innovations in measuring and monitoring

The achievement of the MDGs will require broad social mobilization, including not only governments and development agencies but also civil society. Women’s organizations will need to be vigilant in international and national monitoring of achievements. National level monitoring will be particularly important in assessing progress towards the achievement of Goal 3 and the gender dimensions of all other goals. As we have shown in this report, the selected MDG indicators for Goal 3 do not address many of the dimensions of women’s disadvantage and are not equally relevant to all countries. Thus, the values of the Millennium Declaration will need to be translated into additional country-specific targets and indicators related to the women of that country. Numerous UN agencies have been providing support to countries to identify, construct and use such indicators. UNIFEM, for instance, has worked to strengthen the capacity of national statistical offices and of women’s organizations to help them use indicators to monitor the fulfilment of commitments and to bring about positive change.

One challenge is to ‘liberate’ data from the files of national statistical offices. Most national statistical offices have much more data than they make public. As Patricia Alexander, Regional Adviser on Poverty and Statistics for the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has noted, “Now that we are in the computer age, not only is data gathered on forms that record the sex of every respondent, any educated researcher can use these data to link the ‘sex’ variable to any element in the survey.”
Our struggle now is to let advocates know that the data really are there— and to convince governments to make the data available.

Another challenge is to train more people to be effective users of gender–sensitive indicators in policy advocacy and in monitoring commitments. As Ela Bhatt, the activist and founder of the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) in India, has said ‘Statistics in the hands of activists have power.’ UNIFEM is working with ESCAP to build this capacity in a number of Asian countries by developing teams of trainers to teams will consist of an economist, a statistician from the national statistical office and a gender specialist who will participate in workshops geared to helping them identify issues relevant to women in their country. They will use hands-on exercises based on data they have collected for their country, and then work within their country to build skills in the use of indicators and statistics among national women’s machineries, women’s NGOs and government agencies. Currently, however, greater capacity requires greater resources, which is the responsibility of the entire international community, especially the wealthy nations.

**IMPROVING NATIONAL STATISTICS**

There are many ways to use statistics to construct indicators of progress. But first the statistics must be collected and made available. UNIFEM has for many years provided technical advice and helped develop the availability of sex–disaggregated statistics at the country and regional level. At the country level, the basis for all national statistics is the census. While in theory this registers the activities of each individual, the way it is carried out in many cases makes women’s activities less visible than men’s. Many women are not considered part of the ‘economically active’ population if they work in the household or fields. Women may also be asked to name their primary or secondary occupation, rather than to indicate the secondary occupation, rather than to indicate the regional and national agencies as well as through civil society groups that create and monitor their own indicators.

**CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES**

Civil society groups are creating indicators that can be used not only to enhance the picture provided by government statistics but also to prod governments to meet their commitments to women.

Women’s organizations in many countries in Latin America are working to construct measures of how far their governments have fulfilled the commitments the governments have made to women. With technical support from FLACSO (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales), and financial support from UNIFEM, Indices of Fulfilled Commitments have been constructed in Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay. Work on an Index is proceeding in Argentina, Colombia and Peru and is in the planning stages in Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela.

Three thematic areas have been chosen for each country’s index:

- Citizen participation and access to power
- Economic autonomy and employment
- Women’s health and reproductive rights

Within each theme, the commitments made by governments at UN conferences and in their national plans of action relating to women are translated into quantitative targets, and indicators of progress towards them are identified. The degree of fulfilment of each target is measured. Then the women involved in the initiative agree on how to weight the individual components to create an index for the percentage of the target achieved in recent years for each thematic area as well as for the three themes combined. (For more details of the methods used to produce the figures, see FLACSO, 2001/2003). The strength of this method is that it reflects the priorities of women’s organizations in each country. They decide which commitments to prioritize, how to translate these into targets and how to measure progress towards the targets.

Results for Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay are shown in Table 13. Care must be taken in interpreting this data because the women in each country may have made different choices about how to construct their index. However, we can conclude from the table that in 1998 none of the four governments had yet fulfilled all the commitments of greatest priority to the women in those countries. The Governments of Chile and Paraguay were doing better than those of Ecuador and Uruguay in fulfilling commitments related to women’s health and reproductive rights.

Women are now beginning to use the Indices of Fulfilled Commitments to lobby for change. In Chile, the Grupo Iniciativa Mujeres brought the results of their work to the attention of women leaders, presented them to women in parliament and discussed them with ministers and officials. They also mounted a publicity campaign in the press. Their message was that progress was too slow overall and that at current rates, it would be 2036 before all the goals were achieved. As a result of their efforts some changes were made in programmes for women:

- Legal changes were made to allow vasectomy to be used as a sterilization method.

**CREATING ALTERNATIVE INDICATORS AND INDICES**

When indicators are available, they need to be put to use, documenting progress—or the lack of it—in improving women’s lives. Many indicators are under way in this area, through international, regional and national agencies as well as through civil society groups that create and monitor their own indicators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Thematic Areas</th>
<th>Citizen Participation and Access to Power</th>
<th>Economic Autonomy and Employment</th>
<th>Women’s Health and Reproductive Rights</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>1995 20.78</td>
<td>80.71</td>
<td>66.63</td>
<td>61.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998 25.00</td>
<td>75.18</td>
<td>69.12</td>
<td>61.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>1995 9.37</td>
<td>75.39</td>
<td>49.49</td>
<td>49.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998 15.78</td>
<td>73.32</td>
<td>48.68</td>
<td>50.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>1995 11.27</td>
<td>72.70</td>
<td>58.20</td>
<td>52.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998 35.65</td>
<td>69.52</td>
<td>67.77</td>
<td>60.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>1995 8.13</td>
<td>71.20</td>
<td>21.29</td>
<td>38.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998 13.94</td>
<td>72.19</td>
<td>44.66</td>
<td>49.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) 2003, Index of Fulfilled Commitments (forthcoming), Santiago, Chile.
Adapted from Social Watch 2002

tance of statistics for political activism: “Women tell me that statistics can be really interesting. Our experience shows that indicators really can help to bring about change for women.”

Social Watch is a larger civil society group in Latin America that has been producing innovative indicators to monitor women’s progress. Based at the Instituto del Tercer Mundo in Uruguay, and building on an international network of citizens’ groups in over 50 countries, Social Watch has for several years been producing reports on social progress, including women’s, charting life expectancy, reduction in illiteracy and net enrolment of girls in primary school. In 2002 a new chart was introduced focusing on gender gaps rather than absolute levels of women’s capacities and opportunities. The indicators chosen were the female to male ratio in youth illiteracy rates, unemployment rates and primary school enrolment rates. The choice does not appear to have been directly linked to monitoring the MDGs. Social Watch provides a country by country chart and also a global summary table, the results of which are shown in Table 14.

The table shows that, in the case of illiteracy, for example, 93.9 per cent of the 87 countries for which data was available experienced a reduction in the gender gap, meaning that women approached parity with men, while the gap increased in 13.5 per cent of countries. In all three areas, the gender gap has decreased in more countries than it has increased. Unfortunately there is no discussion of the extent to which the narrowing of gaps represents a true improvement of women’s situation or merely an equalization of the starting levels. In the case of illiteracy, for example, it is difficult to compare the figures compiled in this report with Social Watch’s figures to see if women’s situation has improved, because Social Watch tracks illiteracy and we track literacy. However, if one examines the components of each Index according to priority areas agreed upon by various civil society groups, it becomes apparent that the Gender Status Index, for example, does not refer to the achievement of gender equality, but to the percentage of population with access to health services and the extent to which the scores represent equality in deprivation or equality in prosperity, unless the underlying tables of indicators are also published. The scoreboard does not appear to have been linked to monitoring the MDGs.

There are many other examples of government offices helping to create new indicators that will broaden the knowledge of women’s status. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNIFEM recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Kenyan Government to support the creation and dissemination of data and statistical information for development. In Central America and Mexico UNIFEM has supported the creation of a national statistical system (SISESIM) that monitors the implementation of national programmes for equal opportunities and the advancement of women. In Mexico the SISESIM data comparing school drop-out rates and completion of studies by boys and girls showed that girls were dropping out at a higher rate than boys. It led to the recognition that poor families needed extra assistance to keep girls in school. As a result PROGRESA, a government anti-poverty programme, now provides larger schooling grants for girls than for boys.

UNIFEM has also been championing time use surveys as a means of collecting expanded data about women’s work. Time use, unlike share of employment, gives a more complete picture of women’s work. It will signal an increase in gender equality. If the score on the Index rises, it will signal an increase in gender equality. However, it will not be possible to see what factors are responsible for high and low scores, nor the extent to which the scores represent equality in deprivation or equality in prosperity.

NEW REGIONAL AND NATIONAL INDICATORS AND INDICES

There are several important ongoing efforts to create new databases in various regions. In Africa, the UN Economic Commission for Africa is planning a new set of indicators, the Gender Status Index and an African Women’s Progress Scoreboard, both of which will be published in the Women’s Report in 2003. These will contain data collected directly from the national statistical offices of African countries, and will thus be able to make use of a wider range of data than is generally supplied by UN agencies. The Gender Status Index will combine about 20 indicators of gender gaps in social, economic and political power, giving each equal weighting, and thus implicitly judging that all of the gender gaps measured are of equal importance. In this respect the Index is different from the Indices of Fullfilled Commitments being developed in Latin America, which give different weighting to the components of each Index according to priority areas agreed upon by various civil society groups. The African Gender Status Index is also different in that it does not refer to the achievement of particular goals. Instead, it will have some similarities to the Gender Sensitive Human Development Index in the Human Development Reports. Like those, its usefulness will come from comparing African countries both at one point in time and over time. As measured by the Index, the country with the highest score will be the one with the greatest gender equality. If the score on the Index rises, it will signal an increase in gender equality. However, it will not be possible to see what factors are responsible for high and low scores, nor the extent to which the scores represent equality in deprivation or equality in prosperity, unless the underlying tables of indicators are also published. The scoreboard, which will monitor progress towards improvements in law, policies and budget allocations, will be constructed with input from NGOs.

Another region where time use studies are relevant is sub-Saharan Africa, where they can reveal some of the hidden costs of HIV/AIDS. UNIFEM, in collaboration with the Tropical Institute of Community Health and Development (TICH) in Kenya, has just concluded the first phase of a multicountry participatory research project on the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS care policies and practices in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. The study established that women carry the heavier burden of unpaid and paid care.

Also in East Africa UNIFEM is sponsoring innovative district level surveys such as the ‘gender and household food economy assessment’ that was conducted in the Hiran region of Somalia. The survey collected sex-disaggregated data from households on income, priority expenditures, coping strategies and access to and control over resources. It showed that although women are the main actors in production and marketing, they do not have full control over their income. Indeed, about 10 per cent of their income goes towards their male partners’ daily allowance for khat (an addictive substance used in many parts of the Horn of Africa). The study contributed to advocacy work within the Food Security Network for Somalia, which began targeting women in food security and livelihood programmes. The Network has also decided to use the survey as a prototype for its future work. The findings have also been used to inform the modified UN Joint Action Recovery Programme for Somalia.

Statistics are also an important part of the effort to end violence against women. They provide essen-

Table 14: Changes in Gender Gaps, 1990-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Illiteracy (15-24 Years)</th>
<th>Unemployment</th>
<th>Primary School Enrolment (Gross)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Countries</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deterioration</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>Deterioration 13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>Improvement 38.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
challenges and opportunities for gender equality in Latin America.

In this context, ECLAC has produced a set of gender-sensitive indicators, published in the July 2002 edition of the Demographic Bulletin. The section on gender and poverty, with a high priority, is particularly noteworthy. Currently, there is no international database that allows us to monitor the extent of women’s poverty, and the degree to which women are poorer than men. The MDG indicators for Goal 1, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, are not designed in a gender-sensitive way. The ECLAC indicators are thus innovative in providing gender-sensitive information on a systematic basis for the whole region. ECLAC also goes beyond disaggregating sex of household head to develop new indicators of the kind called for in Progress of World’s Women 2000.

For example, in selected countries of Latin America, the indicators assess the proportions of males and females in households below the national poverty line and the number of females in households below the poverty line for every 100 males below that line. The key results are presented in Table 15. The proportion of females below the poverty line is higher than that of males in the majority of cases (taking urban and rural as separate cases). However, in about half the cases where the proportion in poverty is higher for women, men’s proportion is not significantly lower.

In both rural and female poverty incidence between 1983 and 1993, women remained disproportionately poor (see Table 16). There is much about women’s poverty that is not captured by such statistics. Poor women and girls are unable to survive on their own. They may have to seek shelter with relatives in households living above the poverty line. They may be working as live-in servants in households that are above the poverty line. If they have little or no income of their own, or work as live-in servants, their lives may lack dignity, autonomy and security, even though they have enough to eat and adequate shelter. They may be particularly vulnerable to violence. The next goal for those developing statistics and indicators will be to develop ones that fully capture this.

For example, the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and Statistics Canada are coordinating the International Violence Against Women Survey, which will utilize a standard questionnaire and rely largely on the network and infrastructure of the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) that is used in more than 70 countries around the world. The World Health Organization maintains a database on intimate partner violence and violence against women. It has just completed one groundbreaking study, the World Report on Violence and Health, and in the midst of a multi-country study on violence against women.

ECLAC has also been a leader in developing statistical models and indicators that can be compared across regions. With support from UNIFEM, it is currently working on a Gender Statistics and Indicators model to measure the incidence and evolution of violence against women. Results will be published in the mid-1998.

In the Commonwealth of Independent States, the UNIFEM regional office is currently conducting a study of women aged 15 years and older, and document various social and economic factors such as age, economic participation, family structure of the household, education level and area of residence. The hope is that the experience — and expectation — is that all national institutes of statistics will participate in generating information. In the Commonwealth of Independent States, the UNIFEM regional office is supporting a nine-country survey on violence against women.

In sum, data on gender inequalities continue to be a major challenge for policymakers. Women and girls living in both rural and urban areas. Although there is a commonly held belief that women often comprise up to 70 per cent of those living below the poverty line, this does not hold true for Latin America. If it did, there would be more than 200 females and 100 males below the poverty line. The highest figure recorded in Table 15 is 115 in rural Dominican Republic.

The World Bank has recently released an analysis of women’s equality and their participation in the labor market in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has similar findings to Table 15. Challenges and Opportunities for Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean (Ruiz Abril 2003) shows that “in spite of significant progress over the past 20 years, gender inequalities continue to be a major obstacle for the full development of the countries in the region.” According to Mar a Valeria Pe a, the leader of the World Bank’s Gender Unit for the region.

The study showed that even though women’s participation in the formal economy continues to increase, their share remains much lower than men’s and they earn less than men. The situation is particularly difficult for women in rural areas, who are among the poorest and must cope with a high number of dependents, high fertility rates and lack of access to land. Landlessness in fact is on the increase in several countries, such as Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua according to the Rural Household Survey. Mexico remains one of the countries with the biggest gender gap in land ownership. Women represent only 21 per cent of the property owners under land reform.