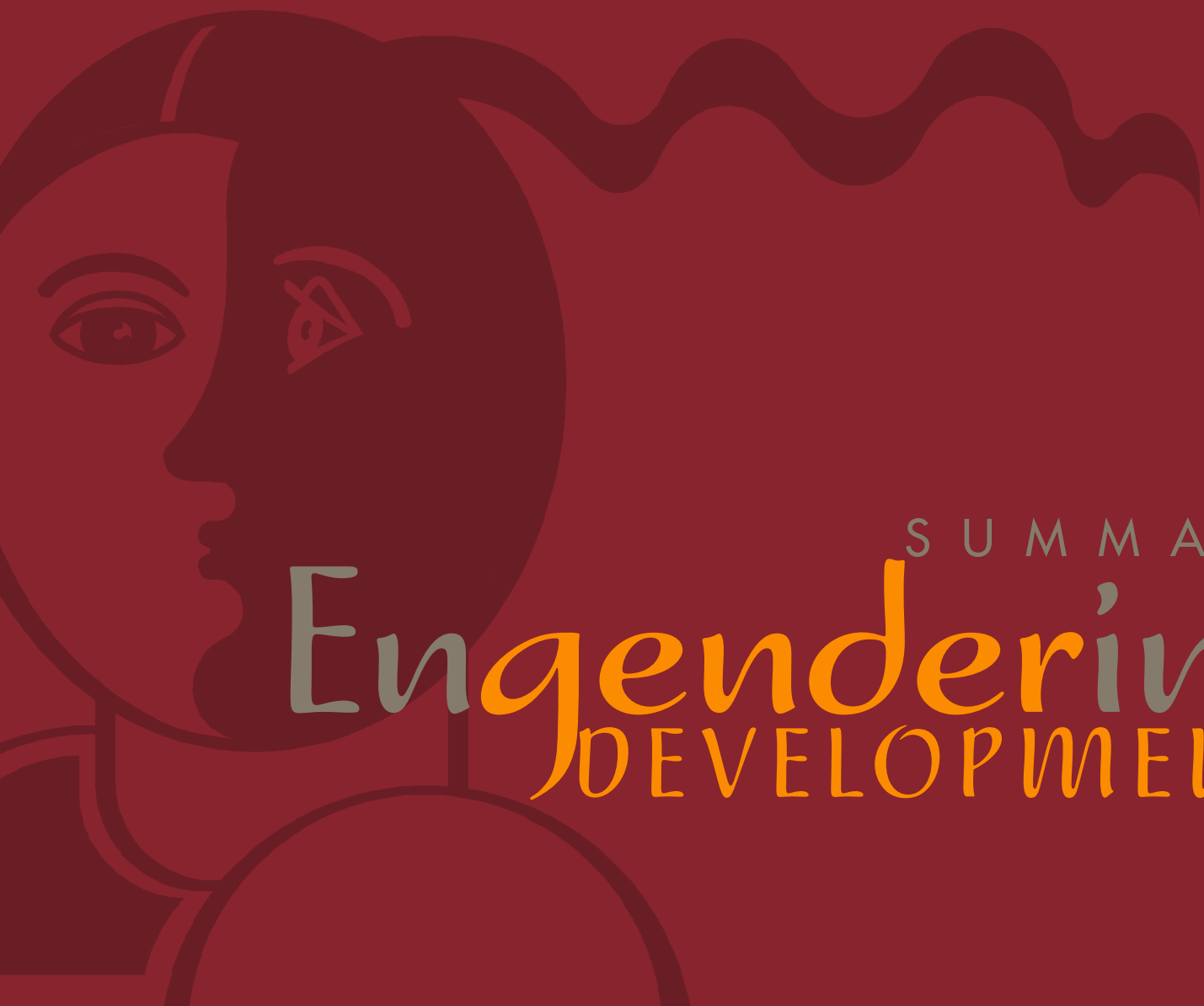




A WORLD BANK POLICY RESEARCH REPORT



S U M M A R Y

# Engendering DEVELOPMENT

*Through Gender Equality in  
Rights, Resources, and Voice*

ANNUAL MEETINGS, PRAGUE 2000

A World Bank Policy Research Report

# Engendering Development

*Through Gender Equality in Rights,  
Resources, and Voice*

SUMMARY

The World Bank  
Washington, D.C.

## **A Note to the Reader**

This booklet contains the summary of *Engendering Development—Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice* presented at the 2000 International Monetary Fund/World Bank Group Annual Meetings in Prague, Czech Republic. It also includes the table of contents for the text of the book.

The full-length report will be published by Oxford University Press for the World Bank. To order copies, please use the form provided at the back of this booklet.

For more information on the report as well as to access the report's Working Paper series, please visit our web site at: [www.worldbank.org/gender/prr](http://www.worldbank.org/gender/prr).

© 2000 The International Bank for Reconstruction  
and Development/THE WORLD BANK  
1818 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20433

All rights reserved  
Manufactured in the United States of America  
September 2000

*Cover credits: Design, Joyce C. Petruzzelli and PRR Report Team (The World Bank);  
Figure Design, Tilly Northedge (Grundy & Northedge, London)*

# The Report Team

The principal authors of this Policy Research Report are Elizabeth M. King and Andrew D. Mason. Ananya Basu, Tai Lui Tan, Claudio E. Montenegro and Lihong Wang compiled and analyzed data, prepared tables and graphs, wrote many of the boxes and appendices, and carried out background research. Branko Jovanovic, Cristina Estrada and Owen Haaga provided additional research assistance. Bruce Ross-Larson helped us in organizing the chapters. The report was produced under the direction of Karen O. Mason and Lyn Squire.

The administrative support team was led by Jane Sweeney and Anna Marie Marañon with help from Polly Means and Dawn Ballantyne. Several others within the Development Research Group and the Gender and Development Group provided support: Susan Razzaz assisted with the electronic discussion of the draft; Kayoko Shibata and Qinghua Zhao gave technical assistance; and Liliana Longo and Patricia Sader gave generous help in monitoring our budget and contracts.

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions are those of the report team and should not be attributed to the World Bank, its Board of Directors, or any of its member countries.

# Summary

**D**espite considerable advances in gender equality in recent decades, manifestations of gender discrimination remain pervasive in many dimensions of life—worldwide. The nature and extent of the discrimination vary considerably across countries and regions. But the patterns are striking. In no region of the developing world are women equal to men in legal, social, and economic rights. Gender gaps are widespread in access to and control of resources, in economic opportunities, in power and political voice. Women and girls bear the largest and most direct costs of these inequalities—but the costs cut more broadly across society, ultimately harming everyone.

For these reasons, gender equality is a core development issue—a development objective in its own right, as well as a factor in strengthening countries’ abilities to grow, to reduce poverty, and to govern effectively. Promoting gender equality is thus an important part of a development strategy that seeks to enable *all people*—women and men alike—to escape poverty and improve their standards of living.

Economic development opens many avenues for increasing gender equality in the long run. A considerable body of evidence around the world supports this assertion. But growth alone will not deliver the desired results. Also needed are an institutional environment that provides equal rights and opportunities for women and men, and policy measures that address persistent inequalities. The analysis in this report argues for a three-part strategy for promoting gender equality:

- *Reform institutions to establish equal rights and opportunities for women and men.* Reforming legal and economic institutions is necessary to establish a foundation of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men. Because the law in many countries continues to give unequal rights to women and men, legal reforms are needed, particularly in family law, land rights, employment, and protection against violence.
- *Foster economic development to strengthen incentives for more equal resources.* Rising income and falling poverty levels tend to reduce gender disparities in education, health, and nutrition, while development that increases productivity and creates new job opportunities often reduces gender inequalities in employment. Investments in basic water, energy, and transportation infrastructure that accompany development help reduce gender disparities in workloads.

- *Take active measures to redress persistent disparities in command of resources and political voice.* Because institutional reforms and economic development may not be sufficient—or forthcoming—active measures are needed to redress persistent gender disparities in the short to medium term.

## **Gender equality—in rights, resources, and voice**

*Gender* refers to socially constructed roles and socially learned behaviors and expectations associated with females and males. Women and men are different biologically—but all cultures interpret and elaborate their innate biological differences into a set of social expectations about what behaviors and activities are appropriate, and what rights, resources, and power they possess. While these expectations vary considerably among societies, there are also some striking similarities. For example, nearly all cultures place the primary responsibility for the care of infants and young children with women and girls.

Like race, ethnicity, and class, gender is a social category that in large measure establishes one's life chances, shaping one's participation in society and in the economy. While some societies do not experience racial or ethnic divides, all societies experience gender asymmetries—differences and disparities—to varying degrees. Often, these asymmetries take time to change, but they are far from static. In fact, they can at times change quite rapidly in response to policy and changing socioeconomic conditions.

The term *gender equality* has been defined in a variety of ways in the context of development. In this report we define gender equality in terms of equality under the law, equality of opportunity (including in access to human capital and other productive resources that enable opportunity and equality of rewards for work), and equality of “voice” (the ability to influence and contribute to the development process). We stop short of defining gender equality as equality of outcomes for two reasons—because different cultures and societies can follow different paths in their pursuit of gender equality, and because an intrinsic aspect of equality is that women and men are free to choose similar or different roles and similar or different outcomes in accordance with their preferences and goals.

Measuring and assessing the many dimensions of gender inequality are tricky and difficult, and the lack of gender-differentiated data and analyses in several important aspects of gender equality is a real obstacle. The report uses a variety of types of data and analyses to present and discuss the issues related to gender inequality across the developing world. Since empirical evidence is richer and more available for more developed countries than for less developed countries, the report also reviews the experience of industrialized countries. The report presents a combination of micro and country case evidence, along with cross-country data, and reviews empirical work from a number of social science disciplines.

## **Despite progress, gender disparities continue in all countries**

The last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw great improvement in the absolute status of women and in gender equality in most developing countries.

- With few exceptions, female education levels improved considerably. The primary enrollment rates of girls about doubled in the Middle East, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa, rising considerably faster than boys' enrollment rates. This substantially reduced large gender gaps in schooling.
- In the past half century, women's life expectancy increased by 15–20 years in developing countries. With greater investments in girls and women and better access to health care, the expected biological pattern in female and male longevity has emerged in all developing regions; for the first time, in the 1990s, women in South Asia are living longer than men, on average.
- More women have joined the labor force. Since 1970 women's labor force participation has risen on average by 15 percentage points in Latin America and East Asia. This growth was larger than for men, thus narrowing the gender gap in employment. Gender gaps in wages have also narrowed.

Despite the progress, significant gender inequalities in rights, resources, and voice persist in all developing countries—and in many areas the progress has been slow and uneven. Moreover, rapid socioeconomic changes in some countries have brought setbacks, jeopardizing hard-won gains.

### ***Rights***

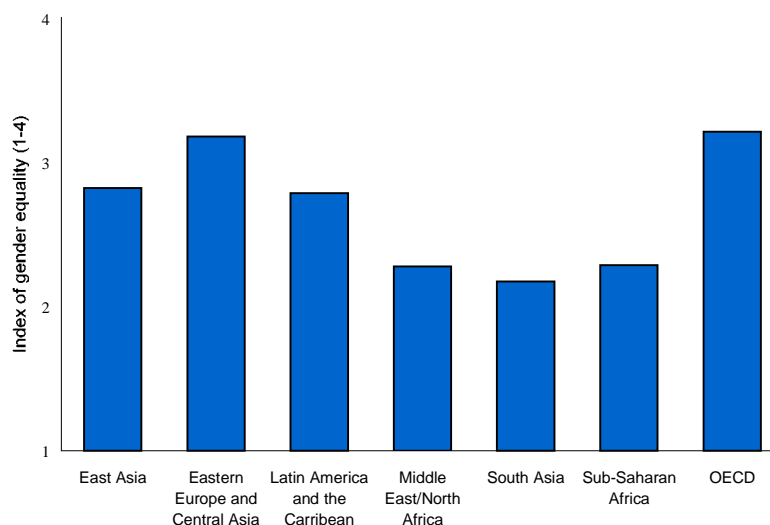
In no region do women and men have equal social, economic, and legal rights (Figure 1). In a number of countries women still lack independent rights to own land, manage property, conduct business, or even travel without their husbands' consent. In much of Sub-Saharan Africa, women obtain land rights chiefly through their husbands as long as the marriage endures, and they lose those rights when they are divorced or widowed. Gender disparities in rights constrain the sets of choices available to women in many aspects of life—often profoundly limiting their ability to participate in or benefit from development.

### ***Resources***

Women continue to have systematically poorer command over a range of productive resources, including education, land, information, and financial resources. In South Asia, women have only about half as many years of schooling as men, on average, and girls' enrollment rates at the secondary level are still only two-thirds of boys'. When women can own land, they generally command smaller landholdings than do men. And in most developing regions, female-run enterprises tend to be undercapitalized, having poorer access to machinery, fertilizer, extension information, and credit than male-run enterprises. Such disparities, whether in

education or other productive resources, hurt women's ability to participate in development and to contribute to higher living standards for their families. Those disparities also translate into greater risk and vulnerability in the face of personal or family crises, in old age, and during economic shocks.

**Figure 1 Gender Inequalities in Basic Rights Persist in All Regions**



*Source:* Rights data from Humana 1992; population data from World Bank, *World Development Indicators* 1999. See endnote 1 for additional details.

Despite recent increases in women's educational attainment, women continue to earn less than men in the labor market—even when they have the same education and years of work experience as men. Women are often limited to certain occupations in developing countries and are largely excluded from management positions in the formal sector. In industrial countries, women in the wage sector earn an average of 77 percent of what men earn; in developing countries, 73 percent. And only about one-fifth of the wage gap can be explained by gender differences in education, work experience, or job characteristics.

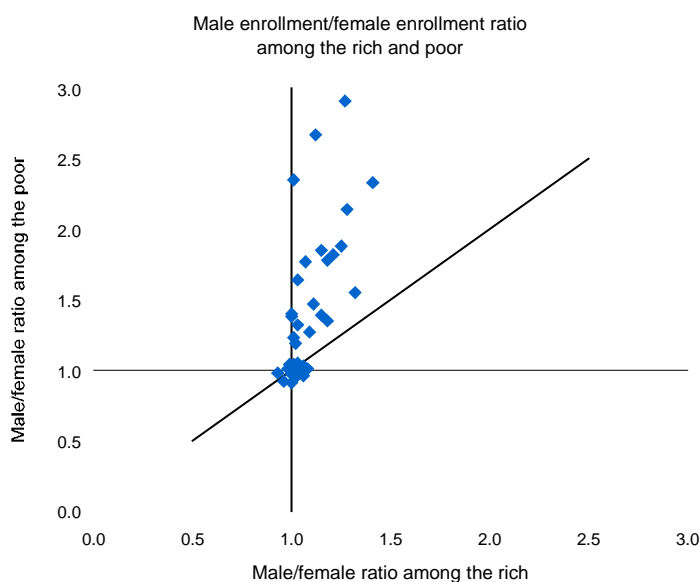
### ***Voice***

Limited access to resources and weaker ability to generate incomes—whether in self-employed activities or in wage employment—constrain women's power to influence resource allocation and investment decisions within the home. Unequal rights and poor socioeconomic status relative to men also limit their ability to influence decisions in their communities and at the national level. Women remain vastly underrepresented in national and local assemblies, accounting for less than 10 percent of the seats in parliament, on average (except in East Asia where the figure is 18-19 percent). And in no developing region do women hold more than 8 percent of ministerial positions. Moreover, progress has been negligible in most regions since the 1970s. And in Eastern Europe, female representation has fallen from about 25 to 7 percent since the beginning of economic and political transition there.

## Gender disparities tend to be greatest among the poor

Gender disparities in education and health are often greatest among the poor. A recent study of boys' and girls' school enrollments in 41 countries indicates that, within countries, gender disparities in school enrollment rates are commonly greater among the poor than among the non-poor (Figure 2). Similar patterns across poor and non-poor households are seen with respect to boys' and girls' mortality rates for children under age 5.

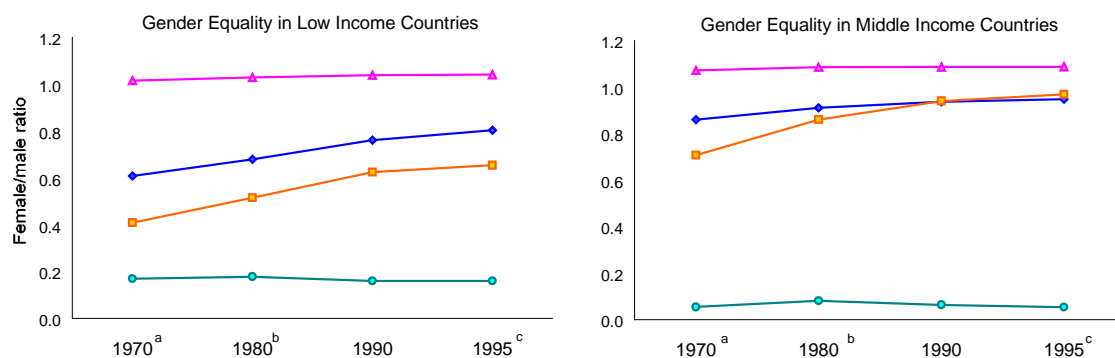
**Figure 2 Gender Disparities Tend to Be Greater Among the Poor Than the Non-Poor**



Source: Filmer 1999.

Similar patterns emerge also when comparing poor and non-poor countries. While gender equality in education and health has improved noticeably over the past 30 years in today's low-income countries, disparities between females and males in school enrollments are still greater in those countries than in middle-income and high-income countries (Figure 3). And despite the links between economic development and gender equality, women's representation in parliaments remains minimal. A few low-income countries, such as China and Uganda, have made special efforts to open parliamentary seats to women. They have achieved levels of female representation that are higher even than in high-income countries, demonstrating the potential impact of a social mandate for gender equality.

It is important to note that these indicators are only a few measurable markers of gender equality. More systematic information is needed on other dimensions—from control of physical and financial assets to autonomy—to better understand how much has been accomplished and how far there is to go.

**Figure 3 Gender Disparities Have Tended to Decline Over Time, But Remain Largest in**


Note: A value of 1.0 indicates equal outcomes for females and males. See endnote 2 for additional details.  
 Source: Parliament data from United Nations, *Women's Indicators and Statistics Database 1998*; World Bank,

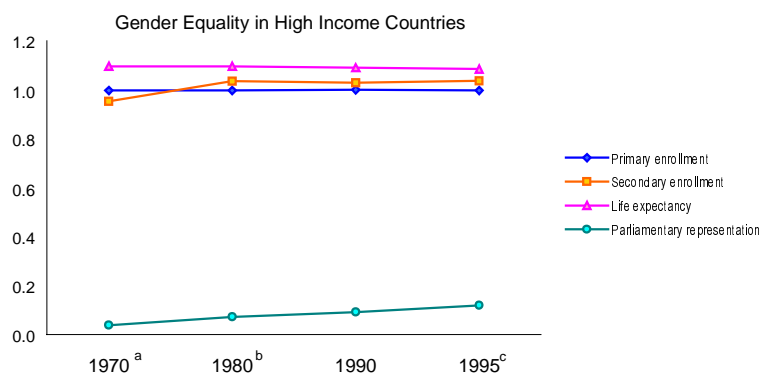
## Gender inequalities harm well-being, hinder development

### *Well-being*

Foremost among the costs of gender inequality is its toll on human lives and the quality of those lives. Identifying and measuring the full extent of these costs are difficult—but a wealth of evidence from countries around the world demonstrates that societies with large, persistent gender inequalities pay the price of more poverty, malnutrition, illness, and other deprivations.

- Perhaps the most dramatic example involves excessively high female mortality in South Asia and China. The reasons? Social norms that result in “son preference,” plus China’s one-child policy, have led to child mortality rates that are higher for girls than for boys. Some estimates indicate that there are 60 to 100 million fewer women alive today than there would be in the absence of gender discrimination.
- Evidence consistently shows that young children are disadvantaged directly by their mothers’ illiteracy and lack of schooling. Lack of schooling translates into poor quality of care for children, which translates into higher infant and child mortality and malnutrition. Mothers with more education are more likely to adopt appropriate health-promoting behaviors, such as having young children immunized (Figure 4). These relationships hold even after accounting for household income and other factors that improve health outcomes.
- As with mothers’ schooling, increases in household income are associated with higher child survival rates and better nutrition. But additional incomes in the hands of women within the household tend to have a larger positive impact than does additional income in the hands of men, as studies of Bangladesh, Brazil, and Côte d’Ivoire suggest. Unfortunately, rigid social norms about the appropriate gender division of labor and limited paid employment for women restrict women’s ability to earn income.

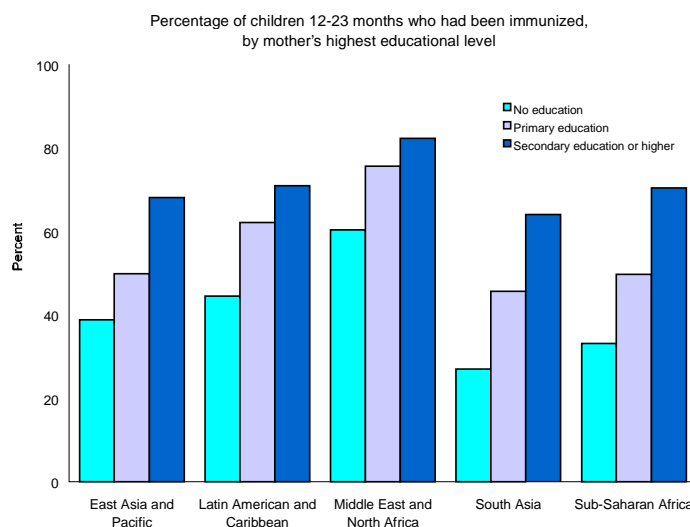
## Low-Income Countries—Except in Political Participation



*World Development Indicators 1999.*

- Cross-country data from 72 countries indicate that gender inequalities in schooling and urban jobs accelerate the growth of HIV infection rates (Figure 5). The AIDS epidemic will spread rapidly over the next decade—until up to one in four women and one in five men become HIV infected, already the case in several countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Figure 4 Child Immunization Rises with Mother's Education**

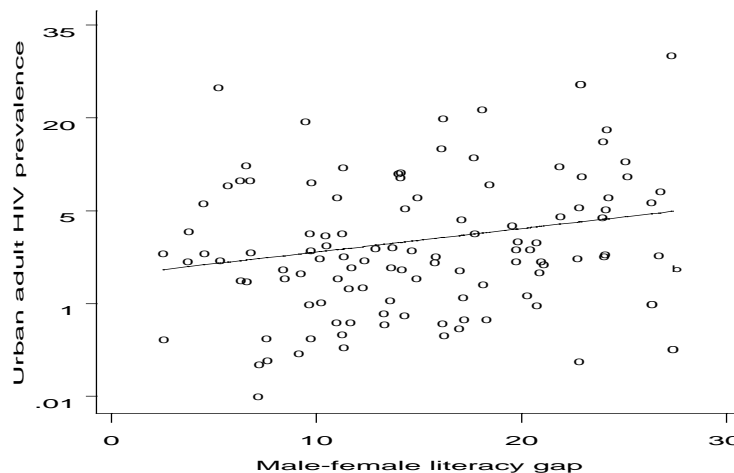


*Source:* Latest Demographic and Health Surveys for selected countries. *World Development Indicators 1999* for population data. See endnote 3 for additional details.

- While women and girls, especially the poor, often bear the brunt of gender disparities, gender norms and stereotypes impose costs on males as well. In the transition economies of Eastern Europe, men have experienced absolute declines in life expectancies in recent years. Increases in male mortality rates—the largest

registered in peacetime—are associated with growing stress and anxiety due to rapidly worsening unemployment among men in those countries.

**Figure 5 HIV Infection Rates are Higher Where Gender Gaps in Literacy are Larger**



Source: Over 1998.

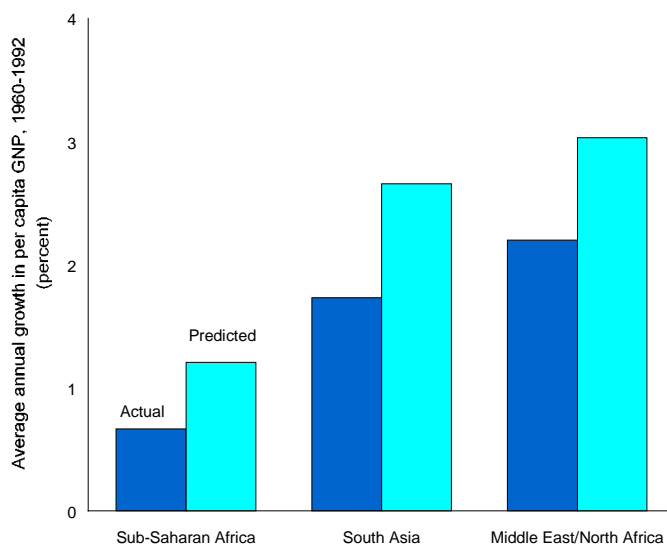
### ***Productivity and economic growth***

Gender inequalities' toll on human lives is a toll on development—since improving the quality of people's lives is development's ultimate goal. But gender inequalities also impose costs on productivity, efficiency, and economic progress. By hindering the accumulation of human capital in the home and the labor market, and by systematically excluding women or men from access to resources, public services, or productive activities, gender discrimination diminishes an economy's capacity to grow and raise the living standards of its people.

- Losses in output result from inefficiencies in the allocation of productive resources between men and women within households. In households in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Kenya, more equal control over inputs and farm income between women and men could raise farm yields by as much as one-fifth of current output.
- Low investment in female education reduces a country's overall output. One study estimates that if the countries in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Middle East and North Africa had started with the gender gap in average years of schooling that East Asia had in 1960 and had closed that gender gap at the rate achieved by East Asia from 1960 to 1992, their income per capita could have grown by 0.5-0.9 percentage points higher per year—substantial increases over actual growth rates (Figure 6). Another study estimates that even for middle and upper income countries with higher initial education levels, an increase of one percentage point in the share of women with secondary education is associated with an increase in per-capita income of 0.3 percentage points. The study

controls for male secondary education as well as other variables commonly found in the growth literature.

**Figure 6 Faster Progress in Closing Gender Gaps in Schooling Would Increase Economic Growth**



*Note:* “Actual” represents the average annual growth rate in per-capita GNP for that region from 1960–92. “Predicted” represents the average predicted GNP growth rate for a region if the gender gap in education in that region had narrowed as fast as it did in East Asia from 1960–92.

*Source:* Simulations based on regression results from Klasen 1999.

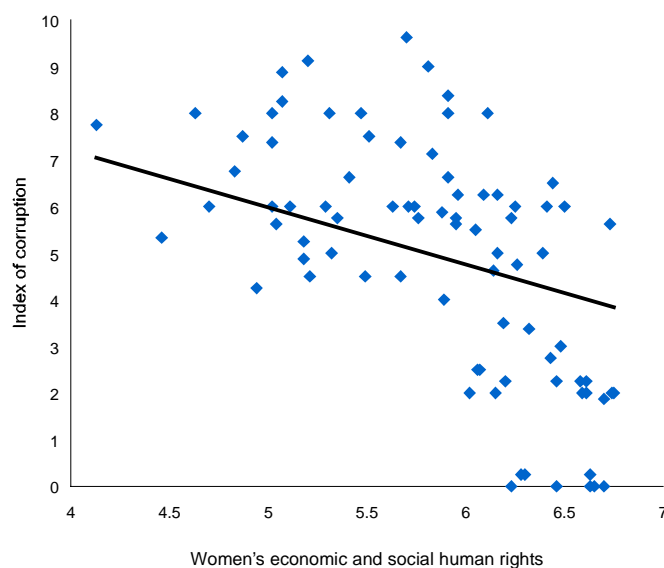
## ***Governance***

Greater women’s rights and more equal participation in public life by women and men are associated with cleaner business and government and better governance. Recent findings from several studies suggest that in countries where the influence of women in public life is higher, the level of corruption is lower. This holds even when comparing countries with the same income (Figure 7), civil liberties, education, and legal institutions. Although still only suggestive, the findings lend additional support for a larger presence of women in the labor force and in politics—since women can be an effective force for rule of law and good government.

Women in business are less likely to pay bribes to government officials, perhaps because women have higher standards of ethical behavior or greater risk aversion. A study of 350 firms in the republic of Georgia concludes that firms owned or managed by men are 10 percent more likely to make unofficial payments to government officials than those owned or managed by women. This result holds regardless of the characteristics of the firm, such as the sector in which it operates and firm size, and the characteristics of the owner or manager, such as education.

Without controlling for these factors, firms managed by men are twice as likely to pay bribes.

**Figure 7 More Equal Rights, Less Corruption**



*Source:* Data from Kaufmann 1998; the regression line controls for levels of per-capita GDP in each country. See endnote 4 for additional details.

## Why do gender disparities persist?

If gender inequalities harm people's well-being and a country's prospects for development, why do harmful gender disparities persist in so many countries? Why are some gender inequalities much more difficult to eliminate than others? For example, improvements have been rapid in such dimensions as health and access to schooling, but much slower or nearly absent in others, such as political participation and equal rights to property. What factors stand in the way of transforming gender relations and eliminating gender inequalities?

One set of factors underlying persistent gender disparities is embedded in societal *institutions*—social norms, customs, rights, laws, as well as economic institutions such as markets. These institutions shape roles and relationships between men and women, influence what resources women and men have access to, what activities they can or cannot undertake, and in what forms they can participate in the economy and in society. They embody incentives that can encourage or discourage prejudice. Even when they do not distinguish explicitly between males and females, formal and informal institutions tend to be “gendered,” in that they are generally informed by social norms and expectations regarding appropriate gender roles. Many of these societal institutions have their own inertia and can be slow and difficult to change. But they are far from static, as experience has shown.

Like institutions, *households* play a fundamental role in shaping gender relations from early in a person's life and in transmitting these from one generation to the next. People make many of life's most basic decisions within households—about having and raising children, engaging in work and leisure, and investing in the future. How tasks and productive resources are allocated among sons and daughters, how much autonomy they are given, whether expectations differ among them can create and reinforce—or mitigate—gender disparities. But the decisions by families are not taken in isolation. They are made within the context of communities and reflect the influence of incentives established by the larger institutional and policy environment.

And because the *economy* determines many of the opportunities people have to improve their standard of living, economic policy and development critically affect gender inequality. A stronger economy that reduces poverty will also mean fewer resource constraints within the household that compel parents to choose between investing in sons or in daughters. But how precisely women and men are affected by economic development depends on what income-generating activities are available, how they are organized, whether women and men are equally able to participate, and how their efforts and skills are rewarded.

Apparently gender-neutral development policies can have gender-differentiated outcomes—in part because the impact of policy is determined by the institutional environment and by the way households respond to economic and social incentives. The gender division of labor in the home, social norms and prejudice, and unequal capacities and assets prevent women and men from taking equal advantage of economic opportunities—or from coping with risk or economic shocks. Failure to recognize gender differences when designing policies can compromise the effectiveness of those policies, both from equity and efficiency perspectives.

So, societal institutions, households, and the broader economy together determine people's opportunities and life prospects, by gender. They also represent important entry points for public policy to address persistent gender inequalities.

### **A three-part strategy to promote gender equality**

That gender inequalities exact high human costs and constrain countries' development prospects provides a compelling case for public and private action to promote gender equality. The evidence makes clear that the state has a critical role in improving the well-being of both women and men, and by so doing, in capturing the substantial social benefits associated with improving the absolute and relative status of women and girls. Public action is particularly important since many social and legal institutions that perpetuate gender inequalities are extremely difficult, if not impossible, for individuals alone to change. Market failures, such as the absence of information about the returns to women's human capital in non-marketed activities, are clear obstacles.

Public policy can establish an institutional environment that provides for equal rights and opportunities for women and men—and foster economic development

that discourages discrimination and promotes inclusion. These are key elements of a long-term strategy to promote gender equality. To ensure faster progress—active policies and programs are needed to redress long-standing disparities between women and men in resources and voice. The evidence argues for a three-part strategy for promoting gender equality.

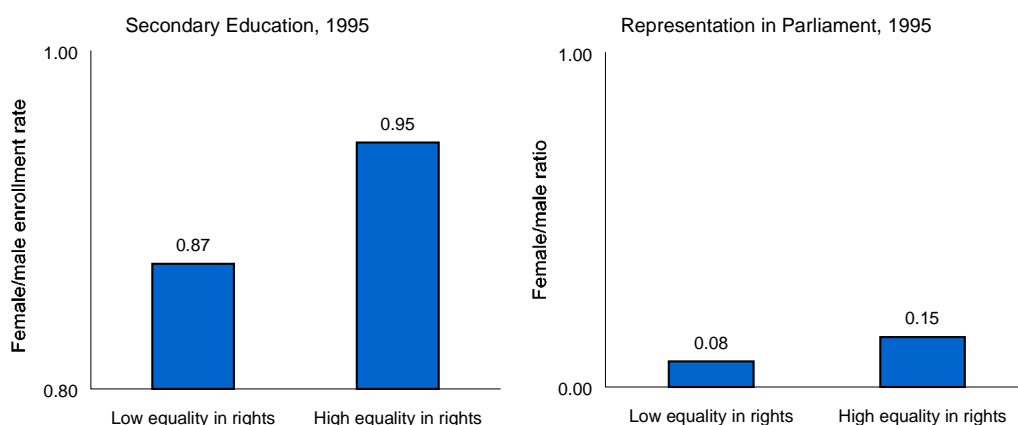
***1—Reforming institutions to establish equal rights and opportunities for women and men***

Because social, legal, and economic institutions shape women’s and men’s access to resources, their opportunities, and their relative power, a critical element in promoting gender equality is establishing a level institutional “playing field” for women and men.

*Ensuring equality in basic rights*

Gender equality in rights is an important development goal in its own right. Legal, social, and economic rights provide an enabling environment in which women and men can participate productively in society, attain a basic quality of life, and take advantage of the new opportunities that development affords. Greater equality in rights is also consistently and systematically associated with greater gender equality in education, health, and political participation—effects independent of income (Figure 8).

**Figure 8 More Equal Rights, More Equal Resources and Voice**



*Note:* A value of 1.0 indicates equal outcomes for females and males. See endnote 5 for additional details.

*Source:* Equality in rights data from Humana 1992; parliament data from United Nations, *Women’s Indicators and Statistics Database* 1998; population data from World Bank, *World Development Indicators* 1999.

Simulation analysis suggests that if countries in the Middle East, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa were to increase gender equality in rights to the level of the “most equal” country in their respective regions, the ratio of women to men in parliament would more than double in the Middle East and would increase by more

than 60 percent in the other two regions. The effect on gender equality in education would be more modest but still sufficient to take countries far toward achieving gender parity in school enrollments. Only in South Asia would sizable gender gaps be expected to persist. There is thus a critical role for legal reforms that accord equal rights and equal protection to women and men.

But legislating greater equality under the law is seldom enough. In many developing countries, the capacity to implement legal reforms remains weak, complicated by multiple—and inconsistent—legal systems. For example, civil law in Uganda provides for equal rights in divorce—but customary law prevails in the division of conjugal property, and divorced women are unable to retain access to land. In cases of gender-based violence, heavy evidentiary requirements and other procedural barriers (as well as the attitudes of enforcers) stand in the way of justice in a number of countries, as in Peru. In such contexts, efforts to strengthen the enforcement capabilities of the country's judicial and administrative agencies are critical to achieving greater gender equality in basic rights. In almost all cases, political leadership is decisive.

*Establishing incentives that discourage discrimination by gender*

The structure of economic institutions also promotes or impedes gender equality in important ways. Markets embody a powerful set of incentives that influence decisions and actions for work, saving, investment, and consumption. The relative wages of men and women, the returns to productive assets, and the prices of goods and services are all determined, in large part, by the structure of markets. Evidence from Mexico and the United States suggests that firms operating in competitive environments discriminate less against women in hiring and pay practices than do firms with significant market power in protected environments. Similarly, in both urban and rural China, women face greater wage discrimination in jobs that have been administratively assigned to them than in jobs obtained through competitive channels.

More broadly, policies and investments that deepen markets and redress gender disparities in access to information—combined with sanctions for those who discriminate—all help to strengthen incentives for gender equality in the labor market. In China and Vietnam, for example, the deepening of rural labor markets has brought with it substantial increases in demand for female labor in nonfarm enterprises, opening up new employment and earnings opportunities for women.

*Designing service delivery to facilitate equal access*

The design of program delivery—such as school systems, health care centers, financial organizations, and agricultural extension programs—can facilitate or inhibit equitable access for females and males. Moreover, involving the community in the design of public service delivery helps to address specific demands within local contexts.

Examples of how service design can improve gender equality in access: In Bangladesh, Kenya, and Pakistan, girls' enrollments are more sensitive than boys' to school quality and to specific delivery attributes—such as the presence of female teachers, sex-segregated schools and facilities, and safe transport to and from the school. Addressing such considerations can significantly increase parents' demand for educating daughters. In parts of West Africa, “mobile bankers” (known as *susu* collectors in Ghana) bring financial services to local markets, workplaces, and homes, eliminating the need for women to travel long distances to save or borrow. And in Bangladesh, group-based lending programs use support groups and peer pressure as a substitute for traditional bank collateral to ensure repayment. Both designs have increased women's access to financial resources.

## ***2—Fostering economic development to strengthen incentives for more equal resources***

In most settings, economic development is associated with improved circumstances for women and girls and with greater gender equality—through several channels:

- Households decide about work, consumption, and investments partly in response to price levels and other market signals. Shifts in these signals tend to bring about reallocation of resources. When economic development improves the availability and quality of public services such as health clinics and schools, it lowers the cost of investments in human capital for the household. If costs decline more for females than males, or if—as extensive evidence suggests—investments in females are more sensitive to price changes than investments in males, then females benefit more.
- When economic development raises incomes and reduces poverty, gender inequalities often narrow. Since low-income families are forced to ration spending on education, health care, and nutrition, with women and girls bearing much of the costs, as household incomes rise, gender disparities in human capital tend to fall.

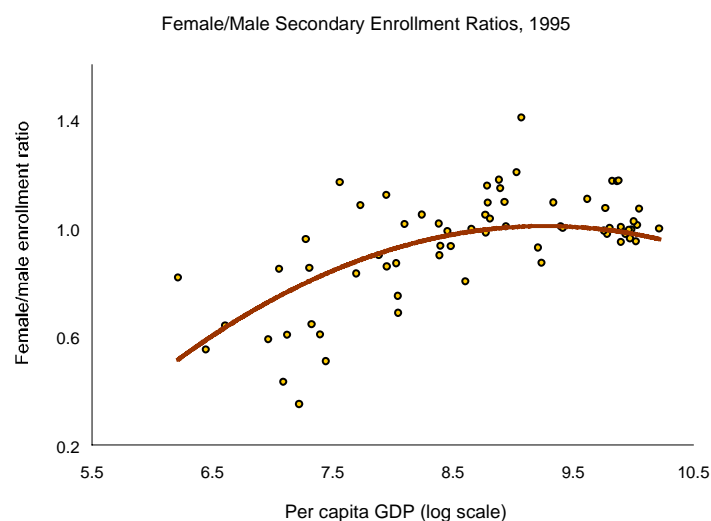
As with basic rights, higher incomes generally translate into greater gender equality in resources, whether in education (Figure 9), health, or even in workload. In education, simulations suggest that the largest improvements due to income growth are likely to occur in the poorest regions, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, the effects of income appear particularly strong at the secondary level. But simulation analysis also suggests that very large increases in income would be required to reach equality or near-equality in secondary enrollments in South Asia or Sub-Saharan Africa—say, to average OECD levels. Such increases are not realistic in the short or medium term. Very large increases in income also would be necessary to induce noticeable gains in gender equality in parliamentary representation.

- When economic development expands work opportunities, it raises the expected rate of return to human capital, strengthening incentives for families to invest in

girls' health and education and for women to participate in the labor force. By changing incentives for work, economic development affects gender equality, whether intended to or not.

- Economic development leads to the emergence of labor markets where none has existed. In so doing, it not only creates or strengthens market signals about the returns to labor but also eliminates some economic inefficiencies. For example, where active labor markets exist, hired labor provides a substitute for female labor, whether on farms or in household maintenance and care activities. This allows households to use time more efficiently, perhaps reducing women's workload. Where labor markets are absent or do not function well, such substitution is not possible.

**Figure 9 Gender Inequality in Education Declines as Income Rises**



*Note:* A value of 1.0 indicates equal outcomes for females and males. See endnote 6 for additional details.

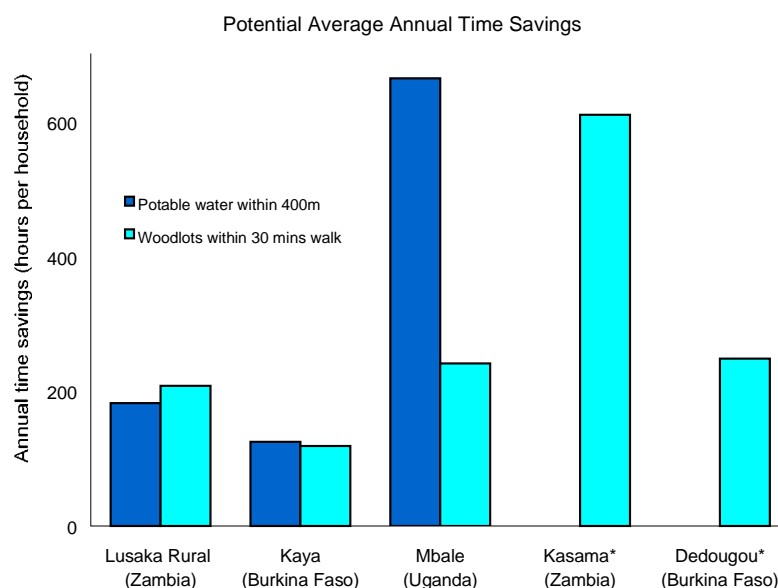
*Source:* Work data from UNDP, *Human Development Report 1995*; World Bank, *World Development Indicators 1999*.

- Economic growth is typically accompanied by an expansion of investments in infrastructure—for safe water, roads, transport, and fuel. This too tends to reduce the time women and girls need to dedicate to household maintenance and care activities. In Burkina Faso, Uganda, and Zambia, women and girls could save hundreds of hours a year if the walking times to sources of fuel and potable water were reduced to 30 minutes or less (Figure 10). The development of economic infrastructure significantly reduces females' time on domestic chores, with potential benefits for their health, participation in income-generating activities, and schooling, in the case of girls.

Although economic development tends to promote gender equality, its impact is neither sufficient nor immediate. Nor is it automatic. The impact of economic development on gender equality depends in large part on the state of rights, access to

and control of productive resources, such as land and credit, and political voice. Experience in the transition economies, the high-growth countries in East Asia, and the adjusting countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America further indicates that social policies that combat labor market discrimination or provide support for childcare help achieve what economic development alone cannot accomplish in reducing gender inequalities. Similarly, social protection policies that recognize gender differences in market-based and household work and in risks are also important to protecting women (as well as men) from economic shocks or prolonged economic downturns.

**Figure 10 Investments in Water and Fuel Infrastructure Can Significantly Reduce Time on Collection Activities**



Note: Kasama and Dedougou are already within the 400m target.

Source: Barwell 1996.

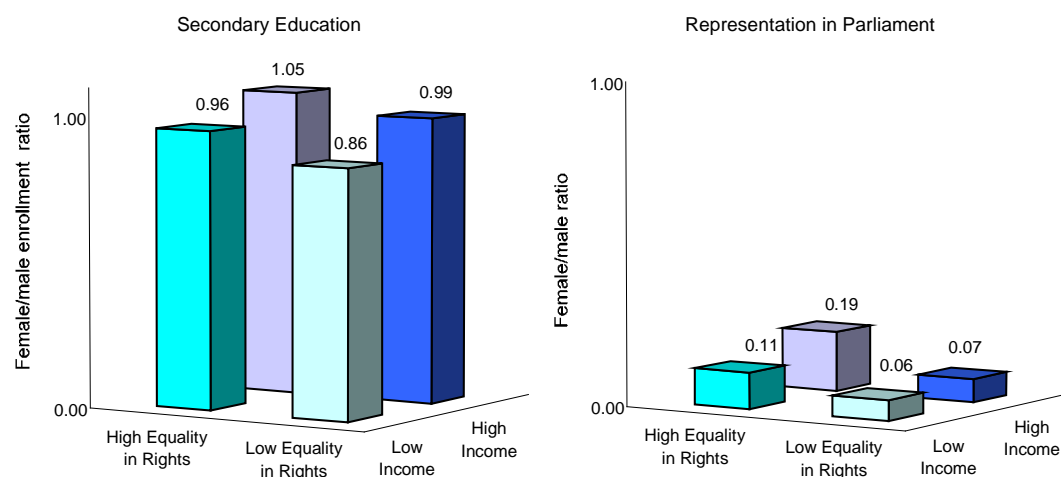
***Institutional reforms and economic development are core elements of a long-term strategy to promote gender equality***

Recent debates on gender and development have tended to pit growth-oriented approaches to development against rights-based or institutional approaches. But the evidence suggests that both economic development *and* institutional change are key elements of a long-term strategy to promote gender equality. For example, where per-capita income and gender equality in rights are low, increasing either equality in rights or income levels would raise gender equality in education levels. Doing both would yield further improvements (Figure 11).

Institutional reforms that strengthen basic rights and policies that foster economic development can be mutually reinforcing. In Sub-Saharan Africa establishing land rights for women raises productivity on female-managed plots—increasing women’s as well as their families’ incomes. Similarly, providing women greater access to savings institutions and credit enhance their economic status and

security and helps improve household welfare. In Bangladesh, as women's abilities to borrow capital in microcredit programs increase, their status and bargaining power in the family rise, as does household consumption (income).

**Figure 11 Equality in Rights and Income Growth are Core Elements of a Strategy to Promote Gender Equality**



*Note:* A value of 1.0 indicates equal outcomes for females and males. See endnote 7 for additional details.

*Source:* Rights data from Humana 1992; parliament data from United Nations, *Women's Indicators and Statistics Database* 1998; all other data from World Bank, *World Development Indicators* 1999.

### ***3—Taking active policy measures to redress persistent gender disparities in command of resources and political voice***

The combined effects of institutional reform and economic development usually take time to be apparent; thus, active measures are often warranted in the short to medium term. Active measures are concrete (often targeted) steps aimed at redressing specific forms of gender discrimination and exclusion—whether in the home, the community, or the workplace. Such measures accelerate progress in redressing persistent gender inequalities—and they are useful in targeting specific sub-populations, such as the poor, for whom gender disparities are often particularly acute.

Since the nature and extent of gender inequality differ considerably across countries, not all the interventions discussed here will be relevant in all contexts. Decisions on whether the state should intervene and which active measures should be adopted must be based on an understanding and analysis of local realities. And because active measures have real resource costs, policymakers will need to be selective about which measures to undertake, focusing strategically on the areas where government intervention has the largest benefits. This implies focusing on areas of intervention that the private sector is unlikely to take on independently—or to take on well. It also implies focusing on areas where the net social benefits of intervening, for equality or efficiency (or both), are likely to be greatest.

Beyond assessing whether a particular intervention is warranted, choices need to be made on how precisely the state should intervene. For example: Is direct public provision of goods or services required? Or can similar objectives be fulfilled more cost effectively through regulatory and enforcement efforts or through public subsidies to private providers of goods or services?

Based on the evidence on persistent gender disparities, the report focuses on four key areas of active policy.

*Promoting gender equality in access to productive resources and earnings capacity*

Efforts to promote greater equality of access to and control of productive resources—whether education, financial resources, or land—and to ensure fair and equal access to employment opportunities can advance gender equality as well as enhance economic efficiency. Policymakers have a number of potential entry points for intervention:

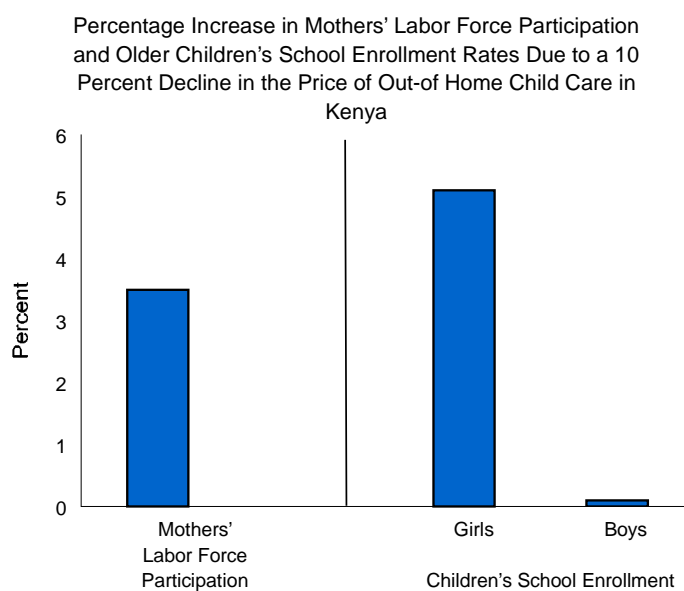
- Reducing the costs of schooling, addressing parental concerns about female modesty or safety, and increasing returns to families through improvements in the quality of schools can overcome social and economic barriers to girls' education, even in highly gender-stratified societies.
- Designing financial institutions in ways that account for gender-specific constraints—whether by using peer groups to substitute for traditional forms of collateral, by simplifying banking procedures, or by delivering financial services closer to homes, markets, and workplaces—can increase female access to savings and credit.
- Land reforms that provide for joint titling of husband and spouse or that enable women to hold independent land titles can lead to greater female control of land, in settings where statutory law predominates. Where customary and statutory laws operate side-by-side, the way the two systems interact must be taken into account if efforts to strengthen female access to land are to succeed.
- In countries with relatively developed labor markets and law enforcement capabilities, affirmative action employment programs can increase female access to formal sector jobs. Where there is serious discrimination in hiring and promotions, affirmative action can also raise productivity in firms and in the economy.

*Reducing the personal costs to women of their household roles*

In virtually all societies, gender norms dictate that women and girls take primary responsibility for household maintenance and care activities. In developing countries, household responsibilities often require long hours of work that limit girls' ability to continue their education and constrain mothers' capacity to participate in market-oriented work. Several types of interventions can reduce the personal costs to women and girls of their household roles.

- Interventions that increase education, wages, and labor market participation—coupled with adequate access to basic reproductive health and family planning services—all strengthen women’s role in making reproductive decisions. But since women and men often have different preferences for family size and contraceptive use, family planning services need to target men as well as women.
- Providing public support for out-of-home childcare services can reduce the costs of care, enabling greater economic participation for women and more schooling for adolescent girls. In Kenya reducing the price of childcare significantly increases mothers’ wage employment and older girls’ schooling (Figure 12).

**Figure 12 Availability of Low-Cost Child Care is Associated with Greater Labor Market Participation by Mothers and Greater School Enrollments by Girls**



Source: Lokshin, Glinskaya, and Garcia 2000.

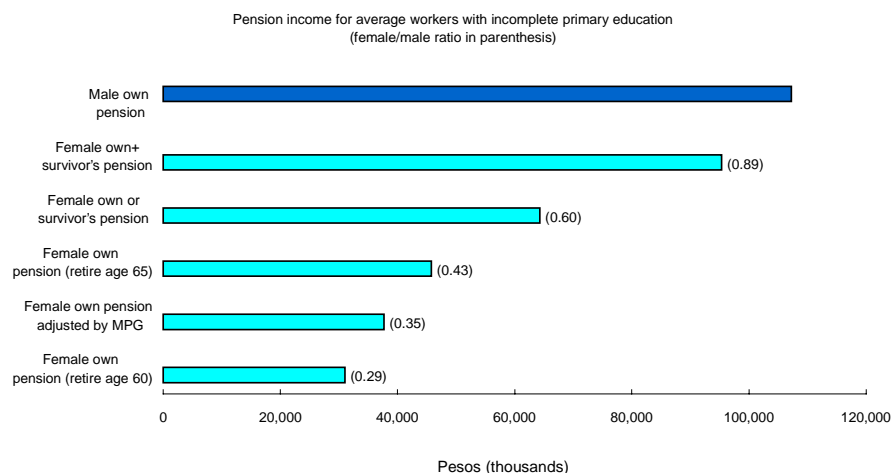
- Protective labor market legislation is often a two-edged sword, generating costs as well as benefits for women working in the formal sector. For example, when the costs of maternity leave are borne fully by firms, hiring decisions can be biased against women. When they are borne fully by women, incentives for women to continue work are weakened. Measures that help to spread the costs of maternity (or other family) provisions among employers, workers, and even the state, can raise the benefits relative to costs for women and their families.
- Targeted investments in water, fuel, transport, and other time-saving infrastructure can hasten reductions in women’s and girls’ domestic workloads, particularly in poor, rural areas—freeing girls to attend school and women to undertake other activities, whether related to income generation or community affairs.

*Providing gender-appropriate social protection*

Women and men often face gender-specific risks during economic shocks or policy reforms. Women command fewer resources with which to cushion shocks, while men, in their traditional role as breadwinners, are particularly vulnerable to the stress associated with market shifts or uncertainty in employment conditions. Taking gender differences in risk and vulnerability into account in designing social protection is particularly important because evidence suggests that women and men within the same household may not pool risk as a unit.

- To protect both women and men, social protection programs need to account for factors that can result in gender bias in participation and benefits. For example, safety net programs have frequently (if inadvertently) excluded women by failing to account for gender differences in labor supply behavior, information access, or the types of work that women and men consider appropriate.
- Old-age security programs that do not account for gender differences in employment, earnings, and life expectancy risk leaving women—especially widows—particularly vulnerable to poverty in old age. A recent study of Chile shows that women’s pension benefits relative to men’s are highly sensitive to the specific design features of the old-age security system (Figure 13).

**Figure 13 Pension Design Affects Relative Protection of Elderly Women and Men: Illustrative Evidence from Chile**



*Note:* These estimates assume that men retire at age 65, and women retire at age 60, the statutory retirement ages for men and women, unless otherwise noted. “MPG” stands for the government supported minimum pension guarantee.

*Source:* Adapted from Cox Edwards 2000. See endnote 8 for additional details.

*Strengthening women’s political voice and participation*

Institutional changes that establish gender equality in basic rights are the cornerstone of greater equality in political participation and voice. Similarly, policies and programs that promote equality in education and access to information (including legal literacy) can strengthen women’s agency and thus their capacity to

participate in the political arena. But like the impact of economic development more broadly, these approaches take time to reap observable benefits.

Recent experience from more than 30 countries, including Argentina, Ecuador, India, the Philippines, and Uganda, suggests that political “reservation” can be effective in increasing female political participation and representation in local and national assemblies in a relatively short period of time. “Reservation” legislation takes different forms in different countries, but it generally stipulates that a minimum number (or proportion) of political parties’ candidates or of electoral seats in national or local assemblies be reserved for women.

## **Challenges for the future—the way forward**

The evidence presented in this report makes a compelling case for the state to intervene in promoting gender equality. Indeed, the state, civil society groups, and the international community all have critical roles to play in fighting gender discrimination and, in doing so, enabling societies to reap considerable benefits. In moving forward effectively, there are several important challenges.

### ***Sharpening policy through gender analysis***

How to continue to deepen understanding of the links between gender equality and development and how to reflect these links in policy decisions is a key challenge for the present and the future. *Engendering Development* brings together extensive evidence on these links, but much remains to be known and understood, implying the need for collecting more and better data and for analyses disaggregated by gender. Among the key areas for more analysis:

- Much more needs to be understood about the gender impacts of specific macro and sectoral policies, particularly about how specific public expenditure choices promote or inhibit gender equality and economic efficiency. Policymakers face numerous competing demands for public resources and attention, with scarce fiscal and administrative budgets. Under these constraints, information and analysis help governments achieve the maximum social gains from the gender-related interventions they choose. Moreover, because the nature of gender disparities differ from society to society, effective policy needs to be grounded in policy analysis that integrates gender concerns at the local and national levels.
- Increasingly, it will be important to look beyond how policies and programs affect our usual development markers (such as education, health, or labor force indicators)—relative to how specific interventions improve female autonomy, leadership, and voice, both within the household and in society more broadly. Understanding which interventions are most effective in achieving this requires more gender analysis.

### *Addressing emerging issues*

It is important to be forward-looking in the face of rapidly changing circumstances around the globe. There are a number of emerging issues that require greater attention by policymakers and policy researchers from a gender perspective, including:

- With birth rates declining and people living longer, the world's population is aging. Among other things, this will result in a substantial expansion in the number of widows worldwide during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What does this demographic shift imply for social protection, health, and other areas of public policy? Understanding the gender dimensions of the demographic trend is an important challenge for policy research.
- Similarly, the process of globalization, along with the technological and information revolutions, is transforming the way that production is organized and information shared in many developing countries. Will these changes accelerate progress toward gender equality or result in widening gender gaps in economic opportunity? Clearer understanding of the opportunities and risks associated with these forces represents another challenge for researchers and policymakers.

### *Broadening partnerships*

A third critical challenge is for policymakers—in their efforts to promote gender equality—to broaden their partnerships with civil society groups, donors, and others in the international community. Their important leadership role can be enhanced by active collaboration with civic and international organizations. To generate adequate knowledge to combat gender inequalities, for example, the donor community can contribute by supporting the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data, by incorporating gender analysis into their dialogues with national policymakers, and by sharing “good practice” based on international experience. Similarly, civic groups and local researchers can contribute critical information and analysis, including those based on local knowledge.

Fostering broader participation and transparency in policymaking has the potential for tremendous payoffs, both for gender equality and for national development as a whole. Including more women in public deliberations and policymaking will be directly empowering to women—and will enhance the impact of policies and programs. As the intriguing research findings on the links between greater female participation in public life and lower levels of corruption suggest, promoting gender equality in voice can also help to strengthen a country's governance and the effectiveness of its development policy more generally.

## Endnotes

---

### <sup>1</sup> Notes to Figure 1.

- a) The rights indicator is an average of three indexes of gender equality in rights collected for more than 100 countries by Humana (1992). The individual rights indexes focus on equality of political and legal rights for women, equality of social and economic rights for women, and equality of rights for women in marriage and for divorce proceedings. The indexes are constructed using a consistent methodology across countries in which the actual extent of rights is evaluated (on a scale from 1 to 4) against rights as specified in several human rights instruments of the United Nations.
- b) All regional values are population-weighted averages.
- c) For country lists, see World Bank, *Engendering Development—Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice*, Data Appendix. Forthcoming.

### <sup>2</sup> Notes to Figure 3.

- a) Parliament data is from 1975.
- b) Parliament data is from 1985.
- c) Life expectancy data is from 1997.
- d) The figures are scaled so that a value of 1 represents equal outcomes for men and women. Education and life expectancy are represented as the female to male ratio. In the case of parliament representation, the value represents women as a share of all parliamentarians divided by men as a share of all parliamentarians.
- e) The classification of income groups is from *World Development Indicators*.
- f) All values are population-weighted averages.
- g) For country lists, see World Bank, *Engendering Development—Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice*, Data Appendix. Forthcoming.

### <sup>3</sup> Notes to Figure 4.

- a) All regional values are population weighted averages.
- b) For country lists, see World Bank, *Engendering Development—Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice*, Data Appendix. Forthcoming.

### <sup>4</sup> Notes to Figure 7.

- a) The Corruption Index uses the data from the *International Country Risk Guide*, and transforms it using the following formula: Corruption Index = 10-(ICRG Index-1)\*2.
- b) The Women's Rights Variable is from Stohl, Michael (Convenor) Global Studies Program, Global Governance of Human Rights.
- c) For country lists, see World Bank, *Engendering Development—Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice*, Data Appendix. Forthcoming.

### <sup>5</sup> Notes to Figure 8.

- a) The rights indicator is an average of three indexes of gender equality in rights collected for more than 100 countries by Humana (1992). The individual rights indexes focus on equality of political and legal rights for women, equality of social and economic rights for women, and equality of rights for women in marriage and for divorce proceedings. The indexes are constructed using a consistent methodology across countries in which the actual extent of rights is evaluated (on a scale from 1 to 4) against rights as specified in several human rights instruments of the United Nations.
- b) An average score of 2.33 or less represents low equality in rights; an average score of 2.67 or greater represents high equality in rights.
- c) These figures are scaled so that a value of 1 represents equality between men and women. Education and life expectancy are represented as the ratio of female to male. In the case of parliament representation, the value represents women as a share of all parliamentarians divided by the men as a share of all parliamentarians. This simple transformation was done to allow the scales for all the graphs to be similar.
- d) All values are population-weighted averages for each category of equality in rights.

---

e) For country lists, see World Bank, *Engendering Development—Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice*, Data Appendix. Forthcoming.

<sup>6</sup> Notes to Figure 9.

- a) The gross enrollment rate is the total enrollment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education in given school year. Female/male enrollment ratio is the female gross enrollment ratio divided by the male gross enrollment ratio.
- b) For country lists and underlying regression results, see World Bank, *Engendering Development—Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice*, Data Appendix and Statistical Appendix. Forthcoming.

<sup>7</sup> Notes for Figure 11.

- a) This figure is based on simulations, controlling for income and rights. The rights indicator is an average of three indexes of gender equality in rights collected for more than 100 countries by Humana (1992). The individual rights indexes focus on equality of political and legal rights for women, equality of social and economic rights for women, and equality of rights for women in marriage and for divorce proceedings. The indexes are constructed using a consistent methodology across countries in which the actual extent of rights is evaluated (on a scale from 1 to 4) against rights as specified in several human rights instruments of the United Nations. Although not shown here, similar patterns are found with respect to rights, income, and gender equality in primary education and life expectancy.
- b) An average score of 2.33 or less represents low equality in rights; an average score of 2.67 or greater represents high equality in rights.
- c) All values are population-weighted averages for each category of equality in rights.
- d) For country lists and underlying regression results, see World Bank, *Engendering Development—Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice*, Data Appendix and Statistical Appendix. Forthcoming.

<sup>8</sup> Note for Figure 13.

The figures are calculated as monthly annuities to urban contributors, assuming 5 percent rate of return with 2 percent secular wage growth. Males are assumed to survive for 15 years after retirement (at age 65) and to make provisions for a survivor's pension for 6 years at 60 percent of their own annuity. If females retire at age 60, they are assumed to survive for 23 years, and if they retire at age 65, they are assumed to survive for 19 years.

# Contents of the Report

**Foreword**

**Introduction**

**The Report Team**

**Acknowledgments**

**Summary**

**1. Gender Inequality at the Start of the 21st Century**

Defining Gender Equality

Regional Patterns of Gender Inequality in Rights, Resources, and Voice

Patterns of Gender Inequality within Regions

Gender and Poverty

**2. Gender Inequality Hinders Development**

Costs to Well-being

Costs to Productivity and Growth

Costs to Governance

Why Gender Disparities Exist: A Framework

Government's Role in Promoting Gender Equality

**3. Social Norms, Laws, and Economic Institutions**

Norms and Customs

Rights and Laws

Markets and Organizations

Institutional Change and the State

**4. Power, Incentives, and Resources at the Household Level**

What is a Household?

Households Reproduce Gender Roles

Resource Control, Bargaining Power, and Household Allocations

Policy Incentives, Public Investments, and Gender Equality

**5. Is Economic Development Good for Gender Equality?**

Breaking Down Rigid Gender Divisions of Labor

Stronger Incentives for Equal Investments in Human Capital

Growth with Gender Equality: What Macro Studies Find  
Do Development Paths Lead to Gender Equality? Regional  
Views

**6. Implementing a 3-Part Strategy to Promote Gender Equality**

Reforming Institutions to Establish Equal Rights and

Opportunities for Women and Men

Fostering Economic Development to Strengthen Incentives for  
More Equal Resources

Taking Active Measures to Redress Persistent Disparities in the  
Command of Resources and Political Voice

Challenges for the Future—The Way Forward

**Appendices**

**References**

# ORDER FORM

Title	Stock #	Price	Qty.	Total US\$
<b>Engendering Development--Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice</b> <i>A Copublication of the World Bank and Oxford University Press.                      (ISBN 0-19-521596-6)</i>	D61596	\$35		

\* Shipping and Handling charges are \$8.00 per order.  
 If a purchase order is used, actual shipping will be charged.

For air mail delivery outside the United States, charges are \$13.00 for one item plus \$6.00 for each additional item.

Subtotal  
 Shipping and Handling\*  
 Total US\$

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Check no. \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.  
 When ordering directly from the World Bank, make check payable in U.S. funds only drawn on a U.S. bank to: The World Bank.  
 Please send your check with your order.

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Charge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to my:

American Express  Mastercard  Visa

Card no. \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

as it appears on the card (required for all credit card charges)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Institutional customers in the U.S. only:**

Bill me. Please include purchase order.

Mail order to:

**World Bank Publications**

P.O. Box 960, Herndon, VA 20172-0960, USA,  
 or Fax to 703-661-1501.

Order by phone: 703-661-1580 or 800-645-7247.

Order online: [www.worldbank.org/publications](http://www.worldbank.org/publications)

Questions? E-mail us at [books@worldbank.org](mailto:books@worldbank.org)

DEDF



**World Bank Publications**

Visit our website at [www.worldbank.org/publications](http://www.worldbank.org/publications)