

Ensuring basic capabilities, an essential task for development

...the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights...

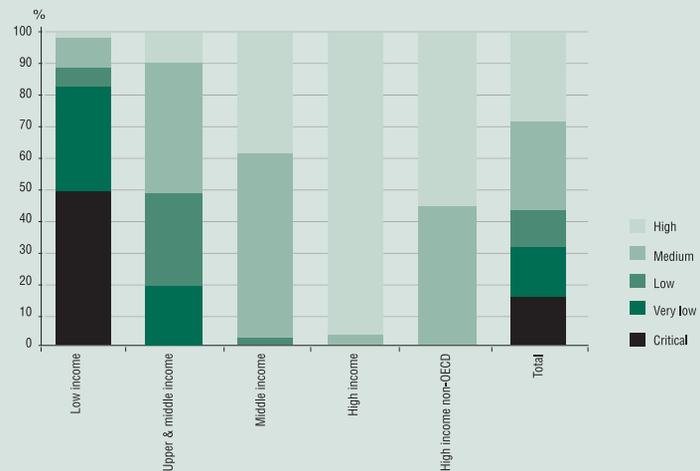
Preamble of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Social Watch Research Team¹

The multiple dimensions of the notions of development and poverty imply taking into consideration a very large set of elements in order to evaluate the degree in which a country or community progress toward the well-being of their population. However, minimum basic capabilities have to be met in order to stride toward that goal. Those requirements are associated to capabilities that members of a society must have and that are reciprocally strengthened in order to enable their individual and collective performance. They refer, especially, to the capabilities achieved by their younger members, who are the driving force in the future of their countries.

Social Watch has developed the Basic Capabilities Index (BCI)² as an approach to measure poverty and well-being based solely on capabilities.³ Each of its three indicators (percentage of children enrolled in first grade that reach 5th grade, malnutrition in children under 5, percentage of deliveries attended by skilled health personnel) express results in different dimensions of the human condition included in the development goals (education, children's health and reproductive health). The BCI as a summary-measure is able to summarize, in general, the sanitary status and the basic educational performance of a population. Also, it has shown it is highly correlated with the measure of other human capabilities related to the social development of countries.

SATISFACTION OF BASIC NEEDS: A REFLECTION OF WEALTH INEQUALITIES AMONG COUNTRIES



The level of satisfaction of basic needs clearly shows the inequalities in wealth among countries, measured through the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita.

Half of the countries with the lowest level of income¹ are in the most critical situation in satisfying their basic capabilities. Furthermore, none of the countries with *Very Low* or *Critical* BCI rankings are above the middle low income level.

In the other end, only high income countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development are almost completely in the highest BCI category, with the full or almost full satisfaction of their basic capabilities. Meanwhile, the remaining high income countries are close to satisfying their basic capabilities, ranking all of them in the two higher BCI categories. In short, among high income countries the level of unsatisfied basic needs is minimum or inexistent.

However, some low income countries have achieved a *Medium* or even *High* BCI ranking. Almost 15% of those countries are placed in the category with the highest satisfaction of capabilities, showing that overcoming a population's basic needs is possible beyond the wealth of those countries. ■

¹ World Bank country classification by GNI per capita.

¹ The members of the Social Watch Social Sciences Research Team are listed in the credits at the start of this book.

² The BCI is originated in the Quality of Life Index developed by the non-governmental organization Action for Economic Reforms-Philippines, which was derived from the Capability Poverty Measure (CPM) proposed by Professor Amartya Sen and popularized by the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index (HDI).

³ In contrast with the HDI, which combines capability indicators with income measurements.

Through this index it is possible to assign a value to each country that ranks them in relation with the other countries.⁴ This ranking was possible for 162 countries.

Likewise, with the goal of analysis, the countries were grouped in categories with similar conditions in relation to the degree of satisfaction of

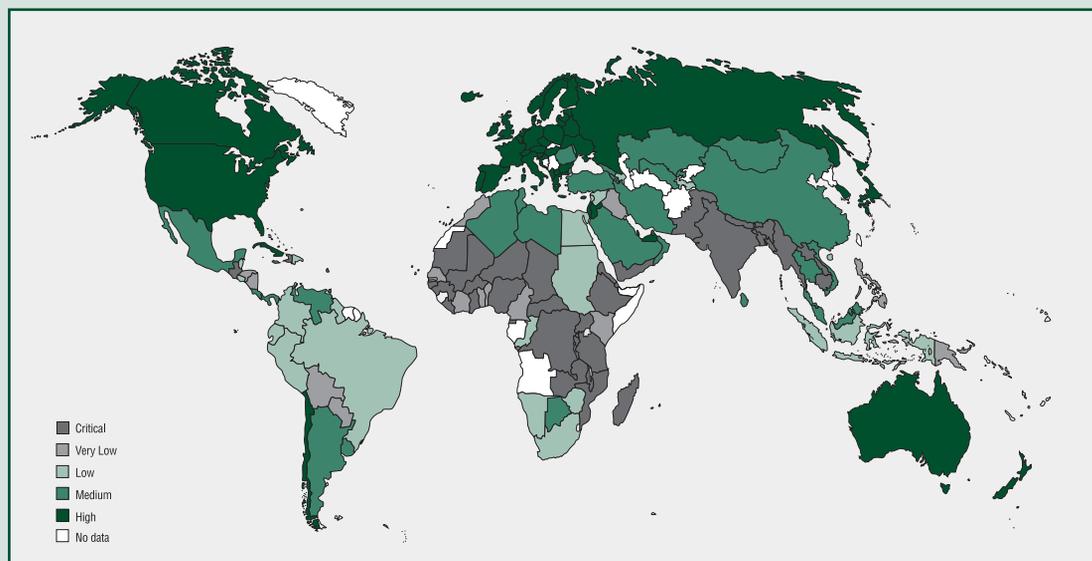
these basic capabilities. The most serious situations are concentrated in countries with *Critical BCI*. In the *Very Low BCI* category are countries that also show very significant obstacles to achieving the well-being of the population. Countries with *Low BCI* are at an intermediate level in the satisfaction of basic capabilities and their performance varies in some development dimensions.

The countries that have progressed to meet most or all of their population's basic capabilities are in the

⁴ All the statistics tables in this Report include the BCI ranking in the row "BCI ranking (out of 162 countries)".

GEOGRAPHY ACCORDING TO THE BCI

Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are the two regions with the highest concentration of basic needs



More than 7 in every 10 countries with a *Critical BCI* belong to sub-Saharan Africa. This region and South Asia make up 88% of the countries with highest basic needs (*Very Low BCI*).

From a regional perspective, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are the areas in the world with the largest percentage of countries in the lowest BCI categories (four of the South Asian countries are in the *Critical* level and two of them rank in the *Very Low* level).

In the sub-Saharan region, half the countries are in the *Critical* level and 36% are at the *Very Low* level in the BCI.

In an intermediate situation are some regions in which there are countries with very diverse behaviours. In Latin America, 11 of the 31 countries with available information have a *Low* or *Very Low* level

in the BCI, all of them in Central America and the Caribbean. Only Chile ranks among the *High BCI* level countries.

Among the East Asia and Pacific countries, five belong to the *Critical* or *Very Low BCI*, while four reach the *High* values in meeting their basic capabilities.

The Northern Africa and Middle East region also has countries with diverse performances. Although four countries have *Very Low* or *Critical* levels, five are in the group of higher BCI level.

More uniform is the performance of Central Asia, where the five countries with available information have *Low* or *Medium BCI* values.

In Europe and North America, the BCI shows *Medium* and *High* values for all of the countries with available information. ■

two categories with higher BCI values (*Medium* and *High BCI*). However, belonging to these groups does not imply a high level of development, but rather meeting the minimum essential requirements in order to progress towards higher levels of well-being.

In the *High BCI* group are the most developed countries and those without major problems to guarantee the satisfaction of the aforesaid capabilities.

The BCI, a summary indicator for the multiple dimensions of development

The BCI is a summary index that efficiently ranks countries according to the basic dimensions usually associated to social development – and present in the goals pledged by the countries in their international commitments. Each country's ranking in the BCI categories is closely related to the ones

obtained as a summary of the current situation in the various areas of development that Social Watch analyzes based on a wider set of specific dimension indicators.⁵ In each one, the situation improves in average as the countries rise in the BCI ranking.

The BCI's usefulness arises from an efficient identification of countries in more critical situations,

enabling a viewing of their situations in relation to their stages of development. According to the analysis shown in the following chapters, it is clearly visible that the group of *Critical BCI* countries have, in average, extreme insufficiencies in all of the social development dimensions assessed by Social Watch. This behaviour explains that the majority of these countries belong to the groups of "worse relative situation" in each of the areas under study. ■

5 Food security; Health; Reproductive Health; Education; Public Expenditure; Information, Science and Technology; Water and Sanitation, and Gender Equity. The tables in this Report assess countries according to the average performance of the set of specific indicators in each development dimension, ranking them among four categories: Countries in a better relative situation within the area, Countries above average, Countries below average, Countries in worse relative situation. For more details on this ranking, see the Methodology section in this Report.

Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) by country*

CRITICAL LEVEL	PLACE	BCI	VERY LOW LEVEL	PLACE	BCI	LOW LEVEL	PLACE	BCI	MEDIUM LEVEL	PLACE	BCI	HIGH LEVEL	PLACE	BCI
Chad	162	47	Myanmar	136	70	Bolivia	110	80	Kuwait	92	90	Trinidad and Tobago	45	98
Ethiopia	161	49	Togo	135	70	Ecuador	109	81	Suriname	91	90	United Arab	42	98
Rwanda	160	52	Cameroon	134	70	Guyana	108	81	Belize	89	90	Ukraine	42	98
Bangladesh	159	53	Côte d'Ivoire	133	71	Paraguay	107	82	Cape Verde	89	90	Jordan	42	98
Niger	158	55	Burkina Faso	132	71	Gabon	106	82	Botswana	88	90	Bulgaria	41	98
Nepal	157	56	Guatemala	131	72	Cook Islands	105	82	Viet Nam	87	91	Italy	40	99
Burundi	156	56	Honduras	130	73	Tajikistan	103	83	Panama	86	92	Latvia	37	99
Lao PDR	155	58	Comoros	129	73	Azerbaijan	103	83	Mexico	85	92	Barbados	37	99
Equatorial G	154	59	India	128	73	Indonesia	102	84	Turkey	83	92	Belarus	37	99
Cambodia	153	59	Nicaragua	127	73	Peru	101	84	Grenada	83	92	Hungary	35	99
Pakistan	152	60	Benin	126	73	Dominican Republic	96	85	Brazil	82	92	Lithuania	35	99
Guinea-Bissau	151	60	Tanzania	125	74	Vanuatu	99	85	China	81	93	Croatia	33	99
Mozambique	150	61	Senegal	124	74	Namibia	98	86	Iran, Islamic Rep.	80	94	Mauritius	33	99
Yemen	149	61	Zambia	123	74	Syrian Arab	97	87	Tonga	79	94	Slovenia	32	99
Malawi	148	63	Papua New Guinea	122	75	South Africa	96	87	Georgia	78	94	Estonia	28	99
Uganda	146	63	Iraq	121	75	Marshall Islands	95	88	Palau	77	94	Cuba	28	99
Nigeria	146	63	Mauritania	120	76	Egypt	94	88	Albania	76	94	Australia	28	99
Liberia	145	64	Zimbabwe	119	77	Colombia	93	89	Dominica	75	94	Canada	28	99
Madagascar	144	65	Swaziland	118	77				Malaysia	73	94	France	26	99
Mali	143	66	Philippines	117	78				Jamaica	73	94	Czech Republic	26	99
Ghana	142	66	Sao Tome and Prin.	116	78				Venezuela	72	94	Bahrain	25	99
Eritrea	141	67	El Salvador	115	78				Mongolia	70	95	Chile	22	99
Guinea	140	67	Djibouti	114	79				Tunisia	70	95	Poland	22	99
Bhutan	139	69	Maldives	113	80				Algeria	69	95	United States	22	99
Gambia	138	69	Morocco	112	80				West Bank and Gaza	67	95	Ireland	17	99
Lesotho	137	70	Sudan	110	80				Saudi Arabia	67	95	Israel	17	99
									St. Kitts and Nevis	66	95	United Kingdom	17	99
									Romania	65	95	Malta	17	99
									St. Vincent	63	95	Cyprus	17	99+
									Moldova	63	95	Korea, Rep.	6	99+
									Macedonia	62	95	Netherlands	6	99+
									Fiji	61	96	New Zealand	6	99+
									Bahamas	60	96	Greece	6	99+
									Qatar	57	96	Spain	6	99+
									St. Lucia	57	96	Austria	6	99+
									Slovakia	57	96	Belgium	6	99+
									Lebanon	56	96	Switzerland	6	99+
									Kazakhstan	54	96	Germany	6	99+
									Costa Rica	54	96	Denmark	6	99+
									Argentina	53	96	Portugal	6	99+
									Uruguay	52	97	Finland	1	99+
									Armenia	51	97	Japan	1	99+
									Samoa	50	97	Norway	1	99+
									Luxembourg	49	97	Sweden	1	99+
									Oman	48	97	Iceland	1	99+
									Brunei Darussalam	47	97			
									Thailand	45	98			

* Countries for which there is sufficient information available to construct the index. See the section on Methodology.

POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

A question of rights

Poverty is a phenomenon with many dimensions. We will approach it from a human rights perspective, whereby the fight to eradicate poverty becomes a political responsibility. The available data show that a worryingly high proportion of countries will not achieve the first Millennium Development Goal, which is to reduce the percentage of the population living in extreme poverty by half between 1990 and 2015. If we leave India and China out of the calculations we find that not only has the number of poor people in the world not fallen, it has actually increased.

Social Watch Research Team¹

Selected indicators:

- Gini Index
- Population living on less than USD 1 per day (international poverty line)
- Population living on less than USD 2 per day (international poverty line)
- Population below the national poverty line
- Participation in the poorest consumption/income quintile

The phenomenon of poverty is on the agenda of virtually all the social and political actors in the world today. It is on the policy agendas of governments, multilateral bodies and civil society organizations too. However, there is a wide range of focuses on this problem and alternative ways to analyse it, some with slight differences and some that are in complete contrast to each other. There is laboured discussion about just how being poor ought to be conceptualized, but behind these debates about concepts what is in play here are the different policies and different paths towards achieving a decent life for all human beings.

From the very beginning Social Watch has taken the view that poverty as a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon which must be tackled with a holistic approach. Poverty is regarded as “a situational syndrome that involves under-consumption, malnutrition, precarious housing, low levels of education, bad sanitation, unstable insertion into the productive structure, discouragement, anomie, little participation in social integration mechanisms, and perhaps adherence to a particular set of values that are to some extent different from those of the rest of society.”² There are also qualitative dimensions to poverty that call for a wider perspective: “To feel that one is poor is a relative concept that has a lot to do with having access to the resources

needed to maintain the standard of living one is accustomed to or which is considered suitable by the society one belongs to.”³

If poverty is defined in terms of a lack of well-being or the resources to be able to enjoy a good quality of life, we have to bear in mind dimensions like the availability of free time, personal security, protection against public and domestic violence, protection against natural disasters, and gender equity.⁴ It also involves other non-material, symbolic dimensions and having the personal resources to be able to avoid exclusion, like various systems of codes that operate in the modern world the most important of which are analytic thought, the ability to process information, and communication and management skills that enable people to participate fully in the globalized world and adapt to new modalities of work and production.

When it comes to conceptualizing and measuring poverty and taking action to combat it in the world, the human rights approach (and in particular the economic, social and cultural rights approach) is useful in that it sheds light on some dimensions of the problem that are usually overlooked.

The rights-based approach marks a shift away from an earlier development focus on meeting basic needs, which relied on charity or good will. A rights-based approach, in contrast, recognizes individuals as “rights-holders”, which implies that others are “duty-bearers”. Needs, on the other hand, have no object – there is no person or mechanism designated to meet them.

Under a human rights framework, governments are the primary duty-bearers. Among their duties are the establishment of equitable laws and systems that enable individuals to exercise and enjoy their rights, and to seek judicial recourse for violations under the rule of law. As rights-holders, people can claim their legitimate entitlements. This approach emphasizes the participation of individu-

“...poverty may be defined as a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.”⁵ ■

als and communities in decision-making processes that shape policies and programmes that affect them.⁶

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) has stated that poverty constitutes a negation of human rights,⁷ and this is a crucial element in the analysis of the phenomenon. From the perspective of rights, it is essential to know how far each country has progressed or lost ground in the struggle against poverty. If poverty is conceived of as a negation of rights, there have to be criteria to make it possible to judge when a certain situation constitutes a violation of rights.

The criteria of the maximum utilization of resources and of non-regression (not to retreat from positions that have been won in the realization of rights) can be key elements in this analysis. Another important variable is the distribution within a country of wealth and resources, these being understood as the people and the material, financial and technical assets that there are. It is clear that this variable covers a much wider field than just income.

States have responsibilities that go beyond specific governments and that are subject to contractual agreements in the international human rights system. These obligations are not subject to

5 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2001). “Substantive issues arising in the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Poverty and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights”. Document E/C.12/2001/10. Available at: <www.unhchr.ch>.

6 UNFPA (2005). *State of the World Population 2005*. Chapter 3: “The Promise of Human Rights”. Available at: <www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/english/ch3/index.htm>.

7 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2001), *op cit*.

1 The members of the Social Watch Social Sciences Research Team are listed in the credits at the start of this book.

2 Altimir, O. (1979). *La dimensión de la pobreza en América Latina*. ECLAC.

3 *Ibid*.

4 Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). (2003). *Documento sobre la pobreza para la III Conferencia Regional de Seguimiento de la Cumbre de Desarrollo Social*.

variations contingent upon what resources are available, they have to do with the right that all people have to a decent life.⁸

...a State party in which any significant number of individuals is deprived of essential foodstuffs, of essential primary health care, of basic shelter and housing, or of the most basic forms of education is, prima facie, violating the Covenant. Such minimum core obligations apply irrespective of the availability of resources of the country concerned or any other factors and difficulties.⁹

The international community also has a responsibility to provide support and solidarity for the implementation and promotion of human rights. Aid in the fight to eradicate poverty does not constitute a gift from the richest countries to the poorest, it is a political responsibility.

In the international system there are declarations in various fora and organizations, and the CESCR declaration is just one among many. However, there is no agreed, exhaustive and comprehensive definition of poverty that involves a commitment to action.

The 1995 Declaration of the World Summit on Social Development was one of the first international declarations with a multi-dimensional focus that was signed and ratified by governments from all over the world. Paragraph 19 of the Summit's Programme of Action affirms:

Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by a lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life.

In recent decades we have witnessed the application of global remedies in which poverty is spoken of not as a social phenomenon but as if it were an intrinsic attribute of specific individuals. Another factor here is that poverty is basically identified with lack or insufficiency of income, and while it is true

8 These concepts were widened by a group of experts in a document that determines what action or omissions constitute a violation of economic, social or cultural rights, and which stresses the importance of distinguishing lack of capacity from lack of will on the part of the State to fulfil its obligations under international treaties. "Maastricht Guidelines on Violations of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights", Maastricht, 22-26 January 1997.

9 *Ibid.*

TABLE 1. The number of countries by percentage of the population living in poverty (the USD 1, USD 2 and national poverty lines)

POVERTY LEVEL	USD 1 PER DAY	USD 2 PER DAY		NATIONAL POVERTY LINE
Less than 2%	33	10	Less than 20%	14
From 2% to 9%	14	14	20% to 29%	17
From 10% to 24%	21	15	30% to 39%	20
From 25% to 49%	14	20	40% to 49%	16
50% to 74%	10	16	50% and over	18
75% and over	3	20		
Countries with information	95	95		85

Source: World Development Indicators 2006 on line. The World Bank <www.worldbank.org>.

that level of income is a major determinant factor, it is not the only factor. In a multi-dimensional focus, income is seen as relative. For one thing, poverty of income cannot be used to identify other dimensions of the concept of a decent life that are not connected to monetary income, so income alone cannot yield an accurate estimate of access to material goods and services. To consider the satisfaction of needs only from the perspective of the consumption of goods and services that are purchased for money is to overlook access to other goods and services that are provided outside the market by the State, NGOs or at home. In many communities there are other ways of exchanging goods and services, ways that do not involve money. The importance of monetary income is associated with specific patterns of modern life and well-being, but it can vary considerably from one community to another.

From the income perspective, a person is defined as being poor when his or her income is below the threshold that is considered the minimum to satisfy specific needs and wants. The method of using an income threshold can be based on a poverty line that is relative or absolute.¹⁰

A specific level of income determines whether we regard an individual as poor or not poor. Depending on the standards used to quantify income poverty, an individual may be poor in the national sphere but not poor according to an 'international' definition, or vice versa, while his or her conditions of life are still the same.

Identifying whether someone is poor or not poor 'defines' who will benefit from most poverty eradication policies. In 2000 the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) proposed to "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger in the world", and to

10 The **relative poverty line** is fixed in such a way that a person is considered poor if his or her income is lower than the average or the mean or some other statistic that depends on the distribution of income across people in a society. The **absolute poverty line** is established in a way that reflects the amount of money needed to have a minimum level of life, and does not depend on income distribution.

this effect poverty was defined by income: an individual is considered poor if he or she lives on less than USD 1 per day.

Although practically every government in the world is committed to the first MDG, it is almost impossible to evaluate what progress has been made in most countries. The basis for making diagnoses and for implementing measures to combat poverty is information, but unfortunately this is a scarce commodity. Indicators are only available for a relatively small number of countries, and those that are available are not always up to date. Estimates for regions and for the world have to depend on a whole series of suppositions, and the figures they arrive at mainly have to do with the numbers of people who are poor. This means they tend to ignore other aspects of the phenomenon like how many countries are reducing or increasing the percentage of the population (not even the number, just the percentage) living in poverty.

Every year Social Watch publishes a poverty and income distribution table ("The present situation of poverty in the world") that is based on the little information available from international data sources. This table shows just some of the indicators used to measure the situation of countries as regards income distribution among the inhabitants and the proportion of the population living in income poverty.

It is estimated that at the present time there are more than one billion people living on less than USD 1 a day, which is defined as extreme poverty or indigence.¹¹

We have information about how many people live on less than USD 1 or USD 2 per day for only 95 countries. Of these, there are at least 13 in which more than half the population have to live on less than USD 1 per day. If we take USD 2 per day as the line there are at least 36 countries in which more than half the people are living in poverty, and in 20 of these more than three quarters of the population have a daily income of less than USD 2.

11 World Bank (2006). *World Development Indicators 2006*.

These poverty lines have been legitimized internationally on the assumption that they make it possible to identify the most critical situations, compare different countries, and decide where the main weight of international aid should be sent. However, in different countries poverty is analyzed using different parameters which are national poverty lines, and these are a more suitable approach since they take account of the context of the society in which poor people live.

For the national poverty line indicator, information is available for only 85 countries. In 18 of these more than 50% of the population live below this poverty line.

According to United Nations estimates, the number of people in extreme poverty has fallen by approximately 200 million since 1990. However, this reduction has been concentrated in only a few countries. If China is excluded from the estimates the panorama changes dramatically and it emerges that over the last 12 years the number of people living in extreme poverty in the world has fallen by a mere 9 million.¹² If India (where poverty has decreased over the period) is also excluded from the calculations we find that the number of poor people in the world has not gone down at all, in fact it has risen.

Between 1990 and 2002 the number of people in the world living on USD 2 a day fell by 40 million, but there are still 2.6 billion people on the planet who have to survive on this amount or less.

According to the latest World Bank estimates,¹³ if the developing countries maintain their current rates of growth until 2015 there would still be 600 million people living on less than USD 1 per day.

Using the United Nations time series data on the percentage of the population living on less than USD 1 per day¹⁴ we can follow the evolution of this indicator for the limited number of countries for which there is information for the 1990-1994 and 1999-2003 periods.

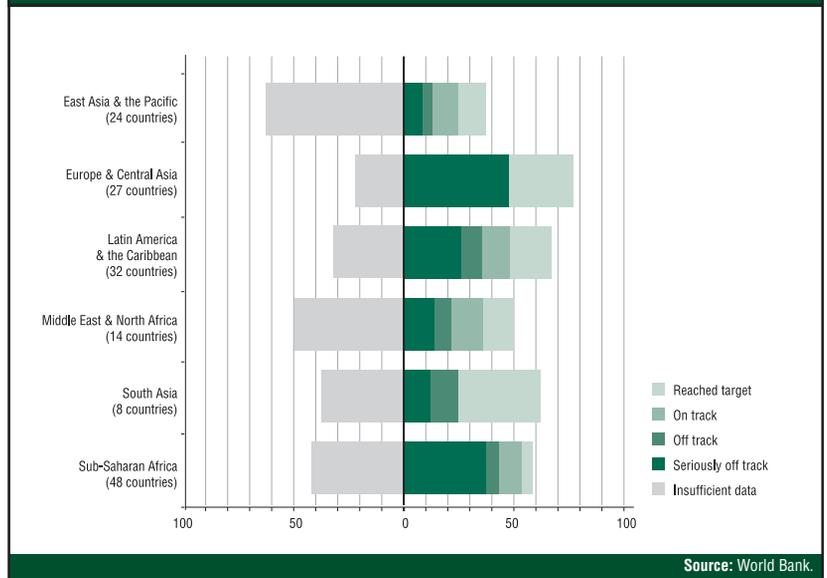
The conclusions are not encouraging. The number of countries that have managed to reduce their poverty percentages over the period is about the same as the number (25 countries) in which the proportion of poor people has increased. There are 13 countries that have the same percentage, or only slight differences, for the two periods, and in most of these only 2% or less of the population are critically poor. However, there are three cases in which poverty has stagnated at very high levels (Bangladesh 36%, Uganda 85% and Zambia 64%).

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ United Nations Statistics Division. Millennium Development Goals Indicators. Available from: <mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Default.aspx >.

CHART 1. Share of countries on track to achieve the poverty reduction target by region



The World Bank makes an evaluation of the possibilities that countries (for which information is available) have of achieving the first MDG. This estimate is based on these countries' rates of progress in these years.

As can be seen in Chart 1, the prospects of achieving the first of the MDGs are far from good. The information that is available makes up a worrying panorama in which few countries will have actually cut extreme poverty by half by the end of the 1990-2015 period. In some regions, especially sub-Saharan Africa, the percentage of countries that will be able to reach this target is minimal. The countries of Europe and Central Asia fall into two clear groups. On the one hand there are those that have already reached this objective, and on the other hand there are countries, mostly in south-east Europe and the Community of Independent States, that fall a long way short of the target.

Another conclusion can be drawn from Chart 1: there is simply not enough information available to make reasonable evaluations. For some regions we do not have data for more than half the countries, and this means that any global evaluations that are made involve a wide margin of uncertainty.

The distribution of resources must be promoted through measures that are universal and focalized. The rationale of social policy should not be limited just to the fight against poverty. If a state focalizes its programmes only on people living in extreme poverty it will not be tackling the problem in its entirety, and this can lead to more people beginning to slide into poverty. ■

However, as we pointed out at the start of this article, to base the concept of poverty and inequality only on income is to adopt a narrow focus that makes it impossible to evaluate the real magnitude of these problems in the world. ■

FOOD SECURITY

More and more people are going hungry

Some countries have made progress, but others, those in the most critical situation, are clearly losing ground and the gap between the countries that are better off and the poorest is widening. In the countries in worse situation an average of 35% of the population are undernourished, while in the countries in better situation the figure is no more than 7%. Since 1997 the number of people who are undernourished has risen, and the regions that are affected most are sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia.

Social Watch Research Team¹

Selected indicators:

- Undernourishment (% of total population)
- Underweight at birth (%)
- Malnutrition among children under 5, low weight (%)

Food security is one of the most critical dimensions of community development and one of the basic human rights established in the ICESCR. It features in declarations and proposed objectives in countries, in regions, and on the international stage.

However, the reality is that effective achievements in this area fall a long way short of governments' declared intentions. At the present time there are an estimated 842 million people in the world who are undernourished out of a total world population of 6 billion, and the trend in the last 10 years has been most discouraging.² In at least 35 countries more than a quarter of the people are undernourished,³ and in some cases the figures are simply shocking: in Burundi, the Republic of the Congo and Eritrea, three fifths of the population are undernourished.

According to UNICEF, in the developing countries one quarter of the children under 5 suffer from malnutrition,⁴ which amounts to a total of 146 mil-

lion children.⁵ The statistics show that the situation in 31 countries is even worse, and in Bangladesh and Nepal, for example, half the children in the country show signs of malnutrition.

Food insufficiency is also perpetuated through maternity. Every year more than 20 million children (15.5% of all live births) come into the world weighing less than 2,500 grams (5.5 pounds).⁶ They are underweight mainly because their mothers were undernourished during pregnancy. In 16 of the countries analyzed at least 20% of babies are underweight at birth, and in Bangladesh, India, Sudan and Yemen the figure is over 30%.

The huge gap between the countries in the better and worse situations as regards food security is just one more sign of how important this aspect of development is. In addition, it should be borne in mind that there are no statistics available for many developed countries, so the differences that the indicators show underestimate the real gap.

In the countries that are worse off an average of 35% of the people are undernourished, while only 7% of the people in the countries that are better off are affected.

When it comes to children the situation is no better. In the countries that are in the worse position an average of 30% of children under 5 are undernourished, but in the better group the figure is less than 7%. On average, 15% of children are born underweight in the worse-off countries, but only 7.5% are underweight at birth in the countries at the other end of the scale.

In many communities the problems of food insecurity are accentuated when extreme situations give rise to food emergencies. Food crises are associated not only with natural disasters but also with direct human causes like armed conflicts, economic crises and forced population displacement, and these have increased dramatically in the last 10

The right to adequate food is enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). When States sign this Covenant they commit themselves to working to improve their methods of food production, conservation and distribution, and to ensure the equitable distribution of food in the world according to people's needs. ■

years. The consequences are much worse in poor countries, and very much worse indeed among the most vulnerable communities and population groups, above all in rural areas where the impact is usually more direct and cruel.

However, food insecurity is a global problem whose causes go far beyond natural disasters or armed conflicts.

Food security is linked to other aspects of development in that it is of crucial importance for people in a community to be able to attain a decent level of life.

The latest Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report gives an analysis based on studies and examples of the numerous mechanisms that link food security to the other aspects of development (see boxes). The aim is to show that it is inconsistent to consider development targets, and in particular the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in isolation from one another, and the report concludes that if these goals are to be reached it is essential to see them as necessarily interconnected and tackle them as an integrated whole. If this interconnection is evident in a series of specific and limited goals like the MDGs it is more consistent to talk of human rights to understand why they should be seen as an integrated whole.

The human rights focus shows how essential the ideas of unity and interdependence are not only in the legal sphere but also as a consequence of the very nature of the processes involved. In a community, not being able to exercise one of these rights, or having one violated, has an effect on all the other rights.

It is not possible to talk about the right to food outside the framework of the wider concept of food sovereignty, which has to do with a country's or a community's capacity to feed itself through autonomous

1 The members of the Social Watch Social Sciences Research Team are listed in the credits at the start of this book.

2 FAO (2005). *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2005*. Available from: <www.fao.org/docrep/008/a0200e/a0200e00.htm>.

3 Undernourishment: the percentage of the population who consume less than the required minimum of food energy. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) the essential daily minimum, which takes account of calories needed to maintain body weight while performing a light activity, varies in different countries but is approximately 2,300 kcal per capita, depending on age, sex and stature.

4 Infant malnutrition: the percentage of children under 5 whose weight by age is less than minus 2 of the standard deviation of the mean for the international reference population of ages from 0 to 59 months. The reference population adopted by WHO in 1983 is based on children in the United States of America, who are assumed to be well fed.

5 UNICEF (2006). "Progress for Children. A Report Card on Malnutrition". No. 4, May.

6 Low birth weight has been defined by WHO as weight at birth of less than 2,500 grams (5.5 pounds). This practical cut-off point for international comparison is based on epidemiological observations that infants weighing less than 2,500 g are approximately 20 times more likely to die than heavier babies. A birth weight below 2,500 g is more common in developing than in developed countries, and it contributes to a range of poor health conditions. UNICEF and WHO (2004). *Low Birthweight: Country, regional and global estimates*.

control of the food production process. Therefore food sovereignty has to do with the rights of communities, countries or groups of countries to define their agrarian policies in a way that excludes dumping (an unethical strategy in normal international trade transactions whereby a product is placed on the market in another country at a price below its value in the country of origin). This includes, for example, policies of making land and credit available to small farmers, but it also includes international trade regulations. The international trade system currently in operation systematically perpetuates inequalities between rich and poor countries by the use of tariff and non-tariff barriers and by subsidizing production in rich countries.

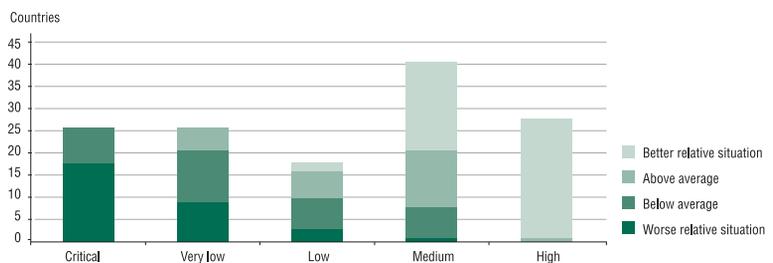
It is no surprise that the countries that are worse off as regards food security are also those that are in difficulties in the other areas of development, as can be seen in accordance with their ranking in the Basic Capabilities Index (BCI).⁷

All the countries in a critical situation in the BCI ratings are also below average in food security, and of the 26 countries in this group 18 are in the worse situation.

In the group of critical BCI countries, 17% of babies are underweight at birth, at least 33% of children under 5 have malnutrition-related problems, and on average 32.5% of the people are undernourished. In the countries that rate high on the BCI, on the other hand, only 7% of babies are born underweight, only 6% of children suffer from malnutrition and a mere 6% of the population are undernourished.

The problems of food insecurity are clearly more serious in some geographical areas than in others. The two regions where a higher proportion of countries are in severe difficulties in this respect

CHART 1. Current food security situation by regions



Food security and gender equity

In Southern Asia infant malnutrition is even more serious than in sub-Saharan Africa.

Lack of food affects women more than men. "Extreme gender inequalities mean that women in Southern Asia are deprived of education, employment opportunities and participation in decision-making. As a consequence, millions of mothers in the south of Asia 'do not have the knowledge, the means or the freedom to take action for their own benefit or for that of their children'. They are very much more likely to suffer from malnutrition. In some parts of Southern Asia the men and boys consume twice the calories that women and girls consume, but the women and girls do a lot of the heavy work."¹⁰

are sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. More than half the undernourished children in the world are in Southeast Asia, and 57 million live in India.¹¹

According to the latest FAO evaluation, some progress has been made in reducing hunger in the world. Between 1990 and 2002 the number of undernourished people in the developing countries fell by 9 million.¹²

Nevertheless, this global figure conceals enormous differences between regions and countries. In East Asia the figure fell by 47 million over the period, mainly thanks to improvements in China, but in sub-Saharan Africa there are 34 million more undernourished people than there were at the start of the 1990s.

In fact, the number of people on the planet who suffer from hunger has risen since 1997.

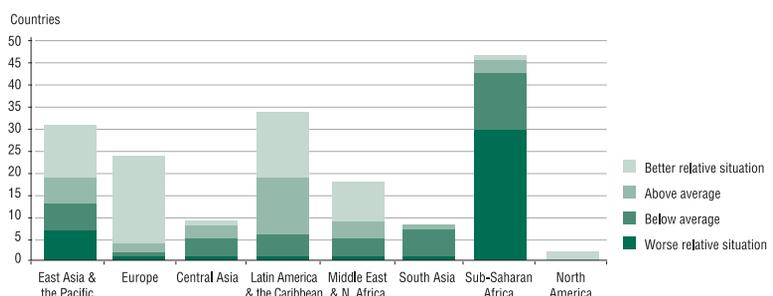
At the current pace, we will fall a long way short of the objective to reduce by half the number of people suffering from hunger by 2015, adopted at the FAO World Food Summit in 1996 and renewed in the MDGs in 2000.

Food security and children's health

Hunger and malnutrition are the main causes of more than half of total infant deaths. Each year they kill nearly 6 million children.⁸

Many babies who are born underweight do not survive because of inadequate food. At least 5.6 million children under 5 die each year as a consequence of malnutrition, which is responsible for more than half of mortality in children under 5 years old.⁹

CHART 2. Final food security position according to the BCI



7 See the section entitled "Achievement of basic capabilities is an indispensable task for development" in this Report.

8 FAO (2005), *op cit*.

9 UNICEF and WHO (2004), *op cit*.

11 UNICEF (2006), *op cit*.

12 United Nations (2006). *The Millennium Development Goals Report*. <mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2006/MDGReport2006.pdf>.

10 FAO (2005), *op cit*.

TABLE 1. Current situation by food security evolution

	SIGNIFICANT REGRESSION	SLIGHT REGRESSION	STAGNATION	SLIGHT PROGRESS	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	TOTAL
Countries in worse situation	3	5	5	9	8	30
Countries below the average	0	3	4	11	8	26
Countries above the average	1	2	6	10	2	21
Countries in better situation	0	1	7	6	0	14
Total	4	11	22	36	18	91

TABLE 2. Averages by indicator of countries in better and worse relative food security situations

		UNDERNOURISHED (% OF TOTAL POPULATION)	LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (%)	MALNUTRITION AMONG CHILDREN UNDER 5, LOW WEIGHT (%)
Countries in worse situation	Average	34.9	15.4	30.2
	Number of countries	30	37	30
Countries in better situation	Average	6.8	7.5	7.9
	Number of countries	12	51	13
Total	Average	26.9	10.8	23.5
	Number of countries	42	88	43

Social Watch has analyzed the evolution of food security using data by country from two of the relevant indicators (undernourishment and infant malnutrition), and the conclusions are alarming. Although some countries have made progress others are losing ground, and these are mainly countries in the most critical situation. This means the gap between the better-positioned countries and the worst affected is widening.

There are four countries in particular for which information is available that show marked regression in their food security situation, and this is mainly due to the fact that the number of people who are undernourished has shot up. The most serious cases are the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, where in just a decade the proportion of the population who were undernourished went from 32% and 48% respectively, to a situation where 70% of the people in these countries were suffering from hunger at the start of the new millennium. In both these cases food insecurity has been exacerbated by climate factors and by armed conflicts whose dire consequences have lingered on long after the events themselves passed into history. Peace is currently being restored in Burundi.

Another case is the Democratic Republic of Korea, where the proportion of people who are undernourished doubled in this period from 18% to 36%. ■

The most critical situations at the present time:

At least one person in two suffers from hunger (*) in ...	
Eritrea	73
Congo, Dem. Rep. of	71
Burundi	68
Sierra Leone	50
Zambia	49
* Undernourishment (% of total population)	

3 out of every 10 newborn babies are significantly under normal weight (*) in...	
Bangladesh	36
Yemen	32
Sudan	31
India	30
* Low weight at birth (%)	

Nearly 50% of children under 5 suffer from malnutrition (*) in...	
Bangladesh	52
Nepal	48
Ethiopia	47
India	47
Yemen	46
Burundi	45
Cambodia	45
* Malnutrition in children under 5, low weight	

EDUCATION

The challenge of universality

The emergence of the information society has opened up new possibilities in education but it has also exposed some basic deficiencies. While illiteracy is now almost negligible in the developed countries it is still only too prevalent in the poorest nations. Although indicators show that overall progress has been made, future demographic growth is going to cause serious problems in some parts of the world. The educational systems in the developing countries are in urgent need of greater public investment and contributions from the international community.

Social Watch Research Team¹

Selected indicators:

- Literacy (15-24 years old)
- Enrolment rate in primary education (net)
- Children who reach 5th grade
- Enrolment rate in secondary education (net)
- Enrolment rate in tertiary education (gross)

Improving education has been on the agenda of international bodies, governments and civil society organizations for decades. Education is a basic instrument for eradicating poverty, constructing citizenship and improving people's ability to control their own futures, and it has attracted the attention of numerous actors and given rise to policies to tackle the main problems. Good progress has been made overall, but in the background we can still discern serious inequalities.

The new systems of production and new kinds of culture that the information society has brought in its wake have helped to push education back into the spotlight of world interest, but the response to this challenge from the decision-makers has been fragmented and inadequate.

In the modern world there is an unprecedented flow of information, but paradoxically some of the major problems facing education on a global level have still not been overcome. For example, many countries have virtually banished illiteracy, but many others are still struggling to establish universal literacy. There are nearly 800 million illiterate adults in the world today (two thirds of whom are women) and more than 100 million children who do not go to school (80% of them in Africa), so this challenge involves huge swathes of the world's population.²

The Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, has made the point that teaching people to read and write is not just an end in itself, it is also a vital tool for eradicating poverty, promoting gender equity, improving health, fostering political participation and improving people's lives in many other dimensions. It is a basic human right, and as such it cannot be renounced.

¹ The members of the Social Watch Social Sciences Research Team are listed in the credits at the start of this book.

² Henceforth the figures given are taken from various UNESCO reports.

TABLE 1. Least literate countries, by region

COUNTRY	REGION	% OF LITERACY
Niger	Sub-Saharan Africa	27
Burkina Faso	Sub-Saharan Africa	40
Mali	Sub-Saharan Africa	41
Iraq	Middle East and North Africa	46
Bangladesh	Southern Asia	51
Mauritania	Sub-Saharan Africa	51
Senegal	Sub-Saharan Africa	56
Benin	Sub-Saharan Africa	59
Comoros	Sub-Saharan Africa	60
Ethiopia	Sub-Saharan Africa	61

The developed countries have achieved almost universal literacy but the poorest countries are still plagued with widespread illiteracy. In India more than a third of the people cannot read or write, and this problem is also severe in sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab world and large parts of Asia.

Of the ten countries with the highest illiteracy rates, eight are in sub-Saharan Africa, which is the by far the most deficient region in this respect.

It is vitally important that enrolment rates in formal education be raised, because there are still more than 100 million children growing up without any primary education, which is a serious deficit for humankind. However, in many cases the task of extending the coverage of formal educational systems is complicated since it can be difficult to reach children in rural areas or with special needs, or children who belong to cultural or linguistic minorities.

The latest data from UNESCO shows that between 1998 and 2002 school enrolments worldwide went up very slightly, by just one percentage point, from 83.6% to 84.6%.

The current situation as regards primary, secondary and tertiary education is very different in different regions of the world. In the richer countries the percentage of university graduates in health sciences, engineering and computing is more than double the rate in the poor countries.

Another dimension to the problem is that not all children in the world who go to school finish primary education. For example, in Latin America there are around six million adolescents who did not complete their primary school education. This is further complicated in parts of Africa because educational facilities are simply not avail-

able, partly due to lack of public funds, as was recently reported by some African Ministers of Education. In some African countries the budgetary allocation for education is less than 3% of GDP. It is policy decisions like this that define the future of education in these countries.

The situation of education in the world today is very far from uniform, and the indicators show that rates of progress vary greatly from one region to another. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of children without schooling fell by 20% in Asia, due to the fact that the educational systems in that part of the world have developed very rapidly and efficiently. However, in the same ten-year period, the number of children without schooling in sub-Saharan Africa increased by 13%. Demographic growth has been cited³ as the cause of this trend, along with a more general phenomenon called 'de-schooling' which is the result of many parents taking their children out of education or, what is worse, not even enrolling them in schools in the first place.

One of the factors that underlie these problems is that most of the countries in that region have high fertility rates. According to some estimates, the school population will grow by 34 million between 2000 and 2015. These demographic characteristics exert an influence on how the challenge of providing universal education is met, and on the direction that public policies will take in the years ahead.

Another generalised difficulty has to do with the ability of educational systems to retain the children who have enrolled, and here again the outlook is rather bleak. The problem is to keep children in school until the last year of primary education. There are many countries, above all in Africa, that have primary school retention rates of less than 70%, and the worst case is Malawi which retains only 22% in primary education.

An efficacious educational system has to do more than simply keep children in school, it has to teach them, and the repetition rate, the percentage of pupils who have to repeat a year, which is connected to retention, is one indicator of how effective the teaching is. The repetition rate is under 3% in most of the countries for which UNESCO has data, but more than half the nations in sub-Saharan Africa have rates above 15%, and the figures go as high as 34% in Gabon and 40% in Equatorial Guinea.

A further complication in schools is classroom overcrowding. In Southern and Eastern Asia, for example, overcrowding in the classroom is a serious hindrance to effective learning. On average there are 40 children per teacher, but in some cases there may be

³ UNESCO (2005). World Report *Towards Knowledge Societies*.

many more, and for example in Bangladesh, one of the most populous countries in the world, the average is 57 pupils per teacher.⁴ The only solution to this is to undertake teacher training on a large scale.

The latest information⁵ that has become available shows the differences in the amounts of public expenditure allocated to education. This expenditure, as a proportion of GDP, is greater in the richer countries, and these are usually the countries that have reached the goal of universal education. To bring the global picture into focus we can consider mean expenditure on education for different regions of the world. The figures speak for themselves: in North America and Western Europe the mean is 5.52% of GDP, in Asia and the Pacific it is 3.9%, and it is a mere 3.3% in sub-Saharan Africa.

One of the most urgent needs of the educational systems in developing countries is increased public investment. In cases where human, financial and other resources are lacking, the international community should step in and provide them. This is laid down in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR); it is a binding obligation that the developed countries have with respect to the developing countries.

Higher education is becoming increasingly commercialized, and this is opening up unprecedented possibilities for the future. There are predictions such as the following, "it is very possible that in 2010 the so-called corporate universities that were originally founded to update employees' competencies will outnumber traditional universities",⁶ and if this kind of situation emerges the question of democratizing tertiary education will be complicated by problems that have never been met before.

When we survey the general panorama in the world we find that almost all the countries in the best overall situation in terms of education indicators have a medium or high rating on the Basic Capabilities Index (BCI). There is a very strong correlation between these two variables (BCI ranking and the final position given by combining the various education indicators). All the countries that rank high on the BCI are in an above average position in education, and 41 of the 45 countries in the middle range on the BCI are also above average in education.

It is no surprise to find that all 25 countries with a critical BCI rating are below average in terms of education, and of the 26 countries in the very low BCI group only one, the Philippines, is above average for education.

There has been a significant overall improvement in the area of education in the world, and only 8 out of 164 countries have slipped into a worse situation while 127 have improved. Besides this, headway has been made where it was most needed, in countries in an unfavourable situation; these mostly showed some improvement in education. Apart from a few exceptions (Gabon, the Cook Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands), the

4 UNESCO (2004). Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. <www.unesco.cl/esp/atematica/eduygenero/noticias/1.act?menu=esp/atematica/eduygenero/>.

5 UNESCO (2005). *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2005. The Quality Imperative*. Available from: <www.efareport.unesco.org>.

6 *Ibid*, p. 98.

CHART 1. Current situation in education, by regions

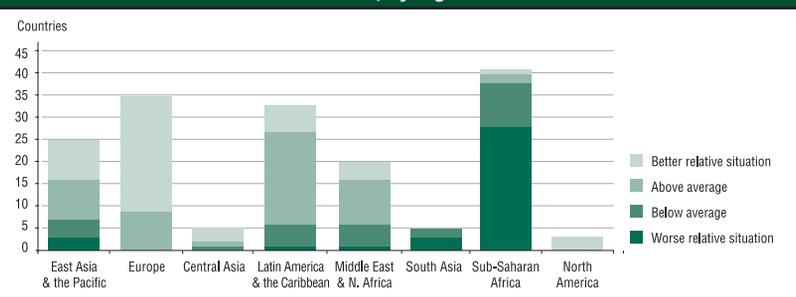


CHART 2. Final position of education according to BCI

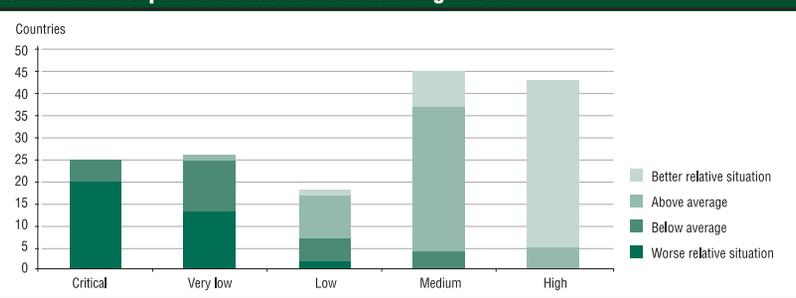


TABLE 2. Current situation by evolution in education

	SIGNIFICANT REGRESSION	SLIGHT REGRESSION	STAGNATION	SLIGHT PROGRESS	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	TOTAL
Countries in worse situation	1	2	4	13	16	36
Countries below average	0	0	5	14	7	26
Countries above average	0	4	15	25	8	52
Countries in better situation	0	1	5	39	5	50
Total	1	7	29	91	36	164

TABLE 3. Averages by indicator of countries in better and worse relative situations in education

		LITERACY (15-24 YEARS OLD)	ENROLMENT RATE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION (NET)	CHILDREN WHO REACH 5 TH GRADE	ENROLMENT RATE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION (NET)	ENROLMENT RATE IN TERTIARY EDUCATION (GROSS)
Countries in worse situation	Average	69.4	65.1	65.6	24.1	3.3
	Number of countries	30	33	31	27	35
Countries in better situation	Average	99.6	95.9	97	88.9	54.8
	Number of countries	31	49	30	48	50
Total	Average	84.8	83.5	81.1	65.6	33.6
	Number of countries	61	82	61	75	85

below-average countries have not regressed, and most have made some kind of progress even if it is only slight.

The two regions that have the best indicators for education in relative terms are North America and Europe; not one European country is below the world average. Latin America and the Caribbean are in a relatively good situation since 27 of the 33 countries in that region are above the world average. Last on the list comes sub-Saharan Africa which, like in so many other dimensions, is in the worst situation of all. More than 90% of the countries in this region are in a below average situation, and only the Seychelles figure among the nations that are in the better situation.

The averages for each indicator show how great the difference is between the countries in the worst and the best situations. In the former group over two thirds (69.4%) of the population are illiterate, but in the more advanced countries less than 0.5% of the people cannot read or write. There are similar or even greater gaps between the two groups when it comes to school enrolments and educational efficacy indicators, and the widest gulf of all is in enrolment in tertiary education: the countries in the best situation send more than 50% of their young people into higher education, but in the countries in the worst situation the average rate is a paltry 3%. ■

INFORMATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Digital gap, people gap

Access to communication technologies has generated new inequalities. More than four fifths of the people in the world do not have access to Internet and are therefore disadvantaged when it comes to making progress in production, education, and constructing full citizenship. In the most backwards regions, investment in new technologies is not geared to spreading them on a large scale.

Social Watch Research Team¹

Selected indicators:

- Internet users (per 1,000 people)
- Personal computers (per 1,000 people)
- Telephone mainlines (per 1,000 people)
- Scientists and engineers in research and development (per million people)
- Expenditure on information and communication technology (% of GDP)
- Expenditure on research and development (% of GDP)

For some years now the experts have been talking about the potential of the new “information society” (and more recently about the “knowledge society”²), and the challenges and dangers it involves. The capability to manage information is increasingly important, and one consequence of this is that unequal access to communication technologies is currently generating new inequalities in terms of social development.

The global aim ought to be to achieve “computer literacy” for the widest possible range of people. In the information society, a world democratic order depends on equal participation for all in the global information flow. However, there are great inequalities in access to this flow, and this has been called “the digital gap”. For example, at the present time 40% of the people in Canada and the United States have access to Internet, but in Latin America and the Caribbean the figure is only 2% or 3%. One of the main challenges facing the world in the new millennium is to narrow this gap.

In fact there is not just one digital gap but several, since people’s access to current information systems is conditional upon a whole series of factors. UNESCO has listed economic resources, geography, age, gender, language, education, cultural background, employment and physical well-being as reasons why people may be “left out” when it comes to being able to make use of the new technologies.

Access to personal computers is a prerequisite for access to the new sources of information. Table 1

TABLE 1. Personal computers per thousand people: the ten most disadvantaged countries by region

COUNTRIES	REGION	PERSONAL COMPUTERS PER 1,000 PEOPLE
Dominican Republic	Latin America and the Caribbean	0.5
Niger	Sub-Saharan Africa	0.7
Malawi	Sub-Saharan Africa	1.6
Chad	Sub-Saharan Africa	1.6
Burkina Faso	Sub-Saharan Africa	2.2
Central African Republic	Sub-Saharan Africa	2.8
Cambodia	East Asia and the Pacific	2.8
Angola	Sub-Saharan Africa	3.2
Ethiopia	Sub-Saharan Africa	3.2
Mali	Sub-Saharan Africa	3.2

shows that the countries which are most deficient in this tool are all in the world’s poorest regions, which are precisely the regions with the greatest need for insertion into the information society in order to make progress in other spheres like production and politics.

There are more than one billion Internet users on the planet and this has been a great success story, but more than four fifths of the people in the world still do not have access to Internet and are therefore being held back in various ways from making progress in production, education and the construction of citizenship. According to UNESCO, 90% of Internet users are in the industrialized countries.

One measure of inequality is the availability of access to broadband, and this is and will continue to be problematic. According to the United Nations Trade and Development Conference, some countries have made spectacular progress in this respect. China, for example, jumped from almost no broadband subscribers to 23 million in just three years. But at the other end of the scale there are some least developed countries that do not even have statistics about broadband access.

Some governments have placed restrictions on access to Internet, and this goes to show just what a powerful political tool it is for shaping public opinion. Internet may not have turned out to be as pluralistic, horizontal, open, democratic or decentralized as its early promise suggested since there are control mechanisms that can be used to restrict it, but it is still the most participative means of mass communication.

Broadly speaking, technological scientific development in a country depends to a large extent on government decisions, and indicators such as public spending on research and development (R&D) can give

a clear idea of how governments are performing in this respect. Public investment in R&D as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is high in the countries that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), where the average is 2.2% and the top investors, relatively speaking, are Israel (4.7%) and Sweden (4.0%).³ But what is worrying here is that the rate in most underdeveloped countries is under 0.2%. For example, at the start of the millennium the Arab countries in North Africa and Asia were allocating only 0.1% of GDP to R&D.

It has been calculated that in Latin America and the Caribbean more than USD 20 billion has been invested in private telecommunications projects, while in the Middle East, Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa less than USD 2 billion has been invested in information and communication technology (ICT). To make matters worse, the investment in ICT that there is in these countries is very often just private initiatives to provide services for wealthy users in urban areas, and is not geared to the large scale diffusion of these technologies.

It is clear that State investment is a key factor. This is confirmed by the fact that experiences that are successful in terms of scientific and technological progress usually enjoy solid support from the government. This is what is happening in China, where the current surge in ICT has been underpinned by a big increase in State investment in R&D, which jumped from 0.83% of GDP in 1999 to 1.23% in 2002.⁴ China’s recent progress not only in ICT but

¹ The members of the Social Watch Social Sciences Research Team are listed on the credits page at the start of this book.

² UNESCO (2005a). *World Report: Towards Knowledge Societies*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁴ UNESCO (2005b). *UNESCO Science Report 2005*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

TABLE 3. Averages by indicator of the countries in better and worse relative situations in science and technology

		INTERNET USERS (PER 1,000 PEOPLE)	PERSONAL COMPUTERS (PER 1,000 PEOPLE)	TELEPHONE MAINLINES (PER 1,000 PEOPLE)	EXPENDITURE ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (% OF GDP)	EXPENDITURE ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (% OF GDP)	SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (PER MILLION PEOPLE)
Countries in better situation	Average	570	564	565	6.76	2.40	3,972
	Number of countries	26	26	26	20	22	22
Countries in worse situation	Average	31	26	52	4.51	0.29	308
	Number of countries	87	84	87	17	29	37
Total of countries	Average	206	159	180	5.76	0.95	1,409
	Number of countries	176	172	176	69	92	103

also in biotechnology and new materials development has been largely based on financial support from the government.

Another key statistic is the amount of human capital that each country has, in terms of researchers and scientists. It has been reported⁵ that only 3% of the world's researchers are in Latin American and the Caribbean, and, as regions go, this is not in the worst situation. These deficiencies serve to perpetuate a vicious circle which denies under-developed countries the tools they need to make progress towards sustainable development.

In some countries there is almost no generalized access to "techno-science", and this seriously impairs their development prospects. In others there are sectors that are linked to the information society, but there are also sectors that are very far indeed from any connection with how the modern world works. This schism can be found in India, for example, and in various Latin American countries, and it amounts to a chasm that cuts right across society. There are basic skills to do with people's cognitive capabilities, and acquiring these skills depends on whether or not an individual has access to, and can participate in, the world of scientific and technological information.

Put simply, a country's ability to take advantage of the new information systems is connected to its capacity to revalue its culture, traditions and values, and this revaluation should involve full integration into the modern world. If a poor country cannot do this it will remain as a receiver of information and it will be limited to a passive role in the information society. A country's development is directly connected to ICT tools, and this also applies to political aspects that have to do with sovereignty.

It has often been said in recent years that access to these technologies is directly linked to other dimensions of social development. The way that gender inequality, education and reproductive health are managed in a society is closely connected to the way and the extent to which that society accesses modern information and communication systems.

The countries that according to the Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) rank as developed are mostly in a

CHART 1. Current situation of science and technology by regions

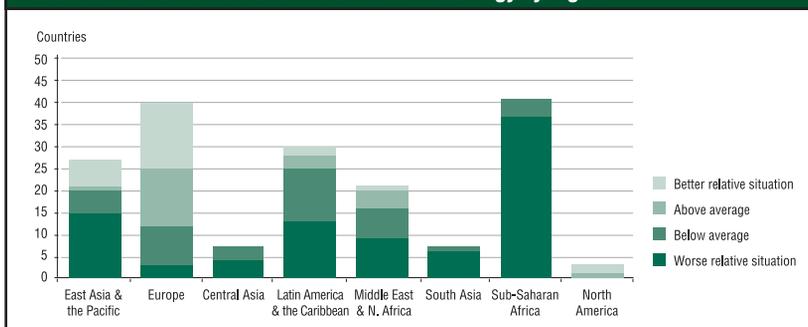


CHART 2. Final science and technology position according to BCI

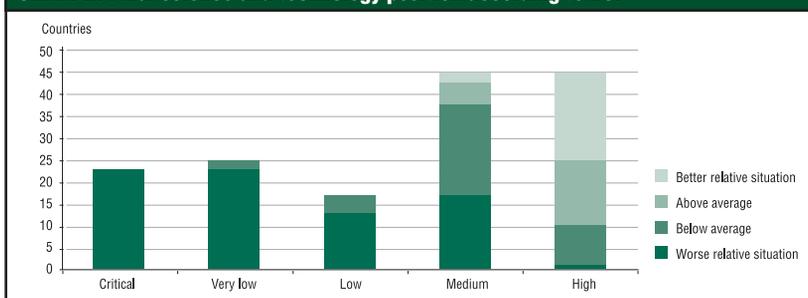


TABLE 2. Current situation by evolution in science and technology

	SIGNIFICANT REGRESSION	SLIGHT REGRESSION	STAGNATION	SLIGHT PROGRESS	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	TOTAL
Countries in worse situation	0	2	12	66	7	87
Countries below average	0	0	9	22	10	41
Countries above average	0	0	0	9	13	22
Countries in better situation	0	0	1	15	9	25
Total	0	2	22	112	39	175

favourable situation as regards information, science and technology. This relation is not as marked as in other areas of development but it is clear enough, although there are some exceptions, like Cuba for example.

It is also worth noting that nearly all the countries for which information is available made progress in information, science and technology. Only Kazakhstan and Tajikistan showed regression on this indicator.

The overall geographical picture is that, like in so many other dimensions of development, sub-Saharan Africa is the region in the worst situation as regards technological development, and it is particu-

larly backward in ICT. All the sub-Saharan countries are below the world average, and nearly 90% of them are in a worse relative situation.

The digital gap between the countries where science and technology are more developed and those that are most backward is huge. Access to personal computers is an important indicator in this area. In the more developed countries there are 563 computers per 1,000 people but in the most backward there are only around 25 per 1,000 people, which is to say there are 20 times more in the developed world. That is just one measure of the size of the digital gap. ■

5 Red de Indicadores de Ciencia y Tecnología (2003). "El Estado de la Ciencia. Inversión en I+D: un período de fluctuaciones". Available from: <www.riicyt.org/interior/difusion/pubs/elc2003/3.pdf>.

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

Abysmal differences

There are big differences in the absolute amounts per capita that governments in different countries spend on health and education. In the underdeveloped countries a smaller proportion of the national budget is allocated to these areas and often there is more private expenditure than public, so resources do not fully reach those who have the greatest difficulty in accessing these services. To improve their situation, these countries ought to be able to manage their public indebtedness in a way that does not compromise their pursuit of national development objectives.

Social Watch Research Team¹

Selected indicators:

- Public expenditure on health (% of GDP)
- Public expenditure on education (% of GDP)
- Foreign debt service (% of GNI)
- Military expenditure (% of GDP)

Public expenditure is the value of the goods and services bought by the State and its agencies. An analysis of the distribution of public expenditure can shed light on the priorities that governments have in responding to their different obligations.

Public expenditure for social sectors has to compete against other sectors for the resources available in a country's budget. This expenditure has to ensure that the people's economic, social and cultural rights, and the government's legal obligations laid down in a variety of international human rights agreements, are honoured. Budgets are mechanisms to allocate public resources, so they are key instruments for ensuring that these rights are not violated. In a democratic State the budget should be an expression of the will of the people operating through political parties and participative institutions.

The four indicators selected for this study have been used to evaluate the share of the national budget that goes on health and education (social welfare) on the one hand and military expenditure and debt servicing on the other, since the latter can be seen to limit a State's capacity to deal adequately with the former.

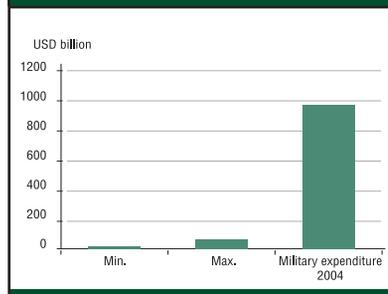
A useful approach to make a comparative analysis of the way States allocate their expenditure is to consider the figures for each sector as a proportion of total Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is the total monetary value of the goods and services produced by a country in a given period. This approach makes it possible to compare rich and poor countries in spite of the vast differences in the scale of their economies and the absolute amounts they allocate to social expenditure.

Health expenditure per capita is a paradigm example of these inequalities, not only between different countries but also within the same country. The world average for expenditure on health is less than USD 500 per capita, but in 2003, for example, the average in countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was USD 2,307. The country that spends most is the United States, with an average of USD 5,635 per capita, which is much more than the figure for European nations like Switzerland or Norway (USD 3,800), and very much more than countries like Spain (USD 1,640). At the other end of the scale there are regions where expenditure on health is only a twentieth of the world average, like sub-Saharan Africa (less than USD 29 per capita per year) and Southern Asia (barely USD 21).

There are also shocking inequalities when it comes to expenditure on education. The industri-

The evolution of public expenditure is directly linked to all of a government's social goals. First, because the country's development possibilities, and particularly the future of the most vulnerable groups of citizens in each society, will depend to a large extent on the allocations that are implemented in the budget. When governments signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, one of the commitments they made was to allocate the maximum possible resources to guaranteeing that the citizens of their countries would be able to enjoy the full exercise of all the dimensions of human rights. But besides this, countries have to be able to manage their public debt in such a way that this does not compromise their national development objectives. Millennium Development Goal 8 involves a commitment to reducing foreign indebtedness and making payment more flexible, so the international community, and the creditor countries and the multilateral banks in particular, are under an obligation to negotiate conditions that will bring about a real improvement in the way debtor countries are able to manage their resources. ■

CHART 1. Expenditure needed to reach health MDG



alized countries contain less than one fifth of the world's population but they enjoy 80% of total world spending on education. Southern Asia has 25% of the world's population but benefits from only 4% of the total, and sub-Saharan Africa has 10% of the world's population, including a third of the children on the planet, but benefits from a mere 1% of total expenditure on education. The world average is USD 630 per capita per year, but while mean expenditure in the OECD countries comes to nearly USD 4,636 per child in primary or secondary education, in the African countries it is only USD 49, and in Southern Asia only USD 38.

These are blatant inequalities in the absolute amounts spent on the welfare services a person enjoys just because he or she happens to have been born in a rich or a poor country, but to make matters worse, in the poor countries a lesser proportion of the budget is spent on providing these services.

In the OECD countries average total (public and private) expenditure on health comes to 8.6% of GDP, and in the United States the figure is no less than 15% of GDP (public expenditure alone amounts to 6.8%), but in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia total spending in this sector is less than 5% of GDP. However, the real gap is much wider than that since, in the poorest countries, private expenditure on health accounts for a higher proportion of total expenditure, and on average public spending on these services comes to barely 2% of GDP. In most poor countries private expenditure exceeds public spending, so most of the resources invested do not reach the people who have most difficulty in accessing these services. This phenomenon also occurs within rich countries where a large proportion of the services are privately

¹ The members of the Social Watch Research Team are listed on the credits at the start of this book.

provided. For example, according to the World Health Organization, the United States comes 37th of the list for public health provision, behind countries like Morocco (which is 29th, with only USD 186 in expenditure), Spain (seventh) or France (first). In fact the United States ranks just two places higher than Cuba (which spends USD 236). One of the reasons for this low ranking is that in the United States, the country that spends most, there are more than 40 million people who have no health coverage at all.

Another aspect of the situation is that social expenditure in itself does not guarantee that the conditions of life of the people in a country will improve. Social policies and the ways in which the budget is implemented can also have a bearing on how much of an impact this expenditure has on the population's quality of life.

According to the World Bank, the additional foreign aid needed to reach the MDGs in health would amount to just somewhere between USD 25 billion and USD 70 billion per year. However in 2004 alone total military expenditure in the world was USD 976 billion, which was 11% more than in the previous year. The main cause of this rise was increased spending by the United States on the war in Iraq. The 31 highest-income countries in the world are responsible for 75% of total global military expenditure, and the United States alone accounts for 50%.² But these nations have enormous incomes so military expenditure comes to only a relatively small part of their GDP, and this means that these countries do not show up prominently in relative indicators like military spending as a percentage of GDP or of Gross National Income (GNI). But there are other comparisons that reveal absurdities in the real situation, like the fact that these countries allocate ten times more to the military sector than to official development aid.³

Another obstacle to allocating resources to development in general and raising spending on basic social welfare services in particular is that many countries have to service considerable foreign debts. Even the multilateral bank has acknowledged that the weight of these payments constitutes a serious obstacle to growth and economic stability in a large number of countries. In 1996

the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund undertook the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative as a first general attempt to eliminate unsustainable debt among the poorest and most indebted countries in the world.⁴ According to recent declarations by the World Bank, in July 2006 work began on processing some debt cancellations that were announced in July 2005 by the Group of Eight (G8 – the seven most industrialized countries plus Russia).

Chart 2 shows the performance of countries as regards public expenditure according to their rating on the Basic Capabilities Index (BCI). It can be seen that the countries that rate better in the use of public expenditure are in better positions according to this index.

Table 1 shows that the countries with the greatest deficiencies (according to the BCI) are also those that allocate the lowest proportion of their national budget to health and education.

CHART 2. Final public expenditure position by BCI

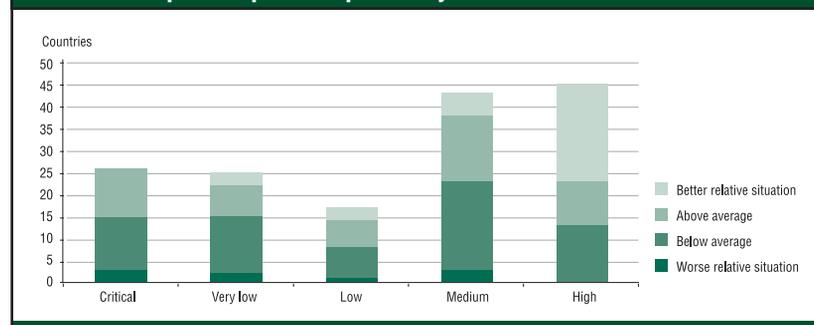


TABLE 1. Public expenditure indicators of countries according to their BCI level

BCI 2006		PUBLIC EXPENDITURE (% GNI 2003-2004)			
		HEALTH	EDUCATION	DEBT SERVICE	MILITARY EXPENDITURE
Critical	Average	2.1	3.6	3.3	3.4
	Number of countries	26	24	26	25
Very low	Average	2.6	4	4.5	2.6
	Number of countries	26	19	24	22
Low	Average	3.4	4.9	5.1	2.1
	Number of countries	17	15	15	14
Medium	Average	3.5	4.8	7.5	2.4
	Number of countries	46	40	38	32
High	Average	5.6	5.6	9	2.2
	Number of countries	45	44	15	42

TABLE 2. Public expenditure indicators of countries by region

REGIONS	PUBLIC EXPENDITURE (% GNI 2003-2004)			
	HEALTH	EDUCATION	DEBT SERVICE	MILITARY EXPENDITURE
East Asia & Pacific	4.2	5.5	4.9	1.8
Europe	5.7	5.3	8.4	1.7
Central Asia	2.3	3.4	8.0	2.6
Latin America & Caribbean	3.5	4.6	7.6	1.3
Middle East & North Africa	3.1	5.5	5.6	5.0
South Asia	2.0	4.0	2.9	2.4
Sub-Saharan Africa	2.4	4.0	3.9	3.0
North America	6.8	5.5	-	2.5

2 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2004). *SIPRI Yearbook 2004. Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*. Oxford University Press. Available at: <editors.sipri.se/pubs/yb04/aboutyb.html>.

3 *Ibid.*

4 The International Development Association and the International Monetary Fund (1999). "Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Perspectives on the Current Framework and Options for Change". Prepared by the Staffs of the World Bank and IMF. Approved by Masood Ahmed and Jack Boorman. Available at: <www.imf.org/external/np/hipc/options/options.pdf>.

When it comes to debt servicing, the countries that rank medium and high on the BCI are most affected, with averages of over 7.5%. It is noteworthy that these countries do not qualify for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.

Table 2 shows that average social expenditure (health plus education) is around 8.5% of GDP, and military expenditure comes to 2.5% of GDP. But it is obvious that behind these averages there are wide variations in what different countries spend. In the countries in the better situation on the BCI, the averages for education and health are three times higher than those for the countries in the worse situation. This table shows that the countries in the better relative situation (33) have a public expenditure structure in which education and health are given considerable weight (an average of 13.6% of GDP). These countries spend an average of USD 9 on these services for every USD 1 that goes to the military budget. Furthermore, in this group of countries the average weight of debt servicing is 2.8% of GNI, which is significantly less than in the rest of the countries. At the other end of the scale, the countries in the worse situation (11) spend an average of 4.3% of GNI on education and health, which is not much more than they allocate to military expenditure (3.7%). Another negative aspect is that a sizeable chunk of GNI (14.4%) goes on servicing the foreign debt.

A geographical analysis of performance in public expenditure shows that Central Asia is the region with the most countries below average (8 of the 9 countries in that region). In Asia and Africa

The reduction in the burden of foreign debt servicing is noticeable in... (% of GNI)		
	1990	2004
Congo, Rep. of	22.9	10.7
Jordan	16.5	6.0
Jamaica	15.9	9.9
Algeria	14.7	7.1
Côte d'Ivoire	13.7	3.7
Honduras	13.7	4.7
Mauritania	13.5	3.5
Nigeria	13.0	4.0
Syria	9.9	1.4
Kenya	9.6	2.3
Trinidad and Tobago	9.6	3.4
Costa Rica	9.2	3.8

CHART 3. Current situation of public expenditure by regions

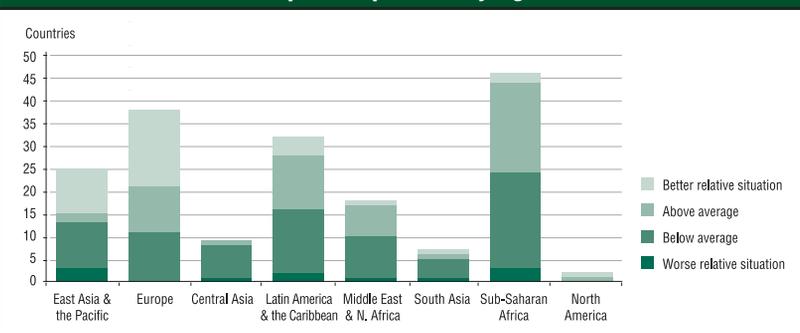


TABLE 3. Current situation by evolution of public expenditure

CURRENT SITUATION	SIGNIFICANT REGRESSION	SLIGHT REGRESSION	STAGNATION	SLIGHT PROGRESS	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	TOTAL
Countries in worse situation	0	4	6	1	0	11
Countries below average	4	14	45	13	0	76
Countries above average	0	9	23	18	4	54
Countries in better situation	1	1	18	13	3	36
Total	5	28	92	45	7	177

TABLE 4. Averages by indicator of countries in better and worse relative situation in public expenditure (2003-2004)

CURRENT SITUATION		HEALTH (% OF GDP)	EDUCATION (% OF GDP)	FOREIGN DEBT SERVICE (% OF GNI)	MILITARY EXPENDITURE (% OF GDP)
Countries in worse situation	Average	1.8	2.7	14.4	3.7
	Number of countries	11	11	9	10
Countries in better situation	Average	6.4	7.2	2.8	1.5
	Number of countries	36	33	10	26
Total of countries	Average	3.7	4.8	5.8	2.5
	Number of countries	187	159	133	151

the proportion of countries below the average is also very high. We should note, however, that the situation varies depending on which indicator is studied. The countries in the worse situation in terms of public expenditure on basic social services are in Central and Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where averages are below 2.5% of GNI in health and around 4% in education. Relative military expenditure, on the other hand, is highest in the Middle East and North Africa, at 5% of GNI. The regions in which average debt servicing as a percentage of GNI is highest are Europe (8.6%), Central Asia (8%) and Latin America (7.6%).

The evolution of performance in public expenditure between 1990 and the early years of the 21st century shows that, of the 177 countries for which data are available, only 4% (7 countries) have made significant progress and 25% have made slight progress. There was no change in half the countries, and in 18.6% of them the proportion of budget allocations going to social services fell. ■

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Discouraging trends

Official development assistance – in the form of grants and soft loans – is no longer the main source of foreign income for most middle income countries, but it still is for the poorest. Since 1997, developing countries have transferred more financial resources to developed countries (to cancel debt commitments) than they have received in ODA. At the same time, assistance from donor countries as a percentage of their GDP has fallen.

Social Watch Research Team¹

Selected indicators:

- Official Development Assistance from the countries belonging to the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and from multilateral organizations (% of GNI)

International cooperation plays an important role in countries' progress towards economic and social development and in the struggle against poverty.

In this sphere financial assistance is vitally important, and it has a big influence on how some of the most disadvantaged countries will develop in the future. Contributions from developed countries through international cooperation can be vitally important for nations that have limited resources to be able to provide for the economic, social and cultural rights of their citizens. In fact, in this sense, this kind of cooperation is an international instrument to promote human rights.²

The developed countries have made commitments that are an expression of their political will and that quantify assistance to the poorer countries. In recent years, there have been government commitments to allocate a fixed proportion of their resources to ODA. In Commitment 9 of the final declaration of the 1995 World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen, it was agreed that the donor countries would allocate 0.7% of their Gross National Income (GNI) to official development assistance (ODA).

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), ODA consists of grants and loans with very soft financial conditions³ made by public institutions in the de-

veloped countries with the aim of promoting economic development and well being in developing countries.⁴

However, official assistance and development are currently under debate because of the broad trends that have emerged in flows of official finance. In recent years there have been three main trends in global net flows into the developing countries:⁵

- Official flows of resources have become relatively less important and private sources of finance for development have been growing. The latter mainly consist of direct investment, which tripled between the 1990-1994 period and 2000-2004. There has also been a considerable increase in remittances sent by emigrants to their countries of origin, which more than doubled in the same period from USD 40 billion to USD 99 billion.⁶
- Official net flows have been highly volatile and have tended to decrease. ODA grew between 1970 and 1990 but since then it has been shrinking. The annual average between 1990 and 1994 was USD 52 billion, but between 2000 and 2004 it was only USD 36 billion.
- The modalities of private and official flows of resources have been changing. In the private sphere foreign direct investment and share acquisitions have been gaining ground over debts contracted with private banks and on capital markets. Direct investment is considered to be more stable and a better long term prospect than

Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) involves promoting a global partnership for development. This means the richer countries have made a firm commitment to giving development aid, and the countries that receive this aid have a responsibility to channel it into social development. The contribution needed from the international community to reach the MDGs is in fact far more than the set target of 7% of GNI in the donor countries. ■

contracting debts with private international creditors.

Official sources of finance have been reducing the amounts they lend, but grants have increased from an annual average of USD 9.5 billion in the 1970s and 1980s to USD 31 billion per year in the 1990s. The underlying logic of this is that middle-income countries would seek more of their finance in capital markets and that ODA would be increasingly channelled to the poorest countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa.⁷ Only in this region and in Southern Asia, where the poorest countries on the planet are found, have official flows exceeded private finance since the 1990s.

In recent years financial flows to developing countries have tended to be channelled through new instruments, and as a consequence ODA, as it was originally defined, is no longer the main source of foreign finance for most middle-income countries. But this does not apply to the poorest countries, where official assistance still amounts to over 7% of GNI.

It was noted above that private flows account for an increasing share of total finance for development at the expense of official flows, but this does not apply uniformly across the globe. These private flows of foreign direct investment are mostly going to a limited number of emerging countries, and to

1 The members of the Social Watch Research Team are listed in the credits at the start of this book.

2 The International Charter on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR).

3 At least 25% should be donated, and loans have very low rates of interest (around 1% per year) and very long repayment periods (30 to 40 years).

4 Official Development Assistance (ODA), grants or loans to countries and territories in Part I of the DAC List of Aid Recipients (developing countries) which are: (a) undertaken by the official sector; (b) with promotion of economic development and welfare as the main objective; (c) at concessional financial terms [if a loan, having a grant element of at least 25%]. In addition to financial flows, technical co-operation is included in aid. Grants, loans and credits for military purposes are excluded. For the treatment of the forgiveness of loans originally made for military purposes, see Notes on Definitions and Measurement below. Transfer payments to private individuals (e.g. pensions, reparations or insurance payouts) are in general not counted.

5 Economic System of Latin America and the Caribbean (SELA) (2005). *La Ayuda Oficial para el Desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe: contexto y perspectivas*.

6 Since the mid 1990s the amount of remittances received by the developing countries as a whole has exceeded ODA.

7 The main agencies in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Canada, among other donor countries, have indicated that ODA will be concentrated more and more in the lowest-income countries.

COMMITMENTS MADE INDIVIDUALLY BY SOME EU COUNTRIES:		
Belgium		0.7% 2010
France	0.5% 2007	0.7% 2012
Sweden	1% 2006	
Spain	0.33% 2006	0.5% 2008
United Kingdom	0.47% 2008	0.7% 2013

specific sectors within those countries. In fact, between 2000 and 2004, some 65% of these flows went to just five countries, namely China, India, Brazil, Russia and Mexico.

ODA flows changed direction after the 1997 crisis in Asia. The developing countries as a group transferred more financial resources to the developed countries (to pay off debt commitments) than they received, so their net balance was negative. In 2004 the balance ceased to be negative. Some developing countries were able to build up financial reserves thanks to favourable prices for their exports, and they used part of these resources to pay off their foreign debts or at least to make advance payments.

Between 2000 and 2004 ODA increased by around USD 12 billion, but when the figures are analyzed as a percentage of GNI in the donor countries it emerges that the trend is for proportionally less assistance to be given. In this period ODA amounted to only 0.25% of GDP, which falls far short of the 0.7% agreed by the donor countries in the 1960s and is also well below the 0.5% that was paid during that decade.

In 2004 the only countries that exceeded the United Nations target of 7% of GNI were Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. In 2004 the average for the countries of the European Union went up from 0.35% in 2003 to 0.36%, but some nations in the bloc are still below the 0.33% that the EU set for its members after the Monterrey Summit in 2002, and even further below the 0.39% that was fixed as the target for 2006.

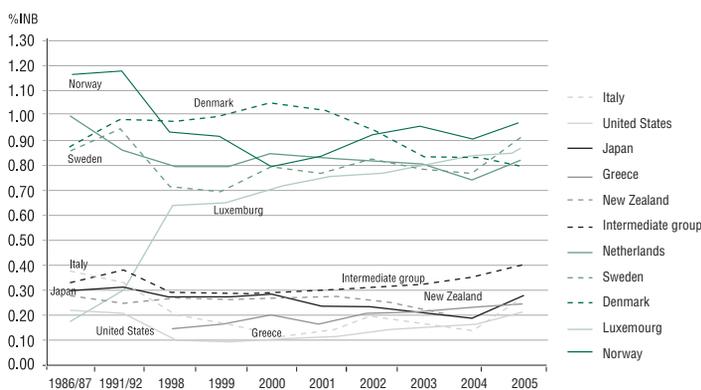
An evaluation of development assistance cannot be confined only to quantifying the funds involved. There is growing concern about the quality of this assistance, that is to say its efficacy, transparency and the real impact that it makes. To improve these dimensions, evaluation tools are being brought into play that allow much better follow up on what is really achieved.

A review of the 2000-2004 period shows that the increases in ODA at that time were in the areas of increased technical cooperation (46%), debt forgiveness for the poorest countries (32%), contributions to multilateral organizations (21%) and emergency aid (15%). At the same time there were decreases in other areas, such as loans and other grants (-14%).

Variations in ODA 2003-2004:

CONSIDERABLE INCREASES	%	REASON
Austria	22.0	Mainly through forgiving debt
Greece	13.1	Increase in technical cooperation and emergency aid
Canada	12.2	Ceased to receive repayments from India
Luxembourg	10.5	Increased cooperation with regional development banks
Portugal	187.5	Forgiving big debts owed by Angola
Spain	14.5	Contributions to international organizations
United Kingdom	8.8	Forgiving debt and increasing assistance for programmes and projects
New Zealand	8.2	Includes a considerable increase in grants to organizations in the South Pacific
SLIGHT INCREASES		
Denmark	3.5	
Finland	5.9	
France	4.3	
Australia	2.3	
Ireland	2.2	
Sweden	1.4	
DECREASES		
Belgium	-30.3	A fall from 2003, when the Democratic Republic of the Congo was granted considerable debt relief
Italy	-9.7	Due to less debt forgiveness
Netherlands	-4.0	Due to India's repayment of assistance loans
Switzerland	-3.0	
Norway	-2.9	

CHART 1. Net ODA payments at current prices and exchange rates (% of GNI), 1986-2005*



* Evolution of the five countries with highest and lowest contributions in 2004, and average value for countries with middle-level contributions.

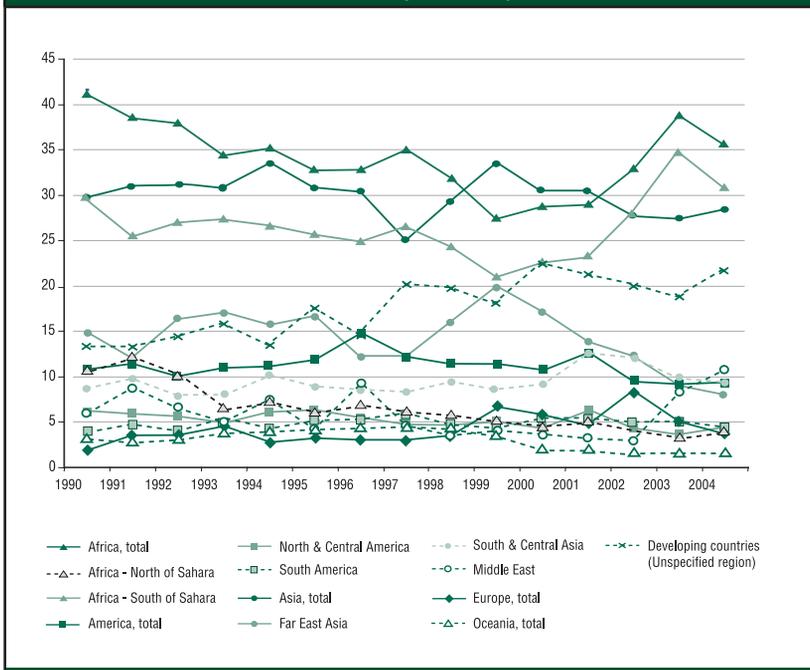
The commitments made at Monterrey meant an increase from the 2004 figure of 0.25% to 0.30% in 2006. It would seem that this proportion will increase, since the G8 (the seven most industrialized countries plus Russia)⁸ announced in September 2005 that they would assume the cost of forgiving the debts that 40 countries have with multilateral organizations.

According to estimates made by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD, annual OECD contributions will rise by USD 50 billion between 2004 and 2010, and reach USD 130 billion in 2010, which would amount to 0.36% of GDP in that year. In relative terms this is just half of what the donor countries committed themselves to in the 1960s.

The World Bank announced recently that the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) came into force on 1 July 2006, and this would forgive the debts that some of the poorest countries in the world have with the International Development Association. This Association, under the aegis of the World Bank, is to grant some USD 37 billion in debt relief over the next 40 years, which is additional to the approximately USD 17 billion in relief that the Association is already committed to under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC).

According to the World Bank, countries that have 'graduated' from the HIPC Initiative would be able to opt for additional relief from their debt burden. In the first stage nineteen countries would enjoy total cancellation "of debts that satisfy the requirements" (Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia). The other heavily indebted poor countries would have to meet the requirements of the programme to be able to accede to the debt cancellation mechanisms.⁹

CHART 2. Evolution of destination of ODA (1990-2004)



8 At the 2005 G8 Summit in Gleneagles in Scotland, these countries committed themselves to cancelling the debts of the most indebted countries in the world, most of which are in Africa. The International Development Association of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Fund will forgive the debts of countries that have 'graduated' (that is, that have reached the 'culmination point') of the HIPC initiative. In March 2006 the donors agreed on a financial package for the MDRI which involves additional funds so as to ensure the flow of new resources for the fight against poverty. Compensatory financial assistance that is given during the period and covers cancelled loans is based on solid commitments that have already been made, and the donors are taking additional measures in the countries of origin to meet the need for supplementary financing in the period.

9 Cf. Wilks, A. and Oddone, F. "Forever in your debt?" in this Report.

Access versus the privatization of resources

Fair access to natural resources is essential for sustainable development. In Millennium Development Goal number 7 there is a call to reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and to achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. Although more people now have access to drinking water, in 2010 an estimated 215 million still will not. The situation is critical, and the growing trend towards privatizing the service and commercializing this essential resource will lead to even more inequality.

Social Watch Research Team¹

Selected indicators:

- People with access to improved water sources (%)
- People with access to sanitation (%)

The importance of people's habitat and adequate standards of life have been analyzed and stressed at various international conferences under the auspices of the United Nations and in human rights instruments.

These dimensions of people's quality of life must be approached with an integrated focus because they are connected to other aspects like access to health services, water, sanitary facilities, and decent housing. Governments are under a series of obligations, laid down in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to meet standards that will enable the people of their countries to have a decent life. These standards or values assumed by a society have also been accepted at international conferences like the Copenhagen Summit and the Beijing Conference, and the commitments have been enshrined in the Millennium Declaration and quantified in Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

There are other dimensions that are interconnected with these commitments, like the links between habitat and health, habitat and poverty, and habitat and discrimination.

It is clear that poverty is very closely linked to discrimination, but within population sectors that suffer from discrimination – including indigenous groups, people of African descent, migrants and the homeless – very often the women suffer from double or even triple discrimination. In order to combat this there have to be specific policies for women geared to providing them with improved access to drinking water, sanitary facilities and housing as a basic structural foundation for complying with all the other commitments that countries have made, including those that have to do with reducing poverty, providing work, and children's and reproductive health (MDGs 1, 4 and 5).

In the 1990s the United Nations called several international conferences to tackle different aspects of sustainable development. In 2000 a series of indicators were set so as to facilitate implementation of the MDGs. These would allow for evaluation of the progress made towards MDG 7, which connects access to water and sanitary facilities with sustainable development, the environment and land. This Goal also links these variables together in that it maintains a focus on urban and land development, habitat, access to drinking water and slum settlements. The Goal includes a call for the proportion of people without access to drinking water to be cut by half, and for a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

On this last point, it should be borne in mind that the urban population is growing fast and this is having a big impact on the environment. What makes this even more serious is that over 70% of the urban population in poor countries live in slum settlements and do not have adequate access to drinking water, sanitary facilities or other essential services.

It is very difficult to measure countries' real progress or regression with respect to goals that are fixed internationally because only data about access to drinking water and sanitation are available. There are no complete and up-to-date data available internationally to be able to monitor what percentage of populations have secure access to land tenancy, and analysis of housing quality is still in its early stages.

The seventh of the Millennium Development Goals requires governments to reduce the numbers of people living in slum settlements, but it is extremely difficult to systematize the information available so as to construct relative indicators of the quality of life in these settlements, access to services, quality of housing or the displacement of population groups.

This report will focus on indicators for which data is available so as to try to shed some light on the world situation as regards access to water and sanitary facilities.

Access to water is a basic human right, and according to UNICEF the amount needed to meet the basic needs of one child is 20 litres per day, which is equivalent to two buckets of water. UNICEF has reported that more than one billion people are still using water that is not fit for consumption, and more than 2.6 billion (40% of the world's population) lack basic sanitary facilities. As a result, thousands of children are dying from diarrhoea and other illnesses connected to water, sanitation and hygiene.

Some 4,000 children die every day simply because they do not have access to drinking water.

In 2002 the United Nations Human Rights Committee passed General Observation No. 15,² which recognizes the right to water as an indispensable factor for human dignity, and links this basic right to life and health. Polluted water and lack of access to adequate sanitary facilities are directly linked to illnesses, which means they amount to a violation of the human right to health. Access to this resource is so important that the General Assembly of the United Nations passed a resolution proclaiming the period 2005-2015 as the "International Decade for Action: Water for Life". The aim of this initiative is to reach the targets that have been agreed internationally and to lay the foundations to be able to make real progress in the years ahead.³

According to UN-Habitat, between 1990 and 2002 some 1.1 billion more people gained access to potable water, which raised global coverage from 77% to 83%. However, in spite of what has been achieved, it is estimated that the number of people without such access will double from 108 million to 215 million in the 1990-2010 period.⁴

This situation is further complicated by the fact that globalization has accelerated the trend towards privatizing essential services such as water. In some countries more than half the urban population has to depend on private companies for their water, and this is usually more expensive than public supplies.⁵

Civil society organizations have called on the international water forums to oppose this commercialization on the grounds that private companies do not allow universal access to this resource and this constitutes a violation of a basic human right. They also claim that the privatization of water services involves very serious human, social and environmental costs.⁶

2 The Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. General Observation No. 15 (2002), "The right to water" (Articles 11 and 12 of the International Charter on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). Geneva, 11-29 November, 2002.

3 United Nations. World Water Day. "Water as the source of life, 2005-2015". Available at: <www.un.org/spanish/events/waterday/2005/>.

4 UN-Habitat (2006). *State of the World's Cities 2006/7: The Millennium Goals and Urban Sustainability*.

5 UN-Habitat (2003). *Water and Sanitation in the World's Cities: Local Action for Global Goals*.

6 Joint Declaration by the Movement for the Defence of Water. Mexico City, 19 March, 2006.

1 The members of the Social Watch Research Team are listed on the credits at the start of this book.

Discrimination in access to water is not just a matter of socio-economic level, but also involves where people live. According to the World Health Organization, approximately 80% of those who do not have access to drinking water live in poverty in rural areas, and this means they are less able to apply political pressure or to claim their rights. What's more, the time it takes them to collect water is time they cannot spend on productive activities, education or family care.⁷

Another dimension to this problem is gender discrimination. The fact that there is discrimination in access to land, to the means of production and to potable water means that very often rural women have to leave their homes. Most displaced women have children, and they gravitate to areas where they can survive on the outskirts of cities, swelling still more the number of people living in slum settlements.

As if these structural circumstances were not bad enough, the situation of poor people is often further blighted by more transitory phenomena like armed conflicts and natural disasters, and this calls for an extra effort on the part of national governments and the international community to honour the commitments they have made.

These problems are not always rooted in a lack of resources. In 2005 the United States was plunged into a major crisis affecting the safety and health of large numbers of people when Hurricane Katrina devastated the city of New Orleans. A sizeable percentage of the population of this city was living below the poverty line;⁸ these were mostly African Americans who were poor and did not have the means to escape when the disaster struck. Not enough shelters were provided, and these refugees lacked drinking water, decent sanitation and other basic services, and were plunged into a grim, large-scale humanitarian crisis right in the heart of the richest country in the world.

In the developed countries access to water and sanitary facilities is not universal but on average it stands at over 90%, and this is a far cry indeed from the situation in the developing countries. The amount of water consumed per person also varies widely. In the rich countries, average daily consumption is between 500 and 800 litres, but in the poor countries it is between 60 and 150 litres.⁹

7 World Health Organization (WHO) (2003). *The right to water*. Available at: <www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/rtwrev.pdf>.

8 UNESCO (2006). *Water, a shared responsibility. The UN World Water Development Report 2*. Chapter 1: "Living in a Changing World". Available at: <www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwdr2/pdf/wwdr2_ch_1.pdf>. According to the report, in 1999 some 28% of the inhabitants of New Orleans were living below the poverty line.

9 UN-Habitat (2006), *op cit*.

CHART 1. Current situation of environmental indicators by regions

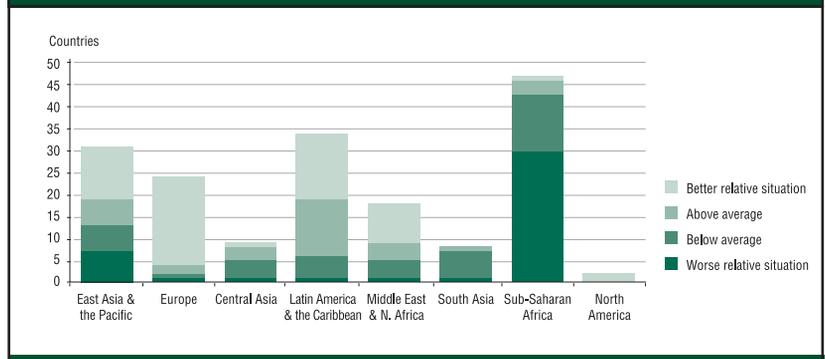
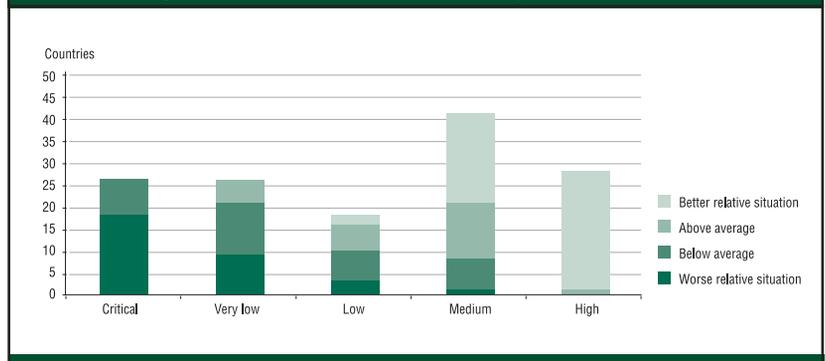


CHART 2. Final position in environmental indicators by BCI



The official international statistics that Social Watch publishes show that in 150 countries for which data is available, 22% are in a worse relative situation, 25% are below average, 18% are above the average and 35% are in a better relative situation.

When we compare the countries in the worse relative situation and those in the better relative situation with the Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) constructed by Social Watch, it can be seen that most of the countries in the worse relative situation have a critical or very low BCI rating, and most of the countries in this category are in sub-Saharan Africa.

One country that stands out for the wrong reasons is Romania. It ranks 65th on the BCI but has very poor rates of coverage as regards drinking water and sanitary facilities, with access below 58% for both services.

Most of the countries in the better relative situation – that is to say those that have better rates of access to these resources – rate middle or high on the BCI. There are two exceptions, Egypt and the Cook Islands, which rank low on the BCI but are in the better relative situation category.

Ethiopia and Chad have the worst national coverage as regards sanitary facilities. In both countries access is below 10%, they have not made sig-

nificant progress for a decade (the 1990-2002 period), and in fact, in Ethiopia, coverage was actually less in 2002 than in 1990.

When it comes to an analysis by regions we find that most of the countries in Europe and North America have the best averages for coverage, and the worst situation is in sub-Saharan Africa where the figures for coverage are critical.

The countries that regressed the most as regards coverage of sanitary facilities were Liberia and Burundi, which both fell by more than ten percentage points in the last decade, and less than 40% of the population now have access. At the other end of the scale Myanmar made the greatest progress in sanitary facilities over the period: coverage increased from 21% in 1990 to 73% in 2002.

Mauritania, Kiribati, Haiti, Benin and Madagascar are all in a very critical situation according to the Basic Capabilities Index but they have made the most progress in extending coverage of sanitary facilities, although overall coverage is still very low.

The countries that regressed most in terms of providing drinking water were the Maldives, the Marshall Islands and Algeria. In all three people's access fell by around ten percentage points, and in the Maldives the situation is serious because in 1990

some 99% of the population had access to potable water but coverage fell to 84% in 2002.

Namibia, Benin and the Central African Republic have very low rankings on the BCI but have managed to improve water coverage. The Central African Republic made the most progress with an increase in national coverage from 48% in 1990 to 75% in 2002.

For the total of 135 countries for which data are available, 59 have not progressed or have stagnated, and most of these are countries in the better situation. They have already achieved high coverage in this respect (on average above 95%), but they have not progressed in spite of the fact that they have made international commitments to attain total coverage in water and sanitary facilities.

Half the countries have improved in this area, with 35 making slight progress and 32 significant progress. Nevertheless, an alarmingly high number of people in the world are still living without adequate water or sanitary facilities, and not only is this linked to illnesses among children and adults, but it also has a severe long-term negative impact on national development and the conditions of daily life. ■

TABLE 1. Current situation by evolution in environmental indicators

CURRENT SITUATION	SIGNIFICANT REGRESSION	SLIGHT REGRESSION	STAGNATION	SLIGHT PROGRESS	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	TOTAL
Countries in worse situation	0	4	4	11	8	27
Countries below average	1	0	4	11	15	31
Countries above average	0	1	6	10	7	24
Countries in better situation	0	3	45	3	2	53
Total	1	8	59	35	32	135

TABLE 2. Averages by environmental indicator of countries in better and worse situation

CURRENT SITUATION		POPULATION WITH ACCESS TO SANITATION (%)	POPULATION WITH ACCESS TO IMPROVED WATER SOURCES (%)
Countries in worse situation	Average	30.86	54.17
	Number of countries	42	42
Countries in better situation	Average	95.96	97.55
	Number of countries	50	58
Total of countries	Average	66.24	79.33
	Number of countries	92	100

HEALTH

Extreme risk

There is a huge gap between the countries in the better and worse relative situations as regards health care. Conditions in some poorer countries amount to a public emergency, but in the more developed countries lethal diseases have been brought under control. No country has regressed significantly in health care recently, but fewer than 10% have made good progress. Health care provision is a question of human rights, and this means there must be universal access and efficient public services.

Social Watch Research Team¹

Selected indicators:

- Malaria (cases per 100,000 people)
- Tuberculosis (cases per 100,000 people)
- People with HIV/AIDS (15 to 49 years old)
- Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)
- Mortality among children under age 5 (per 1,000 live births)
- Children under age 1 immunized against diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus (DPT)
- Children under age 1 immunized against polio
- Children under age 1 immunized against measles
- Children under age 1 immunized against tuberculosis

There are good and bad aspects to the health situation in the world. On the one hand, good overall progress has been made, but there are still threats to health that affect the whole world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "Chronic diseases, consisting of cardiovascular and metabolic diseases, cancers, injuries, and neurological and psychological disorders, are major burdens affecting rich and poor populations alike."²

On the other hand, there are shocking differences in the sphere of health care between countries. In the least developed countries some population groups are at extreme risk in situations that amount to public emergencies, but in the more developed countries some of the most lethal illnesses have been brought under control to the point that they can now be considered merely chronic, that is to say, manageable. The gap is wide, and life expectancy at birth is a key indicator that reflects this inequality.

One of the crucial factors underlying this gap between countries is the amount of health infrastructure that there is, and lack of infrastructure goes a long way towards perpetuating these inequalities. Poor living conditions in general, and poverty, gender inequity and environmental pollution in particular, are also important causes of inequalities in health. This is a question of human rights, and what is needed is not just universal access to health services but also that people and communities should play an active role in their own health care and in the efficiency of public services.

The greatest global pandemic is HIV/AIDS. It has now spread to such an extent that it has become the main cause of death among people in the 15 to 49 age bracket. According to UNICEF, "in 2003 alone, 2.9 million people died of AIDS and 4.8 million people were newly infected with the HIV virus. Over 90 per cent of people currently living with HIV/AIDS are in developing countries. . . In sub-Saharan Africa, HIV/AIDS has led to increasing child mortality, dramatic reductions in life expectancy and millions of orphans."³

Today there are more than 40 million people in the world living with the virus, but only 5% of them are in the rich countries. Medical treatment has improved, but even so, in 2005 more than 3 million people died from causes attributable to HIV/AIDS, and half a million of the victims were children.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), only 4% of the people in Africa who are living with HIV/AIDS are receiving the necessary antiretroviral treatment. Not receiving treatment for the virus has a direct negative impact on life expectancy. To improve this situation it is vitally important to authorize the use of generic equivalents to partly replace patented medicines so that treatment can be rapidly universalized.⁴

In many African countries more than 15% of the population between 15 and 49 years of age has the virus, and in some of these countries the repercussions in terms of morbidity and mortality are catastrophic. In Botswana, for example, life expectancy has fallen to just 19.5 years. The 10 countries with the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS are all in the sub-Saharan region.

TABLE 1. Countries with highest incidence of HIV/AIDS, by region

COUNTRY	REGION	% OF POPULATION WITH HIV/AIDS
Swaziland	Sub-Saharan Africa	39
Botswana	Sub-Saharan Africa	37
Lesotho	Sub-Saharan Africa	29
Zimbabwe	Sub-Saharan Africa	25
South Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	22
Namibia	Sub-Saharan Africa	21
Zambia	Sub-Saharan Africa	17
Malawi	Sub-Saharan Africa	14
Mozambique	Sub-Saharan Africa	12
Tanzania	Sub-Saharan Africa	9

Like in other spheres of social development, morbidity and mortality indicators are connected to economic factors, although there are other causes as well. Experience in various countries has shown that the economic factor that has the most bearing on these aspects of health is not per capita income or the rate of economic growth, but rather, equity in income distribution.

An indicator that clearly reflects a country's health situation is life expectancy at birth. The human race has made good progress in the last 30 years, and average global life expectancy has risen from 59.9 to 67.1 years, but in some regions there has been almost no improvement. In sub-Saharan Africa this indicator has increased by a mere 0.3 years, and in Eastern Europe it has actually fallen by 0.9 years.

What is particularly alarming is that within these populations there are some groups that are especially vulnerable. In the poorer countries there is a greater risk of child mortality in the first year, and mortality among children under 5 is also higher. Worldwide, 11 million children under 5 die from preventable diseases every year.

Since the 1960s some progress has been made in this area and by the 1990s there had been an 11% improvement, although this showed more in some regions than in others. As in so many other dimensions of development, sub-Saharan Africa is in the worst relative situation. In this region there has been no significant improvement over this period, there

1 The members of the Social Watch Research Team are listed in the credits at the start of this book.

2 WHO (2006a). *The World Health Report 2006. Working together for health*. P. 7. Available from: <www.who.int/whr/2006/06_overview_en.pdf>.

3 UNICEF (2005). *The State of the World's Children 2005. Childhood under threat*. Available from: <www.unicef.org/sowc05/english/childhoodunderthreat.html>.

4 UNDP (2005). *Human Development Report 2005*.

are still serious deficiencies in health care, and this can be clearly seen from the list of the ten countries in the world that have performed worst as regards mortality among children under 5 years old.

Another crucial factor in improving morbidity and mortality indicators is a country's ability to immunize its population. The poor countries find this far more difficult to do, and they suffer the consequences. WHO has reported that in Gambia and in other African countries, pneumonia and meningitis (illnesses linked to pneumococcus infections) are ten times more common than in the industrialized countries.⁵

Health is one of the dimensions reflected in the Basic Capabilities Index (BCI), so a country's ranking in this index is directly connected to its performance on indicators in the health area. All the countries in the worse relative health situation rate as critical or very low on the BCI. By the same token, the countries with the highest levels of social development, as shown by high BCI rankings, also show the best performance in terms of health: they are all in the group of countries in a better relative situation except for Trinidad and Tobago, and even that country is above the world average.

In recent years no country has regressed significantly in health care, and this is good news, but on the other hand fewer than 10% of countries have made significant progress. Most have advanced, but only to a small extent. But what gives real cause for concern is that countries in the worse relative situation have not managed even slight progress and have simply stagnated (Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Zambia) or have lost ground (Côte d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic).

There is no doubt that the most disadvantaged geographical region as regards health is sub-Saharan Africa, where around 90% of the countries are below the world average when it comes to health indicators. In contrast, the Middle East and North Africa are in a favourable situation and nearly three quarters of the countries there (15 out of 21) are in a better situation relative to the rest of the world.

The gap between the countries in the worse and better relative situations is clear to see in all the indicators in the sphere of health. The incidence of malaria, for example, is only 6 cases per 1,000 in the countries in the better situation, but the average in countries in the most critical situation is more than 143 per 1,000, that is to say, it is 23 times

5 WHO (2006b). *We are getting into a great era of hope. WHO immunization work : 2005 highlights.* Available from: <www.who.int/immunization/WHO_Immunization_highlights2005.pdf>.

CHART 1. Current health situation by regions

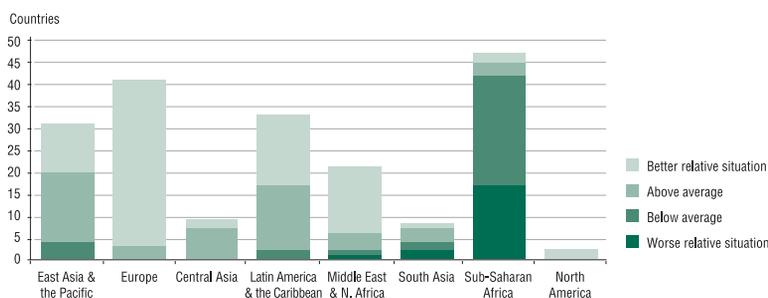


CHART 2. Final health position according to BCI

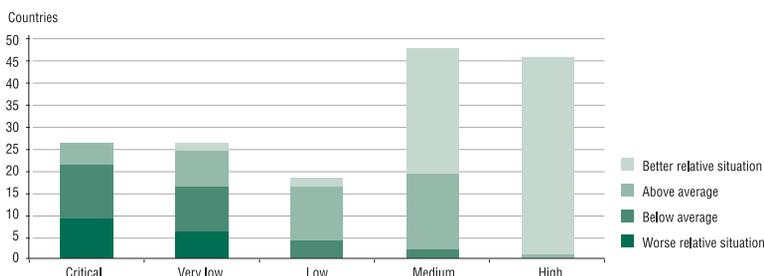


TABLE 2. Mortality among children under 5: the ten countries that have performed worst

COUNTRY	REGION	MORTALITY AMONG CHILDREN UNDER 5 (PER 1,000)
Sierra Leone	Sub-Saharan Africa	283
Angola	Sub-Saharan Africa	260
Niger	Sub-Saharan Africa	259
Afghanistan	Southern Asia	257
Liberia	Sub-Saharan Africa	235
Somalia	Sub-Saharan Africa	225
Mali	Sub-Saharan Africa	219
Dem. Rep. of Congo	Sub-Saharan Africa	205
Equatorial Guinea	Sub-Saharan Africa	204
Guinea-Bissau	Sub-Saharan Africa	203

TABLE 3. Current situation in evolution in health

CURRENT SITUATION	SIGNIFICANT REGRESSION	SLIGHT REGRESSION	STAGNATION	SLIGHT PROGRESS	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	TOTAL
Countries in worse situation	0	2	7	7	1	17
Countries below average	0	6	5	14	4	29
Countries above average	0	1	14	19	4	38
Countries in better situation	0	0	6	53	5	64
Total	0	9	32	93	14	148

TABLE 4. Averages by indicator of countries in better and worse relative situations in health

		INFANT MORTALITY (PER 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS)	MORTALITY AMONG CHILDREN UNDER 5 (PER 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS)	MALARIA (CASES PER 100,000 PEOPLE)	PEOPLE WITH HIV/AIDS (15-49 YEARS OLD) (%)	TUBERCULOSIS (CASES PER 100,000 PEOPLE)	CHILDREN UNDER AGE 1 IMMUNIZED AGAINST DPT (%)	CHILDREN UNDER AGE 1 IMMUNIZED AGAINST MEASLES (%)	CHILDREN UNDER AGE 1 IMMUNIZED AGAINST TUBERCULOSIS (%)	CHILDREN UNDER AGE 1 IMMUNIZED AGAINST POLIO (%)
Countries in worse situation	Average	111	178	144	11.6	577	67.9	66.2	80.0	67.7
	Number of countries	20	20	16	14	20	20	20	20	20
Countries in better situation	Average	12	14	7	0.2	32	93.3	91.7	93.5	92.6
	Number of countries	87	87	11	52	87	87	87	60	87
Total	Average	30	44	88	2.7	134	88.6	86.9	90.1	87.9
	Number of countries	107	107	27	66	107	107	107	80	107

higher. An equally shocking example of this overall inequality is the incidence of tuberculosis: on average, in the countries in the worse relative situation, more than half the population is affected.

Immunization is another area where the health care gap is plain to see. In all the immunization indicators (coverage against polio, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, measles and tuberculosis) the average difference between the two groups of countries is around 20 percentage points. ■

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Deficiencies that cost lives

Since 1994 good progress has been made in extending reproductive health and sexual health services, but in some parts of the world medical care for women is still seriously deficient. Every year some 500,000 women die because of complications in pregnancy and 100,000 more from unsafe abortions.

Social Watch Research Team¹

Selected indicators:

- Women between 15 and 49 attended at least once during pregnancy by skilled health personnel
- Births attended by skilled health personnel per 100,000 live births
- Estimated maternal mortality rate
- Contraceptive use among in-union women aged 15 to 49

According to the latest annual report from the United Nations Fund for Population and Development, nearly one fifth of morbidity and premature mortality in the world and one third of illnesses among women of child-bearing age are caused by deficiencies in reproductive and sexual health services.

In the last 12 years public policies in the sphere of population and reproductive and sexual health have been conditioned by the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) (Cairo, 1994), and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), and by the follow-up on both conferences. The follow-up evaluations on the Cairo Programme for Action (Cairo + 10, in 2004) and the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing + 10, in 2005) revealed that, although important progress has been made towards implementing the resolutions stemming from these conferences, the situation of women's rights in general and of reproductive and sexual rights in particular is plagued by politics, which is jeopardizing and tending to weaken or reverse what has been achieved.

The ICPD Programme of Action stipulated that all States are obliged to:

- ensure that comprehensive and factual information and a full range of reproductive health-care services, including family planning, are accessible, affordable, acceptable and convenient to all users; comfortable for all users through a system of primary health attention by 2015;

- enable and support responsible voluntary decisions about child-bearing and methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law and to have the information, education and means to do so;
- meet changing reproductive health needs over the life cycle and to do so in ways sensitive to the diversity of circumstances of local communities.

The Programme of Action further notes that all countries should strive to make reproductive health accessible through the primary health-care system, as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015.

According to the definition adopted at the ICPD, reproductive health not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, but rather a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so.²

These platforms for action have a legal basis in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This Convention, which came into force in 1981, treats reproductive health as an inalienable right for all women in the world, and links it closely to the right to a decent life.³

The General Secretary of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, has pointed out that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Cairo Plan for Action are not independent objectives. "The Millennium Development Goals, particularly the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, cannot be achieved if questions of population and reproductive health are not squarely addressed. And that

means stronger efforts to promote women's rights, and greater investment in education and health, including reproductive health and family planning."⁴

Since 1994 good progress has been made towards the ICPD objectives in terms of universal access to reproductive health services. Many countries have adopted the idea and the practice of reproductive health, broadened their programmes to reach more people who need these services, and integrated family planning into pre-and post-natal care, childbirth attendance services, the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, and the detection of cervical and other kinds of cancer. In many countries reproductive health services are included in basic health care.

Although clear progress has been made in extending coverage and improving the quality of attention to women, in some countries there are still serious qualitative and quantitative deficiencies in the services provided, and this is reflected in poor health indicators: high rates of maternal mortality, low rates of the use of contraception, and a low percentage of births attended by skilled health care personnel. Every year some 500,000 women die from complications in pregnancy and another 100,000 as a result of unsafe abortions.

- At the present time women make up 40% of the adults in the world living with AIDS.
- A pregnant woman in Africa is 180 times more likely to die than a pregnant woman in Western Europe.
- In Ethiopia one woman in seven dies during pregnancy or in childbirth, but in the United Kingdom the figure is one in 19,000.
- Every day 1,440 women die in childbirth. That amounts to one death every minute.
- For every case of maternal mortality in Spain, 182 mothers die in Cameroon, 200 in Niger and 425 in Angola.⁵

1 The members of the Social Watch Research Team are listed in the credits at the start of this book.

2 United Nations Fund for Population and Development (1994). Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. See: <www.unfpa.org/icpd/icpd_poa.htm>

3 The right to female reproductive health is enshrined in articles 11, 12 and 14 of the CEDAW, and in its General Recommendation number 24. See: <www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm-sp.htm>.

4 Message from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, Bangkok, December 2002.

5 Data taken from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2005). *Human Development Report 2005*.

It is clear that there are huge differences between the developed world and the developing world in the rates of mortality caused by complications during pregnancy or childbirth. The rate of maternal mortality is 18 times higher in the developing countries. On average, women in the developing countries have more pregnancies, and they do not always receive adequate health care, so the actual length of time they are exposed to the risk of maternal mortality is 40 times greater than in the developed world. More than 95% of deaths related to poor reproductive health occur in developing countries, where there is no health care for one third of pregnancies, only 40% of births take place in health care establishments, and only half the births are attended by skilled health personnel.

For the purposes of this report four indicators were used: the percentage of women receiving attention from skilled health personnel during pregnancy, the maternal mortality rate, the percentage of women using contraception, and the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel. Evolution was analyzed using the same indicators except for the maternal mortality rate, since there are problems with this that hinder comparisons.

Of the 27 countries in the worse relative situation on these indicators, 21 are in the critical group on the Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) and 6 are very low on that index. At the other end of the scale, of the 63 countries in the better relative situation as regards reproductive health, 28 have a middle level on the BCI and 33 a high level, and only 2 rate low on that index.

The reproductive indicators in this area show that overall progress has been made recently in all the groups of countries. Only 9 of the 112 countries show slight or significant regression, and 72 have made slight or significant progress.

There is a strong correlation between reproductive health indicators and geographical region, and an analysis of this shows major inequalities. The countries in the worse relative situation are mostly in sub-Saharan Africa (70%) and Southern Asia (14%), while those in the better relative situation are in Europe (39%), Latin America and the Caribbean (23%) and East Asia and the Pacific (17%). The general evolution of reproductive health indicators for the world is encouraging, but there are huge inequalities between regions.

In the countries in the worse situation an average of only 36% of births are attended by skilled health personnel, but the figure for the countries in the better situation is 98%. Other statistics are even more shocking. In the countries in the worse relative situation maternal mortality is 965 per 100,000 live births as against only 43 per 100,000 live births in the countries in the better situation, which means that women in the developing world are 22 times more likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth. ■

CHART 1. Present reproductive health care situation by regions

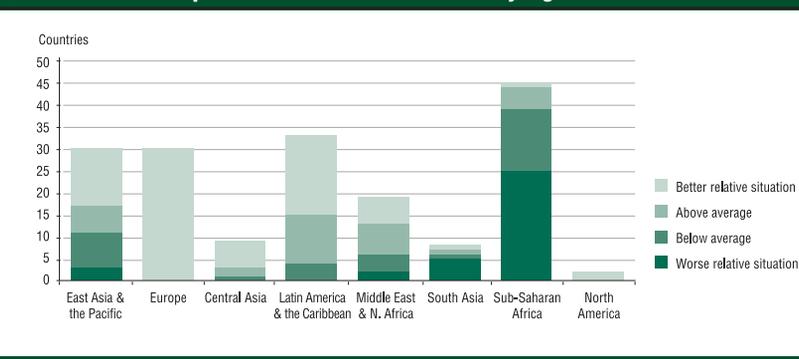


CHART 2. Final position in reproductive health by BCI

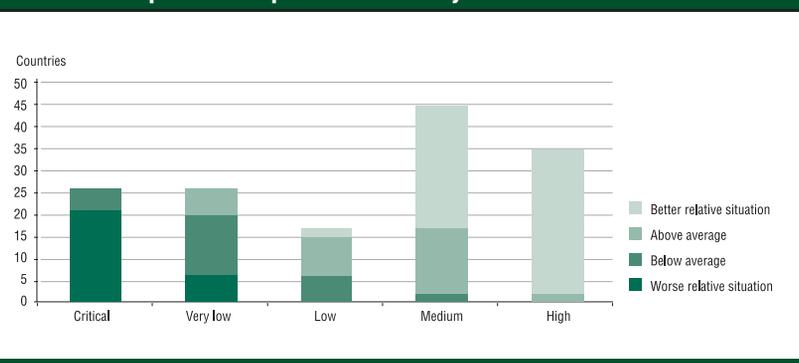


TABLE 1. Present situation by evolution of reproductive health

	SIGNIFICANT REGRESSION	SLIGHT REGRESSION	STAGNATION	SLIGHT PROGRESS	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	TOTAL
Countries in worse situation	0	1	6	9	10	26
Countries below average	1	2	6	6	9	24
Countries above average	0	2	4	12	7	25
Countries in better situation	1	2	15	11	8	37
Total	2	7	31	38	34	112

TABLE 2. Averages by indicator of countries in better and worse relative situations in reproductive health

		BIRTHS ATTENDED BY SKILLED HEALTH PERSONNEL (%)	CONTRACEPTIVE USE AMONG CURRENTLY IN-UNION WOMEN AGED 15 TO 49 (%)	WOMEN AGED 15 TO 49 ATTENDED AT LEAST ONCE DURING PREGNANCY BY SKILLED HEALTH PERSONNEL (%)	ESTIMATED MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE (PER 100,000 LIVE BIRTHS)
Countries in worse situation	Average	36.1	18.3	64.2	964.9
	Number of countries	35	32	24	35
Countries in better situation	Average	98	65	92.1	43.4
	Number of countries	67	56	12	73
Total	Average	77	47.7	73.5	342.0
	Number of countries	102	88	36	108

GENDER EQUITY

The need to acknowledge discrimination

For every 100 boys who do not attend primary school, there are 117 girls who do not attend. Women represent 67% of the world's illiterate people and only 16.6% of the world's legislators. What is more, they do not receive equal pay to men for doing the same work. Acknowledging that gender relations relegate women to second class status is the first step in creating policies and political will to put an end to these inequities.

Social Watch Research Team¹

The tables presented in this Social Watch Report 2006 take the year 1990 as their starting point for measuring advances and setbacks in gender equity. For each indicator selected, the data presented are the latest available.

While the necessary consideration of gender inequalities should cover all dimensions of analysis of the social phenomena at play, a set of indicators has been incorporated that intends to show the principal areas in which inequalities complicate the fulfilment of women's rights and women's advancement to more equitable positions. Modifying the position and traditional roles of women in society and changing relations between men and women in the public as well as the private spheres are complex tasks that require formulating and evaluating specific policies. The first consideration to take into account is that societies and governments must accept and assume that there is a gender system functioning that generates inequalities between men and women. Therefore, societal inequities exist that must be acknowledged as such, because to acknowledge them means to recognize that an additional factor exists, namely gender, that as so many other already recognized factors is a generator of social inequalities. This "obligates" governments to promote policies to correct these inequalities. Indicators and statistics are needed in order to monitor the situation and evolution of these relations. As the United Nations report *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics* shows, the compilation of statistics continues to be deficient and fragmented in many low income countries, while in 90% of the developing world essential statistics do not exist by gender. The Report finds that the last 30 years have shown very little progress, both in the number of countries that publish national statistics and in the degree to which national statistics reflect questions of gender.

Since its 2004 report, Social Watch has incorporated a specific thematic area on gender equity with an eye to making the different treatment faced by men and women evident and facilitating its monitoring and evaluation.

Gender: Education

Selected indicators:

- Gap in literacy rates (women/men)
- Gap in net primary education enrolment rate (women/men)
- Gap in net secondary education enrolment rate (women/men)
- Gap in gross tertiary education enrolment rate (women/men)

Gender equity in education becomes relevant through UNESCO statistics that show us that 67% of the world's illiterate individuals are women. The majority of illiterate women live in rural areas of developing countries, especially Africa, the Arab countries and Southeast Asia. Table 1 shows countries in the worst situation in relation to literacy between women and men. In Chad, for every 100 literate men, there are only 42 literate women; in Mali, 52; in Niger, 54, while in Burkina Faso there are 55.

For every 100 boys who do not attend primary school, there are 117 girls who do not attend, generally due to gender discrimination. More than 40 countries have not met the Millennium Development Goal related to gender equality in primary education, set for 2005. At the same time, achieving gender equality in education constitutes one of the six objectives of the Education for All Programme that 164 governments made their own at the World Education Forum at Dakar in 2000. As a first step toward achieving gender parity the commitment was made to reach

equality in the number of male and female students enrolled in primary and secondary education and again the year 2005 was the deadline for achieving this goal. This goal has not been achieved.

The greatest disparities in access to primary education are found principally in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Chad, for every 100 boys at school, there are only 68 girls; in Guinea Bissau and Niger, 71; in Pakistan, Yemen and Burkina Faso, 73.

Considering as a set the four indicators in the area of education, we observe that of a total of 157 countries, 100 find themselves in the best relative situation, of which 83 also have medium to high BCI levels. The 23 countries that find themselves in the worst position in this area all show critical or low BCI levels. Additionally, upon analyzing trends over time, a majority of the countries that currently find themselves in the worst situation are making positive progress: 20 have advanced while 2 are at a standstill (Chad and Gambia) and 2 have fallen back (Angola and Eritrea). If we look at geographical regions, we see that the countries in the worst situation are largely in sub-Saharan Africa.

It is interesting to place the averages for each indicator in comparative perspective for the countries in a better and worse situation in each area (Table 4). Significant distances exist between both groups. While all indicators demonstrate the inequity in the countries that find themselves in the worst position, in some cases it is even more evident. The gap between women and men with regard to tertiary education enrolment rates shows the greatest distance: 0.4 in the worst positioned countries and 1.4 in the best positioned ones.

TABLE 1. Countries with the largest gap between female and male illiteracy rates

COUNTRY	
Chad	0.42
Mali	0.52
Niger	0.54
Burkina Faso	0.55
Benin	0.56
Yemen	0.60
Liberia	0.64
Mozambique	0.64
Sierra Leone	0.64
Central African Republic	0.67

TABLE 2. Countries with the greatest disparity in access to primary education

COUNTRY	
Chad	0.68
Guinea-Bissau	0.71
Niger	0.71
Pakistan	0.73
Yemen	0.73
Burkina Faso	0.73
Benin	0.77
Liberia	0.78
Côte d'Ivoire	0.78
Djibouti	0.80

¹ The members of the Social Watch Social Sciences Research Team are listed in the credits at the start of this book.

CHART 1. Current situation in education and gender by region

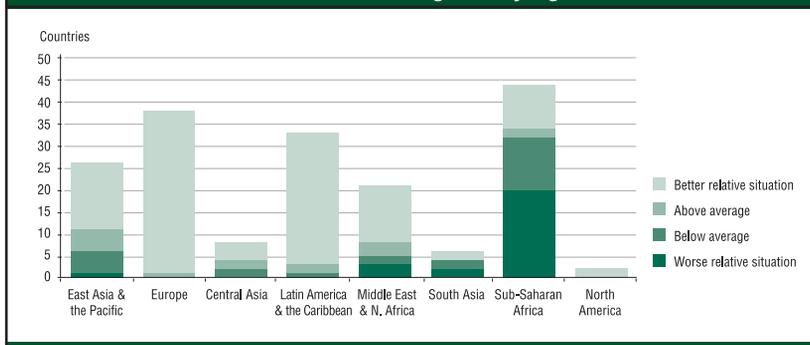


CHART 2. Final position in education and gender according to BCI

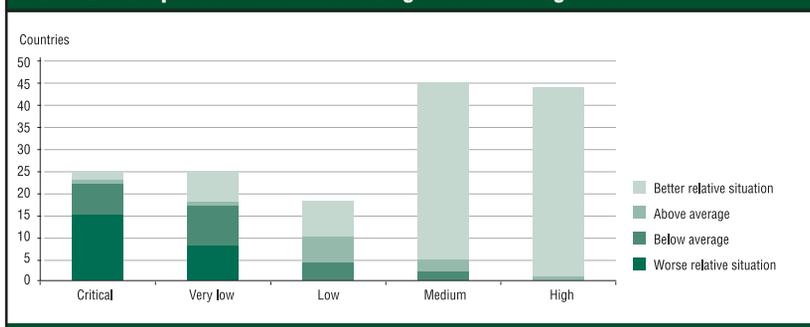


TABLE 3. Current situation based on evolution in education and gender

	SIGNIFICANT REGRESSION	SLIGHT REGRESSION	STAGNATION	SLIGHT PROGRESS	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	TOTAL
Countries in worse situation	2	0	2	6	14	24
Countries below average	0	2	2	6	8	18
Countries above average	0	0	7	5	3	15
Countries in better situation	0	2	91	16	2	111
Total	2	4	102	33	27	168

TABLE 4. Averages by indicator for the countries in the best and worst relative situation in education and gender

		GAP IN LITERACY (WOMEN/MEN)	GAP IN NET PRIMARY EDUCATION ENROLMENT RATE (WOMEN/MEN)	GAP IN NET SECONDARY EDUCATION ENROLMENT RATE (WOMEN/MEN)	GAP IN GROSS TERTIARY EDUCATION ENROLMENT RATE (WOMEN/MEN)
Countries in worse situation	Average	0.68	0.83	0.62	0.41
	Number of countries	20	24	19	25
Countries in better situation	Average	1.01	1.00	1.06	1.44
	Number of countries	76	106	101	105
Total	Average	0.94	0.97	0.99	1.24
	Number of countries	96	130	120	130

Gender: Empowerment

Selected indicators:

- Female professional and technical workers
- Female legislators, senior officials and managers
- Women in government decision-making positions at the ministerial level
- Women members of parliament

An undeniable fact is that the world's women are absent from parliaments. On average, according to figures from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in 2006 women represented 16.6% of legislators worldwide. The level of female political involvement does not depend – unlike other factors involved in development – on the wealth or poverty of a country. Regional averages show that levels of female participation are low in all regions.

Some of the richest countries of the world, including the United States (14%), France (12%), Italy (12%) and Japan (9%) have fewer than 15% female representation in parliament, lower than the 16% average found in sub-Saharan Africa, the poorest part of the world. This region includes some of the most egalitarian countries in terms of the percentage of female legislators, such as Ethiopia (21%), Uganda (24%) and Burundi (31%). One case that stands out is Rwanda, where women make up 48.8% of parliament. At the opposite end of the spectrum are Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, who do not grant women the right to vote or to be elected to office.

In the United Nations system, women comprise 37.1% (2,136 out of 5,754) of all staff in the professional and higher categories with appointments of one year or more. Six out of 37 (16.2%) of the most senior policy-making positions (Under-Secretary-General) are held by women.

There are 39 women ambassadors to the United Nations. They are from Algeria, Australia, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, and Turkmenistan, among others.²

This dimension of gender equity related to female participation in decision-making positions and positions of power is one of the dimensions included in the Millennium Development Goals aiming to strengthen the position of women in the world.

² United Nations. Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women. <www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi>. Accessed November 2005.

In the last 12 months important changes have occurred, among them the election of the first woman president of an African country, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in Liberia, and the first woman president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet. Currently there are 11 women heads of state or of government in countries on all continents. Nevertheless, despite these achievements, progress toward gender equality continues to be slow.

Recently, Rwanda superseded Sweden as number one in the world in terms of women's parliamentary representation – 48.8% women compared to 45.3% in Sweden. Rwanda is an example of the new trend to use electoral gender quotas as a fast track means of achieving gender balance in politics. Despite these exceptions, women are notably absent in parliaments and, as mentioned, on average only constitute 16% of the world's members of parliament. As a result, women's interests and concerns are not represented in the process of creating public policies and women lack influence over fundamental decisions in the social, economic and political spheres that affect the whole of society.

The use of electoral quota systems for increasing the proportion of female officeholders is much more extended than is commonly believed. A growing number of countries are introducing diverse types of gender quotas into their elections. Currently 98 countries have some system of quotas at the electoral, political party or constitutional level.

Given the slow speed at which the number of women in politics is growing, there are increased calls for more efficient methods to reach a gender balance in political institutions. Quotas present one such mechanism. Because of their relative efficiency, there is strong hope quotas can produce dramatic gains in women's representation. At the same time, quotas raise serious questions and, in some cases, strong resistance. "The core idea behind quota systems is to recruit women into political positions and to ensure that women are not only a few tokens in political life"³

Electoral quotas for women may be mandated by constitutional or legislative means, or take the form of a political party quota. They may apply to the number of women candidates proposed by a party for election, or may take the form of reserved seats in the legislature.⁴

Today, quota systems aim at ensuring that women constitute at least a "critical minority" of 20%, 30% or 40%, or even to ensure true 50-50 gender balance. In some countries quotas are applied as a temporary measure; that is to say, to be used only until the barriers for women's entry into

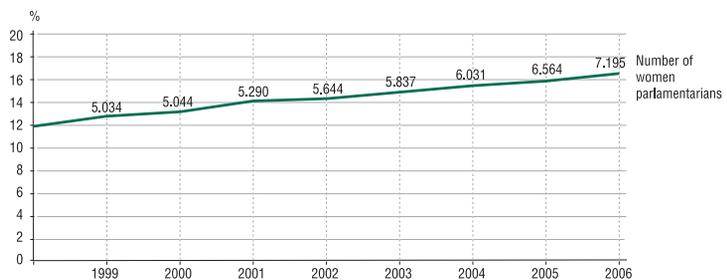
TABLE 1. Regional Averages

	SINGLE HOUSE OR LOWER HOUSE (%)	UPPER HOUSE OR SENATE (%)	BOTH HOUSES COMBINED (%)
Nordic countries	40.0	—	40.0
Americas	20.2	21.4	20.4
Europe - OCDE member countries including Nordic countries	19.6	16.3	18.9
Europe - OCDE member countries excluding Nordic countries	17.5	16.3	17.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	16.5	17.6	16.6
Asia	16.3	14.7	16.1
Pacific	12.3	26.5	14.3
Arab States	8.2	5.9	7.7

Regions are classified by descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single House.

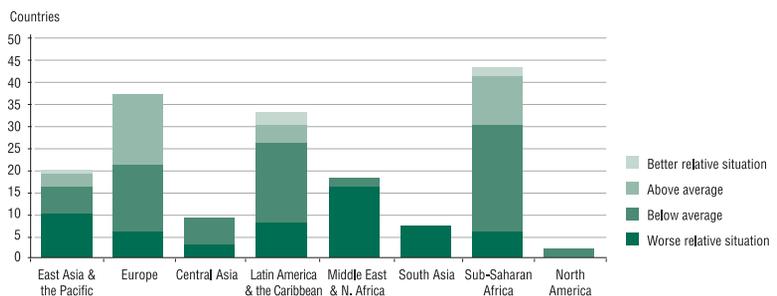
Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2006).

CHART 1. Percentage of women parliamentarians in the world, 1999-2006



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union

CHART 2. Current situation in gender empowerment according to region



³ Global database of quotas for women. A joint project of IDEA and Stockholm University. See: <www.quotaproject.org>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

politics are removed, but most countries with quotas have not set time limits to their use of quotas.

The indicators presented in this Report show that of a total of 150 countries, 33% are in the worst position, 42% are below average and only 25% are above average or in the best position. The countries in the worst position have variable BCI positions. Of the countries that find themselves in the worst position in the area of empowerment, 29 have middle or low BCI (among them Armenia, Mexico, Italy, Thailand and Greece). At the other extreme we find that, of 38 countries that find themselves in the best position or above average, 11 have critical or very critical BCI and 24 have middle or high BCI.

Regarding the countries that find themselves in the worst situation, we find that 75% of them have advanced slightly or significantly, while 13% have regressed. We see a tendency toward slow but meaningful progress.

Upon analyzing the particular situation of each indicator for the countries in the worst and best position relative to empowerment, one can clearly appreciate where the deficiencies are greatest. The average presence of women at the ministerial level in the countries in the best situation is 29%, compared to 6% in the countries in the worst situation. In terms of female members of parliament, in turn, the countries in the best situation reach an average of 33%, while those in the worst situation barely reach 9%. In indicators related to women in professional and technical positions and women who are managers or have high-ranking positions, 31 countries find themselves in the worst relative position. The six countries that find themselves in the best situation in relation to gender empowerment do not publish statistics on these indicators. These six countries are Cuba, Granada, Guyana, Rwanda, South Africa and Timor Leste.

Gender: Economic activity

Selected indicators:

- Women wage employment in non-agricultural sector (as a percentage of total non-agricultural employees)
- Estimated earned income ratio (women/men)

Levels of participation in economic activity provide an important indicator of gender equity because the relationship between participation and poverty is direct; two of the reasons for a great deal of female poverty are unequal levels of access to the labour market and work discrimination that translates into women receiving lower wages than men for the same work.

CHART 3. Final situation in gender empowerment according to BCI

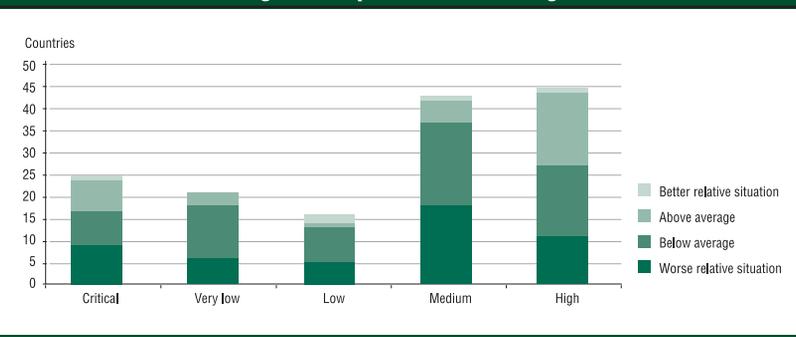


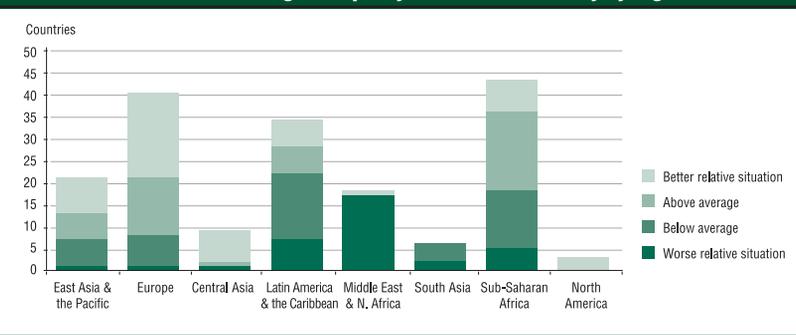
TABLE 2. Current situation according to evolution in gender empowerment

	SIGNIFICANT REGRESSION	SLIGHT REGRESSION	STAGNATION	SLIGHT PROGRESS	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	TOTAL
Countries in worse situation	2	5	7	35	5	54
Countries below average	0	3	7	40	21	71
Countries above average	0	1	3	10	20	34
Countries in better situation	0	0	0	0	5	5
Total	2	9	17	85	51	164

TABLE 3. Averages by indicator for the countries in the best and worst relative position according to gender empowerment

		WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL	WOMEN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT	PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL WOMEN	WOMEN LEGISLATORS, HIGH OFFICIALS AND DIRECTORS
Countries in worse situation	Average	6.52	8.63	38.16	19.35
	Number of countries	54	54	31	31
Countries in better situation	Average	29.5	33.5	N/A	N/A
	Number of countries	6	6		
Total	Average	8.82	11.12	38.16	19.35
	Number of countries	60	60	31	31

CHART 1. Current situation in gender parity in economic activity by region



According to a report from the International Labour Organization (ILO) women represent 40% of the current labour force yet in nearly every position receive lower pay than their male colleagues for doing the same work. Women do not receive equal pay for equal work.

Social Watch monitors gender inequity in economic activity in terms of two indicators: the percentage of women's wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and the gap between the income earned by women and men in the labour market.

In the European Union (EU, made up of 25 countries, among them the most developed countries on the continent) the female employment rate does not exceed 51%, compared to 71% male employment, and the salary gap hovers around 16%.

In over 60 of the world's states, women's income is 50% lower than men's income. Women make up only 39% of salaried workers, but 62% of unpaid family workers.³

If we study the position of women in the area of economic activity within the countries, we find that in 134 countries 1 of every 5 are in the worst position, 30% are below average, 20% are above average and 30% are in the best relative position.

Of the 34 countries ranked in the worst position, 20 are countries with a middle or high BCI and 14 are countries with a low, very low or critical BCI. As we mentioned, gender inequities are not directly related to a country's level of well-being. In turn, if we observe the 43 countries located in the best position, 75% possess middle or high BCI and 25% show a low or critical level.

We find differences in the rates of evolution of gender equity in different countries. Of all the countries observed, 44% are stagnant while 47% are advancing slowly or significantly.

Half of the countries in the worst category are stagnant, while 20% have seen slight progress, another 20% significant progress and the remaining 10% have fallen back.

Finally, half the countries in the worst situation with regard to gender equity are located in the Middle East and North Africa, 20% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 15% in Sub-Saharan Africa and the remaining 15% are located in Europe, Central and East Asia and the Pacific.

Of the best-positioned countries, 37% are European, 16% East Asian and Pacific, 14% Central Asian, 14% Sub-Saharan African, 12% Latin American and Caribbean. While the three countries of North America are among the best positioned coun-

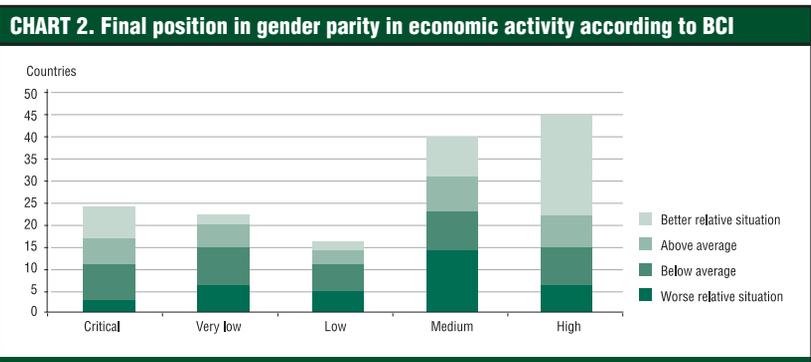


TABLE 1. Current situation based on evolution in economic activity by gender

	SIGNIFICANT REGRESSION	SLIGHT REGRESSION	STAGNATION	SLIGHT PROGRESS	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	TOTAL
Countries in worse situation	0	3	15	6	6	30
Countries below average	2	0	11	11	9	33
Countries above average	0	0	11	11	5	27
Countries in better situation	2	3	22	10	5	42
Total	4	6	59	38	25	132

TABLE 2. Averages by indicator for the countries in the best and worst situation with regard to economic activity by gender

		ESTIMATED EARNED INCOME RATIO (WOMEN/MEN)	WOMEN WAGE EMPLOYMENT IN NON-AGRICULTURAL SECTOR (AS % OF TOTAL NON-AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEES)
Countries in worse situation	Average	0.34	24.99
	Number of countries	31	30
Countries in better situation	Average	0.67	49.66
	Number of countries	46	42
Total	Average	0.54	39.38
	Number of countries	77	72

tries in the category, of the 18 countries of the Middle East and North Africa, 17 are in the worst position.

Upon observing the summary of the indicators in this category, it is clear that in the countries with the greatest gender equity in economic participation, nearly half the paid workers outside the agricultural sector are women, while for those countries in the worst position, women do not reach a quarter. Another meaningful statistic in this same

vein is the income gap, that is to say the relationship between female/male earnings: even in the countries in the best position the gap is 66%, while in the countries in the worst position the gap is more extreme, given that women receive earnings that equal a third of the earnings men take in. For all countries combined, women's income barely exceeds half that of men. ■

³ United Nations (2005). *Millennium Development Goals Report 2005*. Available from: <www.un.org/millenniumgoals>, accessed November 2005.