four areas of special focus were agreed, of which gender equality was one. This presents an important opportunity to ensure that women's access to justice receives a larger share of the World Bank's funding in the future.

## Train judges and monitor decisions

**Balanced, well-informed and unbiased judicial decision-making is an essential part of ensuring that women who go to court get justice. However, even where laws are in place to guarantee women's rights, they are not always properly or fairly applied by judges.**

Organizations such as the International Association of Women Judges and Sakshi, an Indian NGO, provide judges, both women and men, with specialized training and space to discuss the challenges they face, which can help to build understanding of, and commitment to, gender equality. The impact of this work is demonstrated through dozens of groundbreaking cases decided by judges who have participated in these trainings (see Box 2).

Systematic tracking of judicial decision-making is needed at the national level to provide accountability to women seeking justice and to enable civil society and governments to monitor the performance of the courts on women's rights.

### Box 2: Vishaka and the power of gender-sensitive judicial decision-making

**In 1996, the Indian NGO, Sakshi conducted interviews with judges, lawyers and female litigants to explore the impact of judicial perceptions and decision-making on women who come to court. More than two thirds of judges said that women who wore provocative attire were inviting rape.**

Sakshi developed a programme to change internalized myths and gender stereotypes, which has since expanded to 16 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. India's former Chief Justice, Jagdish Sharan Verma, was among the first participants in the programme.

Shortly after, Justice Verma had the opportunity to put into practice what he had learned. When Bhanwari Devi was gang-raped by local men, while doing her job as a social worker in a village in Rajasthan, she not only initiated criminal proceedings, but also sought a broader remedy for other working women.

Supported by five women's organizations, including one called Vishaka, and by Naina Kapur, founder of Sakshi and lead instructing counsel, Bhanwari took the case to the Indian Supreme Court. Here they won watershed recognition of sexual harassment in the workplace.

As one of the presiding judges in the case, Justice Verma was undeterred by the absence of existing sexual harassment laws, recognizing that the right to gender equality and to a safe working environment was guaranteed by both the Constitution and India's international obligations under CEDAW. The Court used the case to produce the first comprehensive legally enforceable guidelines on sexual harassment in both public and private employment.

The Vishaka decision has inspired a similar case in Bangladesh and law reform in Pakistan, so that today almost 500 million women of working age in these three countries alone have the legal protection needed to carry out their work free from harassment and abuse.

## Increase women's access to courts and truth commissions during and after conflict

Sexual violence as a tactic of warfare has been used systematically and deliberately for centuries. It is used against civilian populations as a deliberate vector of HIV, for the purpose of forced impregnation, to drive the forcible displacement of populations and to terrorize whole communities.

Very significant advances in international law in the past two decades have, for the first time, made it possible to prosecute sexual violence crimes (see Box 3). To increase the number of convictions, it is vital that international courts prioritize gender-based crimes in their prosecution strategies.

Furthermore, measures are needed to make courts as well as other justice forums, such as truth commissions, more accessible to women. The only way to guarantee this is to ensure that women play a central part in defining the scope, remit and design of all post-conflict justice mechanisms.

### Box 3: Two decades of groundbreaking progress in international law

**In the past, the impact of conflict on women has barely been acknowledged in international law. As a result, women's experiences have been largely denied and written out of history. However, in the past two decades, significant advances have been made in the recognition and prosecution of sexual violence crimes committed during conflicts.**

In the 1929 Geneva Convention, sexual violence was treated as a matter of moral defamation, rather than a violent crime. The Charters of the Nuremburg and Tokyo Tribunals, established to prosecute war crimes in the aftermath of the Second World War, did not include rape.

The 1949 Geneva Conventions stated that 'women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour', but rape was not listed as a 'grave breach' of the Conventions.

#### 1993

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia was established. The Statute recognized that rape is a crime against humanity and a series of landmark cases have confirmed that sexual violence is a serious war crime. To date, there have been 29 convictions for sexual violence in this Court.

#### 1998

In *Prosecutor v Akayesu* at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, it was found that rape constitutes genocide and a crime against humanity for the first time. To date, there have been 11 convictions for sexual violence in this Court.

#### 2000

United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 recognized the role of women in peacebuilding, emphasizing the need for their full participation in all efforts to promote peace and security.

#### 2002

The Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court, codified as international crimes a broad range of sexual and gender-based crimes. Of the 23 indictments issued by the Court, 12 contain sexual violence charges.

In *Prosecutor v Brima et al.*, the Special Court for Sierra Leone found that forced marriage was an inhumane act constituting a crime against humanity.

#### 2008–2010

United Nations Security Council resolution 1820 called for effective steps to prevent and respond to acts of sexual violence as a central part of maintaining international peace and security.

Security Council resolutions 1888, 1889 and 1960 provide concrete building blocks for the implementation of resolutions 1325 and 1820.

Measures that make a difference include financial assistance, childcare and transport to help women to overcome the practical obstacles to their participation; psychosocial counselling, health care and other long-term support; and providing closed session hearings to enable women to testify about sexual violence.

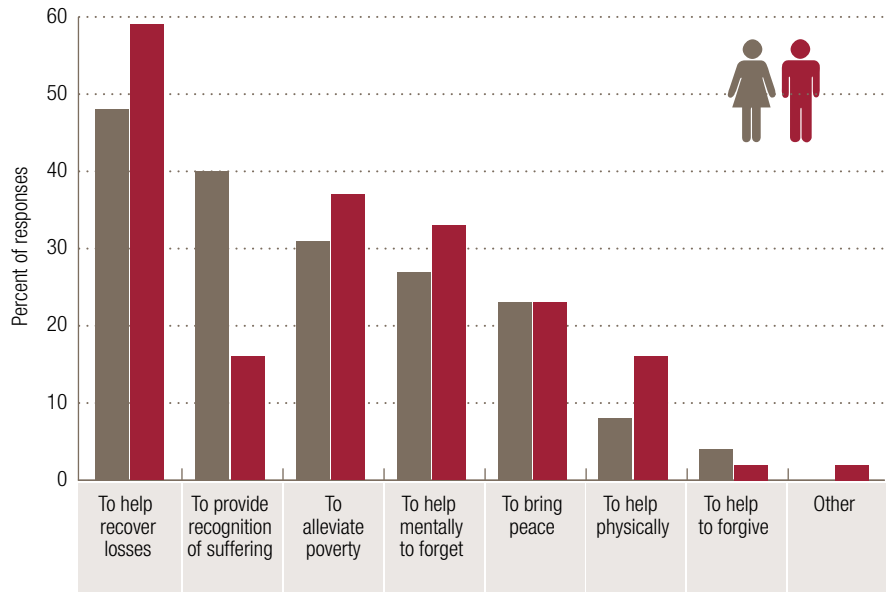
In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, mobile courts are bringing justice to women, responding rapidly to investigate and prosecute perpetrators. In 2010, nine mobile courts adjudicated 186 cases. Of these, 115 were rape cases that resulted in 95 convictions, with prison sentences ranging from 3 to 20 years.

In February 2011, one such court prosecuted the first crimes against humanity case in a mobile court, sentencing nine soldiers for their part in the mass rape of more than 40 women and girls, which took place in Fizi just a few weeks before.

## Implement gender-responsive reparations programmes

FIGURE 5:  
Women's and men's perceptions of why reparations are important in the Central African Republic

Women are more likely to demand apologies and punishment of those responsible for violations, than men.



Source: Based on data from Vinck and Pham 2010a and 2010b.

Reparations are the most victim-focused justice mechanism and can be an essential vehicle for women's recovery. In the Central African Republic, in common with many post-conflict contexts, women say that reparations are needed to help them recover losses and alleviate poverty, but they are also important to recognize women's suffering (see Figure 5).

While the international community has dedicated substantial funding to international courts and other transitional justice mechanisms, this has not been matched by an equal commitment to assist States to fulfil their obligations for reparative justice.

To benefit women, reparations programmes must take account of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, and include individual, community and symbolic measures, as well as access to services and land restitution.

In Sierra Leone, the Government's National Commission for Social Action, supported by the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, is implementing a reparations programme targeting 650 women survivors of sexual violence, designed to promote their long-term empowerment.

To date, 300 women have been provided with micro-grants, support to set up small businesses and skills training in 14 districts of the country. In March 2011, at a ceremony in Freetown, the first 90 women graduated from training courses including literacy, driving, computer skills, soap-making and hairdressing.

## Use quotas to boost the number of women legislators

In countries where women's representation in parliament increases substantially, new laws that advance women's rights often follow.

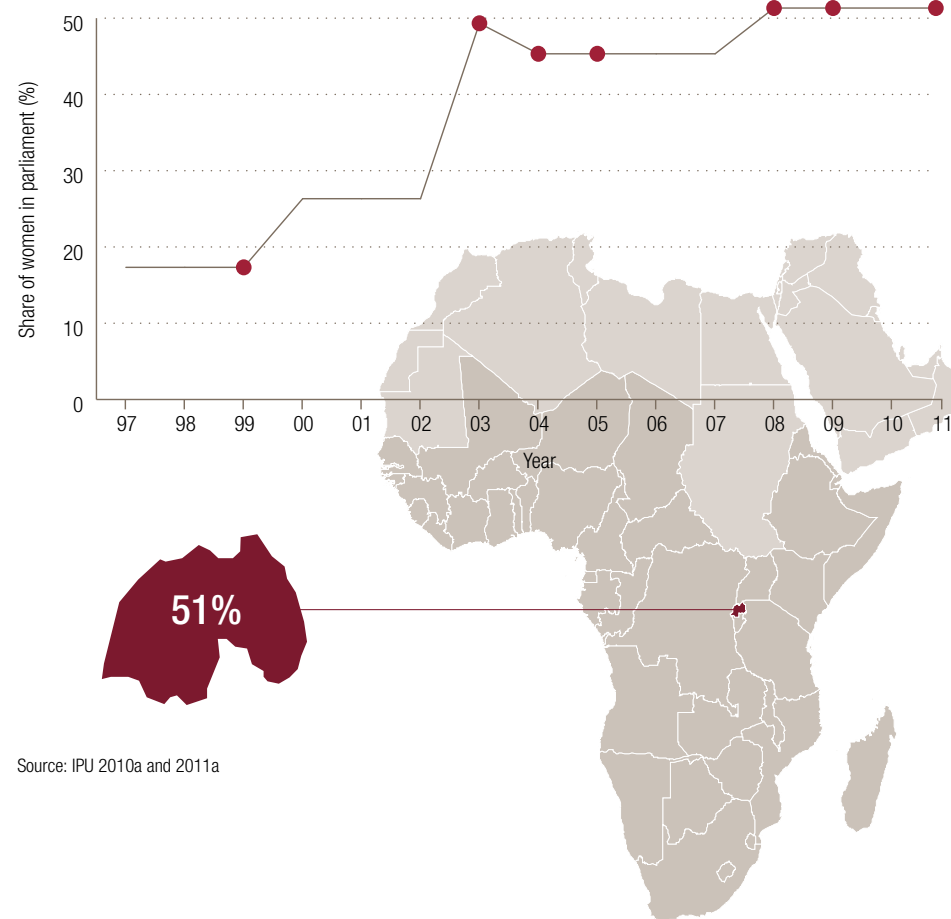
From Nepal to Costa Rica, Rwanda to Spain, where quotas have been used to boost the number of women legislators, progressive laws on land rights, violence against women, health care and employment have been passed. Where women have organized, sometimes across party lines to ensure women's interests are represented, change has followed.

The Beijing Platform for Action called for gender balance in governmental bodies, while CEDAW mandates the use of temporary special measures, including quotas, to amplify women's voices in political decision-making. Of the 28 countries that have reached or exceeded 30 percent women's representation in national parliaments, at least 23 have used quotas.

FIGURE 6: Women's representation and legal reform in Rwanda

Progressive laws on women's rights have followed a rapid increase in the number of women parliamentarians.

- The Succession Law (1999) established gender equality in inheritance and property ownership.
- The Constitution (2003) enshrines the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination, specifying that women must be in at least 30 percent of posts in decision-making at all levels.
- The National Land Policy (2004) and Land Law (2005) provides equality in statutory and customary land ownership.
- The Law on Prevention and Punishment of Gender-Based Violence was passed (2008) and marital rape was criminalized (2009).
- 51 percent of parliamentarians and half of Supreme Court judges are women, including the President of the Court (2011).



Six of the countries that have exceeded the 30 percent mark have recently come out of conflict, demonstrating that progress has more to do with political will than level of development. One such country, Rwanda, has the highest level of women's representation in the world (see Figure 6).

Rwanda's 2003 Constitution commits to 'ensuring that women are granted at least 30 percent of posts in decision-making organs' and in the elections of the same year, women exceeded this minimum target. Rwanda's women parliamentarians have worked in a cross-party caucus and collaborated with the Women's Ministry and civil society organizations to push through reforms, including on inheritance, land rights and violence against women. The women parliamentarians also collaborated with their male colleagues to go on a nationwide tour to monitor implementation of land and inheritance laws and to help change attitudes on women's rights.

## Put gender equality at the heart of the Millennium Development Goals

The MDGs are interdependent and each one depends on making progress on women's rights. Scaling up investment and action on the gender equality dimensions of all the Goals has the dual advantage of addressing widespread inequality and accelerating progress overall.

Achieving these Goals is also an essential precondition for women's access to justice. Without education, awareness of rights and decision-making power, women are often unable to claim their rights, obtain legal aid or go to court.

While advances have been made, including on reducing poverty and child mortality, and increasing access to education, data show that overall progress masks inequalities based on gender, income and location.

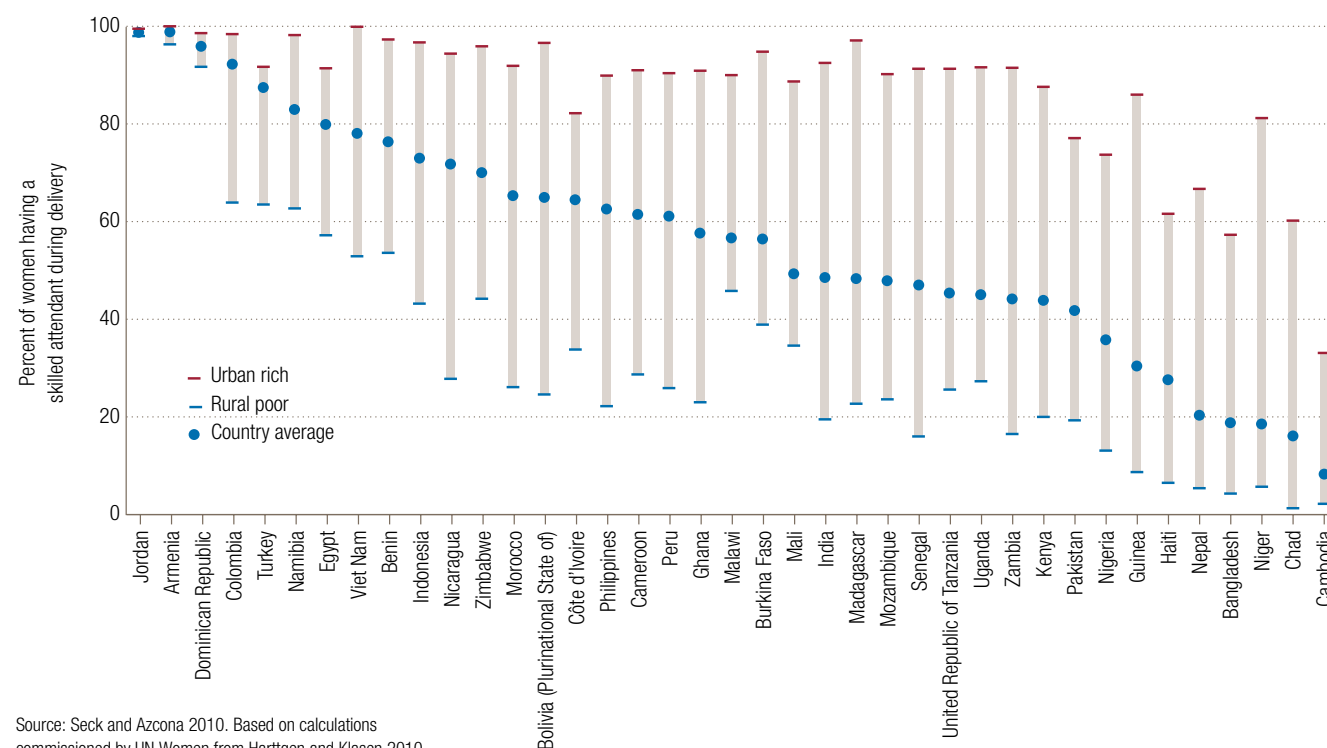
Women and girls, especially those living in rural areas, have been the least likely to share in progress, with millions continuing to live in poverty and exclusion. For example, poor women in rural areas are much less likely to have access to skilled attendance at the birth of their children, which is essential for preventing maternal mortality and morbidity, compared to rich women in urban areas (see Figure 7).

With only four years left until 2015, the target date for achieving the MDGs, ending gender-based injustices that create barriers to women's and girls' opportunities must be the centrepiece of further action.

Some practical approaches to putting women's rights at the heart of the MDGs include: abolishing user fees for health care, which has been shown to increase women's and girls' access to services, including for reproductive health; using stipends and cash transfers to encourage girls to go to school, delay marriage and continue their education for the critical secondary years; putting women on the front line of service delivery to make public services more accessible; and amplifying women's voices in decision-making, from the household up to local and national levels, to ensure that policies reflect the realities of women's lives.

FIGURE 7: Skilled attendance at delivery, urban rich and rural poor women

Rural poor women are much less likely than urban rich women to receive assistance from a skilled health professional during childbirth.



Source: Seck and Azcona 2010. Based on calculations commissioned by UN Women from Harttgen and Klasen 2010.





**United Nations Commission on the Status of Women  
Fifty-seventh session  
4 - 15 March 2013  
New York**

**INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL**

**Key gender equality issues to be reflected in the post-2015  
development framework**

**GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE POST-  
2015 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

**by**

**ANITA NAYAR**  
**Executive Committee Member,**  
**Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)**

There are multiple, overlapping processes that are all winding their way toward imagining what the UN's future development agenda will look like. It has been very challenging to engage strategically in this maze of meetings especially given very limited resources for women's groups to participate meaningfully.

This afternoon I will share some insights from just three processes toward Post 2015 that I have engaged in over the past year as a representative of DAWN, which is a third world feminist network, and in collaboration with global networks like the Women's Major Group and the Women's Coalition for Post 2015. The three engagements are:

- An Expert Group Meeting on Gender Equality in Post 2015 convened by UN Women in November 2012;
- Asia Pacific Regional Dialogue on Post-2015 convened by DAWN, Asia Pacific Gender and Macroeconomic Network and UN Women's Regional Office also in November 2012
- The 20-year review of the UN Conference on Environment and Development or Rio+20 in June 2012, which was an important stepping-stone toward 2015.

At the **Expert Group Meeting** we agreed that the post-2015 development agenda must move us well beyond current MDG Goal 3.

- It must be situated in a human rights framework, with the full realization of women's rights as a goal in and of itself.
- It must include the elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination, including sexual and gender based violence against lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.
- It must tackle macroeconomic policies at the global and national levels such as fiscal, monetary, trade and investment policies that are often key barriers to development.
- It must address deeper structural issues of power, accountability, sharing of resources and decision making.

At the **Asia Pacific Dialogue** we drew on a recent report of the Asian Development Bank that named technological progress, globalization and market-oriented reform as the drivers of inequality in the region.<sup>1</sup>

So despite experiences of continuing (if slower) growth in the region during a period of global economic instability, the evidence shows us that there is no automatic link between economic growth and improved development outcomes.<sup>2</sup> Also the idea that growth will increase women's equality does not hold. In fact we can point to many examples that growth has been based on women's inequality.

Despite the reduction in poverty rates in two countries – India and China – women continue to be more likely to live in poverty than men. For the Asian region, the proportion of workers in

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<sup>1</sup> Asian Development Bank. 2012. Asian Development Outlook 2012. Manila: ADB.

<sup>2</sup> "The Future Asia Pacific Women Want" Outcome Statement from the Regional Dialogue on Sustainable Development and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Convened by DAWN and Asia Pacific Gender and Macroeconomic Network (APGEM) in collaboration with UN Women, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific from 3-5 November 2012, Bangkok.

vulnerable employment among women workers ranged from 41% in West and Central Asia to over 80% in South Asia.<sup>3</sup>

To address this we need coherent economic policies that generate living wage employment and that tackle gender discrimination in the labour markets; we need social protection systems that include support that women need for their reproductive work that is often unpaid or underpaid; we need progressive tax reforms and a financial transaction tax to finance basic social security and health care, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.

So while both the Expert Group Meeting and the Asia Pacific Dialogue were clear about the links between human rights, sustainability and the macroeconomic policy environment why is it that governments at **Rio+20** were resistant to addressing these inter-linkages? Most states concentrated on what they considered their 'big ticket' items of finance, trade and aid with little interest to incorporate a gender analysis into these macroeconomic issues. Some examples:

**Gender and agriculture:** Reference is made to the critical role that rural women play in food security through traditional sustainable agricultural practices including traditional seed supply systems. However these are under severe threat unless governments stop prioritising export oriented agribusiness. Why were such wrong-headed policies not addressed in Rio+20? Will the Post 2015 agenda be any different? Will governments address the root causes of the food crisis including corporate control over food production and speculation in agricultural commodities?

**Gender and climate change:** It's widely recognized that those living in poverty, the majority of whom are women, are disproportionately affected by climate change. This is true because women have disproportionate responsibility for providing food, fuel and water for their households - all areas that are affected by climate change. There is also broad recognition of the critical role that women play in actively building resilience and in reducing emissions. So given this common understanding why were governments at Rio+20 resistant to addressing the linkages between gender and climate change?

**Gender and work:** A reference is made to women's "unpaid work" but a failure to recognize the unequal and unfair burden that women carry in sustaining care and wellbeing. Development is not sustainable if care and social reproduction are not recognized as intrinsically linked with the productive economy and reflected in macroeconomic policy-making.

**Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights:** In the power struggles over global economic justice issues at Rio+20 sexual and reproductive health and rights was treated like a poker chip. There is no acceptable reason to trade women's and young people's sexual and reproductive rights and health. The Post 2015 Agenda must challenge the narrow MDG agenda and affirm women's fundamental rights to bodily autonomy and integrity. In the words of my sisters from the Pacific (unveil t-shirt) "My body is not your political battleground." Not now, and not in 2015.

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<sup>3</sup> Sen, Gita. (forthcoming) "Addressing Risks, Vulnerabilities and the Need for Social Protection in the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Challenges and Pointers".

On this road to 2015 we need to reclaim as the basis the agreements from the key development conferences of the 1990s when the linkages between gender and all three pillars of sustainable development were acknowledged. Governments even acknowledged the threats to sustainability and women's rights. For example, the negative effects of structural adjustment programmes on women, especially in terms of cut-backs in social services, education and health and in the removal of subsidies on food and fuel. Today there is no mention of the impacts on women's rights of damaging practices such as agribusiness, monoculture, land grabs, and commodity speculation that played a significant part in the food crisis.

Why are these failed policies not being challenged? Is it because they are succeeding for some? We have to ask ourselves who is benefiting from policies that undermine human rights and sustainability of the planet?

The Post 2015 Agenda must be relevant to current realities in the context of multiple, converging crises including the financial crisis, economic recession, food, climate and biodiversity crisis.

It must give us the handles to move away from the failed international financial and trade institutions and make significant structural changes in the global development architecture.

It is time to confront the inequitable distribution of assets and property whether between those who hold land, financial, and intellectual property and those who do not, between those who decide over global economic governance policies and those who do not, and between those who control their bodily integrity and yet have little responsibility for the care of future generations and those who do not have bodily integrity and yet are expected to fulfil obligations to feed and nurture others.

The human rights framework is helpful in addressing these structural inequalities. While there is a lot of talk about a rights-based approach to development there are no substantial investments in women's human rights as a goal in itself. The Post 2015 framework must be based on the universality and indivisibility of human rights taking into account intersecting inequalities and ensuring non-discrimination based on gender, age, class, caste, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and abilities.

The human rights instruments have been available to us for more than 50 years and yet we have been slow in integrating this approach into policies and programs in a meaningful way. For example it would be helpful to use the human rights framework to regulate and hold corporations accountable or to look at how ODA supports international commitments to gender equality and women's rights.

Centrally important in the advancement of gender equality and women's rights is the active participation of women's organizations at national, regional and global levels. Their continued funding and engagement in the Post 2015 process is critical. Who else will ensure that governments don't suffer from amnesia and begin to seriously address the structural transformations that are required for gender, economic and ecological justice?



## After 2015: progress and challenges for development

By Claire Melamed and Lucy Scott

**T**he Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have set the benchmark for global development policy since 2000. In 2015 the current set of MDG targets will expire, and although much progress will have been made, many targets will not have been met. What is the most effective way to take the MDG agenda forward after 2015?

This is a live political debate. The outcome document for the UN summit of September 2010 requires the UN Secretary General to ‘... make recommendations in his annual reports, as appropriate, for further steps to advance the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015’. Political capital is already being invested in a post-2015 agreement, and it is becoming an increasingly active agenda for non-governmental organisations. There are a range of options being proposed. These vary in ambition from keeping the current targets and extending the deadline, to keeping the current structure with some tweaking of existing targets and adding some new ones, or to the most ambitious aim of replacing the MDGs with a wholly new structure.

Whatever the practicalities of a post-2015 agreement, it is essential that it learns the right lessons from the past and has the right analysis of the future, if it is to be both politically acceptable and useful in reducing poverty. This Background Note maps out current thinking on the impact of the MDGs and options for the future.

### Lessons from the past: MDG success and failure

A key component of drawing-up the post-2015 agenda is learning lessons from the MDG approach through examining what has worked and what hasn’t (Moss, 2010). Quite a lot has worked. In stark, and welcome,

contrast to the conventional narrative of a few years ago, many of the stories coming out of Africa, Asia and Latin America today are of progress and success ([www.developmentprogress.org](http://www.developmentprogress.org)). Not all of this can be attributed to the MDGs, but it seems clear that they have helped to raise the profile of poverty and development issues around the world. While this is a strength, it is also a weakness as other important development issues risk being neglected.

### MDG successes

One key achievement of the current MDGs is the extent to which they have mobilised public and political support for development. In donor countries this has been reflected both in the increases in aid pledges in 2005 (Moss, 2010) (though rather less was delivered than was promised in most countries), and in the growth of broader campaigns such as ‘Make Poverty History’, which called for reforms of global trade rules and debt relief as well as aid increases. The MDGs were the framework for much of the political activity around aid in the period up to 2005, defining, for example, the amount of aid required as the amount needed to reach the MDGs. The range of political and popular support might have been greater than their designers ever anticipated (Vandemoortele and Delamonica, 2010).

In developing countries too, the MDGs have had an impact on the priority given to poverty reduction. A survey of 100 civil society actors in a number of countries revealed a strong belief that development has become a higher priority because of the MDGs (Pollard et al., 2010). Activists from the millennium campaign argue that the MDGs have also helped to build a popular movement against poverty in many countries.

Any post-2015 agreement needs to maintain popular momentum. Perhaps as important as the goals



themselves for mobilising civil society organisations in developing countries is the process through which a post-2015 agreement is drawn-up. This is certainly the view of representatives of many of those organisations (Pollard et al., 2010).

The MDGs have the political and popular power that they have in part because they are clear and concise (Jahan, 2010). Any post-2015 settlement will have to balance the need for clarity with the desire to adequately reflect the complexity of development.

One way of doing this would be of course to retain the current structure. They could either have an extended timeline, with suggestions for a deadline of either 2020 or 2025, or alternatively no timeline (Sumner, 2009). Dispensing with time-bound targets however, could fatally weaken the incentivising power and influence of the MDGs (Manning, 2009). Others argue that it would be the ‘worst scenario’ to continue with the current MDGs. Post-2015 discussions must provide an opportunity to respond to some of the criticisms of the MDGs (Vandemoortele, 2009).

### MDG weaknesses

The experience of the MDGs has provided lessons about where and how global agreements can be a catalyst for change, and where they are less relevant. The main criticisms of the MDG approach have been the following:

**MDGs are donor-led:** A major criticism of the MDGs, rightly or wrongly, is that they are a donor-led agenda and pay little attention to local context (Sumner, 2009; Shepherd, 2008). As such, they penalise and stigmatise the poorest countries where achieving the goals is a greater challenge (Easterly, 2009).

Instead, it is argued that goals should be tailored to national circumstances and priorities, treating countries differently (Johannesburg Global Summit 2011). This could include adjusting targets for GDP (Langford, 2010). A second important principle is participation. More space is needed for locally-led strategies that emphasise the agency of citizens (IBON International). At the very least, any new agreement must go with, not against, the grain of politics and policy in developing countries (Shepherd, 2008).

However, there is a risk that focusing in too much on the national level will reduce the global reach and relevance that were such defining features of the MDGs. This trade-off will have to be considered carefully by policy-makers negotiating a post-2015 agreement.

**MDGs miss out on crucial dimensions of development:** Critics identify many ‘missing dimensions’ of the MDGs (German Watch, 2010). These include climate change, the quality of education, human rights, economic growth, infrastructure, good governance and security (Vandemoortele and Delamonica, 2010).

One response could be to enlarge the scope and number of MDGs, an ‘MDG plus’ option. However, it may be a mistake to believe that any development goals can perfectly capture and cover every dimension of human development (Vandemoortele and Delamonica, 2010). There is a danger that over burdening the MDGs would weaken their influence (Jahan, 2010).

An alternative could be to simplify the existing MDGs while adding additional dimensions of development; an ‘MDG compact’ view (Bourguignon et al., 2008). The three health-related goals could, for example, be collapsed into one overall health goal (Vandemoortele and Delamonica, 2010). This ‘MDG compact’ approach could involve taking a set of three or four ‘core’ universal goals plus a small set of three or four locally defined goals and/or goals that go beyond human development (Moss, 2010).

### MDGs neglect the poorest and most vulnerable:

The MDGs are based on average progress at a national or global level. In measuring progress, there is a risk that some people will fall through the net. In some countries MDG progress looks impressive, while the situation for the very poorest is actually getting worse (Save the Children, 2010). In addition, only two of the MDGs call explicitly for gender-disaggregated measures of progress. A failure to deal with gender issues risks failing to understand properly the gendered nature of many poverty problems and is a barrier to achieving the MDGs (Holmes and Jones, 2010).

One way to address this criticism would be to adopt a human rights approach post-2015 (Langford, 2010). A second would be to focus more directly on inequality and to have targets or indicators that require progress to be more equitably shared, including between men and women. Both approaches could be politically contentious, and again there will be trade-offs for policy-makers between achieving the best outcome and achieving the strongest political consensus.

## What should a post-2015 agreement do?

### It must tackle the most pressing development problems

The current goals and targets that make up the MDGs were debated and agreed in the late 1990s, when the world looked quite different. Most people lived in rural areas. Most poor people lived in poor countries. Climate change was a far-off concern, and far from the mainstream political issue that it is today. There was more optimism about what economic growth could deliver in terms of new jobs and improved living standards for all.

A global strategy for development in 2015 will have to confront different challenges to those of the 1990s.

In particular, the MDGs emerged in a relatively stable period, while the post-2015 world is likely to be characterised by multiple crises and sources of instability, including finance and climate (Sumner and Tiwari, 2010). Inequality within nations already poses a threat to the achievement of the MDGs (Vandemoortele, 2009) with many poor people now living in middle-income countries. What are the biggest current poverty problems, and how could a post-2015 agreement mobilise the necessary solutions?

Some key changes to be addressed in a post-2015 agreement include:

- **Urbanisation.** Most of the world's population now lives in cities. While that is not yet true of the world's poor, growing migrations to cities, and the relationships between city and countryside, are a key part of the realities of poor people's lives. The move to the city can be a catalyst for increased wealth and opportunity, or can trap people into a life of poverty and insecurity. The current MDG framework has been poor at driving the kind of policy and politics that would most effectively reduce urban poverty (Grant, 2011; Hasan et al., 2005). A post-2015 agreement will have to do better.
- **Climate change.** A fundamental criticism of the MDGs is their lack of attention to climate change, both in terms of the environmental sustainability of development pathways and in terms of the threats posed by climate change to development success (Urban, 2010). While global agreements on climate change are being discussed elsewhere, for the post-2015 era two questions are crucial. First, global agreements have to work together so that responses to climate change also accelerate poverty reduction, rather diverting aid and weakening the focus on poverty. Second, climate change has provoked a new interest in risk and vulnerability as key aspects of poverty. A post-2015 agreement should increase the resilience of poor people to shocks, if it is to properly address current poverty problems.
- **Chronic poverty and the rise of inequality.** We now know that poverty reduction is highly uneven, and that social, cultural and economic factors act together to trap some people in poverty even if average incomes are increasing. Meanwhile, the MDGs are criticised for being weak on equity. How can the realities of chronic poverty and inequality be reflected in a post-2015 agreement? Proposals include introducing targets to reduce poverty severity and depth or making MDG progress conditional on targets being reached in all regions of the country or among all population groups (Langford, 2010). Another proposal concerns social protection, an issue that has risen up the policy

agenda since 2000. Universal social protection could contribute to meeting many of the MDGs and reduce poverty and vulnerability (Shepherd, 2008).

- **Jobs and equitable growth.** Rising unemployment, with its human cost, its link to political instability, and its waste of productive resources, is shaping up to be one of the biggest economic and political issues of all in many developing countries. MDG 1 has a target on employment and latterly more attention has been paid to this issue. But some observers argue that it is too little, too late.

One criticism of the MDGs is that their focus on poverty and social indicators, at the expense of employment creation, makes them a form of 'welfare colonialism' (Vandemoortele, 2009). A new set of goals could focus on decent work and labour standards (ILO, 2009), and maximise the transmission mechanisms between growth and poverty reduction through job creation, but also redistribution through government fiscal policy (Melamed et al., 2008). The question is what governments and donors can actually do to create jobs and foster equitable growth, and how could an international agreement contribute?

### It must reflect current thinking on development and aid

The MDGs are firmly embedded in the 'human development' paradigm of development (Hulme, 2010). This was conceived as an alternative to a view that development could be measured entirely through economic growth. Building on that idea, other development paradigms are now competing for space in policy debates. Well-being is one, a human rights-based approach is another. Both imply different ways of measuring whether progress is being achieved, and different policy priorities to achieve change (Langford, 2010; McGregor and Sumner, 2010).

MDGs are also based on a donor-recipient model of aid, where developing countries have domestic financing needs, for example to provide health or education services, which rich countries can help them meet through aid. For the poorest countries, this will continue to be true. However, as the poorest countries are also the most politically fragile and vulnerable to disasters, traditional development aid and humanitarian assistance will have to work better together to achieve both short-term relief and long-term change (Shepherd, 2008).

With the majority of poor people now in middle-income countries, the donor/recipient model may no longer be the right framework for the global actions required to end poverty. And given increasing political attention in all countries to global problems such

as climate change or security concerns, this model no longer reflects the reality of global political relationships. A post-2015 agreement might impose more demands on richer countries, to improve trade rules, tackle carbon emissions or even reduce consumption (Glennie, 2009). It might also be framed more around an understanding of finance for 'global public goods' (Severino and Ray, 2010), rather than traditional aid spending.

## 2015 – then what?

The MDGs can claim some major successes, though much remains to be done. Generating the political will and energy for a post-2015 agenda that learns

from both success and failure, and is appropriate to today's problems will be a challenge for both political leadership and academic dexterity.

A post-2015 agreement does not need to encapsulate everything that is known about how to reduce poverty. Instead, it needs to focus on those aspects of development that can be addressed through coordinated global action. The quest should not be for the perfect agreement, but for the one that seems most likely to work.

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# LOCALIZING SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: CONSIDERATION FOR POST-2015 GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Policy Brief October 2012



## Background

The deadline set by the United Nations to achieve the MDGs is just three years away. Discussions on developing a new global development agenda to replace the MDGs are on-going. The global goals that are agreed at the end of those discussions must be accompanied by effective implementation mechanisms. The challenge for all governments and development partners is how to create a system of governance that translates global consensus into local action and results. The experience of implementing the MDGs offers some lessons on how to proceed.

When the MDGs were launched, the idea was for conventional sectoral systems to be used to implement the programmes. With that understanding, poverty reduction strategy programmes and sector-wide approaches were adopted as implementation strategies. Sector institutions and ministries, including finance, health, education, agriculture and forestry, were strengthened to lead implementation of the sectoral goals. Development partners adopted corresponding funding processes that involved direct budgetary support, and there was an assumption that countries would channel budgetary funding to these sectors to support MDG implementation.

The mid-term evaluation of the MDGs in 2008 introduced certain key aspects shared by the United Nations Secretary-General.<sup>1</sup> There was a clear indication that the achievement of the MDGs was not just a pursuit of discrete actions to improve statistics in the respective sectors, but a long-term concerted process that required elaboration of issues on ownership, local accountability, viability of local institutions, and sustainability of gains. This introduced the term 'Localization of the MDGs'.<sup>2</sup> Development partners and sector ministries at the national level sought to reflect MDG targets that were relevant and realistic to local settings. Localization of the MDGs thus made local governance and local development central, not only for achieving the MDGs, but to provide a reliable institutional base for sustaining the MDGs' key social and economic gains.

### What do Local Governance and Local Development mean?

**Local governance** refers to a range of interactions between multiple actors (local governments, private sector, civil society and community-based organizations), institutions, systems and processes at the sub-national level through which services are provided to citizens, groups, enterprises and local communities. The interaction involves decision-making, planning, financing, implementation, monitoring, accountability and management of local development processes. This does not rest only on the powers, resources and actions of local governments, but also the important space and roles given to non-state actors and local citizens. Local governance is therefore an important input to the process of achieving local development.

**Local development** involves the provision of basic infrastructure and services, creation of livable, integrated cities, towns and rural areas, mobilization of local revenue and promotion of local economic development.

## The experience of the local governance approach in the implementation of the MDGs

The introduction of a role for sub-national governments plus recognition of local governance and local development in the implementation of the MDGs added a sense of urgency to the localization process.

<sup>1</sup>UN (2008) Committing to action: Achieving the MDGs. Background note by the UN Secretary-General to the high level event on the MDGs, 28 September 2008

<sup>2</sup>UNDP (2011) Urban Millennium Partnership: Localizing MDGs for meeting the challenge of MDGs in cities



Local initiatives became central to national and sub-national development plans and poverty reduction strategies. Development partners, governments, NGOs and civil society groups not only supported local institutions, both urban and rural, in interpreting the MDG targets to local needs, they also facilitated the planning, ownership and nurturing of local institutions to sustain the gains.

In their response to MDG 1 (eradicating extreme poverty and hunger), sub-national governments started local economic development programmes with support from national governments and development partners in many countries in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Asia. Support to sub-national governments brought about improvements in the capacities of local enterprises to create economic opportunities, utilize local resources, and increase local incomes in activities that also targeted women and youth.<sup>3</sup> For MDG 2 (achieving universal primary education), sub-national governments in many countries are traditionally responsible for providing infrastructure for basic schools. Sub-national governments partnered with sector ministries in charge of education and other development partners to provide incentives for increasing school attendance and reducing drop-out rates, particularly for girls. In Africa and Asia, sub-national governments in many countries implemented free basic school programmes, school feeding and free transportation programmes. They provided a platform for mobilizing farmers, entrepreneurs and civil society groups who participated in the school feeding programme. Reports suggest that this has been a significant success (WFP, 2011).<sup>4</sup> In almost all countries where these interventions were implemented by sub-national institutions, basic school participation increased. Women's empowerment advanced from advocacy to manifestation when sub-national institutions took the lead in implementing programmes. Gender analysis and application featured in local representation, data-collection and decision-making, development prioritization, resource allocation and reporting. In countries such as Armenia, Chile, Rwanda, Tanzania, Samoa and Bangladesh, this has contributed to significant MDG3 gains.<sup>5</sup>

Sub-national governments have been responsible for providing and managing public health facilities in their respective jurisdictions. The response to MDGs 4, 5 and 6 has been monumental, as sub-national governments continued to be the focus for mobilizing NGOs, community groups, and resources, and for using local systems for campaigns on immunization, maternal care, HIV-AIDs, and distribution of mosquito nets. In many of these countries, institutions such as primary healthcare units were established and have become part of the regular sub-national government administrative structure. This system has made it possible for healthcare to routinely reach much wider areas and populations. The compilation of health data and reports on health indices at the sub-national level has helped to target health responses. The United Nations AMICALL programme, which involved 1,500 mayors in 13 countries, has been acknowledged as an appropriate and essential response to HIV/AIDs prevention and control in Africa.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> UNDP, UNCDF and UN-Habitat supported the initiation of Local Economic Development programmes in 15 least developed countries in Africa including post-conflict countries such as Burundi, Sierra-Leone and Somalia. [Southern and Eastern Africa | UNCDF](#); [UN-HABITAT](#)

<sup>4</sup> The WFP document, *School feeding cost benefit analysis* (WFP, 2011), recorded countries such as Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Laos, Mozambique, Malawi, Cambodia, Zambia <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/newsroom/wfp208643.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.undg.org/docs/11421/MDG3\\_1954-UNDG-MDG3-LR.pdf](http://www.undg.org/docs/11421/MDG3_1954-UNDG-MDG3-LR.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [Amicall – Alliance of mayors and municipal leaders on HIV/AIDS in Africa](#)

In many countries, urban and natural resource management remains the responsibility of sub-national governments. In 2008, the Union of Cities and Local Governments questioned how MDG 7 (ensuring environmental sustainability) could be achieved without the keen involvement of sub-national governments. Sub-national governments used innovative strategies, such as public-private partnership, community management schemes and partnerships with informal producers and dwellers, to improve water, sanitation and slum conditions in many municipalities. The challenge of climate change and natural resource management emphasizes ownership, local participation and local financing mechanisms. Responding to these challenges has been a significant task, particularly with large-scale strategies that involve central government delivery mechanisms. The few innovations that do exist have involved municipalities and communities.<sup>7</sup>

#### Limitations of the MDG approach

MDGs influenced the setting of somewhat rigid national policy agendas, following international benchmarks, rather than **local conditions** and often ignoring the complexities of the development process; in the global debate, the MDGs led to overemphasizing financial resource gaps to the detriment of attention for **institutional building and structural transformations**.

*From The future we want (UNDP, 2012)*

Local governance systems and institutions have provided mechanisms for implementing the MDGs. They have created avenues that have localized the MDGs in terms of ownership, participation and accountability. They have provided the means with which to reach out to beneficiaries in conflict and post-conflict areas. And they have established an institutional base for sustaining MDG gains.<sup>8</sup>

#### Local governance and sustainable human development

Discussion of the 'Beyond 2015' development agenda has so far been shaped by two global forums, the 4<sup>th</sup> High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, Republic of Korea, in November 2011, and the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012. While the Busan forum emphasized the role of local governance in ensuring effective local ownership and accountability, the Rio+20 conference underlined the role of local governance in mobilizing views for decision-making and harnessing local potential for planning and implementation of policies for sustainable development. The outcome document recognized that the key development challenges now and for the future are **poverty, inequality and sustainable environment**.<sup>9</sup> Based on the MDG experience and substantial

#### Local governance and Busan

The Busan partnership emphasized the critical role that local governments play in linking citizens with government and ensuring ownership of countries' development agendas. It pledged to further support local governments to enable them to assume, more fully, roles above and beyond service delivery to enhance participation and accountability at the sub-national levels.

*From the UCLG Report, 2012*

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/uclg/upload/news/newsdocs/mdg\\_flyer\\_en.pdf](http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/uclg/upload/news/newsdocs/mdg_flyer_en.pdf); The MDG Centre

<sup>8</sup> [Millennium Declaration and the MDGs](#)

<sup>9</sup> Paragraph 3 of the Busan Outcome document [http://www.aideffectiveness.org/busan/hlf4/images/stories/hlf4/OUTCOME\\_DOCUMENT\\_FINAL\\_EN.pdf](http://www.aideffectiveness.org/busan/hlf4/images/stories/hlf4/OUTCOME_DOCUMENT_FINAL_EN.pdf); and Paragraph 37 of [The Future We Want Rio+20 Outcome Document](#) highlight these challenges.

evidence from many countries – middle-income, low income, least developed and post-conflict – paragraph 42 of *The Future We Want, Rio+20 Outcome Document* clearly underlines the role of local governance and local development in a future development agenda.<sup>10</sup> They provide a framework with which to engage citizens in **decision-making** and **accountability**, **information gathering** for effective decision-making, **planning** and **implementation** and accounting for **development results**.<sup>11</sup>

Consensus is emerging globally that people must utilize available resources to enlarge their choices, capabilities and needs – but they must do so without compromising the needs of future generations. This implies that development must operate within a defined ethical framework, which requires some regulation without constraining the necessary space for local diversity and innovation. Local governance as a policy and practice provides that opportunity, because it harmonizes societies' interests, aspirations and diversities in the use of available resources in an equitable manner.

Sustainable human development lies at the core of the global development discourse. It requires a balance between economic demand, social satisfaction and environmental resources. Keeping that balance has been the responsibility of central governments through policy development and resource disbursement. The implementation and manifestation of the balance takes place at the local level and is referred to in this context as 'local space'.

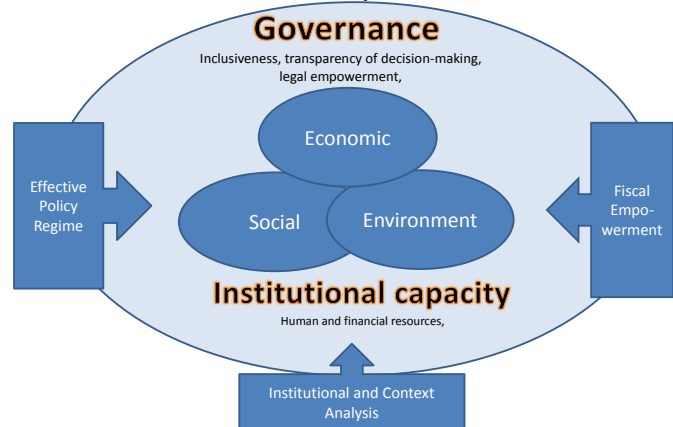
The management of this local space to maintain the balance depends on local governance and local development arrangements (relationship between the centre and the local space, the level of inclusiveness in decision-making, transparency in administration, demand for accountability

### Does local governance have a place at Rio?

The Rio+20 conference concluded that sustainable development requires the meaningful involvement and active participation of regional, national and sub-national legislatures and judiciaries, local authorities, as well as other stakeholder in processes that contribute to decision-making, planning and implementation of policies and programmes for sustainable development at all levels.

From the UCLG Report, 2012

**Figure 1. Achieving Sustainable Human Development in Local Spaces**



### Sustainable human development

Sustainable human development is defined as the enlargement of people's choices and capabilities through the formation of social capital so as to meet as equitably as possible the needs of the current generations without compromising the needs of future ones. It focuses on development that not only generates economic growth, but distributes its benefits equitably, that regenerates the environment rather than destroying it, that empowers people rather than marginalizes them.

From UNDP's *Human Development Report*, 2011

<sup>10</sup> [The Future We Want Rio+20 Outcome Document](#)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.aideffectiveness.org/busanhlf4/images/stories/hlf4/OUTCOME\\_DOCUMENT\\_FINAL\\_EN.pdf](http://www.aideffectiveness.org/busanhlf4/images/stories/hlf4/OUTCOME_DOCUMENT_FINAL_EN.pdf); [The Future We Want Rio+20 Outcome Document](#).

and respect for the rights of minority and marginalized groups) and the level of local institutional capacity (human and financial resources, and interaction of the institutions). Paragraph 37 of the Rio+20 outcome aptly captures this analogy: “We reaffirm that to achieve our sustainable development goals, we need institutions at all levels that are effective, transparent, accountable and democratic”.

### The place of local governance in the post-2015 development agenda

Local governance systems provide a useful platform for the interaction of different players (community leaders, civil society, private business sector, public sector official, local political representatives, local public servants and minority and marginalized groups). The MDG experience implementation demonstrates that citizens’ engagement solely in policy discussions and local electoral processes may not be enough to provide and solidify local identification and ownership. Modern communication facilities have led to a high demand by citizens for engagement. The shift from a paternalistic government to an engaging government calls for multi-stakeholder decision-making with transparent information sharing and regular mobilization of local views, not just for policy development but for planning, implementation and accounting for development results.

Strengthening the role played by local governments through organized development dialogues will ensure that decisions and choices are not only **inclusive**, but **relevant and locally owned**. This engagement has accounted for the changed phase of MDGs. The pursuit of sustainable human development therefore demands a balance of local interest among various stakeholders, demanding more dialogue and engagement to establish agreements, commitments and **ownership**. Local governance and local development respond to this vital element of balance – creating a sense of **ownership** and commitment for **sustainable human development**.

#### Local governance in Rwanda

In Rwanda, local governance and local development represented a way to rebuild trust, give local people greater voice in governance processes, increase transparency and maintain political stability. Local authorities are thus implementers of plans and policies drawn up with them at the national level. Without local governance, there can never be a sustainable development process.

Hon. James Musoni, Minister for Local Administration, Government of Rwanda (2008)

Local governance and local development provide the most practical means of developing accountability, because they effectively serve as a fulcrum for beneficiaries to relate plans to delivery, targets to achievements and resources to outputs. They provide a powerful and practical way for ordinary citizens to demand accountability from elected representatives and public officials – and because local institutions are located where services are delivered, results can readily be verified by beneficiaries.

**“Local governance and local development provide the most practical means of developing accountability”**

Given that sustainable human development requires ready, specific and reliable information that reflects location, gender, income and other characteristics for effective monitoring and decision-making, local government institutions are well placed to provide that. In many developing countries, the unpredictable nature of these elements can make information gathering demanding and too frequent. Sub-national government institutions are closer to the sources of information, so they are better

positioned to collect data and interpret nuances than national government agencies. The ever increasing demand for information suggests that sub-national government, both rural and urban, will have a key role to play in the next development agenda.

Local governance and local development presents opportunity for local people to identify their own needs and aspirations and to create strategies and actions to respond appropriately to issues that affect them, define targets, and mobilize resources. It is through this essential function of sub-national governments that relevant services (e.g., education, health services, access to water and sanitation, agricultural extension, roads and other economic infrastructure) are provided. Local governance also offers appropriate ways to manage local diversities, minority needs and specific local situations. A local governance and development system with defined, recognized and statutory functions provides a clear **institutional base to coordinate local actions and initiatives**, serve as a link between local aspirations and national perspectives and provides a reference point and focus for local development.

**“Local governance offers appropriate ways to manage local diversities, minority needs and specific local situations”**

The performance of sub-national governments determines to a large extent whether citizen entitlements to universal primary basic education, basic health care, water, sanitation and drainage networks, and a safe environment are guaranteed. The performance of local governments as service providers and regulators of local service provision help determine whether many of the MDG targets are met and can be met and, indeed, whether the next development agenda can be achieved and sustained. Local governance and local development therefore constitute a nexus for responding to the challenges of poverty, inequality and sustainable environment.

### **Challenges of local governance and local development**

The implementation of a local governance and local development framework brings a number of challenges. Sub-national governments were often accused of being corrupt, irresponsible and a repository for recalcitrant and incorrigible public servants. Although that situation has greatly improved since the 1990s, the psychological challenge remains.<sup>12</sup> The main practical constraints to local governance and local development include statutory and policy weaknesses, inadequate capacity and insufficient resources. Many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America have developed decentralization policies and programmes as part of broader strategies to establish effective local governance and local development processes. But even when statutes and policies have been established to devolve decision-making power to sub-national governments, they are often not implemented. In many countries, the framework for local governance continues to be ad-hoc and at the discretion of the central executive.

In Africa and Asia, many sub-national governments still lack the basic capacity to apply tools and methods to basic functions, such as planning, budgeting, revenue mobilization and service delivery. The situation is worse in countries that have not clarified the division of functions between national and sub-national institutions.<sup>13</sup> The greatest challenge for sub-national governments is the availability of resources for their work. Fiscal decisions in most cases are still centralized and even when decentralized, funds are often inadequate. Opportunities for raising local revenues are limited, particularly in rural sub-

<sup>12</sup> BARDHAN P., MOOKERHJEE D. (2000) *Corruption and Decentralisation of Infrastructure Delivery in Developing Countries*. Working Paper, University of California, Berkeley

<sup>13</sup> UNDP (2012) *The Strengthening Local Government Capacities in Southern and Eastern Africa*. UNDP Johannesburg  
UN ESCAP (2006) *Local Government in Asia and the Pacific: A Comparative Analysis of 15 Countries*. UNDESA, New York

national governments. That, of course, inhibits the delivery of local services and programmes. Notwithstanding these challenges, in countries where sub-national governments are provided with the necessary support to operate – Philippines, Rwanda, Bangladesh, Ghana, Nicaragua, Tanzania and Chile, for instance – sub-national governments have been able to provide leadership to respond to municipal challenges as well as leading in the implementation of the MDGs.

### Policy implications for sustainable human development

The potential for sub-national institutions to respond effectively to hunger, inequality and a sustainable environment is enormous and remains central to the implementation of any new development agenda. But the appropriate conditions must be in place if this opportunity is to be grasped and expanded. Key areas for consideration and discussion include:

1. **Decentralization:** Decentralization policies (or a lack thereof) determine the nature, structure and quality of local governance and its ability to implement development processes and achieve positive outcomes. Promoting fiscal, political and administrative decentralization may be a key condition for the effective implementation of local governance and local representation.
2. **Relationship between sub-national and national governments:** This relationship is necessary to ensure the coordinated articulation and implementation of development priorities, both local and national. The relationship may benefit from strengthening when there are clearly defined lines of responsibility, authority and resources between national and sub-national government.
3. **Capacity development for sub-national institutions:** In situations where personnel exist, but lack the necessary skills, knowledge and ability to deliver, training is essential. But where there are no personnel to carry out the assigned functions, there may be a need to facilitate **the administrative functioning of sub-national institutions:** Specific tools and methods should be developed to support community leaders, community based groups, traditional authorities to facilitate civic engagement and accountability.
4. **Predictable resource regime for sub-national governments:** Effective programme planning and implementation requires a predictable and reliable source of funding. There is a need to institute measures that enable national government and development partners to commit to a medium-term financial framework for sub-national governments. Defined and fixed proportions from central government investment funds could be earmarked for investment support to sub-national levels on a mid-term perspective of three to five years.
5. **Sub-national governments delivering special services:** Sub-national institutions have been adept in responding to demands for regular municipal services, such as health, education, water and sanitation. They have, though, been challenged by new demands of urbanization, employment creation and sustainable environment. Special policy packages could be developed to provide the necessary legal, institutional and resources incentives to deal with these local demands.
6. **Local revenue mobilization:** MDG implementation at the local level depends very much on donor support and national government transfers. Many urban local governments that are in the position to mobilize a substantial part of the local revenue are not doing so. Successful implementation of sustainable development goals will depend on improving the fiscal effort of sub-national governments to mobilize local resources.

### Setting goals for local governance after 2015

Positioning local governance and local development at the global level in a new global agenda that includes sustainable human development demands a common global understanding. More importantly,



it must identify and agree on areas for development and measurement. Here, local governance and local development will focus on responding to the challenges of poverty, inequality and a sustainable environment. It would also be technically convenient if the measurement is stratified to correspond to global, regional and country targets. It is more expedient to express a country target to be relevant at a sub-national government level than working from a global goal, which may be considerably vague. The challenge of how to build on these target chains from the sub-national (local) level to aggregate a measurable global result still remains a challenge.<sup>14</sup>

Local governance and local development have huge potential to translate the global development agenda to the local reality. Providing legislative and political support to countries to institutionalize a local governance framework – as well as supporting them to define and articulate a vision for local development – is the way forward in the implementation of new global development goals. There should also be a focus on developing tools and methodologies that enhance the capacity of local governance institutions to coordinate and manage local public expenditure systems. Support to civic engagement that ensures equity and inclusive development will be needed. Finally, local governance and local development systems must be harnessed for local service delivery and as a key channel through which to achieve sustainable human development.

**“Local governance and local development have huge potential to translate the global development agenda to the local reality”**

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<sup>14</sup> [Measuring-Democracy-and-Democratic-Governance-in-post-2015 | UNDP](#)





## PARLIAMENT'S ROLE IN DEFINING AND PROMOTING THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

As we approach the MDG deadline, development partners must look beyond 2015 and consider the role of democratic governance and parliaments in continuing to promote development objectives. This will be particularly important if the international community commits itself to a new set of goals. Democratic governance has not received enough attention in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but is increasingly advocated for the post-2015 development agenda. There are many successful MDG elements relevant to parliaments that new development goals should maintain. And there are some clear gaps they should strive to address. An assessment of these successes and gaps will help prepare the ground for parliamentary engagement in the possible next generation of goals. This policy brief looks at some of the lessons learned and entry points for defining the role of parliaments in promoting the post-2015 development agenda.

### *Parliaments' contribution to the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda*

Parliamentary systems differ, so a 'one size fits all' approach will not help to determine the extent to which parliaments have been successful in building on political will and momentum to deliver on the MDGs. Parliaments around the world have played varying roles in contributing to their country's achievement of the MDGs. Parliaments in developed countries should ensure that their governments honour their commitment to allocate 0.7 percent of GDP to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), as called for by the Monterrey Consensus. They should also pay greater attention to the quality of aid. But experience suggests that they have often been sidelined in discussions on ODA, resulting in low

accountability for the budgeting of aid and its allocation to MDG achievement.

**Parliaments in developed countries should ensure that their governments honor their commitment to allocate 0.7 percent of GDP to ODA**

In Mongolia, the Parliament adopted a resolution on the national MDGs that included a ninth MDG on human rights, democratic governance, and anti-corruption in addition to the globally recognized eight MDGs.<sup>1</sup> In Sweden, though, the government launched a bill – Shared Responsibility: Sweden's Policy for Global Development – that brought all components of Sweden's development policy together, and took a comprehensive approach to policy areas (debt, trade, agriculture, education, environment, and migration). This legislation ensures a coherent and consistent development policy, because the country speaks with one voice in international fora. The bill was debated and improved by the Swedish. Parliament further requested an annual report on progress on implementation of the new policy.

In developing countries, parliaments need to ensure that their governments mobilize the resources necessary for development. They should establish national strategies to adapt policies to the MDGs and participate in formulating and monitoring poverty reduction strategies (PRS). It is now axiomatic that greater parliamentary engagement and greater accountability are required in the process of developing PRS.

**In developing countries, parliaments need to ensure that their governments mobilize the resources necessary for development**

Internal parliamentary mechanisms related to work on the MDGs also differ between countries. In some, working groups

have been established that promote engagement and discussion of the MDGs within the parliament. For example, the Bangladesh's Parliamentary Caucus on education has succeeded in introducing legislation in parliament on a constitutional amendment to recognize education as a fundamental right.<sup>2</sup> The Bangladesh's first parliamentary caucus on education was composed of representatives from all the political parties in parliament and its work was supported by the People's Empowerment Fund, a non-profit legislative advocacy group. The Parliamentary Caucus on MDGs in the Kenyan Parliament consists of an informal group of Members of Parliament (MPs). It provides a platform with which to engage civil society and to discuss issues related to achievement of the MDGs. Similar mechanisms exist in India and Indonesia.<sup>3</sup> In India, a well-established interaction between the executive and parliamentary committee on development issues further promotes greater political engagement on the national development agenda. Some parliaments have established standing committees on the MDGs (e.g., Nigeria). The absence of dedicated parliamentary mechanisms for the MDGs has not prevented countries from achieving most of their MDG targets (e.g., South Africa). Some of the lessons learned indicate that the existence of a parliamentary group on the MDGs has helped create awareness of the MDGs among MPs. But the key to success lies elsewhere. It is found, for example, in a strong national development agenda, in a strong executive-legislative working relationship, in a sufficiently resourced parliamentary committee structure, and in genuine parliamentary engagement on the national development agenda (where MDGs have been institutionalized in national targets and related development policies, including the MDG reports, and are discussed and debated in parliament).

Many countries routinely prepare national MDG progress reports – although, regrettably, most processes leading to the reports produced so far have not been fully participatory. National MDG reports and the targets to which countries have committed themselves are rarely discussed in national parliaments.

National parliaments have largely been overlooked as development actors and partners in MDG achievement. Similarly, parliaments have not often been engaged in PRS process in terms of providing oversight of performance and aid delivery results.

In the Parliament of Serbia, a Poverty Reduction Standing Committee was established. The Committee chair has been included as a member of the working group formed by the government to support analysis of the nationalized MDGs. This

is one example of how parliamentary committees can play a leadership role in MDG-related issues. Nigeria's success in meeting most of the goals is linked to the country's multi-sectoral infrastructural development. It is one of the few countries whose parliament has been pivotal in pushing the MDG agenda. From the stand-up campaign in Parliament to the creation of a standing committee, the Nigerian Parliament has made important efforts to engage and be profiled as highly committed to delivering on the MDGs.

**Nigeria is on track to achieve Goal 4 by 2015. It is one of the few countries whose parliament has been pivotal in pushing the MDG agenda forward**

Efforts are now being targeted at the 'off-track' MDGs and consolidating and sustaining results achieved so far.<sup>4</sup> Parliaments have also demonstrated a capacity and willingness to act. For example, the African Speakers of Parliaments and Presidents of Senate have unanimously adopted a landmark resolution on a Declaration of Commitment. This prioritizes parliamentary support for increased policy and budget action on maternal, newborn, and child health in African countries. This milestone was adopted at the 3rd Pan African Speakers Conference (17–18 October 2011), convened by the Pan-African Parliament in Johannesburg, South Africa. The commitment is the first of its kind by the African Speakers of Parliament, and is a significant marker in accelerating progress in Africa towards the attainment of MDGs 4 and 5 on Child and Maternal Health, respectively.<sup>5</sup>

Parliamentary engagement with development objectives should be sustained after 2015, at global, regional and national levels for possible nationally-determined goals. Engagement with regional (such as Parlato and the Pan African Parliament) and sub-regional parliaments (Parlacen, SADC PF, ECOWAS Parliament, and East African Legislative Assembly) should strongly link regional, sub-regional and national policy frameworks to strengthen cross-national learning, harmonization of policy and accountability of the executive at the supra-national level. Parliaments should be adequately supported to enable them to promote, and deliver on, the new set of goals. While specific post-2015 goals have not yet been determined, underlying trends and priorities shaping the development agenda have been identified, as have guiding principles relating to sustainability, inclusion and equity, and improvements in human security and fulfillment of human rights. Building on existing examples of where parliaments have strengthened democratic governance for the MDGs,

more active engagement of parliamentarians across the world should be encouraged so that there is greater public accountability for creating the policies and practices essential for achieving the post-2015 goals.

### **Parliamentary engagement with development objectives should be sustained after 2015**

Parliaments can make a direct difference by implementing nationally relevant development plans and budgets that are compliant with associated priorities defining the post-2015 development framework. These are inclusive social development, inclusive economic development, environmental sustainability, and peace and security.<sup>6</sup> Those priorities need to be further disaggregated to address the challenges of equity, equality and non-discrimination. Such an approach should be encompassed in a rigorous data collection and benchmarking exercise for the post-2015 goals. Parliaments can adopt legislation that specifically responds to these critical challenges, for example by passing laws that are sensitive to climate change, that foster employment and job creation, or address patterns of inequalities, demographic change/population growth, urbanization, infrastructure, and migration.<sup>7</sup> For example, citizens of Costa Rica have the right to a healthy environment and the government will provide and defend that right by enacting legislation that will provide a standard – and penalties for violating that standard. Finally, Parliaments could be the main champions in terms of promoting a dedicated goal on democratic governance at global, regional or national levels.

### ***Lessons learned from the MDGs in relation to parliaments***

The post-2015 development agenda will build on the momentum of, and lessons learned from, the MDGs. The need for country ownership, government accountability, and national policy was not sufficiently taken into account during the MDGs design and implementation, and is now being highlighted as a requirement to ensure that the new set of objectives is attained.<sup>8</sup> Parliaments are at the forefront of these imperatives, because they play a critical role in meeting those requirements through their lawmaking, budgeting, and oversight functions.

### ***Accountability***

Parliaments have a clear role in monitoring and holding governments to account for the international, regional and

national commitments they have made. Parliamentarians are also actively engaged in regional or sub-regional parliaments. Lack of accountability has been identified as a major weakness in MDG implementation. From the Paris Accord to the Accra Declaration to the recent statements from Busan, the international community has continued to express its hope that countries' institutions be sufficiently capacitated to ensure internal supervision of a national government's international commitments. Future goals would also benefit from clearer definition of responsibilities at the country level.<sup>9</sup> A stronger accountability scheme requires that parliaments and others – including local level elected representatives and institutions – engage throughout the policy-making process and the associated stages of the budget cycle to promote and deliver the post-2015 goals. Such an approach will strengthen political commitment and offer incentives for better service delivery for all.

Parliaments must become leaders in accountability at all levels to ensure the government is continuing to push for the achievement of future objectives and in meeting international commitments (including duties under international human rights standards, regional commitments). There are several tools that a parliament can use to monitor government actions, including policy implementation, expenditure review, and oversight of independent institutions.

### **Parliaments must become leaders in domestic accountability**

A parliament normally has a number of functional committees that reflect the various government ministries. It is the committees' role to monitor their respective ministries to ensure they are acting broadly in the interest of the citizens and that they are specifically, properly, and adequately implementing laws passed by the parliament to meet certain policy objectives.

Once a state budget has been passed, one committee is normally designated (e.g., Public Accounts Committee) to review government expenditures. Often, this is done in conjunction with the State Auditing Institution (e.g., Cour des Comptes). It is through annual parliamentary reviews of proposed government expenditures that parliaments can

### **Parliamentary reviews of proposed government expenditures can help ensure that adequate funding is allocated to achieving the post-2015 objectives**

ensure adequate funding is allocated for the achievement of the post-2015 objectives, and that funding is spent properly to allow laws to be translated into action throughout the country.

In many situations, the parliament is responsible for appointing and monitoring the work of independent agencies, such as the state auditor, an anti-corruption commission, or a human rights commission. The parliament should not interfere in the work of these bodies, but should ensure they remain independent of the executive branch, have adequate funding required for their assigned jobs, and are working in the interests of all citizens.

### **National implementation**

Another acknowledged shortfall of the MDGs is the lack of translation of global trends and goals into national policy-making.<sup>10</sup> All too often, international commitments are made without legal standing in a country unless and until those commitments are translated into laws and policies. As United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Anan, said, “It is not in the United Nations that the Goals will be achieved. They have to be achieved in each of its Member States, by the joint efforts of their governments and their people”. Parliament, then, will have a specific role in adopting a national legal framework that reflects and domesticates international commitments from the post-2015 development framework. Parliaments will be responsible for scrutinizing draft laws and adopting laws needed to turn commitment into action.

### **National ownership**

While it is vital to engage parliaments in the process following the establishment of the new set of goals, it is also important to stress their involvement in the process leading up to the agreement. This was not fully the case with the MDGs, because parliaments were not engaged in the process until later. Indeed, the signatories to the Millennium Declaration at the United Nations Millennium General Assembly in September 2000 and the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were representatives of 189 governments from the North and the South, ignoring the importance of the legislative branch and its role in the Declaration’s implementation. The exclusion of key stakeholders, including parliaments, is seen as another shortfall of the MDGs. It is only in the last five years that the work with parliaments has started to be recognized as an important part of a strategy to achieve the MDGs. This began primarily with the natural curiosity of MPs who began to ask questions about the MDGs and government efforts to meet their commitments. Promoting national, regional, and global consultations with representatives from parliaments at the

conception of the goals, engaging them from the very outset, and ensuring they are equal signatories of the new goals, will help build greater commitment and national ownership. That will boost domestic accountability and avoid criticism of the MDGs as a top-down/donor-centric agenda that lacked inputs from developing countries.

**It is important that parliaments are engaged in the process leading to the agreement of the new goals**

At the same time, a strategic approach needs to be put in place to strengthen coherence between development, trade, investment, intellectual property, and other key policy regimes. Parliaments are well-positioned to promote such an integrated approach by passing and promoting coherent laws and policies that meet economic, social, and development goals, and by aligning international commitments with national priorities.

### **Way forward**

Evidence shows that the presence of a strong legislature is an unmixed blessing for democratization.<sup>11</sup> During the June 2011 Tokyo MDG follow-up meeting, UNDP reiterated the need “to emphasize institution building and system strengthening” and urged that “more attention needs to be paid to capacity development”. The United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda also stated the MDGs “overemphasized financial resource gaps to the detriment of attention for institutional building and structural transformations”.<sup>12</sup> Achieving the post-2015 development agenda will therefore take more than just technical inputs. It must include political interventions and support to political actors to overcome some of the hurdles that have prevented the full achievement of the MDGs. To that end, active and sufficient support to all political institutions, including parliaments, should be ensured. Development partners must recognize the crucial role of parliaments and provide them with strategic and directed support.

Today, UNDP is supporting one in three parliaments around the world in an effort to build inclusive and participative political institutions, to develop sustainable capacities in legislators and parliamentary staff, to share best democratic practices, and to strengthen dialogue with civil society to prevent violence and promote women’s participation. Looking ahead, and recognizing the role of parliament as a development actor and contributor to the possible post-2015 targets and objectives, UNDP and development partners must



continue to strategically empower parliaments, and support both parliamentarians and staff in the following areas:

- ✓ The provision of information and knowledge of international best practices and concrete examples from other countries;
- ✓ Long-term capacity development; and
- ✓ Support to key parliamentary committees and the staff they rely on so that they fulfill their functions.

**Development partners must recognize the crucial role of parliaments and provide them with strategic and directed support**

More specifically, development partners must be prepared to support the role of parliament beyond 2015 in its law-making and oversight functions, targeting both parliamentarians and staff. Projects should be developed to ensure that a parliament's key components have the capacity and knowledge to properly review draft laws related to the post-2015 objectives. They must also have an ability to ensure that draft laws are of a high quality, reflecting regional and international best practices and international human rights standards. That should include building the capacity of research and legal drafting divisions of the parliamentary secretariat. And direct support to relevant parliamentary committees will help to ensure that the committees have access to the appropriate expertise, (including CSOs, citizens, academics, and UN experts) to reflect both best practices and the concerns of citizens. Development partners can build the capacity of parliamentary committees that oversee the key ministries responsible for implementing the post-2015 development agenda.

As the process of passing a state budget differs from country to country, the passage of the budget provides an opportunity for MPs to press for the funding required to achieve the post-2015 objectives. Timely access to expertise and the capacity to build political demand for such funding are crucial. Development partners can promote the role of parliament in monitoring government expenditures, as well as supporting civil society organizations and other actors to monitor public performance. This can be highly detailed and technical work, but the provision of expertise can help relevant committees (e.g., public accounts committee) to fulfill their roles. Provision of information and access to experts will be crucial to the proper functioning of such committees.

It is through these key considerations that development partners can ensure that parliaments play an active role from the outset in achieving the post-2015 development objectives. By supporting parliaments and promoting enhanced coordination between all donors and stakeholders, we will be working with an important national institution that can – and must – be positively engaged if development objectives are to be met.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> [“Millennium Development Goal 9: Indicators and the State of Democracy in Mongolia”](#), UNDP, the Institute of Philosophy, Sociology, Law of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences and UNDEF, 2009.
- <sup>2</sup> [“Toolkit for Parliamentarians, International Parliamentary Conference on the Millennium Development Goals”](#), Houses of Parliament, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, 2012.
- <sup>3</sup> [“Analytical Study of Parliamentary mechanisms for MDGs”](#), IPU and Millennium Campaign, 2010.
- <sup>4</sup> The poorest and most fragile countries being left behind; growing concerns about pockets of indigenous and socially excluded groups in middle income countries. See [“Millennium Development Goals: 2012 Progress Chart”](#).
- <sup>5</sup> [“Speakers of African Parliaments Adopt Resolution on Declaration of Commitment to Prioritize and Increase Budget Support to Maternal, Newborn and Child Health”](#), October 2011
- <sup>6</sup> [“Realizing the Future We Want for All, Report to the Secretary-General”](#), UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, June 2012.
- <sup>7</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> [“Report of the Experts Group Meeting to support the advancement of the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda”](#), New York, 27-29 February 2012.
- <sup>9</sup> [“Getting to Zero: Finishing the Job the MDGs Started”](#), March 2012.
- <sup>10</sup> [“After 2015: contexts, politics and processes for a post-2015 global agreement on development”](#), ODI, January 2012.
- <sup>11</sup> Steven Fish, [“Stronger Legislatures, Stronger Democracies”](#), Journal of Democracy Volume 17, Number 1, January 2006.
- <sup>12</sup> [“Review of the contributions of the MDG Agenda to foster development: Lessons for the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda”](#), UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, March 2012.

## January 2013

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## **KEYNOTE CONVERSATION**

### **Violence Against Women: India as a Case Study**

- Agreed Conclusions from Commission on Status of Women, March 2013  
(Advance unedited version)

Commission on the Status of Women  
Fifty-seventh session  
4 – 15 March 2013

**The elimination and prevention of  
all forms of violence against women and girls**

**Agreed conclusions**

1. The Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and the declarations adopted by the Commission on the occasion of the tenth and fifteenth anniversaries of the Fourth World Conference on Women.
2. The Commission also reaffirms the international commitments made at relevant United Nations summits and conferences in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women, including in the Programme of Action at the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation.
3. The Commission reaffirms that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Optional Protocols thereto, as well as other relevant conventions and treaties, provide an international legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures for the elimination and prevention of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, as a cross-cutting issue addressed in different international instruments.
4. The Commission recalls the rules of international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977.
5. The Commission recalls the inclusion of gender-related crimes and crimes of sexual violence in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as the recognition by the ad hoc international criminal tribunals that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide or torture.
6. The Commission acknowledges also the important role in the prevention and elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls played by regional conventions, instruments and initiatives and their follow-up mechanisms, in respective regions and countries.
7. The Commission reaffirms the commitment to the full and effective implementation of and follow-up to all relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, in particular the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. It also reaffirms its previous agreed conclusions on violence against women (1998) and on elimination of discrimination and violence against the girl child (2007).

8. The Commission recalls Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000, 1820 (2008) of 19 June 2008, 1888 (2009) of 30 September 2009, 1889 (2009) of 5 October 2009 and 1960 (2010) of 16 December 2010 on women and peace and security and all relevant Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict, including resolutions 1882 (2009) of 4 August 2009 and 1998 (2011) of 12 July 2011 on armed conflict and post-conflict situations.

9. The Commission also recalls Human Rights Council resolutions 17/11 of 17 June 2011 on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: ensuring due diligence in protection, 20/6 of 5 July 2012 on the elimination of discrimination against women and 20/12 of 5 July 2012 on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: remedies for women who have been subjected to violence.

10. The Commission affirms that violence against women and girls is rooted in historical and structural inequality in power relations between women and men, and persists in every country in the world as a pervasive violation of the enjoyment of human rights. Gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that seriously violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Violence against women and girls is characterized by the use and abuse of power and control in public and private spheres, and is intrinsically linked with gender stereotypes that underlie and perpetuate such violence, as well as other factors that can increase women's and girls' vulnerability to such violence.

11. The Commission stresses that "violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. The Commission also notes the economic and social harm caused by such violence.

12. The Commission strongly condemns all forms of violence against women and girls. It recognizes their different forms and manifestations, in different contexts, settings, circumstances and relationships, and that domestic violence remains the most prevalent form that affects women of all social strata across the world. It also notes that women and girls who face multiple forms of discrimination are exposed to increased risk of violence.

13. The Commission urges States to strongly condemn violence against women and girls committed in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, and recognizes that sexual and gender-based violence affects victims and survivors, families, communities and societies, and calls for effective measures of accountability and redress as well as effective remedies.

14. The Commission urges States to strongly condemn all forms of violence against women and girls and to refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination as set out in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

15. The Commission recognizes that all human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated and that the international community must treat human rights

globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis, and stresses that, while the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

16. The Commission stresses that all States have the obligation, at all levels, to use all appropriate means of a legislative, political, economic, social and administrative nature in order to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls, and must exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence against women and girls and end impunity, and to provide protection as well as access to appropriate remedies for victims and survivors.

17. The Commission stresses that the right to education is a human right, and that eliminating illiteracy, ensuring equal access to education, in particular in rural and remote areas, and closing the gender gap at all levels of education empowers women and girls and thereby contributes to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

18. The Commission reaffirms that women and men have the right to enjoy, on an equal basis, all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. It urges States to prevent all violations of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls and to devote particular attention to abolishing practices and legislation that discriminate against women and girls, or perpetuate and condone violence against them.

19. The Commission stresses that the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women, including women's economic empowerment and full and equal access to resources, and their full integration into the formal economy, in particular in economic decision-making, as well as their full and equal participation in public and political life is essential for addressing the structural and underlying causes of violence against women and girls.

20. The Commission also recognizes the persistence of obstacles that remain for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, and that the prevention and response to such violence requires States to act, at all levels, at each and every opportunity in a comprehensive and holistic manner that recognizes the linkages between violence against women and girls and other issues, such as education, health, HIV and AIDS, poverty eradication, food security, peace and security, humanitarian assistance and crime prevention.

21. The Commission recognizes that women's poverty and lack of empowerment, as well as their marginalization resulting from their exclusion from social and economic policies and from the benefits of education and sustainable development can place them at increased risk of violence, and that violence against women impedes the social and economic development of communities and States, as well as the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

22. The Commission recognizes that violence against women has both short- and long-term adverse consequences on their health, including their sexual and reproductive health, and the enjoyment of their human rights, and that respecting and promoting sexual and reproductive health, and protecting and fulfilling reproductive rights in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences, is a necessary condition to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women to enable them to enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to prevent and mitigate violence against women.
23. The Commission expresses deep concern about violence against women and girls in public spaces, including sexual harassment, especially when it is being used to intimidate women and girls who are exercising any of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.
24. The Commission expresses concern about violent gender-related killings of women and girls, while recognizing efforts made to address this form of violence in different regions, including in countries where the concept of femicide or feminicide has been incorporated in national legislation.
25. The Commission recognizes that illicit use of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons aggravates violence, inter alia, against women and girls.
26. The Commission recognizes the vulnerability of older women and the particular risk of violence they face, and stresses the urgent need to address violence and discrimination against them, especially in the light of the growing proportion of older people in the world's population.
27. The Commission reaffirms that indigenous women often suffer multiple forms of discrimination and poverty which increase their vulnerability to all forms of violence; and stresses the need to seriously address violence against indigenous women and girls.
28. The Commission recognizes the important role of the community, in particular men and boys, as well as civil society, in particular women's and youth organizations, in the efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.
29. The Commission acknowledges the strategic and coordinating role of national machineries for the advancement of women, which should be placed at the highest possible level in government, for the elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls, and the need to endow these machineries with the necessary human and sufficient financial resources to enable them to function effectively. The Commission also acknowledges the contribution of national human rights institutions where they exist.
30. The Commission recognizes the important role of the United Nations system, in particular of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), in addressing discrimination and violence against women and girls at the global, regional and national levels and in assisting States, upon their request, in their efforts to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls.



31. The Commission stresses the importance of data collection on the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls, and in that regard takes note of the work of the Statistical Commission towards a set of indicators on violence against women.

32. The Commission welcomes the progress made in addressing violence against women and girls such as the adoption of relevant laws and policies, the implementation of preventive measures, the establishment of protection and appropriate support services for victims and survivors and improvement in data collection, analysis and research. In this regard, the Commission welcomes the contributions and participation of governments at all levels, and all relevant stakeholders in efforts to address violence against women and girls in a holistic manner.

33. The Commission recognizes that despite progress made, significant gaps and challenges remain in fulfilling commitments and bridging the implementation gap in addressing the scourge of violence against women and girls. The Commission is in particular concerned about: insufficient gender-sensitive policies; inadequate implementation of legal and policy frameworks; inadequate collection of data, analysis and research; lack of financial and human resources and insufficient allocation of such resources; and that existing efforts are not always comprehensive, coordinated, consistent, sustained, transparent and adequately monitored and evaluated.

34. The Commission urges Governments, at all levels, and as appropriate, with the relevant entities of the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, within their respective mandates and bearing in mind national priorities, and invites national human rights institutions where they exist, civil society, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector, employer organizations, trade unions, media and other relevant actors, as applicable, to take the following actions:

#### **A. Strengthening implementation of legal and policy frameworks and accountability**

(a) Consider ratifying or acceding to, as a particular matter of priority, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and their respective Optional Protocols, limit the extent of any reservations, formulate any such reservations as precisely and as narrowly as possible to ensure that no reservations are incompatible with the object and purpose of the Conventions, review their reservations regularly with a view to withdrawing them and withdraw reservations that are contrary to the object and purpose of the relevant treaty; and implement them fully by, inter alia, putting in place effective national legislation and policies, and encourages State parties in their reporting to relevant treaty bodies to include requested information on measures to address violence against women and girls;

(b) Encourage the use of all relevant sources of international law, international guidelines and best practices regarding protection of victims and survivors to combat violence against women and girls;

(c) Adopt, as appropriate, review, and ensure the accelerated and effective implementation of laws and comprehensive measures that criminalize violence against women and girls, and that

provide for multidisciplinary and gender-sensitive preventive and protective measures such as emergency barring orders and protection orders, the investigation, submission for prosecution and appropriate punishment of perpetrators to end impunity, support services that empower victims and survivors, as well as access to appropriate civil remedies and redress;

(d) Address and eliminate, as a matter of priority, domestic violence through adopting, strengthening and implementing legislation that prohibits such violence, prescribes punitive measures and establishes adequate legal protection against such violence;

(e) Strengthen national legislation, where appropriate, to punish violent gender-related killings of women and girls and integrate specific mechanisms or policies to prevent, investigate and eradicate such deplorable forms of gender-based violence;

(f) Ensure women's and girls' unimpeded access to justice and to effective legal assistance so that they can make informed decisions regarding, inter alia, legal proceedings and issues relating to family law and criminal law, and also ensure that they have access to just and effective remedies for the harm that they have suffered, including through the adoption of national legislation where necessary;

(g) Take the necessary legislative and/or other measures to prohibit compulsory and forced alternative dispute resolution processes, including forced mediation and conciliation, in relation to all forms of violence against women and girls;

(h) Review and where appropriate, revise, amend or abolish all laws, regulations, policies, practices and customs that discriminate against women or have a discriminatory impact on women, and ensure that the provisions of multiple legal systems, where they exist, comply with international human rights obligations, commitments and principles, including the principle of non-discrimination;

(i) Mainstream a gender perspective into all legislation, policies and programmes and allocate adequate financial and human resources, including through the expanded use of gender-responsive planning and budgeting, taking into account the needs and circumstances of women and girls, including victims and survivors of violence, for the development, adoption and full implementation of relevant laws, policies and programmes to address discrimination and violence against women and girls and for support to women's organizations;

(j) Increase the investment in gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, taking into account the diversity of needs and circumstances of women and girls including victims and survivors of violence, including through mainstreaming a gender perspective in resource allocation and ensuring the necessary human, financial and material resources for specific targeted activities to ensure gender equality at the local, national, regional and international levels, as well through enhanced and increased international cooperation;

(k) Develop and implement effective multisectoral national policies, strategies and programmes, with the full and effective participation of women and girls, which include measures for prevention, protection and support services and responses; data collection, research,

monitoring and evaluation; the establishment of coordination mechanisms; allocation of adequate financial and human resources; independent national monitoring and accountability mechanisms; and clear timelines and national benchmarks for results to be achieved;

- (l) Ensure that in armed conflict and post-conflict situations the prevention of and response to all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, are prioritized and effectively addressed, including as appropriate through the investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators to end impunity, removal of barriers to women's access to justice, the establishment of complaint and reporting mechanisms, the provision of support to victims and survivors, affordable and accessible health care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and reintegration measures; and take steps to increase women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes and post-conflict decision-making;
- (m) Ensure accountability for the killing, maiming and targeting of women and girls and crimes of sexual violence, as prohibited under international law, stressing the need for the exclusion of such crimes from amnesty provisions in the context of conflict resolution processes and address such acts in all stages of the armed-conflict and post-conflict resolution process including through transitional justice mechanisms, while taking steps to ensure the full and effective participation of women in such processes;
- (n) End impunity by ensuring accountability and punishing perpetrators of the most serious crimes against women and girls under national and international law, and stressing the need for the alleged perpetrators of those crimes to be held accountable under national justice or, where applicable, international justice;
- (o) Take effective steps to ensure the equal participation of women and men in all spheres of political life, political reform and at all levels of decision-making, in all situations, and to contribute to the prevention and the elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls;
- (p) Underline commitments to strengthen national efforts, including with the support of international cooperation, aimed at addressing the rights and needs of women and girls affected by natural disasters, armed conflicts, other complex humanitarian emergencies, trafficking in persons and terrorism, within the context of actions geared to addressing and eliminating violence against women and girls and the realization of the internationally agreed goals and commitments related to gender equality and the empowerment of women, including the Millennium Development Goals. Also underline the need to take concerted actions in conformity with international law to remove the obstacles to the full realization of the rights of women and girls living under foreign occupation, so as to ensure the achievement of the above-mentioned goals and commitments;
- (q) Ensure that the specific needs of women and girls are incorporated into the planning, delivery and monitoring of, and infrastructure for disaster risk reduction programmes and protocols and humanitarian assistance to address natural disasters, including those induced by climate change such as extreme weather events and slow onset impacts, with their full

participation, and that in disaster preparedness efforts and in post-disaster settings, the prevention and response to all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, are prioritized and adequately addressed;

(r) Address violence against women and girls resulting from transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons and drug trafficking, and adopt specific policies to prevent and eradicate violence against women in crime prevention strategies;

(s) Strengthen bilateral, regional and international cooperation, by consolidating existing mechanisms and developing new initiatives consistent with the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children and by implementing the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons;

(t) Take appropriate measures to address the root factors, including external factors, that contribute to trafficking in women and girls. Prevent, combat and eliminate trafficking in women and girls by criminalizing all forms of trafficking in persons, in particular for the purpose of sexual and economic exploitation, as well as by strengthening existing civil and criminal legislation with a view to providing better protection of the rights of women and girls and by bringing to justice and punishing the offenders and intermediaries involved, including public officials, by protecting the rights of trafficked persons and preventing re-victimization. Take appropriate measures to ensure that identified victims of trafficking in persons are not penalized for having been trafficked. Provide identified victims of trafficking appropriate protection and care, such as rehabilitation and reintegration in society, witness protection, job training, legal assistance, confidential health care, and repatriation with the informed consent of the trafficked person, regardless of their participation in any legal proceeding. Accelerate public awareness, education and training to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation;

(u) Strengthen international cooperation, including through the fulfilment of international official development assistance commitments, that support multisectoral policies, strategies, programmes and best practices, in accordance with national priorities aimed at achieving sustainable development and the realization of the empowerment of women, particularly towards ending violence against women and girls and promoting gender equality;

(v) Encourage private sector investment in programmes, campaigns and strategies to respond to, prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment at the workplace, and to empower victims and survivors of violence;

(w) Adopt and fund policy reforms and programmes, and support education, to sensitize, train and strengthen the capacity of public officials and professionals, including the judiciary, police and military, as well as those working in the areas of education, health, social welfare, justice, defense and immigration; hold public officials accountable for not complying with laws and regulations relating to violence against women and girls, in order to prevent and respond to such violence in a gender-sensitive manner, end impunity, and avoid the abuse of power leading to violence against women and the re-victimization of victims and survivors;

(x) Prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women and girls that are perpetrated by people in positions of authority, such as teachers, religious leaders, political leaders and law enforcement officials, in order to end impunity for these crimes;

(y) Create and enhance a supportive environment for increased consultation and participation among all relevant stakeholders in efforts to address violence against women and girls, especially organizations working at the community level to promote the empowerment of women and girls, as well as victims and survivors so they can become agents of change and their knowledge and experience can contribute to the elaboration of policies and programmes;

(z) Support and protect those who are committed to eliminating violence against women, including women human rights defenders in this regard, who face particular risks of violence;

(aa) Take appropriate measures to ensure the human rights of and protect women and girls deprived of their liberty and/or under State custody or State care from all forms of violence, in particular sexual abuse;

(bb) Adopt a life-cycle approach in efforts to end discrimination and violence against women and girls and ensure that specific issues affecting older women are given greater visibility and attention, are addressed through the fulfillment of obligations under relevant international conventions and agreements and included in national policies and programmes to prevent and eliminate violence against women;

**B. Addressing structural and underlying causes and risk factors so as to prevent violence against women and girls**

(cc) Accelerate efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls and ensure their equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to education and to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; ensure that all children, particularly girls, have equal access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality, and renew their efforts to improve and expand girls' education at all levels, including the secondary and higher levels, in all academic areas; and increase girls' ability to attend school and extra-curricular activities by investing in public infrastructure projects and accessible quality public services and providing a safe environment;

(dd) Promote women's full participation in the formal economy, in particular in economic decision-making, and their equal access to full employment and decent work; empower women in the informal sector; and ensure that women and men enjoy equal treatment in the workplace, as well as equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, and equal access to power and decision-making, and promote sharing of paid and unpaid work;

(ee) Accelerate efforts to develop, review and strengthen policies, and allocate adequate financial and human resources, to address the structural and underlying causes of violence against women and girls, including gender discrimination, inequality, unequal power relations between women and men, gender stereotypes, poverty as well as their lack of empowerment, in particular in the context of the economic and financial crisis; and accelerate efforts to eradicate

poverty and persistent legal, social, and economic inequalities, including by strengthening women's and girls' economic participation, empowerment and inclusion, in order to decrease their risk of violence;

(ff) States are strongly urged to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries;

(gg) Take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, educational and other measures to protect and promote the rights of women and girls with disabilities as they are more vulnerable to all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including in the workplace, educational institutions, the home, and other settings;

(hh) Undertake legislative, administrative, financial and other measures to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies, inter alia, by means of international cooperation; prioritize and intensify initiatives towards the economic empowerment of women at the grassroots level, including through entrepreneurship education and business incubators, as a way of uplifting their status, thereby reducing their vulnerability to violence;

(ii) Refrain from using social justifications for denying women their freedom of movement, the right to own property and the right to equal protection of the law;

(jj) Design and implement national policies that aim at transforming those social norms that condone violence against women and girls, and work to counteract attitudes by which women and girls are regarded as subordinate to men and boys or as having stereotyped roles that perpetuate practices involving violence or coercion;

(kk) Develop and implement educational programmes and teaching materials, including comprehensive evidence-based education for human sexuality, based on full and accurate information, for all adolescents and youth, in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities, with the appropriate direction and guidance from parents and legal guardians, with the involvement of children, adolescents, youth and communities, and in coordination with women's, youth and specialized non-governmental organizations, in order to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women of all ages, to eliminate prejudices, and to promote and build informed decision-making, communication and risk reduction skills for the development of respectful relationships and based on gender equality and human rights, as well as teacher education and training programmes for both formal and non-formal education;

(ll) Carry out awareness-raising and education campaigns, in co-operation with civil society organizations, especially women's organizations, through different means of communication, targeting the general public, young people, men and boys, to address the structural and underlying causes of violence and abuse against women and girls; to overcome gender stereotypes and promote zero tolerance for such violence; to remove the stigma of being a victim

and survivor of violence; and to create an enabling environment where women and girls can easily report incidences of violence and make use of the services available and of protection and assistance programmes;

(mm) Mobilize communities and institutions to address and change attitudes, behaviours and practices that perpetuate and condone gender stereotypes and all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, by engaging with women's and youth organizations, national machineries for the advancement of women, national human rights institutions where they exist, schools, educational and media institutions and others directly working with women and girls, men and boys and with individuals at all levels of society and in all settings, religious and community leaders and elders, teachers and parents;

(nn) Promote and protect the human rights of all women including their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence; and adopt and accelerate the implementation of laws, policies and programmes which protect and enable the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including their reproductive rights in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and their review outcomes;

(oo) Develop and implement gender-sensitive policies, strategies, programmes and measures which promote greater understanding and recognition that caregiving is a critical societal function and encourage the equal sharing of responsibilities and chores between men and women in caregiving, including for persons with disabilities, older persons and people living with HIV, as well as for child-rearing, parenting and domestic work; and also work to change attitudes that reinforce the division of labour based on gender, in order to promote shared family responsibility for work in the home and reduce the domestic work burden for women and girls;

(pp) Engage, educate, encourage and support men and boys to take responsibility for their behaviour, to ensure that men and adolescent boys take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behaviour, and to refrain from all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls; develop, invest in, and implement policies, strategies and programmes, including comprehensive education programmes to increase their understanding of the harmful effects of violence and how it undermines gender equality and human dignity, promote respectful relationships, provide positive role models for gender equality and to encourage men and boys to take an active part and become strategic partners and allies in the prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls;

(qq) Review, enact and strictly enforce laws and regulations concerning the minimum legal age of consent and the minimum age for marriage, raising the minimum age for marriage where necessary, and generate social support for the enforcement of these laws in order to end the practice of child, early and forced marriage;

(rr) Ensure the provision of viable alternatives and institutional support, including for girls who are already married and/or pregnant, especially educational opportunities with an emphasis on keeping girls in school through post-primary education and promoting the empowerment of



girls through improving educational quality and ensuring safe and hygienic conditions in schools, physical access to education, including by establishing safe residential facilities and childcare, and increasing financial incentives to women and their families where necessary;

(ss) Ensure the access of adolescents to services and programmes on preventing early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV, ensuring personal safety, and preventing the use and abuse of alcohol and other harmful substances;

(tt) Develop policies and programmes, giving priority to formal and informal education programmes that support girls and enable them to acquire knowledge, develop self-esteem and take responsibility for their own lives, including access to a sustainable livelihood; and place special focus on programmes to educate women and men, especially parents and caregivers, on the importance of girls' physical and mental health and well-being, including the elimination of child, early and forced marriage, violence against women and girls, female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation, including commercial sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, rape, incest and abduction, and the elimination of discrimination against girls such as in food allocation;

(uu) Develop and support existing policies and programmes targeting children and young people, especially women, who have experienced or witnessed domestic violence or sexual abuse, including protection for children in the justice system, so as to reduce the risk of their possible re-victimization or perpetration of violence and restore their health; and implement such programmes in a gender-responsive manner with the meaningful participation of young people, civil society and women's and youth organizations, and educational and health institutions;

(vv) Recognize the important role the media can play in the elimination of gender stereotypes, including those perpetuated by commercial advertisements, and in promoting non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive reporting, including by preserving the confidentiality of the identity of victims and survivors where appropriate; and, to the extent consistent with freedom of expression, encourage the media to improve public awareness on violence against women and girls, to train those who work in the media, and to develop and strengthen self-regulatory mechanisms to promote balanced and non-stereotypical portrayals of women with a view to eliminating discrimination against and the exploitation of women and girls and refraining from presenting them as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities and instead present women and girls as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to and beneficiaries of the process of development;

(ww) Support the development and use of ICT and social media as a resource for the empowerment of women and girls, including access to information on the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls; and develop mechanisms to combat the use of ICT and social media to perpetrate violence against women and girls, including the criminal misuse of ICT for sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, child pornography and trafficking in women and girls, and emerging forms of violence such as cyber stalking, cyber bullying and privacy violations that compromise women's and girls' safety;

(xx) Improve the safety of girls at, and on the way to and from school, including by establishing a safe and violence free environment by improving infrastructure such as

transportation, providing separate and adequate sanitation facilities, improved lighting, playgrounds and safe environments; adopting national policies to prohibit, prevent and address violence against children, especially girls, including sexual harassment and bullying and other forms of violence, through measures such as conducting violence prevention activities in schools and communities, and establishing and enforcing penalties for violence against girls;

(yy) Take measures to ensure that all workplaces are free from discrimination and exploitation, violence, and sexual harassment and bullying, and that they address discrimination and violence against women, and girls as appropriate, through measures such as regulatory and oversight frameworks and reforms, collective agreements, codes of conduct, including appropriate disciplinary measures, protocols and procedures, referral of cases of violence to health services for treatment and police for investigation; as well as through awareness-raising and capacity-building, in collaboration with employers, unions and workers, including workplace services and flexibility for victims and survivors;

(zz) Increase measures to protect women and girls from violence and harassment, including sexual harassment and bullying, in both public and private spaces, to address security and safety, through awareness-raising, involvement of local communities, crime prevention laws, policies, programmes such as the UN Safe Cities initiative, improved urban planning, infrastructures, public transport and street lighting, and also through social and interactive media;

(aaa) Condemn and take action to prevent violence against women and girls in health care settings, including sexual harassment, humiliation and forced medical procedures, or those conducted without informed consent, and which may be irreversible, such as forced hysterectomy, forced caesarean section, forced sterilization, forced abortion, and forced use of contraceptives, especially for particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged women and girls, such as those living with HIV, women and girls with disabilities, indigenous and afro-descendent women and girls, pregnant adolescents and young mothers, older women, and women and girls from national or ethnic minorities;

(bbb) Further adopt and implement measures to ensure social and legal inclusion and protection of women migrants, including women migrant workers in origin, transit and destination countries, and promote and protect the full realization of their human rights, and their protection against violence and exploitation; implement gender-sensitive policies and programmes for women migrant workers and provide safe and legal channels that recognize their skills and education, provide fair labour conditions, and as appropriate facilitate their productive employment and decent work as well as integration into the labour force;

(ccc) Also take measures to ensure the protection of self-employed workers in cross-border work and women seasonal workers from violence and discrimination;

### **C. Strengthening multisectoral services, programmes and responses to violence against women and girls**

(ddd) Establish comprehensive, coordinated, inter-disciplinary, accessible and sustained multisectoral services, programmes and responses at all levels, and with the support of all

available technologies, for all victims and survivors of all forms of violence against women and girls based on their needs, that are adequately resourced and include effective and coordinated action by, as appropriate, police and the justice sector, legal aid services, health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and medical, psychological and other counselling services, including specialist services as appropriate, State and independent women's shelters and counselling centres, 24-hour hotlines, social aid services, one stop crisis centres, immigration services, child services, public housing services to provide low threshold, easy to reach and safe assistance for women and children, as well as assistance, protection and support through access to long-term accommodation, educational, employment and economic opportunities, and take steps to ensure the safety and security of health care workers and service providers that assist and support victims and survivors of violence, and in cases of girl child victims, such services and responses must take into account the best interests of the child;

(eee) Further take measures to coordinate services through the establishment of processes for referral between services of victims and survivors while ensuring their confidentiality and safety, establish national benchmarks and timelines, and monitor their progress and implementation; as well as ensure access to coordinated multisectoral services, programmes and responses for all women and girls at risk of or subjected to violence;

(fff) Ensure the availability and accessibility for victims and survivors and their children to services, programmes and opportunities, for their full recovery and reintegration into society, as well as full access to justice, including those subjected to domestic violence and other forms of violence, by putting in place measures, and where these exist, expanding such measures; and ensure the provision of adequate and timely information on available support services and legal measures, when possible in a language that they understand and in which they can communicate;

(ggg) Create, develop and implement a set of policies, and support the establishment of rehabilitative services, to encourage and bring changes in the attitudes and behaviours of perpetrators of violence against women and girls, and to reduce the likelihood of reoffending, including in cases of domestic violence, rape and harassment, as well as monitor and assess their impact and effect;

(hhh) Improve access to timely, affordable and quality health systems for women and girls, including through gender-sensitive national strategies and public-health policies and programmes that are comprehensive, affordable and better targeted to addressing their needs and that encourage women's active participation in their design and implementation; and also enhance women's access to affordable, safe, effective and good quality treatment and medicines, with a special emphasis on the poor, vulnerable and marginalized segments of the population;

(iii) Address all health consequences including the physical, mental and sexual and reproductive health consequences, of violence against women and girls by providing accessible health-care services that are responsive to trauma and include affordable, safe, effective and good-quality medicines, first line support, treatment of injuries and psychosocial and mental health support, emergency contraception, safe abortion where such services are permitted by national law, post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV infection, diagnosis and treatment for sexually

transmitted infections, training for medical professionals to effectively identify and treat women subjected to violence, as well as forensic examinations by appropriately trained professionals;

(jjj) Accelerate efforts to address the intersection of HIV and AIDS and violence against all women and girls, in particular the common risk factors, including through strategies to address domestic and sexual violence, and to strengthen coordination and integration of policies, programmes and services to address the intersection between HIV and violence against women and girls, and ensure that responses to HIV and AIDS are leveraged to prevent violence against them, while meeting their specific needs for sexual and reproductive health care services, as well as HIV and AIDS diagnosis, affordable and accessible treatment and prevention, including procurement and supply of safe and effective prevention commodities, including male and female condoms;

(kkk) Eliminate discrimination and violence against women and girls living with HIV as well as the caregivers of persons living with HIV and take into account their vulnerability to stigma, discrimination, poverty and marginalization from their families and communities when implementing programmes and measures which encourage the equal sharing of caring responsibilities;

(lll) Expand the availability of health-care services, and in particular, strengthen maternal and reproductive health centres, as key entry points that provide support, referrals to services and protection to families, women and girls at risk of violence, especially sexual violence, and which provide support to adolescents in order to avoid early and unintended pregnancies and sexually-transmitted infections, through education, information and access to sexual and reproductive health-care services;

#### **D. Improving the evidence-base**

(mmm) Carry out continued multidisciplinary research and analysis on the structural and underlying causes of, cost and risk factors for violence against women and girls and its types and prevalence, in order to inform the development and revision of laws and their implementation, policies and strategies, and make such information public to support awareness-raising efforts;

(nnn) Collect, collate, analyze and disseminate reliable, comparable and anonymized data and statistics on a regular basis, disaggregated by sex and age, at the national and local levels on different forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, including the health costs and economic costs to society of such discrimination and violence, and also consider all other relevant factors, such as accessibility, to inform the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of laws, policies and programmes;

(ooo) Improve the collection, harmonization and use of administrative data, including, where appropriate, from the police, health sector and the judiciary, on incidents of violence against women and girls, including data on the relationship between the perpetrator and victim and geographic location, ensuring that confidentiality, ethical and safety considerations are taken into account in the process of data collection, and improving the effectiveness of the services and programmes provided and protecting the safety and security of the victim;

(ppp) Develop national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess policies and programmes, including preventive and response strategies to address violence against women and girls in both public and private spheres;

(qqq) Promote the sharing of best practices and experiences, as well as feasible, practical and successful policy and programme interventions; as well as promote the application of these successful interventions and experiences in other settings.

35. The Commission emphasizes that ending violence against women and girls is imperative, including for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and must be a priority for the eradication of poverty, the achievement of inclusive sustainable development, peace and security, human rights, health, gender equality and empowerment of women, sustainable and inclusive economic growth and social cohesion, and vice versa. The Commission strongly recommends that the realization of gender equality and empowerment of women be considered as a priority in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.



## SESSION 2

### **Expanding Economic Opportunities for Women: A Prerequisite for Smart Economics**

- “The Global Gender Agenda,” Joanna Barsh, Sandrine Devillard and Jin Wang, *McKinsey Quarterly*, 2012
- “The Challenge of Closing the Gender Gap in Developing Countries,” Dwyer Gun, *The Guardian*, 2012
- “Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific: A Companion to the World Development Report,” World Bank, 2012



## The global gender agenda

**Joanna Barsh, Sandrine Devillard, and Jin Wang**

Women continue to be underrepresented at senior-management levels in Asia, Europe, and North America. McKinsey research suggests some answers.

**The progress of women** toward the upper echelons of business, government, and academia continues to provoke media attention and lively debate. Look, for instance, at the coverage of Marissa Mayer's July appointment as CEO of Yahoo! and the diverse reactions to an article ("Why women still can't have it all") published in the July/August issue of the *Atlantic* magazine.<sup>1</sup>

Coincidentally, this summer also marked the moment when we released the latest phase of a global research initiative on women in senior management across Asia, Europe, and North America. This effort involved assembling fresh data on the gender composition of boards, executive committees, and talent pipelines, as well as detailed surveys of leading businesses in each region.<sup>2</sup>

Encouragingly, the research shows that a growing number of women, both in senior roles and among the rank and file, are finding their voices and inspiring others to achieve progress. It also demonstrates that more companies are enjoying the benefits of gender diversity and that some have found ways to boost the representation of women at the highest levels of their organizations. From an admittedly low base, for instance, more women sit on European corporate boards (though not executive committees) than did so five years ago. Countries with a clear political commitment to change, in the form of specific quotas or targets, are achieving significant results. Several major corporations are emerging as inspirational role models.

<sup>1</sup>See Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Why women still can't have it all," the *Atlantic*, July/August 2012, Volume 310, Number 1, pp. 84–102.

<sup>2</sup>See *Women Matter: An Asian Perspective*, June 2012; *Unlocking the full potential of women at work*, April 2012; and *Women Matter 2012: Making the Breakthrough*, March 2012 (all available on [mckinsey.com](http://mckinsey.com)).

Yet while the vast majority of organizations in developed economies are striving to unlock the potential of women in the workforce, many executives remain frustrated that they have not made more immediate and substantial progress. Firmly entrenched barriers continue to hinder the progress of high-potential women: many of those who start out with high ambitions, for instance, leave for greener pastures, settle for less demanding staff roles, or simply opt out of the workforce. In Asia, cultural attitudes toward child care and household tasks further complicate the challenges for corporate pioneers. And everywhere we look, despite numerous gender diversity initiatives, too few women reach the executive committee, and too few boards have more than a token number of women.

Our research also offered some clues about the characteristics of companies that make the greatest advances in gender diversity. Much depends on the stage of the journey companies have reached. The regional and cultural context matters, too. Still, we were struck by the global applicability of some core principles. Across geographies, we find that a wholly committed senior leadership, active talent management, and more effective efforts to shift mind-sets and change behavior can transform the gender agenda (see sidebar, ‘We’re at a tipping point,’ on page 10).

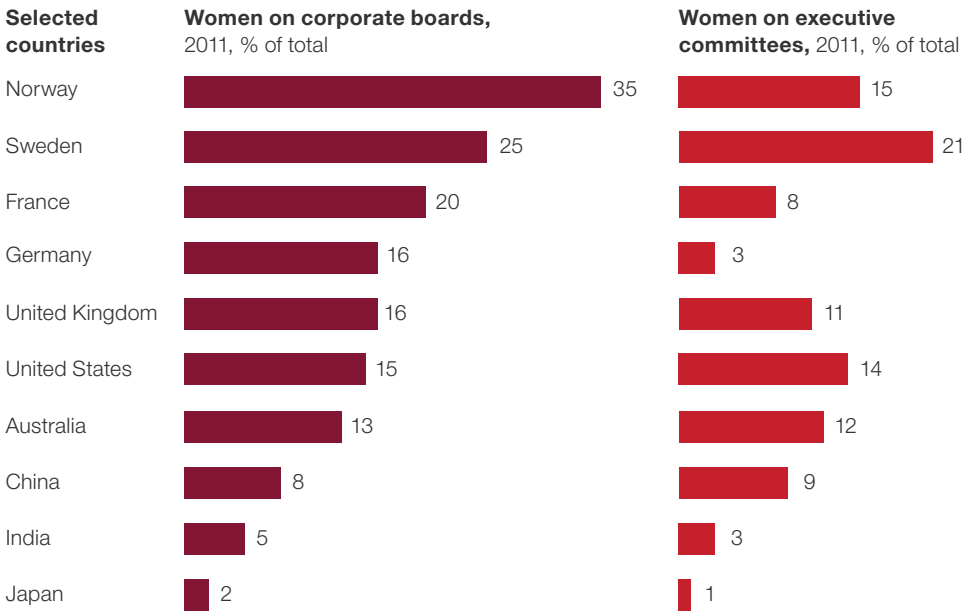
## **Global challenges**

Women hold 15 percent of the seats on corporate boards and 14 percent of those on executive committees in the United States; 16 percent and 3 percent, respectively, in Germany; 20 percent and 8 percent, respectively, in France; and less than 10 percent on both boards and executive committees in China, India, and Japan. In Scandinavia, the numbers are higher: Norway’s representation is currently at 35 percent and 15 percent, respectively; Sweden’s at 25 percent and 21 percent, respectively (exhibit).

The representation of women in all regions, moreover, diminishes markedly at each higher management level. Some female executives, of course, leak out of the talent pipeline because they are headed for other or better jobs; others voluntarily draw back from promotions as part of conscious work–life decisions. But a significant number run into a succession of seemingly immovable barriers at key career intersections.

Exhibit

Women’s representation on executive committees and corporate boards around the world remains small.



Source: Annual reports of companies listed on each country’s main stock index; McKinsey analysis

We have long noted the combination of structural obstacles, lifestyle choices, and institutional and individual mind-sets that hinder the advancement of women. But only recently have we started to understand how deeply entwined they are. Men and women tend to be evenly distributed across line and staff roles early in their careers, for example, but women begin a steady and disproportionate shift into staff roles by the time they reach the director level. Lacking the sorts of networks that come more easily to men, many women miss out on discussions with sponsors who might encourage them to stay in the line. Line jobs tend to involve more pressure and less flexibility—less appealing to women forming families or opting for greater control over their lives. Some male executives, with good intent, do not even ask mothers to consider line assignments that involve travel and long hours.

Natural advantages or disadvantages do characterize some sectors, but the situation varies markedly even within them, and contradictions abound. In European financial services, for instance, the rate of attrition is particularly severe by the time women reach middle

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management. In contrast, our research indicated that some of the top US gender diversity performers were in financial services.

Finally, Asia stands out. The relatively low overall rate of female labor force participation in many Asian countries—though not all of them, for China is a notable exception—means that it is harder to fill the pipeline at the outset. Next, the double burden of Asia's working women, who must juggle families and jobs, is not only reinforced by cultural factors but also compounded by a lack of government support in areas such as childcare. In many markets, women wait until their children are older before returning to work or (in Taiwan, for example) drop out in their late 20s never to return. Exacerbating matters in much of Asia is an absence of urgency to change the equation. In our recent survey of the region's senior executives, just 30 percent of respondents said that gender diversity was currently a top priority for their corporations, and only a third saw it as being one of the top ten priorities on the corporate agenda in coming years.

## **From good to great**

These challenges persist at a time when many companies, particularly in North America and Europe, are pursuing an arsenal of measures aimed at easing women's progress through the organization. Such measures include efforts to make appraisals objective and unbiased; the adoption of diversity targets; greater flexibility in remote working; smoother transitions before, during, and after maternity leave; and executive coaching for high-potential vice presidents. Of the 235 European companies we surveyed recently, for instance, more than 60 percent told us they have at least 20 gender diversity initiatives in place.

Motivations vary. A number of studies find a correlation between high-performing companies and those with strong female representation at the top,<sup>3</sup> though correlation does not prove causality. Many CEOs

<sup>3</sup>For more, see *Women Matter: Gender diversity, a corporate performance driver* (October 2007) and *Women Matter 2: Female leadership, a competitive edge for the future* (October 2008), on [mckinsey.com](http://mckinsey.com).

are convinced that mixed boards and mixed executive teams perform better than those dominated by men. As one corporate leader put it, just about every company wants to “get the best brains to work on the problem.” That said, successfully transforming gender attitudes and performance requires much greater leadership attention and dedication than even committed CEOs and top teams are currently giving to it. These goals also call for integrated management and monitoring of women in the talent pipeline from early on to the point when they become eligible to join the C-suite and for intervention to shift widely held beliefs holding back talented women.

### Leadership ‘obsession’

Every major cultural, operational, or strategic change in a business requires personal passion, “skin in the game,” and role modeling from senior leaders, and gender diversity is no exception. When a CEO is the chief advocate and “storyteller,” more people (including the often less committed male middle managers) believe that the story matters and begin to adopt the CEO’s mind-set and behavior. Intensely committed CEOs make their goals clear and specific, tell everyone about them, get other leaders involved, and manage talent to help make things happen. CEOs who do not see gender diversity as a top issue fold “gender” into “diversity” and “diversity” into “talent,” thereby losing focus as leadership of initiatives is delegated to others further down the line. CEOs who champion gender diversity, for example, participate in women’s events and multiday talent discussions; less committed CEOs introduce them and leave, inadvertently signaling that other priorities take precedence.

In Europe, many executives tell us that the momentum for change took hold only when the top team made its commitment visible—for example, by appointing women to senior positions or taking measures to ensure that they were considered for certain jobs. Sponsorship is (and always has been) a critical part of an executive’s path to the top. HR leaders tell us that these relationships are hard to institutionalize and that formal programs have mixed success. But we find it significant that one company did much better when the CEO and the diversity leader personally took charge of the sponsorship program, selected a group of high-potential women, and invited them to spend significant time with the top team. Women in the program really got to know the CEO and senior-team members, and vice versa, and most have since moved up the management ladder.

## Managing—and cultivating—the pipeline

McKinsey's more general work on transforming the performance of companies shows that those with a clear understanding of their starting point are more than twice as likely to succeed as those that are less well prepared.<sup>4</sup> In a gender diversity context, this understanding means knowing the gender balance at every level of the organization; comprehending the numbers by level, function, business unit, and region; and then monitoring metrics such as pay levels, attrition rates, reasons women drop out, and the ratio between women promoted and women eligible for promotion.

Why go to this expense? Establishing the facts is the first step toward awareness, understanding, and dedication to improvement. Using a diagnostic tool, one company simulated how much hiring, promoting, and retaining of women it would require to increase the number of senior women managers. That approach helped it set an achievable and, just as important, sustainable target that would not compromise a highly meritocratic corporate culture. With an overall target—that 25 percent of managing directors and directors should be women by 2018—and a clear understanding that the bar for promotion could not be lowered, managers now look harder for high-potential women and start working with them earlier to develop that potential.

Incentives tied to managers' bonuses can help, though some companies fear that targets may undermine the credibility of women at the top. Those in favor of such targets believe that a radical mandate is required for substantial change and worth the backlash from women who ascended "the hard way." Where targets are rejected, other mechanisms "with teeth" are necessary—almost all the top US performers on gender diversity have goals, if not targets. In Europe, we identified a gap between the measures companies now have in place and how carefully these companies apply and monitor them. Some have targets for women in senior positions, for example, but no plans for implementation; others have targets and plans but fail to communicate them. Companies with cultures inimical to top-down diktats should consider adopting a regular report that candidly evaluates progress and prompts senior management to brainstorm for new ideas.

<sup>4</sup>For more, see "What successful transformations share: McKinsey Global Survey results," [mckinseyquarterly.com](http://mckinseyquarterly.com), March 2010.

## Shifting mind-sets and behavior

Leaders with the best of intentions may still fall short unless they can change the way they and their organizations think. So if, for example, the prevailing view is that truly committed executives work 24/7 and travel at the drop of a hat, many talented women will turn their backs on further advancement. Such prevailing attitudes are hard to shift: in our experience, that can be done only by role models who challenge them through their actions and by a learning environment that cultivates self-awareness. More women at the top should help, though of course women can be as responsible as men for promoting a culture of nonstop work.

The top performers on gender diversity value and promote inclusiveness. Their leaders firmly believe that mutual respect drives better customer service and hence sales. When such beliefs take hold, they are powerful. One global cosmetics company we know, which operates in 88 countries and has a customer base that's 90 percent female, now cites gender diversity as one of its key strengths. Another consumer-based business, headquartered in Europe, makes mostly products for men but learned through research that women usually make the buying decision. Increasingly, the company looks to female employees to refine its marketing and product-development approach.

Certain institutional biases are subtle—for example, a reluctance on the part of men to give women the tough feedback everyone needs on their way to the top. Many men, fearing that sponsoring women might seem inappropriate, find it difficult to do so. Most people feel more comfortable promoting those who behave and think as they do. A willingness to question can make a difference. When one company discovered, through an audit of its recruiting processes, that recruiters were more critical of female than male candidates, it devised a training course for the critics. One of them was asked to lead a session and has since become among the company's most vocal supporters of diversity and inclusion.

The mind-sets—and aspirations—of women themselves are as important as those of the companies that employ them. Interviews with 200 successful middle-management and more senior women in 60 large companies across the United States highlighted some common threads: early career acceleration coupled with significant sponsorship, a willingness to change employers to gain greater oppor-



tunities, and a propensity to stay in line jobs for much of their advancement. These women remained optimistic even in the face of significant challenges.

Early-tenure women want to move to the next level as much as men do. Yet we found that only 18 percent of entry- and midlevel women have a long-term eye on the C suite, against 36 percent of men. That finding reinforces our belief that inspirational leaders should intervene with talented female middle managers to discuss their aspirations, build their confidence, embolden them to aim higher, and seek ways to make line roles more palatable for them. In particular, we would emphasize the need for women's leadership-development programs to focus on personal mastery of thoughts, feelings, and actions and thus to make women accountable for their own future.<sup>5</sup> In the average Fortune 500 company, a 10 percent boost in the odds that women will advance from manager to director and then to vice president would yield an additional 90 female executives, including five senior vice presidents and one member of the executive committee.

## **Four priorities for committed leaders**

The widespread applicability of the principles above suggests a short list of actions that should be on every committed leader's priority list:

**1. Treat gender diversity like any other strategic business initiative,** with a goal and a plan that your company monitors and follows up at the highest levels over many years. Build in a "report or explain" process and articulate a well-supported point of view on the value women bring to your organization and the case for or against explicit targets. If greater representation of women in the talent pipeline promises a competitive advantage, successful leaders will work hard to include them. If greater female representation better serves the company's customers, those leaders will make that happen.

**2. Ask for—and talk about—the data,** sliced and diced to identify 'pain points' in the pipeline by business, geography, and function. Go well beyond measuring success by the number of women at the top. Discuss the percentage of talented women at each stage of

<sup>5</sup>For more, see Joanna Barsh, Susie Cranston, and Rebecca A. Craske, "Centered leadership: How talented women thrive," [mckinseyquarterly.com](http://mckinseyquarterly.com), September 2008.

the pipeline, their odds of advancement versus men's, and the mix of women between line and staff jobs compared with that of their male counterparts. Make sure your entire top team and those who report to its members are accountable for the numbers, and brainstorm about what it will take to improve them.

**3. Establish a culture of sponsorship,** encouraging each top executive to sponsor two to three future leaders, including women. Instill a mind-set of “paying it forward,” so that every woman sponsored will in turn sponsor two or three others. Embed effective sponsorship of women into the profile of successful leaders at your company and raise the issue in performance dialogues with your own direct reports. Show your wider commitment by talking with top female talent when you visit regional divisions and business units or participate in external events.

**4. Raise awareness of what a diverse work environment looks like,** celebrating successes to reinforce the mind-set shifts you desire. Use frequent personal blogs, top-team meetings, and town hall gatherings to communicate what you are doing to drive change. To increase awareness of the new mind-sets, question your own personnel choices, and think about whom you tend to work with and why. Top executives who work hard to encourage diversity of thought across a company will increase everyone's determination to bring the best to work—ending up not only with what they set out to achieve but with even more: an engaged community that corrects itself when things go off track.



A wide range of global companies made real advances in gender diversity over the past five years. They know that this is hard work—a journey measured in years rather than months. But they also know that improving the pipeline of female talent is possible, with rewards that include tapping the best brains, improving customer service, increasing employee engagement, and everything that comes with these benefits. ○

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# The Challenge of Closing the Gender Gap in Developing Countries

By Dwyer Gunn

*Which is more effective in improving life for women: economic development or specific programs aimed at increasing equality?*



Krishnendu Halder/Reuters

While the developed world discusses the glass ceiling, [the end of men](#) and whether women can really ever [have it all](#), activists in developing countries tend to focus on more basic issues like combating [violence against women](#) and providing equal access to vaccines, basic healthcare, and primary education.

"Today, it is estimated that 6 million women are missing every year (World Development Report, 2012)," writes MIT's [Esther Duflo](#), one of the world's foremost [development economists](#) and a [John Bates Clark medalist](#), in a new comprehensive literature review on the relationship between poverty and gender inequality across the developing world, published in last week's [Journal of Economic Literature](#). Sex-selective abortion, infanticide, unequal treatment in childhood, and the risks of childbirth all play a role in the missing women phenomenon.

Duflo's paper is concerned primarily with the best way to fix this problem. Will economic development, with its attendant rising incomes and resources, eventually lead to gender equality on its own, even

without targeted efforts at improving conditions for women? Or is gender equality a [prerequisite](#) to achieving development goals, as Kofi Annan and others have argued? And in this age of diminishing foreign aid budgets, can organizations focus their meager resources on just one of these two channels?

There's lots of evidence that gender inequality declines as economic development occurs and incomes rise. Prior to development, poverty-stricken families respond to income shocks by re-allocating resources to sons. "In India, the excessive mortality rate of girls, relative to boys, spikes during droughts," writes Duflo, in reference to [a 1999 paper](#) by Elaina Rose. "When they cannot afford to feed everyone, families disproportionately sacrifice the welfare of girls." On the other hand, Rose found that wealthier families with assets—land they can sell during particularly rough times—don't show the same gender disparities.

Economic development in a community not only brings more doctors and health facilities, but also increases families' abilities to weather the kinds of crises that disproportionately harm girls. In Duflo's words: "[B]y reducing the vulnerability of poor households to risk, economic development, even without specifically targeting women, disproportionately improves their well-being."

Development is also often accompanied by decreased maternal mortality and increased labor market opportunities for women, both of which may encourage parents to invest more in their young daughters. In other words, parents who think their daughters have a better chance of surviving the perilous childbearing years, or of one day getting a high-earning job outside the home, might make very different decisions about feeding and educating those daughters. A 2009 [evaluation](#) of a policy initiative in Sri Lanka found that a reduction in maternal mortality led to increases in female life expectancy, literacy and years of education.

But is it enough? "Is there a reason to design policies specifically targeted towards improving the condition of women?" asks Duflo. "Or is it sufficient for improving women's condition to fight poverty and to create the conditions for economic growth in poor countries?"

Duflo doesn't think development alone will be enough—gender gaps in wages and political participation persist in even the world's most developed countries, and researchers have found evidence of sex-selective abortion in countries like China, South Korea, India and Taiwan—and among [certain ethnic groups](#) in the U.S.

So what about the other lever—empowering women through political quotas or scholarships—in the hopes it will drive development for both women and men? Kofi Annan isn't the only one who views gender equality as a prerequisite for development—many microcredit loans and cash transfer programs are offered exclusively to women due to the belief that they make better spending and investment decisions than men.

Empowering women—either through cash transfer programs given only to women, scholarships, parliamentary/government quotas aimed at increasing female participation, or laws designed to

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Related Story



**The Wide Poverty Gap Between Women and Men**

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protect women's rights—does change the way families make decisions. "[C]ompared to income or assets in the hands of men, income or assets in the hands of women is associated with larger improvements in child health, and larger expenditure shares of household nutrients, health, and housing," writes Duflo.

Efforts to increase female participation in government, through quotas in India, for example, also result in different spending and investment decisions—despite early concerns that female leaders would simply vote as directed by their husbands.

"Women invest more in infrastructure that is directly relevant to the expressed development priorities of women," writes Duflo. "In West Bengal, where women complained more often than men about water and roads, reserved councils [those with seats reserved for women] invested more in water and roads. In Rajasthan, where women complained more often about drinking water but less about roads, reserved councils invested more in water and less in roads."

But Duflo is skeptical of the theory that women are purely benevolent and always make better decisions than men. For example, those investments in water in West Bengal and roads in Rajasthan? They came at the expense of investments in schools.

Research on the South African pension program, an old-age program that was somewhat rapidly expanded to cover elderly South Africans of all races after the end of apartheid, also found somewhat troubling results—while young girls living with pensioners showed improved health outcomes, no such improvements were seen for young boys. Much like male policymakers, male pensioners also seem to emphasize education more than women: "[C]hildren are more likely to be in school when they live with an eligible man than with an eligible woman," writes Duflo. "Here again, we find evidence that the identity of the income holder matters. In this case, however, it is when men receive the pension that they make the decision favorable to well-being and development."

Even more importantly, in resource-limited developing countries, these empowerment interventions have real costs—for both boys and girls. Not only does a scholarship designated for a girl mean one less spot for a boy, it means less money to hire teachers for everyone.

Duflo's ultimate message is, in her words, not the "most comforting message to deliver." "[N]either economic development nor women's empowerment is the magic bullet it is sometimes made out to be," she concludes. "Equity between men and women is only likely to be achieved by continuing policy actions that favor women at the expense of men, possibly for a very long time."

This article available online at:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2012/12/the-challenge-of-closing-the-gender-gap-in-developing-countries/266617/>

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# Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

A Companion to the  
*World Development Report*

WORLD BANK EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC  
REGIONAL REPORT



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# Overview

In recent decades, women across the globe have made positive strides toward gender equality. Literacy rates for young women and girls are higher than ever before, while gender gaps in primary education have closed in almost all countries. In the last three decades, over half a billion women have joined the world's labor force (World Bank 2011c). Progress toward gender equality in East Asia and the Pacific has been similarly noteworthy. Most countries in the region have either reached or surpassed gender parity in education enrollments. Health outcomes for both women and men have improved significantly. Female labor force participation rates in the region are relatively high. Yet, despite considerable progress in this economically dynamic region, gender disparities persist in a number of important areas—particularly in access to economic opportunity and in voice and influence in society. For policy makers in East Asian and Pacific countries, closing these gender gaps represents an important challenge to achieving more inclusive and effective development.

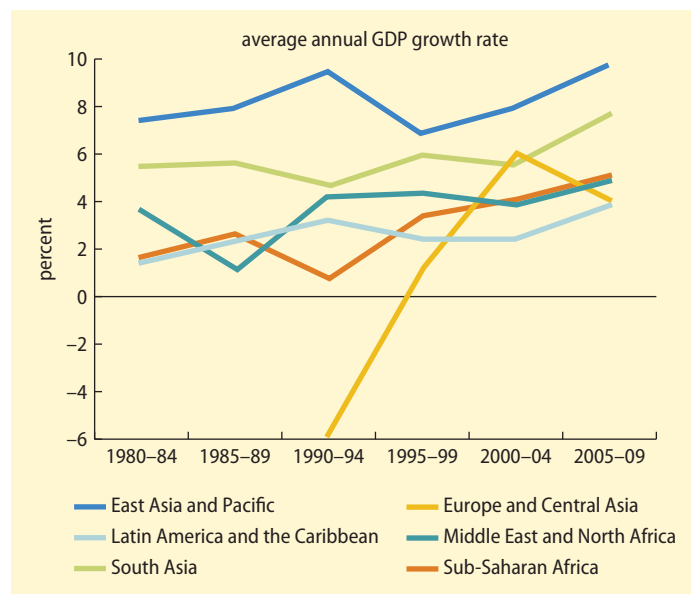
*The East Asia and Pacific Region's significant economic growth, structural transformation, and poverty reduction in the last few*

*decades have been associated with reduced gender inequalities in several dimensions.*

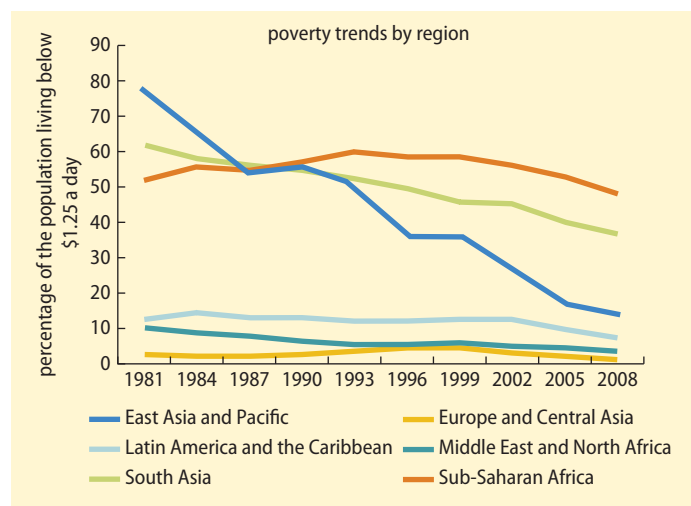
The region grew at 7 percent on average between 2000 and 2008 (figure O.1), the structure of the region's economies has shifted away from agriculture toward manufacturing and services, and extreme poverty has fallen dramatically. Indeed, the share of the region's population living on less than US\$1.25 a day has declined by more than 50 percent since 1990—from among the highest rates of poverty in the world to among the lowest (figure O.2). Growth, structural transformation, and poverty reduction have been accompanied by considerable progress toward gender equality in several key areas, particularly education and health. Many countries in the region have experienced closing gender gaps in school enrollments and declining maternal and child mortality rates.

*But growth and development have not been enough to attain gender equality in all its dimensions.*

Women still have less access than men to a range of productive assets and services, including land, financial capital, agricultural extension services, and new information technologies. Substantial employment segregation by gender remains. Women are less likely than men to work in

**FIGURE 0.1** The East Asia and Pacific region has experienced rapid economic growth

Source: World Development Indicators (WDI) database.

**FIGURE 0.2** Poverty reduction in the East Asia and Pacific region has been impressive

Source: PovcalNet.

formal sector jobs and more likely to work in poorly remunerated occupations and enterprises. And despite closing of education gaps, women continue to be paid less than men for similar work. Women in East Asian and

Pacific countries still have a weaker voice and less influence than men, whether in household decision making, in the private sector, in civil society, or in politics. Moreover, women across the region remain vulnerable to gender-based violence, often at the hand of an intimate partner.

*This report clarifies empirically the relationship between gender and development and outlines an agenda for public action to promote gender equality in East Asian and Pacific countries.* The report was written as a companion to the *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development* (World Bank 2011c) and is intended as a tool to help policy makers in the region promote both gender equality and more effective development. Following the *World Development Report 2012*, this report focuses on gender outcomes in three domains: (a) endowments—human and productive capital; (b) economic opportunity—participation and returns in the economy; and (c) agency—women’s voice and influence in all facets of society.

The report makes several distinct contributions to policy makers’ understanding of gender, development, and public policy in East Asian and Pacific countries.

- First, the analysis focuses on issues that are particularly relevant to the region. Compared with other developing regions, for example, female access to basic education is no longer a first-order concern in most East Asian and Pacific countries. Gender stereotyping and gender “streaming” in education still represent critical challenges, however, and thus receive particular emphasis in the report.
- Second, the report examines the gender dimensions of several emerging trends that are important to the region’s development: increased global economic integration, rising use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), migration, urbanization, and rapid population aging. These trends have gender dimensions that

are not commonly accounted for by policy makers but that will generate a distinct set of challenges for promoting gender equality going forward.

- Third, the East Asia and Pacific region is vast and diverse, with important differences in economic and social characteristics that affect progress toward gender equality. The report accounts for intraregional diversity in a way that is not possible in a global report. Particular emphasis is placed, where possible, on the challenges faced by countries in the Pacific as distinct from those in East Asia.
- Finally, the report has undertaken extensive empirical analysis of gender equality using a newly created database of household surveys for the region. In doing so, the report has contributed significantly to the development of indicators and evidence on gender, development, and public policy that were not available previously.

## Why does gender equality matter for development?

*Gender equality matters intrinsically.* Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen transformed the discourse on development when he argued that development not only is about raising people's incomes or reducing poverty but rather involves a process of expanding freedoms equally for *all* people (Sen 1999).<sup>1</sup> Viewed from this perspective, gender equality is intrinsically valued. The near-universal ratification and adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)<sup>2</sup>—and the subsequent commitment of the international community to Millennium Development Goals 3 and 5—underscores a near-global consensus that gender equality and women's empowerment are development objectives in their own right.

*Gender equality also matters for development.* A growing body of empirical literature from around the world demonstrates that promoting gender equality is also good development policy, or as stated in the *World*

*Development Report 2012* (World Bank 2011c, 3), “Gender equality is smart economics.” Indeed, the literature shows that greater gender equality in endowments, access to economic opportunities, and agency can (a) contribute to higher productivity, income growth, and poverty reduction; (b) improve the opportunities and outcomes of the next generation; and (c) enhance development decision making. This section explores the evidence on these three pathways, in turn.

## Gender equality can contribute to higher productivity and income growth

For households and economies to function at their full potential, resources, skills, and talent should be put to their most productive use. If societies allocate resources on the basis of one's gender, as opposed to one's skills and abilities, this allocation comes at a cost. Indeed, the economic costs of gender inequalities—whether caused by the persistence of traditional norms or by overt discrimination—can be considerable. A recent study commissioned for the *World Development Report 2012* found that in the East Asia and Pacific region, output per worker could be 7 to 18 percent higher across a range of countries if female entrepreneurs and workers were to work in the same sectors, types of jobs, and activities as men and to have the same access to productive resources (Cuberes and Teignier-Baqué 2011).

Evidence suggests that misallocation of female skills and talent commonly begins before women enter the labor force, when families and societies underinvest in girls' schooling. A number of cross-country studies have found a robust inverse relationship between the size of the gender gap in education and gross domestic product (GDP) growth, controlling for average education levels and other factors associated with economic growth (see, for example, Klasen 2002; Knowles, Lorgelly, and Owen 2002).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, to the extent that young women (or men) choose fields of study on the basis of their gender rather than their abilities,



this too will exact costs not only on individuals' employment and earnings, but also on a country's economic productivity more broadly.

Gender inequalities in access to productive assets also have costs in terms of productivity and income. Microeconomic studies from a number of countries across developing regions show that female farmers and entrepreneurs are inherently no less productive than male farmers and entrepreneurs; rather, they tend to have less access to productive inputs.<sup>4</sup> A recent study by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that equalizing access to productive resources between female and male farmers could increase agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4.0 percent (FAO/Sida Partnership Cooperation 2010).

A number of studies show that gender-based violence also imposes significant costs on the economies of developing countries through lower worker productivity and incomes, lower human capital investments, and weaker accumulation of social capital (Morrison, Ellsberg, and Bott 2007). In addition to indirect costs, gender-based violence has large direct economic costs on society. A study in the United States found that the direct health care costs of intimate partner violence against adult women were more than \$4 billion USD in 1995 (USCDC 2003). Reducing gender-based violence would thus have significant positive effects on the region's economies by reducing health care costs and increasing investments in women's human capital, female worker productivity, and women's accumulation of social capital.

As the global economy becomes more integrated, the productivity effects associated with greater gender equality are likely to be increasingly important to East Asian and Pacific countries. Recent studies on the relationship between gender and trade suggest that gender inequalities have become financially detrimental for countries in a world of open trade (Do, Levchenko, and Raddatz 2011). To participate effectively in

an increasingly competitive world, countries will need to harness their resources efficiently by improving opportunities for all and allocating labor on the basis of skill instead of gender. Gender inequality, whether in endowments, economic opportunities, or agency, reduces a country's ability to compete in this increasingly globalized economic environment (World Bank 2011c).

### **Promoting gender equality is also an investment in the next generation**

A large body of cross-country and country-specific literature shows that healthier, better educated mothers have healthier, better educated children, which can be expected to positively affect children's future productivity and economic prospects. The effects begin even before childbirth. In Timor-Leste, highly educated mothers and those in the wealthiest households are more likely to have their babies delivered by skilled attendants than less educated mothers and those from poorer households (NSD, Ministry of Finance, and ICF Macro 2010). Similarly, Demographic and Health Survey data show that Cambodian women with little education are relatively less likely to receive prenatal care and assistance from trained health personnel during birth deliveries than women with more education (Johnson, Sao, and Hor 2000). A mother's health and nutrition status is also found to strongly affect children's physical health as well as cognitive and noncognitive abilities, which can have long-lasting developmental and societal consequences (Naudeau et al. 2011).

Higher labor force participation as well as income earned and assets held by women have also been shown to have positive effects on the next generation. In Indonesia, for example, women with a higher share of household assets before marriage tend to use more prenatal care and are more likely to have their births attended by skilled health care providers (Beegle, Frankenberg, and Thomas 2001). Similarly, in China,

increasing adult female income by 10 percent of the average household income raised the fraction of surviving girls by 1 percentage point and increased years of schooling for both boys and girls. In contrast, a similar increase in male income reduced survival rates and educational attainment for girls with no impact on boys (Qian 2008). Studies from across developing and developed regions (for example, from places as diverse as Brazil, Ghana, South Africa, and the United States) show that income in the hands of women positively affects their female children's health (Duflo 2003; Thomas 1995); commonly, the marginal effects of income and assets in the hands of mothers are larger than effects of similar income and assets in the hands of fathers.

Reductions in gender-based violence through greater female agency can also have important intergenerational benefits. Several studies show that experiencing domestic violence between parents as a child contributes to a higher risk of both women experiencing domestic violence as adults and of men perpetrating violence against their spouses (Fehringer and Hindin 2009). In Timor-Leste, 56.4 percent of women who were victims of spousal violence had a father who beat their mother (NSD, Ministry of Finance, and ICF Macro 2010). In Cambodia, women who reported that their mothers experienced domestic violence were more likely to experience physical and psychological domestic violence as well (NIPH, NIS, and ORC Macro 2006). Efforts that increase women's safety and security and that reduce domestic violence can thus lead to lower intergenerational transmission of violence within families.

### **Strengthening women's voice can enhance the quality of development decision making**

Several studies show that women and men have different policy preferences (Edlund and Pande 2001; Lott and Kenny 1999). Despite perceptions in some East Asian and Pacific countries that women do not make

as good leaders as men, studies suggest that capturing these gender-based differences in perspective can lead to not only more representative but also better decision making. Evidence from South Asia suggests that development policy making can benefit from greater gender equality in voice. As an example, a study of women elected to local government in India found that female leadership positively affected the provision of public goods at the local level in ways that better reflected both women's and men's preferences (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004). Similarly, studies from rural India and Nepal found that when women who were previously excluded from decisions about local natural resource management gained greater voice and influence, local conservation outcomes improved significantly (Agarwal 2010a, 2010b).

Women's collective agency can also be transformative, both for individuals and for society as a whole. For example, for a group of ethnic minority women in rural China, information sharing among them has helped empower them and raise their social standing in the Han-majority communities into which they married (Judd 2010). In a more formal setting, over the last 15 years, migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong SAR, China, have been engaged in civic action focused on local migrant workers' rights as well as international human rights (Constable 2009). These efforts have contributed to the enactment of laws that now provide migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong SAR, China, with some of the most comprehensive legal protections in the world.

### **Recent progress, pending challenges**

Over the last few decades, most East Asian and Pacific countries made considerable progress toward gender equality in several dimensions. In other dimensions, gender disparities have been more persistent. This section reviews recent progress and pending challenges in the region, noting where economic growth and development have

contributed to advances and where they have been insufficient.

### Growth and development have been accompanied by reduced gender inequalities in several dimensions

*Many gender gaps in education have closed.* Over the last few decades, boys' and girls' schooling outcomes have converged at levels that are high by international standards. East Asia and the Pacific has performed better than other developing regions, in terms of both increasing female and male educational enrollments and raising the female-to-male enrollment ratio. In 2010, the region had the highest primary school ratio of female-to-male enrollments among all developing regions; at the secondary level, only Latin America and the Caribbean had a higher female-to-male enrollment ratio (figure O.3).

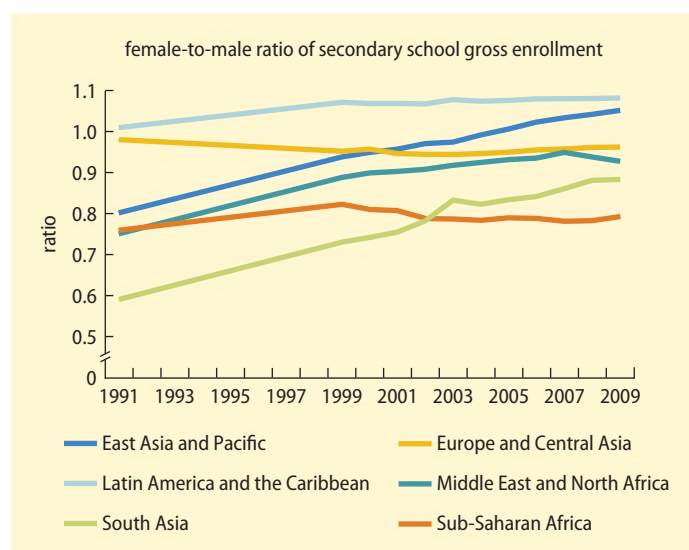
*Key health outcomes have improved.* During the past half century, the region has experienced significant advances in several health indicators. Fertility rates have

sharply declined, and under-five mortality rates have halved since 1990 for both boys and girls. Noteworthy gains have been made in birth attendance by health professionals. In addition, the East Asia and Pacific region has seen substantial declines in the maternal mortality rate, from approximately 200 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 100 in 2008 (figure O.4).

*Gender gaps in labor force participation have narrowed.* Female labor force participation in East Asian and Pacific countries is high by international standards (figure O.5), and among younger cohorts, female labor force participation has tended to rise over time. Moreover, as countries grow and develop, women are increasingly moving into jobs in the nonagricultural sector and are migrating to urban areas in search of better employment opportunities. Trends and patterns of labor force participation look similar to those observed in the United States and other countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) during their economic transformations.

In many ways, women in East Asia and the Pacific are better positioned today than ever before to participate in and contribute to their countries' development.

**FIGURE O.3** Girls' secondary school enrollments have converged to those of boys



Source: WDI database, 2011 data.

### Despite progress, important challenges to promoting gender equality remain

*Progress has been uneven across the region.* Substantial variation remains across countries, both in overall enrollment rates and in female-to-male enrollment ratios. Countries such as Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), and Papua New Guinea still have relatively low enrollment levels and low female-to-male enrollment ratios, particularly at the secondary school level. Furthermore, although countries have experienced convergence in enrollment among the young, substantial gaps still remain in the educational endowments of adult populations.



Maternal mortality remains high in lower-income countries and in several Pacific countries (figure O.4). In Lao PDR, for example, maternal mortality rates were still more than 500 deaths per 100,000 births in 2008, among the highest rates in the world. Indonesia's maternal mortality rate remains high compared to other countries in the region at similar levels of development.

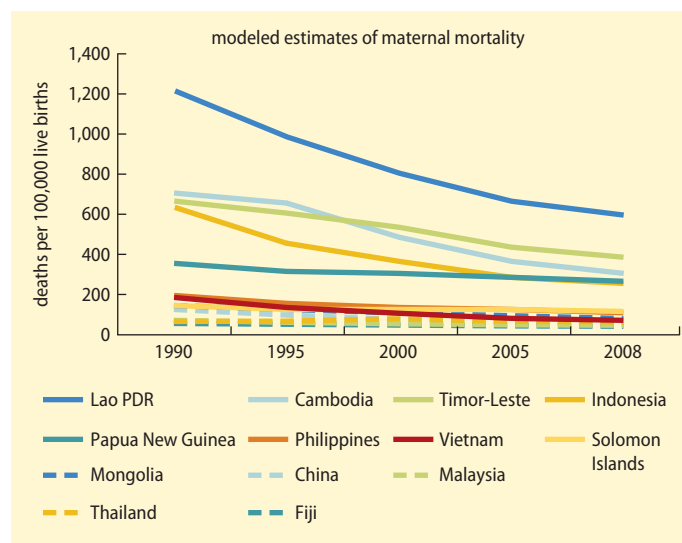
Substantial differences in labor force participation occur across countries in the region, even among countries with similar income levels. Relative to their income levels, countries such as China and Vietnam have substantially higher rates of female labor force participation than the world average, whereas participation is near the world average in countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines, and below average in countries such as Fiji and Malaysia (figure O.5).

*Within countries, interactions between gender and other socioeconomic characteristics can often exacerbate disparities.* Economically disadvantaged and minority populations often experience lower educational enrollments, for example. In Vietnam, school participation among 15- to 17-year-olds is substantially higher among the Kinh and Hoa (Chinese) majorities than among many of the 52 ethnic minority populations. Among the more economically disadvantaged and less well integrated Hmong, Dao, and Khmer minorities, far fewer girls attend school than boys (Baulch et al. 2002).<sup>5</sup> Geographic distance, or remoteness, can also serve to compound gender disadvantage. Women in remote rural areas commonly have limited access to health care, significantly raising the risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth. While Vietnam has experienced noteworthy declines in maternal mortality, on average, over the last decade, progress has been much slower in remote and ethnic minority regions (World Bank 2011b).

### Some gender disparities fail to close—or close very slowly—with development

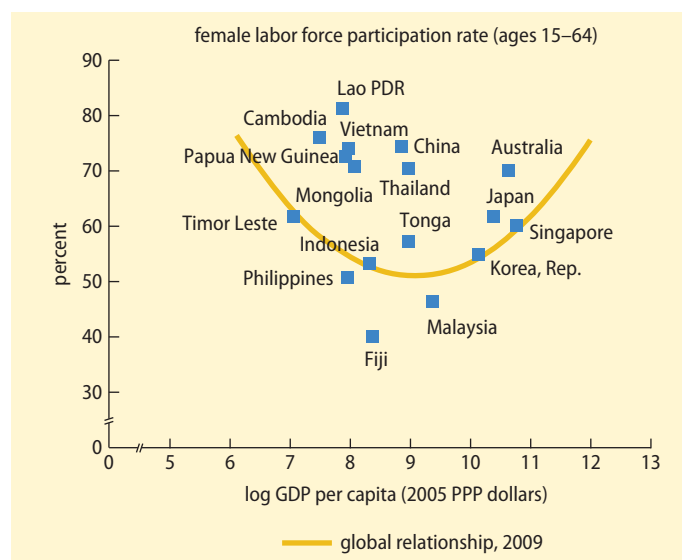
*More than a million girls and women per year are “missing” in East Asia.* Among

**FIGURE O.4** Maternal mortality rates have declined in most countries in the region



Source: WDI database, Gender Statistics, 2010 data.

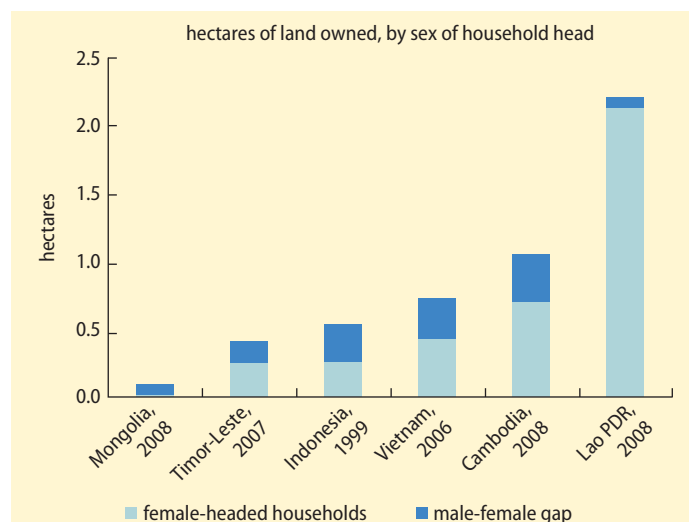
**FIGURE O.5** Female labor force participation is high by global standards but also varies substantially across the region



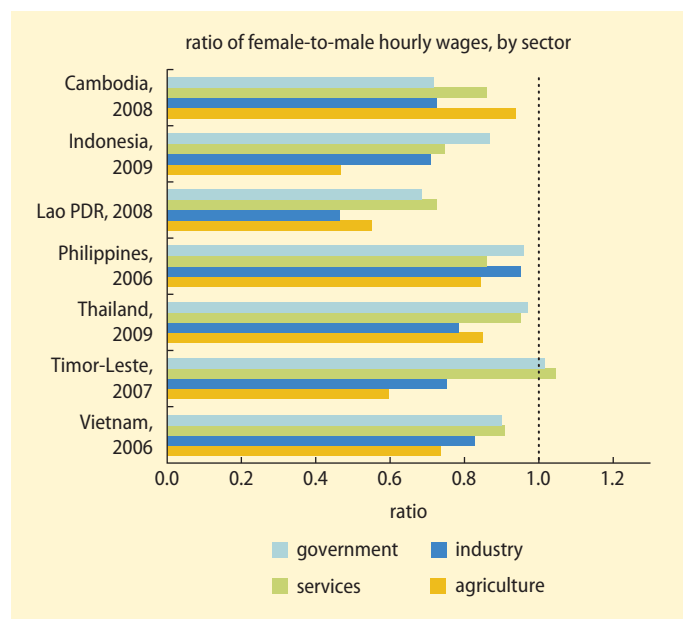
Sources: World Bank staff estimates using Key Indicators of Labour Market (KILM) labor force data (International Labour Organization) and purchasing power parity adjusted GDP per capita (in logs and at 2005 prices) from the Penn World Tables.

Note: GDP = gross domestic product, PPP = purchasing power parity. The data shown for each country are from 2009 and the estimated U-shaped relationship uses data from across the world.

the most concerning issues is that despite growth and development, the problem of missing girls remains significant. The term “missing women” was first coined

**FIGURE 0.6** Across the region, female-headed households own less land than male-headed households

Source: World Bank staff estimates using household income and expenditure surveys.

**FIGURE 0.7** Women in East Asia and the Pacific still earn less than men

Source: World Bank staff estimates using household income and expenditure surveys.

to what is observed in developed countries. Sen argued that this imbalance in sex ratios reflected severe forms of gender bias in affected societies. Biological differences between males and females imply that approximately 105 boys are born for every 100 girls. Nonetheless, China, Vietnam, and until recently, the Republic of Korea have experienced substantial deviations from the biological norm, and the trend over time, particularly in China, has been alarming. In China, the number of girls who are missing per year at birth increased from 890,000 in 1990 to 1,092,000 in 2008. Missing girls as a fraction of the total number of female births increased from 8.6 percent in 1990 to 13.3 percent in 2008 (World Bank 2011c).

*Gender disparities still exist in access to and control of productive resources.* Gender disparities in access to and control of land and farm inputs are pervasive in the region despite growth and development. Women remain less likely to own land than men. And when women, or specifically, female-headed households, do own land, they typically have smaller holdings (figure O.6).<sup>6</sup> Female-headed households also tend to have poorer access to other productive inputs and support services, including livestock holdings and access to agricultural extension services.

*Despite high labor force participation, important gender inequalities in economic opportunity remain.* Women still earn less than men in nearly all sectors in all countries in the region (figure O.7). Gender wage gaps increase with age, reflecting in part lower levels of experience among women caused by workforce interruptions and reduced working hours during childbearing years, as well as gender disparities in education among older cohorts. Gender wage gaps in the region are also strongly influenced by occupational and sectoral segregation, mirroring patterns seen in the United States and other

by Amartya Sen (1999) to refer to the phenomenon that many low-income countries have far fewer women than men relative

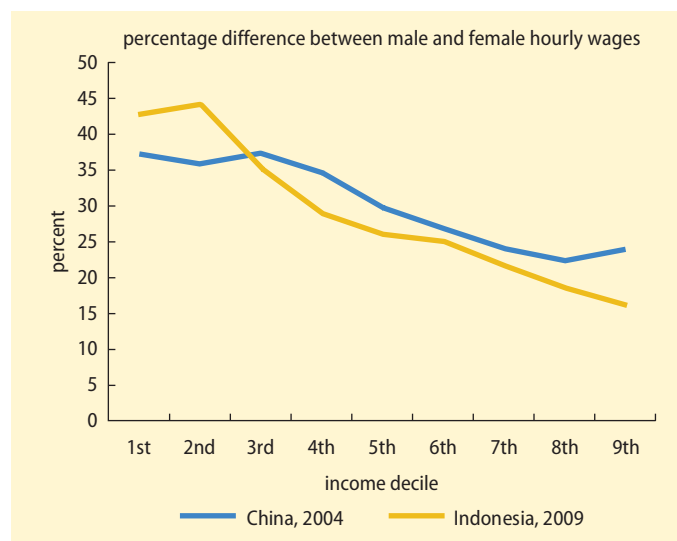
OECD countries. Together, differences in education endowments, experience, and industrial and occupational segregation explain up to 30 percent of observed gender wage disparities in East Asian countries (Sakellariou 2011).

Gender wage gaps in the region are often greatest among men and women with relatively low education and skill levels. Several studies from East Asian and Pacific countries point toward “sticky floors,” that is, wider wage gaps at the bottom than at the top of the earnings distribution (figure O.8). The finding of sticky floors contrasts with studies from OECD countries, which more commonly find “glass ceilings,” that is, larger wage gaps among higher-earning men and women.

Women are more likely to work in small firms, to work in the informal sector, and to be concentrated in lower-paid occupations and sectors. Within firms, women are more likely than men to be temporary workers. Such employment segregation affects a number of economic outcomes by gender, including earnings, returns to education and experience, social security coverage, and exposure to shocks. Substantial gender-based occupational and sectoral segregation is seen in all countries and does not decline with development. In fact, employment segregation tends to increase as economies become more diverse with development. Economic growth and, in particular, urbanization appear to make occupational and sectoral segregation by gender more pronounced, particularly during the early stages of economic structural change.

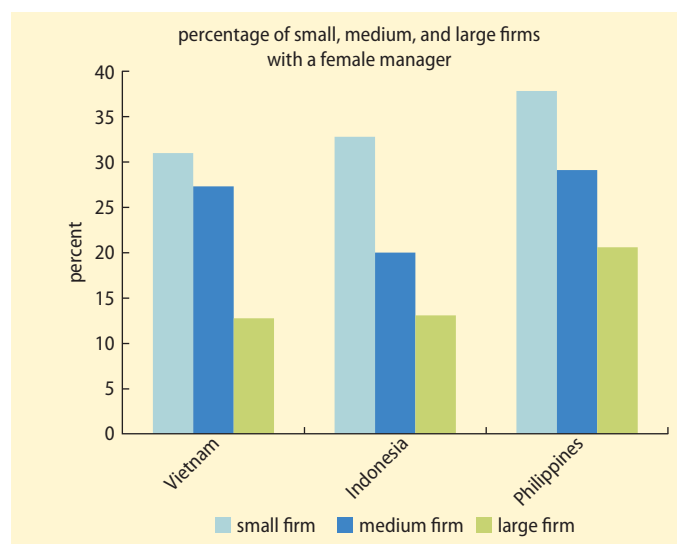
Similarly, female-led enterprises tend to be smaller and more precarious than male-led enterprises (figure O.9). The micro, small, and medium firm sectors are important segments of most East Asian and Pacific economies and contribute a substantial fraction of GDP. Female-led enterprises across the region, particularly in the informal sector, have lower profits, are less likely than male-led enterprises to be registered,

**FIGURE O.8** In urban China and Indonesia, gender wage gaps are largest among low wage earners



Sources: Chi and Li 2007; Sakellariou 2011.

**FIGURE O.9** Enterprises with female managers tend to be smaller



Source: World Bank staff estimates using Enterprise Surveys database for 2006–11.

have fewer employees and assets, and are more likely to be home based or to operate out of nonpermanent premises. Although

female-owned and -managed enterprises are not inherently less productive, they tend to be smaller, less capitalized, and located in less remunerative sectors.

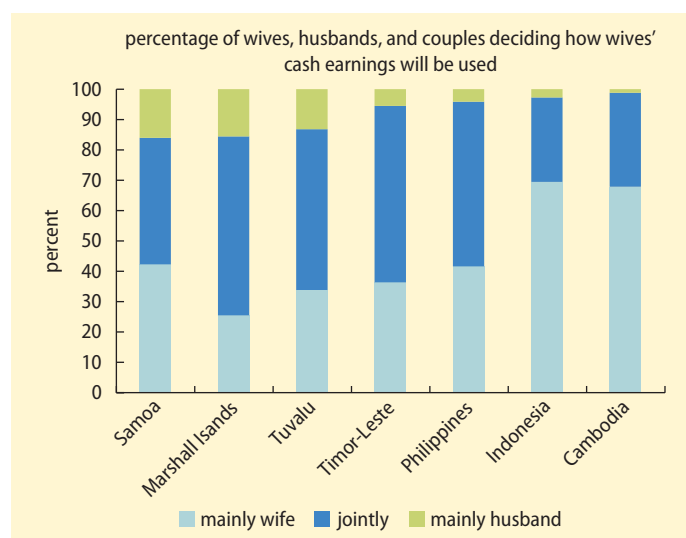
***Women in the region still have less voice and influence than men.*** Women's household decision-making power in East Asia and the Pacific is relatively high, but levels of autonomy vary across the region. Women's autonomy in the household can be measured in several ways, including control of assets, freedom of physical mobility, and voice in decision making. By several of these measures, including control over large household purchases and visiting family and relatives, women in East Asian countries appear to have relatively high autonomy compared with women in other developing regions (World Bank 2011c). Women in the Pacific have relatively less control over their own earnings, however. Over 15 percent of women in the Marshall Islands, 15 percent in Samoa, and 13 percent in Tuvalu report that their husbands control their cash earnings (figure O.10). Moreover, 58 percent of partnered women in the

Solomon Islands and 69 percent of partnered women in Vanuatu report that they have experienced some sort of controlling behavior by their partners. This includes preventing them from seeing family, wanting to know where they are at all times, forbidding contact with other men, and controlling their access to health care (SPC and NSO 2009; VWC 2011).

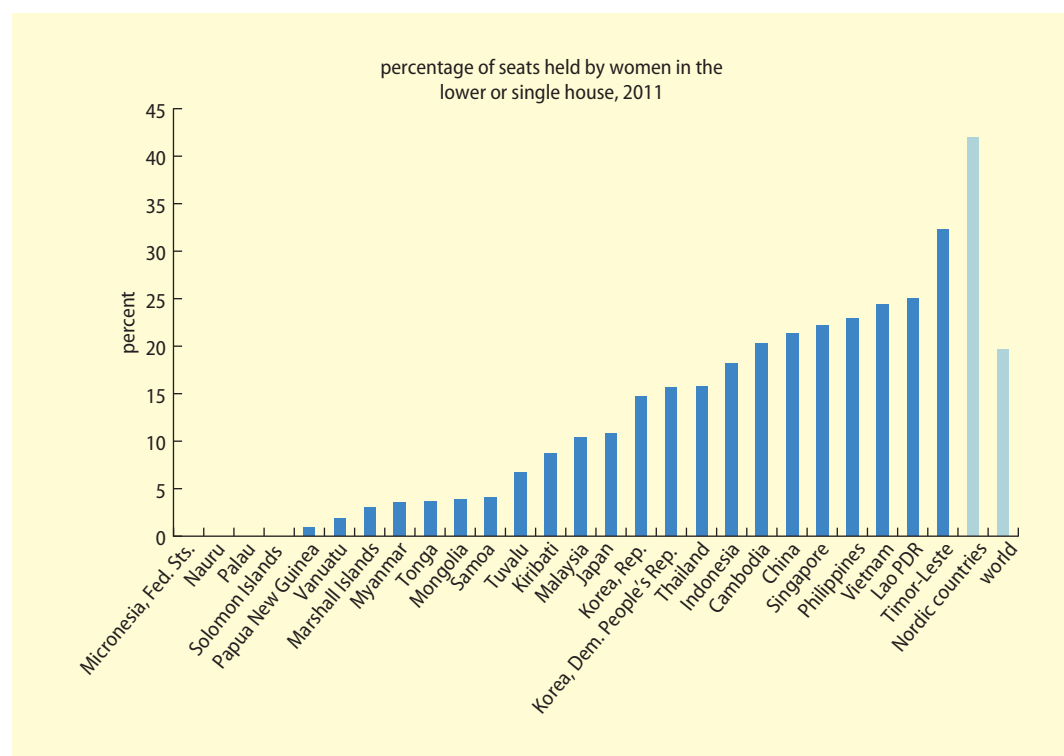
Women's voice and influence in the public domain—as measured by representation in national and local political assemblies—remains low. The share of female parliamentarians in East Asian and Pacific countries is just below the global average, at approximately 18 percent in 2011. Despite economic growth and development in the region, this figure has barely changed since 1990. Although the share of women in national assemblies varies considerably across the region, it is systematically lower in the Pacific than in East Asia (figure O.11). Indeed, in no country in the Pacific does the share of parliamentarians who are female exceed 10 percent, and four countries—the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, and the Solomon Islands—have no female parliamentarians.

The prevalence of gender-based violence is high in the region, and particularly so in the Pacific where the prevalence of domestic violence is among the highest in the world. As can be seen in figure O.12, 68 percent of ever-married women 15–49 years of age in Kiribati, 64 percent in the Solomon Islands, and 60 percent in Vanuatu have experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner (SPC, Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs, and Statistics Division 2010; SPC and NSO 2009; VWC 2011). Although no nationally representative data exist for Papua New Guinea, studies conducted at the subnational level suggest that domestic violence is just as prevalent (Ganster-Breidler 2010; Lewis, Maruia, and Walker 2008). This violence is a linchpin to a bigger story; violence against women represents the extreme deprivation of voice and freedom among

**FIGURE O.10 Who decides how wives' cash earnings are used varies widely across the region**



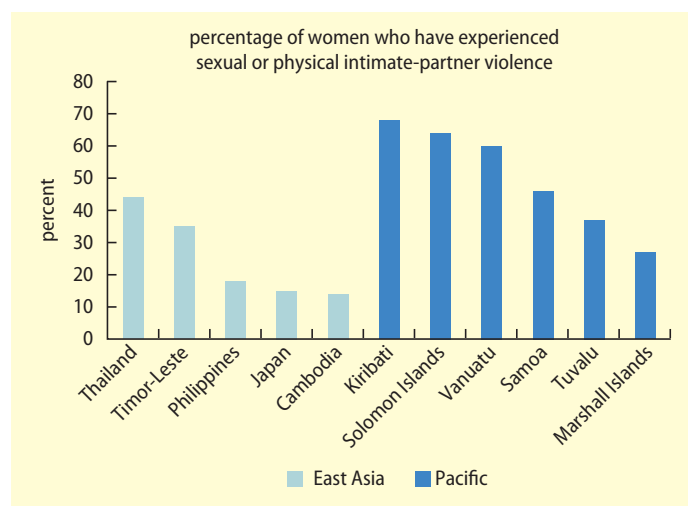
Sources: Demographic and Health Surveys, various years.

**FIGURE 0.11 Women's representation in parliament is low, especially in the Pacific**

Source: PARLINE database (Inter-Parliamentary Union).

women and, as such, is often associated with a lack of agency in other dimensions.

*Awareness is increasing that men and boys—not just women and girls—face gender-specific risks.* Some countries in the region have started to experience a reverse gender gap in education; girls' secondary school enrollment now exceeds that of boys in China, Fiji, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Samoa, and Thailand. Reverse gender gaps at the tertiary level are sometimes even starker: in Thailand, 122.4 females were enrolled for every 100 males in 2008. In addition, men across the region experience higher levels of morbidity and premature mortality related to substance abuse. The prevalence of smoking and drinking among males in East Asian and Pacific countries is much higher than the prevalence among females.

**FIGURE 0.12 Violence against women is high in the region**

Sources: Demographic and Health Surveys, various years, and government surveys.  
 Note: Data for Thailand are for Bangkok and Nakhonsawan only, and data for Japan are for Yokohama only.

## Why do many gender inequalities persist?

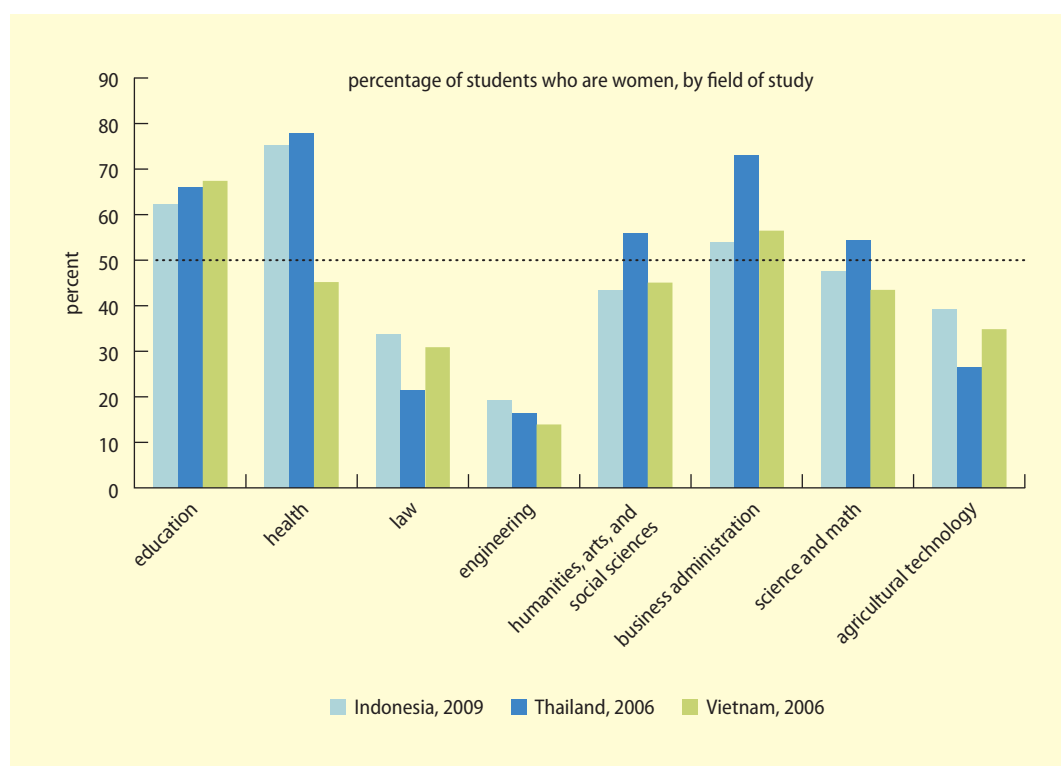
### Low household incomes, weak service delivery, and traditional norms can impede gender equality in education and health

Where gender gaps in education are still observed, low income coupled with high costs of education can limit household demand for schooling. Traditional gender norms and practices also strongly influence household schooling decisions. Participants of focus group discussions in a qualitative research exercise in Papua New Guinea report, for example, that parents value boys' education over girls' education. The reason is that males will carry the family name and become household heads

whereas females are expected to submit to their husbands and be caregivers and homemakers.

Weak systems of service delivery also constrain progress in education—overall as well as for girls. In Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Papua New Guinea, for example, school enrollments are low overall, and gender gaps persist. Low enrollment rates in Papua New Guinea also reflect limited physical access to schools and high dropout rates. Poor and sparse school infrastructure, poor teacher attitudes and attendance, lack of teachers in remote areas, and negative pupil behavior all contribute to low overall enrollments. Long distances to schools have been observed to make school attendance costly in both Cambodia and Lao PDR, particularly for girls, because long travel distances raise safety

**FIGURE 0.13** Women are concentrated in certain fields of study, such as education and medicine, but are underrepresented in law and engineering



Source: Sakellariou 2011.

concerns among parents. The lack of toilets at many schools makes attendance more difficult for girls than boys.

Gender streaming in education largely reflects societal norms and expectations and has implications for gender inequalities in job placement and earnings. Substantial differences remain in the composition of education between men and women in the region (figure O.13). Economic returns or comparative advantage of females and males in different fields of study do not appear to explain education streaming. Social norms about appropriate work for women and men, role models in the labor market, and gender stereotyping in school curricula play important roles. In East Asia and the Pacific, teaching materials more frequently portray males than females in active and leadership roles. Women are often depicted as secretaries, assistants, nurses, and teachers whereas men are portrayed as doctors, politicians, or police officers. Gender streaming in education ultimately affects the type of work that women and men do and, importantly, affects their respective abilities to take advantage of existing and emerging economic opportunities.

Poor service delivery and cultural norms about birthing practices contribute in large part to high maternal mortality in several East Asian and Pacific countries. Poor access to quality obstetric health services, particularly in remote rural areas, places women at higher risk for maternal death. Rural areas tend to be less well served by the health system, and rural residents have much lower access to birth deliveries attended by trained staff than do urban residents. Evidence shows that poor health infrastructure and long distances to the nearest health center are both important barriers to reducing maternal mortality in Cambodia and Lao PDR. In addition, culture and tradition play an important role in the choice of health practices, such as the location of childbirth, the use of skilled birth attendants, and sterilization practices. Preferences can vary from birth deliveries at home to

deliveries in the forest, including beliefs that women do not need prenatal care or delivery supported by skilled attendants. These factors take a heavy toll on women during pregnancy and pose higher risks of mortality related to birth complications.

Strong son preference, intensified by declining fertility and the availability of prenatal sex-identification technology, underlies the observed skewed sex ratios at birth in a few East Asian countries (China, Vietnam, and to a lesser extent now, Korea). Parents' choices to keep and care for boys over girls can depend on social norms and values, different economic opportunities by gender, and the benefits parents expect from a son compared to a daughter, including material support in old age. Although many societies have some mild degree of preference for sons, the interplay of culture, state, and political processes can generate extreme patrilineality and highly skewed child sex ratios. In addition, the manifestation of son preference is influenced by public policies—for example, China's one-child policy and Vietnam's two-child policy—and the spread of prenatal sex-determination technology since the early 1980s. For these reasons, economic growth and development alone do not necessarily reduce son preference and sex ratios at birth in East Asia.

Gender norms about masculinity play a strong role in influencing the excessive tobacco and alcohol consumption observed among men in many parts of the region. Smoking and drinking are commonly viewed as masculine behaviors. Men and boys feel substantial pressure to accept gender stereotypes that they should be strong and tough. In contrast, social disapproval of women who smoke keeps the smoking prevalence among women very low in Vietnam, for example. Survey data indicate that the primary reason why most Vietnamese women do not use tobacco is the expectation that "women shouldn't smoke." Survey respondents consider this factor more influential in affecting smoking behaviors than health concerns.



### Norms regarding women's household roles and disparities in productive resources constrain economic opportunity

Gender norms related to the allocation of time to household work affect women's opportunities in the labor market because they are expected to take primary responsibility for home and family in addition to any market role. Responsibility in the household fundamentally affects all outcomes in the market sphere—from where women work and what they do to how much they earn. Women work longer total hours than men and devote significantly more time to domestic and caregiving activities (figure O.14), particularly in households with small children. Many women temporarily leave the labor force when they must care for small children or the elderly. Trade-offs between household and market work can be particularly stark in rural areas, where women can spend long hours on domestic chores because of poor infrastructure and a lack of alternative childcare options. Indeed, differences in the types of work that women and men do, along with higher rates of female presence in the informal sector, are in part caused by

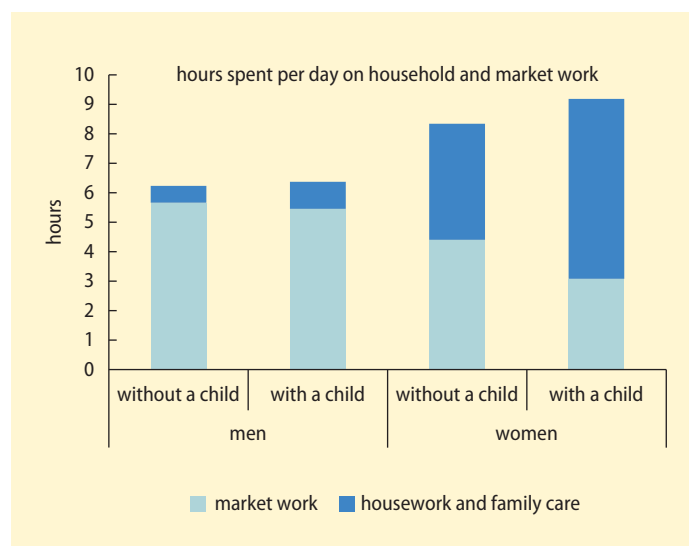
women's greater need for workplace flexibility to facilitate management of their dual household and market roles.

Female-headed households in the region tend to have less access to land because of the interaction of complex legal, social, and economic factors. In the majority of countries in East Asia, statutory law does not differentiate property inheritance by gender. However, parallel statutory and customary legal systems in a number of East Asian and Pacific Island countries mean that women are not treated equally to men in the implementation of the law. Gender inequalities persist also in access to other productive inputs and support services—from livestock holdings to agricultural extension services. Although evidence on access to credit is mixed across the region, female entrepreneurs in several countries, including Timor-Leste and Tonga, report greater difficulty than their male counterparts in accessing credit. Such disparities in access to productive resources continue to impede gender equality in access to economic opportunity.

A substantial share of the gaps in productivity and profits between female- and male-led firms can be accounted for by gender-based segregation of enterprises by sector, firm size, and firm characteristics. This “sorting” of firms is found among both formal and informal enterprises and reflects both gender norms regarding time allocation to household and market work and differential access to productive inputs. In Indonesia, for example, the food, retail, and garment manufacturing sectors—where female entrepreneurs are most likely to locate—are among the least capital-intensive and productive sectors (figure O.15). By contrast, the transport sector—where male entrepreneurs are most likely to locate—has higher productivity and capital intensity.

Broader constraints to business development, such as cumbersome registration procedures, affect both female- and male-led enterprises (figure O.16). The most important issues vary by country, but, within any given country, both male and female entrepreneurs often identify similar challenges—competition, difficulty in accessing finance,

**FIGURE O.14** In Lao PDR, women—particularly those with young children—must balance household and market work



Source: World Bank staff estimates using Lao Socio-economic Survey, 2008.

and lack of electricity—and in comparable magnitudes. Evidence suggests that such constraints may be more onerous among small and informal firms than among larger firms, however, so to the extent that female-led firms are smaller and more likely to be informal, they are likely to be more adversely affected.

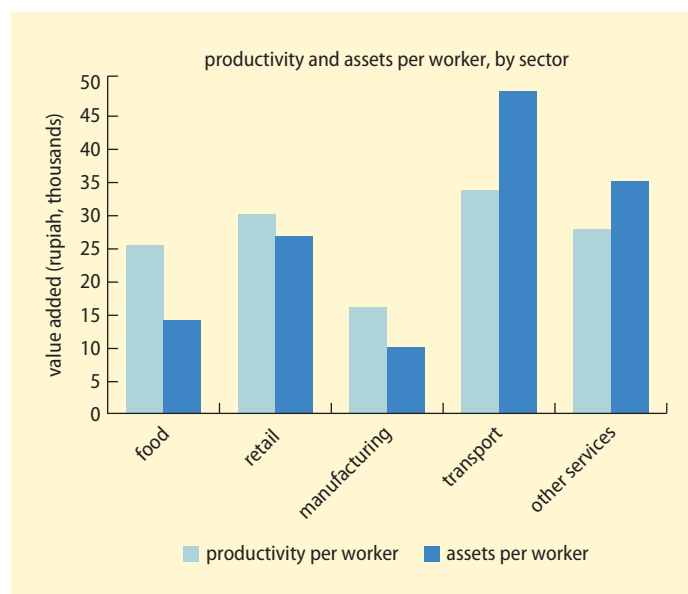
### Gender inequalities in endowments and economic opportunity limit women's agency...

A woman's agency is affected in fundamental ways by her endowments and access to economic opportunities. Gender inequalities in educational attainment, economic assets, and own earnings can hinder women's abilities to influence their circumstances in the home, to enter and participate effectively in politics, or to leave bad or dangerous household situations. In Indonesia, for example, women with little or no education are less likely to participate in decisions involving their own health care, to make household purchases, or to engage regularly in social activities than women with at least a secondary education (BPS and ORC Macro 2003). In China and Cambodia, women with less education are less likely to enter politics—for reasons of norms or statute—than women with higher levels of education (Maffii and Hong 2010; Wang and Dai 2010). Moreover, worldwide evidence suggests that a woman's ownership and control of her own assets and income is associated with a decreased risk of intimate-partner violence (Agarwal and Panda 2007; ICRW 2006; Pronyk et al. 2006; Swaminathan, Walker, and Rugadya 2008). Women's income can also positively affect their accumulation of assets, which in turn positively affects their ability to leave an abusive partner, to cope with shocks, and to invest and expand their earnings and economic opportunities (World Bank 2011c).

### ... as do traditional norms regarding women's roles ...

Social norms and practices can limit women's voice and influence in the home or in

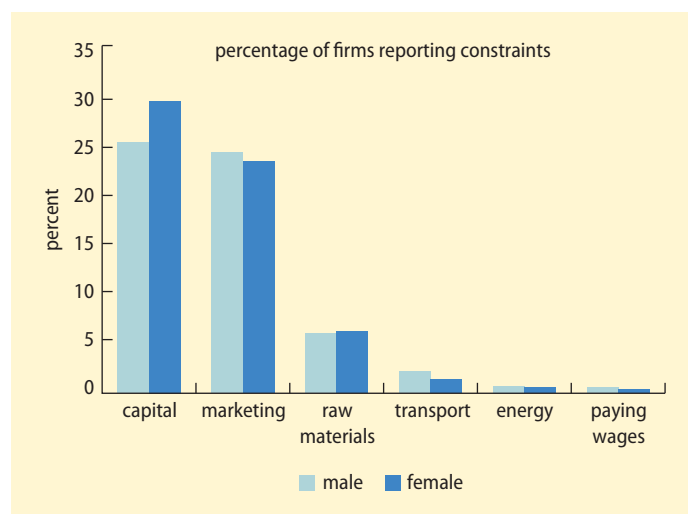
**FIGURE 0.15** In Indonesia, female-led enterprises are clustered in lower-productivity and less capital-intensive industries



Source: World Bank staff estimates using Indonesia Family Life Survey 2007/2008.

Note: The graph shows productivity and assets per worker in five industries for firms with fewer than five workers. Productivity is measured by value added.

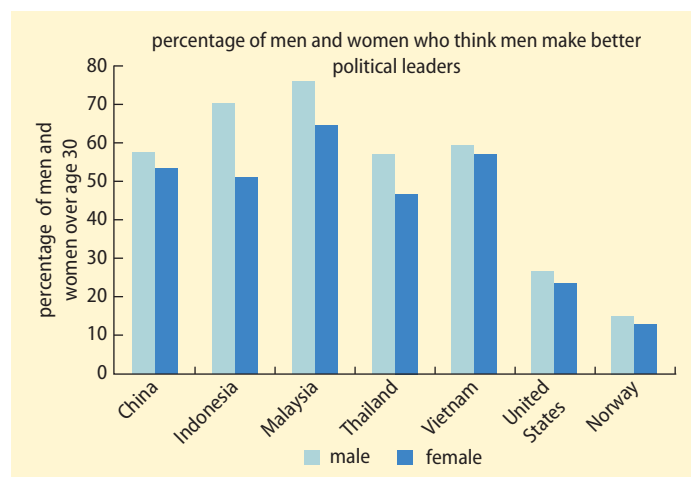
**FIGURE 0.16** Male- and female-led firms report similar constraints in Indonesia



Source: World Bank staff estimates using Survey of Cottage and Small-Scale Firms (SUSI) 2002.

society. As previously noted, traditional norms about women's roles within the home constrain their economic opportunities and thus their decision-making power within the home. Traditional gender norms

**FIGURE O.17** Men and, in some cases, women believe that men make better political leaders than women



Source: World Values Survey database, 2005–2009 data.

Note: Data for Indonesia, Malaysia, the United States, and Vietnam are for 2006; data for China and Thailand are for 2007; data for Norway are for 2008.

and social expectations also shape people's views about women's roles in the public sphere. Surveys conducted in several East Asian countries indicate, for example, that a majority of men—and sometimes a majority of women—think that men make better political leaders than women (figure O.17). Similarly, in parts of rural China, many people still think of women as less capable (*disuzhi*), and local norms dictate that they should confine their activities to the domestic settings (Wang and Dai 2010).

### ... and complex legal environments and, often, weak access to justice

The legal setting, along with people's access to justice, establishes the underlying environment in which women (and men) can exercise agency in the home and in society. Whether women and men are equally supported under the law, and whether their rights are protected in practice thus critically affect their voice and influence in society. Laws and access to justice also create the environment in which women and men can (or cannot) access resources and economic opportunity and accumulate assets, which also affects their agency. In several countries in the

region, the legal environment is affected by not only statutory but also customary law.

Plural legal environments, where both statutory and customary laws are practiced, can create important challenges to promoting gender equality in voice and influence. Statutory laws, customary (and sometimes religious) laws and practices can affect women's voice and influence in different ways when they bestow different rights by gender. Moreover, in practice, the interaction between statute and custom can mean that women's legal status varies substantially across ethnic (and religious) groups, even within a single country. This interaction can affect women's rights in marriage and divorce, reproductive health, education, asset ownership, inheritance, and freedom of mobility, among other things, which in turn can fundamentally affect the extent of women's agency.

In some countries, inadequate legal protection, weak implementation and enforcement, and social tolerance enable gender-based violence. Although more than three-quarters of countries in East Asia have strengthened legislation on domestic abuse in recent years (including, for example, Indonesia, Korea, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam), in the Pacific, more than 60 percent of countries still lack sufficient legislation on domestic violence (UNDP 2010). Even when countries have appropriate legislation in place, women remain unprotected by the legal system because the laws remain largely unenforced. A recent study found, for example, that officers in the Fiji Police Force Sexual Offences Unit often have unwelcoming attitudes when dealing with female victims (UNFPA 2008). The same is true in some areas in Cambodia, where many local officials still believe that a husband can threaten his wife despite the laws in place (UNDP Cambodia and VBNK 2010).

### Emerging opportunities and risks in an increasingly integrated world

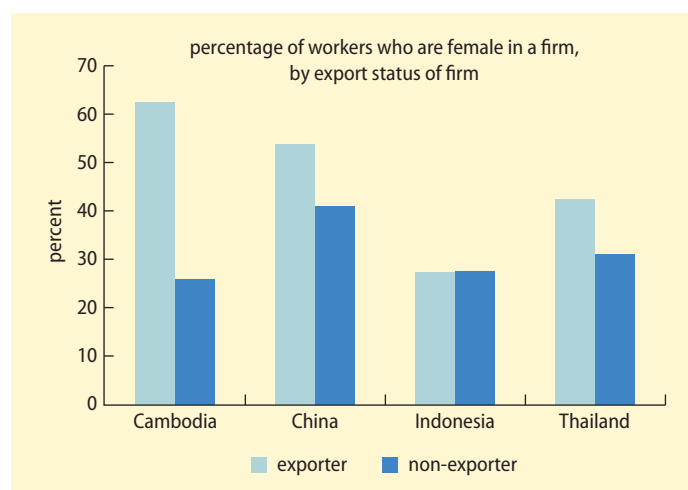
*Several emerging trends in the region will present both new opportunities and new*

*risks to achieving gender equality.* East Asia and the Pacific are at the forefront of several global trends: increasing global economic integration, rising availability and use of ICTs, increased domestic and cross-border migration, rapid urbanization, and population aging. Because these trends have gender dimensions, they will affect the evolution of gender equality in the region. In many ways, these trends will bring with them new opportunities for gender equality. For example, increased economic integration, greater access to ICTs, and increased migration will likely all contribute to increased income earning opportunities for women. Along with new opportunities, however, these emerging trends will bring new risks.

Increasing global integration will likely continue to be an important source of nonagricultural employment growth for women, who are already highly represented in export-oriented sectors (figure O.18). And greater employment and earnings in export-orientated industries can contribute to greater female independence and autonomy in decision making. At the same time, increasing global integration can increase economic risk and uncertainty, as shocks are quickly transmitted across integrated markets. A number of studies find that while shocks do not necessarily have more adverse impacts on women than men, they do have gender-differentiated effects on outcomes as diverse as employment, earnings, labor force participation, education, health, and nutrition (see, for example, Bruni et al. 2011; Rodgers and Menon forthcoming).

Advances in ICTs are opening up opportunities for both men and women throughout the region. New and emerging technologies, if accessible, can help increase women's welfare through a number of channels by opening new economic opportunities, empowering women by breaking down information barriers, facilitating engagement of women in isolated communities in distance learning, and enabling them to take collective action. In Malaysia, for example, female entrepreneurs have created self-help cyber communities to

**FIGURE O.18** The share of female workers in export-oriented firms is relatively high

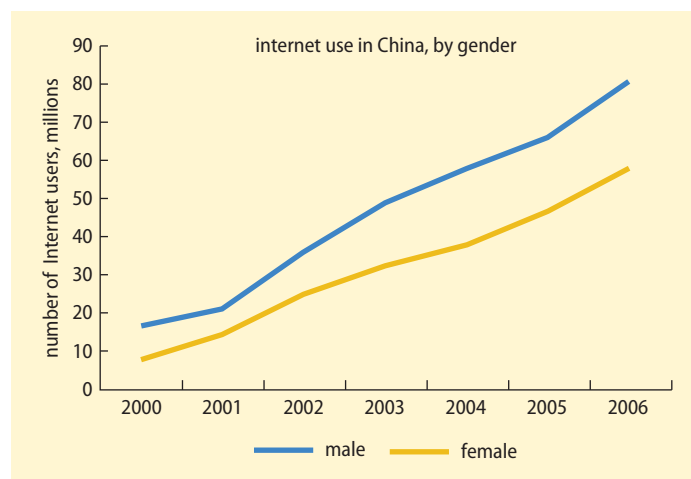


Source: World Bank staff estimates using Enterprise Surveys database for 2002–06.  
Note: Share of female workers = female workers/total workers.

network and share information about starting and running a business. Limited evidence suggests that women in the region may still have lower access to information technologies than men, however. Although data from China show rapid growth in access to ICT services, Chinese women are still less likely to use the Internet or to subscribe to mobile phone services (figure O.19). Widening gender gaps in access to ICTs raise the risk of rising disparities in economic opportunity and voice going forward.

High economic growth and increased economic integration over the past three decades have spurred significant migration across the region. Women constitute nearly half of all migrants in East Asia and the Pacific and are increasingly migrating in search of better economic opportunity. Female migrants dominate a number of occupations and sectors, including labor-intensive manufacturing and export-oriented industries, and domestic work. Migration can provide women with increased economic opportunity, give them the chance to improve their knowledge and skills, and increase their agency through raising their contributions to family income.

**FIGURE O.19** China has seen remarkable growth in Internet use since 2000, but women's use trails men's



Source: CNNIC (China Internet Network Information Center) Internet Statistics.

At the same time, migration brings with it important gender-specific risks. For example, many female migrants work as domestic workers, an occupation with particularly weak worker protections in most countries. Female migrants are also disproportionately susceptible to human trafficking.

Many East Asian and Pacific countries are experiencing unprecedented levels of urbanization as migrants move to urban areas in search of economic opportunity. Between 2000 and 2015, Indonesia, China, and Cambodia are predicted to see an increase of the population residing in urban areas by 17, 13, and 9 percentage points, respectively (UN 2010). Urbanization affects all aspects of life, from the nature of employment to the availability of services to one's ability to rely on extended family and community networks for support. These changes almost certainly have gender-specific impacts. While urban areas can open up a wider range of economic opportunities for both men and women, women's ability to take advantage of new opportunities is likely to depend more fundamentally on the nature and availability of urban services—for example, whether transportation systems facilitate their safe travel to job sites or affordable child care can

compensate for the loss of extended family networks.

Finally, the high-income economies in East Asia are experiencing rapid population aging. Most emerging countries in the region have also begun this process; dependency ratios are already increasing in many middle-income countries in East Asia and the Pacific. Old-age dependency is expected to increase even more quickly in the coming decades (figure O.20). Population aging is likely to have gender-differentiated effects at all age levels. Gender differences in time devoted to caring for the elderly imply that in the absence of institutionalized care services, women are likely to bear the brunt of the increased demand for elder care (Dwyer and Coward 1992; Ofstedal, Knodel, and Chayovan 1999). In addition, while women tend to live longer than men, gender differences in education and labor force participation imply that women are less likely to be vested in formal pension systems and may have fewer assets to ensure a basic level of well-being in old age.

At present, these emerging trends have gender dimensions that are not commonly accounted for by policy makers. Nonetheless, these trends will generate a distinct set of challenges for promoting gender equality going forward. An important role for public policy, therefore, will be to support women (and men) in taking advantage of emerging opportunities while protecting them against the emerging risks.

### Toward gender equality in East Asia and the Pacific: Directions for policy

The collection of evidence points to four priority areas where public policy can contribute to greater gender equality and more effective development in East Asian and Pacific countries:

- First, promoting gender equality in human development remains a priority where gender gaps in education are large or health outcomes are poor; closing gaps in human



development, where they persist, is likely to yield high returns.

- Second, taking active measures to close gender gaps in economic opportunity is often warranted on both equity and efficiency grounds. Which policy levers will yield the highest returns depends on the structure of the country's economy and which specific constraints are most binding.
- Third, taking measures to strengthen women's agency—and to protect them from violence—is also called for across the region; strengthening women's voice and influence will contribute to the quality of development decision making and thus to development more broadly.
- Fourth, public policy has a critical role in fostering new opportunities and managing emerging risks associated with increasing global economic integration, the rising role of ICTs, increasing migration, rapid urbanization, and population aging.

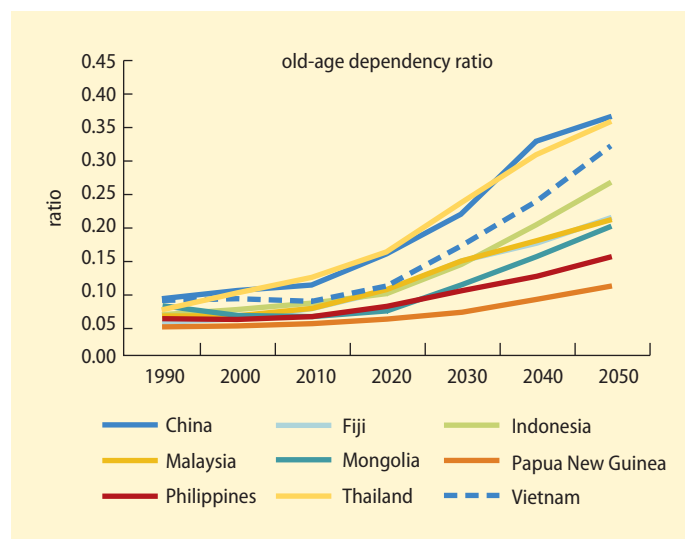
The following sections examine policy approaches to promoting gender equality in East Asia and the Pacific in these four priority areas, drawing on recent experience from the region and beyond.

## Promoting gender equality in human development

### *Closing persistent gender gaps in human development*

In countries with unequal gender outcomes in education and health, the priority remains improving these outcomes. In East Asia and the Pacific, gender gaps in human development at the national level tend to persist where overall outcomes are low. In such cases, public action to strengthen countries' education and health systems will be called for to improve gender (as well as overall) outcomes. For countries with more localized gender disparities, for example, among specific ethnic groups or in remote, rural regions, more targeted interventions may be warranted. The exact constraints

**FIGURE 0.20** The old-age dependency ratio is increasing in most East Asian countries



Sources: Data for 1990–2010: World Bank 2010; data for 2020–50: HNPStats Population Projections database.

Note: The old age dependency ratio is defined as the ratio of the elderly (ages 65 and above) to the working age population (ages 15–64).

vary by country context, but the evidence makes clear that both demand-side and supply-side factors are responsible for these poor human capital outcomes.

Policies can thus have an impact by improving service delivery (for example, through infrastructure, staffing, incentives, and use of ICTs) and implementing demand-side interventions (for instance, through cash transfers to poor households, information campaigns, and improved accountability). For example, Indonesia's school construction program in the 1970s significantly increased education attainment and future earnings (Duflo 2000). In Cambodia, a scholarship program targeted at girls and a related program targeted at boys and girls from low-income households led to an increase in school enrollment of at least 20 percentage points (Filmer and Schady 2008, 2009). Evidence indicates that to reduce maternal mortality, interventions that ensure basic infrastructure and improve accountability for service delivery are important. Approaches to providing services that take into account traditional norms and practices also show promise. For example, Malaysia

has adopted programs that provide guidance that traditional birth attendants on hygiene practices, diagnosis of complicated cases, and information on the importance of prenatal care.

### *Reducing gender streaming in education*

For East Asian and Pacific countries where gender equality in access to human capital is no longer the dominant concern, addressing education quality—specifically, gender streaming in education—will have high returns. Although concerted efforts in both education and the labor market will be needed to break gender “silos” in education and, consequently, in the economy, significant steps can be taken within the education system. One important step involves reform of school curricula to address the transmission of gender stereotypes through the education system. Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam have reviewed curricula and revised learning materials or encouraged better practice without gender stereotyping. Other active interventions may be warranted, including information campaigns, financial or nonfinancial incentives, and efforts to create gender-friendly environments in higher education. Providing information on wages and career paths in these programs before individuals choose their courses may help reduce gender streaming in training. In the United States, for example, the Science Connections program offered monthly science workshops for girls plus a summer science weekend for families to increase girls’ knowledge about and interest in nontraditional careers in science. Scholarships that support women (and men) in entering nontraditional fields may provide another avenue for breaking down gender silos in education.

### *Promoting balanced sex ratios at birth*

In the few countries with “missing girls” at birth, rooted in the prevalence of son preference, active measures are needed to address the issue. Even where laws against sex-selective abortion have been enacted, strong incentives to select the preferred gender still induce

expectant parents to bypass the law, and enforcement of such laws is difficult. Existing evidence suggests a more promising approach is to adopt policies that aim to enhance family perceptions of the value of daughters. While general policies to promote economic development may play a role, Korea’s recent experience suggests that introducing interventions to influence norms and facilitate the spread of new social values may also be important, rather than relying on efforts to raise female education and labor force participation alone. Information campaigns, financial incentives, and improved social security for the elderly can all contribute to changing societal preferences and behaviors. China has been adopting several of these types of programs. For example, the National Population and Family Planning Commission scaled up the Chaohu pilot through the national Care for Girls campaign in 24 counties with severe gender imbalance. This campaign went beyond advocacy and media publicity alone; direct financial incentives for parents to raise daughters have also been introduced. Preliminary evidence suggests that these programs have had some impact on reducing imbalances in the sex ratio at birth.

### *Addressing male-specific gender issues*

Paying attention to male- as well as female-specific gender issues is appropriate for reasons of basic welfare as well as for development effectiveness. In this context, initial signs of reverse gender gaps in education in several countries should be monitored closely. While the long-term implications of male disadvantage in education are still to be understood, depending on the underlying causes, it could have both economic and social consequences. Moreover, excessive tobacco and alcohol consumption among males in many parts of the region deserves policy attention; the social costs are usually higher than private costs because of the negative effects of these behaviors on other members of the society. Possible measures to tackle this challenge include providing information about the health risks of excessive tobacco and alcohol consumption, enacting



or increasing taxes on tobacco and alcohol, imposing regulatory measures on advertising, and restricting smoking in public sites. The Thai Health Promotion Foundation, for example, uses alcohol excise tax revenues to support the operation of an alcohol control center and a research center on alcohol consumption, to support advertising campaigns to reduce alcohol-related traffic accidents, and to promote abstinence and increase knowledge about the links between alcohol use and domestic violence.

### **Taking active measures to close gender gaps in economic opportunity**

#### *Mitigating trade-offs between women's household and market roles*

Women often face stark time trade-offs between household and market work, particularly in rural areas. In such contexts, programs targeted at reducing women's time on household work—for example, through investment in infrastructure—are likely to increase women's ability to engage in market-based income-earning opportunities. In Lao PDR, for example, evidence indicates that having access to electricity extends the hours available for both productive and leisure activities, particularly for women and girls (World Bank 2011a).

Policies that support women in balancing their caregiving and market roles are also important in strengthening their access to economic opportunity. Access to affordable and accessible child care can be critical in this regard. Community child care centers, particularly those targeted at low-income neighborhoods, have been found to increase maternal employment in a number of Latin American countries. The importance of affordable child care, particularly as urban areas expand, can be seen from recent experience in the region. In Mongolia and China, reductions in subsidized child care in the 1990s and 2000s have significantly and negatively affected female labor force participation in urban areas.

Parental and paternity leave can promote greater parity between the sexes by

facilitating a more equitable division of child-rearing responsibilities and allowing women to have the same opportunities as men for advancing their careers in the formal sector. Within the region, only Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines currently have provisions for paternity leave. While the principles behind paternity (and parental) leave are appealing, evidence from the OECD on the take-up of paternity leave is mixed, suggesting that providing paternity leave alone is not sufficient to change the current gender division of child-rearing responsibilities within households; rather, such leave policies need to be combined with other approaches to breaking down gender norms regarding household caregiving.

#### *Breaking down gender silos in the labor market*

A key element of breaking down gender silos in the labor market involves supporting young women and men to invest in skills on the basis of their productivity rather than on the basis of gender norms and perceptions regarding “appropriate” occupations. Beyond efforts to reduce gender streaming in education, programs that help both women and men understand employment options outside of gender silos will likely improve the allocation of talent toward jobs in ways that improve both equality of economic opportunity and productivity. In Kenya, for example, a micro and small enterprise voucher program, called Jua Kali, provided its female beneficiaries information about wages in a range of occupations. Preliminary evaluation of the program suggests that 5 percent of women who received the information switched to more lucrative (often “male”) jobs as compared to those who did not receive the information (Hicks et al. 2011).

Breaking down social norms and perceptions about gender roles in the workplace is an area where the public sector can lead by example, particularly with respect to enabling women as leaders and managers. The public sector is in a unique position to establish good practice in this regard by encouraging women's professional advancement, either

through direct measures such as targets or quotas or through specialized training programs. In this context, the government of Malaysia has put in place a system of quotas for female managers in the public sector. In Mexico, the government initiated a system of grants to firms to address gender-related employment issues in the workplace, including fostering greater female participation in management.

*Eliminating resource constraints on female-led farms and enterprises*

Despite progress, women continue to have less access to a range of productive resources than do men as a function of their gender rather than because of their innate productive capabilities. Public policies thus have an important role to play in promoting gender equality in the control of productive inputs—whether land, agricultural extension, technology, or financial capital. Improving women's access to productive assets can play an important role in raising enterprise productivity in both the farm and nonfarm sectors. Following are some examples.

- Several countries in the region have made headway in recent years in increasing ownership and control of land. In response to concerns about persistent gender inequalities in land, several countries—including Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam—have recently adopted gender-sensitive reforms in land titling. Since the 2004 Land Law in Vietnam, all new land tenure certificates must include the names of both spouses. Qualitative assessment of the reform's effects in three provinces suggests that joint titling improves opportunities for women to access loans, empowers women in case of disputes, and leads to more mutual decision making (World Bank 2008). Because the reasons for women's lower access to land differ across the region—from unfavorable legal frameworks to cultural norms and practices that deem land to be a "male asset"—effective policies to increase female land holdings need to account for context-specific constraints.

- Gender inequalities in access to information and training, extension services, and other productive inputs constrain the productivity of female-led enterprises, both within and outside agriculture. In Papua New Guinea, where training and extension services are more likely to reach male than female farmers, a recently launched agriculture training program includes several components focused on closing the gap between rural women's economic needs and the inputs and services provided. Similarly, in Cambodia, the Cambodia-Australia Agricultural Extension Project has addressed two key constraints that have limited female farmers' access to agricultural support: the project has increased by 80 percent the number of female extension workers and undertakes special initiatives that account for female farmers' relatively lower levels of literacy.
- While evidence on access to finance in East Asian and Pacific countries is mixed, women do face particular challenges in accessing credit, especially given their poorer access to land, an important source of collateral. Beyond financial constraints, training programs that improve business skills may be implemented to address gender differences in entrepreneurial capital. In this context, an impact assessment of a women's entrepreneurship training program in Aceh, Indonesia, found that business planning and management training helped promote greater confidence among women trainees, create or strengthen social networks, and identify ways to improve the business environment for female entrepreneurs (ILO 2008).

As in the case of education and health, broad systemic weaknesses—whether in the form of cumbersome registration procedures, weak systems of financial intermediation, or lack of electricity—affect both female- and male-led enterprises. Evidence suggests that such constraints may be more onerous among small and informal firms than among larger firms and, therefore, may constrain

female-led enterprises disproportionately. As a result, interventions that focus on improving the overall investment climate and particularly on promoting small business development will be important. Addressing systemic as well as gender-specific constraints will thus be critical to promoting gender equality in economic opportunity.

### *Creating an enabling environment for gender equality in employment*

Public policy can strengthen the enabling environment for gender equality in formal employment. An important element of this is to ensure that women and men face a level legal playing field with respect to jobs and sectors. Labor regulations that result in asymmetries in the employability and costs of hiring male and female workers can be found across the region. Ostensibly protective legislation, in the form of restrictions on women working at night, working overtime, and working in so-called dangerous sectors, serves in practice to inhibit women's economic participation. Priority should be given to reducing labor market restrictions that limit women's employment options. Where the original concerns motivating these policies are still valid—for example, health and safety issues—measures should be taken to ensure that these concerns are addressed more directly through workplace safety codes, provision of safe and reliable transport infrastructure, and so on.

Active labor market policies are another means of overcoming gender differences in access for formal employment. For example, wage subsidies may induce employers to hire female workers whom they may not have otherwise considered, due to lack of information about their workplace productivity. This intervention thus provides the opportunity to reduce gender stereotypes by enabling employers to observe women's skills directly, and it can facilitate women gaining valuable labor market experience. Skills training programs may also enable women and men to move into professions outside of gender silos, particularly when paired with apprenticeship opportunities. Although evidence on the effect

of active labor market policies in East Asia and the Pacific is limited, studies from Latin America and the Middle East suggest that well-designed active labor market policies can help improve women's employment outcomes.

Affirmative action policies have also been used to overcome gender-specific barriers to employment, whether caused by implicit or overt discrimination in hiring and promotion. The literature reflects some debate regarding the benefits and costs of affirmative action, but the collection of evidence (largely from high-income countries) suggests that carefully designed policies can help break down barriers to female employment with little or no adverse effects on firm productivity (World Bank 2011c). Affirmative action in hiring and promotion in the public sector can have important demonstration effects. In 2004, the government of Malaysia introduced a quota for the public sector of 30 percent female representation across all decision-making levels, including positions such as department heads or secretary-general (ASEAN 2008). Whereas in 2006, women held 24.6 percent of top positions in the public sector, by 2010, the figure had risen to 32.0 percent. More recently, the Malaysian government set a target for 30 percent of corporate board positions to be held by women by 2016.

### **Taking measures to strengthen women's voice and influence**

Measures to increase women's endowments and economic opportunity, such as those described previously, contribute to strengthening their voice within the household and in society. Educated women in good health, with assets and income, are better able to act on their preferences and influence outcomes that affect themselves and others in society. In addition, several other policy approaches can directly promote women's agency and reduce gender-based violence.

### *Supporting initiatives to transform gender norms and practices*

While gender norms may be persistent, they are far from static. Individual experiences

as well as large-scale political and economic processes are capable of bringing about dramatic, and often rapid, social change. In East Asia, increasing economic integration and rising access to ICTs are not only transforming the economic landscape but also increasing flows of information in ways that may serve to transform gender norms in the region. Similarly, migration and rapid urbanization across the region are bringing with them the possibility of newly defined roles for men and women, as women and men alike are exposed to new ideas and production modalities.

The education system can be a vital source to change social norms that perpetuate gender inequality. The integration of gender equality principles into the school and professional curricula can address the value system of children early on and, over time, transform social norms (Utomo et al. 2009). Evidence of the positive effects of changing the curriculum is available for adults in Thailand where gender sensitivity was integrated into the curriculum in the Chulalongkorn medical school. Evaluation of the program showed that respondents were more aware of gender issues and tended to apply gender concepts and concerns in their work and personal lives (WHO GWH 2007).

Provision of information through television programming can also play a critical role in changing social norms, especially with respect to fertility and gender-based violence. Evidence shows that people can be prompted to rethink gender roles in society when they are exposed to new information and experiences that challenge existing norms. In Brazil, despite strong traditional norms in favor of having many children, increased exposure to the opposite behavior by popular women in soap operas led to a measurable decline in fertility (Chong and La Ferrara 2009; La Ferrara, Chong, and Duryea 2008). In India, increased exposure to television contributed to decreased acceptance of wife beating, lower fertility rates, and noticeable shifts away from son preference (Jensen and Oster 2008).

### *Strengthening the legal and institutional environment*

Nearly all countries in the region have acceded to CEDAW, signaling commitment to adhering to internationally agreed-upon norms regarding gender equality.<sup>7</sup> An important pending agenda is to ensure that domestic legislation and the institutions of implementation and enforcement are aligned with countries' commitments. Where comprehensive legal reform is not possible, governments should identify priorities for action. For example, in contexts where women's agency within the home remains weak, a case exists for reforms to focus on rights in marriage and divorce, inheritance and maintenance laws, and protection of women from gender-based violence, which can strengthen the enabling environment for greater voice and influence in the household. As part of the process of monitoring progress toward gender equality, governments should undertake regular assessments to ensure that legal gaps are being filled and that relevant laws are being enforced. In countries where multiple systems of law coexist, assessing customary practices to ascertain whether they limit women's agency and then developing strategies to address these limiting factors will be important.

Strengthening the capacities of institutions to enforce the law and increasing knowledge of the law are also critical. Both financial and human investments need to be made to ensure that public sector personnel, such as judges and police, have the knowledge and capacity to actively enforce laws intended to protect women and to promote gender equality. Concerns have been raised that police forces in several countries in the region, including Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, have been too passive in investigating trafficking and enforcing anti-trafficking laws (U.S. Department of State 2011). The Cambodian Women's Crisis Center began a community program that increases the awareness of violence against women and of the legal rights of women, including the law on domestic violence

and protection that was implemented in 2005. The program promotes initiatives to strengthen enforcement of the law by providing information and training to local authorities and developing community support networks.

### *Increasing women's access to justice*

Financial costs and travel distances often are de facto barriers to women accessing justice, even when the appropriate laws and institutions are in place. In that context, developing and implementing innovative methods to improve access to the judicial system can help women exercise their agency in the courts when needed. The use of mobile courts, for example, such as those in rural areas of China and Indonesia, provides a solution to the problem of accessibility and security for women who wish to exercise their rights in the legal system but who are unable to travel to the court. Technology, such as telephone hotlines and websites, can be used to undertake basic legal transactions. For women with few economic resources, waiving or subsidizing the costs of legal aid can help reduce financial barriers to accessing the judicial system.

### *Enabling women's participation in politics and policy making*

Active measures to promote women's participation in policy making can be effective in increasing female representation in local and national assemblies in many contexts. A range of affirmative action mechanisms have been used in developing countries. Quotas have been used in several countries, sometimes in the form of constitutional changes to reserve a specified number of posts for women and sometimes through legislative and political party quotas. Quotas can be informal (and voluntary) or mandated formally at the subnational or national level (Dahlerup 2006). The idea is to provide temporary measures to break down barriers to the entry of women into politics. The suitability and impact of different forms of quotas or targets differ depending on the specific context. Data suggest that

these measures can be effective in increasing female representation in elected bodies. They can also help transform people's views about the efficacy of female political leaders (Beaman et al. 2009). At the same time, electoral quotas do impose constraints on the democratic process. It is thus important to keep this—as well as the expected benefits of increasing female participation in politics—in mind when determining when and how to enact such measures.

### *Pursuing a multipronged approach to reducing gender-based violence*

Reducing gender-based violence requires action on a number of fronts: efforts to increase women's voice within the household; enactment and enforcement of appropriate legislation and strengthening of women's access to justice; provision of adequate support services for victims of violence; and use of the media to provide information on women's rights, to increase social awareness, and to shift social norms with respect to violence.

Countries that take a strong stance on gender-based violence legislation and enforcement can make positive strides against such violence in short periods of time. Cambodia saw a significant decrease in the incidence of domestic violence between 2000 and 2005, largely attributed to strong efforts by the country's Ministry of Women's Affairs, which introduced draft domestic violence legislation in 2001. Four years later, in October 2005, the National Assembly adopted the legislation. The new law criminalized acts of domestic violence, provided for the protection of victims, and enabled neighbors or local organizations to intervene if they witnessed domestic violence. As a complement to the law, women's organizations and other nongovernmental organizations carried out information campaigns to disseminate information on people's basic rights and responsibilities under the law.

Governments also need to provide adequate support services for victims when violence does occur. This support can include a range of services, from police and judiciary to



health and social services. In Malaysia, the government established integrated one-stop crisis centers in hospitals that provide easy access to medical care and social services, and facilitate reporting of violence to specially trained police officers (World Bank 2011c).

### *Creating space for women's collective agency*

While promoting women's individual agency is important, supporting women's collective agency can be an effective way to empower women to advocate for and promote effective public action toward gender equality. Experience from around the region highlights the potential of enabling women's collective agency. For example, during the debate in Cambodia leading to the 2005 Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims, the Cambodia Committee of Women, a coalition of 32 nongovernmental organizations, persistently lobbied the government and the Ministry of Women's Affairs to secure the legislation's passage. Similarly, in Fiji, the Fiji Women's Crisis Center campaigned successfully for the implementation of a nationally representative quantitative survey on violence against women; the results of this survey are scheduled to be released in 2012. Partnerships with the private sector, including women's business associations, can provide an important space for women to interact, learn, and advocate for gender equality. A recent initiative to increase women's participation in the private sector's dialogue with government in Cambodia, through the Government Private Sector Forum, has induced policy makers to undertake new initiatives addressing the needs of female entrepreneurs.

### **Fostering new opportunities, managing emerging risks**

*A new and important challenge for policy makers will be to help foster emerging opportunities and, in particular, to manage emerging risks associated with increasing economic integration, increasing access to ICTs, migration, rapid urbanization, and*

*population aging.* Many of the emerging opportunities can be fostered through the types of efforts to promote greater gender equality in endowments, economic opportunity, and agency discussed in this report. For example, where gender gaps in ICT use are growing, ensuring that women have access to these new technologies may require active measures similar to those discussed earlier to ensure equal access to other types of productive resources. Managing emerging risks, however, may require additional policy approaches, such as the following.

Greater economic integration will bring with it increased exposure to employment shocks that will have gender-differentiated effects. Adequately addressing the risks associated with economic integration will require designing social protection programs that take into account the different risks faced by female and male workers. Building on the lessons from recent economic crises, several developing countries, including some from East Asia and the Pacific, have begun to recognize the gender dimensions of risk and shocks in the design of programs. In Indonesia, for example, a conditional cash transfer program, *Keluarga Harapan*, targets households with members who are particularly vulnerable during times of crisis, such as pregnant and lactating women.

As female migration across the region increases economic opportunities for women, it creates new concerns about female migrants' welfare. Protecting female migrants from exploitative situations, including sex work and human trafficking, will also require a gender-aware approach. Greater protection through better laws, enforcement, and monitoring; improved information flows; and safety nets will better address the vulnerabilities specific to women traveling abroad. Specific areas for action include improving legal protections for female migrants, strengthening the monitoring and credibility of recruitment agencies, and developing and providing welfare and support services to assist female migrants. Governments in both sending and receiving countries will need to actively address the

issue of human trafficking through prevention, protection, and prosecution. Gender-awareness training for people involved in the migration process will improve their ability to identify and assist abused female migrants, including those trafficked or at risk of being trafficked.

Growing urbanization in the East Asia and Pacific region has presented women not only with increased economic opportunities but also with particular challenges, such as limited access to child care and higher security risks in urban areas. Thus, policy makers need to ensure that child care, education, infrastructure, transportation, and water and sanitation policies take into account women's specific social and cultural needs. Rigorous laws and policies to protect women in urban areas from the risk of violence and exploitation are also warranted.

Rapid population aging in the region is likely to have important gender-differentiated effects, among other things, because older women may increasingly find themselves living as widows. Along with risks from urbanization and the breakdown of extended family support networks, these women are likely to find themselves at increased economic risk, having accumulated relatively few assets and mostly lacking access to formal social security. In this context, designing old-age income security programs that can protect women from destitution in old age will have an increasingly important role. In addition, policy makers should consider ways to strengthen care for the elderly to ensure that women do not bear an undue burden of caregiving as the region's population ages.

### Filling knowledge gaps

Finally, while much has been learned from recent global and regional evidence on gender equality and development, much remains to be understood empirically to help inform effective public action. Continuing to close data and analytical gaps will thus be important to better understand policy priorities, the effects of specific interventions, and the costs and benefits of

different policy options. To fill knowledge gaps, additional gender-disaggregated data need to be collected. Moreover, additional empirical analysis, both on long-standing gender issues and the gender implications of emerging trends in the region, will enable policy makers to better promote both gender equality and more effective development.

### Notes

1. Sen (1999) defines freedoms and “unfreedoms” in five categories: (a) political freedoms, (b) economic facilities, (c) social opportunities, (d) transparency guarantees, and (e) protective security.
2. Adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly, CEDAW is often referred to as the international bill of rights for women. The convention defines what constitutes discrimination against women and provides an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. To date, it has been ratified by 187 countries worldwide (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>).
3. It is important to interpret these studies with caution, given the difficulty in establishing a causal relationship between gender equality in education and growth in cross-country studies.
4. Evidence from Africa and Latin America, for example, suggests that ensuring equal access to productive assets and technologies could significantly raise agricultural production and household income (Goldstein and Udry 2008; Quisumbing 1995; Udry 1996).
5. Globally, poverty and gender often interact to compound gender inequalities (World Bank 2011c). In East Asia and the Pacific, poverty does not appear to be as important a contributor to gender disadvantage in education as elsewhere, however. Survey data from several countries in the region indicate that gender gaps in enrollment do not vary substantially or systematically across income quintiles.
6. For data on land holdings, by gender, in China, see de Brauw et al. (2011). Data on other countries are based on World Bank staff calculations, using household survey data.
7. As of the end of 2011, only six countries in the world had not ratified CEDAW. Two of those countries are in the Pacific: Palau and Tonga (CEDAW, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>).





## SESSION 4

### **Increasing Women's Political Participation: Turning Policies into Practice**

- “Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments”  
Chapters 1 & 5, IPU, 2008
- “Raising Female Leaders,” Abdul Latif Jameel, Poverty Action Lab, April  
2012
- “Changing Realities for Asian Women Leaders,” Hu Shuli, *Global Asia*,  
September 2011

**Equality in Politics:**

# **A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments**



**Reports and Documents n° 54**



Inter-Parliamentary Union

# Executive Summary

Parliament is the place where a country's policy direction is set. A democratic parliament reflects the views and interests of the society from which it is drawn and allows those perspectives to shape the society's social, political and economic future. When women are involved in all aspects of political life, including as members of parliament, societies are more equitable and democracy is both strengthened and enhanced.

Women have historically been sidelined from the structures of state that determine political and legislative priorities. Although the number of women in parliaments around the world has been increasing steadily over the past decade, in 2008 women still occupy less than 18 percent of all parliamentary seats.

For more than 30 years, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has conducted research on women in politics. This research is crucial as it forms the basis of national, regional and international policies and strategies to promote balanced participation of men and women in politics. The IPU last conducted a global survey of women parliamentarians in 1999–2000. The results of that survey, in which 180 women politicians reflected on their experiences working in male-dominated parliaments, are published in the 2000 IPU book *Politics: Women's Insight*.

The research collected for this report builds on previous work in this field. The survey, conducted between 2006 and 2008, was designed to collect insights from both men and women in parliament into what shapes decision making. The research aimed to elicit concrete examples of how parliamentarians are working to attain gender equality in politics at the national level. The IPU received responses from 272 parliamentarians in 110 countries in every region of the world and held personal interviews with 20 parliamentarians. Unlike previous IPU research, 40 percent of the respondents were men.

The survey finds that different factors affect the entry of women and men into politics (**Chapter 2**). Some factors provide more of a deterrent than others. For men, perceived lack of support from the electorate, for example, can discourage their entry into politics, while for women domestic responsibilities are seen as the single most important deterrent. In addition, women face different obstacles to winning a seat in parliament. Overall, respondents believe prejudice and cultural perceptions about the role of women, together with a lack of financial resources, to be among the most influential obstacles. More needs to be done to address the obstacles faced by women, and respondents identified the adoption of electoral quotas and the implementation of sensitization programmes as important mechanisms.

It is clear from the responses to the survey that women and men have different interests in and perspectives on life (**Chapter 3**). While not a homogenous group, women parliamentarians share certain general interests and concerns. Men also believe that women's political priorities are different from theirs. Indeed, more than 90 percent of all respondents agreed that women bring different views, talents and perspectives to politics. Women parliamentarians tend to emphasize social issues, such as childcare, equal pay, parental leave and pensions; physical concerns, including reproductive rights, physical safety and gender-based violence; and development, which includes human development, the alleviation of poverty and delivery of services.

While most women parliamentarians feel that they have a responsibility to represent women, some emphasize that women should advocate not only on behalf of women, but also on behalf of the wider community. Others believe it is important to move beyond what is perceived as a women's agenda and to show that women are contributing to a broad range of political discussions.

Democracy requires that the interests of different groups in society, including those of women, are reflected in decision-making processes. Some men in parliament raise issues of concern to women in their work. But half the women respondents made it clear that they do not think men can sufficiently represent the interests of women in politics.



The survey finds that women parliamentarians are the most ardent supporters of women and have redefined legislative priorities to include women's concerns and perspectives (**Chapter 4**). In particular, women in parliaments in all regions of the world are at the forefront of efforts to combat gender-based violence, which is endemic in many societies. Women have been instrumental in ensuring that issues such as parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender-equality laws and electoral reforms that enhance women's access to parliaments appear on the legislative agenda.

While most women identify themselves as being active on women's issues, gender equality, community matters and family-related issues, many are also becoming involved in areas traditionally thought of as men's domain, such as fiscal policy and foreign affairs. Nonetheless, the study shows that, owing to a range of factors such as the low number of women in parliaments which limits their availability to participate in committee work, women have the least influence on legislation concerning finance, foreign affairs, national security and defence.

The study also shows that the policies of political parties are key determinants of legislative priorities and agendas. The decision-making bodies of political parties, such as executive committees, are highly influential; yet women have been, and continue to be, under-represented in these groups. Less than 20 percent of respondents believe that women are "very well represented" in the policy-making organs of their political parties. While some political parties have created women's wings, more often than not these bodies serve only as a meeting place for women, rather than active and effective arms of the party that contribute to decision making.

Does the number of women in parliament matter? The study shows that numbers do matter because, at the very least, the more women there are in parliament, the easier it is to address women's issues and to change the gender dynamics in the chamber. Eighty-six percent of respondents agreed that greater numbers of women in parliaments would increase women's influence on political policies and priorities.

Since there are no systematic strategies for gender mainstreaming in parliaments, women's progress in parliament has been patchy. Indeed, more than half the respondents to the survey believe that gender equality is only "occasionally" or "rarely mainstreamed" in parliament (**Chapter 5**). Just one-third of respondents think that gender equality is "regularly mainstreamed".

Respondents identify four factors that are most influential in creating a more gender-sensitive parliament. These are: the support of the ruling party in parliament; the work of parliamentary committees; the work of women's parliamentary caucuses, which are cross-party networks of women; and the rules that govern the functioning of parliament. However, by a more than two-to-one margin over their male counterparts, women believe that parliament is still dominated by a gentleman's club or old boys network. Only eight percent of respondents believe there have been substantial changes in the rules and practices of parliament because of the presence of women. Small but noticeable changes have been noted in parliamentary language and behaviour, which are seen as having become less aggressive since women began taking up parliamentary seats.

The survey also finds that women remain concentrated in committees that deal with social issues, education, health and family affairs. While these committees are important, and oversee a large share of public expenditure, women are often absent from the debate on other issues, such as finance and foreign affairs. This lack of women's participation in committees that deal with the economy, finance and the budget means that women have a lesser say in determining financial priorities and shaping national agendas. Such concentration is also true at the executive level. Women held 1,022 ministerial portfolios in January 2008, but only six women held a defence portfolio.

In many ways, this study attests to the fact that gender equality in parliaments remains an ideal, not a reality (**Chapter 6**). Women parliamentarians continue to face difficulties in their work, perhaps none greater than in changing the political structures that were developed by, and remain dominated by, men. Not all



political parties promote gender equality or uphold their manifesto pledges in practice, and few women hold top decision-making positions in their ranks. Yet this survey finds that the support of the ruling party is one of the most important factors in introducing and enacting gender-related legislation.

Respondents identify several structural changes that could help to promote women's access to and full participation in parliament. These include strengthening existing committees on gender equality or caucuses of women parliamentarians; changing parliamentary processes and facilities to make them more family-friendly (more than half the women respondents and more than 40 percent of the men have difficulty balancing their family and political obligations, and more than two-thirds of all respondents said that there had been no real changes in parliamentary sitting times that could help them balance their responsibilities); conducting more research and training to make parliaments more sensitive to the needs of women and men; and providing parliaments with more funding for support services and outreach work.

In one-third of all the parliaments in the world, less than 10 percent of the members are women. That level of women's representation amounts to a deficit in democracy. It is clear that it is women and not men who have been instrumental in placing such issues as gender-based violence, trafficking of women and children, equal pay, childcare and parental leave on the political agenda. Greater participation by women in parliament would ensure that these concerns, and many others that might be overlooked or not given priority by men, are addressed.

Real change requires political will and partnership. Women and men must acknowledge that the equal participation of women in parliamentary processes not only benefits society, but is required in legitimize democracies. ■



# Chapter 5

## Institutional Change: Gender-sensitive Parliaments

“Institutions are a microcosm of our society. Institutional transformation is both a litmus test of, and a pre-requisite for, societal transformation.”<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 4 examined how women in parliaments have made their presence felt and highlighted some of the specific policy areas in which women are most active. Although the number of women in parliaments around the world varies greatly, it is apparent that the gradual increase in women's presence has resulted in new priorities being placed on the legislative agenda. Women parliamentarians are the most ardent promoters and defenders of women and have redefined political priorities to include women's concerns and perspectives. In particular, efforts to combat gender-based violence are yielding results, and legislative efforts are also addressing parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender equality laws and electoral reform in favour of enhancing women's access to parliaments. The research also demonstrates, however, that women face certain obstacles in pursuing change, such as their relative numbers in positions of power and the ideologies and policies of political parties.

This chapter focuses on the institution of parliament—the organization, the rules, the processes and structures through which politics is done. When women enter parliament, they typically enter a male domain where the vast majority function according to rules established by men. This creates another set of potential challenges for women—challenges that they have already begun to confront. This chapter highlights some of the initiatives that have been taken and the changes introduced to improve the gender sensitivity of parliaments. First, it examines the institutional structures that have been put in place to facilitate gender mainstreaming, such as through

committees. Second, it addresses some of the changes to the rules and practices of parliaments under consideration to make them more gender-sensitive and family-friendly.

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### Key questions include:

- Do the traditional rules and practices of parliament affect women's participation?
- What institutional structures have been put in place to facilitate the work of women? What has been the effect of parliamentary bodies, such as committees and women's caucuses, on gender mainstreaming?
- Has the presence of women in parliament brought about more gender-sensitive norms and practices?

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## Parliamentary Structures

As is demonstrated in the previous chapters, a stronger presence of women in parliament allows for new priorities and issues to be highlighted and addressed. Mainstreaming gender equality in the work of parliament should contribute to effective policies that address the needs and interests of both halves of the population. There are no systematic strategies for gender mainstreaming, however, and this has resulted in piecemeal approaches being taken in different legislatures.<sup>2</sup> Survey respondents were





asked about the factors which were most influential in shaping a more gender-sensitive parliamentary agenda. Overall, respondents identified the following as the most influential:

- The support of the ruling party in parliament;
- The work of parliamentary committees, including committees that specialize in gender equality and the status of women;
- The work done by women's parliamentary caucuses, which are cross-party networks of women; and
- New rules established for the functioning of parliament.

## Parliamentary Committees

Much of the work of parliaments is done through parliamentary committees. Legislative committees conduct detailed examinations of bills that come before the parliament, while oversight or scrutiny committees examine government administration and may also propose new policies or laws. These may be supplemented by ad hoc or select committees established for a particular purpose.<sup>3</sup> Committees usually report to the parliament as a whole and make recommendations for government action on the matters under consideration. Methods of appointing committee members vary in parliaments around the world and may include appointment by political parties or groups represented in parliament (in proportion to their overall representation in the chamber) or election by all members.

### Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy that puts gender equality issues at the centre of broad policy decisions, institutional structures and resource allocation. It also includes the views and priorities of women in decision-making structures.<sup>4</sup> There is no single model for gender mainstreaming but institutional mechanisms are crucial. Committee work offers an important opportunity for mainstreaming gender issues in the work of parliament, not only in developing legislation but also in terms of oversight of government action. Many women parliamentarians work through committees to voice their concerns and interests and raise the profile of gender issues.

However, the low level of representation of women in the world's parliaments continues to hamper gender mainstreaming efforts. Research undertaken by the IPU in 1988 and again in 1991 found that the low proportion of women in parliamentarians made it difficult for them to participate in all parliamentary committees, and that they tended to be concentrated in committees dealing with social issues, health, the family and education.<sup>5</sup> The low proportion of women also meant that there were fewer and less varied committees in which they were able to participate, relative to men. Similarly, the 2000 study *Politics: Women's Insight* revealed that more than two-thirds of those surveyed believed that the absence of women in committees affected the development of legislation and that greater proportions of women in parliament were needed for satisfactory policy making.<sup>6</sup> As much of the work of parliament is done in committees, it is important for women to be present and active, and for their views and concerns to be raised and considered.

However, there has been seemingly little progress to date. Parliamentarians were asked if they considered that the number of women in parliamentary committees was sufficient. Overall, two-thirds of respondents replied that they did not think the presence of women was sufficient, while less than one-third thought that it was.

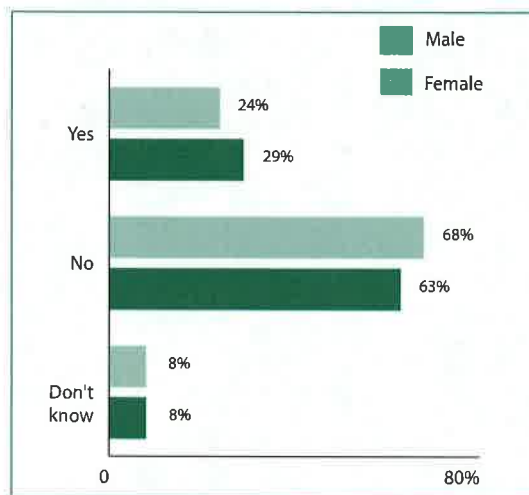


Figure 5.1: Does a Sufficient Number of Women Serve on your Parliamentary Committees?

Chapter 4 highlighted some of challenges that women parliamentarians face in pursuing their policy priorities. One of the challenges highlighted is linked to their low numbers in parliament: often there are simply not enough women to participate

## Case Study: Mainstreaming Gender in the Austrian Parliament

*Mrs. Maria Rauch-Kallat, Member of the Parliament of Austria and former Minister of Health and Women, highlights the different strategies for mainstreaming gender and working in partnership with men.*

In politics, there are several things that are important to promoting gender equality. First, consciousness-raising with men as well as with women is very important. Very often women do not realize what constitutes discrimination and it takes some time to see. This is especially true of hidden discrimination which is not felt—or at least not immediately. Second, legislation and legal measures help to promote women and to eliminate or punish discrimination. Third, the support of various organizations that promote women is needed—NGOs as well as party organizations.

One of the most important things is to have a fair share in family work, for as long as mothers still have 80 per cent of the load of family work, the education of children, managing the household, and so on, they will never have enough time to engage in politics. So a fair share means not only a fair share in politics but also a fair share in family work by fathers.

The best way to work for equality in parliament is to ensure gender mainstreaming throughout all structures, such as through committees where the outcomes for men and women of every law we are debating should be examined. Of course, committees on gender equality have a function in consciousness-raising and in taking initiatives to promote women.

Building political party support is also important, especially if a party is the governing party and you need the parliamentary group to reaffirm laws. A good opinion-forming process is needed together with the support of parliamentary groups. Party leaders also have a responsibility to promote equality between men and women, especially in terms of numbers in their parliamentary group.

In the Austrian Parliament we have a lot of men who work as our partners, so we are not working against men. We need the support of men to improve the situation. Sometimes men are mentors, so we have built up mentoring in Austria. When I was Minister for Women, we built up a big mentoring programme. This measure has helped a lot and while we normally ask women to mentor women, we also take men as mentors for women. A very important strategy is networking, so we built up various networks for women and mixed networks for men and women. It is important for women to take time for networking, because men are very successful at networking. Women often do not take the time for networking, but they are improving.

(Edited excerpt from interview, Geneva, December 2007)



in all the committees, or women may have to take on additional work and spread themselves too thinly by taking on several committee assignments. This also leads to women having a far heavier workload than men. The low number of women in parliaments affects their ability to be effective in committee work, as a woman parliamentarian from Sudan commented:

*The proportion of women in parliament is less than 25 percent and this is reflected in the low number of women in the committees, which is not sufficient to allow women to affect political decisions.*

#### **The Concentration of Women in "Soft Committees"**

Traditionally, women have tended to be concentrated in committees that deal with social issues, education, health and family affairs. *Politics: Women's Insight* confirmed this imbalance in committee assignments in 2000, revealing that women tend to concentrate in certain committees such as those dealing with health and education. While these portfolios are important, as they often scrutinize a large share of public expenditure, women are often absent from or struggle for representation in other portfolios such as finance and foreign affairs.<sup>7</sup> This research confirms the prevalence of this trend. That women tend to be concentrated in certain portfolios is demonstrated by the views of parliamentarians in Box 5.1. A woman parliamentarian from Burkina Faso notes that:

*Most women are concentrated in the committees on social and cultural affairs. For a long time there was only one woman on the Finance and Budget Committee, yet this is the committee that allocates and distributes the resources for government policy. Women are also poorly represented on the legal committee.*

This trend is evident not only in countries with a low number of women representatives. A respondent notes that this is true even in Sweden, a country which is often well regarded in terms of equality and has achieved near-parity between women and men in parliament:

*We have 48 percent women in parliament but there are committees that are not balanced. The imbalance is traditional: men in defence and women in social affairs.*

#### **Box 5.1: Women's Concentration in the "Soft Committees"**

In some committees there are very few women and in others there are too many, depending on the theme—health and education are women's areas and the economy and finance are men's.

Woman parliamentarian, Switzerland

Some committees do not have a single woman, such as Roads and Transport, Sports and Finance.

Male parliamentarian, Ghana

There are 15 percent women in parliament, 29 out of 200 deputies. They are not represented in all the parliamentary committees, such as the economic committee. There is a higher representation of women in the committees dealing with education and health and European affairs.

Woman parliamentarian, Czech Republic

Of the 500 deputies in the National Assembly, only 40 are women. Two are members of the Bureau of the Socio Cultural Committee. There are too few women to cover the committees sufficiently.

Woman parliamentarian, Democratic Republic of the Congo

There are too few women in the following committees: defence and security, agriculture and the environment, the economy and planning, and generally finance.

Woman parliamentarian, Niger

There should be more women in economics affairs, finance and trade committees, and more men in equal opportunities and health committees.

Woman parliamentarian, Austria

There are very few of us for the number of parliamentary committees, we focus on those where there are the most difficulties (family, education, health).

Woman parliamentarian, Chile

The inclusion of a few women in policy making, especially a good number of women who are chairing some important committees, has brought about a good change and given women a lot of prestige in this respect.

Woman parliamentarian, Pakistan





The trend for women to be concentrated in certain portfolios is not only evident at the parliamentary level. At the executive level, too, the majority of women ministers tend to hold the so-called “soft” portfolios—those related to social affairs, the family, children, youth and women’s affairs. Of the 1,022 ministerial portfolios held by women worldwide in 2008, only six were defence portfolios.<sup>8</sup> Some dispute the term “soft” portfolio, as education and social affairs often carry the biggest budgets and they can have “hard” consequences for nations. Yet women’s absence from those committees dealing with the economy, finance and the budget means that women are losing out on having their voices and perspectives heard in determining financial priorities and shaping national agendas. As much of the work of parliament is done in committees, it is there that women must be present and press for the inclusion of their views in all policy matters.

## Parliamentary Committees on Gender Equality and the Status of Women

The past two decades have seen a proliferation of committees that deal exclusively with gender equality matters, or include gender equality among the issues in their scope:

- In 1991, committees dealing with women’s issues existed in 21 of the 96 parliaments for which information was available.
- In 2008 there were 93 parliamentary committees in 80 countries with responsibility for addressing gender equality matters.<sup>9</sup> Just 35 countries have reported that they do not have such committees.
- The region with the highest concentration of committees dealing with gender issues is Europe (35), followed by Africa (18) and the Americas (12). A handful of committees are found in Asia, the Arab States and the Pacific.<sup>10</sup>

The establishment of these committees can be politically significant, illustrating the importance that a parliament attaches to achieving gender equality

in its work. Such committees are also important as they “bring gender equality into the main building rather than leaving it out in the wings”.<sup>11</sup>

Of the existing committees, 38 are permanent and specialize in gender equality issues, while 55 are multifunctional and address gender matters along with other areas, such as human rights, equal opportunities, social affairs, youth or children. The committees have powers that range from the authority to introduce legislation to mainly monitoring and oversight functions. Different tools are available for committees to do their work, including oral and written questions, and the right to summon ministers and government officials and to hold public hearings.<sup>12</sup>

These committees are valuable for providing a forum for parliamentarians to scrutinize all proposed legislation from a gender perspective. They also serve to enhance the gender aspects of many political issues and the legislative agenda, and to generate public discussion.<sup>13</sup> When asked about the functioning of specialized committees on gender equality in countries where they exist, 56 percent of parliamentarians either agreed or strongly agreed that they are effective in their work, 31 percent were ambivalent, and 13 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Overall, the majority of respondents believed that the committees dealing with gender make useful contributions to the work of parliament. Interestingly, men form half or more of the membership in 50 percent of the committees dealing with gender equality and the status of women. Only one committee has 100 percent female membership.<sup>14</sup>

### A Dual Approach

There is no single approach to mainstreaming gender concerns in parliament. In addition to gender mainstreaming through specialized or multifunctional committees, other parliaments seek to mainstream gender through existing, mainstream committee structures. Some parliaments use a combination of the two approaches, working through both mainstream and specialized committees simultaneously. As gender equality is a cross-cutting issue, it is important that it is mainstreamed into all parliamentary committees, regardless of the portfolio.



## Case Study: Gender Mainstreaming and Committees in Cyprus

*Ms. Sotiroula Charalambous is a Member of Parliament in the House of Representatives in Cyprus and Chairperson of the Committee for Equality between Women and Men, the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for Labour and Social Affairs and a member of the Committee for Economic and Budgetary Affairs. Ms. Charalambous highlights the importance of committee work for mainstreaming a gender perspective in parliament.*

Our main function as parliamentarians is the legislative function, which of course is very important, but you have to take into consideration that in Cyprus we have a constitutional restriction that we cannot put up a bill in parliament which affects the budget. This is something very typical for our parliament. When a draft bill comes to parliament, for example, we can amend this bill only if the government agrees. This is the biggest restriction in parliament.

The majority of bills come from the government, but we use another tool that we have in our hands which is to raise issues for discussion in parliamentary committees and thereby exercise pressure on the government to address certain issues. So, for example, if we want to have paid parental leave, we put the issue on the parliamentary committee agenda to be discussed. In this way we exercise pressure, and we try to bring on board non-governmental organizations that are relevant to the issues at hand in the parliamentary committees in order to raise their voice and support us in our work. We become a pressure group on the government.

The main avenue for gender mainstreaming is the specialized committee but we are also trying to raise gender issues in each committee. I think that this is very helpful because, for example in the budgetary committee, the president of the committee is a woman, so this helps because the budgetary committee has the duty to examine the whole budget. But, in order to do this, you have to have women on the committees. In recent years it has been very positive that not only have women parliamentarians raised issues in their relative committees that have to do with gender issues, but also men parliamentarians—to me this is a very positive step.

What is positive and what will achieve progress in our parliament is that we have women who are chairpersons of committees. Before being the chairperson of the specialized committee, I was the President of the Labour and Social Insurance Committee. This helps because it is a very practical way of showing that women can do the same as men and they can even be better than men.

Edited excerpt from interview, Geneva, December 2007

“This is what gender mainstreaming is about. It is not only one committee dealing with “women’s affairs” but every committee, and everybody has to look into what a new law means for women and whether or not it helps to improve the situation for women.”<sup>15</sup>

## Case Study: Gender Mainstreaming in Sweden

*Ms. Annika Qarlsso, Member of the Committee on the Labour Market, Sweden, highlights the Swedish approach to gender mainstreaming.*

When adopting a position on a political proposal, the consequences for both women and men are taken into consideration. By taking into account the differences in conditions for women and men in connection with various proposals, the aim is to achieve a practical political outcome that promotes women's and men's equal opportunities and puts right any injustices. A thorough gender equality analysis sometimes makes it possible to see that certain measures are necessary to enable women and men to achieve the same objectives. It is also important to be aware that, even if gender aspects are analysed, the same conclusions will not always be reached by all women. It is possible to agree on the objectives but not on how to achieve them.

In the 1990s parliamentary working methods changed and gender equality issues were gradually assigned to the individual parliamentary committees. If a proposal contains measures to combat violence against women, the matter is considered by the Committee on Justice. If issues concerning gender equality in the health services are raised, then the Committee on Health and Welfare deals with the matter. Each issue is, quite simply, considered by the committee to which the field of activities belongs. . . . This practice is now included formally in the Riksdag Act.

The Swedish parliamentary model, where each committee is responsible for specific policy areas, has a number of strengths and weaknesses. Its weaknesses include that:

- The gender equality perspective is forgotten when a large number of proposals have to be considered; and
- Gender equality is weighed against other priority areas, such as immigration, the elderly or children.

Its strengths include that:

- Decisions are taken where the power and money are, which means that it is easier to make and implement changes.
- Issues are not considered in any particular order; and they are not considered to be women's issues.
- All parliamentary committees are obliged to take account of how their proposals will affect women as well as men.
- Gender equality is not about a single issue with a universal solution—there are many issues and many different solutions which need to be resolved in various stages in order to achieve equal rights for women and men, and equal opportunities in all areas of society.

There is plenty of room for improvement in Sweden, in Europe and throughout the world. Women must never feel satisfied with making just a bit of progress. Women today must take responsibility for ensuring that tomorrow's generation have the opportunity to become what they want, without any limitations imposed by an unequal society. If this is to be achieved, gender equality cannot be treated as an isolated issue. It has to be included in all policy areas.

Excerpt from a case study published in IPU, 2007. *The Role of Parliamentary Committees in Mainstreaming Gender and Promoting the Status of Women*, Report 52. Geneva. pp. 13–15.





An IPU report on the role of parliamentary committees in mainstreaming gender equality found that successful mainstreaming in parliaments also depends on the coordination between committees in parliament, such as convening common sittings that debate the contents of specific bills and ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective. This coordination is particularly crucial for budget and finance committees, with a view to developing gender-sensitive budgets. Men should play a greater role, ensuring that a gender perspective results from the inclusion of the views of both men and women.

Committees on gender equality can be effective bodies for channelling the concerns of women but it is also important to ensure that women's concerns do not become relegated or marginalized in such committees. Some parliaments have therefore opted to mainstream gender concerns in all parliamentary committees, rather than establishing a specialized gender body, as is highlighted in the case study on Sweden.

### Gender budgeting

Gender budgeting is an approach that aims to develop policies that mainstream gender. It aims to "mainstream gender in the budgetary process and bring a gender perspective into economic policy making . . . most importantly, it is about changing policies and transforming processes."<sup>16</sup> Gender budgeting therefore refers not only to expenditures earmarked for women, but also to an analysis of the entire budget from a gender perspective, including security, health, education, public works, and so on, to ensure that the allocations address the needs of both women and men.

Parliamentarians and members of committees have a role in this process. The purpose of gender committees is to raise gender issues during the budget debates, develop partnerships with the budget committees, and serve as conduits between women's organizations and parliament. Parliamentarians can ensure that the correct questions are being asked and that governments are held to account. Parliamentary committees can further transform what is essentially a political debate into a public one by incorporating interest groups and civil society. In addition, scrutinizing the operating budget of parliament and undertaking a gender impact analysis of the priorities and expenditure allocations can be useful tools for identifying specific areas that require funding.

Several parliamentarians have taken part in specialized training and information sessions on the mechanics of gender budgeting. Such forums offer important cross-border learning and networking opportunities, particularly when both men and women take part.<sup>17</sup> In addition to gender budgeting, several parliamentarians have benefited from gender mainstreaming training and capacity-building workshops, which can be important tools for supporting institutional transformation.

## Women's Caucuses

Women in several countries have realized that as a minority in parliament, it is advantageous to form alliances and coalitions to affect change. Of the 77 countries for which the IPU has data, just under half of the parliaments reported the existence of a caucus of women parliamentarians. Such bodies have been formed on the understanding that they are important forums for bringing women together across political party lines to channel the interests and concerns of women. They are also important forums for working with other partners and engaging members of civil society, as a parliamentarian from Uganda explained:

*We have formed the Uganda Women's Parliamentary Association through which we promote gender issues in parliament. We have also learned to lobby male parliamentarians to support gender issues. We also reach out to civil society organizations and all those who can help us push gender issues effectively.*

Women's caucuses undertake a range of functions, such as conducting studies to "examine the gender gaps in all our legislation pertaining to women and children" as a parliamentarian from Zimbabwe explained. In those countries with women's caucuses, 61 percent of the respondents believe that such caucuses have been successful at influencing parliamentary or legislative activities and providing oversight. A women parliamentarian explained the successes of the women's caucus in Burkina Faso:

*Women parliamentarians have proved that they can assume their role at least as well as men, if not better. They have had to act in united and concerted fashion, giving the men pause for thought. They have shown that when they have a common interest, they can pave over their ideological differences to fight together and obtain remarkable results.*





## Case Study: Gender Responsive Budgets

It is often assumed that a national budget is gender-neutral; that in its functions, a budget will benefit women and men, girls and boys equally. In fact, by failing to take account of the different roles, capabilities and needs of women and men, budgets can reinforce existing inequalities. The purpose of bringing a gender perspective to the budget is to ensure that budgets and economic policies address the needs of women and men, girls and boys of different backgrounds equitably, and to attempt to close any social and economic gaps that exist between them.

To achieve economic efficiency, budgets and the policies they finance should recognise the dependence of the paid economy on the unpaid care sector and plan for both of them appropriately. While economic efficiency is a compelling reason for budgets to be gender-responsive, the goal of equity is equally important. Parliaments can monitor government commitments fulfilled through the allocation of resources to bridge existing gender gaps in capabilities, opportunities and decision-making power. In addition, tracking expenditures against gender and development commitments improves accountability and transparency of the budgetary process and the effectiveness of budget policies.

### How to perform a gender analysis of budgets:

Several tools have been developed for use in gender analyses of expenditures and revenues. A commonly used tool is the Gender-Aware Budget Statement, which can be applied to the whole budget or to a number of sectors. Expenditures and revenues are analysed, using various tools, for their likely impacts on different groups of women and men, girls and boys.

### Gender analysis of expenditures

#### *Step 1: Situation gender analysis of a sector*

This analysis begins with studying key documents and data on gender issues in the country and identifying their underlying causes and effects, both immediate and long-term. Very often, parliamentarians and civil society organizations have a fair idea about the social and economic situation of women and men, girls and boys in their constituencies. Data can be found in line ministries, statistical departments and international reports.

#### *Step 2: Gender analysis of sector policy*

In the second stage, sector policy and programme documents are examined to see whether they address the gender issues previously identified. Does the policy reduce gender inequalities, leave them as they are or increase them?

#### *Step 3: Gender analysis of budget allocations*

The third stage analyses the extent to which any policy commitments to address gender concerns are matched by allocations from the budget. Does the government do what it says it is going to do? An assessment is also made of whether the allocations address the gender issues identified in step one.

Gender budgeting initiatives have been developed in over 50 countries, including Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Uganda.

Information from Inter-Parliamentary Union (Joachim Wehner & Winnie Byanyima), 2004. *Parliament, the Budget and Gender*, IPU, UNDP, UNIFEM and World Bank Institute. Geneva.



Two-thirds of respondents believed that women's caucuses have been successful in uniting women across party lines. For one-third of respondents, however, the problem of party loyalty remains. In many instances, women's caucuses do not receive parliamentary support, such as financial resources, support services or even the office and meeting spaces needed to organize their work. Meeting arrangements can be difficult and must be organized around the formal business of the parliament.

Additionally, parliamentarians have highlighted how the work of all bodies dealing with gender equality (parliamentary committees and caucuses) could be greatly facilitated and enhanced by the provision of timely and accurate sex-disaggregated data. Such data would also help parliamentarians to fulfil their watchdog role and oversee government action and progress.<sup>18</sup>

A barrier to the formation of cross-party women's caucuses is that party systems may hinder or actively discourage working across party lines to achieve outcomes, as a parliamentarian from Cambodia explained:

*We tried to organize a cross-party women's caucus but again were hindered. The caucus activities were never able to take off because of party discipline. They come to discuss it but nothing comes out of it. It is like I agree with you that we should have red telephones and I will say it informally to you; and we will have lunch together, and I am like you and I share the same opinion as you. But when it comes to trying to change the phones into red ones, you go back to your party and your leadership says "no, no, no, phones have to be grey". I then go back to my party leadership and they say "no, the phones have*

### Case Study: Namibia's Women's Caucus

*Ms. Margaret Mensah-Williams, Vice-President of the National Council of Namibia, highlights the role of the Women's Caucus in Namibia.*

The gender committee in Namibia concentrates on specific issues, such as HIV and AIDS, whereas the women's caucus plays a vital role in examining all acts for discrimination, and looking at the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The distinction that I make is that the committee looks at issues related to equity or equality to ensure enforcement, whereas the women's caucus actually elevates women to the position where they ought to be.

The caucus is like a watchdog and it pushes issues, whereas in the gender committee I feel that members are approaching the issue from a party political viewpoint. In the women's caucus, there is one objective which is for all of us to be equal and that, to me, is the main distinction: that we do not look at each other and where we come from; we look at each other as women and what we fight for is all the women in the country.

The issues that we address are: (1) the budget; (2) we look at CEDAW and its legislative implications; (3) we reach out and ensure that people understand their rights; and (4) we ensure that all the acts are enforced. The caucus may also come up with motions and issue collective statements on behalf of women where necessary.

The women's caucus is also a disseminator of information and encouragement for people to use and benefit from the laws passed. Otherwise, they just sit on the shelves: good laws, a democratic country, but with little enforcement—so that is very important. In parliament we exercise an oversight function over the executive; so we have an important role as the majority of them are male and will protect and defend what belongs to them.

(Edited excerpts from Interview, Geneva, October 2007)



*to be green" and I say "yes sir" and you say "yes sir" and that is it. So we have not been able to change anything but I think it is important that such a caucus exists.<sup>19</sup>*

## Gender-sensitive Parliaments

Parliaments are organized and operate according to established rules, processes and norms that have historically been determined by men. When women enter parliaments, therefore, they typically enter domains which operate along gendered lines—a political environment where the inherent institutional culture and traditions may be biased against them. This can affect how political representation works in practice.<sup>20</sup> Removing the barriers to women's participation is therefore crucial for creating gender-friendly parliaments that respond to the needs and interests of both men and women.

The institutional culture of parliament can be reflected in different ways, such as in the facilities of parliament, the rules and norms that have been adopted and the unwritten mores.<sup>21</sup> Debates about modernizing parliaments, in particular adopting gender-sensitive and family-friendly reforms, provide another example of the impact of women's presence in parliament.<sup>22</sup> In some parliaments, reforms have been successfully implemented in response to the changing gendered needs of parliaments as more women enter them, such as changes in the sitting times. However, in many instances the practices and norms of parliaments remain unchanged, which can act as a deterrent for women. In 2000 *Politics: Women's Insight* found that many women politicians believed that "male practices" were barriers to women's participation in parliament. The research highlighted practices that impede women's progress, such as the old boys' network, back room deals and a reluctance to give away power.<sup>23</sup> Such barriers are still experienced by women parliamentarians today.

Survey respondents were asked whether the presence of women had brought about a change in the rules and practices of parliament. Figure 5.2 shows that, overall, results were disappointing: only eight percent of respondents believed that there had been a 'substantial change' while 20 percent believed there had been a 'noticeable change' (with a higher concentration in Europe and Africa); 38 percent believed there had been a 'small change' while 31 percent had noted no 'noticeable change.'

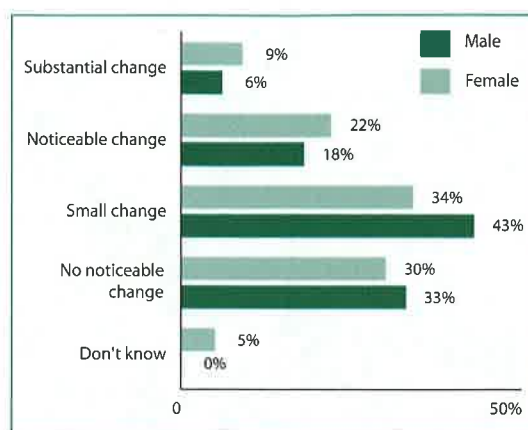


Figure 5.2: Changes in the Rules and Practices of Parliament brought about by the Presence of Women

Respondents were then asked to identify the particular areas in which change had occurred as a result of women's presence in parliament. Table 5.1 indicates that, overall, both men and women believed that women's presence had been influential in bringing about a change in parliamentary language<sup>24</sup> and slightly less instrumental in introducing parental leave provisions for parliamentarians. Respondents believed that less progress was evident in terms of changing parliamentary dress codes or the sitting hours of parliament.

Table 5.1: Change Related to Women's Presence in Parliament

Parliamentary language and behaviour is less aggressive.	2.5
Maternity/paternity leave provisions for parliamentarians have been introduced.	2.3
More training opportunities are provided.	2.1
The rules and practices of parliament have changed.	2.0
Childcare facilities have been introduced.	2.0
Dress codes take into account the needs of women and men.	1.9
The sitting hours of parliament have changed to take into account the needs of women and men.	1.7

The score indicates the average level of activity that respondents attached to each of the policy areas on a four-point scale, where a great deal was scored as 4, noticeable change as 3, small change as 2 and no noticeable change as 1.





### Parliamentary Working Arrangements

Parliaments are workplaces that have been shaped primarily by men. They remain organizations that follow long-held traditions, including the timetable of sitting days and the times for debates and hearings. Parliamentary cultures often emphasize a club-like atmosphere where work inside the building is to be prioritized over other responsibilities. In many cases these priorities and patterns date back to the years before women gained access to parliaments. In the organization of parliamentary business and the schedule of the day, men are still in charge in many instances and this is reflected in how the chamber is organized and how the chamber functions. A key challenge is therefore to identify those aspects of the organization of parliamentary work that can be re-organized and updated to accommodate the needs of both men and women.

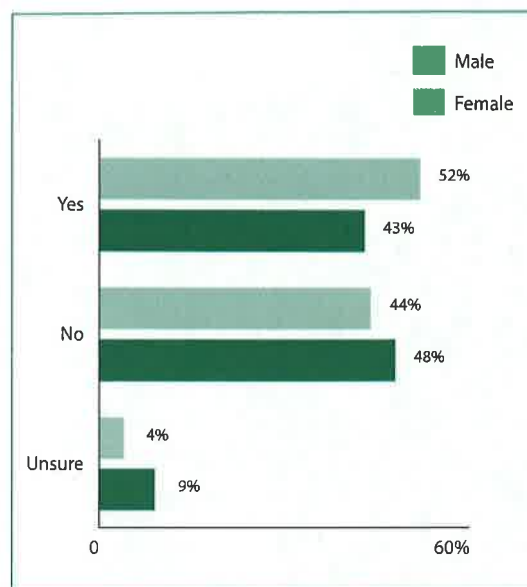
## Family-friendly Working Environments

Typically, institutions in the public domain were established on the assumption that those who worked in them had few or no domestic responsibilities.<sup>25</sup> As many women retain family responsibilities when they enter parliament, they have highlighted the need for a balance between time devoted to parliamentary work and to domestic responsibilities. A woman parliamentarian from Chile noted that:

*Parliamentary work certainly takes up a great deal of time, with sessions lasting from morning until late at night and the many commitments undertaken; this makes it difficult to see one's family. The working hours have to be arranged so that the family occupies an important place on the agenda.*

The challenge of balancing family life and political commitments, however, applies to men too and changing working patterns in parliaments ultimately benefits all members.

The survey found that more than half of women respondents and more than 40 percent of men had faced difficulties in balancing their family and political commitments. Both the increased presence of women in parliaments and evolving societal expectations about men's involvement in the domestic sphere have led to changes in some practices in recent years, but much more needs to be done.



5.3: Balancing Family Life and Political Commitments

### Sitting Hours

As women enter parliaments, one of the main challenges they face is changing working patterns. Overall, women respondents are more likely than men to support reforms that promise to have a differential impact on women, such as the provision of childcare facilities.<sup>26</sup> Women parliamentarians are more likely to feel that parliamentarians should work similar hours to other professions, that the working week should be shorter and that night sittings should be discontinued.

For example, respondents were asked whether they believed that the sitting hours of parliament had changed to take into account the needs of women and men (Figure 5.4).

Disappointingly, few respondents felt that the sitting hours of parliaments had been changed to significantly help parliamentarians to balance their political and domestic responsibilities. Over two-thirds believed that there was 'no noticeable change' or only a 'small change,' with similar levels reported by women and men. While efforts are being made, little significant change was reported across countries. In a handful of parliaments, however, women fought for and won significant reforms in this regard.

In South Africa, for example, the parliamentary calendar has been reorganized to match the school calendar so that parliamentarians are either in recess

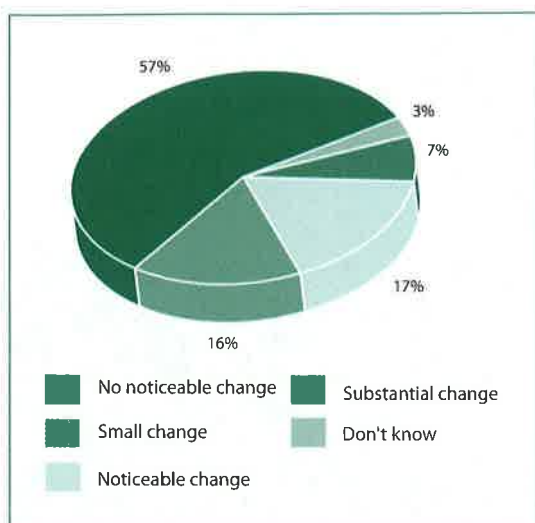


Figure 5.4: Changes to Sitting Times in Parliament

or have constituency time when students are on vacation. Debates finish much earlier in the evening to accommodate parliamentarians with families, and childcare facilities have been put in place. Unfortunately, the responses to this survey (see Box 5.2) highlight that across parliaments there is much more to be done to introduce parliamentary sitting times that are family-friendly and gender-sensitive and accommodate the domestic needs of parliamentarians.

### Childcare

The provision of childcare facilities provides further flexibility for parliamentarians, especially when parliament is far from their home constituencies. One study finds that “of all the possible work place innovations, few make a stronger statement about family-friendly practices than having childcare facilities paid for and arranged by the institution.”<sup>27</sup> In addition, some respondents highlighted parliament’s role in setting an example for other public and private sector workplaces, as a women respondent from Saint Lucia noted:

*I believe that parliament must lead by example in setting up day care places for women parliamentarians so that while they are dealing with the business of running the country they can feel secure that their children are safe. This can also work well for the men who can also assist their wives in taking care of the children. This can be extended to all public offices so as to encourage and increase productivity.*

### Box 5.2: Incremental Institutional Progress

There definitely needs to be more done but, across the board, parliaments have had to consider the demands of women with family or caring responsibilities in sitting hours, and some recognition of childcare needs, although the major responsibility still remains with individuals.

Woman parliamentarian, Australia

The parliament has had to consider timetable changes, day sessions and ending the long-standing male practice of night sessions.

Woman parliamentarian, Argentina

Parliament is currently revising the House Standing Orders to address issues that discriminate against women. For example, women parliamentarians are not allowed into the chamber with their handbags.

Woman parliamentarian, Kenya

The numbers have risen slowly, so most of the changes have been slow. But noticeable change happened when more women parliamentarians started having babies during their term in parliament, and after our first woman Speaker came into power.

Woman parliamentarian, Finland

Some of the issues are catered for in our Rules of Procedure including the dress code for both male and female parliamentarians. Even parliamentary language and behaviour have been addressed in the Uganda Rules of Procedure.

Woman parliamentarian, Uganda

The only substantial change that has occurred over the last six years has been the relaxation of the dress code to allow women to wear long trousers in parliament and to allow them to carry handbags. Regarding debates, women have proved to be as aggressive, if not more, than men particularly on matters to do with family and child welfare.

Male parliamentarian, Zambia



While some studies have shown that among the first changes that women may seek to make when they enter parliaments is to put in place childcare centres and introduce family-friendly sitting hours,<sup>28</sup> the results from this survey suggest that there are obstacles to implementing childcare facilities that need to be considered.

Overall, two-thirds of respondents felt that there had been no noticeable change or only a small change regarding the introduction of childcare facilities in parliaments. Many parliaments have found it difficult to reconcile the costs involved with the sporadic nature of the demand for childcare services. Demand is sporadic because of the amount of time parliamentarians spend in the country's parliament and the time spent away in constituencies.<sup>29</sup> However, parliaments could undertake a cost-benefit analysis of such measures, and consideration could be given to increasing the budget allocated to such facilities in parliaments.

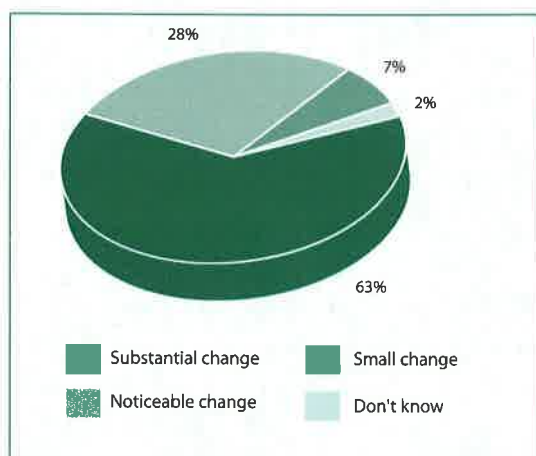


Figure 5.5: Introduction of Childcare Facilities

## Gendered Parliamentary Mores

Creating a gender-sensitive parliament includes the creation of a working environment that is family-friendly and free of harassment, as well as the evolution of a new institutional culture—its language and practices—that encourages the best in both men and women. The mores of parliament have tended to exude maleness, resulting in institutions in which men tend to feel at ease but women are affected by the mannerisms and behaviour.<sup>30</sup>

Survey respondents were asked whether a gentlemen's club or old boys' network dominated parlia-

ment.<sup>31</sup> The results illustrate that women are more likely to see evidence of a gentlemen's club than male parliamentarians—this can go beyond networks of men, and be felt in the language used and the dress codes. Some women parliamentarians reported that discriminatory practices still existed in their parliaments, such as not being allowed to take their handbags into the chamber, or being prevented from wearing trousers.

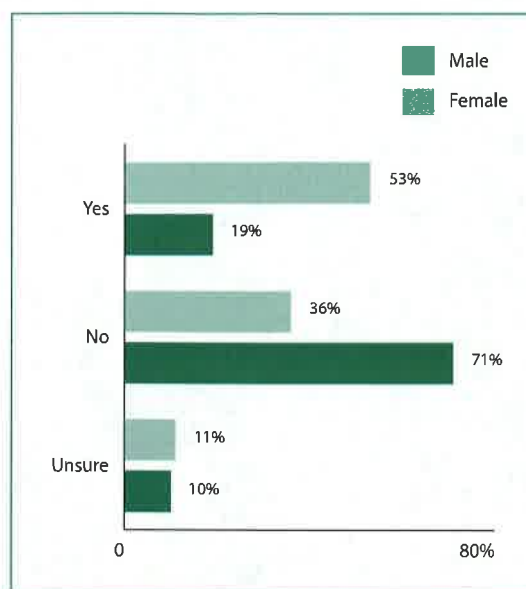


Figure 5.6: Does a Gentlemen's Club Dominate Parliament?

A feature of parliamentary life that potentially alienates women from the process is the language used in parliaments, and the often confrontational approach used in the chamber. In some instances, this mock belligerence can become actual or perceived verbal abuse, including demeaning references to women's concerns or women parliamentarians, sexism and the use of exclusively masculine references in debate. *Politics: Women's Insight* found that language had become an indicator of male bias and behaviour, and that this was offensive to many. In this survey one woman parliamentarian from Burkina Faso remarked:

*I am truly convinced that women politicians pay a high price for their participation in political life. They are the targets of various kinds of attack, even below the belt. This is because they often constitute the conscience of "politickers". It is a good thing they often end up developing thick skins.*



## Case Study: Family-friendly Sittings in Australia

*Case Study provided by Sonia Palmieri, Department of the House of Representatives, Australia*

Mirroring the increase in women's representation, institutional reform of the Australian Federal Parliament has been gradual but is now understood to be necessary. The parliament has acknowledged the need for change in a number of areas.

The *sitting hours* of the House of Representatives used to be distinctly family unfriendly. On the assumption that members would prefer to work longer hours on fewer days while in session in Canberra (which, for many members, is some distance from their own electorates), the House would sit until 11pm on at least two nights each sitting week. These hours were amended in 2003 to ensure the House rose (unless otherwise arranged) no later than 9.30pm. In 2008, following the election of a new government, an attempt was made to make the sitting hours even more family friendly. To ensure the House would not sit past 9pm on Mondays and Tuesdays, a new but optional "backbenchers" day was proposed on Fridays. However, following serious outcry from the Opposition, these changes were revoked. The Senate's hours were not subject to these changes. Indeed it is not uncommon for the Senate to be sitting later than the House.

*Childcare* options within Parliament House were extensively investigated throughout the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament (2004–2007) for children of parliamentarians and staff. A number of difficulties were identified, however, in the design of the proposed centre: for the centre to be situated in the available space, it would only be able to cater for a limited number of infants between 6 and 18 months old; and while priority would go to the children of Members of Parliament, the sporadic placement of their children (mostly during sitting weeks) would mean that places would cost more than the average. In spite of these drawbacks, it is understood that an organization will run the childcare centre from 2009.

Given the priority accorded the issue of childcare during the recent election campaign, the new government has been keen to demonstrate its commitment to parental needs in the Parliament. In its first week of sittings, it moved a resolution to allow special provisions for nursing mothers. In cases where a woman is nursing her small infant when a vote is called, she may now ask her (Government or Opposition) Whip to vote on her behalf (by proxy).

A woman parliamentarian from the Maldives commented:

*I have been able to cope with the difficulties and also deal with issues as I encounter them, through various means. An assertive response to harassing remarks usually deters men from repeating the behaviour.*

Twenty-six percent of women respondents had been the target of disparaging remarks, compared to nearly 23 percent of males, revealing a minimal gender split. This may indicate that men as well as women suffer from the combative culture in parliaments. Values and beliefs are communicated through the

use of language and can be a persuasive political tool. However, attitudes and beliefs have historically been associated with a male political culture that has gone hand in hand with their dominance in parliaments. The rules governing the use of language may require an overhaul to take into account gender sensitivity.

## Women in Parliamentary Leadership Positions

Few women have held or hold the position of speaker in parliament—the most senior parliamentary position. In January 2008, women held 28 of the





262 (10.7%) presiding officer posts in parliaments around the world. The number of women presiding officers has hovered around the 10-percent mark for the past 10 years. The highest concentrations are in the Caribbean and in Europe, with eight women presiding officers in each region. Five women hold this position in Africa, followed by four in the Americas and three in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>32</sup>

Little useful data was gained in relation to the effects of women attaining parliamentary leadership positions on changing the mores and processes of parliaments. This may be due to the very different structures of parliaments across the world, and the lack of clearly analogous leadership positions and structures. *Politics: Women's Insight* found some evidence that women presiding officers had made material and functional improvements to parliaments.<sup>33</sup>

Some survey respondents provided comments on their experiences of women in leadership positions, and those that did so felt that having women in more high-profile roles had helped the parliament to develop a more inclusive atmosphere, especially as the speaker holds an influential position in the parliament. The speaker is usually well placed to change or influence the rules of parliament, and a woman speaker can act as a role model for other women. A woman parliamentarian from Colombia highlighted:

*In the case of Colombia, the fact that the presiding officers of the three last congressional periods have been women probably gave greater prominence to women on the congressional agenda. Also, the fact that a woman is presiding affects the way parliamentarians treat each other, as the men show respect for the person presiding.*

The role model function that women can fulfill is also highlighted by the former Speaker of the Senate of Jamaica, Ms. Syringa Marshall-Burnett: "We become role models for newly elected parliamentarians and for young people especially girls and women in terms of decision-making at the highest levels of government and public life" and instill respect and public trust.<sup>34</sup>

A 2006 IPU report of a meeting convened for women speakers of parliament highlighted the effect that women speakers could have on parliament's functioning and in strengthening the participa-

tion of women. One delegate reported that in her opening speech as Speaker of the Parliament, she underscored the importance of the participation of women in politics and emphasized the need to change working methods and procedures to implement family-friendly sitting hours. Another delegate noted that she used her influence as speaker to open a discussion on gender equality in parliament and in political parties, and, as a result, some parties had changed their constitutions to incorporate gender equality principles.<sup>35</sup> The report also highlighted the role of women speaker role as champions of gender equality. While the speaker played a facilitating role within the chamber—moderating debates between rival political factions—outside the chamber, she was well-placed to highlight the problem of gender inequality and promote the interests of women.

### **An Agenda for Gender Equality in Parliament**

Survey respondents were asked how regularly they believed gender equality concerns were mainstreamed into the work of parliament. A discouraging finding is that more than half the respondents believed that gender equality was only occasionally or rarely mainstreamed in parliament. Just one-third thought it was regularly mainstreamed while another 10 percent believed it was mainstreamed all the time, with women and men reporting similar levels.

Mainstreaming gender in parliament—in the organization, the rules and structures—requires a deliberate and concerted effort. Initiatives have been introduced to improve the gender-sensitivity of parliaments. For example, in 2004, the Swedish Parliament established a working group to undertake a review of gender equality efforts in its own structures.<sup>36</sup> The working group was tasked with examining "gender equality beyond figures" and presented its proposals on how to improve gender equality in a report.<sup>37</sup> The report resulted from in-depth interviews with 30 Members of the Swedish Parliament (Riksdag).

The working group submitted a series of recommendations to the Secretary General of the Riksdag in order to enhance gender equality. The proposals were grouped under seven main headings, and include the following: adopting a programme of equality for every mandate period with the aim of promoting equality in the parliament; increasing visibility and knowledge of gender equality; enhancing mentoring of, and support to, new members and ensuring



## Case Study: Women Finding their Way in South Africa

*Pregs Govender was an African National Congress parliamentarian elected to South Africa's first non-racial parliament in 1994. Her book, *Love and Courage: A Story of Insubordination* (2007) highlights her experiences of entering parliament for the first time. Her experiences are shared by women in many parliaments after large-scale social change.*

One of the first challenges Pregs Govender relates was the need to claim and classify a male toilet as a women's toilet, as almost all the toilets in the building were for men. She relates that "it was not just the toilets that were designed for men: there were men's-only gyms, subsidized pubs, not to mention the long hours and the way the Assembly conducted itself with a pugnacious debating and heckling style."

She also recalls that the parliament was slow to adapt to the changing profile and interests of members, instead continuing to reflect the white and largely male patterns of the apartheid era. She noted that little allowance was made for those who were raising families or had no domestic help, and was concerned at the example parliament was setting for the nation: "I saw no reason why parliament could not plan its work within a clear timetable so that we could all contribute effectively while leading more balanced lives. We surely could not provide compassionate leadership for our country if we did not exercise such leadership over ourselves and in our homes."

Govender's experience serving in committees led her to believe that they—and not the chamber itself—were the parliament's real engine rooms. Assigned to the finance committee (despite her protestations of being ill-suited to the task) she was able to use this position to press for the examination of the impact of policies on women and poor people. Despite early rebuffs that such issues had no place in the consideration of government budgets and spending processes, she advocated and eventually received a commitment to the collection of national statistics related to women's unpaid contribution to the economy and the disaggregation of statistics by sex, a key tool in evaluating the impact of policies on women.

Govender's role on the finance committee also saw her press for and achieve a Women's Budget as a method for "analysing the entire budget for its gendered impact on women". Faced with opposition inside and outside her party, she explains how "Parliament, first through the finance committee and then the committee on women, used its power to ensure that government institutionalised a gender analysis in the national Budget in 1998."

Parliament's Committee on the Status of Women, which Govender chaired, was an important institutional mechanism for gender equality. It established "transformative legislative priorities for women," 80 percent of which were enacted by the end of 1999. These included the Domestic Violence Act, the Child Maintenance Act, the Customary Law on Marriages Act and changes that benefited women workers in the labour laws.

Excerpts with the permission of the author from *Love and Courage: A Story of Insubordination*, 2007, Johannesburg: Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd., pp. 147–163.



that due consideration is given to parental responsibilities when planning the work of parliamentary committees.<sup>38</sup> The work of the Riksdag is based on an understanding that "gender equality efforts must be conducted in a planned, methodical and continuous fashion, which can be achieved by the Riksdag Board determining an action programme for each electoral period and then following it up and evaluating it. Drawing up an action programme is the responsibility of the Secretary General of the Riksdag, while two officials are responsible for its implementation in practice."<sup>39</sup> The example of the Riksdag highlights the importance of setting measurable targets for evaluating performance with regard to gender mainstreaming in parliaments. While some work is being done, efforts could be enhanced across parliaments by the development of benchmarks or indicators across parliaments and regular internal reviews.

## Summary

While some progress is being made in parliaments, particularly through specialized committees on gender equality and the work of parliamentary women's caucuses, much work remains to be done. Indeed, for effective gender mainstreaming through all state structures several other stakeholders should be involved, as a woman parliamentarian noted:

*In Cambodia, even though one of the nine commissions in parliament is responsible for addressing the specific needs of women, we still need to have a women's unit in other commissions of the Senate. Gender is a cross-cutting issue so it is necessary for women's voices to be heard by all the parliamentarians responsible for different*

*tasks. At national level, a gender unit has been established in most ministries and it is considered to be a successful mechanism for gender mainstreaming in Cambodia.*

Reorganization and improvements are needed in all areas of parliamentary life—both in the evolution of cultural mores so that parliament is more welcoming to men and women from diverse backgrounds, and in the institutions of parliament, allowing more effective committee work on gender issues, the emergence of women's caucuses and more visible roles for women in parliamentary leadership. This work must be done by women and men as they develop a genuine partnership approach. This is explained by a woman parliamentarian from Sudan:

*The increased number of women in the parliament and their election as chairpersons to about 25 percent of the committees in the parliament, together with the strong collaboration between women from different parties in the development of a special caucus for women for the first time, will all do much to promote women's rights in development and politics.*

Many of these conclusions illustrate that there is scope for broader and more detailed work within parliaments to assist in the achievement of gender equality. Such actions could be greatly facilitated by the development of benchmarks or indicators to measure gender mainstreaming within parliaments, including an examination of parliaments' budgets. Chapter 6 identifies priorities for future action and research. ■





## Endnotes

1. Colleen Lowe Morna and Susan Tolmay (eds), 2007. *At the Coalface: Gender and Local Governance in Southern Africa*, Gender Links, Johannesburg, p. 129.
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3. See the IPU website at [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org) and IPU, Hiromori Yamamoto, 2007. *Tools for Parliamentary Oversight: A Comparative Study of 88 National Parliaments*, IPU, Geneva.
4. See for example IPU, *Tools for Parliamentary Oversight*, 2007, p. 23.
5. IPU, 1991. *Women and Political Power*, IPU, Geneva, p. 142.
6. See Inter-Parliamentary Union (Marilyn Waring, Gaye Greenwood & Christine Pintat), 2000. *Politics: Women's Insight*, IPU, Geneva, p. 106.
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8. IPU, 2008. "Women in Politics 2008: Room for improvement despite significant gains", Press release no. 297, New York, 29 February.
9. Information is available for 115 countries in total. Some parliaments reported the existence of more than one committee dealing with gender issues, particularly in cases where the parliament is bicameral. IPU, 2008. PARLINE Database: Parliamentary bodies dealing with the status of women, Available online at <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/instance-women.asp>.
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11. IPU, 2007. *Report on the Role of Parliamentary Committees in Mainstreaming Gender and Promoting the Status of Women*, IPU, Geneva, p. 8.
12. Idem. p. 2.
13. Joni Lovenduski and Azza Karam, "Women in Parliament: Making a Difference," in Julie Ballington & Azza Karam (eds), 2005. *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, International IDEA, Stockholm, p. 201.
14. Belgium's Advisory Committee on Social Emancipation comprises all women members. IPU, 2008. PARLINE Database.
15. Quoted in IPU 2007, *Report on the Role of Parliamentary Committees in Mainstreaming Gender and Promoting the Status of Women*. p. 10.
16. Elizabeth Klatzer quoted in *ibid*, p. 41.
17. The IPU hosted six regional meetings for parliaments which sought to strengthen parliaments' capacity to contribute effectively to the budgetary process, with a specific focus on gender, between 2000 and 2007.
18. IPU, 2007. *Report on the Role of Parliamentary Committees in Mainstreaming Gender and Promoting the Status of Women*. p. 3.
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22. Sarah Childs, Josie Lovenduski and Rosie Campbell, 2005. *Women at the Top 2005: Changing Numbers, Changing Politics?* Hansard Society, London, p. 71.
23. IPU, 2000. *Politics: Women's Insight*, p. 40.
24. Also see the discussion in Chapter 3 of this publication.
25. Parliament of South Africa, 1998. *Transforming Parliaments: Report of the Fifth International Conference of Women Presiding over National Parliaments*, Cape Town, p. 11.
26. Also see, for example, Childs, Lovenduski and Campbell, 2005, p. 71.
27. Colleen Lowe Morna (ed.), 2004, p. 100.
28. Idem.
29. See for example Case Study on Family-friendly Sitings in Australia.
30. Parliament of South Africa, 1998. p. 12.
31. Old boy networks are exclusive informal networks linking members of a profession or ex-students of a school or university in order to provide connections, which have traditionally excluded women.
32. IPU, 2008. *Women in Parliament in 2007: The Year in Perspective*, IPU, Geneva.
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- <sup>35</sup>. IPU, 2006. *Summary Report: Gender Equality on the Legislative Agenda: The Role of Women Presiding over Parliaments*, an IPU event organized on the occasion of the 50th Session on the Status of Women, New York, 27 February.
- <sup>36</sup>. The review was initiated in response to a series of events. Mr. Anders Bengtsson explained that in November 2003, representatives of the Swedish Social Democratic Party submitted a series of proposals to the Parliamentary Board on how to improve gender equality in parliament. The authors of the communication concluded that despite many years of quite successful political activity for gender equality, inequalities were still prevalent in parliament, stemming from structural problems and subtle expressions of discrimination emanating from unspoken rules and traditional patterns. A 2004 survey done by one of Sweden's largest daily newspapers confirmed that a majority of women parliamentarians felt that they had been discriminated against simply because they were women. See Mr. Anders Bengtsson, 2005. "Gender Issues as 'People's Issues': The Role of Male Parliamentarians, Speech delivered at the IPU and UN Division for the Advancement of Women Parliamentary Event, *Beyond Beijing: Towards Gender Equality in Politics*, New York, 3 March.
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## RAISING FEMALE LEADERS

A quota system for female village leaders in India changed perceptions of women's abilities, improved women's electoral chances, and raised aspirations and educational attainment for adolescent girls.



In 2008, women accounted for 18 percent of parliament members worldwide, and only 13 countries had a female head of government. In response to this underrepresentation, more than one hundred countries have introduced affirmative action policies for women in public office. In an effort to increase women's participation in politics in India, a 1993 constitutional amendment mandated that a randomly selected third of leadership positions at every level of local government be reserved for women.

The hope is that such a quota system, beyond its immediate impact on gender balance among leaders, will have long-term effects on women's status in society by changing perceptions of their leadership capabilities and shaping beliefs about what they can achieve. However, until recently, little research has been done on the longer-term impact of quota systems.

J-PAL affiliates Lori Beaman, Raghavendra Chattopadhyay, Esther Duflo, and Rohini Pande, together with Petia Topalova, used the random variation in exposure to female leaders mandated by the constitutional amendment to examine the medium- and longer-term impacts of reservation on perceptions of women leaders, the aspirations of adolescents and their parents, and girls' schooling attainment in India.

- **The reservation policy led to significant electoral gains for women in subsequent, unreserved elections, but only after two rounds of quotas.** In the 2008 election in India, the proportion of female candidates elected significantly increased in villages that had reservations for women in the previous two elections, compared to villages that had never been reserved.
- **Repeated exposure to a female leader changed villagers'—especially men's—perceptions of women's ability to lead effectively.** The reservation policy reduced the association of women with domestic activities and improved male villagers' evaluation of female leaders' effectiveness.
- **Exposure to female leaders heightened adolescent girls' career aspirations and increased their level of educational attainment.** Compared to villages that never had reservations for a female leader, the gender gap in aspirations closed significantly for adolescents in villages assigned to a female leader for two election cycles. The presence of a female leader also erased the gender gap in adolescent educational attainment and caused girls to spend less time on household chores.



In 1993, a constitutional amendment mandated a three-tiered system of local government for each state in India. The lowest tier is the village council, or *gram panchayat*, which is responsible for the provision of village infrastructure—such as public buildings, water, and roads—and for identifying government program beneficiaries. The councilors in each village elect a chief councilor, or *pradhan*, from amongst themselves.

The amendment required that in each election one third of village councils be randomly chosen to be reserved for a female *pradhan*; only women could run for or be elected *pradhan* in reserved village councils. At the time of data collection in West Bengal in 2006 and 2007, two village council elections had been conducted (in 1998 and 2003) since the amendment was implemented. The randomized nature of the quota assignment meant that, in 2007, a village council could have been reserved for a female *pradhan* once (in 1998 or 2003), twice (in 1998 and 2003), or never. This created the opportunity to study the impact of different amounts of exposure to a female leader.

In order to measure voter attitudes and adolescent aspirations, researchers surveyed households in 495 randomly selected villages in Birbhum district, a largely rural and poor district in the state of West Bengal in Eastern India. In sampled households, an individual questionnaire was administered to one male and one female adult, as well as all adolescents. The adult questionnaire asked respondents to evaluate their *pradhans* as well as a set of hypothetical leaders. Both the adult and adolescent questionnaire included questions on educational attainment and time use in the last 24 hours, as well as questions on parents' aspirations for their children and adolescents' aspirations for themselves.

## TOOLS TO MEASURE PERCEPTIONS



### Hypothetical Leader Effectiveness

**Speech experiment:** Each respondent heard a short tape-recorded speech in which a leader responded to a villager complaint by requesting that villagers contribute money and effort. Some respondents were randomly selected to hear the speech read by a male voice and others to hear it with a female voice. They were then asked to evaluate the leader's performance and effectiveness.

**Vignette experiment:** Each respondent also heard a vignette in which the leader chose to address a situation of resource scarcity by investing in either a drinking water or an irrigation project. The vignettes were randomly varied along two dimensions: the leader's sex and the choice of project.

Since there were no performance differences between the hypothetical male and female leaders, if respondents gave worse ratings to female leaders, this was evidence of bias.

### Gender-Occupation Stereotypes

An Implicit Association Test (IAT) is an experimental method that relies on the idea that respondents who more quickly pair two concepts in a rapid categorization task associate those concepts more strongly. In order to measure gender-occupation stereotypes, an IAT was used to test the association of male and female names with leadership and domestic tasks. An IAT was also used to measure taste, i.e. the association of male and female leaders with concepts of good and bad.

## RESULTS

**The reservation policy significantly improved women's prospects in elections open to both sexes, but only after two rounds of reservation.** Villages that had one previous round of reservation were not significantly more likely to elect a female pradhan than never-reserved villages. However, villages that had been previously reserved twice were more likely to elect female leaders. In unreserved elections, women were elected pradhan in around 10 percent of villages with no prior history of reservation, 13 percent of villages that had been reserved once, and 17 percent of villages that had been reserved twice.

**Repeated exposure to female leaders changed villagers' beliefs on female leader effectiveness and reduced their association of women with domestic activities.** Evaluations of female pradhans in villages reserved for the first time were significantly worse than those of (predominantly male) pradhans in never-reserved villages. In contrast, in twice-reserved villages, evaluations of female pradhans were indistinguishable from those of pradhans in never-reserved villages. Reservation also reversed the bias in male villagers' ratings of the effectiveness of a hypothetical female pradhan: men in villages that had been reserved actually rated the effectiveness of a hypothetical female pradhan above that of a male pradhan. Exposure to a female leader also significantly reduced male villagers' association of leadership activities with men.

Researchers found no evidence that these changes were driven by observable differences between the first and second-generation female pradhans, or between male and female pradhans. There was no significant difference in the quality of public goods received and, on average, very similar levels of villager satisfaction were reported across villages in different reservation categories.

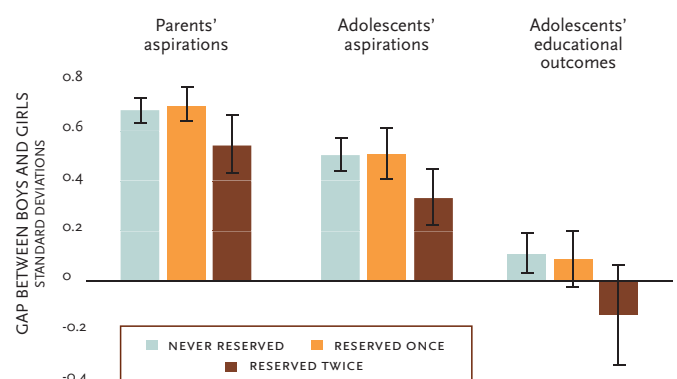
**However, reservation did not, in the short run, alter voter taste for female leaders.** All villagers exhibited a strong *implicit* same-gender preference: women associated female names and images of female leaders with positive attributes on the IAT, while men associated male names and images with positive attributes. However, both genders exhibited an *explicit* preference for male leaders. Male villagers in never-reserved villages rated male leaders 1.45 points higher than female leaders on a ten-point scale. Among female villagers the difference was smaller (0.56 points), but still significant. Reservation did not improve

the implicit or explicit distaste for female leaders—in fact, the relative explicit preference for male leaders was actually strengthened in villages that had experienced a quota.

**The presence of a female leader in their village significantly increased parents' aspirations for their daughters and female adolescents' aspirations for themselves.** In villages that had never been reserved for a female leader, parents had significantly lower aspirations for girls than for boys. For example, parents were 14 percentage points less likely to want their daughter to study beyond the secondary school level. In villages with a female leader for two election cycles, however, the gender gap in parents' aspirations significantly decreased, as did the gender gap in adolescent aspirations (Figure 1). Adolescent girls in twice-reserved villages were 19 percentage points more likely to want to marry after age 18, and 8.6 percentage points more likely to want a job that requires an education.

**The presence of a female leader in the village increased educational attainment for adolescent girls and decreased the amount of time they spent on domestic chores.** Adolescent boys in never-reserved villages were 6 percent more likely to attend school and 4 percent more likely to be able to read and write than their female counterparts. Adolescent girls in never-reserved villages also spent more time on domestic chores (79 minutes more per day than boys). By the second cycle of female leadership in twice-reserved villages, the gender gap in educational outcomes was completely erased, and the gender gap in time spent on household activities decreased by 18 minutes.

**FIGURE 1: GENDER GAP DECREASED IN VILLAGES WITH MOST EXPOSURE TO FEMALE LEADERS**



# POLICY LESSONS



**Although stated preferences against female leaders remain difficult to reverse, beliefs on their effectiveness may be more malleable and appear to play a significant role in voter decision making.** The reservation policy did not improve voters' implicit or explicit taste for female leaders. However, exposure to a female leader caused voters to realize that women have the ability to lead effectively.

**Use of political affirmative action, which causes voters to update their understanding of the abilities of traditionally disadvantaged groups, including women, can durably influence political outcomes.** Reservation, by increasing exposure to nontraditional leaders, can change voters' attitudes on the ability of disadvantaged groups to lead. Exposure to a female leader improved perceptions of women leaders' effectiveness and led to electoral gains for women in future, unreserved elections.

**Female leaders may serve as role models for future generations, shaping parents' and children's beliefs about what women can achieve.** The presence of a female leader in the village significantly increased parents' aspirations for their daughters and female adolescents' aspirations for themselves. Paralleling the changes in aspirations, the presence of a female leader also improved educational outcomes for adolescent girls, which may improve labor market outcomes for women over time.

**Featured Evaluations:** Beaman, Lori, Raghavendra Chattopadhyay, Esther Duflo, Rohini Pande, and Petia Topalova. 2009. "Powerful Women: Does Exposure Reduce Bias?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 124(4): 1497-1540.

Beaman, Lori, Esther Duflo, Rohini Pande, and Petia Topalova. 2012. "Female Leadership Raises Aspirations and Educational Attainment for Girls: A Policy Experiment in India." *Science* 335 (6068): 582-586.

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**Suggested Citation:** J-PAL Policy Briefcase. 2012. "Raising Female Leaders." Cambridge, MA: Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab.



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[September 19, 2011]

 Printed Version ]

## Changing Realities for Asian Women Leaders

By Hu Shuli

**Asia is not without notable examples of women who have made it to the top in the political arena, but that does not mean the gap between male and female participation in politics is anywhere near being closed.**

**Hu Shuli, arguably China's best known female journalist, reflects on the role of women in politics and what it will take to close that gap.**

Women have played a pivotal role in the modern politics of many Asian countries, a fact that grabbed the world's attention in 1986 when Corazon Aquino took office as the Philippines' first female president. Another milestone was reached just recently with Yingluck Shinawatra's election as Thailand's first female prime minister.

Indeed, Asia has filled a hall of fame with the names of successful women in positions of power. Indira Gandhi was twice elected prime minister of India. Benazir Bhutto served as Pakistan's prime minister for two terms. Megawati Sukarnoputri was elected president of Indonesia in 2001. And Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and world-renowned opposition leader in Burma, led that country's National League for Democracy to an election victory in 1990, the results of which were ignored by the ruling military junta.

But it would be wrong to say that this list of political stars is an indicator of wide political participation among women in Asia. In fact, most of Asia's top female leaders rose to power because of the influence of their families or marital ties. Suu Kyi's father founded the modern Burmese army and negotiated the country's independence. Megawati's father was the first president of Indonesia. Benazir Bhutto was the eldest child of former Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

The rise of Suu Kyi, Megawati, Bhutto, Aquino, Yingluck and many other modern female leaders in Asia is tied to loved ones who were attacked or even murdered by political opponents. Aung San was assassinated by rivals in 1947, while Aquino's husband, Benigno Aquino Jr., was gunned down by assassins in 1983. Bhutto's father was executed after he was overthrown by the military. Megawati's father, Sukarno, was pushed out of office by his own generals. Yingluck's brother, Thaksin Shinawatra, lost the premiership in a 2006 military coup. Thus, these women stepped onto the political stage and set their eyes on state leadership with a sense of responsibility, a touch of heritage and sometimes more than a tinge of victimhood. But they won public support for having vision and proving their ability to lead.

### CHINA'S ROAD

It is also true that Asian countries without a woman at the top are not necessarily weak on female political participation. In China, after a lengthy revolution that created a political structure in 1949 that is very different from those found among its Asian neighbors, women's access to politics, business or social affairs is not restricted. Moreover, this access for women is widening ♦ a fact supported by the nation's relatively inexpensive childcare system and broad educational opportunities.

But this easy access has evolved in different ways for Chinese women in the private and public spheres. Female business leaders have thrived in China in recent decades. The Hurun Report's "List of Self-Made Women Billionaires" last year said that 11 of the world's top 20 richest, independently wealthy women were Chinese. Yet the percentage of women among the top leaders in the Chinese government, especially members and alternate members of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, shrank from 11.4 percent in 1977 to 7.6 percent in 2002. While women can be found serving as officials in more than 80 percent of the country's provincial-level governments, only about 8 percent have a woman at the head of the government.

This gender discrepancy between the private and public sectors partly illustrates what is recognized as an unbalanced development pattern in China. The nation now has a rapidly maturing market economy alongside a political system that

has shown relatively slow progress on reform.

## **PERCEPTION AND REALITY**

In general, two obstacles stand in the way of real progress for women in China's political sphere. One is perception, and the other is reality.

Many men tend to think that women lack the capacity to engage in politics, which of course is not true. Politics is all about people who take the lead in making collective decisions. That sort of process requires wisdom, vision, management skill and the ability to chart out, execute and revise plans. These abilities are not gender-specific. And today, as more women receive higher education and hone skills in professional arenas, they are prepared more than ever to take on political responsibility.

Yet sometimes misperceptions of women are a result of how women see themselves. In many places, women accept traditional, secondary roles in the context of family and society. Girls are accustomed to the idea that being attentive and obedient are virtues, and thus subconsciously give up political and professional opportunities in order to serve family roles. This perception can be altered when female role models become more publicly visible in political, business and social circles, and as more women professionals assume active roles in day-to-day business and social affairs. At Caixin Media, where I am editor-in-chief, more than 60 percent of our newsroom staff are women. Their achievements have put them at the top of China's journalism industry, among men and women.

The second obstacle to politics facing women in China is the reality of the system. We can hardly expect that situation to change overnight, despite well-intentioned legislation and regulations. India adopted an important constitutional amendment in 1994 that stipulates one-third of the seats in village-level government bodies must be reserved for women. This raised the ratio of females with jobs as village heads. But in fact, the official posts that women win in India are not necessarily powerful. And in many cases, seats reserved for women have been left unfilled, or were eventually assumed by men.

In reality, it can take ages to change minds in a traditionally patriarchal society. Even in Kerala, the Indian state that successfully broke the caste system and whose human development index is comparable to what is found in developed nations, female leaders more often serve as representatives of parties and their policies, not as advocates for women. Reserving a given number of government seats, although an encouraging step and proof of progress, is far from the kind of silver bullet needed to give women equal political power.

Besides, only a minority of Asian women are conversant with their own legal rights. The lack of awareness about the rights and privileges available to women is another hindrance to the influence and impact of legal remedies.

## **FEMALE CULTURE**

Georg Simmel wrote in the book *Female Culture* that the world has no neutral ungendered culture because, "with the exception of a very few areas, our objective culture is thoroughly male." He also said that outstanding performances by women are celebrated as "thoroughly manly." Modern progress in Asian societies has disproven his argument. Female characteristics are increasingly recognized and included in common notions of leadership. For instance, micro-finance banks today tend to lend to women as they are better family leaders who tend to be less selfish, fairer and more resilient to outside pressure than men. This same conclusion is reflected in a lower corruption rate for female leaders than male and a higher probability that a government will adopt people-oriented policies while giving proper attention to social welfare and public benefits. The list of advantages women have could go on.

Women are accepting multiple roles in society at large and in their families. Sometimes these roles conflict, usually due to friction over social norms and popular expectations. For Asian women to participate more actively and widely in politics, to make having female leaders at the top the norm rather than the exception and to broaden the horizons of the political scene, we need new thinking within and across borders. That can only happen if we make the voices of women heard, ensure women's actions are visible to the public and approach political participation with firm determination.