



SUMMARY

The final chapter of the report provides a road map for maximizing gender equality through seven key modes: education, financing, legislation, legislative quotas, women empowering women, engaging men and boys, and improved research and data.

- **Education:** Ensuring that girls and boys have equal educational opportunities is one of the most powerful steps towards combating gender discrimination. Key actions include abolishing school fees, encouraging parents and communities to invest in girls' education, and creating girl-friendly schools that are safe and without bias.
- **Focusing additional resources on achieving gender equality:** Far too little recognition has been given to the resources required to meet the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment.
- **Levelling the playing field in national legislation:** Legislative reform can be a powerful strategy of empowerment

for women and girls and for the safeguarding of their rights.

- **Quotas can encourage women's participation in politics:** Quotas are a proven method of ensuring women break through the political glass ceiling. To be truly effective, however, quotas must be supported by political parties and electoral systems that are committed to encouraging women's participation in politics and government.
- **Women empowering women:** Grass-roots women's movements have been the most vocal champions of women's equality and empowerment, but they are sometimes overlooked by national governments and international agencies. Involving women in the early stages of policy formulation helps ensure that programmes are designed with the needs of women and children in mind.
- **Engaging men and boys.** Men can be powerful allies in the struggle for women's equality. Advocacy initia-

tives designed to educate both women and men on the benefits of gender equality and joint decision-making can help nurture a more cooperative relationship between them.

- **Research and data on the situation of women and girls are sorely lacking:** An overwhelming lack of sex-disaggregated statistics often results in scant or weak quantitative evidence on the issues that affect women and, in turn, children. Better and more extensive data and analysis are urgently required.

Eliminating gender discrimination will produce a double dividend, fulfilling the rights of women and going a long way towards realizing those of children as well. Effective partnerships, involving governments, donors and international agencies, can support this process through the design and implementation of human rights-based development strategies. For women, men, and for children, the time to refocus our efforts is now.

Reaping the double dividend of gender equality

For children to achieve their fullest potential and to grow up in families and societies where they can thrive, gender discrimination must be banished once and for all. A world free of discrimination may seem like an impossible dream, but it is a dream within our reach. In recent decades, the goal of reducing gender discrimination has steadily grown in importance on the international agenda. Corresponding successes in empowering women and girls have become increasingly apparent. Since 1945, the proportion of women in parliament has increased more than fivefold.¹ Girls' education has increased dramatically in many regions, and more than 90 developing countries are on course to achieve the goal of gender parity in primary education, albeit only by 2015, which is already 10 years later than the original deadline set by the international community.² Discriminatory attitudes towards women and girls have been changing, not only over the course of generations, but also in some cases, through focused campaigns and discussion forums, in a matter of months.³ Throughout the preceding chapters of this report, it has been clear that great change in favour of women and girls is possible and that for all children, such change is essential.

Progress is reflected in statistical outcomes and in the underlying social and political processes that have resulted in a strong international consensus in support of gender equality and the rights of girls and women. The ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by

184 countries by September 2006, and several world conferences on women, culminating in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, have established in ever more concrete terms the challenges faced and actions required to empower women. But despite these gains and commitments, for many women, adolescent girls and girl children, the promises have not materialized. From children excluded from education because of their gender, to adolescent girls who may die from problems related to pregnancy and childbirth or face violence and sexual abuse, gender discrimination leads to rights violations that reverberate throughout the life cycle (*see Chapter 1, page 4*).

This final chapter brings together a number of concrete and achievable cross-cutting actions in several critical areas that can address this challenge. These actions will make an unprecedented difference to the lives of women and children and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Measures include education, financing for development, legislation, legislative quotas, women empowering other women, engaging men and boys, and research and data. These recommendations are less about radical new ideas than they are about a firm commitment to and focus on what has proven to work and what needs to be done – as well as an equally firm commitment to working together in order to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.

At its core, the goal of gender equality calls for a change in social attitudes and institutions

Partnerships for girls' education

Gender parity in primary and secondary education is a central tenet of the Millennium agenda, and partnerships at all levels are increasingly recognized as the conduit to reaching this objective. The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), launched in 2001, is a partnership between UN agencies and a broad spectrum of partners dedicated to achieving gender equality in education. UNGEI facilitates the coordination of girls' education strategies and interventions at the country level through partnerships with governments, donor countries, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, communities and families.

Other partnerships are also working towards the same objective. In 1999, four international civil society organizations – Oxfam International, ActionAid International, Education International, and the Global March against Child Labour – established the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) to work towards elimination of gender disparities in education

by 2015. Based on research in nine African and Asian countries, a report issued by the GCE entitled *A Fair Chance* identifies key actions to eliminate gender disparities in education.

The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), based in Kenya, is a non-governmental organization made up of cabinet ministers and other high-level educators from sub-Saharan African. Since 1993, FAWE has worked with governments, donors, non-governmental organizations, universities, communities and others to promote gender equity in education. Partners focus on influencing policy, increasing public awareness, practical interventions and mainstreaming best practices. The partnership's achievements include the publication of the *ABC of Gender Responsive Education Policies: Guidelines for analysis and planning*, which details the process for evaluating gender responsiveness in national education action plans and provides guidance on gender mainstreaming. So far, FAWE has

analysed and influenced action plans in 17 countries.

Reaching girls in rural areas of sub-Saharan African is the focus of the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), which currently operates programmes in Ghana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. CAMFED reports having enabled more than 56,000 girls to remain in primary school, with 98 per cent graduating to secondary schools, by working with a wide range of partners, including parents, local authorities and patriarchal chiefs. CAMFED's community approach includes establishing district committees to raise and distribute resources, building community confidence through dialogue and addressing threats to girls' health and safety. The 'virtuous cycle of girls' education' means that the young women who benefit from these interventions subsequently support them by contributing their insights and perspectives to local authorities and children in their communities.

See References, page 88.

that is based on the principles of equality and respect for human rights. Achieving social change at the local level, in communities and households, requires concerted and deliberate action by a broad array of actors, including men and boys, husbands and fathers, voters, teachers, religious and civic leaders, the media, the private sector and, indeed, women and girls themselves. Actions taken at the local level need to be encouraged and reinforced by governments and international donors, which have a pivotal role in the design and implementation of appropriate legislation and programmes that protect and advance the rights of women and girls.

Effective partnerships are essential to accelerating progress in all of the areas cited. While across the international community partnerships are being recognized as the most effective means to bring about real and lasting change, their role in tackling gender discrimination – an issue that cuts across all aspects of development – is of especially critical importance.

Establishing effective partnerships that bring together diverse actors with different agendas, perspectives and affiliations is an objective not without problems or costs. Each of the seven recommendations will focus on the role of partnerships in tackling gender discrimination.



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Some of the following actions can reap quick rewards, others may take longer. But for women and children, for this and for future generations, the time to act is now.

Education: Attacking gender discrimination at its root

As this report has shown, ensuring that girls and boys have equal educational opportunities is one of the most important and powerful steps towards combating gender discrimination and advancing children's rights. Every girl and boy is entitled to education, regardless of their social or economic status. Enabling girls to access the intellectual and social benefits of basic education ensures that their rights are protected and fulfilled and greatly enhances the range of life choices available to them as women. Furthermore, girls' education has profound and long-lasting benefits for families and entire communities. Women with some formal education are

more likely to delay marriage and childbirth, ensure their children are immunized, be better informed about their own and their children's nutritional requirements and adopt improved birth spacing practices. As a result, their children have higher survival rates and tend to be healthier and better nourished.⁴ Moreover, in many countries, each additional year of formal education completed by a mother translates into her children remaining in school up to one half year longer than would otherwise be the case.⁵

Recent trends in girls' education provide grounds for some optimism. Over the past 30 years, for example, gross primary enrolment rates for girls in low-income countries have risen from 52 per cent to over 90 per cent.⁶ But gender disparities remain, not only at the primary and secondary levels, but also in tertiary education, where a mere 5 per cent to 10 per cent of students in low-income countries are female.⁷

Abolishing school fees

In many developing countries, the direct and indirect costs of schooling represent one of the most significant barriers to education for both girls and boys, particularly those from poor families living in rural areas.⁸ Abolishing school fees is one of the most effective policy measures for accelerating progress in this area. In 2005, UNICEF and the World Bank launched the School Fee Abolition Initiative (SFAI), which aims to increase access to basic education and scale up progress to meet the MDGs and the Education for All targets in the next decade. In Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, the United Republic of Tanzania and other countries participating in the SFAI (Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are planning to abolish fees shortly), the elimination of school fees is making it possible for girls from disadvantaged backgrounds to enrol in primary education.⁹

Encouraging parents and communities to invest in girls' education

Even where schools fees are not an issue, the perceived and real opportunity costs asso-

ciated with sending children to school can discourage parents from supporting girls' education.¹⁰ Encouraging poor families to invest in their daughters' education may require such incentives as conditional cash transfers, meals, subsidies and other types of income support. Conditional cash transfers provide families with food and compensate parents for the opportunity costs associated with child labour on the condition that parents send their children to school and take them to health clinics for regular vaccinations and check-ups.

Girl-friendly schools: Safe and without bias

Children who are not in school tend to come from the poorest and most marginalized households and often live in remote rural areas.¹¹ Parents may object to sending their daughters to school because they feel the facility is unsafe, or that the long journey to school exposes girls to risk of sexual assault or other forms of violence.¹² Governments, parents and international donors must work together to promote flexible scheduling, increase the safety of school facilities, ensure that schools have separate hygiene and sanitation facilities for girls, and build schools close to their homes.

The school curriculum must impress upon teachers, as well as students, the importance of gender equality, and address male bias in the classroom. Studies show that teachers who perceive girls to be less intelligent than boys tend to treat boys and girls differently. Male students receive preferential treatment and are given time to learn and play at school. Girls, in contrast, are often encouraged to be subservient and to sit close to the back of the classroom. In some communities, girls are assigned janitorial work in schools while the boys play in the schoolyard.¹³

Girls outperform boys throughout much of the industrialized world. The picture is different in the developing world, however, where boys tend to achieve higher results on school exams than girls. A recent survey of francophone Africa and Eastern and Southern Africa shows that boys are outperforming girls in all of the low-income countries surveyed in the assessment.¹⁴





One way to help eliminate bias is to increase the number of female teachers in the classroom. In addition, textbooks and related school materials should avoid replicating gender stereotypes, such as those that portray women cleaning and cooking while men are shown as professional engineers and doctors.¹⁵

Focusing more resources on achieving gender equality

In addition to sound legislation, robust research and bold policies, achieving gender equality and fulfilling women's and children's rights also requires resources. Without financial resources to incorporate new laws and policies, strong legislation and better research will mean little. Equitable and efficient social investment to eliminate gender discrimination is a key strategy for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Perhaps because gender discrimination is so often viewed as the result of social attitudes

alone, far too little consideration has been given to the financial resources required to achieve the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment. A great deal of knowledge exists about the policies and actions required to address gender inequality, but much more needs to be done to turn theory into practice.

The UN Millennium Project has taken the lead in assessing how much it will cost to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.¹⁶ Detailed country assessments focus on the goods, services and infrastructure required, as well as capital and recurrent costs. As intensive and detailed as these projections are, they are unable to specify with precision the final cost of meeting the MDGs. Uncertainty arises from the inability to know how the Millennium Declaration is being implemented in specific communities and countries, as well as the variable costs associated with each of the eight MDGs.¹⁷ Because gender equality cuts across all of the Goals, assessing the cost of achieving MDG 3 – promoting gender

Monitoring governments' commitments to women's empowerment through gender-responsive budgets

Budgets reflect the social and economic priorities of governments. A government budget that can be broken down according to its impact on women and men is considered 'gender-responsive'. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) defines gender-responsive budgeting as "the analysis of actual government expenditures and revenue on women and girls as compared to men and boys."

According to a report by the Commonwealth Secretariat, the aim of gender budgets is fourfold:

- Improve the allocation of resources to women.
- Support gender mainstreaming in macroeconomics.
- Strengthen civil society's participation in economic policymaking, and
- Track public expenditure against gender and development commitments and contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Gender-responsive budget analysis can provide a clear picture of the ways in which the distribution, use and generation of public resources affect women and men differently. It is an immensely useful tool not only to highlight the links between social investment and the realization of women's rights, but also to hold governments accountable for their commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.

UNIFEM has strongly promoted gender-responsive budgets, which

are currently being applied in over 50 countries. South Africa was among the first to implement gender-responsive budgeting in 1995. Rwanda's budget currently prioritizes gender equality, and all of the country's sectoral budgets are prepared with the participation of that country's Ministry of Gender.

In Latin America, UNIFEM has supported gender-responsive budget initiatives in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru. Such analyses have become codified in the formal budgeting process in Chile, where gender is one of six mandatory areas on which government ministries must report. Other interventions in the region have also included gender-based budget analyses at national, provincial and municipal levels, technical support to budget planning institutions, and advocacy initiatives with civil society and public sector organizations.

In India, female parliamentarians have taken a leading role in raising gender-based budgeting initiatives at the parliamentary level. Some states have gone even further by legislating for people's audits of local planning and spending, and enacting measures to ensure women's participation in these processes. For the 2005/6 fiscal year, 18 departments were directed to submit budgets showing resource allocations and expenditures benefiting women.

In Morocco, the 2006 budget contained an annex on gender equity priorities. This unprecedented

development followed four years of collaboration between UNICEF and the Ministry of Finance in Morocco. The annex assesses the implications that the national budget has for gender equality and outlines specific gender targets. Key ministries, including education, finance, health, agriculture and rural development, participated in the preparation of the annex.

Gender-responsive budgets are proving to be effective in focusing attention on where financial resources are required to promote gender equality and empower women. Along with child budgets, which are also gaining increasing recognition as effective advocacy and policy instruments, they are practical tools to show whether sufficient resources are being dedicated to realize the rights of women and children.

See References, page 88.

equality and empowering women – has proved especially difficult. The UN Millennium Project has taken steps to modify its methodology in the hope of distilling more accurate estimates of the costs involved in meeting MDG 3.¹⁸ The initial estimates come from a detailed analysis of Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ghana, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda that has subsequently been extended to cover all low-income countries.

In the initial group of five countries studied, it was estimated that between US\$37 and US\$57 per capita (measured in constant 2003 US dollars) was needed annually for supplies and services in girls' education, women's health and other areas. The MDG 3 specific interventions represent only 6-10 per cent of the total cost of interventions required to achieve the MDGs.¹⁹

Estimating costs requires outlining concrete areas where investments are needed. Many exercises estimating the cost of MDG 3 have focused solely on eliminating gender disparity in education,²⁰ which, however vital, is only part of the puzzle. A more complete cost estimation focuses on the seven strategic priorities identified in the Millennium Project task force report on gender equality and achieving the Millennium Development Goals:

- Strengthen opportunities for post-primary education for girls while meeting commitments to universal primary education.
- Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Invest in infrastructure to reduce women's and girls' time burdens.
- Guarantee women's and girls' property and inheritance rights.
- Eliminate gender inequality in employment by decreasing women's reliance on informal employment, closing gender gaps in earnings and reducing occupational segregation.
- Increase women's share of seats in national parliaments and local government bodies.
- Combat violence against girls and women.²¹

How much additional financing in total is required to meet MDG 3 depends on how government resources change between now and 2015, and how much of those resources are dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment. According to a realistic scenario, low-income countries would need an additional US\$28 billion (measured in constant 2003 US dollars) in 2006 from donor countries, rising to US\$73 billion in 2015. Available estimates suggest, however, that governments currently target fewer resources to gender equality than other MDG areas.²²

Getting the financing right is only the first step. Money must be put to the right use, and it must be integrated within existing government budgets and plans, as well as aligned with poverty reduction strategy papers and other planning processes in which all stakeholders participate. The road to gender equality can be long and complex, but without sufficient resources the destination will be impossible to reach.

Levelling the playing field in national legislation

Legislative reform can be a powerful strategy for empowering women and girls and safeguarding their rights. Over the past year alone, women obtained the right to vote and to stand for election in Kuwait,²³ pushed for legislation that would criminalize domestic violence in Tajikistan,²⁴ called for the greater inclusion of gender concerns in peace-agreement and post-conflict processes in Somalia,²⁵ and were a driving force behind the ratification of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, which entered into force in November 2005.²⁶ Nevertheless, in many countries, women still lack equal access to justice and legal protection, and in some countries, powerful legal obstacles continue to undermine their rights in key areas.

Domestic violence and gender-based violence in conflict

Violence against women and children has devastating consequences. It fills their lives with pain and terror, from which some may never recover.²⁷ It knows no boundaries of

Partnering to promote child rights and gender equality in political agendas

Partnerships between parliamentarians and advocates for women and children are also helping to focus greater attention on gender equality and protection against harm, exploitation, abuse and violence. One such partnership is the collaboration between Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UNICEF, which dates back over a decade and a half beginning with IPU's support for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. More recently, IPU jointly organized with UNICEF the Parliamentary Forum on Children during the UN Special Session on Children in May 2002. Since then, a strong partnership has developed between the two organizations, especially in the area of child protection and the promotion of gender equality. Some of the key joint actions have included:

- **Child protection handbook for parliamentarians:** *Child Protection: A Handbook for Parliamentarians*, launched in 2004, covers a wide range of themes related to child protection, including trafficking of children, violence against children, female genital mutilation/cutting, the sexual exploitation of children,

children and war, and juvenile justice. The handbook serves as a catalyst for action, providing concrete examples of ways to build a protective environment for children and parliamentarians' responses to the challenges of child protection.

- **Child trafficking handbook:** This jointly produced handbook by IPU and UNICEF was launched in 2005 at the IPU Assembly. *Combating Child Trafficking* served as a tool for a regional parliamentary seminar, 'Developing a Protective Framework for Children: The role of parliaments', in February 2006. The seminar, held in Hanoi at the invitation of the Vietnamese National Assembly, included parliamentarians from 13 countries.

- **High-level panels on gender equality and child protection:** In recent years, the two organizations have held a series of panels at the annual IPU assemblies to focus attention on gender equality and child protection. The first panel, which addressed the issue of commercial sexual exploitation, took place at the 2004 IPU Assembly in Mexico. The following year, the panel

addressed the issue of violence against women and children in situations of armed conflict. In 2006, the panel – which also featured the collaboration of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) – examined the impact of HIV/AIDS on children.

- **Regional forums:** On the recommendation of the IPU Task Force of Parliamentarians against female genital mutilation, the African Parliamentary Union, UNICEF and IPU organized a regional conference in Dakar, in December 2005 on parliamentary action to put an end to FGM/C. The conference brought together members of Parliament from 21 countries. It aimed at strengthening their action by familiarizing them with the experience of TOSTAN – a non-governmental organization based in Senegal whose Community Empowerment Programme has been successful in discouraging the practice of FGM/C – and similar successful initiatives to combat protection abuses against children.

See References, page 88.

geography, culture or wealth. Anti-violence measures often require specific legislation, as well as a strong commitment by policymakers, the judiciary and law enforcement officials, and, in some cases, the international community, to ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and that victims receive the full support they need to rebuild their lives.

The Report of the Independent Expert for the United Nations Study on Violence against Children, released in August 2006, confirms a widely held perception that domestic violence

has incalculable consequences for children.²⁸ Children suffer both directly, as targets of violence, and indirectly, as first-hand witnesses to the devastating impact that violence has on the family and household. Worldwide, at least 45 countries have specific legislation against domestic violence, 21 others are drafting more laws, and numerous countries have amended criminal laws to include domestic violence.²⁹ But the gap between the laws on the books and their implementation often remains as wide as it is deadly, and important regional differences prevail. While more than 80 per cent



of Latin American countries have specific legislation against domestic violence, this is true of less than 5 per cent of countries in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Africa and East Asia and the Pacific.³⁰

Similarly, comprehensive mechanisms are needed to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in conflict. The increased lawlessness that accompanies the breakdown of social institutions and structures in times of conflict can contribute to a high incidence of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse. War exacerbates the violence that girls and women live with in times of peace. Many women and girls become victims of sexual slavery during conflict, forced to provide sexual services to armed forces or groups. In some cases, rape is employed as a strategic method of warfare in order to humiliate, degrade and displace communities, as well as to achieve wider military objectives, including ethnic cleansing and political terror.³¹ Rape has also been perpetrated by those with a mandate to protect, including United Nations staff and peace-keeping personnel.³²

Since all such acts of sexual exploitation and abuse take place within a broader context of violence, long-standing gender inequality and a lack of empowerment of women and girls, strategies to address gender-based violence must address these underlying causes.

Resolution 1325, adopted by the UN Security Council in 2000, took an important step forward by calling on “all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence.”³³ Much more remains to be done, however, including encouraging governments to codify rape and other forms of sexual violence as crimes in their national laws, holding states accountable for the actions of fighting forces, and increasing the numbers of women at all stages of peace-building.³⁴

Property and inheritance rights

Equal land and property rights would represent a significant step towards eliminating gender discrimination at the household level. For legal reform to change the lives of women and children, national laws based on human

Figure 5.1 The majority of countries with the most women in parliament use political quotas

Rank	Country	Lower or single house of parliament			
		Date of elections	% of women in parliament	Does the country have a quota?	Types of quota*
1	Rwanda	September 2003	48.8	Yes	1
2	Sweden	September 2002	45.3	Yes	3
3	Costa Rica	February 2006	38.6	Yes	2,3
4	Norway	September 2005	37.9	Yes	3
5	Finland	March 2003	37.5	No	-
6	Denmark	February 2005	36.9	Yes	3
7	Netherlands	January 2003	36.7	Yes	3
8	Cuba	January 2003	36.0	No	-
8	Spain	March 2004	36.0	Yes	3
10	Argentina	October 2005	35.0	Yes	1, 2, 3
11	Mozambique	December 2004	34.8	Yes	3
12	Belgium	May 2003	34.7	Yes	2,3
13	Austria	November 2003	33.9	Yes	3
14	Iceland	May 2003	33.3	Yes	3
15	South Africa	April 2004	32.8	Yes	3

* There are several types of quotas, including (1) constitutional quotas; (2) election law quotas; and (3) political party quotas for electoral candidates. For definitions, see Panel, page 79.

Sources: Data are drawn from the Inter-Parliamentary Union database on 'Women in National Parliaments', <<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>>, accessed May 2006. The figures for those legislatures using quotas are derived from the Global Database of Quotas for Women, <<http://www.quotaproject.org/country.cfm>>, also accessed May 2006.

rights laws and principles must necessarily be upheld over male-biased customary laws and traditional practices. National legal reforms in property law and inheritance rights represent one of the most direct strategies for increasing women's access to land and property. In the wake of land reform in Costa Rica, for example, women represented 45 per cent of land-titled beneficiaries between 1990 and 1992, compared with only 12 per cent before the reform. Similarly, in Colombia, after a ruling in 1996 on joint titling, land titled jointly to couples made up 60 per cent of land adjudications, compared to 18 per cent in 1995.³⁵

No compromise on protecting women and girls

Legislative reform is likely to require different actions in different legal contexts. The fulfilment of the rights of women and girls in one country may be contingent upon the abolition or amendment of discriminatory legislation. In other countries, equal access to justice and legal protection may require the enactment of new laws or specific mechanisms that neutralize the power of other legal structures – such

as customary laws and religious codes – which often discriminate against women.³⁶ However, while understanding that customary law and religious codes are important, efforts at harmonizing these codes with statutory law cannot be conducted at the expense of the rights and well-being of women and girls.

Quotas can encourage women's participation in politics

Chapter 4 showed that, whether women are transforming political processes, directly representing the interests of women and children, or inspiring the next generation of girls, the political participation of women is vital for children. With Kuwait granting women the right to vote and stand for election in May 2005, there are now very few countries with elected parliaments where women do not have the right to vote and stand for public office.³⁷ But while the legal barriers to entry into politics and government for women have been removed, women still account for only one out of every six national parliamentarians in the world.³⁸

Quotas: One size does not fit all

Quotas have proved effective in increasing the participation of women in politics in countries across the world. The mechanisms by which they apply vary widely and have differing effects in each country. As a means to understanding the concept of quotas, the following definitions and associated terms are presented, as classified by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, an inter-governmental organization whose mandate is to support sustainable democracy worldwide.

- **Gender quota systems** aim to ensure that women constitute at least a 'critical minority' of 20, 30 or 40 per cent of legislators, or a true gender balance of 50 per cent. In some countries quotas are applied as a temporary measure, that is to say, until the barriers to women's entry into politics are removed. Most countries with quotas, however, have not limited their use over time.
- **Legal quotas** regulate the proceedings of all political parties in a country and may also prescribe sanctions in case of non-compliance. Legal

quotas can be mandated in a country's constitution (as in Burkina Faso, Nepal, the Philippines and Uganda) or by law, usually electoral (as in many parts of Latin America and, for example, in Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Sudan).

- **Voluntary party quotas** are decided by one or more political parties in a country. In some countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Germany, Italy, Norway and Sweden, several political parties have some type of quota. In many others, only one or two parties have opted to use quotas. If the leading party in a country uses a quota, such as the African National Congress in South Africa, this can have a significant impact on the overall rate of female representation. Most of the world's political parties, however, do not employ any kind of quota at all.

Quotas can target different parts of the selection and nomination process

- The first stage involves finding aspirants, or those willing to be

considered for nomination, either by a primary or by the nominations committee and other parts of the party organization. Gender quotas at this stage are rules that demand that a certain number or percentage of women or either sex be represented in the pool of potential candidates. This has been used in countries with plurality-majority electoral systems, like the controversial 'women's short lists' in the United Kingdom.

- At the nomination stage, quotas are applied to the nomination of candidates to be placed on the party ballot. This implies that a rule (legal or voluntary) requires that, for instance 20, 30, 40 or even 50 per cent of the candidates must be women.
- At the electoral stage, quotas are applied as 'reserved seats', where a certain percentage or number among those elected must be women. Increasingly, gender quotas are being introduced using reserved seat systems.

See References, page 88.

Quotas can make an important difference. Whether legally mandated through constitutional or electoral law – often but not always the most effective approach – or based on voluntary actions by political leaders, quotas have led to dramatic changes in women's political participation throughout the world. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, as a result of the introduction of quotas, Rwanda, for example, jumped from 24th place in 1995 to 1st place in 2003 in terms of women's representation in parliament, while Costa Rica advanced from 25th in 1994 to

3rd place in 2006. Afghanistan, previously unranked as women were denied the right to vote under the Taliban regime, now stands in the 25th position.³⁹ Similar statistics hold true for countries as diverse as Argentina, Burundi, Iraq, Mozambique and South Africa.⁴⁰

Overall, of the 20 countries in the world with the most women in parliament, 17 (or 85 per cent) are using some form of quota system (*see Figures 5.1 and 5.2, pages 78 and 80*). While quotas are most widely used to increase the political representation of women in national

parliaments, to date there are 30 countries that have constitutional or statutory quotas at the subnational level. In India, for example, the results have been dramatic, as one third of seats in all local legislatures are reserved for women by a constitutional amendment. This stands in contrast to the national parliament, where women account for less than 10 per cent of all parliamentarians.⁴¹

Quotas are also gaining increasing recognition as a potentially effective vehicle for ensuring women's representation at the peace table. In 1999, for example, after women were key participants in helping settle hostilities in southern Sudan, the United Nations Development Fund for Women partnered with a local organization on the 'People to People' peace process, which reserved a third of the seats in local and regional peace reconciliation meetings for women.⁴² Similarly, in South Africa, 41 per cent of the commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were women.⁴³ Neither of these examples, however, involves formal peace processes. At present, no examples of such quotas exist.

While they can be effective, however, quotas are no panacea. To be effective, quotas have to match the electoral system of a country; unless

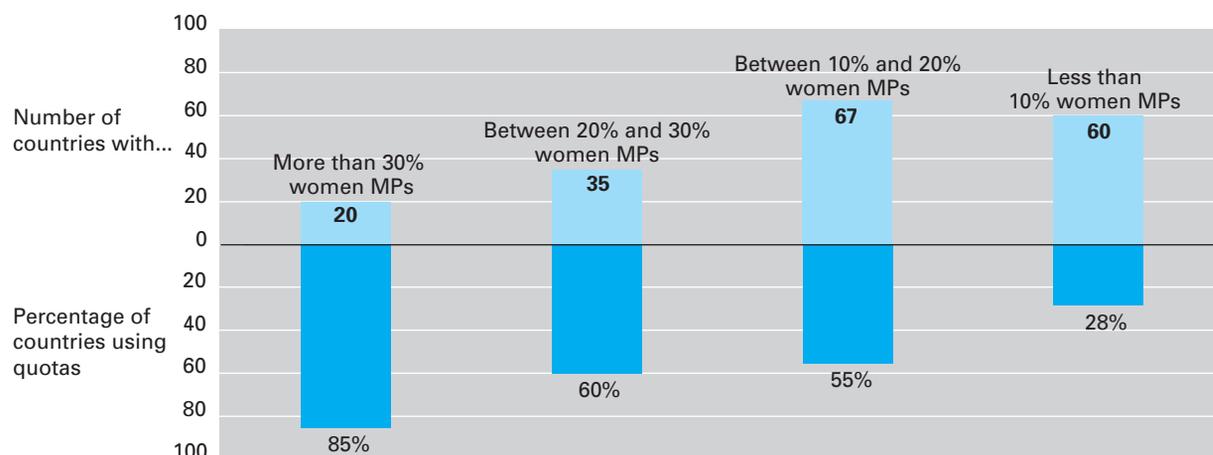
they do, and unless commitments are reinforced by a political system in which rules matter and failure to comply carries consequences, the role of quotas is merely symbolic.⁴⁴

Women empowering women

One of the most important and effective avenues for women's empowerment is the dynamic of cooperation among women. Informal women's collectives organize around such issues as nutrition, food distribution, education and shelter, contributing to an improved standard of living for women, their families and communities.⁴⁵ But even though women's social networks tend to be wider than those of men, they tend to command fewer economic resources.⁴⁶

Women's groups need to be recognized as important agents of empowerment and development. Governments and development agencies must include them in poverty reduction strategies and nurture long-term partnerships. By working with women's organizations at the community level and channelling development resources through them, international development agencies can help increase the likelihood that resources will reach the most vulnerable members of poor communities –

Figure 5.2 Countries with the most women in parliament are also the most likely to use quotas



Note: Quotas include constitutional quotas, election law quotas and political party quotas for electoral candidates.

Sources: Women in parliament from the Inter-Parliamentary Union database on 'Women in National Parliaments', <<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>>, accessed May 2006. The figures for those legislatures using quotas are derived from the Global Database of Quotas for Women, <www.quotaproject.org/country.cfm>, also accessed May 2006.



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women and children. Involving women in the early stages of policy development help ensure that programmes will be designed with the needs of women and children in mind.

Grass-roots women's movements are vocal and active champions of women's equality and empowerment and have campaigned successfully for CEDAW and other conventions mandated to improve the situation of women and girls at the international level. The benefit of women's groups is even more evident at the local level, where they are working to improve the quality of life for their families.

Engaging men and boys

Men can make a crucial contribution to ending gender discrimination. Globally, men continue to dominate decision-making processes in households, economies and governments. In addition, men's participation in initiatives to promote gender mainstreaming and gender equality remains low. Such initiatives may be perceived as a threat to their status and power.

By making child-friendly choices and supporting women in their capacities as decision-makers, men can be powerful allies in the struggle for women's equality. Evidence shows that men are more likely to be active, hands-on fathers when they feel positive about themselves and their relationship with the child's mother, when they have support for active involvement in their children's lives from family and friends, and when they are in employment.⁴⁷

Involving men

Men are often the dominant household decision-makers, yet they tend to be overlooked by programmes that improve conditions for women and children.⁴⁸ In one Indian state, for instance, researchers discovered that advocacy campaigns on nutrition were targeted to women, even though approximately 20 per cent of fathers made the decisions regarding children's nutrition.⁴⁹

UNICEF's experience shows that programmes that focus on males provide ways to promote positive gender socialization. Programmes that

Women's participation in community-based initiatives across the developing world

Across the developing world, studies show that women's participation in community initiatives can have long-lasting benefits for women and children. Women who are empowered to take action, whether through programmes led by governments, non-governmental organizations or those driven by the community, often have a positive influence on the lives of other women.

Bangladesh. One example is the Food for Education (FFE) programme in Bangladesh, which focused on female-headed households. Lessons learned from the FFE programme, which ran from 1993 to 2002, were applied in a follow-up project by the World Bank. About 40 per cent of the 5.2 million students enrolled in schools with FFE received food grains, primarily wheat. The programme successfully increased primary school enrolment, promoted school attendance and reduced drop-out rates. While boys' school enrolment increased by nearly 30 per cent, the increase for girls was even more remarkable, at over 40 per cent. In addition, there is some evidence that the programme also enabled girls to stay in school longer, thus delaying marriage and improving their income-earning potential.

Guatemala. Families with working mothers in need of childcare were

the focus of Programa de Hogares Comunitarios, in Guatemala. Under this government-sponsored initiative, a group of parents was given the opportunity to designate a woman from their community as their childcare provider. The success of the programme, which began in 1991, was reinforced by the positive outcomes for the children, who consumed, on average, 20 per cent more energy, proteins and iron and 50 per cent more vitamin A than children in the control group. Programme evaluations also revealed that mothers involved were more likely to receive work-related social and medical benefits than other non-participating working mothers.

Indonesia. Non-governmental organizations are actively involved in the campaign for women's rights in Indonesia. Since 1986, the Centre for the Development of Women's Resources has been a leader in the movement to end violence against women. The centre trains community-based groups on women's issues, including survival strategies and skills for building support networks to cope with violence against women. The groups are then equipped with modules to conduct succession training until the information reaches village level.

According to the Asian Development Bank, the organization's campaign and training has increased the number of women requesting legal assistance from the Indonesia Women's Association for Justice, another leading non-governmental organization.

Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan, the women of Angren City Municipality have given young disabled children and their mothers a new source of hope. Developed by women in the community who wanted to improve the social services available to the families of disabled children, the Sunday School Programme provides an educational environment for children who are excluded from traditional classrooms.

Women play a crucial role in the school's success, organizing the programmes and encouraging mothers, many of whom rarely participate in social events outside of the household, to enrol their children. By providing a safe and supportive environment in which disabled children and their parents can learn and socialize, the programme caters to the emotional and practical needs of families.

See References, page 88.

encourage the participation of both men and women can help to increase communication between the sexes and encourage a more even division of childcare responsibilities. In Viet Nam, for example, UNICEF has mobilized men to promote the use of oral rehydration salts to treat diarrhoea and to increase immunization

coverage. Throughout Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, male and female activists are campaigning against gender-based violence. In Uganda and Zimbabwe, UNICEF programmes are attempting to foster the socialization of girls and boys as a means of stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS.⁵⁰



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Another strategy for increasing men's support for gender equality involves policies that aim to redistribute benefits to men and women more equitably. Evidence from the 'Nordic experiment' illustrates how this works. In Scandinavian countries, a combination of government and non-government initiatives contributed to a dramatic increase in the availability of paternity leave for men. In Sweden, for instance, fathers now assume responsibility for 45 per cent of childcare responsibilities, thanks in large part to the growing popularity of paternal leave.⁵¹

Challenging gender stereotypes and changing attitudes

Advocacy initiatives designed to educate men and women on the benefits of gender equality and joint decision-making can help nurture a more cooperative relationship between men and women. Evidence shows that fathers are more likely to stop abusive treatment towards mothers if they have been exposed to information on how gender-based violence adversely affects their children.⁵²

Research and data on the situation of women and girls

There is broad recognition of the impact that discrimination has on the lives of women. But an overwhelming lack of sex-disaggregated statistics often results in scant or weak quantitative research on the issues that affect women and, in turn, children. This report has shown that there is sufficient data and research on women and girls to outline where their rights are violated and illustrate the negative impacts these violations can have on children. Nonetheless, much more needs to be known about many of the most important aspects of women's lives and the impact discrimination has on those around them. Research and data are sorely lacking in several key areas listed below.

- **Maternal mortality:** While 111 countries produced data based on registration systems and other surveys, for 62 countries no recent national data were available and estimates therefore had to be based on models.

Program H: Challenging gender stereotypes and changing attitudes in Brazil and other countries

Advocacy initiatives designed to educate men and women on the benefits of gender equality and joint decision-making can help nurture a more cooperative relationship between them.

A Brazilian non-governmental organization, Instituto Promundo, is implementing one such gender-sensitive programme, with positive results for women, men and children. Program H (the H refers to *homens*, or men in Portuguese) encourages young men to respect their partners, to avoid using violence against women, and to take precautions to avoid HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Through a creative blend of radio announcements, billboards and dances, Promundo challenges traditional male attitudes by promoting the idea that it is 'cool and hip' to be a more gender-equitable man.

Evaluations of the group meetings, where young men discuss the consequences of high-risk lifestyle choices, show that men who complete the programme are less likely to support traditional gender norms (for example, the belief that childcare is a woman's job and that there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten). The number of young male participants (aged 15 to 28) who supported the statement that "a

woman's most important role is to take care of the home and cook" declined from 41 per cent in the pretest to 29 per cent after completion of the programme.

The success of the Program H initiative in Brazil has inspired similar programmes in other countries in the region, as well as in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and the United States. In India, for example, where programmes modelled on the Program H approach have been adopted, preliminary findings suggest that men's attitudes towards women have changed.

See References, page 88.

UNICEF has joined with other UN agencies and institutions to create a partnership dedicated to producing more comprehensive and accurate data.⁵³

- **Violence against women:** Only 38 countries in the world have conducted at least one national survey on violence against women since 1995. A further 30 countries have surveys completed that cover parts of the country.⁵⁴
- **Enrolment, school attendance and literacy:** While there are significant data disaggregated by sex on school enrolment, sex-disaggregated data on literacy and school attendance are available for only 112 and 96 countries, respectively. Efforts to compile and release sex-disaggregated data on female completion rates at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education must also be strengthened.⁵⁵
- **Labour force, unemployment and occupational distribution:** Just over half the world's 204 countries and territories provided sex-

disaggregated data on these fundamental areas of work, with only 105 providing data on occupational segregation by sex.⁵⁶

- **Wage statistics:** This is a vital area where discrimination affects women and their children, and yet just under half (52) of the 108 countries or territories that reported wage data were also able to provide disaggregation by sex. Europe and Asia account for almost three quarters of these countries.⁵⁷
- **Informal employment:** Even with an internationally agreed-upon definition of informal employment, only 60 countries have produced data on informal employment, and in many cases these statistics are not fully comparable.⁵⁸
- **Unpaid work and time use:** Since 1995, 67 countries or areas have conducted time use surveys, with again the vast majority in CEE/CIS and South and East Asia. Only seven countries in Africa and three in South America have collected such data.⁵⁹

- **Women’s participation in national and local governments:** The Inter-Parliamentary Union collects data on the number of women in parliaments and how the numbers have changed over time.⁶⁰ Data on women’s participation in local government are relatively scarce, however, although United Cities and Local Governments has collected data in more than 70 countries.⁶¹
- **Women in peace negotiations and peace-building:** No systematic data are available on women participating as parties to peace negotiations. With the exception of the statistics made available by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, no systematic data are available about women involved in different dimensions of peace-building.

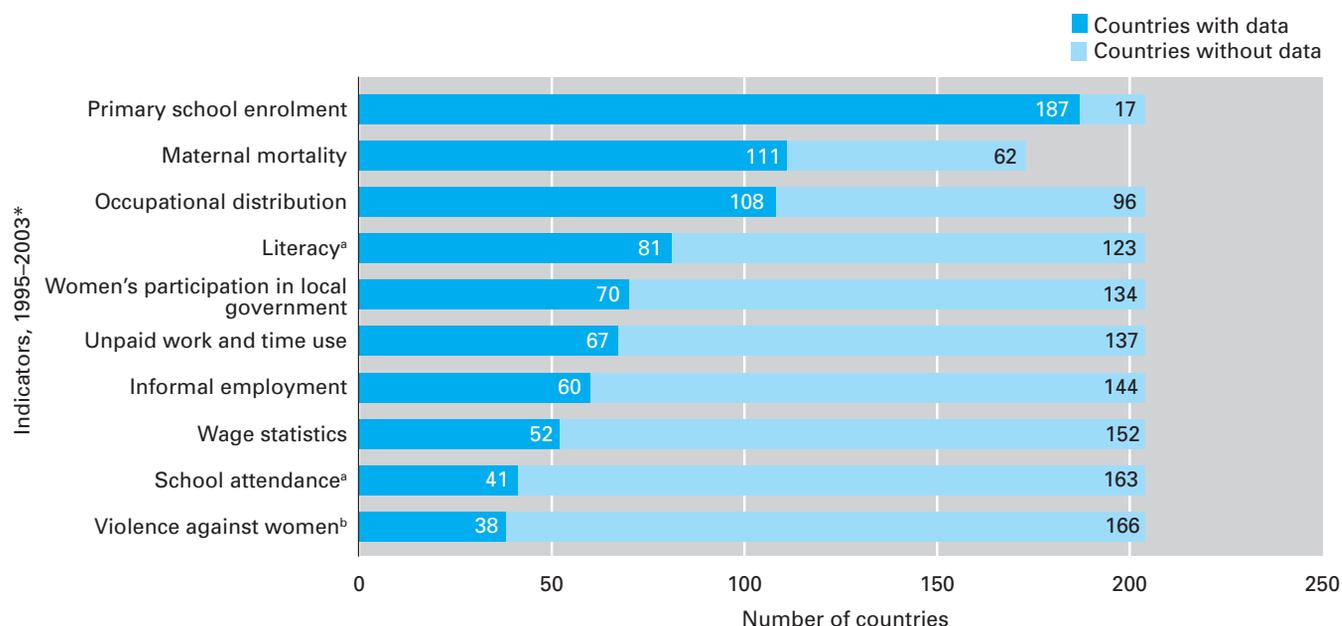
In some areas, collection of data is much more difficult than in others. Collecting data on violence and trafficking, for example, poses more methodological problems than data on women in national parliaments. However, the lack of data in many key areas reflects not the difficulties of data collection, but rather the

significant discrepancy between the resources invested in the excellent and careful collection of data in some areas, and lack of data in others. In other words, it is not only a question of capacity but also one of political will to invest in data collection.

When statistics are a priority, even if difficult to collect, they are there. Financial statistics such as inflation, for example, are not easy to collect as they require detailed and rapidly updated economic information, yet they are available almost universally – even in the poorest countries. But many countries, particularly poorer ones, do not currently have the statistical capacity to regularly collect the most basic disaggregated statistical series, let alone in areas such as informal employment, time use and wages.

While country-led censuses and surveys are the centrepiece of statistical collection, other approaches can rapidly produce data even where statistical capacity is limited. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, a household survey programme developed by UNICEF to

Figure 5.3 In many countries sex-disaggregated data are not available for key indicators



*Data refer to the most recent year available during the period specified.

Note: ‘Countries with data’ includes only countries where data are based on censuses, surveys or other sources, not countries where data are derived from modelled estimates. ^aData from censuses only. ^bIncludes only data from national surveys. An additional 30 countries have surveys covering part of the country.

Source: United Nations, Department of Social and Economic Affairs, *The World’s Women 2005: Progress in statistics*, United Nations, New York, 2006.

Partnering to provide improved estimates of maternal mortality

Each year, over 500,000 women die as a result of pregnancy-related causes, and many others suffer life-long health complications. Reducing maternal mortality is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals, but it is also among the most difficult to monitor owing to difficulties in measuring maternal mortality. In some cases, measurement is complicated by a lack of data; maternal deaths often go unrecorded in countries that lack reliable civil registration of births and deaths, or where the cause of death is not adequately classified or reported. Even in those countries with robust civil registration systems, maternal deaths are often

misclassified or attributed to other causes – particularly if the pregnancy status of the woman is not known or recorded.

UNICEF is collaborating with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to improve the information base on maternal mortality. Building on more than a decade of inter-agency collaboration and cooperation, UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA are pooling their expertise to pioneer a new approach to estimating the number of women dying from causes related to or aggravated by pregnancy. The methodology developed for the project will correct

existing data discrepancies and generate estimates for countries that currently lack data.

The group's joint work will also enhance data collection and dissemination by compiling and reviewing country concerns to ensure widespread acceptance of final estimates on maternal mortality, obtaining the most recently reported national data from their country and regional offices and organizing interregional consultations to discuss underlying statistical issues.

See References, page 88.

assist countries in filling data gaps for monitoring the situation of children and women, is capable of producing statistically sound, internationally comparable estimates of key indicators. One of the three questionnaires focuses on women aged 15–49 and currently includes questions on assets and security of tenure. Another valuable source of household data is the Demographic and Health Surveys, which include 200 surveys in 75 countries. Surveys such as these provide effective vehicles for getting in-depth information on the economic situation of women, as well as the prevalence of domestic violence and other forms of gender discrimination at the household level.

The time is now

The progress that has been made fighting gender discrimination is positive: girls are catching up with boys in school attendance and performance, and in a few developing countries and regions have surpassed them; more women are economically active and in higher level positions than ever before; and the number of women in parliament is increasing year after year. But, in addition to

showing how far we have come, the assessment of this report underlines how far there is to go.

Eliminating gender discrimination will produce a double dividend, fulfilling the rights of women and going a long way towards realizing those of children as well. With concerted efforts, real progress, based on respect, universal human rights and equal opportunities for women and men alike, can be made towards transforming discriminatory attitudes behaviours, customs, laws, institutions and practices in society. Effective partnerships involving governments, donors and international agencies, can support this process through the design and implementation of human-rights-based development strategies.

Tackling gender discrimination requires a different approach to policymaking. Generally, the key actors in policy decisions are governments. In areas such as debt or trade, for example, economists, members of the public and business leaders may be influential, but the decision to act rests with the governing authorities. Although governments and donors



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have a key role in addressing gender discrimination and inequality through legislation, policies and funding for key programmes, the core agents of change are an altogether more diverse group that includes all members of society, and women and girls themselves. These are the individuals and groups who hold the power to eliminate gender discrimination and inequalities through everyday attitudes, behaviours and practices.

The challenge to achieve such change is as exhilarating as it is daunting. It is not simply a question of producing a big decision by an important body, which would be in many ways a simpler task to conceptualize and approach. It requires societies to examine openly and honestly the extent of gender discrimination and rights violations suffered by women and girls, and commit themselves to eliminating its root causes. Although challenging at times, this process will be worth the

reward. Every person who argues that women have an equal place in decision-making forums, every community that demands girls go to school, and every government committed to ensuring that violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination against women have no place in society brings the double dividend of gender equality a step closer for this and future generations of women and children.