

Chapter 4

Assessing the Progress of Women: A Broader Picture



Introduction

Assessing the progress of women in terms of the broader objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action requires a wider range of indicators than those designed for the agreed upon targets. A fuller assessment of women's economic progress can be made by looking at several income and employment indicators, including women's position in family enterprises and as business owners; in paid occupations with a higher degree of decision-making power; and in the labour market. This chapter presents these indicators, together with two cross-cutting issues: economic inequality among women and the feminization of income-poverty. In order to locate women's economic status in a broader social context, it also examines indicators of obstacles to women's empowerment, including violence against women, the increased incidence of HIV/AIDS among women and girls, and women's unequal share of responsibility for unpaid care work, in both family and community.

"Promote the further development of statistical methods to improve data that relate to women in economic, social, cultural and political development...."

— Platform for Action, 1995

In addition to indicators of specific dimensions of women's position, progress can be assessed by means of composite indicators, which aggregate several different dimensions into one index. The chapter considers the advantages and disadvantages of the two composite indicators introduced by the Human Development Report, namely, the Gender-Sensitive Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Measure. Finally, it takes up the issue of ways in which to improve information to enable an adequate assessment of progress of the world's women.

Women's Economic Status

Women are economically active in family enterprises, in their own small businesses and as employees. As discussed in Chapter 1, much of this work is informal, in the sense of being outside social protection, even for employees. Despite many improvements, available statistics still undercount informal employment in many countries, and reflect only the most visible dimensions of women's employment.

Women's Work in Family Enterprises and as Business Owners

Rural women are particularly likely to work in small family enterprises (farms and small manufacturing and service businesses) on an unpaid basis, without direct remuneration, or to be self-employed or running microenterprises that employ two or three other women ("own-account workers and employers" in the terminology of labour-force surveys). All else being equal, it is probably more advantageous for a woman to be an "own-account worker or an employer" than an "unpaid family worker," since the former puts cash into her own hands, whereas the latter does not. Benefits women receive from contributing unpaid labour to family businesses depend upon how their husbands, brothers or

Box 1: Where do the tea bonuses go?

In the mid-1990s, tea in Kenya was produced by smallholders and bought by the Kenya Tea Development Authority, which arranged for processing and exportation. Male farmers held the licenses to grow the tea and were paid for the amount of tea they delivered each month, and also received an annual bonus payment. Their wives and daughters harvested the tea and transported it to pick-up points from which trucks took the tea to the processing plants.

A study in Kericho District by a Kenyan researcher, Grace Ongile, found that the use of the bonuses was often a point of contention between women and men. She states that "it is publicly acknowledged that smallholder tea farmers spend part of the bonus payment from tea on personal leisure activities such as drinking," as illustrated in a cartoon in a Kenyan newspaper, *The Daily Nation* (a tea farmer spending his bonus money at the beer hall, where he is confronted by his wife).

While many women farmers did not express concerns about the way their husbands spent the tea bonus, others indicated considerable dissatisfaction.

Wife 1, age 42, with 10 young children: "The head of the family spends all the money recklessly leaving the family with nothing."

Wife 2, age 58, with 5 children: "The husband gives part of the bonus payment only to the elder wife and not myself."

In Central Province, another region of Kenya, some wives of tea farmers had earlier protested that their husbands spent the annual bonuses on beer, meat and other personal needs. They were successful in getting part of the bonus paid directly to them.

Source: Ongile 1998.

fathers distribute income generated by the family farm or enterprise. Women have often voiced dissatisfaction with this distribution (see Box 1). In a market-based world, workers who are not directly remunerated for work performed (“cash in hand”) tend to be at a disadvantage. The proportion of women who work on this basis tends to be much higher than the proportion of men (see Table 4.1); and among men, it is more often young men who work on this basis. For them it does not mean a lifetime of economic dependence, since in due course they will be head of a family farm or business themselves.

One way to assess how far there has been a reduction in obstacles to the economic advancement of rural women is to examine whether the proportion of women working as unpaid family workers has been falling, and whether there has been a rise in women’s share of positions as employers and in self-employment (see Charts 4.1 and 4.2, pp. 88-89).

Over time, the proportion of women who are unpaid family workers has been declining in many countries (in 36 out of 70 shown in Chart 4.1). But some countries appear to show a substantial increase (e.g., Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malawi). In some, this probably reflects efforts to improve labour-force surveys to include as unpaid family workers women who were previously classified as economically inactive housewives (this is probably the case in Bangladesh and Pakistan). In others (such as Malawi), it may reflect changes in the classification of the many farming women who are both “unpaid family workers” on their husband’s fields and “own-account workers” on their own fields.

Running her own small business does give a woman decision-making power over what to do with her own time, unlike the lack of freedom experienced by women who work unpaid in family enterprises. But microenterprises are vulnerable to market fluctuations and changes in the economic environment, resulting from decisions of larger enterprises, governments and other economic institutions.

Women’s share of work as an employer or as a self-employed person is high and rising in most of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, reflecting the preponderance of women in farming and small-scale

Table 4.1: Unpaid Male and Female Family Workers as Proportion of Male and Female Labour Force, 1990

Male %		Female %	
Northern & Sub-Saharan Africa			
Algeria	3	2	
Benin	32	29	
Botswana	18	15	
Burundi	26	34	
Central			
African Rep.	7	10	
Côte d’Ivoire	23	48	
Egypt	9	23	
Lesotho	27	33	
Malawi	61	93	
Mali	44	82	
Nigeria	9	15	
Rwanda	27	79	
Tunisia	5	18	
Zambia	4	6	
Central and Western Asia			
Iraq	1	9	
Israel	1	2	
Kuwait	*	*	
Syria	8	35	
Turkey	13	64	
Asia and the Pacific			
Bangladesh	22	83	
Brunei Darussalam	*	1	
Fiji	16	16	
Hong Kong,			
China SAR	*	1	
Indonesia	9	34	
Iran, Islamic Rep.	2	12	
Korea, Rep.	2	23	
Malaysia	3	14	
Nepal	2	4	
Pakistan	17	53	
Philippines	9	18	
Samoa (Western)	66	63	
Singapore	1	2	
Sri Lanka	6	14	
Thailand	16	44	
Tonga	23	20	
Latin America & the Caribbean			
Bahamas	*	1	
Bolivia	4	11	
Brazil	8	12	
Chile	2	4	
Costa Rica	3	4	
Ecuador	4	10	
El Salvador	9	7	
Guatemala	15	10	
Haiti	11	10	
Mexico	10	17	
Panama	4	2	
Paraguay	2	4	
Peru	3	7	
Suriname	2	2	
Trinidad & Tobago	1	3	
Uruguay	1	3	
Venezuela	1	1	
Eastern Europe			
Hungary	1	3	
Poland	5	18	
Western Europe and Other Developed Countries			
Australia	1	1	
Belgium	1	7	
Canada	*	1	
Denmark	*	3	
Finland	1	*	
Greece	4	22	
Ireland	1	2	
Italy	2	6	
Japan	2	12	
Luxembourg	*	4	
Netherlands	*	2	
New Zealand	1	2	
Norway	1	1	
Portugal	1	2	
Spain	2	6	
Sweden	*	*	
United States	*	*	

* less than 1 per cent
Source : Wistat, version 4.



“A man cannot stay at home all the time. He has to go out to the town to get news on what is happening within the town. My wife has to ask me for permission even when she is going to visit a friend. I can only give permission if she has finished all the work for the day.”

— Kenya tea farmer, 1995 (Ongile 1998)

Chart 4.1: Change in Female Unpaid Family Workers as % of Female Labour Force, 1980s-1990s

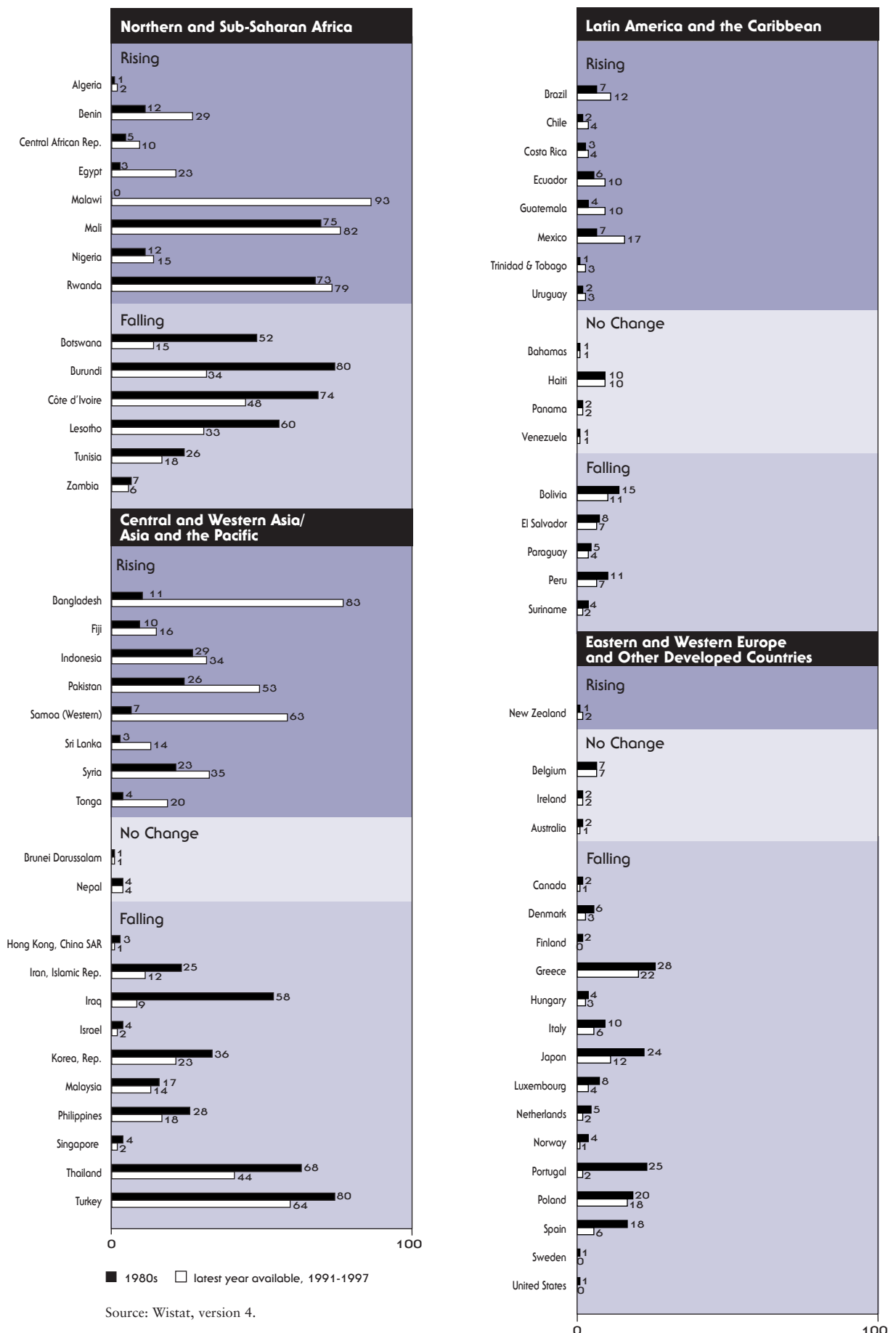
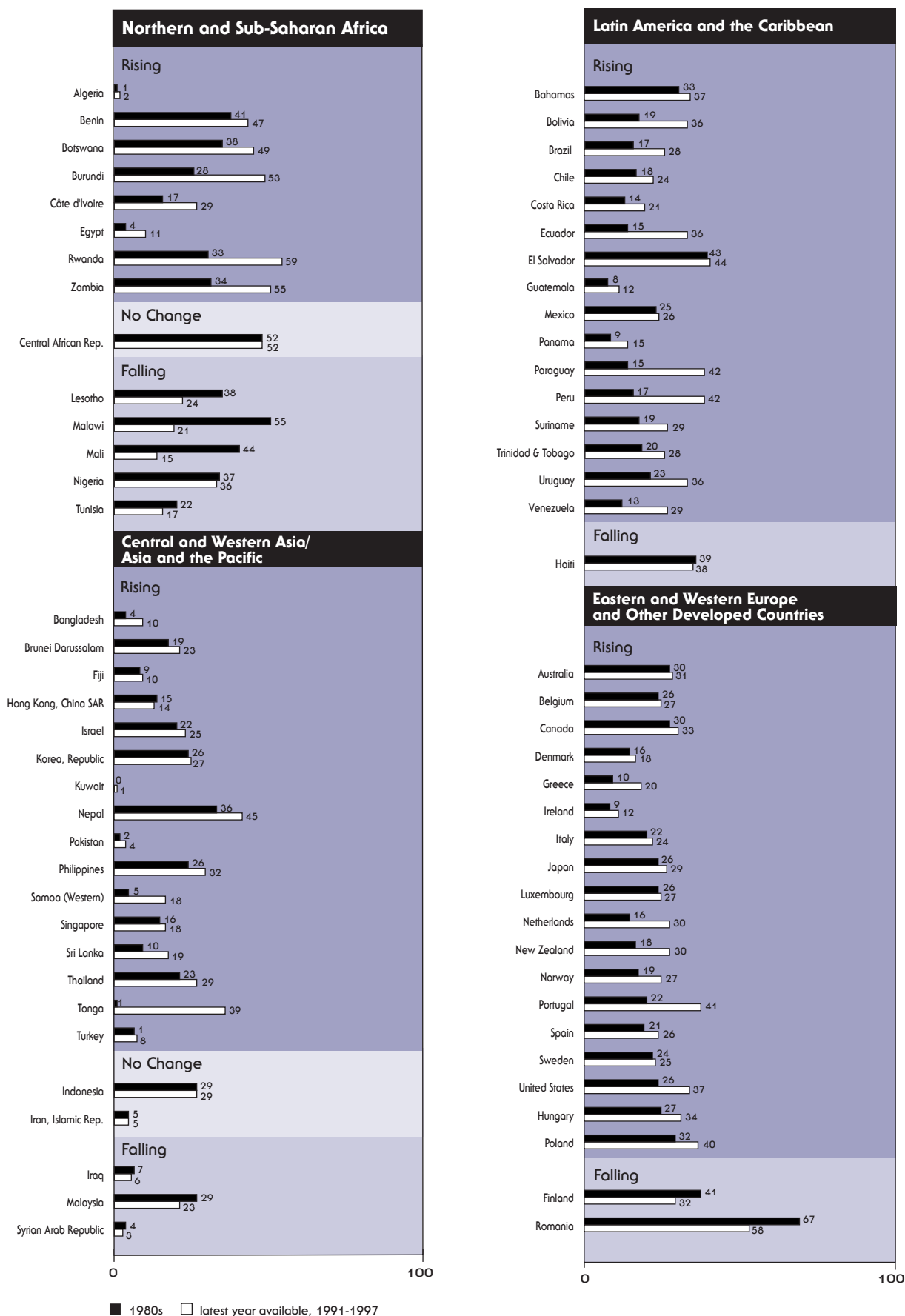


Chart 4.2: Employers and Own-Account Workers: Change in Female Share (%), 1980s-1990s



Source: Wistat, version 4.

services, such as trading. Their share is low and shows no tendency to rise in Northern Africa and Central and Western Asia. In the rest of the world the pattern is very variable, but levels are generally below those of Sub-Saharan Africa. UNIFEM is supporting women's enterprise development in many countries in developing activities that range from traditional embroidery to mining to e-commerce.

A more accurate assessment of progress with regard to women's paid employment would take into account information on how remunerative women's businesses are, and how much economic power the women who run them have (see Box 2). Unfortunately, no international database contains information on business ownership, differentiating businesses by scale of both assets and employment (from self-employed to thousands of employees), and giving the sex of their owners. And no international database provides sex-disaggregated data on business start-up rates and survival rates.

Gender Equality in Decision-making Occupations

It is easier to track progress in women's share of seats in national parliaments than it is in other public decision-making positions. Women's share of managerial, administrative, and professional and technical occupations is often used as a proxy for women's share of decision-making positions in the economy. However, this indicator will tend to overestimate women's decision-making power because



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these occupations cover a range of levels of responsibility, and women tend to be concentrated in the lower levels of responsibility within each of these occupational groups. Moreover, women's share of professional and technical occupations is pushed up by the fact that some professions, such as teaching and nursing, are highly feminized, though even here, higher level decision-making jobs are occupied mainly by men. Also, clerical work is sometimes grouped with managerial and administrative work, which also inflates women's share. This report considers the share of managerial and administrative occupations alone.

Chart 4.3 shows changes women's share of these occupations. In 51 of 59 countries, women's share has risen, reaching 30 per cent or more in 16. This is higher than the number of countries (9) in which women have 30 per cent or more of seats in national parliaments. Lacking is any indicator of how women are using their increased occupancy of managerial and administrative positions to transform workplaces. (See Box 3, p. 92, on women in the UN system.)



UNIFEM

Box 2: Ugandan Women Speak About Their Businesses

"I started with a few goods because I had little money. I used to pick a few cabbages, but now I buy a whole bag. I buy a whole box of tomatoes. But you have to start small, save slowly, slowly. ...This season is dead, lost. Things are in pieces. Rains spoiled the harvest. So when you sell, the price is high, beyond what a consumer can afford... We continue to repay [our loan] even though we have no money remaining. Work has become more difficult and less rewarding."

—Margaret Namuga (46), widowed with three children, sells vegetables

"I eat and drink from my business. I built a house so that I no longer rent. I bought my plot from cassava [earnings]. I have been able to educate my children. That is very important – an even better achievement than building a house."

—Betty Nakiganda (48), widowed with eight children, sells cassava

"Through my business I have achieved a lot: I managed to construct a house, buy things for it, buy a vehicle and open two more shops like this one. I believe that ...there is nothing men can do that we cannot do."

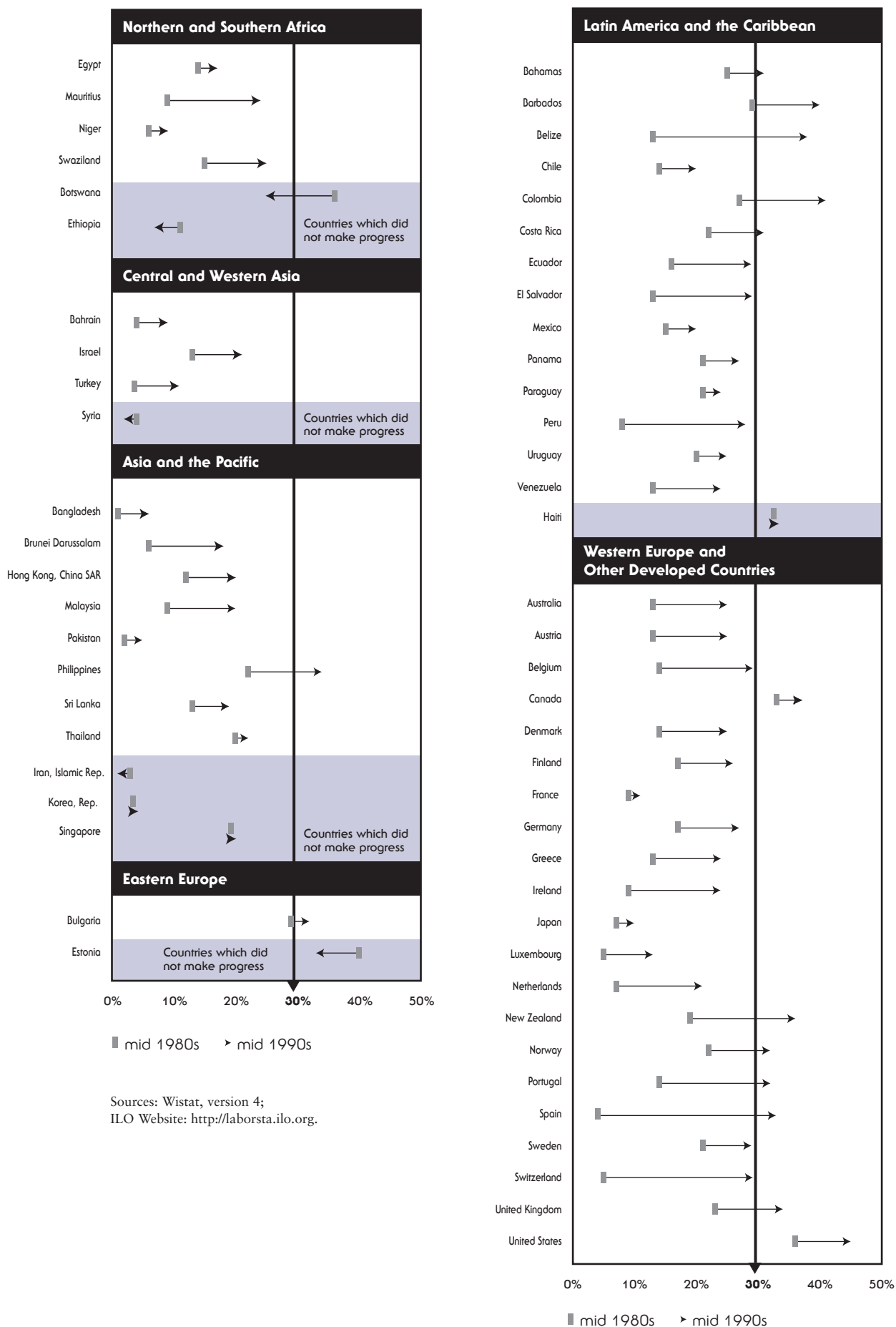
—Teddy Birungi (36), married with five children, wholesales beer, soda and whiskey

"I started what they were calling *magendo* (informal trade) in those days, that is, buying sweets and selling them, making a little profit to add to my salary. Later I baked buns and that was more rewarding. ...I started looking for a shop. I got a small place in Kisura, but I lived in Nakaserto so it took me a long time to commute. I had to run the shop after office hours. At 5 p.m. I would pick [up] my children, take them home, give them tea, run through their homework then rush to the shop. Kisura was hard."

—Alice Karugaba (50s), separated with four children, owns two furniture and soft-goods stores

Source: Snyder 2000.

Chart 4.3: Change in Female Share of Administrative and Managerial Positions, mid 1980s - mid 1990s



Box 3: Women in the UN System

The 24 organizations, programmes and funds that comprise the UN system have three types of posts:

- **geographical posts** are subject to geographical quotas, based on a weighted formula that considers a country's membership, population and level of assessment for contributions. These posts offer greater opportunities for career advancement via a grading structure that contains more posts at the decision-making level;
- **non-geographical posts** have no geographical quotas and are primarily in areas such as translation and interpretation which have comparatively low career ceilings;
- **project posts** are connected to a specific project, often in developing countries. These are generally of limited duration, ranging from six months to five years.

The General Assembly requested the UN system to achieve gender parity (50/50) in posts by 2000. Between 1991 and 1996, women's share of posts increased:

- 22.0 to 27.2 per cent in geographical posts;
- 30.4 to 33.9 per cent in non-geographical posts;
- 12.9 to 24.1 per cent in project posts.

If increases remain at this rate, gender parity will not be achieved in geographic posts until 2018; in non-geographic posts until 2013.

Women remain concentrated in lower-level positions. About 60 per cent of women work in support functions, in administration, language and library-related fields. This has not substantially changed since 1984. Women hold only 20 per cent of the geographical posts at senior management level (P5 and above). There has been only a one percentage increase in the number of women at this higher level over the period 1991-1996. At this rate, reaching gender parity will take 44 years.

Source: International Civil Service Commission 1998.



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The Gender Gap in Wages

Women's share of paid employment in industry and services has been increasing in most countries. But has women's share of wages in this employment also been increasing? A comprehensive answer is difficult, because international databases have information for only a very limited range of countries. The Wistat database provides information on female wages as a proportion of male wages for some countries (for non-agricultural activities and for manufacturing). This is presented in Table 4.2, together with information from ECLAC (1998) for female income from employment as a percentage of male income from employment in urban households in selected Latin American countries, and information from UNICEF (1999) on female monthly wages as a percentage of male monthly wages in countries in transition to market economies. Because of differences in coverage and reliability of the surveys on which the underlying data is based, the table has to be used with caution (see Annex: Technical Notes). Countries are presented in alphabetical order by region, as the data are not sufficiently comparable to permit a ranking of countries. The table shows that women's average wages are less than men's in all 63 countries for which data is internationally available.

The gender gap in wages in the industrial and services sector ranges from 53 per cent to 97 per cent, with a median of 78 per cent. In manufacturing the range is 54 per cent to 99 per cent, with a median of 75 per cent. The gender wage gap in the United States is close to the median. In 1998, women's wages in the United States were 76.3 per cent of men's wages on a weekly basis, (US Department of Labor 1999).

It is even more difficult to assess change over time, as international databases for industrial and service-sector activities have data for only 29 countries. In the majority of these, the ratio of female to male wages has risen since 1980, in some cases substantially; while in all but one of the cases where it has fallen, the fall is small (see Chart 4.4, p. 94). Even less data is available in international databases to assess progress in the gender wage gap in manufacturing. Chart 4.5 (p. 94) indicates that out of 22 countries, female wages have risen as a percentage of male wages in 20 countries, and have fallen, although only slightly, in 2.

The experience of countries of Eastern Europe and Central and Western Asia that are in transition to the market is shown in Chart 4.6 (p. 94). Only one country, Bulgaria, shows a big rise (5 percentage points) in the gender pay gap between 1990 and 1997. The gap has been relatively stable in Slovenia and Russia and has narrowed considerably in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. The pay gap does not, of course, capture other

dimensions of women's labour-market experience in countries in transition, including a decline in female employment and job security. Evidence of gender bias has been reported in recruitment practices of some employers in Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, despite employment laws that are supposed to guarantee equal treatment (UNICEF 1999).

Charts 4.4-4.6 suggest some progress in the limited group of countries for which data is available in reducing the gender gap in wage earnings. Data on the wage gap are likely to reflect mainly the earnings of full-time formal sector employees, since the enterprise surveys that generate the data tend to omit part-time, home-based seasonal and temporary employees and do not cover very small enterprises. Thus they do not cover a great deal of informal employment. In the European Union, there is a larger gender wage gap (on an hourly basis) for part-time employees than for full-time employees (Rubery et al. 1998). Studies undertaken by Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) suggest that the gender gap in earnings in developing countries is larger in informal than in formal employment.

A narrowing of the gender gap in earnings does not necessarily mean an increase in women's living standards. The gap can narrow while real earnings of both women and men fall, if men's real earnings fall faster than those of women.

There is an urgent need for more and better data on the gender wage gap. The new ILO report on Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM) contains 18 indicators, and those for employment and unemployment are generally disaggregated by sex (ILO 1999). But the indicators for wages focus on the issue of labour costs and international competitiveness rather than equality in labour markets. It is important to extend KILM so that it can be used to monitor the gender gap in wages, preferably on a separate basis for full-time and part-time employment. Ideally, indicators for the gender gap should be complemented by indicators for the average real wages of men and women, so that it is possible to see if the gender gap narrows as a result of equalizing up or equalizing down.

Economic Inequality Among Women

As the scoreboard at the end of Chapter 3 shows, income inequality is growing in many countries. This suggests that inequality is likely to be growing among women, with highly educated women enjoying rising incomes and good conditions of employment while women with less educational qualifications have stagnant or falling incomes. Although there is no international database with comprehensive information on inequality among women, several pieces of evidence support the idea.



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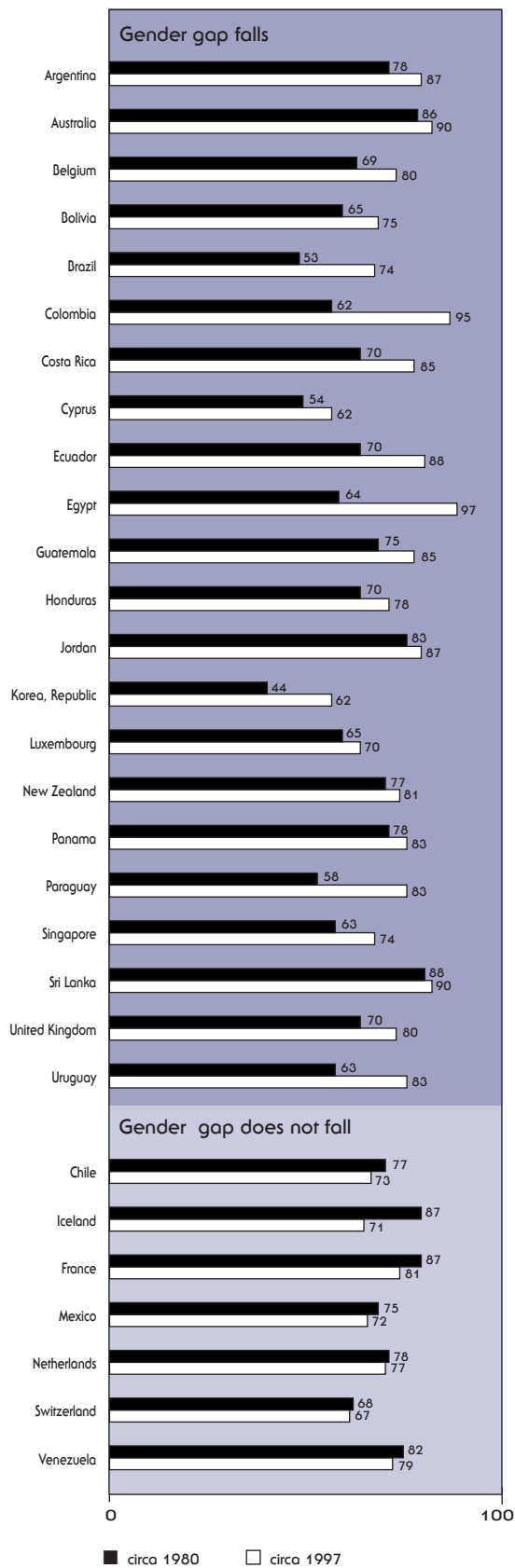
Table 4.2: Female Wages as % of Male Wages, circa 1997

	Industry & Services	Manufacturing		Industry & Services	Manufacturing
Northern & Sub-Saharan Africa			Eastern Europe		
Egypt	97	74	Bulgaria	69	n.d.
Eritrea	58	n.d.	Czech Rep.	81	n.d.
Swaziland	n.d.	71	Estonia	73	n.d.
Central and Western Asia			Hungary	77	70
Azerbaijan	53	n.d.	Larvia	80	89
Cyprus	62	60	Lithuania	71	81
Jordan	87	62	Poland	79	n.d.
Kazakhstan	72	n.d.	Romania	76	n.d.
Kyrgyzstan	72	n.d.	Russia	70	n.d.
Turkey	n.d.	99	Slovakia	78	n.d.
Uzbekistan	81	n.d.	Slovenia	86	n.d.
Asia and the Pacific			Ukraine	72	n.d.
Malaysia	n.d.	58	Western Europe and Developed Countries		
Myanmar	n.d.	96	Australia	90	85
Korea, Rep.	62	56	Austria	n.d.	66
Singapore	76	60	Belgium	80	80
Sri Lanka	90	85	Denmark	n.d.	85
Thailand	72	68	Finland	n.d.	79
Latin America & the Caribbean			France	81	79
Argentina	87	n.d.	Germany	n.d.	74
Bolivia	75	n.d.	Greece	n.d.	81
Brazil	76	54	Iceland	71	n.d.
Chile	73	n.d.	Ireland	n.d.	75
Colombia	95	n.d.	Luxemburg	70	63
Costa Rica	85	86	Netherlands	77	n.d.
Dominican Rep.	88	n.d.	New Zealand	81	78
Ecuador	88	n.d.	Norway	n.d.	87
El Salvador	89	95	Portugal	67	69
Guatemala	85	n.d.	Sweden	n.d.	90
Honduras	78	n.d.	Switzerland	67	69
Mexico	78	71	United Kingdom	80	72
Nicaragua	67	n.d.			
Panama	83	n.d.			
Paraguay	74	77			
Uruguay	83	n.d.			
Venezuela	79	n.d.			

n.d. = no data

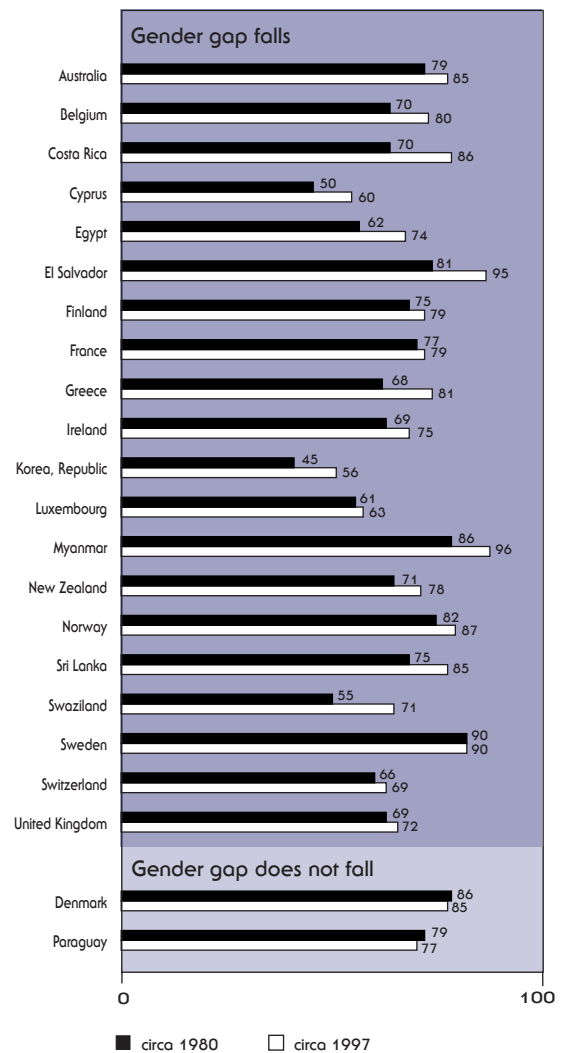
Sources: Wistat, version 4; ECLAC 1998, table 39; UNICEF 1999, table 2.2.

Chart 4.4: Change in Female Wages as % of Male Wages in Industry and Services, c.1980-c.1997



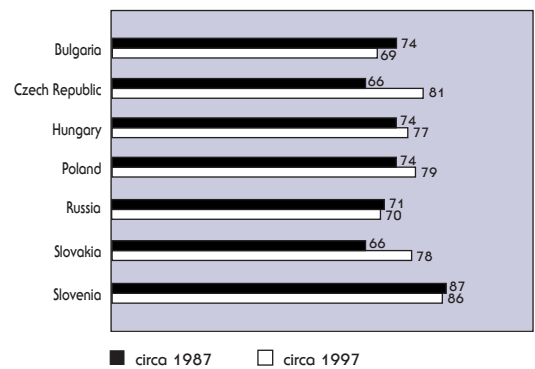
Sources: Wistat, version 4; ECLAC 1998, Table 39; ILO Website: <http://laborsta.ilo.org>.

Chart 4.5: Change in Female Wages as % of Male Wages in Manufacturing, c.1980-c.1997



Sources: Wistat, version 4; ILO Website: <http://laborsta.ilo.org>.

Chart 4.6: Female Monthly Wages as % of Male Wages in Transition Countries, c.1987-c.1992



Source: UNICEF 1999, table 2.2.

An analysis of the dispersion of earnings among women in nine countries in Latin America in 1990 and 1997, for example, shows that inequality among women increased in all but two countries, Brazil and Honduras, in both of which inequality was already high (Gálvez 1999).

New evidence for the UK indicates that it is married women with no skills or medium-level skills who experience the greatest economic penalty from the gender gap in wages and from becoming a parent (UK Cabinet Office 2000). The life-time earnings gap for low-skilled and medium-skilled married childless women (as compared to similar men) is 37 per cent of their life-time earnings. For high-skilled, married women without children it is only 12 per cent of life-time earnings. UK women who have children spend some time out of the labour market, and forego some earnings as a result. For a low-skilled woman with two children the loss is largest: £285,000. For a medium-skilled woman, the loss drops to £140,000 and for a high-skilled woman it is only about £19,000 — since women with this level of skills spend much less time out of the labour market.

The Feminization of Poverty

The Beijing Platform for Action refers to the “feminization of poverty” and asks national and international statistical organizations to collect gender-disaggregated data on poverty. The Platform does not define “feminization of poverty,” but as Nilüfer Çağatay (1998) points out, the concept is used as “shorthand” for a variety of ideas, including one or more of the following:

- women have a higher *incidence* of income-poverty compared to men;
- women’s income-poverty is more *severe* than men’s income-poverty;
- over time, the incidence of income-poverty among women is *increasing* compared to that among men.

Income-poverty refers to the lack of sufficient income to support an adequate standard of living. Its incidence is the proportion of the population whose income or consumption level falls below a nationally or internationally agreed poverty line. The severity of income-poverty may be measured by adjusting the incidence of income-poverty for the difference between the poverty line and the average income of the population living under the poverty line (poverty-gap ratio). If this average income is just below the poverty line, then poverty is not as severe as it is if this average income is far below the poverty line. Individuals are considered poor if the per-capita real income/consumption of the household to which they belong is below the poverty line.



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Unfortunately, indicators of income-poverty incidence and severity are not usually calculated and presented in a gender-sensitive way. The figures indicate what proportion of the population is in poverty (in the sense of having inadequate incomes), but not how many are men and how many are women. Without a gender-sensitive income-poverty indicator there is no way of estimating the extent of feminization of poverty — leading to the use of global “guesstimates” such as the much-repeated claim that 70 per cent of the world’s poor are women. No one can identify the empirical evidence on which this claim is based, and demographic analysis has shown that it is not credible (Marcoux 1998).

Comparisons are often made between the incidence of income- or consumption-poverty among female-headed households and that among male-headed households. But definitions of female headship vary widely, as do reasons for female headship, and empirical investigations reveal no general association between poverty and female headship, though they are associated in some countries (Çağatay 1998; Quisumbing et al. 1995). The widespread consensus is that comparing female and male-headed households is not an appropriate way to measure the degree to which poverty is feminized (Fukuda-Parr 1999; Razavi 1999).

An alternative is to focus on dimensions of poverty besides household income. Box 4 presents a poverty pyramid in which personal consumption

Box 4: Poverty Pyramid

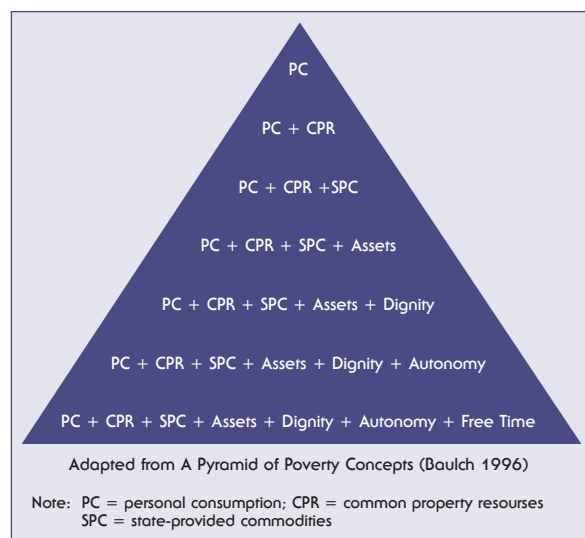


Table 4.3: Adult Population in Poverty, Russian Federation

Gender/age group	% of population below subsistence level			% of respective demographic group		
	1992	1994	1997	1992	1994	1997
Women (age 31+)	32.6	29.1	29.8	71.2	40.4	37.5
Men (age 31+)	21.4	21.8	20.7	59.6	31.7	27.5

Source: Based on UNDP 1998c, table 2.10.

Table 4.4: Gender Poverty Ratio in Selected Countries, 1980s

Sub-Saharan Africa	
Country	Women per 100 men in the poorest quintile ¹
Botswana (1993)	192
Côte d'Ivoire (1986-88)	123
Ethiopia (1989-90)	127
Ghana (urban) (1987-88)	141
Ghana (rural) (1987-88)	140
Madagascar (1992)	109
Niger (1989-90)	113
Rwanda (1985-86)	132
Asia & the Pacific	
Bangladesh (1992-93)	130
Indonesia (1988-89)	124
Nepal (1991-92)	93
Pakistan (1986-89)	106
Philippines (Bukidnon) (1984-85)	93

¹ Based on adult equivalents

Latin America & the Caribbean	
Country	Women per 100 men in the poorest quintile ¹
Guatemala (1988)	95
Honduras (1988-89)	105
Western Europe & Other Developed Countries	
Country	Women per man ¹ below the poverty line ²
Australia (1985-1986)	1.34
Canada (1987)	1.28
Germany (FR) (1984)	1.29
Italy (1986)	1.02
Netherlands (1987)	1.02
Sweden (1987)	0.90
United Kingdom (1986)	1.19
United States (1985)	1.41

¹ aged 18-57

² defined as living in a household whose disposable income (after taxes and transfers) is less than 50% of the median disposable income for that country, adjusted for differences in family size.

Sources: UN 1995a, chart 5.21; Caspar et al. 1994.

(PC) is only one element. Other elements are the enjoyment of common property resources (CPR) such as forests and rivers; state-provided commodities (SPC) such as health care and education; and assets such as land and equipment. Besides these tangible dimensions, poverty also includes lack of dignity and autonomy and free time.

Much policy attention is still focused on the conventional measures of income-poverty, so it is important to consider how measures of income-poverty could be made more gender-sensitive. New ways of analysing and presenting existing data could be used to track the feminization of income-poverty. The raw data from household surveys always includes the numbers of males and females in each household and their ages. Thus, it is in principle possible to calculate the proportion of the people in households below the poverty line who are women and the proportion who are men. Table 4.3 presents the example of the Russian Federation, where household surveys over three years found that in each year, adult women comprised a larger share of the population in poverty than did adult men, and poor adult women comprised a larger share of all adult women than poor adult men did of all adult men, suggesting that poverty is indeed feminized.

A particularly useful gender-sensitive indicator is the gender-poverty ratio, that is, the number of women per 100 men (or per man) in the population below the poverty line, or poorest fifth of the population (see UN 1995a). Estimates presented in Table 4.4 indicate that there is feminization of poverty in 12 out of 15 developing countries for which data is available and in 5 out of 8 developed countries for which data is available. This is a measure that deserves to be more widely used, since the statistics to construct it are collected routinely by household surveys in many countries.

Social Obstacles to Women's Empowerment

Many obstacles remain to women enjoying a better return for their participation in the market economy and more scope for shaping the institutions and policies of the societies in which they live. Some of the most important barriers result from the way in which family life and the life of the community are organized in all societies, from the most "traditional" to the most "modern." Three of the most important of these are interrelated: violence against women, the burden of HIV/AIDS and the unequal sharing of unpaid caring work. There are big gaps in information required to track the extent to which each of these obstacles is getting stronger or weaker. But in all three cases, new efforts are underway that should make it easier to track progress in reducing them.

Violence Against Women

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

The Declaration states that violence against women encompasses, among other things, “physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family and in the general community, including battering, sexual abuse of female children, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation, sexual harassment, and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women, forced prostitution, and violence perpetrated or condoned by the state” (UN 1993a). All of these forms of violence are associated with power inequalities: between women and men, between children and their care-givers, as well as with growing economic inequalities both within and between countries.

It is not easy to measure the precise extent of violence against women, as it requires inquiring into sensitive areas of women’s lives about which women may be very reluctant to speak. However, there are a number of studies of one widespread kind of violence against women: domestic violence committed by a husband or boyfriend. The results of the most comprehensive of these studies are presented in Table 4.5. The different methods used in different studies make it impossible to draw definite conclusions about where the problem is most severe. But the figures show that the violation of women’s human rights is widespread and substantial, affecting between about 10 per cent to over 50 per cent of adult women in all regions of the world. Since domestic violence tends to be underreported, the true incidence is probably higher.

These stark figures underline the fact that although the home and community are places where women provide care for others, they are also where millions of women experience coercion and abuse. The challenge is to institutionalize the measurement of violence against women, so that data is collected by national statistical offices, on a comparable basis, in a wider range of countries. This would enable progress in reducing violence against women to be tracked over time. The World Health Organization (WHO) is currently undertaking a multi-country study on women’s health and domestic violence against women which seeks,

Table 4.5: Prevalence of Violence Against Women by an Intimate Partner

	Year	Adult women assaulted by intimate partner (%)
Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa		
Egypt	1995-1996	34.4
Ethiopia	1995	45.0
Kenya	1984-1987	42.0 ¹
Nigeria	1993 P	31.4
South Africa	1998	13.0
Uganda	1995-1996	40.0
Zimbabwe	1996	17.0
Central and Western Asia		
Turkey	1998	57.9
Asia and the Pacific		
Bangladesh	1993	42.0 ¹
Cambodia	1996 P	16.0
India	1999	40.0
Korea, Rep.	1989	38.0
Philippines	1993	5.1
Thailand	1994	20.0 ¹
Latin America and the Caribbean		
Barbados	1990	30.0
Bolivia	1998	17.0 ²
Chile	1993 P	26.0 ¹
Colombia	1995	19.0 ¹
Mexico	1996	27.0
Nicaragua	1997	30.2 ²
Paraguay	1995-1996	9.5
Peru	1997 P	30.9 ²
Uruguay	1997	10.0 ²
Eastern Europe		
Moldova, Rep.	1997	14
Western Europe and Other Developed Countries		
Australia	1996	8.0 ¹
Canada	1993	29.0
Netherlands	1989	20.8
New Zealand	1994	35.0
Norway	1989 P	18.0
Switzerland	1994-1996	12.6
United Kingdom	1993 P	30.0
United States	1998	22.1

¹ In current relationship

² In past 12 months

P indicates year of publication rather than year data was gathered

Sources: WHO database; Wistat, version 4; Johns Hopkins Population Information Program, www.jhuccp.org/pr/111edsum.stm.

among other things, to obtain reliable estimates of the prevalence and frequency of violence against women in both urban and rural locations. Participating countries include Brazil, Peru, Namibia, Thailand and Japan. UNIFEM intends to support further work on developing indicators relevant to the measurement of efforts and achievements in ending violence against women.

Many cultures have beliefs, norms and social institutions that legitimize and so perpetuate violence against women. Acts that would be punished if directed at an employee, a neighbour or an acquaintance often go unchallenged when directed by men at women, especially within the family. UNIFEM is working to help create a world free of violence against women, by supporting innovative programmes by women's organizations and governments around the world (see Box 5).

Women and HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is the fourth most common cause of death worldwide (WHO 1999). Women experience a double burden as a result of the spread of HIV/AIDS: a burden of suffering and a burden of caring for those who are suffering. The latest regional figures from UNAIDS show that 55 per cent of those living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa are women. In other regions women are in a minority among those living with HIV/AIDS – but they bear most of the burden of caring for men and children who are infected. Coercive relations with sexual partners is a major way in which women become infected with HIV/AIDS. Infection rates among pregnant women are also rising. Approximately 90 per cent of the 1 million children under age 15 living with HIV worldwide have acquired the disease from their mothers during pregnancy, at birth and through breast-feeding.

Table 4.6 shows the prevalence of HIV/AIDS by country, in 1997. More data is available for the regions where the epidemic is more long-standing,



Box 5: End Violence Against Women

"Imagine a world free from gender violence where homes are not shattered; where shame and silence are cast aside for new, joyful melodies; where women and men develop the capacity and the courage to live to their full potential." –Noeleen Heyzer, March 1999

In 1998, the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNIFEM drew together several initiatives to focus the world's attention on ending violence against women. First, it coordinated existing regional campaigns to end violence against women in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. These campaigns generated a public outpouring on an issue that had long been silenced, receiving widespread media attention and impelling political and religious leaders to come out publicly against religious and cultural practices harmful to women and girls.

On 8 March 1999, UNIFEM sponsored a global interagency videoconference, "A World Free of Violence Against Women," which linked together the UN General Assembly in New York with audiences in New Delhi, Mexico City, Nairobi, and the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. More than 2000 people filled the General Assembly and the other four sites, and viewing audiences from all over the world hooked up to the videoconference via satellite, the Internet and videoconference technologies. Government leaders joined with the courageous survivors of gender-based violence in focusing a global spotlight on what Secretary-General Kofi Annan called "the most shameful human rights violation."

In preparation for the videoconference, UNIFEM initiated an on-line discussion group, <end-violence>, to enable individuals and groups worldwide to talk to each other about their work to end the incidence and impact of violence against women and girls. Focusing on what works and what does not, the discussion group has taken on a life of its own; more than 1,300 participants have continued to exchange e-mail information, generating ideas and strategies to share with women in different parts of the world.

"This is the positive, human side of globalization...A woman from Papua New Guinea asks about working with male batterers, and an activist from Moscow answers her questions."

— Toronto Star, 6 February 1999

UNIFEM manages a Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women. As of August 2000, the fund had mobilized \$5.1 million, supporting 88 organizations in 54 countries.



Box 6: Addressing the Challenge of HIV/AIDS

UNIFEM is partnering with UNAIDS and UNFPA to devise new strategies to increase awareness of the gender dimensions of AIDS. The joint initiative, "Gender Focused Responses to Address the Challenges of HIV/AIDS," concentrates on strengthening the capacity of women's groups to address HIV/AIDS as a gender issue; increasing the knowledge base of UNIFEM and its partners about the concerns of women living with HIV/AIDS, and forging new partnerships between government, civil society, and the private sector to leverage support for women living with HIV/AIDS.

Workshops in three regions enabled participants to learn from each other about the concerns of women with HIV/AIDS in different parts of the world and the strategies to address them. Following the workshops, three core groups are focusing on human rights advocacy, information gathering and capacity building.

The human rights advocacy group encourages journalists to write stories about women living with HIV/AIDS, seeking to build an archive of articles recording the violation of human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. Lydia Cacho, a journalist with the Mexican news service CIMAC, attended a workshop in Senegal in October 1999. Since her return, she has written numerous newspaper articles on gender and HIV/AIDS in Africa and organized her own workshops on gender-focused journalism. She says: "After working for three years on gender and HIV/AIDS, I was burnt out and tired. I was re-charged after participating and [the workshop] stirred my desires to work on the issues."

The information group has focused on community-based research on the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS. Among their findings:

- in India, knowledge about the protective aspects of condom use became available to women only once they had become infected;
- in Senegal, women's lack of knowledge about sexuality and the transmission of disease is greater among housewives than among sex workers;
- in Zimbabwe, home-based care-givers seek information on how to cope with the disease rather than how to prevent it.

The capacity-building group is drawing from two ongoing initiatives in the field to develop a resource guide to empower women to negotiate safe sexual practices:

- a project on STD and HIV/AIDS prevention in Calcutta, which has successfully reduced the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate among sex workers through greater use of condoms, improved access to health care facilities and organizing into a union;
- a project to promote the female condom in Senegal in response to a woman-initiated demand for a means to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS.

United Nations/Roger Lemoine



and its prevalence is higher: Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Europe and Other Developed Countries. Data was not available for 1997 for the regions where the epidemic is of low maturity: Northern Africa, Western and Central Asia, and Eastern Europe. Areas of low maturity cannot afford complacency, however, since once the proportion of the adult population living with HIV/AIDS is above 1 per cent, the disease spreads very rapidly. In Asia, incidence has doubled since 1994. The steepest curve in rising infection rates in 1999 was in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, according to UNAIDS.

The epidemic is at its worst in Sub-Saharan Africa, where in 1999 more people died from HIV/AIDS than as a result of armed conflict. Statistics do not really reveal the agony:

Permit me to begin with a statement recently made by a woman living with HIV/AIDS in Africa. This woman who for eight months weathered bouts of diarrhea, fought herpes zoster, lived with a persistent cough, vomited most of what she ate and bore drenching night sweats and ulcers, cried out with firmness and commitment, "Let us stop pretending about the problem. The problem is real. I am a living example. There are thousands suffering out there. The disease is spreading like wildfire every day and night. So why all this pretense? The sooner we face reality as individuals and as a society the better for all of us."

—Madhu Bala Nath, New York, February 2000

Many agencies, including UNIFEM, are supporting programmes that respond to the gender dimensions of the epidemic, focusing on women's lack of knowledge of or control over their own bodies and the terms on which sexual activities take place (see Box 6). Strong prevention programmes can reduce the spread of the disease. For example, in Uganda and Thailand "the incidence of new infections, particularly in young populations, has declined by about one-third in response to intensive information and protection campaigns" (UNFPA 1999:10).

However, pressure to cut public expenditure makes it harder to finance programmes to prevent and to treat HIV/AIDS. And some measures taken to increase health service efficiency make it more difficult for women with HIV/AIDS to get access to drugs and treatments to palliate the disease. Community-based research by UNIFEM and other partners in Mexico found that although official policy provides free access to expensive anti-retroviral drugs for people living with AIDS, access is through market-based health insurance schemes

that cover only people in formal sector employment. This leaves out the majority of women, who are in informal employment.

The insurance scheme of last resort is the extended family, but under the onslaught of HIV/AIDS this is showing signs of vulnerability. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women widowed by HIV/AIDS cannot always count on the support of kin. In Asia, more and more women living with HIV/AIDS are living as single deserted women.

Unequal Share of Unpaid Care Work

In this report “no name” work is given a name: unpaid care work. Chapter 1 discussed how such work is defined and how it relates to unpaid work in family businesses and to paid work (whether inside or outside the home). Here the focus is on measurement through time-use surveys, which can reveal how much time men and women spend on unpaid care labour, and how this compares with the time spent on market-oriented work. Indicators of time spent in unpaid care labour are not yet included in the Wistat or any other global database. Currently national time-use studies are available for a limited number of countries, but many more countries are in the process of designing and implementing such surveys (see Box 7).

“Vietnamese women spend a lot of time on ‘no name’ work such as housework to take care of the family, care of the elderly and the handicapped and child care.”

— Lucira Lazo (1999)

Most available studies show that women spend much more time on unpaid care labour than do men, and this imbalance persists even when women have full-time paid jobs or full-time responsibilities for producing food for their families.

Information on time use in Western Europe and Other Developed Countries and Eastern Europe, in the late 1980s and early 1990s shows that women as a whole typically provide around 70 per cent of the time spent on unpaid care work within the family while men provide around 30 per cent (UN 1995a, table 4.8). The same pattern seems to prevail in several developing countries for which information is currently available (see Box 8, p. 102). The obligation to care for others puts care-givers at a disadvantage in the market economy. In developed countries with ageing populations, more and more of that care is for elderly people. One small US study found that people caring for elderly relatives sacrifice substantial wages and benefits by foregoing promotions, training and transfers and taking

Box 7: Progress in Measuring Unpaid Care Work

Since 1995, at least 24 developing countries have designed or undertaken national time-use surveys or have included time-use modules in household surveys, including:

- Africa: Benin, Chad, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa;
- Latin America and the Caribbean: Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua;
- Asia: China, Indonesia, Laos, India, Nepal, Oman, Palestine, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Viet Nam.

The Statistical Office of the European Commission, Eurostat, is coordinating a Europe-wide time-use survey involving 18 countries in Eastern and Western Europe. Among other developed countries, Japan conducts national time-use studies every five years; Australia conducted surveys in 1992 and 1997; Canada included three questions on unpaid work in the 1996 national census and has conducted time-use surveys at regular intervals since the early 1980s; and the United States is undertaking preliminary studies for a time-use survey.

Many more developing countries, including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Bangladesh, are interested in conducting time-use surveys. Support for the efforts of developing countries is being provided by the UN Statistical Division, the United Nations Development Programme Project to Promote Gender Equality in the Asia Pacific Region and the International Development Research Centre, Canada.

Sources: Guerrero 2000; UN 2000; Lazo 1999.



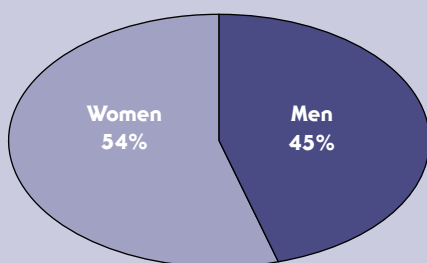
UNICEF/Carolyn Watson

Box 8: Time Spent in Unpaid Care Work

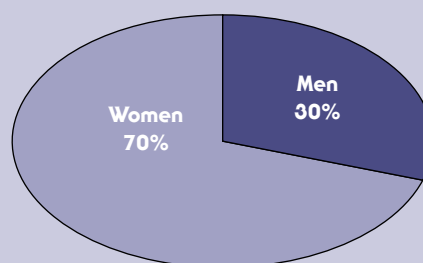
Mexico

In 1995, women spent on average 28.4 hours a week on unpaid work in the home, and 32.7 hours per week on employment outside the home. Men spent 11.9 hours a week on unpaid work in the home and 39.9 hours a week on employment outside the home. In addition, 90.5 per cent of economically active women also carried out unpaid work in the home, compared to only 62.4 per cent of economically active men.

Division of Total Work Time



Division of Time in Unpaid Work in the Home



Bangladesh

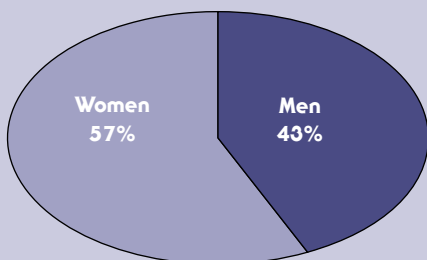
Paid employment of women in the manufacturing sector grew rapidly in Bangladesh in the 1980s, with the expansion of the garment industry. But women manufacturing workers still had responsibility for most of the unpaid care work within families.

Average Weekly Hours of Work of Urban Manufacturing Workers, 1990-1991

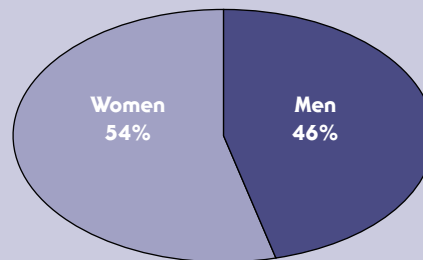
	Male		Female	
	Formal Sector Workers	Informal Sector Workers	Formal Sector Workers	Informal Sector Workers
Manufacturing Work	53	23	56	21
Unpaid Care Work	13	14	31	24
Total	66	37	87	44

The total working hours of women were longer than those of men in both the formal and informal sectors. Those working the longest hours were women in the formal sector.

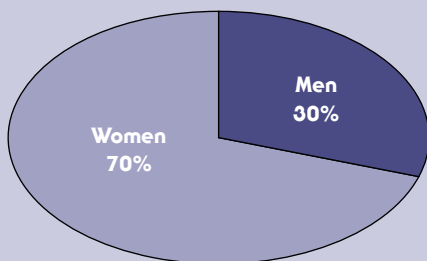
Division of Total Work (formal sector workers)



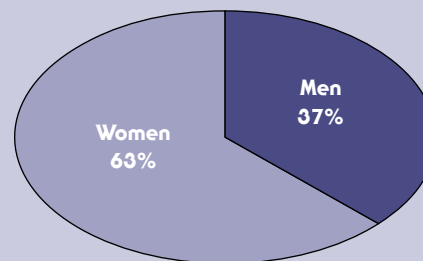
Division of Total Work (informal sector workers)



Division of Unpaid Care Work (formal sector workers)



Division of Unpaid Care Work (informal sector workers)



Sources: Mexico: UNIFEM/CONMUJER 1999:65; Bangladesh: Zohir 1998.

extended time away from their paid work. It was estimated that individuals in the study on average lost more than half a million dollars in lost wages, social security and pension benefits over their lifetimes (*New York Times*, 27 November 1999).

“Time is the one unit of exchange we all have in equal amounts, the one investment we all have to make, the one resource we cannot reproduce.”

— Marilyn Waring (1999)

Composite Indicators

In addition to looking at indicators of specific dimensions of women’s lives and the obstacles to women’s empowerment, it is possible to construct composite indicators that attempt to aggregate several indicators into a single index. The best-known composite indicators are the Human Development Index (HDI), the Gender Sensitive Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), used in UNDP’s Human Development Reports (see Box 9). These all draw attention to the fact that economic growth does not automatically translate into progress for people, and make clear that human development does not always translate into gender equality.

The GDI and GEM were introduced in 1995, and the 1999 Human Development Report published GDI for 143 countries and GEM for 102 countries. It is important to note that neither the GDI nor the GEM is a direct measure of gender inequality, because they include pointers both to the relative capabilities and relative exercise of economic and political power of women and men, and to the absolute capabilities and powers of women and men. This is in many ways a strength – progress for women is not a matter just of narrowing the gap between women and men, but also of an improvement in the level of the quality of life enjoyed by women and their communities and the level of resources over which they have command. An exclusive focus on gender gaps can divert attention from deteriorations in the general standard of living enjoyed by both men and women, which may outweigh any progress made in narrowing gender gaps. However, when a single index aims to reflect both relative and absolute dimensions of progress, it leads to complications in the construction and interpretation of the index.

The GDI was introduced to adjust the HDI for gender disparities so that a given level of achievement on the HDI indicators counts for less if it is based on different achievements for men and women. If there were no differences between men and women in life

expectancy, educational attainment and standard of living, the GDI would be the same as the HDI. Insofar as women enjoy fewer capabilities than men, the GDI is less than the HDI. It is constructed on the same principles as the HDI, but a female index and a male index are calculated separately for life expectancy, educational attainment and income per capita. The female index and the male index for each indicator are then combined in a weighted average, with the weights being chosen so as to penalize countries with wide gender disparities. The extent to which the GDI is less than the HDI depends upon the size of the gender gap for each component and the penalty factor applied to the gap.

An identical gender gap in income shares (e.g. women earning 20% and men 80% of earned income) will yield more than four times the gender penalty in a rich country such as Saudi Arabia than in a poor country such as Bangladesh. In most countries, the earned income gap accounts for more than 90 per cent of the gender penalty (Bardhan and Klasen 1999: 987).

Box 9: Composite Indices: HDI, GDI and GEM

HDI

The Human Development Index (HDI) measures the average achievement of a country in basic human capabilities. The HDI indicates whether people lead a long and healthy life, are educated and knowledgeable and enjoy a decent standard of living. The HDI examines the average condition of all people in a country; distributional inequalities for various groups of society have to be calculated separately.

GDI

The Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the HDI does, but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men. The methodology used imposes a penalty for inequality, such that the GDI falls when the achievement levels of both women and men in a country go down or when the disparity between their achievements increases. The greater the gender disparity in basic capabilities, the lower a country’s GDI compared with its HDI. The GDI is simply the HDI discounted, or adjusted downwards, for gender inequality.

GEM

The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) examines whether women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision-making. While the GDI focuses on expansion of basic human capabilities, the GEM is concerned with the use of those capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities of life.

Source: UNDP 1995.

Unfortunately, the measurement of the earned income gap is the most unreliable component of the GDI. It cannot be measured directly, so it is estimated on the basis of data on female non-agricultural wages as a percentage of male non-agricultural wages, and female and male shares of the economically active population. But it is subject to the same problems of data availability discussed earlier. For the majority of countries covered by the GDI, data on the gender wage gap is not available from the ILO. So the HDR assumes that the ratio is 75 per cent, and the female and male shares in earned income are estimated on this basis. Moreover, although male and female shares of the labour force are available for most countries, the female share tends to be underestimated, especially in poor agricultural countries where women's participation in the agricultural labour force is generally undercounted.

The Gender Empowerment Measure attempts to assess the comparative political and economic power of men and women, taking into account not only their relative power over the national "pie" but also the size of the pie itself. "Richer countries should rank higher on GEM on the basis of income alone. If they do not, this indicates the need for more progress in achieving gender equality" (UNDP 1995: 86).

This concern makes the measure more complicated than if the objective were simply to measure the relative power of men and women over the national pie, but this complexity addresses an important issue. Women may increase their power to make decisions about how to produce and consume the national pie – but if the national pie is itself very small, then women's increased power relative to men in their country does not give them much more power over real resources.

The GEM is a measure that aims to set the relative economic and political power of men and women in any particular country in the context of the scale of that country's resources, as measured by its GDP per capita. If women in a rich country and in a poor country have equal relative shares of economic and political power in relation to men in that country, the GEM will show the women in the rich country having greater power than the women in the poor country. This seems appropriate for a measure that is applied internationally. It sets women's empowerment in an international development context and relates gender equality to inequality between countries. But it means that a higher GEM cannot be interpreted in a straightforward way as an indication of the extent to which the country with the higher GEM has policies better able to provide gender equality, because the higher GEM also reflects the fact that the country is itself richer.

A simplified explanation of the way in which the GEM is constructed is shown in Box 10.



Aurora/Joanna Pinneo

Because the GEM takes into account purchasing power as well as the exercise of economic and political decision-making power, it is not appropriate simply to add up the different shares and divide by the number of components to get a composite index. That would be the equivalent of adding apples and pears. Thus the GEM follows the pattern of the HDI and the GDI: Step 1, the identification of components and indicators, is followed by Step 2, the construction of an index for each component, before Step 3, when the scores on each index are summed and divided by the number of components (implying an equal weight for each component index).

Like all composite indices, the GEM is open to criticism on the choice of components to include. Moreover, empowerment is a complicated idea and a single global quantitative index will be unable to capture many important dimensions of empowerment. The GEM is an average measure at the national level, designed for global comparisons. It is not designed to measure empowerment of particular groups of women in particular localities but to capture average differences between countries. It is particularly useful for cross-country analysis, such as that of the relation between women's empowerment and public expenditure.

Chart 4.7 shows that there is some tendency for a higher score on the Gender Empowerment Measure to be associated with a higher level of non-military government expenditure as a percentage of GNP. This may be because in societies in which women have more of the kind of power measured by the GEM, they press for more public services and income transfers from better off to poorer people; or because in societies where there is more provision of public services and income transfers from better off to poorer people, women are able to acquire more of the kind of power measured by the GEM. It is probably a mixture of the two. It would be interesting to explore this relationship comparing, say, with different measures of women's empowerment and more detailed measures of public provision, the amount of time women have to spend on getting fuel and water and preparing food with public expenditure on energy, water and transport services to households. But the data required to do this are not readily available.

Box 10: The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)**Step 1 Types of Power****Economic Power:**

Purchasing power

Decision-making power

Political Power:

Parliamentary decision-making

Indicator

Women's share of real GDP (PPS \$)

Women's share of administrative and management positions, and of professional and technical positions.

Women's share of seats in parliament

Step 2 Indices of Gender Gaps in Power**Economic Power:**

Purchasing power

Decision-making power

Combined Decision-making
Power Index**Political Power:**

Parliamentary decision-making

Gap between female and male proportional income-shares, weighted so as to penalize gender inequality and weighted by the level of real GDP per capita.

Gap between female and male proportional shares of administrative & management positions, weighted to penalize gender inequality. Gap between female & male proportional shares of professional & technical positions weighted to penalize gender inequality.

Simple average of administrative and management index and professional and technical index

Gap between female and male proportional shares of seats in parliament, weighted so as to penalize inequality

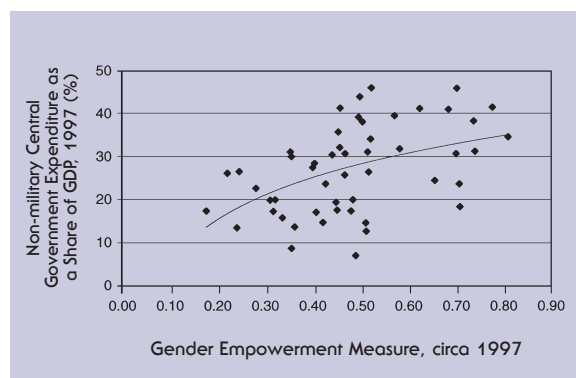
Step 3 Composite Index

GEM

Add together the three indices calculated in Step 2 and divide by 3.

"Quantified data are a crucial lever for any analysis of change".

— Devaki Jain and Samia Ahmad (1999)

Chart 4.7: GEM and Public Expenditure

Source: Calculated from data in the Human Development Report CD-ROM.

Women in India have adapted the idea behind the GEM to the circumstances in their country, constructing for each state three different composite indexes of women's empowerment, based on indicators of women's relative representation at different levels of the political system, relative exercise of the right to vote, relative literacy rate, relative life expectancy and relative income share (Jain and Ahmad 1999; Mehta 1996).

Improving Information on the Progress of Women

UNIFEM supports a number of initiatives to improve statistical information about women's lives, including the production of a set of statistical profiles of women and men in the countries in the Asia Pacific region and in Mexico, Colombia and Ecuador. It supports ongoing programmes to improve gender statistics and indicators in South and South East Asian and Pacific countries; Arab countries, Central America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, and East Africa.

Two particularly noteworthy programmes are the creation of a computerized system of sex-disaggregated social and economic indicators for Mexico (SISESIM) and the “engendering” of the Indian Census 2001. SISESIM is a system of indicators for women’s policy design, implementation and evaluation that covers education, health, work (market-oriented and unpaid care), political participation and housing. It includes disaggregations by age, level of education and place of residence, as well as by sex. The system was developed through a series of interactive workshops between producers and users of statistics. One outcome was an agreement to collect information on the ownership or tenancy of housing by sex in the National Time Use Survey. Before this, no national survey in Mexico included this information.

The “engendering” of the Indian Census comprises a series of activities to ensure that women’s work is more visible in the world’s largest regular census. The Indian Census of 1981 indicated that only 13 per cent of women were economically active – but other research showed that about 89 per cent of Indian women participated in informal employment in unregistered enterprises. The way the census was conducted clearly did not capture the full extent of women’s economic activity. UNIFEM built an alliance between key Indian officials and research institutes to press for changes in the conduct of the census, which resulted in a wide range of changes in 1991. Among other things, the questionnaire was modified to explicitly include casual or seasonal unpaid work in family farms and enterprises. Enumerators were encouraged to think about the wide variety of work that women do in family farms and enterprises and trained to ask detailed questions about such work. A public information campaign, including a theme song by a popular singer, portrayed the various roles of women workers in rural and urban settings. In addition, a series of workshops helped senior government officials to understand the ways in which the new census data could be used in their ministries. Building upon this experience, UNIFEM is supporting further improvements in the conduct of the 2001 census, including further training for enumerators and wider public information efforts.

UNIFEM is also a partner in Women Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), an international network that is working to improve statistics on women’s informal sector employment in accord with priorities developed by grass-roots organizations. These include the inclusion of street vendors and home-based workers in surveys and the compilation of statistics on contribution of the informal sector to GNP, disaggregated by sex.

At the national level, technical assistance is being provided to Central Statistical Offices of Kenya and India. At the international level, WIEGO is represented in the Expert Group on Informal Statistics, the International Conference of Labour Statisticians and a variety of other UN expert groups and has influenced the content of the new ILO manual on informal sector surveys. As improved statistics become available, they are used in policy advocacy by HomeNet, SEWA (India), SEWU (South Africa) and the International Alliance of Street Vendors. These organizations find that statistics that give women greater visibility also give them greater voice.

Priorities for New Information

Different ways of assessing women’s progress are feasible and appropriate at local, national, regional and global levels. This report has drawn upon UN databases to assess global progress in meeting objectives agreed at UN conferences. A great deal of the information that would be useful in such an assessment is not available in those databases. The Beijing conference stressed the importance of more information on women’s unpaid work for their families and communities – and many more countries are now in the process of collecting this through time-use surveys. Priorities for further sex-disaggregated data include:

- gender poverty ratios to track the feminization of poverty;
- business ownership by sex of owner and size of business;
- job quality, by proportion of women and men in paid employment with jobs that have social protection rights attached to them;
- income inequality among women;
- incidence of violence against women.

“Figures can really help change things.”

— Renana Jhabwala, SEWA, Ottawa, 1999

Information on the status of women will not by itself improve their lives. Strategies must be agreed for using all available data to hold governments, corporations and international bodies accountable for the impact of their policies on women.