have equal access to food, health care, education and opportunities. Evidence has shown that women whose rights are fulfilled are more likely to ensure that girls have access to adequate nutrition, health care, education and protection from harm.

Second, gender equality is essential to creating the world envisioned in the Millennium Declaration, a world of peace, equity, tolerance, security, freedom, respect for the environment and shared responsibility, in which special care and attention is given to the most vulnerable people, especially children. This is the world that the international community has pledged to strive for – a world fit for both women and children.

Nothing less than the full participation of all members of society is needed to ensure sufficient human progress to meet the Millennium Agenda. World leaders at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000 understood this. They acknowledged that gender equality will empower women to overcome poverty, with multiple benefits for their families, communities and countries.

The Millennium agenda reflects this recognition of the centrality of gender equality to human development. The Millennium Declaration specifically calls for the full implementation of both the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the conventions are sister treaties – inexorably linked in their call for precise rights and responsibilities and filling in crucial gaps that may exist when either stands alone.

Several articles of CEDAW address rights pertinent to children, including equality (articles 2 and 15), protecting maternity (article 4), adequate health care (article 12) and shared parental responsibility (article 16). The CRC calls for equal access for girls and boys to education and health care. Both conventions demand freedom from violence and abuse and are based on principles of non-discrimination, participation and accountability.

The treaties are not perfectly harmonious. There are areas of tension. For instance, some supporters of gender equality believe that the CRC stereotypes women as mothers, limiting their life options. Some child rights advocates think that CEDAW focuses too much on a woman’s right to self-actualisation and may unintentionally subvert the importance of motherhood. Despite these differences, the two conventions hold more in common than in opposition – they set the standards for an equitable world in which the rights of every human being – female and male, old and young – are respected.

The rights of women are less widely accepted than those of children. Although both treaties have gained widespread endorsement, CEDAW has had the tougher road to acceptance and ratification. Some nations that readily accept the concept that children have rights are less willing to concede that women also have rights. And while 184 countries are parties to CEDAW, many of the signatures were submitted with reservations to specific articles. In fact, CEDAW contains among the highest number of reservations of any United Nations treaty, underscoring world-wide resistance to women’s rights. Further support for CEDAW and the CRC has been strong. In practice, however, neither

---

**Figure 1.1 In many developing regions, girls are more likely than boys to miss out on a secondary education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West and Central Africa</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and Pacific</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- Gross secondary school enrolment ratio refers to the number of children enrolled in secondary school, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the total number of children of official secondary school age. Net secondary school attendance ratio refers to the number of children attending secondary school who are of official secondary school age, expressed as a percentage of the total number of children of official secondary school age. These data come from national household surveys.
- * Data refer to the most recent year available during the period specified.
- ** Excludes China.

**Sources:**
- Gross secondary enrolment ratio: UNESCO Institute of Statistics. Net secondary school attendance ratio: Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. The underlying data can be found in the Statistical Tables of this report, page 99.
Gender discrimination is pervasive. While the degrees and forms of inequality may vary, women and girls are deprived of equal access to resources, opportunities and political power in every region of the world. The oppression of girls and women can include the preference for sons over daughters, limited personal and professional choices for girls and women, the denial of basic human rights and outright gender-based violence.

Figure 1.2 Men’s discriminatory attitudes towards women vary across regions but are significant everywhere

Proportion of male respondents who:
Agree or strongly agree that "men make better political leaders than women do"
Agree or strongly agree that "when jobs are scarce men should have more right to a job than a woman"
Agree or strongly agree that "university is more important for a boy than a girl"

Inequality is always tragic and sometimes fatal. Prenatal sex selection and infanticide, prevalent in parts of South and East Asia, show the low value placed on the lives of girls and women and have led to unbalanced populations where men outnumber women. Despite overall growth in educational enrolment, more than 115 million children of primary school age do not receive an elementary education. With few exceptions, girls are more likely than boys to be missing from classrooms across the developing world. Girls who do enrol in school often drop out when they reach puberty for many reasons – the demands of household responsibilities, a lack of school sanitation, a paucy of female role models, child marriage or sexual harassment and violence, among others.

Violence against women and girls
Girls and women are frequently victims of physical and sexual violence inside and outside the home. Although such assaults are under-reported because of the stigma of the crime, a recent multi-country study by the World Health Organization revealed that between 15 per cent and 71 per cent of women had experienced physical or sexual assault from an intimate partner. Domestic violence is the most common form of violence perpetrated against women.

During armed conflict, rape and sexual assault are often used as weapons of war. When complex emergencies force people to be displaced from their homes, women and girls are at increased risk of violence, exploitation and abuse – sometimes from the very security personnel or other persons charged with their protection and safety.

Insidious forms of gender inequality
As despicable as deliberate negligence or brutal violence can be, insidious gender inequality may be equally destructive.

UNICEF calculations are based on data derived from the World Values Survey, Round 4 (1999–2004). Data for each country and territory in the regional aggregates are for the latest year available in the period specified. The following countries and territories are included in the regional aggregates cited: Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia. Latin America and Caribbean: Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Mexico, Peru. South Asia: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan. East Asia and Pacific: China, Indonesia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Viet Nam. Sub-Saharan Africa: Algeria, South Africa, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania. Countries in transition: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey. Industrialized countries: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States. Notes on the methodology employed can be found in the References section, page 88.

landscape. And while gender continues to influence people’s choices and challenges, in many parts of the world a girl born in 2007 will probably have a brighter future than a girl born when CEDAW was adopted in 1979.

Today, women and girls have access to opportunities that were previously restricted. Primary school enrolment rates for girls have jumped and the educational gender gap is narrowing. Women are entering the labour force in greater numbers. And women’s political representation is increasing in many parts of the world.

In 2006, for instance, Chile and Jamaica elected women for the first time as their heads of government. (Chile’s president, Michelle Bachelet, is also head of state.) In addition, the Republic of Korea appointed its first woman prime minister in April 2006, bringing the total number of female heads of state or government in the world to 14.7

While that number is miniscule, considering that there are 192 UN Member States, female government leadership was unheard of less than 50 years ago.8

Gains in gender equality notwithstanding, far too many women and girls have been left behind and remain voiceless and powerless. Women are disproportionately affected by poverty, inequality and violence. It is widely estimated that women make up the majority of the world’s poor,9 comprise nearly two thirds of the people who are illiterate,10 and, along with children, account for 80 per cent of civilian casualties during armed conflict.11

All Member States of the United Nations, regardless of their political, religious or ethnic composition, spoke with one voice when the UN pledged to make the world fit for children at the General Assembly Special Session on Children in May 2002.
But rallying around the cause of children without championing gender equality is like stocking a sports team with players but failing to teach them how to play the game.

**The intergenerational dividends of gender equality**

Women are the primary caregivers for children and thus ultimately shape children’s lives. This is especially true in the most traditional, patriarchal societies where roles and responsibilities are strictly delineated by gender. The well-being of women and children is inseparable. What is good for women is good for children with few, if any, exceptions.

Nations bear the consequences when women are disempowered and deprived of human rights. The cycle of poverty and despair is passed from generation to generation. Conversely, countries reap double dividends when gender equality is promoted and ultimately attained. Women become healthy, educated, productive and able to help their children survive and thrive. These benefits are bequeathed to current and future generations.

To maximize gender equality’s impact on poverty reduction, education and sustainable development, women must have influence in decision-making in three distinct areas: the household, the workplace and the political sphere. A change for the better in any one of these realms influences women’s equality in the others. But halfway measures towards human rights are unacceptable. Anything less than unqualified support for gender equality in all three areas will sabotage meaningful progress towards fulfilling the MDGs.

**Equality in the household (Chapter 2)**

Women’s access to power at the household level has the most direct impact on families and children. Here is where decisions are made about the allocation of resources for food, health care, schooling and other family necessities.

When women are locked out of decisions regarding household income and other resources, they and their children are more likely to receive less food, and to be denied essential health services and education. Household chores, such as fetching water, gathering firewood or caring for the young or infirm, are delegated to mothers and daughters, which keeps them out of the paid labour force or school. When women share equality in household decisions, they tend to provide more adequately and fairly for their children.

**Equality in the workplace (Chapter 3)**

At work, women are often victimized by discrimination. They may be excluded from more highly remunerated occupations and are frequently paid less than men for the same work. Women and girls are often recruited into domestic work outside their own homes and may be forced to live away from their families, at times in oppressive, dangerous conditions. Destitute women and girls may find the sex trade their only option for employment when all other economic doors have been shut.

Ending the wage gap, opening higher-paying fields to women and allowing female workers more decision-making power will greatly benefit children. As women become economically productive, their spheres of influence increase. They become able to make choices not only for themselves, but also for their children. When a woman brings income or assets into the household, she is more likely to be included in decisions on how the resources will be distributed. Historically, when women hold decision-making power, they see to it that their children eat well, receive adequate medical care, finish school and have time for recreation and play. Women who have access to meaningful, income-producing work are more likely to increase their families’ standards of living, leading children out of poverty.

**Equality in government and politics (Chapter 4)**

Increasing women’s political participation is an MDG objective in its own right (MDG 3, Target 4, Indicator 12). Empowering women in the political arena can help change societies.
Figure 1.5 High rates of maternal death are associated with limited access to health-care services for expectant mothers

Health-care services for expectant mothers, 1997–2005*

Antenatal care coverage
Skilled attendant at delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Antenatal care coverage</th>
<th>Skilled attendant at delivery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West and Central Africa</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and Pacific</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEE/CIS</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrialized countries</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Antenatal care coverage refers to the percentage of women aged 15–24 attended at least once during pregnancy by a skilled attendant (doctor, nurse or midwife). Data on antenatal care coverage are not available for industrialized countries. Skilled attendant at delivery refers to the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel (doctors, nurses or midwives).

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

Sources: Demographic and Health Surveys, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, World Health Organization and UNICEF. The underlying data can be found in the Statistical Tables of this report, page 98.

Lifetime risk of maternal death, 2000

1 in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Lifetime risk of maternal death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West and Central Africa</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and Pacific</td>
<td>770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEE/CIS</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrialized countries</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The lifetime risk of maternal death takes into account both the probability of becoming pregnant and the probability of dying as a result of that pregnancy, accumulated across a women’s reproductive years.

Sources: World Health Organization and UNICEF. The underlying data can be found in the Statistical Tables of this report, page 98.

Their involvement in governing bodies, whether local or national, leads to policies and legislation that focus on women, children and families. In a survey of 187 women who hold public office in 65 countries, the Inter-Parliamentary Union found that about nine-tenths believe they have a responsibility to represent women’s interests and advocate for other members of society.12

Women can play key roles in securing peace. Female representation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction is vital to ensuring the safety and protection of children and other vulnerable populations. Women’s direct influence on politics and public policy bodes well for peace, security and prosperity.

Empowering women and girls

The status of women is a crucial element for accurately gauging the state of the world’s children and assessing what the future holds for them. Disaggregated data on life expectancy, infant and under-five mortality, educational enrolment and completion, as well as other quantifiable statistics, are necessary to assess progress towards the MDGs. But attitudes, cultural beliefs and ingrained bigotry are difficult to quantify; consequently, qualitative evidence and women’s reporting on their experiences are also needed to promote gender equality, poverty reduction and sustainable development.

The following chapters will analyse both quantitative indicators and qualitative evidence about the status of women and its relationship to child survival and development. The final chapter of the report intends to provide a road map for maximizing gender equality through seven key modes: education, financing, legislation, legislative quotas, engaging men and boys, women empowering women, and improved research and data. For only when equality is achieved will women be empowered, and only then will they and their children thrive.

It has been nearly 30 years since CEDAW was adopted by the United Nations. One can only imagine what the lives of girls born in 1979 would have been like had the convention been fully supported and implemented. A generation of empowered women would have made a world of difference.

As a Chinese adage says, “Women hold up half the sky.” The next generation cannot wait another three decades for its rights. Women and girls must have the means and support to fulfil their potential and fully enjoy their rights.

A world fit for women is a world fit for children

Two years after the Millennium Summit, the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in May 2002 linked economic development to the creation of a world fit for children. A world fit for children is also a world fit for women. They are inseparable and invisible – one cannot exist without the other.

Lofty ambitions, good intentions and catchy slogans will not produce human progress. The road to sustainable development cannot be paved with half measures. Sound investments and a resolute commitment to justice, gender equality and children are required.

If all citizens are allowed the opportunity to reach their potential, then nations will thrive. No argument against gender equality, whether based on traditions, customs or outright bigotry, can disprove the claim that women’s rights are good for children and ultimately good for the world.

Women and girls must have the means and support to fulfil their potential and fully enjoy their rights.
**Figure 2.2** Many husbands are making the decisions alone on daily household expenditure

Percentage of women who say their husbands alone make the decisions on daily household expenditure, 2000-2004*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and Pacific</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEE/CIS</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data refer to the most recent year available during the period specified. All countries with available data are presented in the chart.

Source: UNICEF calculations based on the data derived from Demographic and Health Surveys. The data were accessed from the DHS Statcompiler in June 2006. Notes on the methodology employed can be found in the References section, page 88.
Figure 2.2 Many husbands are making the decisions alone on daily household expenditure

Percentage of women who say their husbands alone make the decisions on daily household expenditure, 2000-2004*

*Data refer to the most recent year available during the period specified. All countries with available data are presented in the chart.

**Source:** UNICEF calculations based on the data derived from Demographic and Health Surveys. The data were accessed from the DHS Statcompiler in June 2006. Notes on the methodology employed can be found in the References section, page 88.
Figure 2.3 Many husbands are making the decisions alone on visits to friends and relatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of women who say their husbands alone make the decisions regarding visits to friends and relatives, 2000-2004*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania (United Rep. of)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEE/CIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data refer to the most recent year available during the period specified. All countries with available data are presented in the chart.

Source: UNDCP calculations based on the data derived from Demographic and Health Surveys. The data were accessed from the DHS Stata Compiler in June 2006. Notes on the methodology employed can be found in the References section, page 88.

**Lack of control over health-care needs:** Decisions on women's health care are vital to the health and well-being of both women and children. In many households, notably in those countries examined in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, women have little influence in health-related decisions. In Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria, for example, almost 75 per cent of women reported that husbands alone make decisions about women's health care; in the two countries surveyed in South Asia, Bangladesh and Nepal, this ratio was around 50 per cent. This exclusion compromises the health and well-being of all family members, particularly children.

**Limited management of daily household expenditures:** Household decisions on daily expenditure have a decisive impact on children's well-being, education and, particularly, their health. Whether a family decides to spend its financial resources on the needs of children or the personal preferences of adults often depends on which family members are involved in the decision-making process. In many households across the developing world, men have a firm upper hand in decision on household expenditures. In 7 of the 15 countries surveyed in sub-Saharan Africa, more than 40 per cent of women indicated that their husbands had exclusive control over daily household expenditures. In the countries examined in the Middle East and North Africa and South Asia, approximately 30 per cent of women felt excluded from decisions on household purchases, while in those countries surveyed CEE/CIS, East Asia and Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean, women reported having a greater degree of control over these decisions.

**Exclusion from decisions on major household purchases:** Household decisions on large expenditures such as land, cars and livestock can be crucial for families. Money spent on large purchases may be regarded as a wise long-term investment. However, the short-term cost of acquiring these assets can consume a large share of household income that might otherwise be used for more immediate household needs, such as medicine, school supplies and food.

Data from the Demographic and Health Surveys suggest that men generally decide how much the household will allocate towards major expenditures. In Nigeria, for example, 78 per cent of women indicated that their husbands have exclusive control over large purchases. Approximately 60 per cent of women in Egypt and over a third of women in Bangladesh and Nepal felt excluded from such decisions. This contrasts with attitudes in the two countries surveyed in East Asia and Pacific, Indonesia and the Philippines, where fewer than 18 per cent of women reported feeling that their husbands did not have a speaker in matters.

**Restricted mobility and freedom:** Household decisions regarding women's mobility directly affect their ability to provide for their own needs as well as the needs of their children. Survey data suggest a high degree of male control over women's mobility in each of the regions surveyed. In Burkina Faso and Mali, approximately 60 per cent of women reported that husbands alone decide when wives can visit family or relatives. One third of Bangladesh husbands control their wives' mobility outside of the home. In Latin America and the Caribbean, data from Nicaragua show that 18 per cent of women require a man's permission before leaving home to visit friends and family. In CEE/CIS, 16 per cent of Armenian women need to first secure their husbands' permission.

**Factors underlying household decision-making processes**

Household assessments such as Demographic and Health Surveys can provide a good indication of which family members are likely to participate in household decisions, but they cannot explain why certain individuals in each household are able to dominate decision-making processes. To understand the dynamics that influence household decision-making processes, it is useful to consider the factors that determine the structure of the family unit, as well as each family member's role within the household.

Gender discrimination in household decision-making is often rooted in patriarchal attitudes.
that value the social status of men over women. But the extent to which individual households conform to ‘traditional’ ideas about the roles of men and women varies. The ability of family members to impose their own preferences in household decisions (bargaining power) is influenced by social attitudes and other, more tangible, factors.4

According to a study based on household decisions and gender, major determinants of influence in household decision-making include control of income and assets, age, and access to and level of education.

Examining these factors across a wide range of countries offers insights into the distribution of bargaining power in individual households.4

Control of income and assets: The family member who controls the greatest share of household income and assets often has the strongest say in deciding whether those resources will be used to meet household needs.4 As the next chapter will illustrate, in both industrialized and developing countries, women continue to lag behind men in terms of income-earning opportunities and ownership and management of assets.

Age gaps: The distribution of household bargaining power is also influenced by a woman’s age at marriage and the age difference between a woman and her husband. Evidence from around the world shows that the age gap between husbands and wives can vary enormously among households. The average age at first marriage in Western Europe is estimated to be 27 for women and 30 for men. In developing countries, age differences are far greater. In South Asia, for example, husbands are approximately five years older than their wives; the gap rises to six years in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding southern Africa).4 In cases of child marriage (defined as customary or statutory union where one or both of the partners is under the age of 18 years old), when the age gap between spouses is most extreme, the burden of domestic work and childcare severely constrains the life choices available to married girls and child mothers.7 This, in turn, affects the power that women have over household decisions.

Levels of education: In addition to increased levels of knowledge, self-confidence and assertiveness, education confers social status and increases income-earning potential. As with age gaps between married couples, the levels of education of spouses vary among households. The findings of a study undertaken in 40 developing countries indicate that, on average, men tend to spend more time in education than women.

The education gap is widest in South Asia, where men on average spend 2.5 years more in school than women, declining to 1.3 years in sub-Saharan Africa, and 1 year in Latin America and the Caribbean.6 Disparate levels of education between men and women may reinforce household gender inequalities, ensuring that women remain disadvantaged.

Domestic violence

Levels of education, earnings and asset ownership and age gaps are key in determining bargaining power between men and women within the household. Arguably of equal importance is the threat of domestic violence. While physical and sexual violence and other forms of abuse occur in different domestic environments and in different guises, there is substantial evidence to suggest that such acts are mainly perpetrated by adult men against women and girls.4 Domestic violence threatens the physical health and emotional well-being of its victims and often forces them to endure subordinate positions and economic insecurity within their households.10

Household gender inequalities foster a permissive context for abusive relationships. A UNICEF study indicates that women who marry at a young age are more likely to believe that it is sometimes acceptable for a man to beat his wife, and are more likely to experience domestic violence than women who marry at an older age. In Kenya, for example, 36 per cent of women who were married before the age of 18 believe that a man is sometimes justified in beating his wife, compared to 20 per cent of those who were married as adults.11

Violence against women and girls crosses the boundaries of race, culture, wealth and religion. Every year, thousands of women are maimed or killed by rejected suitors in many countries.4 A landmark World Health Organization multi-country study on women’s health and domestic violence against women reveals that of those interviewed, 37 per cent of women in a Brazilian province, 56 per cent of women in a province in the United Republic of Tanzania, and 62 per cent of women in a province in Bangladesh reported having experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner.12

The pattern is broadly similar for industrialized countries. According to another key report from the same organization, the World report on violence and health, studies show that 40 per cent to 70 per cent of female murder victims in Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa and the United States were killed by their husbands or boyfriends – often within the context of an ongoing abusive relationship.13 In the United Kingdom, 40 per cent of female homicide victims are killed by their intimate partners.30

Where women have a fair say, children benefit

The consequences of women’s exclusion from household decisions can be as dire for children as they are for women themselves. In families in which women are key decision-makers, the proportion of resources devoted to children is far greater than in those in which women have a less decisive role. This is because women generally place a higher premium than men on

Figure 2.4 Underweight prevalence among children under five in the developing regions*

*UNICEF analysis is based on estimates of underweight prevalence in developing countries (1996-2005).

the incidence of underweight children under three from 30 per cent to 27.2 per cent, and ensures that a further 1.7 million children are adequately nourished.27

A growing body of evidence, principally from West and Central Africa, suggests that when resources are scarce, women generally prioritize the nutrition of family members above other personal and household issues. Survey results from Cameroon show that income-earning women typically spend 74 per cent of their funds to supplement the family food supply, while men spend only an estimated 22 per cent of their income on food.28 Research from Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana demonstrates that in the event of an external shock, such as surplus rainfall or drought, income received from the cultivation of crops tends to be spent differently by men and women. Whereas an increase in women’s income led to additional household spending on food, an increase in men’s income had no significant impact.29

Throughout much of the developing world, women play an important role in planting and harvesting crops, but rarely own the land on which crops are grown and lack control over the distribution of food and profits (see Chapter 3, pages 41–42). Even on subsistence plots, where women generally retain a portion of what they produce, gender discrimination reduces the quantity of food available for children. Unequal access to education, labour and fertilizer results in women farmers having lower crop yields than their male counterparts. In Burkina Faso, for example, where members of the household simultaneously cultivate the same crop on different plots of similar size, evidence shows that, on average, yields are about 18 per cent lower on women’s plots compared to men’s plots. For vegetable crops, in which women tend to specialize, the decline in yields is about 20 per cent.30

Increasing women’s access to the means of agricultural production, such as farming land or fertilizers, farm labour, credit and education is therefore crucial to guaranteeing food security and improving the nutritional status of children. Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa indicates that strengthening women’s control over these inputs can increase agricultural output by an average rate of 10 per cent.31

Women prioritize family health care

As the primary caregivers for children, women tend to be the first to recognize and seek treatment for children’s illnesses. Yet, as the findings of the Demographic and Health Surveys cited earlier confirm, many women around the world are denied a say in even the most basic decisions on family health, such as whether a child will be taken to the doctor, how much money will be spent on medication and the type of care they themselves will receive during pregnancy. In households where women are routinely denied these rights, the husband—or his mother in some cases—determines when and how to seek health care for family members. For instance, a study from Gujarat, India, reports that approximately 50 per cent of women interviewed felt unable to take a sick child to the doctor without the approval of their husband or parent-in-law.32

Women who have greater influence in decision-making can promote better health-care practices for the family. As evidence from Nepal and India shows, even after accounting for differences in education and wealth among the households surveyed, women’s participation in household decisions decreases stunting among children and reduces child mortality.33

Research from Ghana indicates that gender bias in household decisions can influence the quality of medical treatment that sick children receive. A study conducted in the Volta region found that men, typically the household decision-makers in rural villages, tend to treat malaria in children with local herbal remedies and generally regard formal medical treatment as a last resort. Women, in contrast, prefer to treat children immediately with antimalarial drugs from formal medical clinics, which are often located in neighbouring towns and therefore entail travel expenditures in addition to the costs of health care. Those women who lacked economic support from relatives or disagreed with their husbands or family elders about how the children should be treated struggled to obtain appropriate treatment for their ailing children. As a result, the local remedies preferred by men tended to prevail over formal medical treatment, often to the sick children’s detriment.34

Even when women can influence household decisions on medical care, they may still need the help of family members, particularly husbands or mothers-in-laws, to carry out their decision. In Bangladesh, Egypt and India, for example, social norms often discourage or restrict women’s mobility outside of the home. Restrictions on women’s movement can compromise children’s access to emergency health care by preventing women from travelling independently to shops, pharmacies or hospitals, and limiting women’s direct contact with unrelated males, including doctors.35

Women prioritize education

Empirical research on the links between women’s decision-making power in the household and children’s education is in its infancy. Yet the evidence available indicates that women’s empowerment within the household increases the likelihood that children, particularly girls, will attend school. Recent studies have found that where gender influences outcomes for children, it tends to be related to the gender of the parent who controls the distribution of resources. A study of Brazilian households reveals that girls living with mothers who are educated and decision-makers are more likely to be enrolled in school and kept out of the informal labour market.36

Empowering women to prioritize girls’ education generates positive outcomes that span generations. A UNICEF survey of selected countries across Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa—incorporating Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India and Suriname—finds that on average, children with uneducated mothers are at least twice as likely to be out of primary school than children whose mothers attended primary school.37 The importance of mothers’ education is supported by a separate study of children aged 7 to 14 years in 18 sub-Saharan African countries; the study found that 73 per cent of children with educated mothers were in school, compared with only 31 per cent of children whose mothers lacked schooling.38 Moreover, children with a formally educated primary care giver are less likely to repeat a grade or leave school early.39

Figure 2.5 Despite recent improvements, women’s literacy rates are generally lower than men’s

Notes: Adult literacy rate refers to the percentage of persons aged 15 and over who can read and write.
* Data refer to the most recent year available during the period specified.
Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics. The underlying data can be found in the Statistical Tables of this report, page 98.

The incidence of underweight children under three from 30 per cent to 27.2 per cent, and ensures that a further 1.7 million children are adequately nourished.27
contribution to the functioning of the household, there is a widespread view that women as well as men should contribute to household income. Findings from the World Values Survey reveal that when asked whether husbands and wives should both contribute to household income, a clear majority of respondents agreed – around 90 per cent on average in countries surveyed in East Asia and Pacific, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and transition economies, and more than two thirds in the Middle East and South Asia.

These attitudes have, perhaps, contributed to the steady increase in women entering the labour force over the past two decades. By 2005, women accounted for roughly 40 per cent of the world’s economically active population. Trends in participation rates vary widely across regions, however, with much greater female economic activity rates in East Asia and Pacific (68.9 per cent), sub-Saharan Africa (62.3 per cent) and CEE/CIS (57.5 per cent) than elsewhere. Just over one third of women in the Arab States, and under one half in Latin America and South Asia are economically active.

A more revealing statistic of the regional variation in women’s relative economic activity outside the household is the gender parity activity index (defined here as the female economic activity rate as a percentage of the male rate). In the least developed countries, CEE/CIS, East Asia and Pacific, sub-Saharan Africa and the member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the parity index exceeds 70 per cent. However, it drops to 52 per cent in Latin America and South Asia and below 30 per cent in the Arab States.

The wage and earnings gap

Women not only spend significantly less time in paid employment than men; when they work outside the household their average income is also far lower. Although disaggregated data on nominal wages are scarce, the available evidence shows that, across regions, women’s nominal wages are roughly 20 per cent lower than men’s. While the data show that gender wage gaps exist across countries, these can vary significantly and can even be inverted. In Brazil, for example, women under the age of 25 earn a higher average hourly wage than their male counterparts.

Because much of the work women do is underpaid and because they often perform low-status jobs and earn less than men,
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. 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, such as health care, 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. 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. 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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Proportion of women’s wages to men’s wages outside of agriculture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 countries in the Middle East</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 countries in East Asia</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 industrialized countries</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 countries in transition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 countries in Latin America</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Caribbean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 countries in sub-Saharan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 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, Czech Republic, Georgia, Kazakhstan, 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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Women’s estimated earned income</th>
<th>Men’s estimated earned income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industrialized countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEE/CIS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and Pacific</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Estimated earnings are defined as gross domestic product per capita (measured in US dollars at 2003 prices adjusted for purchasing power parity) adjusted for wage disparities between men and women.

Do girls risk missing out on school when women work?

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.

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.

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). In other regions where data are available, women face similar inequalities. For example, in Cameroon, while

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

![Figure 3.3 Estimated earnings for women are substantially lower than for men](image)

*Estimated earnings are defined as gross domestic product per capita (measured in US dollars at 2003 prices adjusted for purchasing power parity) adjusted for wage disparities between men and women.

women undertake more than 75 per cent of agricultural work they own less than 10 per cent of the land. Comparable disparities have been identified in Kenya, Nigeria, the United Republic of Tanzania and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In Pakistan, research reveals that women owned less than 3 per cent of plots in sampled villages, despite having the right to inherit land in most villages.

Where women own assets they have more control over household decision-making. For example, in rural Bangladeshi households, when women's shares of pre-wedding assets are higher than their husbands', their influence in household decisions is greater and levels of sickness among their daughters decrease.

The benefits of ownership can also extend beyond household bargaining dynamics, with positive implications for productivity and growth, particularly in agriculture. Giving women greater control over land and farm planning and management can enhance agricultural productivity. A study by the International Food Policy Research Institute suggests that if gender inequalities were reduced in Burkina Faso, and men and women farmers given equal access to quality agricultural inputs and education, agricultural productivity could rise by as much as 20 per cent.

An earlier study on women farmers in Kenya revealed that crop yields could be increased by 24 per cent if all women farmers were to receive a primary education. Another study in Bangladesh reached a similar conclusion, showing that providing women with specific resources such as high-yielding vegetable seeds and polyculture fish technology in fish ponds leased to groups of low-income women has a greater impact on poverty reduction than untargeted technology dissemination, which is more likely to benefit men and more affluent households.

Empowering women through other types of investment can also have positive effects on economic growth and poverty reduction. Research indicates that providing women with skills training and access to new technologies gives them greater mobility and increases their control over resources, enhances their political awareness and reduces instances of domestic violence.

Where women work matters for children

Female participation in the workforce can be beneficial to children, because it often results in women gaining greater access to, and control of, economic resources. But paid employment for women does not automatically lead to better outcomes for children. Factors such as the amount of time women spend working outside the household, the conditions under which they are employed and who controls the income they generate determine how their employment affects their own well-being and that of their children.

Women’s informal employment and its impact on children

The increased participation of women in the labour force has not always been matched by an equivalent improvement in their working conditions or job security. Women are less likely than men to enjoy job security, working in positions with low earnings, little financial security and few or no social benefits. As growing numbers of women join the labour force, there has been a parallel increase in informal and non-standard forms of employment.

In developing countries, the majority of women workers outside agriculture are concentrated in the informal sector. They are more likely than men to be own-account workers, domestic workers, industrial outworkers or unpaid workers in family enterprises.

By its very nature, informal work is less visible in national statistics due to the lack of systematic reporting. Collecting accurate and comprehensive information on the informal sector remains problematic because of the wide-ranging nature of activities, non-formal organizational structures and diverse modes of operation involved.

In nearly all developing regions, 60 per cent or more of women engaged in non-agricultural work activities are in informal employment. The exception is North Africa, where women's participation in the informal sector is 43 per cent. Of the developing regions, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of informally employed women (84 per cent). Individual developing countries show wide variation across regions (see Figure 3.5, page 44).

Women working in the informal sector often face difficult working conditions, long hours and unscheduled overtime. The lack of job security and benefits such as paid sick leave and childcare provisions can leave women and their children at a higher risk of poverty. When mothers are poor, engaged in time-intensive, underpaid and inflexible informal work, and have little control over their earnings and few alternative caregivers, children are significantly more at risk of poor health and growth.

Such conditions are prevalent in many areas of both informal employment and low-income
work in the formal sector. One particular area that has received increasing scrutiny in recent years is domestic service. Women make up the majority of domestic workers, most of them informally employed. When mothers who work in domestic service take on childcare responsibilities for the employer’s family, this often results in a conundrum: The day-to-day security of the employer’s children is dependent on an employee who has to be away from her own children in order to work.28

A childcare crisis in the formal sector

The increasing participation of women in the labour force is challenging the traditional breadwinner-homemaker model of paid work by men and unpaid work by women. In its place, a new model is prevalent in many countries, such as the high-income OECD countries, transition economies and the rapidly growing nations of East Asia, where both men and women engage in paid employment.29 In the United Kingdom and the United States, for example, two out of every three families are currently double-income families.30 In the Russian Federation, in 52 per cent of households in which there are young children, all adults between the ages of 25 and 55 are working. The corresponding figure for Viet Nam is 88 per cent.31 But even as this new model of household income generation steadily takes root, in general women are still expected to take on the majority of the housework and childcare. As a result, and in the absence of greater participation by men in both domestic chores and childcare, it is becoming increasingly difficult for working mothers to reconcile work and family responsibilities.32

Women working in the formal sector are more likely to have shorter careers than men of equivalent age because there may be periods during their careers when they are unable to engage in full-time employment. Many women in high- and middle-income countries tend either to leave their jobs or work part-time to raise children – typically between the ages of 25 and 35 – and return to full-time employment at a later stage.33 In the European Union, around half of working mothers with a child aged six or younger work part-time.34 These temporary absences from full-time employment can result in lower pay or fewer promotions. In addition, positions that require long working hours, travel or even relocation may be less of an option for mothers in paid employment because of their family commitments.35

In the absence of policies to support working mothers, childbearing and childcare can interrupt women’s careers and permanently constrain their earning power. Research indicates that mothers in paid employment tend to earn even less than other women. According to recent research in several industrialized countries, one child could lead to a “penalty” of 6 per cent to 7 per cent of earnings for women; the penalty for two children can be as high as 13 per cent.36

Although research shows that quality parental care is an essential component of child development and that the early experiences of children have a significant impact on their future welfare,37 working families are often struggling to balance the demands of work and childcare. The demands of work also often leave parents with less time to spend with their children. A study from the United Kingdom shows that parents there are working longer hours or are increasingly focused on work activities.38 Working long hours can be problematic for lower-income families, yet many employers do not regard work-schedule flexibility to be an option for low-wage workers.39 More than two thirds of the low-income parents interviewed in a recent study in the United States reported having at least one child with either a chronic health issue or a special learning need, and that they were often unable to devote quality time to their children without jeopardizing their ability to support their families.40

These difficulties are exacerbated by a lack of affordable, quality childcare facilities. Children who receive high-quality childcare that provides a safe, stable and stimulating environment and fosters their learning skills demonstrate stronger mathematical ability, cognitive skills and alertness and are less likely to exhibit problem behaviours than children who receive low-quality care.41

In many countries, the absence of state provisions or subsidies results in high-quality childcare remaining prohibitively expensive for low-income families. In others, quality childcare is expensive even for middle-income families.42 Parents often rely on extended family members to care for their children while they work. Studies conducted in China and in West Java, Indonesia, for example, show that grandparents, in particular, play an active role in childcare when mothers are away at work.43

The availability of affordable, quality childcare outside the home increases the probability that mothers will enter the labour force. In poor areas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, access to public childcare facilities enables mothers to work outside the home, in full- or part-time employment. This also holds true for the Russian Federation, where subsidized out-of-home childcare raises maternal and household incomes and brings mothers into the labour market. In Kenya, the reduction of childcare costs has been shown to have a positive correlation with higher wages for working mothers.44

Some countries – notably those Scandinavian nations with high levels of gender equality as measured by the GEM (see Chapter 1, page 8) – have managed to attain and sustain elevated levels of high-quality, affordable childcare. One example is Sweden, where municipalities provide public childcare nurseries and centres, as well as publicly paid and regulated care for children in private homes and subsidized private childcare centres with fees free or based on income.45 In the Netherlands, the Childcare Act (which entered into force in January 2005) places responsibility for the cost of childcare jointly on parents, employers and the government. The government provides subsidies directly to parents, who choose the day-care centre for their children. Employers are required to contribute one sixth of the cost of childcare per employee, while the local government monitors quality and regulates operators.46

In many industrialized countries, large companies have introduced family-friendly initiatives including parental leave, maternity benefits, career breaks, flexible hours, childcare arrangements and work-share schemes (see Panel, page 46).47 Such initiatives can have substantial benefits for employers as well as employees. Working parents and employers agree that work-schedule flexibility reduces the conflict between work and family life, giving parents the opportunity to attend to their children’s health and educational needs.48

Figure 3.5 Many women across the developing world work in the informal sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Women’s informal employment as a percentage of women working in 1994 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

the contribution of women is critical both to the long-term success of peace processes and to post-conflict stability.

Women in national politics

Promoting the interests of children and women

Research on the priorities of women parliamentarians comes mostly from industrialized countries, where there has been greater scrutiny of legislative behaviour than in developing countries. Case studies examining lawmakers’ patterns of bill sponsorship and legislative outcomes across a range of industrialized countries confirm a strong commitment by women legislators to issues related to children, women and families. This commitment translates into both active sponsorship of legislation in these areas and to ensuring that the bills become law. A number of studies have expanded this area of enquiry to developing countries, with similar findings.

It would be a mistake to assume on the basis of these results that every woman legislator actively advocates on behalf of women and children; some certainly do not. What the following studies indicate, however, is that many of the issues of particular relevance and importance to women and children might not receive significant attention from their representatives. A pioneering study of women legislators in Latin America found that in the 1993–1994 period, women deputies in Argentina were 9.5 per cent more likely to sponsor children and family bills than their male counterparts. Furthermore, despite representing only 14 per cent of deputies, Argentina’s women parliamentarians introduced no fewer than 78 per cent of the bills related to women’s rights.

Recent evidence suggests that this pattern of behaviour held true over the subsequent decade. In 1999, women legislators in Argentina played a critical role in ensuring the passage of a law that modified the country’s penal code to explicitly define sexual crimes against women and children and toughened penalties for those convicted of sexual assault against children and the disabled. In 2003, women senators in Colombia helped promote groundbreaking equal opportunity legislation. The laws carry wide-ranging provisions to promote and guarantee the rights of girls and women, remove obstacles to the exercise of their rights, and incorporate gender-equitable policies at all levels of the State.

This pattern of advocacy by women legislators on behalf of women and children is also found in industrialized countries. A recent examination of New Zealand’s parliamentary debates on childcare and parental leave over a 25-year period (1975–1999) revealed similar patterns on the part of women legislators (see Figure 4.1, page 571). In the United Kingdom, a forthcoming analysis of more than 3 million words of text from the plenary debates of the National Assembly of Wales also finds important differences between the willingness of female and male legislators to engage in debate about childcare.

Parliamentary advocacy on behalf of children and families can also follow parallel and ideological lines. Countries where cross-party alliances of women parliamentarians have successfully advanced the cause of women and children include Egypt, France, the Netherlands, South Africa, Sweden, the Russian Federation and Rwanda.

In the case of the Russian Federation, an examination of the role of women legislators in the 1993–1999 Duma shows that they were able to set aside ideological and party differences to promote legislation benefiting children and families. The proposed measures favoured childcare and child support; benefits to citizens with children; pregnancy benefits and leave; reduced taxes for families with many children; penalties for domestic violence; and equal rights for men and women with families.

Initiatives to promote children’s rights often accompany efforts to advance the rights of women. One such example occurred in Rwanda, where in 1999 women parliamentarians played a critical role in the passage of a law strengthening women’s rights. The new legislation established women’s right to inherit land for the first time. In the wake of the Rwandan genocide, which destroyed and scattered families, the exclusion of women from land ownership became a critical issue. In addition to being a violation of their rights, not allowing women to own land had a negative impact on such issues as food production and security, the environment, settlement patterns and the livelihood of families and children left behind.

Women legislators in Rwanda also actively advocated for increased spending on health and education, and for special support for children with disabilities. In 2006, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, a cross-party caucus formed in 2003, worked on and supported a bill to combat gender-based violence. The proposed legislation will define gender-based violence and address crimes committed during the genocide as well as ongoing violations.

This activism on the part of women legislators in Rwanda is not an isolated phenomenon but part of a trend that has been apparent in other countries in the region for several years. In South Africa, women parliamentarians provided significant support for the 1998 Domestic Violence Act. The act makes specific references to children, defines the different forms of domestic violence and explains how children can get a protection order against their abusers. In neighbouring Namibia, women lawmakers supported groundbreaking legislation dealing with domestic and sexual violence, such as the Combating of Rape Act of 2000, which provides protection against rape to young girls and boys, and the Domestic Violence Act of 2003.

Changing the face of politics

Women in parliament are not only having an impact on legislation. Their influence extends beyond their immediate actions and is encouraged by their numbers in office. The extent of that influence is measured by the increased likelihood that a bill introduced by a woman will become law. For example, a study of the Argentine Congress found that women legislators were 9.5 per cent more likely to sponsor children and family bills than their male counterparts. For the years 1995–1999, 57.4 per cent of bills introduced by women were related to women’s and children’s rights, compared with 49.9 per cent of bills introduced by men. A forthcoming analysis of more than 3 million words of text from the plenary debates of the National Assembly of Wales also finds important differences between the willingness of female and male legislators to engage in debate about childcare.

A number of studies have found similar trends in industrialized countries, with similar findings. In New Zealand, for example, women deputies were 66 per cent more likely to sponsor children with disabilities. In 2006, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, a cross-party caucus formed in 2003, worked on and supported a bill to combat gender-based violence. The proposed legislation will define gender-based violence and address crimes committed during the genocide as well as ongoing violations.

This activism on the part of women legislators in Rwanda is not an isolated phenomenon but part of a trend that has been apparent in other countries in the region for several years. In South Africa, women parliamentarians provided significant support for the 1998 Domestic Violence Act. The act makes specific references to children, defines the different forms of domestic violence and explains how children can get a protection order against their abusers. In neighbouring Namibia, women lawmakers supported groundbreaking legislation dealing with domestic and sexual violence, such as the Combating of Rape Act of 2000, which provides protection against rape to young girls and boys, and the Domestic Violence Act of 2003.

Figure 4.1 Bill sponsorship in Argentina and New Zealand

Women in parliament were more likely to support children’s and women’s rights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women and politics: Realities and myths

Should one expect the involvement of women parliamentarians to lead to different policy outcomes? The reasons one can assume women might act from a different perspective than their male counterparts are practical rather than theoretical.

An alternative perspective

In an extensive survey of 187 women parliamentarians from 65 countries conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 1999, the respondents consistently portrayed women as having different priorities from men. Four out of every five respondents believed that women held conceptually different ideas about society and politics. More than 80 per cent agreed that women’s greater participation would bring about change, and almost 9 out of every 10 considered that women’s participation in the political process significantly changed political outcomes.

Three reasons women politicians are likely to approach politics differently

Women’s motivation for entering politics is often different from that of men. In the IPU survey, 40 per cent of the respondents stated that they had entered politics as a result of their interests in social work and 34 per cent through non-governmental organizations, as opposed to the more ‘conventional’ path of party politics often embraced by men. This finding accurately reflects a well-established tendency among women to engage in civil society as a way of promoting projects that support household survival, and to focus their energies at the local level.

Women are often exposed to different patterns of socialization and have different life experiences than men and are likely to bring their experience and expertise to bear on their political decisions. While impatient changes have been taking place over the past few decades, in most countries, women still bear the main caregiving responsibilities for their families, including children and the elderly.

Women are more likely to see themselves as representatives of women.

Three reasons women politicians are likely to approach politics differently

Women’s motivation for entering politics is often different from that of men. In the IPU survey, 40 per cent of the respondents stated that they had entered politics as a result of their interests in social work and 34 per cent through non-governmental organizations, as opposed to the more ‘conventional’ path of party politics often embraced by men. This finding accurately reflects a well-established tendency among women to engage in civil society as a way of promoting projects that support household survival, and to focus their energies at the local level.

Women are often exposed to different patterns of socialization and have different life experiences than men and are likely to bring their experience and expertise to bear on their political decisions. While impatient changes have been taking place over the past few decades, in most countries, women still bear the main caregiving responsibilities for their families, including children and the elderly.

Women are more likely to see themselves as representatives of women.

A study of legislators in the United States, for example, found that women feel a special responsibility to represent other women and consider themselves more capable of representing their interests. In Northern Ireland, for example, almost one third of women who vote thought a woman would better represent their interests.

Why are there still so few women in politics?

Given their potential contribution to the political process, an obvious question arises: Why then are there so few women participating in politics?

The answer is multifaceted and differs across countries, societies and communities. But several common threads are outlined below.

Women are unlikely to run for political office. While exact numbers are difficult to come by, existing studies indicate that women are less likely to run for office. In the United States, for example, men are at least 50 per cent more likely to have investigated how to place their name on the ballot, or to have discussed running with potential donors, party or community leaders, family members or friends.

• Double burden of public and private responsibilities: As the preceding chapters have shown, women’s work burdens are generally much heavier than men’s, leaving less time and energy for involvement in political life. In the United States, evidence shows that as women’s responsibilities for household tasks and caregiving decrease, their interest in running for office increases.

• A culture of exclusion: In many countries, against political and financial networks are controlled by men. Cultural practices that serve to nurture and consolidate bonds of male solidarity within these networks, such as drinking, smoking or golfing, are key stepping stones on the path to political office. A study in Thailand found that men typically dominate recruitment committees and tend to bypass women candidates, both in order to retain a structure they are familiar with and because they are more likely to know the male candidates personally.

• Higher participation in education: Those women who run for office successfully, especially in developing countries, tend to be educated to tertiary level at least. Out of the 187 women from 65 countries surveyed by the IPU in 1999, 73 per cent held an undergraduate degree and 14 per cent also held graduate degrees. The lack of women educated to tertiary levels in many countries can therefore act as a barrier to their participation in politics and government.

Women face an uphill struggle to win office.

Women leave politics. There is little data available on whether women leave office more than men due to voter hostility or outright violence sometimes directed against women who are in office (or try to run for office). Women pradhans (leaders) in West Bengal, India, for example, revealed that even though women delivered an amount of public goods to their villages that was equal to or higher than that of their male counterparts, villagers were not only less satisfied with their leadership but also blamed them for the inadequate quality of services outside of their jurisdiction. Perhaps unsurprisingly, about half of the pradhans said they would not run again. In Afghanistan, women candidates in the 2005 election were subject to violence and, in some instances, death threats.

Myths about women in politics

There are more myths about women in politics, both positive and negative, about how women might act from a different perspective than their male counterparts. Such myths are discussed below.

Myth 1: Every woman will make a good prime minister. Women pradhans (leaders) in West Bengal, India, for example, revealed that even though women delivered an amount of public goods to their villages that was equal to or higher than that of their male counterparts, villagers were not only less satisfied with their leadership but also blamed them for the inadequate quality of services outside of their jurisdiction. Perhaps unsurprisingly, about half of the pradhans said they would not run again. In Afghanistan, women candidates in the 2005 election were subject to violence and, in some instances, death threats.

Myth 2: Women are unsuited to the ‘hard’ jobs. A 2005 IPU tally of ministerial portfolios by women counted 858 women ministers in 183 countries. The distribution of portfolios, however, is striking. While almost a third of all ministerial jobs held by women fell in the area of family, children, youth and social affairs or women’s affairs and education, women accounted for only 13 ministers of defence and 9 ministers of the economy worldwide (or 1.5 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively).

See References, page 88.

Voter perceptions, however, can offer an instructive indication. On average, more than half the people surveyed in East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa agreed or strongly agreed that men make better political leaders than women, with three quarters sharing that view in the Middle East and North Africa. However, in other parts of the world, the evidence is more positive. For example, in the Americas, 35 countries against political and financial networks are controlled by men. Cultural practices that serve to nurture and consolidate bonds of male solidarity within these networks, such as drinking, smoking or golfing, are key stepping stones on the path to political office. A study in Thailand found that men typically dominate recruitment committees and tend to bypass women candidates, both in order to retain a structure they are familiar with and because they are more likely to know the male candidates personally.

• Double burden of public and private responsibilities: As the preceding chapters have shown, women’s work burdens are generally much heavier than men’s, leaving less time and energy for involvement in political life. In the United States, evidence shows that as women’s responsibilities for household tasks and caregiving decrease, their interest in running for office increases.

• A culture of exclusion: In many countries, against political and financial networks are controlled by men. Cultural practices that serve to nurture and consolidate bonds of male solidarity within these networks, such as drinking, smoking or golfing, are key stepping stones on the path to political office. A study in Thailand found that men typically dominate recruitment committees and tend to bypass women candidates, both in order to retain a structure they are familiar with and because they are more likely to know the male candidates personally.

• Higher participation in education: Those women who run for office successfully, especially in developing countries, tend to be educated to tertiary level at least. Out of the 187 women from 65 countries surveyed by the IPU in 1999, 73 per cent held an undergraduate degree and 14 per cent also held graduate degrees. The lack of women educated to tertiary levels in many countries can therefore act as a barrier to their participation in politics and government.

Women face an uphill struggle to win office.

Women leave politics. There is little data available on whether women leave office more than men due to voter hostility or outright violence sometimes directed against women who are in office (or try to run for office). Women pradhans (leaders) in West Bengal, India, for example, revealed that even though women delivered an amount of public goods to their villages that was equal to or higher than that of their male counterparts, villagers were not only less satisfied with their leadership but also blamed them for the inadequate quality of services outside of their jurisdiction. Perhaps unsurprisingly, about half of the pradhans said they would not run again. In Afghanistan, women candidates in the 2005 election were subject to violence and, in some instances, death threats.

Myths about women in politics

There are more myths about women in politics, both positive and negative, about how women might act from a different perspective than their male counterparts. Such myths are discussed below.

Myth 1: Every woman will make a good prime minister. Women pradhans (leaders) in West Bengal, India, for example, revealed that even though women delivered an amount of public goods to their villages that was equal to or higher than that of their male counterparts, villagers were not only less satisfied with their leadership but also blamed them for the inadequate quality of services outside of their jurisdiction. Perhaps unsurprisingly, about half of the pradhans said they would not run again. In Afghanistan, women candidates in the 2005 election were subject to violence and, in some instances, death threats.

Myth 2: Women are unsuited to the ‘hard’ jobs. A 2005 IPU tally of ministerial portfolios by women counted 858 women ministers in 183 countries. The distribution of portfolios, however, is striking. While almost a third of all ministerial jobs held by women fell in the area of family, children, youth and social affairs or women’s affairs and education, women accounted for only 13 ministers of defence and 9 ministers of the economy worldwide (or 1.5 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively).

See References, page 88.
Aging changes in the priorities and policies of national legislators, including their male colleagues. Research suggests that male legislators today are increasingly aware of the importance of issues related to women and families, and, in many cases, are important partners in promoting gender equality. For example, in the three Latin American countries cited above (Argentina, Colombia and Costa Rica), there is strong support among male legislators for both women’s issues (68 per cent) and family and children’s issues (66 per cent). Although these figures are below the corresponding indicators among women legislators (94 per cent for women’s issues and 79 per cent for family and children issues), qualitative research, based on interviews with parliamentarians, suggests that men’s interests in these issues are on the rise. Changes in legislative priorities have been accompanied by subtle but significant transformations of the parliamentary environment. Two examples of such changes relate to parliamentary schedules and the availability of childcare facilities in national legislatures. As a direct result of women entering legislatures in greater numbers, parliaments in several countries—including South Africa and the United Kingdom—have amended their sitting hours to accommodate the schedules of women with family responsibilities. In northern Europe, Sweden’s parliament has established a day-care centre for legislators, while in Scotland’s National Assembly, a creche was put in place for visiting constituents to “ensure that those with childcare responsibilities (usually women) can seek out and meet their representatives.”

**Few women in parliament, but signs of progress**

Despite the fact that women are often among the most active political advocates for children, women and families, and that increasing their participation in parliament is a key objective of the Millennium Development Goals (specifically MDG 3), the number of women in national parliaments remains low. Women are under-represented in all national parliaments and in July 2006 accounted for just under 17 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide. Ten countries have no women parliamentarians, and in more than 40 others women account for less than 10 per cent of legislators. Nordic countries have the highest rates of participation, with women representing around 40 per cent of parliamentarians in the combined upper and lower chambers. Arab States rank lowest, with a regional average of less than 8 per cent.

**Beyond the numbers**

Women’s representation in national parliaments is certainly a critical measure of their political empowerment and of a country’s commitment to ensuring that powerful advocates for children can be heard. But numbers are merely a necessary benchmark and not a sufficient condition of women’s empowerment. An extensive analysis of gender budgets in developing countries, undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat, has shown that changed gender attitudes, even where successful, must be accompanied by adequate resources as well as the requisite skills.
Governments, in conjunction with women’s organizations and political parties, have a vital role in ensuring women’s empowerment. They do so by promoting gender-sensitivity among officials or establishing comprehensive women’s policy forums, such as women’s ministries and equal opportunity bureaus. A comprehensive study of governments’ responsiveness to violence against women between 1974 and 1994, for example, found no linear relationship between the number of women in parliament and policy initiatives aimed at reducing violence against women. Drawing on examples from 36 countries, the study revealed that governments with a high representation of women in parliament — such as Sweden, Finland and Denmark — sometimes lagged in their anti-violence policies behind such countries as Australia and Israel where the presence of women in the legislature was far weaker. The study concluded that what matters most in terms of a government’s response to the needs and interests of women is not simply the number of women in parliament. Of equal importance are institutional mechanisms, such as support from political parties for women’s rights, and the strength and coherence of women’s organizations.25

### Women in local politics

#### Prioritizing investments that benefit women and girls

The participation of women in local politics can have an even more immediate and direct impact on outcomes for women and children than national legislation or policies. Although evidence about the behaviour of local politicians is limited, a number of studies from both industrialized and developing countries indicate that women in local government tend to prioritize social issues. Moreover, in one important documented case in the developing world (India), women’s increasing participation in local politics has led to a more equitable distribution of community resources, with direct benefits for women and children, especially girls.

In Norway, children’s issues, and particularly the lack of childcare spaces, are one of the most frequently cited reasons for women entering local politics. A recent study, tracking data as far back as 1975, shows that during the first year when women were around some 30 per cent of local council members, the number of children receiving benefits increased. The most significant finding of the study is that women in local government have the greatest policy impact early on in their careers because they bring a new set of concerns to the political agenda.27

In the United States, a 1994 analysis of more than 9,800 bills introduced in three states over a two-year period found that women legislators were twice as likely as their male counterparts to sponsor child health bills.28 Another study, which examined women’s political representation, showed that US states with a high percentage of women in the legislature are likely to be more supportive of efforts to address violence against women, increase child support, provide women with more extensive employment and unemployment benefits, and promote reproductive health care.29

In developing countries, research on the impact of women in local government is an emerging area of enquiry. The most comprehensive findings currently available come from India, where in 1998 one third of all leadership positions in village councils were reserved for women.30 An extensive research project examining the impact of the reservation policy initially surveyed 165 village councils in the state of West Bengal. The study examined the level of public goods provision in councils that had reservation policies compared to those without such quotas. The study found that in villages with reservation policies, investment in drinking-water facilities was double that of villages without quotas and that the roads were almost twice as likely to be in good condition. Furthermore, major roadways were 20 per cent more likely to have been recently repaired; new biogas (a substitute for cooking fuel and electricity) projects were introduced in 26 per cent of the villages with reservation policies (compared to 6 per cent in the villages without quotas); and, due to active monitoring, the number of visits by health workers in the six months covered by the study was significantly higher. These improvements were highly beneficial to

#### Women’s groups: A force for political change

There are at least two ways in which women’s groups can be an important force for political change. First, these groups often provide support to women who have been elected to political office. Second, they conduct their own advocacy efforts on behalf of women, children and families. Across the world, women’s groups and networks are providing examples of how grass-roots mobilization can advance human rights, especially for the most vulnerable.

- **Afghanistan:** Women’s groups have provided significant support in mobilizing women to participate in the presidential and parliamentary elections and in monitoring the electoral process. They have also organized workshops for women refugees in order to expand their awareness of their rights.

- **Australia:** Women’s groups, along with other groups in civil society, played an important role as advocates for the rights of children in immigration detention. They have lobbied for changes in domestic law and social policy and for improved services to enhance the ability of refugee families to rebuild their lives.

- **Morocco:** In 2004, the advocacy and awareness-raising efforts of women’s rights activists associated with the organization Printemps de l’Egalité (Spring of Equality) helped persuade government leaders to support a landmark family law that is meant to address women’s inequality, protect children’s rights and safeguard men’s dignity.

- **Mozambique:** A campaign against child marriage by several local women’s groups contributed to the passage of a new family law in 2004 that raised the legal age of marriage from 15 to 18 years, and included parental consent from 16 years to 18 years, and with parental consent from 14 years to 16 years.

- **Rwanda:** In 2002, women parliamentarians and community leaders collaborated during the drafting of a national convention to support women’s educational opportunities, small business loans provided by rural banks and the creation of a commission to lobby on behalf of vulnerable young people.

- **Tajikistan:** The Tajikistan League of Women Lawyers drafted a national law on violence, which is currently pending approval by the president. The drafting of the law was a difficult task, but the League organized 32 workshops across the country for more than 1,100 participants, and eventually succeeded in obtaining the cooperation of local authorities, law enforcement and judicial bodies, ministries and other national institutions.

---

**Figure 4.4 Women in governance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World averages</th>
<th>Women in parliament</th>
<th>Women ministers</th>
<th>Women heads of government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

rights laws and principles must necessarily be upheld over male-biased customary laws and traditional practices. National legal reforms in property law and inheritance rights represent modernizing these codes with statutory law can- not be conducted at the expense of the rights and well-being of women and girls.

Quotas can encourage women’s participation in politics

Chapter 4 showed that, whether women are transforming political processes, directly repre- senting the interests of women and children, or inspiring the next generation of girls, the right to vote and stand for public office is vital for children. With Kuwait granting women the right to vote and stand for election in May 2005, there are now very few countries with elected parliaments where women do not have the right to vote and stand for public office.98 But while the legal barriers to entry into poli- tics and government for women have been removed, women still account for only one out of every six national parliamentarians in the world.99

Quotas: One size does not fit all

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

- **Gender quota systems** aim to ensure that women constitute at least a ‘critical minority’ of 20, 30 or 40 per cent of legislators, or a true gender balance of 50 per cent. In some countries quotas are applied as a temporary measure, that is to say, until the barriers to women’s entry into politics are removed. Most countries with quotas, however, have not limited their use over time.

- **Legal quotas** regulate the proceed- ings of all political parties in a coun- try and may also prescribe sanctions in case of non-compliance. Legal quotas can be mandated in a country’s constitution (as in Burkina Faso, Nepal, the Philippines and Uganda) or by law, usually elec- toral (as in many parts of Latin America and, for example, in Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Sudan).

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

  - **Quotas can target different parts of the selection and nomination process**

    - At the nomination stage, quotas are applied as ‘reserved seats’, where a certain percentage or number among those elected must be women. Increasingly, gender quo- tas are being introduced using reserved seat systems. See References, page 88.

    - At the electoral stage, quotas are applied as electoral candidates to be placed on the party ballot. This implies that a rule (legal or voluntary) requires that, for instance 20, 30, 40 or even 50 per cent of the candidates must be women.

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

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

  - **Quotas can target different parts of the selection and nomination process**

    - At the nomination stage, quotas are applied as ‘reserved seats’, where a certain percentage or number among those elected must be women. Increasingly, gender quo- tas are being introduced using reserved seat systems. See References, page 88.
parliaments, to date there are 30 countries that have constitutional or statutory quotas at the subnational level. In India, for example, the results have been dramatic, as one third of seats in all local legislatures are reserved for women by a constitutional amendment. This stands in contrast to the national parliament, where women account for less than 10 per cent of all parliamentarians.\(^{43}\)

Quotas are also gaining increasing recognition as a potentially effective vehicle for ensuring women’s representation at the peace table. In 1999, for example, after women were key participants in helping settle hostilities in southern Sudan, the United Nations Development Fund for Women partnered with a local organization on the ‘People to People’ peace process, which reserved a third of the seats in local and regional peace reconciliation meetings for women.\(^{44}\) Similarly, in South Africa, 41 per cent of the commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were women.\(^{45}\) Neither of these examples, however, involves formal peace processes. At present, no examples of such quotas exist.

While they can be effective, however, quotas are no panacea. To be effective, quotas have to match the electoral system of a country; unless they do, and unless commitments are reinforced by a political system in which rules matter and failure to comply carries consequences, the role of quotas is merely symbolic.\(^{46}\)

**Women empowering women**

One of the most important and effective avenues for women’s empowerment is the dynamic of cooperation among women. Informal women’s collectives organize around such issues as nutrition, food distribution, education and shelter, contributing to an improved standard of living for women, their families and communities.\(^{47}\) But even though women’s social networks tend to be wider than those of men, they tend to command fewer economic resources.\(^{48}\)

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

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

**Engaging men and boys**

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

By making child-friendly choices and supporting women in their capacities as decision-makers, men can be powerful allies in the struggle for women’s equality. Evidence shows that men are more likely to be active, hands-on fathers when they feel positive about themselves and their relationship with the child’s mother, when they have support for active involvement in their children’s lives from family and friends, and when they are in employment.\(^{49}\)

**Involving men**

Men are often the dominant household decision-makers, yet they tend to be overlooked by programmes that improve conditions for women and children.\(^{50}\) In one Indian state, for instance, researchers discovered that advocacy campaigns on nutrition were targeted to women, even though approximately 20 per cent of fathers made the decisions regarding children’s nutrition.\(^{51}\)

UNICEF’s experience shows that programmes that focus on males provide ways to promote positive gender socialization. Programmes that...
Program H: Challenging gender stereotypes and changing attitudes in Brazil and other countries

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

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

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

Evaluations of the group meetings, where young men discuss the consequences of high-risk lifestyle choices, show that men who complete the programme are less likely to support traditional gender norms (for example, the belief that childcare is a woman’s job and that there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten). The number of young male participants (aged 15 to 28) who supported the statement that “a woman’s most important role is to take care of the home and cook” declined from 41 per cent in the pretest to 29 per cent after completion of the programme.

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

See References, page 88.

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

- Violence against women: Only 38 countries in the world have conducted at least one national survey on violence against women since 1995. A further 30 countries have surveys completed that cover parts of the country.

- Enrolment, school attendance and literacy: While there are significant data disaggregated by sex on school enrolment, literacy and school attendance are available for only 112 and 96 countries, respectively. Efforts to compile and release sex-disaggregated data on female completion rates at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education must also be strengthened.

- Labour force, unemployment and occupational distribution: Just over half the world’s 204 countries and territories provided sex-disaggregated data on these fundamental areas of work, with only 105 providing data on occupational segregation by sex.

- Wage statistics: This is a vital area where discrimination affects women and their children, and yet just under half (52) of the 108 countries or territories that reported wage data were also able to provide disaggregation by sex. Europe and Asia account for almost three quarters of these countries.

- Informal employment: Even with an internationally agreed-upon definition of informal employment, only 60 countries have produced data on informal employment, and in many cases these statistics are not fully comparable.

- Unpaid work and time use: Since 1995, 67 countries or areas have conducted time use surveys, with again the vast majority in CEE/CIS and South and East Asia. Only seven countries in Africa and three in South America have collected such data.

- Women’s participation in national and local governments: The Inter-Parliamentary Union collects data on the number of women in parliaments and how the numbers have changed over time. Data on women’s participation in local government are relatively scarce, however, although United Cities and Local Governments has collected data in more than 70 countries.

- Women in peace negotiations and peace-building: No systematic data are available on women participating as parties to peace negotiations. With the exception of the statistics made available by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, no systematic data are available about women involved in different dimensions of peace-building.

In some areas, collection of data is much more difficult than in others. Collecting data on violence and trafficking, for example, poses more methodological problems than data on women in national parliaments. However, the lack of data in many key areas reflects not the difficulties of data collection, but rather the significant discrepancy between the resources invested in the excellent and careful collection of data in some areas, and lack of data in others. In other words, it is not only a question of capacity but also one of political will to invest in data collection.

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

While country-led censuses and surveys are the centrepiece of statistical collection, other approaches can rapidly produce data even where statistical capacity is limited. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, a household survey programme developed by UNICEF to Figure 5.3 In many countries sex-disaggregated data are not available for key indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Countries with data</th>
<th>Countries without data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary school enrolment</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal mortality</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational distribution</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s participation in local government</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid work and time use</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal employment</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage statistics</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School attendance</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence against women</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Note: ‘Countries with data’ includes only countries where data are based on censuses, surveys or other sources, not countries where data are derived from modelled estimates. ‘Countries without data’ includes only data from national surveys. An additional 30 countries have surveys covering part of the country.