women’s per capita average earned income – measured by applying women’s share of non-agricultural wages to gross domestic product – is far lower than men’s (see Figure 3.3, page 41). Estimates based on wage differentials and participation in the labour force suggest that women’s estimated earned income is around 50 per cent of men’s in the countries surveyed in the Middle East and North Africa, around 40 per cent in Latin America and South Asia, 30 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and around 60 per cent in CEE/CIS, East Asia and industrialized countries.12 As Chapter 2 shows, income in the hands of women can reap benefits for children. Gender gaps in earnings, therefore, can decrease or limit the resources available to meet children’s rights to health care, education, adequate nutrition and education.

With both parents working outside the home, and in the absence of adequate social support systems, children’s rights to education, rest and leisure, care and protection are also at risk. One example of this negative externality is the mother-daughter substitute effect. As mothers take on paid work outside the home, children, especially girls, assume the domestic responsibilities, looking after the home and taking care of siblings – often at the expense of their education.14 This highlights the importance of the role played by both parents in caring for children, whether or not they work outside the home (see Panel, page 41).

The asset gap
Women not only earn less than men, they also tend to own fewer assets. Smaller salaries and less control over household income constrain their ability to accumulate capital. But these are not the only reasons. Gender biases in property and inheritance laws and in other channels of acquiring assets – even state land distribution programmes – leave women and children at greater risk of poverty.15

The consequences of being excluded from owning property or assets can be even more direct, particularly when a marriage breaks down or a husband dies. Widows who upon their husband’s death lose the right to their ownership of the family home or land, or divorced women who are driven from the husband’s home, are easily pushed into the margins of society, further exacerbating the struggle to achieve health and well-being for themselves and their children.16

Although increasing numbers of women are entering the workforce, their expanded participation is not always matched by an improvement in children’s welfare. The need for substitute caregivers while mothers are at work places many children – most often girls – at risk of being kept out of or dropping out of school in order to care for younger siblings or perform household work, or both. The universally recognized rights of children to play, to receive an education and to be cared for by both parents are at risk, with negative implications for their well-being and future economic status. Evidence of these trends is consistent across many developing countries.

Although there are even fewer statistics on gender asset gaps than on wage disparities, the evidence available suggests that the pattern of discrimination is broadly similar across the developing world. A study covering five Latin American countries indicates that women own only a fraction of the land compared with men (see Figure 3.4, page 42).17 In other regions where data are available, women face similar inequalities. For example, in Cameroon, while

Figure 3.2 Nominal wages for women are significantly lower than for men

Figure 3.3 Estimated earnings* for women are substantially lower than for men

Do girls risk missing out on school when women work?

A recent survey in Nepal shows that eldest daughters tend to be at greatest risk of being withdrawn from school to help their working mothers take care of younger siblings and to assume household responsibilities. Evidence from the United Republic of Tanzania indicates that a lack of childcare facilities forces parents to take their children to work or pass on childcare responsibilities to their elder siblings. Increasing female employment in Peru has resulted in children, particularly girls, dedicating more time to household activities. Similarly, in countries in South-East Asia, as more mothers work outside the home, the increased need for childcare is met by older children, aunts and grandmothers, who often become the primary caregivers of young children in rural areas.

See References, page 88.

* UNICEF calculations for Developing countries include countries and territories in the following regional groups: Middle East and North Africa: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Occupied Palestinian Territory, East Asia and Pacific: Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand. Countries in transition: Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, Latin America and Caribbean: Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Sub-Saharan Africa: Botswana, Eritrea, Kenya, Swaziland.

Industrialized countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.