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Promises to Keep:
Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

A Background Paper for the
Task Force on Education and Gender Equality
Of the
The Millennium Project

By

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The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.
-Robert Frost

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction.....	1
Section I: Definition, Costs, and Determinants of Gender Equality.....	3
Definition of Gender Equality.....	3
Definition of Empowerment.....	4
The Costs and Consequences of Gender (In)equality.....	5
Section II: Historical Development and Characteristics of Goal #3.....	6
Section III: Review of the Target and Indicators for Goal #3.....	7
Critique of the Target.....	7
Critique of the Indicators.....	8
General Limitations of all Indicators.....	12
Section IV: Progress of Nations Toward Goal #3.....	13
Methodology.....	13
Results.....	14
Section V: Evaluating Patterns of Gender Inequality.....	23
Methodology.....	23
Results.....	23
Section VI: Recommendations for Meeting Goal #3 and Strategies for Success.....	26
Target #1: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015.....	27
Target #2: Eliminate gender inequality in access to economic assets and employment by the year 2015.....	29
Target #3: Achieve a 30 percent share of seats for women in national parliaments by the year 2015.....	33
Meeting the Goal of Empowering Women: Other Actions.....	34
Conclusion.....	35
Bibliography.....	
Appendix.....	

Introduction

At the Millennium Summit in 2000, the 189 member states of the United Nations made a commitment in the Millennium Declaration to achieve eight goals, labeled the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Box 1). The third goal on this list seeks to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. In setting this goal, the U.N. member states recognized the contributions that women make to economic development and the costs to societies of the multiple disadvantages that women face in nearly every country.

Box 1 Millennium Development Goals

Women throughout the world play critical roles in economic growth and development, and their contributions have an impact on households, communities and national economies. Over the past three decades, significant improvements have been made in women's status, especially in health and education. In the health sector, greater investment in

Goal 1	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
Goal 2	Achieve universal primary education
Goal 3	Promote gender equality and empower women
Goal 4	Reduce child mortality
Goal 5	Improve maternal health
Goal 6	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
Goal 7	Ensure environmental sustainability
Goal 8	Develop a global partnership for development

reproductive health services has led to significant reductions in infant and maternal mortality and declines in fertility rates, reducing women's burdens associated with childbirth and child rearing. In some countries, women's life expectancy has increased by up to a decade over that of just 30 years ago. These improvements mark important progress in women's well-being and their capacity to participate fully in society. They also have contributed to reducing inequalities between women and men. However, progress has not been uniform and continues to lag in many countries.

In many developing countries women and girls are still the poorest, least educated, most unhealthy, and most marginalized segments of the population. Of the world's 876 million people 15 years and older who cannot read or write, nearly two-thirds are women according to UNESCO estimates (UNESCO 1999). Although the gender gap in primary and secondary school enrollment rates is closing in many regions, girls still lag behind boys in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Opportunities for paid employment for women relative to men have also increased, but the quality of employment for women has not increased in the same way and may even have deteriorated. The gender gap in earnings persists and women's jobs tend to enjoy less social protection and employment rights than do men's jobs. In the majority of countries in Latin America and Asia, 50 percent or more of the female non-agricultural labor force are in the informal sector, where earnings and social protection are far less secure (United Nations 2000).

Violence against women continues to be a serious violation of women's rights. According to Heise and Ellsberg (1999), around the world at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. And despite the gains mentioned earlier, maternal mortality remains staggeringly high: over half a million women die each year from

pregnancy and childbirth-related causes (WHO 2002), 99 percent of which occur in the developing world. The HIV/AIDS pandemic presents an especially urgent challenge because, worldwide, rates of infection among women are rapidly increasing; among those 15-24 years of age, females now constitute the majority of new infections (UNICEF/UNAIDS/WHO 2002). Women's economic vulnerability and low social status contributes significantly to their increased risk of HIV/AIDS. For all of these reasons, Goal #3 is important in its own right and is salient to all the other MDG goals.

To accelerate progress, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan and UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown have launched the United Nations Millennium Project, a three-year effort to identify the best strategies for meeting the MDGs, including the identification of priorities, strategies, organizational means, and financing structures. The Project's ultimate objective is to help ensure that all developing countries meet the MDGs. The bulk of the Project's analytical work will be carried out by ten Task Forces comprised of representatives from academia, the public and private sectors, and civil society organizations, each of which has been assigned particular goals. This paper is the first background paper for the Task Force on Gender Equality.

The purpose of the paper is to review progress countries have made in reaching this goal and to suggest recommendations to hasten progress. The paper has four key messages:

- First, the current MDG gender equality target and indicators do not capture all the major components of gender equality. The paper proposes three domains of gender equality: capability (basic human abilities as measured by education, health and nutrition), opportunity (access to assets, income, and employment), and agency (the ability to make choices that can alter outcomes) and suggests new targets and indicators to augment the ones proposed by U.N. member states.
- Second, each of these domains is amenable to policy intervention: "capabilities" can be addressed in large part through existing initiatives in health, education, and other sectors; "opportunities" requires some fundamental changes in the economic order; and "agency" is possible through electoral quotas, legislation on violence against women, and other measures.
- Third, internationally-funded initiatives (such as Education for All), conventions (such as the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), and other mechanisms (the ILO Decent Work Agenda) that currently exist provide reasonable frameworks for achieving gender equality. These should be complemented by a new international campaign for zero tolerance for violence against women.
- Finally, the paper urges the international community to translate rhetoric to action by improving the availability and quality of sex-disaggregated data, increasing financial and technical resources for agencies dedicated to promoting the status of women, and enhancing political commitment at the highest levels to end gender inequality and empower women.

The paper is organized into six broad sections. The first section defines gender equality and empowerment and proposes a framework for understanding the different components of each of these concepts. The second section reviews the history of the development of Goal #3 and discusses the importance of this goal relative to the other MDGs. The third section critiques the target and indicators selected for the goal and suggests more adequate targets and indicators to

measure progress. The fourth section analyzes the progress made by countries to reach the goal. The final two sections of the paper identify strategic ways to meet Goal #3 by reviewing a sampling of policy and program interventions commonly used to bring about gender equality and suggesting appropriate policy and program interventions for different categories of countries as defined by the dominant form of discrimination experienced by women.

Section I: Definition of Gender Equality and Empowerment, Costs and Determinants

Like race and ethnicity, gender is a social construct. It defines and differentiates the roles, rights, responsibilities and obligations of women and men. The innate biological differences between females and males are interpreted by society to create a set of social expectations that define the behaviors that are appropriate for women and men and that determine women's and men's differential access to rights, resources, and power in society. Although the specific nature and degree of these differences vary from one society to the next, they typically favor men, creating an imbalance in power and a gender inequality that exists in most societies worldwide.

Definition of Gender Equality

According to the UN (2002), "equality is the cornerstone of every democratic society that aspires to social justice and human rights." The term gender equality has been defined in multiple ways in the development literature and has been the subject of great debate in the U.N. It often means women having the same opportunities in life as men, for instance equality of access to education and employment, which does not necessarily lead to equality of outcomes.¹ Several experts have proposed conceptual frameworks for understanding gender equality. The United Nations Human Development Report (1995) refers to gender equality in terms of capabilities (education, health, and nutrition) and opportunities (economic and decision-making). Similarly, the World Bank defines gender equality in terms of equality under the law, equality of opportunity (including equality of rewards for work and equality in access to human capital and other productive resources that enable opportunity), and equality of voice (the ability to influence and contribute to the development process).

We have borrowed from both frameworks to propose three primary domains or components of equality between women and men: capabilities, access to resources and opportunities, and agency or the ability to influence and contribute to outcomes. The capabilities domain refers to basic human abilities as measured through education, health, and nutrition. It is the most fundamental of all the three domains and is necessary for achieving equality in the other two domains. Access to resources and opportunities, the second domain, refers primarily to equality in the opportunity to use or apply basic capabilities through access to economic assets (such as land and property) and resources (such as income and employment). The third domain, agency, is the defining element of the concept of empowerment (see below) and refers to the ability to make choices and decisions that can alter outcomes. Gender equality in this domain can only result from an equalizing in the balance of power between women and men in the household and societal institutions.

These three domains of equality are inter-related. Progress in any one domain to the exclusion of the others is insufficient to meet the goal of gender equality. While they are inter-related, the three domains are not necessarily dependent on each other. So, for instance, illiterate women may organize, thereby building their agency to influence outcomes for themselves and their

households. Not surprisingly, women then use that agency to demand capability (better health or education) and opportunity (access to decent work).² Similarly, women with capabilities (as measured by education) may have no economic opportunity, as is evidenced in many Middle Eastern countries.

Gender inequalities exist because of discrimination in the family and societal institutions, and social, cultural, and religious norms that perpetuate stereotypes, practices and beliefs that are detrimental to women. Human rights conventions provide redress for discrimination. Among these, the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1979, is the most universally accepted instrument for realizing gender equality and influencing cultural and traditional definitions of gender roles and family relations. The treaty has been ratified by 170 countries, including every nation in the Western Hemisphere except the United States, but its impact is dependent on political will and resources, a point to which we return later in the paper.

Economic institutions and policy can exacerbate existing gender inequalities instead of mitigating them. There is a strong tendency to see the market as a liberating force for women. While modern markets can and do undermine some of the pre-existing forms of culturally-determined gender inequality, they also incorporate and transform pre-existing inequalities into new ones (Elson and Pearson 1997). Modern economic relations have gender inequality inscribed within them and often do not take account of externalities produced by unpaid care in households (Folbre 1994). Similarly, laws and policies play a significant role in determining the extent of gender inequality that exists in a society. They can serve to protect women's rights or to reduce them. For example, in many countries, women still lack the legal right to inherit or own property and, in many others, violence against women is not considered a criminal offense. Without transformations in economic relations or the implementation and enforcement of legal rights and protection, gender equality and the empowerment of women can remain an elusive goal.

Definition of Empowerment

The concept of empowerment is related to gender equality but distinct from it. Based on a review of literature on the definition and measurement of women's empowerment, Malhotra, Schuler and Boender (2002) conclude that empowerment is a process that marks change over a period of time and requires that the individual being empowered is involved as a significant agent in that change process. Several experts agree that an empowered woman is one who has the agency to formulate strategic choices and to control resources and decisions that affect important life outcomes (Kabeer 1999). The core of the concept of empowerment lies in the ability of the woman to control her own destiny.

This implies that to be empowered women must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), they must also have the agency to use those rights, capabilities, resources, and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions (such as is provided through leadership opportunities and participation in political institutions). Table 1 illustrates various dimensions of women's empowerment that are important at the household, community, and national levels.

Table 1. Commonly used dimensions of empowerment and potential operationalization in the household, community, and broader arenas.

Dimension	Household	Community	Broader Arenas
Economic	Women's control over income; relative contribution to family support; access to and control of family resources	Women's access to employment; ownership of assets and land; access to credit; involvement and/or representation in local trade associations; access to markets	Women's representation in high paying jobs; women CEO's; representation of women's economic interests in macro-economic policies, state and federal budgets
Socio-Cultural	Women's freedom of movement; lack of discrimination against daughters; commitment to educating daughters	Women's visibility in and access to social spaces; access to modern transportation; participation in extra-familial groups and social networks; shift in patriarchal norms (such as son preference); symbolic representation of the female in myth and ritual	Women's literacy and access to a broad range of educational options; Positive media images of women, their roles and contributions
Familial/ Interpersonal	Participation in domestic decision-making; control over sexual relations; ability to make childbearing decisions, use contraception, access abortion; control over spouse selection and marriage timing; freedom from domestic violence	Shifts in marriage and kinship systems indicating greater value and autonomy for women (e.g. later marriages, self selection of spouses, reduction in the practice of dowry; acceptability of divorce); local campaigns against domestic violence	Regional/national trends in timing of marriage, options for divorce; political, legal, religious support for (or lack of active opposition to) such shifts; systems providing easy access to contraception, safe abortion, reproductive health services
Legal	Knowledge of legal rights; domestic support for exercising rights	Community mobilization for rights; campaigns for rights awareness; effective local enforcement of legal rights	Laws supporting women's rights, access to resources and options; Advocacy for rights and legislation; use of judicial system to redress rights violations
Political	Knowledge of political system and means of access to it; domestic support for political engagement; exercising the right to vote	Women's involvement or mobilization in the local political system/campaigns; support for specific candidates or legislation; representation in local bodies of government	Women's representation in regional and national bodies of government; strength as a voting bloc; representation of women's interests in effective lobbies and interest groups
Psychological	Self-esteem; self-efficacy; psychological well-being	Collective awareness of injustice, potential of mobilization	Women's sense of inclusion and entitlement; systemic acceptance of women's entitlement and inclusion

Source: A. Malhotra, S. Schuler, and C. Boender, 2002

The Costs and Consequences of Gender Inequality

A recent analysis conducted by the World Bank (2001) establishes that women bear the largest and most direct cost of gender inequality and lack of empowerment.³ These costs are individual, societal, and inter-generational. For example, women's economic dependency on men reduces their ability to leverage safer sex options to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies and

HIV infection (Gupta and Weiss 1994). And violence against women which is a gross infringement of women's rights has severe health and economic consequences for women (Heise and Ellsberg 1999, Panda 2002).

Several studies have established the benefits of reducing gender inequality. Saito and Spurling (1992), for instance, have estimated that giving women farmers in Kenya the same level of agricultural inputs and education as male farmers could increase yields obtained by women farmers by more than 20 percent. Hill and King (1995) show that, all else being equal, countries in which the ratio of female-to-male enrollment in primary and secondary school is less than .75 can expect levels of GNP that are roughly 25 percent lower than in countries in which there is less gender disparity in education. Finally, research on gender inequality in the labor market shows that eliminating gender discrimination in occupation and pay could increase not only women's income, but also national income. If gender inequality in the labor market in Latin America were to be eliminated, not only could women's wages rise by about 50 percent, but national output could rise by more than 5 percent (Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos 1992).

Section II: Historical Development and Characteristics of Goal #3

The MDG goal to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women recognizes the costs to society of continued female disadvantage. As compared to the other goals in the MDGs, the goal to reduce gender disparities is unique because it is not specific to any one sector or issue, such as health, education, or access to water. Instead, it cuts across all the sectors and issues addressed in the MDGs and its success depends on the extent to which it is addressed within each of the other sector-specific goals. Moreover, the goal of gender equality is pre-eminent among the MDGs because if it is not achieved, none of the other goals can be fully met. Despite the instrumental value of gender equality for the full success of the other goals, singling it out within the MDGs as an independent goal serves to underscore its value in and of itself, rooted in the principles of social justice, rights, and non-discrimination.

The articulation of this goal and its inclusion in the MDGs marks the culmination of many years of discussions and debates and is related most directly to the discussions and promises made in four particular UN conferences held in three consecutive years in the mid-1990s: the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993; the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994; the World Summit on Social Development held in Copenhagen and the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, both of which occurred in 1995. Together, the declarations and agreements made at these conferences underscored the importance of women's rights and freedoms, persuaded governments to recognize the gendered consequences of population, social, and macroeconomic policies, and emphasized the importance of mainstreaming gender into all development policies and practice.

In addition, at each of these conferences governments agreed to a number of time-bound targets, with 1990 as the base year, to serve as benchmarks of progress (Box 2). While most of these targets focus on education and health, the Beijing Platform for Action includes a target for increasing the representation of women in positions of power and decision-making. Targets for decreasing women's poverty or increasing women's economic equality are notable by their absence. Although poverty and women's economic rights were key themes at both the Copenhagen and Beijing conferences, governments' commitment to addressing these issues did not result in the formulation of specific targets.

Box 2 History of Goal 3*

Commitment	Target	By the Year	Conference
Women in decision-making	30%	1995	ECOSOC (Reiterated at FWCW, 1995, Beijing)
Gender equality for girls in primary education	Parity: ratio = 1	2000	FWCE, 1995, Beijing
Close gender gap in primary and secondary education	Parity: ratio = 1	2005	ICPD, 1994, Cairo; WSSD, 1995, Copenhagen; FWCW, 1995, Beijing
Achieve equivalent levels of education for girls and boys	Parity: ratio = 1	2015	ICPD, 1994, Cairo

*This box lists only selected commitments made by governments. The full list can be seen in UNIFEM 2000.

Section III: Review of the Target and Indicators for Goal #3

The target selected to represent the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women reflects this history. The target is restricted to education -- eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than by 2015. Two of the four suggested indicators to measure progress toward this target also reflect this emphasis on education.

The focus on education is fully justified in light of the ever-increasing research evidence that investing in girls' education yields high returns for girls themselves, as well as for households and communities (Shultz 2001). Ensuring that women do not suffer the disadvantage of illiteracy and lack of education is critical for building women's capabilities, a first step in the empowerment process. It is also an essential ingredient for ensuring child health and welfare, reducing maternal mortality, and breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Moreover, by setting an ambitious target for eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education -- less than a decade -- the MDGs send a clear message that gender inequality in education in this, the 21st century, is unconscionable and must be rectified.

Critique of the Target

Equality in education as a target for measuring progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women is more than justified, but it is not sufficient to measure the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. One problem with the target is that achieving parity in educational outcomes is not the same as ensuring that all girls are properly educated and can fully develop their capabilities. Second, even though education provides women with an essential capability and has intrinsic value, gender equality and the empowerment of women can remain elusive goals without the opportunity to fully use that capability, for example, in employment, or by participating in decision making in the political arena.

Because countries adopted only one target for Goal 3, it is important that, at a minimum, all countries achieve that target. However, should countries be willing to expand the number of targets to meet Goal 3, we recommend two more that represent gender equality in opportunity and agency: eliminate gender inequality in access to economic assets and employment by the

year 2015 and achieve a 30 percent share of seats for women in national parliaments by the year 2015. We fully recognize that these targets do not adequately capture the complex and multiple dimensions of opportunity and agency, but their inclusion better represents the scope of Goal 3.

The three proposed targets nevertheless leave out critical aspects of women's lives and the range of inequalities that women experience. Glaring by their absence are targets to measure progress to reduce gender inequalities in each of the other Millennium Development Goals. Gender is highly relevant to achieving all the MDGs, be it protecting the environment, achieving sustainable development, enabling universal access to health care and education, combating HIV/AIDS, or reducing poverty and hunger. The Task Forces for these other MDGs must, therefore, monitor and address gender inequalities as a central component of their work. Ensuring that this happens will be an important task for the Millennium Project Secretariat and the Task Force on Gender Equality.

Critique of the Indicators

The United Nations has suggested four indicators to measure Goal #3:

- the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education,
- the ratio of literate females to males among 15-24 year olds,
- the share of women in wage employment in the nonagricultural sector, and
- the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.

The first two are indicators of capabilities, the third is an indicator of opportunity, and the fourth is an indicator of agency. Although they represent all three domains of gender equality, they are not without their drawbacks. In addition, there may be other indicators that are better suited to tracking progress toward the MDG gender targets.

Capability Indicators: There are both substantive and technical concerns with the two capability indicators. The ratio of girls to boys in school reflects the input side of education, that is, how many girls and boys are enrolled in school, which is where most policy efforts have been directed. Getting girls and boys to school is clearly an important first step. Yet, as Bruns et. al. (forthcoming) note, the more important issue is school completion and student learning outcomes. The completion of 5 to 6 years of schools is necessary for mastery of basic competencies, such as literacy and numeracy. School enrolment ratios, whether on a gross or net basis, are poorly correlated with the rate of primary school completion; moreover, enrolment ratios are consistent with many different patterns of drop-out and retention. Finally, as will be discussed below, gender differences are brought into sharper contrast in the comparison of enrolment rates against completion rates.

Beyond the substantive issue of what should be the focus of the MDG goal, there are other concerns with the proposed capability indicators. The ratio of girls to boys in school simply depicts the number of girls relative to boys in school. Enrolment rates, by contrast, give a picture of the number of students, boys or girls, enrolled in a given level of education relative to the population of the age group which should be enrolled at that level. Net enrolment rates, which take into consideration the appropriate age for each grade, are a good indicator of access to education, but they are not available for many countries. Gross enrolment rates are more widely

available, but they include repeat students in the calculation and so will be higher than net enrolment rates.

There are also concerns about the literacy indicator. This indicator was chosen to reflect the performance of the national education system, as well as the quality of the human resources within a country in relation to their potential for growth, contribution to development, and quality of life. Yet, the quality of the literacy data is suspect. Some countries collect literacy information using sophisticated and comprehensive techniques while others are not able to even provide the most basic information. In addition, because literacy is not a simple concept with a single universally accepted meaning, different countries measure literacy differently. The UNESCO definition (“A person is literate if s/he has completed five or more years of schooling”) has been widely criticized partly because it assumes that people can be easily categorized as “literate” or “illiterate” or because adults with five or more years of schooling may still be functionally illiterate, while those with less than four years of schooling may have acquired literacy skills by non-formal means.⁴ Despite these limitations, this indicator is the best that exists across countries and over time.

As we said earlier, it is important to note that in addition to education, there are other important indicators of capability, related to health and nutrition. Three other MDG goals address improvements in health -- reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS. Because the indicators for these goals can be gender-disaggregated, we suggest that the Task Forces on Maternal and Children’s Health and on HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Other Communicable Diseases make a point to profile existing gender disparities that may prevent achievement of these development goals.

Opportunity Indicators: The choice of indicator in the MDGs to measure progress in economic opportunity is the female share of non-agricultural wage employment. As noted in UNIFEM’s Progress of the World’s Women 2000, this is an indicator of the extent to which women have equal access to paid jobs in areas of expanding employment. As stated in the report, “Wage employment in industry and services usually puts some money directly into the hands of women themselves, unlike employment as an unpaid family worker on a family farm. Moreover, the pay is likely to be higher than the average pay for self-employment.” The drawback of using this indicator is that it could be interpreted to also mean equality in income. A second drawback is that an increase in women’s share of paid employment adds to women’s total workload such that what women may gain in terms of cash they lose in terms of time (UNIFEM 2000). Third, as Anker (2002) notes, this indicator only measures the presence or absence of work, and not the “decency” of work itself or the disadvantages women face – in access to employment (measured by unemployment rates), in returns to their labor (earnings or wages), in the types of jobs they hold (occupational segregation), and in security of employment (social protection). Finally, in grouping together all non-agricultural employment, the indicator can’t distinguish between work which is formal or informal, full time or part time, and permanent or seasonal. There is ample evidence that women’s participation in informal employment is as high as 80 percent in some countries such as India, Uganda, Indonesia, among others (Charmes 2000), and that women are more likely to predominate in part-time and seasonal jobs.

As we said earlier, the U.N. member states did not set a target for equality in the labor market. It would not make sense to set a target of parity between women and men in shares of non-agricultural employment because of the variable quality of this employment and because

women's share is mainly determined by the structure of the economy, not by policies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The target we have proposed, "eliminate gender inequality in access to economic assets and employment by the year 2015" could be measured, however, by several other indicators.

The ILO has proposed a series of indicators for equality in access to and fair treatment in employment as part of the ILO's decent work initiative (Anker 2002). These indicators include gender-disaggregated unemployment rates, the female to male wages or earnings ratio (divided by years of school which controls for human capital), and occupational segregation by sex (the percent of non-agricultural employment in male-dominated and female-dominated occupations and the index of dissimilarity),⁵ among others.

These indicators show a sobering picture of women's status in employment. For instance, in 1997 female unemployment rates were higher than male unemployment rates in all regions of the world for which data were available, although the gap narrowed in some regions (United Nations 2000). Similarly, in no country for which data are available do women earn as much as men. For instance, in the manufacturing sector in 13 out of 39 countries, women earned up to 20 percent less than men; in the other countries, the pay differential was even greater (ibid). Approximately half of all workers in the world are in gender-dominated occupations where at least 80 percent of workers are of the same sex, a form of labor market rigidity that reduces employment opportunity and impairs economic efficiency (Anker 2002). Occupational segregation is also associated with lower wage rates for women, as typical women's occupations tend to have lower pay, lower status and fewer possibilities for advancement than do male occupations.

Because of multiple data and other problems, it is difficult to recommend one global indicator to measure progress toward eliminating gender inequalities in access to assets and employment. Unemployment rates, for instance, are an important indicator of labor market performance in industrialized countries, but are of much more limited significance in low-income economies where the majority of the population engages in some form of economic activity – usually informal employment or self-employment. Occupational segregation indicators may not cover informal employment, and in some countries, they may not be correlated with other indicators of labor market disadvantage. And finally, data on the gender earnings gap – in both paid and self-employment -- are currently not available for many countries. Of these three indicators, the gender earnings gap is probably the best marker of gender equality in the labor market. Therefore, for the long-term, we strongly recommend that countries collect data, at a minimum, on gender wage gaps in paid and self-employment, and use that information for monitoring progress toward the proposed target. In the interim, as an alternative to one single global indicator, we recommend the development of region-specific indicators for this target, especially since the forms of gender inequality vary with a country's economic structure. Regional agencies or country governments would decide which indicators are the most appropriate to track. The Economic Commissions for Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean have already begun to gather data and identify a range of indicators to monitor gender disparities in the labor market.

Agency Indicators: The United Nations has recommended that progress toward women's empowerment be tracked by the female share of seats in national parliaments. Currently, this is the only indicator that can be tracked on a global scale. It is an imperfect proxy for tracking

aggregate levels of female empowerment because it says nothing about whether women have power in parliament to make decisions or whether or not they are sensitive to gender issues and can promote a gender equality legislative agenda. It has also been observed that greater progress has been made in municipal and local level elections than in national elections, so it would therefore be very useful to track progress that women are making at the local level. The International Union of Local Authorities has scattered data on municipal level institutions but aims to construct a global database on women in local government. We would recommend including an indicator using this information once it is available. Other potential indicators for tracking women's agency are those that measure women's ability to influence decisions in social and political life, such as women's participation in professional and employer organizations, trade unions, and other civic institutions. At the individual level, indicators could include control over fertility and sexuality. Again, however, there is a paucity of such information for most countries.

One barrier that stands in the way of women being able to use their capabilities, exploit opportunities, and exercise agency is violence.⁶ Worldwide, it has been estimated that violence against women is as serious a cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive age as cancer, and is a greater cause of ill-health than traffic accidents and malaria combined. Therefore, another indicator of women's agency, albeit in a negative way, is the prevalence of physical violence in the past year experienced by women aged 15-49 at the hands of an intimate partner.

Measuring the true prevalence of gender-based violence presents several challenges. To accurately measure true prevalence of physical violence, the questions used to gather data must disaggregate specific acts of physical violence such as kicking, beating, hitting and slapping, information which can be hard to obtain because of its sensitive nature. Statistics available through the police, hospitals, women's centers, and other formal institutions often underestimate the levels of violence because of under-reporting. The WHO's World Report on Violence and Health, which presents data from 48 population-based surveys conducted in 35 developed and developing countries, and WHO's recent multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence lay a strong foundation for larger-scale data collection initiatives. Thus, although prevalence rates are a good indicator, they can't be used to track progress toward the goal since data are not currently available for a large number of countries.

To summarize this section, while the designated United Nations indicators represent progress in the domains of capability, opportunity, and agency, they all have limitations. Where possible, we recommend supplementing those indicators with the following:

- completion rates in addition to enrolment rates for all levels of education;
- region-specific indicators such as gender gaps in earnings in paid and self-employment, sex-disaggregated unemployment rates, or occupational segregation; and
- prevalence of domestic violence in the past year, in addition to share of seats in national parliaments.

Suggesting additional indicators may undermine their usefulness to governments because of the amount of effort involved in tracking each one. Keeping this in mind, we consider the ones listed above to both be essential for monitoring progress toward the goals and feasible for

countries to use. Data on primary and secondary school completion rates now exist for more than 80 countries. Efforts are underway to collect data on relative earnings through labor force surveys and on domestic violence through victimization surveys. These efforts should be scaled up by 2005 so as to permit a more comprehensive tracking of progress toward Goal #3.

General limitations of all indicators

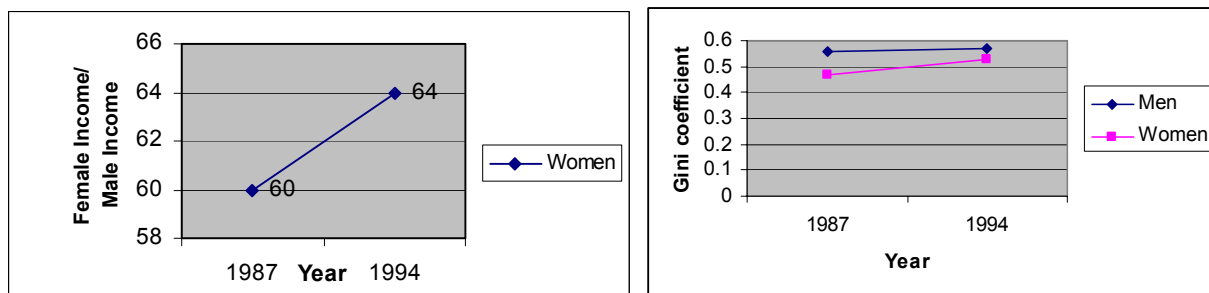
Beyond the specific issues associated with each indicator described above, there are a number of more general issues. First, the paucity of data on some indicators automatically restricts their use, despite the fact that there may be more valid indicators than the ones for which there is more data. Second, good ratios are not good enough because they say nothing about the absolute levels achieved. Third, national averages mask regional variation. Finally, few indicators exist that measure *quality* of progress toward the goal instead of just *quantity* of progress.

The dearth of data and lack of standardization across countries limit a complete and accurate measurement of gender equality and empowerment. There are data gaps across all domains – capabilities, opportunity, and agency -- but gaps are particularly prevalent in the domain of opportunity. For example, most of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are missing data on the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. As noted earlier, even fewer have information on women’s relative earnings. Lack of time-series data is an additional hindrance. Finally, data are often missing for countries that experienced violent conflict during the decade.

A second issue is the use of ratios versus levels. Ratios to measure gender equality can be deceptive. For example, the female to male ratio of primary school enrolment may indicate gender equality, but the absolute level of girls and boys in school may be low. A case in point is Burundi. By the indicator of literacy, Burundi is predicted to achieve gender equality with a female to male ratio of 0.94 in 2005 and an expected ratio of 1.20 in 2015. Currently, however, almost a third of both men and women in Burundi are deemed illiterate (38 percent of women and 34 percent of men).

Furthermore, ratios also hide differences between groups of women as defined by income, race, ethnicity, caste, rural/urban, and so forth. For example, in Bolivia, El Salvador, and Paraguay, women in urban areas had a higher average number of years of education than did women in rural areas (Deutsch et. al. 2001). In addition, Anriquez and Buvinic (1977) show that in

Figure 1: Chilean Employment Income, 1987-1994



Source: Anriquez and Buvinic, 1997.

Chile, the income gap between the sexes has narrowed, but that income inequality among women widened from 1987 to 1994.

A third issue is that country averages can mask sub-national variation. Averages at a global or country level may depict gender equality whereas sub-national figures may depict gender inequality. In Guatemala, for example, only 45 percent of indigenous girls aged 13 attend school as opposed to 71 percent of indigenous men, 75 percent of non-indigenous women and 85 percent of non-indigenous men (Duryea, 2001).

Finally, few indicators exist for measuring the *quality* of equality – the process that brings it about and the nature of the outcomes. Achieving numerical equality is clearly important in a world where even this goal has yet to be attained. However, unless indicators are also developed for measuring quality of change, we run the risk of placing too much weight on mere quantitative change as opposed to the way in which it is achieved. We return to this point in the last section of the paper.

Section IV: Progress of Nations Toward Goal #3

This section considers whether countries are on track toward the original MDG target, eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education by 2015. In addition, this section provides a review of country status on the two additional targets proposed earlier. To do this analysis, we use the four indicators suggested by the U.N. member states:

- the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education,
- the ratio of literate females to males in 15-24 year olds,
- the share of women in wage employment in the nonagricultural sector, and
- the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.

In addition, to measure progress toward the education target, we have included data on gender-disaggregated completion rates. The data cover all regions of the world (as classified by the UN system), including Western Europe and Other Developed Countries.

Methodology

For the education indicators, we present information for various countries using the ratio of girls to boys gross enrolment rates and the ratio of girls to boys completion rates. The reason we use the ratio of rates is so that we can analyze whether reductions in gender disparity are being achieved through increases in the enrolment and school completion of girls or through decreases in the enrolment and school completion of boys. This methodology is also used by Abu-Ghaida and Klasen (2002) and UNIFEM (forthcoming).

We are interested in knowing how far countries will be from the target of gender parity in primary and secondary education in 2005 and at all levels of education in 2015. Detailed data on primary, secondary, and tertiary education are in Appendix 1. We base our predictions on the UNDP methodology described in Technical Note 2 of the Human Development Report 2002.⁷ It is important to note a number of concerns about this methodology. The most important is the

assumption used to calculate the rate of change. To assume that this rate is linear, independent of a range of social, economic, and political factors, is overly simple. A better approach would be to simulate the effect of different contextual conditions based on data for each country. The absence of such a simulation model, and the lack of data on women to use for such a model, however, limits us to this simpler approach.⁸

Despite these limitations, we assessed progress in terms of five criteria which are similar to that used in the UN Human Development Report 2002⁹:

Reverse Gaps	Parity	On Track	Falling Behind	Off Track
A ratio of 1 or greater	A ratio of 1	0.90 to 0.99	0.70 to 0.89	Less than 0.70

In reviewing the status of countries on the other two targets, we did not predict values for 2005 and 2015 because Target 2 presents no numerical standard to track progress of countries. Projections for Target 3 based on linear rates of change would be meaningless.

Results

Gender Equality in Primary Education: As shown in Table 2, of the 124 countries for which data are available, and if present trends continue until 2005, 32 countries are expected to achieve gender parity or a reverse gender gap (i.e., where the rate for girls exceeds that for boys). Sixty seven countries are on track. Sub-Saharan Africa fares the worst: six are off track, i.e. with ratios less than .7 (Benin, Chad, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, and Niger) and eight countries are falling behind, i.e. with a ratio between .7 and .89. One country in South Asia – Pakistan - is also off track.

Table 2: Country Predictions By Region for Female To Male Gross Primary Enrollment Ratios, 2005

Region	Number of countries in each ratio category					Total
	Greater than 1	Ratio = 1	0.99-0.90	0.89-0.70	0.69 and below	
Dev'd	4	4	11			19
EAP	4	2	3	4		13
ECA	1	4	16	1		22
LAC	1		14	2		17
MENA	6	1	6	3		16
SA			3		1	4
SSA	4	1	14	8	6	33
Total	20	12	67	18	7	124

Source: UNESCO, 1996; Note: Valid N=124. Missing N=67.

The predictions for 2005 matter only if increases in the female to male primary enrolment ratio are attained through increases in female enrolment rates. Increases in the female to male ratio can result from a fall in male rates with female rates remaining constant, from a decline in both female and male rates with male rates declining faster, or from female rates increasing faster than male rates. Of the 32 countries in Table 2 that are expected to achieve gender parity or a reverse gap by 2005, only 15 are predicted to do so through increases in female rates: Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, China, Sudan, Malawi, Kuwait, Albania, Tunisia, Lithuania, Philippines, Sweden,

Bulgaria, Japan, Republic of Korea, and Malaysia. Fourteen countries are expected to achieve a ratio of one or greater either because of declines in male rates, with female rates remaining constant, or declines in both female and male rates, with male rates declining faster than females, thus causing the female to male ratios to increase.

How do girls fare compared to boys based on the indicator of completion? Table 3 presents data on the ratio of girls to boys who are predicted to complete a course of primary school. Of the 80 countries for which data are available, 53 countries are predicted to have a reverse gap or to achieve parity in completion, seven are on track, six are falling behind, and 14 are off track. This result – that the majority of countries (52 out of 80) are predicted to have a reverse gender gap, that is, the girls completion rate exceeds that of boys -- seems very surprising. However, it may be due to the fact that the prediction was based on data from 1990-96 and doesn't reflect progress made from 1996 to 2000.¹⁰ Data from 2000, however, do indeed confirm reverse gender gaps, but in only 40 out of 80 countries. This will be discussed further below.

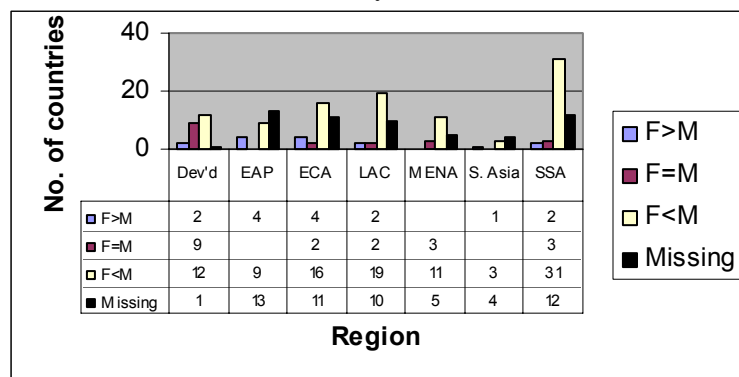
Table 3. Country Predictions By Region for Female To Male Primary Completion Ratios, 2005

Region	Number of countries in each ratio category					Total
	Greater than 1	Ratio = 1	0.99-0.90	0.89-0.70	0.69 and below	
SSA	12	1	3	4	8	28
EAP	4				3	7
ECA	12		2			14
LAC	9		1			10
MENA	12		1	2		15
SA	3				3	6
Total	52	1	7	6	14	80

Source: World Bank, 2002; Note: Valid N=80. Missing N=111; Note: Data on developed countries are missing.

Because of the problems inherent in linear projections of the future, we analyze in greater detail data from 2000 on primary enrolments and completion in order to have a more realistic assessment of countries' ability to meet the goal by 2005. As Table 4 shows, in 2000, in every region of the world, there are countries in which the female to male gross enrolment ratio is less than one. However, of the countries for which data are available, sub-Saharan Africa has the

Table 4: Female to Male Primary Enrolment Ratios, 2000

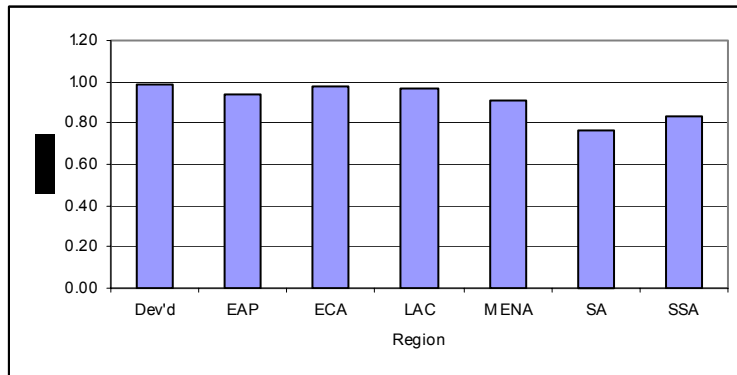


Source: UIS, 2000; N=191

highest proportion of countries with a female to male enrolment ratio of less than one. South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa also have the lowest regional averages of the ratio of female to

male gross primary enrolment rates (.76 for South Asia and .83 for sub-Saharan Africa); see Table 5.

Table 5: Regional Averages For Countries With Female To Male Gross Primary Enrolment Ratios Of Less Than One, 2000

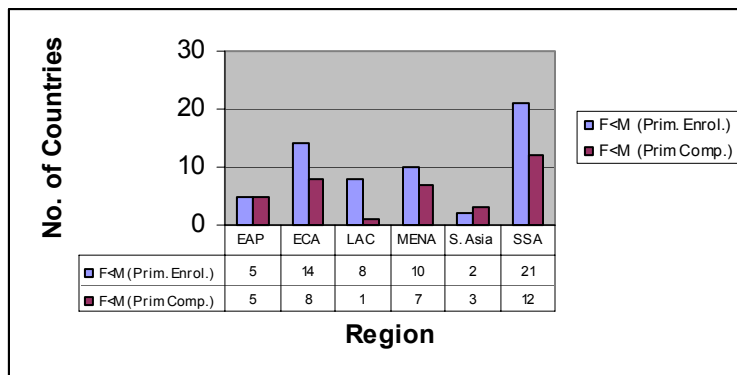


Source: UIS, 2000

In countries where the enrolment ratio is one or greater, it is important to note that that the ratio may mask relatively low rates of female (and male) enrolment. For example, both Yugoslavia and Tanzania have female to male primary enrolment ratios of 1 in 2000, but in Yugoslavia, 67 percent of females and 65 percent of males are enrolled and in Tanzania, 63 percent of both females and males are enrolled (See Appendix 1).

Comparing female to male gross enrolment and completion ratios in 2000 shows that in all regions, except East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia, countries in which the female to male primary *enrolment* ratio is less than one outnumber countries in which the female to male primary *completion* ratio is less than one (Table 6). Again, the data show that more girls are completing primary school than boys, but both fewer girls and boys are completing school than are enrolling. In other words, the underlying completion rates for both boys and girls may be lower than those for enrolment, but the completion rates for girls are higher than those for boys, thus resulting in a ratio greater than one. This can be illustrated by the example of Burkina Faso,

Table 6: Comparison of Primary Enrolment and Completion Ratios, 2000 (Female rate < male rate)



Source: World Bank, 2000; and UIS, 2000

Valid N=76, i.e. 76 countries have data for both enrolment and completion rates.

which has a female to male primary enrolment ratio of .7 (a female rate of 35.2 and a male rate of 50.5) but a primary completion ratio of 1.48 (a female rate of 29.9 and a male rate of 20.2). Thus, both female and male rates are lower for completion than they are for enrolment in Burkina Faso but the ratio for completion is higher than that for enrolment because the female rate is higher than the male rate.

Gender Equality in Secondary Education: Should present trends continue five of 118 countries with data in Table 7 are likely to achieve a ratio of one in gross secondary enrolments by 2005 and 54 are predicted to have a reverse gap. Thirty-two countries are expected to be off track or falling behind: 11 countries in Africa are off track and seven are falling behind; two countries in Europe and Central Asia are falling behind; one country in East Asia and the Pacific is off track and three are falling behind; one country in the Middle East and North Africa is off track and three are falling behind; and one country in South Asia is off track and one is falling behind.

Table 7. Country Predictions By Region For Female To Male Gross Secondary Enrollment Ratios, 2005

Region	Number of countries in each ratio category					Total
	Greater than 1	Ratio = 1	0.99-0.90	0.89-0.70	0.69 and below	
Dev'd	11	2	7	2		22
EAP	8		3	3	1	15
ECA	10		7	2		19
LAC	10		2			12
MENA	7	1	4	3	1	16
SA	1		1	1	1	4
SSA	7	2	3	7	11	30
Total	54	5	27	18	14	118

Source: UNESCO 1996; Note: Valid N=118. Missing N=73.

This picture worsens by the indicator of completion. Thirty nine-countries are predicted to be off track for completion, while another 17 are likely to fall behind. Twenty two of 28 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, six out of nine in the Middle East and North Africa, and five out of six in South Asia are predicted to be off track for achieving gender parity in secondary school completion.

Table 8. Country Success For Female To Male Secondary Completion Ratios, 2005

Region	No. of countries in each ratio category					Total
	Greater than 1	Parity	0.99-0.90	0.89-0.70	0.69 and below	
Dev'd	5		13	3	2	23
EAP		1	2	7	2	12
ECA			1	2	1	4
LAC	15	1	6		1	23
MENA	2			1	6	9
SA				1	5	6
SSA	3			3	22	28
Total	25	2	22	17	39	105

Source: Barro and Lee, 1996

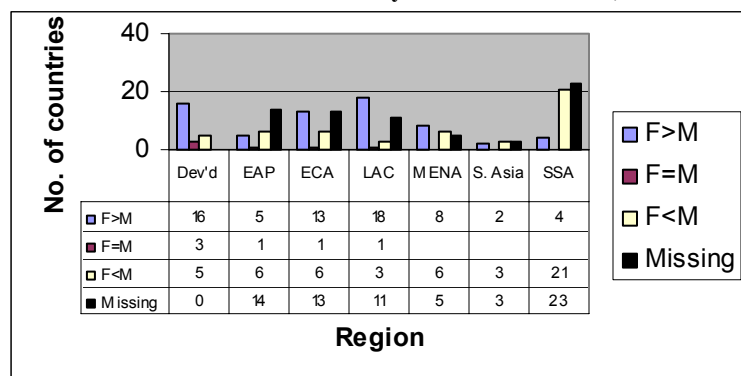
Note: Valid N=105. Missing N=86.

How much of each country's predicted progress is due to improvements in girls' enrolment and completion rates as opposed to declines in boys' rates? Fifty-nine countries are expected to

achieve gender parity or a reverse gap in secondary enrolment by the year 2005. Of these, 43 are predicted to experience real increases in female to male secondary enrolment ratios (i.e., increases in female rates of secondary enrolment). Once again success measured by ratios may belie real advances for women. A case in point is Tanzania where the female secondary enrolment rate increases from 4 to 5 percent (1990-1996) while the male rate remains constant at 6 percent over the same time period. As a result the ratio of females to males increases from 1990 to 1996 and is thus predicted to achieve a value of greater than one by 2005. Another 15 countries have either experienced decreases in male rates or both female and male rates, with male rates decreasing at a faster rate: Mongolia, Albania, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Syria, Kyrgyz Republic, Bahrain, Sudan, Latvia, Hong Kong, Guyana, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Finland and Madagascar.

Once again, we can ask whether these predictions are realistic in light of where countries stand in 2000. Seventy-two countries in 1999/2000 have female to male secondary enrolment ratios of one or greater, implying gender parity or a reverse gap in secondary enrolment. Of these, only 30 have high rates of female enrolment (above 90 percent): Sweden, St. Lucia, Uruguay, UK, Brazil, Belgium, Brunei, Malaysia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Argentina, Portugal, Spain, Bahrain, New Zealand, Luxembourg, Denmark, Barbados, Greece, Estonia, Norway, Canada, Japan, Hungary, USA, France, Australia, Israel, and the Republic of Korea. Four of the 72 countries which have achieved a ratio of one or more in secondary enrolment in 2000 have very low rates of secondary female enrolment: Sudan (36 percent), Lesotho (32 percent), Djibouti (17 percent) and Maldives (44 percent). Male secondary enrolment rates for these countries are even lower, resulting in high female to male ratios.

Table 9: Female to Male Secondary Enrolment Ratios, 2000

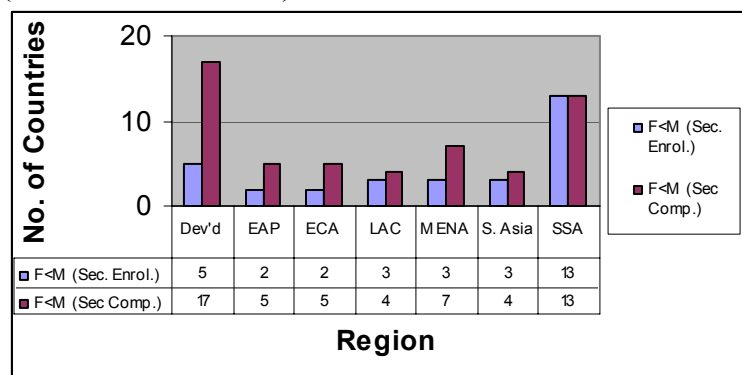


Source: UIS, 2000; N=191

Table 9 shows that sub-Saharan Africa has the greatest number of countries (21) with female to male secondary enrolment ratios that are less than one, i.e. female rates are lower than male rates in 2000. And, it has one of the lowest regional averages, .67, for female to male enrolment ratios. South Asia does not look much better, with a regional average of .7. The averages for completion ratios are even worse at .42 and .41 respectively for sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Comparing enrolment to completion shows that, in every region except sub-Saharan Africa, countries fare worse when measured by completion as compared to enrolment not only because female completion rates are lower than male rates but also because this is the case in a larger number of countries.

**Table 10: Comparison of Secondary Enrolment and Completion Ratios, 2000
(Female rate < male rate)**



Source: Barro and Lee, 1996; and UIS, 2000

Valid N=78, i.e. 78 countries have data for both enrolment and completion rates.

Thus, from this analysis, it is apparent that gender gaps are severe in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia in both secondary enrolment and completion.

Gender Equality in Tertiary Education: Of the 160 countries for which data are available, eighty eight are predicted to achieve a ratio of one or greater in enrolment in tertiary education in 2015 (Table 11). Once again, the majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are predicted to be off track or falling behind (33 of 39 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and all six in South Asia).

Table 11. Country Predictions By Region for Female To Male Gross Tertiary Enrollment Ratios, 2015

Region	Number of countries in each ratio category					Total
	Greater than 1	Ratio = 1	0.99-0.90	0.89-0.70	0.69 and below	
Dev'd	20		1	3		24
EAP	9		1	3	5	18
ECA	23	3	1	1	1	29
LAC	17		2	4	4	27
MENA	10		1	3	3	17
SA				2	4	6
SSA	6			5	28	39
Total	85	3	6	21	45	160

Source: UNESCO, 1996. Note: Valid N=160. Missing N=31.

By the indicator of completion, Table 12 shows that the majority of developed countries and countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and East Asia and the Pacific are predicted to be off track for gender parity in completion. All countries in South Asia are predicted to be off track on this indicator.

Table 12. Country Success for Female To Male Tertiary Completion Ratios, 2015

Region	No. of countries in each ratio category					Total
	Greater than 1	Parity	0.99-0.90	0.89-0.70	0.69 and below	
Dev'd	2		2	5	14	23
EAP	4			1	7	12
ECA	2		1		1	4
LAC	13		6	3	1	23
MENA	1			2	6	9
SA					6	6
SSA	2			1	25	28
Total	24		9	12	60	105

Source: Barro and Lee 1996; Note: Valid N=105. Missing N=86.

Most countries that are predicted to have increases in the female to male ratio do so through increases in female rates of tertiary enrolment. The exceptions are Qatar, Armenia, Republic of Moldova, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Cuba, Belarus, Belize, Puerto Rico, Kazakhstan, Uruguay, Lebanon, Russia, Canada, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyz Republic, all of which experience declines in the female rate coupled with more rapid declines in the male rate, which results in an increased ratio. Moreover, some of the 88 countries have such low levels of female tertiary enrolment in 1996 that prediction of gender parity in 2015 is misrepresentative of female capability. For example, Rwanda's female tertiary enrolment rate increases from 0.73 percent to 0.88 percent (1990-1996) while its male rate increases from 0.27 to 0.33 percent.

For countries that have data for both enrolment and completion, data again show that results different depending on the choice of indicator. In sub-Saharan Africa, six countries are expected to achieve gender parity or a reverse gap in tertiary enrolment but only two of these, South Africa and Lesotho, are expected to achieve it in completion. In Europe and Central Asia, 23 countries are expected to achieve a ratio of one or greater in enrolment but only Hungary and Poland are expected to achieve such ratios by the indicator of completion. In South Asia, no countries are expected to achieve or be on track for gender parity in tertiary education. The best performers, Sri Lanka and India, are falling behind based on enrolment but are off track based on completion.

Again, does the situation in 2000 bode well for realizing the target? In 2000, 53 countries had ratios of one or higher for female to male tertiary enrolment rates. Only one of these countries, Finland, had a female rate of greater than 90 percent. Twenty-one of these countries had female rates of lower than 33 percent: Brunei, Jamaica, Myanmar, Albania, Lesotho, Trinidad and Tobago, Cyprus, Saudi Arabia, Netherlands Antilles, Brazil, Namibia, Luxembourg, Yugoslavia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Jordan, Colombia, Samoa, Slovak Republic, Malaysia, and Czech Republic.

Gender Parity in Literacy: Eighty-six percent of 138 developing countries are predicted have ratios of .9 or greater by 2015 - see Table 13. Once again, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia do not fare well relative to other regions. Thirteen of 41 countries in sub-Saharan Africa are either falling behind or off track. In South Asia three countries out of six are predicted to fall behind. In contrast, only one country in Latin America and the Caribbean (Guatemala) and two in the Middle East and North Africa (Iraq and Yemen) are likely to fall behind or be off track.

Out of 70 countries that have achieved gender equality in literacy as of 2000, 67 also have high rates of female and male literacy (90 percent or greater). However, three countries, despite female to male literacy ratios of one or greater in 2000, still have relatively low rates of literacy for both females and males in 2000: Honduras at 87 percent for females and 84 percent for males; Nicaragua at 72 percent for females and 71 percent for males; and Haiti at 65 percent for females and 64 percent for males. Thus female to male literacy ratios may depict gender equality whereas the numbers of literate females – and males – may be low.

Table 13. Country Predictions By Region For Ratio Of Literate Females To Males, Aged 15-24, In 2015

Region	Number of countries in each ratio category					Total
	Greater than 1	Ratio = 1	0.99-0.90	0.89-0.70	0.69 and below	
Dev'd		6				6
ECA	3	17				20
EAP	11	4	3			18
LAC	15	11	1	1		28
MENA	13	1	3	1	1	19
SA	1	1	1	3		6
SSA	23	2	3	9	4	41
Total	66	42	11	14	5	138

Source: UIS, 2000. Note: N=138.

Gender Equality in Non-Agricultural Wage Employment: Data for the share of the non-agricultural labor force are compiled by the ILO. As noted earlier, compared to the education indicators, there are far fewer data available for the MDG female employment indicator than for the education and literacy indicators. Even where information is available, it is not up-to-date for a large number of countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa.

Because there is no target for women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector, we do not predict values for future years. Table 14 provides a picture by region of women's share of the non-agricultural labor force in the most recent year available for the following categories: high (50 percent and greater), medium (between 25-49.9 percent) and low (between 0-24.9 percent).

Table 14: Share Of Women In Non-Agricultural Wage Employment, By Region (1995-2000)

Region	Rank			Total
	High (50+)	Medium (25-49.9)	Low (0-24.9)	
Dev'd		24		24
EAP		10		10
ECA	6	13	1	20
LAC	3	26		29
MENA		1	5	6
SA		1	3	4
SSA		6	6	12
Total	9	81	15	105

Source: LABORSTA, ILO, 2000. Note: Valid N=105. Missing N=86.

In only nine of 105 countries in the late 1990s was the female share of non-agricultural wage employment 50 percent or greater. In another 81 countries, the share is between 25-49 percent. South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa have the lowest female shares of non-

agricultural employment (three of four countries in South Asia and five of six countries in the Middle East and North Africa).

Of 124 countries which have data for two years in the early and late 1990s, 66 have seen increases in the female share of non-agricultural employment and 19 have seen declines. Most of the declines were in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. In ten countries, the share remained constant over the decade.

Gender Equality in National Parliaments: The share of seats in parliament is one measure of women’s agency – their ability to participate in making decisions that affect their lives. Because women’s share of seats in parliament is not correlated with the passage of time, we do not predict values for future years. Regional and country breakdowns are based on data provided by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Table 15 provides a picture of women’s share of seats in parliament in 1990/1991 and most recent year available for the following categories: high (30 percent and above), medium (20-29.9 percent), low (10-19.9 percent), and very low (0-9.9 percent).

Table 15. Share Of Women Held Seats In National Parliament, 1991 and 2002

Region	Rank								Total	
	High (30+)		Medium (20-29.9)		Low (10-19.9)		Very Low (0-9.9)			
	1991	2002	1991	2002	1991	2002	1991	2002	1991	2002
Dev'd	4	8	4	6	5	8	9	2	22	24
EAP			2	3		4	12	8	14	15
ECA				3	4	13	24	11	28	27
LAC		1		6	10	17	19	9	29	33
MENA					1	2	7	11	8	13
SA					1		6	6	7	6
SSA	1	2	1	5	9	13	15	23	26	43
Total	5	11	7	23	30	57	92	70	134	161

Source for 1991: IPU, 1991. Note for 1991: Valid N =134. Missing N=57.

Source for 2002: IPU, 2002. Note for 2002: Valid N=161. Missing N=30.

Around the world, women are largely absent from these decision-making bodies. In 2002, in only 11 of 161 countries did women hold 30 percent or more of seats in national parliament: Mozambique, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, New Zealand, Argentina and South Africa. In another 23 countries, women held between 20 to 29 percent of seats in 2002.¹¹ Yet, women have made notable progress in political life since 1991. Of the 122 countries that have longitudinal data, women have increased their share of seats in parliament in 99 countries, compared to 18 countries where women’s representation declined over the decade and five countries which experienced no change.¹²

Summary. The data reveal some interesting patterns. First, the predictions for nearly all education indicators show that few countries will achieve a ratio of one – or gender parity – either by 2005 or 2015. For primary enrolment, the majority of countries, 67 of 124, are predicted to be on track, while for primary completion, the majority are predicted to have reverse gaps – such that education for boys must be addressed. For secondary and tertiary enrolment and completion, the pattern is as follows: the majority of countries are predicted to have reverse gaps in enrolment but to be off track for completion. Thus, in primary education, more girls complete than boys and in secondary and tertiary education, more boys complete than girls. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia show the poorest performance on all education indicators and

these regions have the lowest averages of all regions on these indicators. Second, in only half of the countries where the female to male enrolment ratio is one or greater, the female gross enrolment rate is less than .90. Third, with respect to the economic indicator, the female share of non-agricultural wage employment in a large number of countries (96 of 105) is less than 50 percent. Fourth, in a majority of countries around the world, women hold less than 20 percent of seats in their national parliaments. This is true for all countries in the Middle East and North Africa and in South Asia. Interestingly, although women in the majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa hold fewer than 20 percent seats in their national parliaments, women in seven countries have made important political gains. Overall, then, by most indicators, women fare less well than men and by a few indicators, women do better than men, but the goal of gender equality is still elusive.

Section V: Evaluating Patterns of Gender Inequality

The above analysis shows the progress of individual countries on each of the indicators. The next challenge is to identify whether countries share common patterns of gender inequality so as to determine policy recommendations and strategies that are not so abstract as to be irrelevant or so specific as to be useful for only one context. This section attempts to address this challenge. We used cluster analysis to develop a preliminary framework for grouping countries by their dominant form of gender inequality.¹³

Methodology

Variables measuring capability, opportunity, and agency in each country were used to classify the 112 countries in the sample used in the cluster analysis. The indicator for capability is female gross secondary enrollment rates; the indicator for opportunity is female to male labor force participation rates; and the indicator for agency is share of women-held seats in national parliament. We also added to this list a country income variable, the log of gross national income per capita, to account for a country's level of development.¹⁴

The cluster analysis was conducted using the hierarchical method of complete linkage (furthest neighbor) with squared Euclidean distance measures. This index calculates the sum of the squared differences of all the variables. Complete linkage was chosen because the clusters were assumed to have unequal variances and unequal sample sizes. All variables were standardized to Z scores. The agglomeration schedule in Table A.2.1 in Appendix 2 revealed 7 clusters. Three of the clusters were then re-clustered using the same technique to arrive at more precise classifications (see Tables A.2.2, A.2.3 and A.2.4 in Appendix 2).¹⁵ The final analysis resulted in 12 distinct groups of countries (Table 16).

Results

Table 16 depicts how the countries clustered together based on indicators of gender equality. For each cluster, we used the mean scores on the capability, opportunity, and agency indicators to categorize clusters into high, medium, and low levels of capability, opportunity, and agency (see Tables A.3.1, A.3.2, and A.3.3 in Appendix 3). So, for example, women in Cluster 2 countries have, relative to the other clusters, high capability, opportunity and agency, while women in Cluster 11 countries, have, relative to the other clusters, low capability, opportunity, and agency.

Table 16. Country Clusters

Cluster No.	N	Country		Type of Gender Inequality
1	12	Australia Austria Belgium Canada Germany Iceland	Ireland Luxembourg New Zealand Spain Switzerland United Kingdom	High capability Medium opportunity High agency
2	5	Denmark Finland Netherlands	Norway Sweden	High capability High opportunity High agency
3	5	Argentina Costa Rica Dominican Republic	Mexico Venezuela	Medium capability Low opportunity High agency
4	34	Albania Azerbaijan Barbados Belarus Bolivia Botswana Brazil Bulgaria Colombia Croatia Cyprus Czech Republic Estonia France Georgia Greece Hungary	Israel Italy Jamaica Japan Kazakhstan Korea, Republic Latvia Poland Portugal Romania Russian Federation Slovak Republic St. Lucia Thailand Trinidad and Tobago United States Uruguay	Medium capability Medium opportunity Medium agency
5	10	Bangladesh Djibouti Equatorial Guinea Guatemala India	Indonesia Morocco Paraguay Sudan Turkey	Low capability Low opportunity Medium agency
6	6	Algeria Egypt Iran	Jordan Maldives Pakistan	Medium capability Low opportunity Low agency
7	7	Belize Chile Malaysia Mauritius	Panama Samoa Tunisia	Medium capability Low opportunity Medium agency
8	4	Bahrain Kuwait	Lebanon Saudi Arabia	Medium capability Low opportunity Low agency
9	6	China Ecuador Lithuania	Namibia South Africa Vietnam	Medium capability High opportunity High agency
10	7	Angola Eritrea Lao People's Dem. Rep. Mozambique	Rwanda Tanzania Zimbabwe	Low capability High opportunity High agency
11	13	Benin Burkina Faso Cambodia Chad Comoros Ethiopia Gambia	Guinea-Bissau Lesotho Mauritania Niger Togo Vanuatu	Low capability Medium-low opportunity Low agency
12	3	Mongolia Nepal	Tajikistan	Medium capability High opportunity Medium agency

Source: ICRW, 2003

Briefly, of the 112 countries in the cluster analysis, the largest number of countries had medium levels of capability, opportunity, and agency. The women in all the low-income countries, with the exception of Cluster 12, have low capability. It is interesting to note that countries that clustered in the medium opportunity category (Cluster 4) included both low and high income countries. This pattern is consistent with the feminization U hypothesis: high labor force participation rates in countries at low levels of development, which fall as countries begin to industrialize, and rise again at more advanced stages of development (Mammen and Paxson 2000, Cagatay and Ozler 1995). Clusters where women have high agency consist of the Nordic countries (Cluster 2), a range of high-income industrialized countries (Cluster 1), the socialist economies such as China and Vietnam (Cluster 9), countries that have implemented quota laws for women's participation in politics (e.g., South Africa and several Latin American countries), as well as countries that have recently emerged from political crisis. As part of their post-conflict restructuring, countries in this latter group such as Rwanda, Eritrea, and Mozambique (Cluster 10), have attempted to increase women's participation in policy decisions.

Table 17. Cluster Descriptive Statistics

Cluster No.	N	Female Gross Secondary Enrolment Rate, 1999 ¹		Female to Male Labor Force Participation, 1988-2000 (mry) ²		Share of Women Held Seats in National Parliament, 1999 ³	
		Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.
1	12	120.35	25.74	.73	.07	21.58	5.83
2	5	134.59	21.36	.86	.05	37.80	2.94
3	5	72.73	15.87	.45	.04	18.60	5.68
4	34	91.39	10.70	.73	.07	9.68	3.39
5	10	39.26	14.63	.50	.09	6.00	4.44
6	6	65.29	22.40	.20	.06	3.00	2.19
7	7	85.25	14.69	.45	.07	8.14	1.34
8	4	76.89	21.53	.32	.11	.50	1.00
9	6	60.02	7.49	.79	.09	22.50	4.88
10	7	19.47	13.00	.88	.06	17.57	3.99
11	13	15.35	8.75	.78	.09	3.85	3.48
12	3	61.97	14.82	.83	.11	4.67	2.88

Note: mry=most recent year.

¹ Source: UNESCO, 1999/2000.

² Source: KILMNET, ILO, 2000

³ IPU, 1999.

eyeballing the clusters reveals some interesting patterns. First, a country's level of income is positively associated with women's capability and agency (see also the correlation coefficients in Table 18). Second, policies that legislate women's representation in political positions seem to have had a positive impact on women's share of parliamentary seats. Regardless of income level, in countries that have instituted quotas, women's representation in parliament is higher than in countries that do not have such laws or policies. Third, countries emerging from situations of conflict seem to do notably better on the agency indicator than other low income countries. It has been documented that during periods of conflict women are more visible in the public arena, either as combatants or as workers replacing the labor of men. In the rebuilding of conflict-torn countries, this high level of participation by women is sometimes institutionalized and mainstreamed into national and local decision-making processes. In Eritrea, for example, women constituted about 30 percent of fighters during the war and enjoyed a relatively high status in the ranks. Women constituted 22 percent of Eritrea's first National Assembly elected in

Table 18. Correlation Coefficients for Female Gross Secondary Enrolment, Share of Women Held Seats in Parliament, Gross National Income per capita, and Female to Male Labor Force Participation

Variable	Measure	Female Gross Secondary Enrolment Rate, 1999 ¹	Share of Women Held Seats in National Parliament, 1999 ²	Gross National Income per capita, 1999 ³	Ratio of Female to Male Labor Force Participation, 1988-2000 (mry) ⁴
Female gross secondary enrolment rate, 1999 ¹	Pearson Correlation	1	.410**	.649**	.041
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.655
	N	122	119	114	121
Share of women held seats in national parliament, 1999 ²	Pearson Correlation	.410**	1	.505**	.362*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	119	185	165	177
Gross national income per capita, 1999 ³	Pearson Correlation	.649**	.505**	1	.128
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.098
	N	114	165	172	169
Ratio of female to male labor force participation, 1988-2000 (mry) ⁴	Pearson Correlation	.041	.362**	.128	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.655	.000	.098	.
	N	121	177	169	202

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). MRY=most recent year

¹ Source: UNESCO, 1999/2000. ² Source: IPU, 1999. ³ Source: World Bank, 1999. ⁴ Source: KILMNET, ILO, 2000

1994. Significantly, the National Assembly appointed a Constitutional Commission in 1994 with nearly half the members (48 percent) being women.

The analysis in this section is preliminary. Regression analysis is needed to more conclusively establish the factors that may have contributed to the features described above. This will be undertaken in the next stage of the project. Even in the absence of such an analysis, we can use the cluster framework to suggest – albeit tentatively – policy recommendations and strategies to assist different countries to meet the MDG goal and targets.

Section VI: Recommendations for Meeting Goal #3 and Strategies for Success

The last section of this paper discusses policy and program actions for achieving Goal 3. These recommendations are organized by the three targets we suggested above. In each case, the

recommendations are tailored to address the dominant constraints that characterize each cluster of countries discussed above.

One overarching constraint to meeting all three targets is the burden of unpaid labor borne by women and girls which restricts girl's participation in school, reduces the rewards to and recognition of women's economic contributions, and prevents their full participation in public life. This constraint is particularly severe in low-income, female-headed households. Therefore, in implementing the recommendations that follow, this constraint must be kept in mind.

Target #1: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015

The importance of girls' education has been actively promoted over the past decade through highly visible global advocacy efforts. It is, therefore, not surprising that much greater progress has been made in meeting this target relative to the other targets. However, as the analysis above shows, most of this progress has been restricted to achieving equality for girls in primary education. Less progress has been made in achieving equality in secondary and tertiary education, which as noted above is especially illuminated by an examination of the ratio of girls' to boys' completion rates.

Overall, the comparison of enrolment rates to completion rates reveals the inadequacy of enrolment rates in telling the full story. We, therefore, recommend that nations be held to a standard of gender equality in school completion, not merely in school enrolment. Moreover, wherever possible, information on school completion must be augmented by indicators to measure gender equality in outcomes of schooling and the quality of education.

For the clusters of countries where women have low capability, investing in girls' education must be a priority. These countries are primarily low-income countries in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, but also include a few countries from East Asia. Improving the capabilities of women in these countries is fundamental to reducing gender inequality overall.

Particular attention must also be paid to girls' education in countries that have recently emerged from conflict, such as Eritrea, Angola, and Mozambique. The cluster analysis shows that these countries cluster together and fall in the lowest quartile on female secondary education, indicating women's low capability. The re-building of national institutions, policies, and programs that typically characterizes the post-conflict period in such countries, offers an opportunity for implementing new and reinvigorated initiatives to promote girls' education.

The range of strategies that can be employed to get girls into school and enable them to complete a full course of primary and secondary education is well known. They address both supply and demand constraints. Supply side strategies include increasing the number and reach of primary and secondary schools, particularly in rural areas; reducing schooling costs (both direct costs and opportunity costs through subsidies, scholarships, income transfers, book provision, etc.); staffing schools with female teachers; instituting policies that promote girls' attendance (such as permitting married adolescents to attend); and improving the safety of schools, the quality and gender-sensitivity of the curriculum (in both texts and through teacher training), and the design of facilities (e.g., the provision of latrines for girls). Demand-side strategies include mobilizing parent and community involvement in monitoring the quality of education, undertaking

campaigns to increase the awareness of the value of girls' education, and introducing broader economic policies that increase the returns to girls' education.

Experience with some of these strategies has been documented elsewhere (Morley and Coady 2003). However, we don't have rigorous evaluations of the costs and benefits of each or how well any one intervention compares to another. Moreover, for improvements in girls' education, it would also be useful to examine the effectiveness of measures targeted to the education sector versus other sectors, such as water and sanitation, which may reduce the burdens to girls of going to school.

Because of the wide range of options and the diversity of needs and constraints that affect girls' education in different settings, developing a single global policy for reducing gender inequalities in education is difficult. There are, however, some common principles that must be kept in mind regardless of the specific set of interventions implemented.

First, quantitative targets to measure the success of interventions are limited in their usefulness. As mentioned earlier, achieving a ratio of one for female to male enrolment or completion, for example, tells us very little about the quality of education or the benefits that accrue to girls from their education. Second, as Subrahmanian (2002) recommends, the question that must guide the selection of policy interventions is "Education for what?" Global advocacy on girls' education has been successful primarily because of the instrumentalist rationales that were used to link girls' education to child survival and reductions in fertility. Such rationales greatly increased global investments in girls' education. Yet, it is important to recognize the intrinsic value of educating girls. Ultimately, the education of girls must benefit girls themselves and contribute to their well-being and empowerment. In other words, investments in girls' education interventions must have personal returns for girls themselves, as well as social returns.

Third, because the success of interventions to educate girls is fundamentally embedded in the socioeconomic and cultural context of households and their decision making processes, it is critical that family and community members be involved in the implementation of interventions to improve girls' education. Subrahmanian (2002) identifies four types of determinants of household decisions on girls' education: the macroeconomic context that shapes employment opportunity; household livelihoods and aspirations and the extent to which households are willing to commit resources; assessments of the prospects and capacities of individual children; and the proximity, quality and inclusiveness of the schooling that is available. According to Subrahmanian (2002), if the sociocultural and economic context that defines the value of girls is to be altered, interventions must find ways to influence the attitudes and perceptions of households and communities and their decision making process. Involving them in the process and creating a sense of ownership at the local level also helps to create the "enabling environments... for women to develop voice and articulate their choices and priorities without risk of social censure" (Subrahmanian 2002; pp iv).

Fourth, interventions must give highest priority to marginalized and excluded populations of girls, such as those who belong to ethnic minority groups or to poor communities. Many of the national averages on girls' enrolment and completion rates mask the disadvantage that continues among certain excluded groups. In Latin American countries, for example, it is important to invest in the education of girls from poor households and indigenous populations.

The Education for All (EFA) initiative, established after the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, provides a suitable global policy framework within which the above principles can guide progress toward gender equality in education. The declaration issued at that conference which aims to achieve universal education for all, includes within it a commitment to “ensure access to and improve the quality of education for girls and women and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation” (Article 3, WDEFA). The EFA initiative, led by UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, and the World Bank in partnership with national governments and NGOs, has stimulated the development and implementation of national strategic plans to meet the goals set in the declaration.

Building on the framework of the EFA, a new compact was endorsed in 2002, called the EFA Fast-Track Partnership (Bruns, Mingat, and Rakatomalala 2003). The compact was the first concrete proposal for channeling increased development support to a set of countries identified based on their commitment to a sound educational sector strategy within a broader poverty reduction strategy. It is noteworthy that of the countries included in the list of Fast Track countries, only seven of those emerged in our cluster analysis as having low capabilities for women. Our preliminary cluster analysis suggests that 23 more countries in which women have low capability could also potentially benefit from being fast tracked for assistance, but further analysis is needed to confirm this.

If the EFA goals are to be met, the initiative requires an infusion of increased funding and organizational strengthening. Donor governments and countries alike need to bolster their verbal commitment by making adequate financial pledges. Efforts must also be made to ensure that at the country-level there is coordination between the EFA initiative and other policy processes that seek to meet the same goals, such as the World Bank’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (PRSPs). Most importantly, we must assure that the high-level international visibility of the MDGs is harnessed to strengthen the EFA initiative. The risk of distracting governments and donor countries from meeting the goals of the EFA by demanding allegiance to multiple international initiatives is real and must be addressed by better country-level and international coordination. It would also be useful to commission rigorous evaluations of the impact of the EFA initiative on gender equality in education in the countries where it is operative and apply the insights gained to improve country programs.

As our analysis showed, without a substantial acceleration of progress, as many as 20 countries in our sample will be falling behind or off track in meeting the goal of gender equality in primary completion by 2005 and 56 countries will not meet the goal of gender equality in secondary completion by the same year. It is also clear that low-income countries are furthest behind and will need to have their resources augmented by support from donor countries if they are to meet the goal.

Target #2: Eliminate gender inequality in access to economic assets and employment by the year 2015

We propose this target so as to hold countries accountable for women’s economic status. Our analysis of trends in women’s share of non-agricultural wage employment and female to male labor force participation rates, as well as a broader review of the literature on women’s economic status in different regions, shows that women face severe disadvantages in their access to

employment and incomes. In the majority of countries in our cluster analysis, women are opportunity constrained.

There are two pathways to meeting Target #2. One is by improving women's access to economic assets and the second is by improving women's access to employment and conditions in labor markets.

Access to Assets

In conditions of poverty and during times of crisis, access to economic assets is an important way to assure women's security. Ownership and control over property signifies command over productive resources, which enables individuals to make choices regarding livelihoods, provides security against poverty and promotes autonomy. In countries in sub-Saharan Africa that are hard hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, for example, women's lack of land rights and property ownership makes them more vulnerable to destitution when they lose their male partners to the disease. Lack of property rights has also been associated with increased violence against women (Panda 2002).

Laws that allow women to inherit, acquire, and control productive assets, including land and housing, are an essential first step for ensuring women's access to assets. A striking feature of Latin America compared to other regions is the legal tradition inherited from Iberian colonial rule whereby all legitimate children, irrespective of sex, inherit equally from both of their parents (Deere and Leon 2001). Socialist governments in Vietnam, Laos, and China also gave women nominal rights to land (Tinker and Summerfield 1999). In contrast, other regions have multiple and overlapping legal systems. Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, is governed through a combination of statutory, colonial, tribal, Hindu and Muslim laws. Although statutory laws often prohibit discrimination against women, there are many legal exceptions with regard to the personal laws that apply to marriage and family matters. As a result, the widespread application of customary laws effectively prevents many girls and women from owning, retaining, or inheriting property.

Even where laws exist, most land is owned by men. Land reforms are potentially one way of giving women property ownership. After Costa Rica's land reform, women represented 45 percent of land titling beneficiaries between 1990-92, compared with 12 percent before the reform (World Bank 2001). Yet, as Agarwal (1994) points out, titling and registration do not necessarily give women control over the use and returns from the land. In addition, not all land reforms have benefited women. For instance, in Bolivia and Ecuador, women's land rights were not raised as major issues in the negotiations that led to new agrarian codes (World Bank 2001). Indeed, in some areas, women have lost access rights during land reforms. In Laos, although custom allows women to inherit land from their parents, during the process of legal change, men have acquired greater control of land rights at the expense of women (Viravong 1999). Therefore, it is important in land reforms, resettlement schemes, and other such interventions, to incorporate specific provisions that give women equal land rights, protect and provide information that safeguards their interests, and prevent their exclusion from access to and use of land.

Beyond land and housing, providing poor women access to credit is another way to enhance their asset ownership and access to savings. Microfinance programs have been the most popular

economic strategy over the past two decades to assist poor and landless women to enter self-employment or start their own business. According to the State of the Microcredit Summit Campaign 2001 Report, 14.2 million of the world's poorest women now have access to financial services through specialized microfinance institutions, banks, NGOs, and other non-bank financial institutions (Druschel et al. 2001). Many microfinance programs, which incorporate savings components, have enabled women to build assets to use as collateral, reduce consumption volatility over time and self-finance investments rather than turning to creditors (Morduch 1999). According to Pitt and Khandker (1998), non-land assets increase substantially when borrowing is by women, and not by men.

Although microfinance programs have captured the imagination of international donors, NGOs and country governments, they are not the economic panacea.¹⁶ Perhaps their most important impact is in stabilizing household income (Kevane and Wyddick 2000). Microfinance programs have been less effective in stimulating economic growth. In a cross-country study, Hulme and Mosley (1996a) report that credit did not trigger growth in terms of an increase in technical sophistication, output or employment. While some employment growth is observed among family members of borrowers, the employment impact outside the family has been small (Dawson and Jeans 1997).

Keeping these limitations in mind, we recommend that donors and countries prioritize legal reforms that give women property and inheritance rights that contain effective enforcement mechanisms. Microfinance programs and services should also continue to have donor support; however, in order to have greater impact, microfinance programs need to be coupled with other types of products and services, including training, technology transfer, business development services, and marketing assistance, among others. More attention also needs to be given to innovative savings and insurance instruments for low-income women.

Gender Equality in Employment

As noted earlier, the female share of paid non-agricultural employment only indicates the presence or absence of such work; it does not capture the conditions under which women work, the returns to their labor, whether they have secure contracts, and other important features of their jobs. This indicator also leaves out the majority of work done by women around the world. As is now well known, informal employment is generally a larger source of employment for women than for men, especially in the developing world.¹⁷ Other than in North Africa where 43 percent of women workers are in informal employment, 60 percent or more of women workers in the developing world are in informal employment. In sub-Saharan Africa, 84 percent of women non-agricultural workers are informally employed compared to 63 percent for men; in Latin America 58 percent for women in comparison to 48 percent for men; and in Asia, the proportion of women and men non-agricultural workers in informal employment is roughly equivalent (WIEGO 2002).

The female share of non-agricultural wage employment does not provide information on another gender gap, namely that women and men work in different occupations. Worldwide, women are concentrated in clerical, sales, and service jobs traditionally regarded as “female” and are underrepresented in production, transport, administrative, and managerial jobs in which men predominate (Mehra and Gammage 1999). In general, the jobs in which women predominate are less desirable and lower status occupations. Such jobs also pay less.

Gender gaps in earnings are among the most persistent forms of inequality. There has been some narrowing of gender wage gaps in some countries (Tzannatos 1999; Artecona and Cunningham 2002; Oostendorp 2002), although in other countries, gaps have widened (see Standing 1989, 1999; Mehra and Gammage 1999). Even in the East Asian countries which have grown rapidly, relying on exports produced by female labor, gender wage gaps remain persistently large and have worsened in some cases (Seguino 2000).

Interventions to improve women's access to employment take many forms. On the supply side, in the most capability constrained countries, strategies include increasing women's access to education and their advancement from primary to tertiary levels. Once in school, it is especially important to boost women's participation in science, engineering, technology and other fields to prepare them for the new labor market opportunities in the global economy.

Beyond supply side interventions, demand side policies must also be brought to bear. Employment-targeted economic growth is a prerequisite for low-income countries coupled with social policy that eliminates discriminatory employment barriers. Second, equity in earnings is needed, with both women and men able to earn living wages—wages sufficiently high to permit adults to adequately provision for their families. Provisioning for families requires relatively secure income sources. Women are frequently breadwinners but, even when part of two-adult households, secure earnings are an important means to improve their bargaining power for a more equitable distribution of resources and unpaid labor. A further requirement is the equitable distribution of state resources that close gender gaps in economic and social well-being, such as health care and training, which can redress gender inequalities (Seguino and Grown 2003).

Interventions to improve pay and working conditions have primarily taken the form of legislation. Such measures have been implemented in a growing number of industrialized and developing countries over the past several decades (Rodgers 1999). They include working hour restrictions with differential coverage for men and women, family leave policies, equal pay and equal opportunities laws and policies, and other anti-discrimination legislation. Empirical evidence of the impact of each of these on women's employment and on relative wages is mixed for industrial countries and scant for developing countries.

For instance, among developing countries, evidence indicates that changes in Costa Rican legislation to lengthen maternity leave duration had little impact on wages and employment until after a new enforcement mechanism was created in 1990 (Gindling and Crummet 1977). With improved enforcement and stricter penalties on firms that violated the law, women's wages fell significantly while their employment did not change. The evidence on equal pay and equal opportunity policies suggests they have been successful in improving women's relative wages in economies where collective bargaining is common (Australia, Britain, and Canada) but less successful in countries with decentralized wage setting practices such as the United States. Enforcement is an obstacle, especially in developing countries that have neither the resources nor the institutional infrastructure to monitor employment practices (Rodgers 1999)). Nor do equal pay laws address lower earnings resulting from occupational segregation whereby men and women are concentrated in different occupations and economic sectors. Some countries have passed laws stipulating equal pay for work of comparable value; others have tackled occupational segregation by promoting employment redistribution through legislation that improves women's access to occupations in which they were formerly absent. Closely related

measures that prevent discrimination on the basis of marital status or family responsibilities have similar objectives, but their impact has not been rigorously evaluated.

An international framework exists for promoting equal access to employment – the ILO Decent Work initiative – which has four interrelated objectives: fostering of rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialog. The primary goal of the initiative is “to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity” (Anker 2002) The gender-sensitivity of the decent work framework, and the gender-disaggregated indicators it proposes for monitoring country performance, make it suitable for tracking country’s targets toward this target for Goal #3. We recommend that the ILO be given the resources and authority to take the leadership in providing data and monitoring progress.

Target #3: Achieve a 30 percent share of seats for women in national parliaments by the year 2015

This target has been proposed to accelerate efforts to increase women’s agency in countries around the world. The limitation of this indicator – share of women-held seats in national parliament – as a measure of agency has been noted earlier, but because of a lack of suitable data on other indicators it serves as a useful proxy for women’s ability to make decisions that affect their lives. As the analysis above shows, although there has been notable progress on this variable in the past decade, in only 11 of 161 countries did women hold 30 percent or more seats in parliament in 2002. All except three of these (South Africa, Mozambique and Argentina) are high income industrialized nations.

The cluster analysis revealed that the five clusters of countries where women have low or medium to low agency are primarily low-income and Islamic countries (both high and low income). The only low income countries that have high agency for women were those that had a socialist political tradition (such as Vietnam and China), those that had emerged from prolonged conflict (such as Eritrea and Mozambique), and/or those that had introduced legislation to promote women’s political representation (Mozambique and Ecuador).

The most popular policy intervention instituted to increase the proportion of women in public office has been political reservation or quotas for women, in other words, reserving political positions for women in political parties or in local and national assemblies. Today, quotas for women in elective office have been introduced either at national or local levels in at least 45 countries. In the developing world, Latin America stands out as the single region with the most number of countries (12) that have introduced political reservation for women. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Uganda and South Africa stand out as role models for women’s political representation. In Asia, the most prominent effort made to increase women’s representation in government occurred in India. Two constitutional amendments in 1992 required that at least a third of the seats in *panchayats* (or local councils) and municipal councils, and the same number of chairpersons, be reserved for women.

Whether quotas are effective in increasing numbers of women elected depends on the type of electoral system. According to Tinker (2002), quotas have worked most effectively through the party list system with political parties distributing seats through proportional representation. All of the 11 countries that have succeeded in meeting the 30 percent target for women’s

representation in national parliament use proportional representation based on the party list system. In a review of women's political representation, Htun (1998) agrees that the outcome of quotas in the Latin American region has depended entirely on a country's particular electoral institutions. It has been most successful in Argentina where the quota law requires parties not only to reserve 30 percent of the places on the party list for women, but to put those women in electable positions on the list. Because of the success of quotas in the party list system in increasing women's representation in parliaments, we recommend that this affirmative action policy be adopted by countries that use this system. Research is needed to determine what might work best in countries with other electoral systems.

Opinion is mixed on whether an increased number of women in political office translates into policies and budget authorizations that benefit women overall. In commenting on the increased number of women in *panchayats* in India, Vyasalu and Vyasalu (2000) are pessimistic about the potential for impact given that most of the women are "functionally illiterate, with few productive assets, and the vast majority depend on wage labor in a traditional rural society that has rigidly fixed places for various castes as well as for gender" (pp 46). In such a setting, the mere establishment of a new law, they feel, will not result in the political empowerment of women or in improved policies for women.

On the other hand, a recent study conducted by Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2001) comparing the effects of quotas for women in two Indian states, West Bengal and Rajasthan found that women elected as leaders under mandated reservation invest more in public goods most closely linked to women's concerns. These include drinking water, fuel, and employment generating activities such as road construction. When women are the heads of *panchayats*, there is a greater likelihood that policies that are sensitive to women's needs will be implemented.

Once women are in positions of political power in national parliaments, one of the most effective tools they can use is to monitor national budgets for their gender responsiveness. Currently, initiatives to review the gender impacts of government budgets on women and men and to increase understanding of gender issues in budgetary processes and allocations are being undertaken in 45 countries. Since these initiatives are so recent, little evidence exists yet to document their impact, but they hold promise for ensuring that the rhetoric of gender equality is matched by financial allocations.

Even when increasing the number of women in political positions does not result in more women-friendly policies or a gender-sensitive allocation of resources, it does have an important symbolic effect because it generates a public discussion of gender equality in politics and decision making. Quotas are an efficient way to bring about change in the quantity of women political leaders in the short term. Over time, as women establish themselves in greater numbers as leaders, they may help to trigger or fast-forward a broader process of social and political change that can have positive outcomes for women.

Meeting the Goal of Empowering Women: Other Actions

Meeting the three targets will lay the foundation for women's empowerment because gaining power in society is dependent upon having capability, opportunity and influence over key decisions that affect life outcomes. However, achieving the goal of women's empowerment is not only about the content of interventions but about the process. The process of empowerment

varies from culture to culture, but there are several types of changes that are considered to be central across cultures. Some of these changes include increased participation in decision-making, more equitable status of women in the family and community, increased political power and exercise of rights, and increased self-esteem.

Women can be empowered through development interventions if they are done right (see various BRIDGE publications). Some of the clearest evidence comes from evaluations of well-designed microcredit programs (Hashemi, Schuler, and Riley 1996). In addition to gaining greater respect and legitimacy in the broader community – particularly from male members – because of their access to credit, the opportunity to have control over decisions about loan size, use of the loan, and so forth has been found to be empowering for women. Women borrowers have also gained experience and confidence as leaders of their Trust Banks (in the Philippines) and have gone on to be elected within their barangays in the Philippines and Mayor in Honduras (Cheston 2002).

A significant barrier to women's empowerment is gender-based violence. As mentioned earlier, the prevalence of violence against women can serve as an indicator of the level of empowerment of women in any given country. The lack of data currently makes this difficult to operationalize in the MDG context, but it does not reduce the urgency to address this problem.

At the country level, most initiatives to address violence have been legislative. Although the legislation varies, it typically includes a combination of protective or restraining orders and penalties for offenders. As with property rights, a formidable challenge is often the enforcement of existing laws. Procedural barriers and traditional attitudes of law enforcement and judicial officials undermine the effectiveness of existing anti-violence laws. Training programs for judicial and law enforcement personnel often go a long way to change such attitudes. Beyond training programs, the establishment of female-staffed police stations has been effective in making them more accessible to women. For the women who have experienced violence, a range of medical, psychological, legal, educational, and other support services is necessary.

Finally, to prevent violence, improving women's education levels and economic opportunities has been found to be a protective factor (Duvvury 2002; Panda 2002). The interventions noted above to improve women's economic opportunities thus become even more important. Ultimately, however, the threshold of acceptability of violence against women needs to be shifted upwards. To do that requires a massive media and public education campaign, much like what was done to reduce the acceptability of smoking. At the international level, the United Nations, through the Secretary-General's office, should spearhead a campaign for zero tolerance of violence against women. This campaign should highlight the epidemic proportions of gender-based violence and raise the resources necessary for countries to implement action plans on which they would be monitored and held accountable.

Conclusion

The MDG campaign offers an opportunity to attend to the unfinished business of development by fulfilling the promises made by world leaders to reduce poverty, end hunger, improve health and eliminate illiteracy. Gender inequality fuels many of these ubiquitous challenges and is exacerbated by them. Conversely, gender equality and the empowerment of women can secure the future of women themselves, their households, and the communities in which they live.

Relative to the past, current international development rhetoric places gender inequality high among the list of development priorities. Having an independent MDG goal on gender equality is a reflection of this new emphasis. Years of advocacy and political mobilization by the international women's movement, and debates at U.N. conferences over the past three decades have contributed to making gender inequality more visible in international discourse. The challenge now is to convert that rhetoric into action.

The Millennium Project offers an opportunity for each of the Task Forces to address gender inequalities within each of the different development sectors. We encourage them to establish an identifiable set of actions through which gender-based constraints can be reduced and women's needs can be met.

There are four key prerequisites to translating rhetoric into action in all sectors: the availability of quality and comprehensive sex-disaggregated data; financial and technical resources; national and international monitoring and accountability mechanisms; and political commitment.

Quality, Sex-Disaggregated Data: As noted earlier in the paper, the availability and quality of the international data on gender gaps in education, economic opportunity, and women's agency are poor. The most notable data gaps are on women's economic activity and women's decision-making ability in the family, the community, and the political arena. We still lack comparable cross-country data on women's earning in various industries and occupations, the extent of women's participation in informal employment, prevalence rates on violence against women, women's share of seats in municipal and other local level legislative bodies, among others. Good data are essential for effective policy. Without appropriate sex-disaggregated data, efforts to develop and implement policies are hampered, accountability is difficult to establish, and the impact of programs and interventions is hard to assess. If the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as its specific targets are to be met, international and national agencies must gather and standardize data on women. Efforts are underway through UNSI to rectify gaps in data collection and standardization spearheaded by ECLAC. These efforts need to be given higher visibility and priority and must be coordinated with the Millennium Project, to maximize impact and relevance of the data.

Financial and Technical Resources. Typically, there are very few resources available at the national level for government-run women's machineries dedicated to promoting the status of women. Evidence suggests that usually national women's machineries are underfunded and vulnerable to arbitrary budget cuts, particularly during economic or political restructuring and reform (Tadjbakhsh 2000; DAW/ECLAC 1998). This has a direct impact on the quality of staffing, which typically tends to be inexperienced and lacking in specialist skills. As a result, women's machineries usually take on short term projects of very little strategic value. Even in international agencies, such as the World Bank, UNDP or WHO, gender units are constrained by poor staffing and small budgets. Many of the policy commitments made by countries at UN gatherings cannot be implemented because they are not adequately financed at the international or national levels. Funding for both national and international gender agencies should be benchmarked against budgets for other "cross-cutting" issues, such as the environment or children.

The perpetual shortage of resources for programs that address women's needs is often justified by the argument that because gender is cross-cutting, it benefits from the budgets of all

development sectors. This reasoning is based on the presumption that gender mainstreaming has occurred successfully. However, in most cases gender mainstreaming renders gender invisible. And, it is often difficult to identify the exact amount of funding allocated to particular gender equality goals within each sector.

Because gender inequality is multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral, assessing the financial costs of efforts to reduce it are difficult to calculate. We are not aware of any attempts to derive an algorithm to estimate these costs for countries with different levels of gender inequality or development. Yet, without such an estimate, advocating for more resources for gender equality goals is greatly hampered. In the context of the MDGs, it would be very useful to commission a costing exercise that can estimate the funds required internationally for achieving the three targets listed in this paper and the potential returns.

International Mechanisms: The appropriate international policy framework and mechanism for meeting each of the individual targets has been mentioned above. To summarize, the Education For All initiative must serve as the mechanism through which priorities are set and resources are channeled to achieve gender equality in primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Equal access to employment should be monitored through the ILO's Decent Work campaign. And, finally, to secure women's agency, we recommend that the Secretary-General of the UN lend his leadership to a campaign of zero tolerance for violence against women.

Overall, the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) provides a useful international mechanism to hold countries accountable for meeting Goal #3. All nation states that have ratified the convention are obligated to take all necessary measures at the national level to implement the provisions within it, including providing legal protection against discrimination of women. In order to monitor progress made by nation states in advancing the agenda of CEDAW, each nation state is required to report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on specific measures that they have taken to advance the Convention's agenda. Each country is required to report within one year of acceding to the Convention and at least every four years thereafter, including whenever the Committee so requests. The Committee annually reports to the UN General Assembly and makes recommendations to nation states based on an evaluation of the country reports.

A recent study of the impact of CEDAW has shown that it provides a powerful instrument at the national and international level for defining norms for constitutional guarantees of women's rights, for interpreting laws, mandating proactive, pro-women policies, and for dismantling discrimination overall (McPhedran et al. 2000). For CEDAW to be used effectively requires action at many levels and by many actors. Among the many factors identified by the study as being key to the effective utilization of CEDAW were the following: widespread awareness and knowledge of CEDAW; constructive dialogue between government representatives, CEDAW Committee members, and NGOs; governments recognizing how policy goals can be adapted to implement their stated commitment to CEDAW; and the systematic use of gender-specific indicators to assess the impact of governmental policies, laws, and budgets. We recommend that the CEDAW mechanism be used to monitor progress toward the MDGs and to hold nation's accountable.

Political will. Ultimately, for all of this to happen, we need political commitment and determination at the highest levels of international agencies and national governments to end

gender inequality and empower women. As noted at the beginning of this paper, gender inequality is deeply rooted in entrenched beliefs and attitudes, societal institutions, and market forces. The only way that the social change required to bring about gender equality will occur is through the dedication of visible and credible champions at the international and national level. Gender inequality is not a problem that has no solution. It persists partly because of the lack of leadership to institute the policies that can trigger social change and to allocate the resources necessary to get the job done.

It is time for the international community to live up to the promises made to women through the numerous commitments made, conventions signed, and treaties ratified over the past three decades. The Millennium Project reminds us that we have promises to keep and miles to go before we sleep.

Endnotes

¹ Gender equity, a term that is often incorrectly used interchangeably with gender equality, moves beyond equality of opportunity and denotes equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognizing their different needs and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources (Reeves and Baden 2000).

² The Self-Employed Women's Association in India is a good example of women using collective action to demand economic opportunity and education.

³ For a fuller description, see the complete report.

⁴ Additional problems include the fact that a census is usually conducted only once every 10 years. In some cases, countries report data from only 1 to 3 censuses. Trends are therefore difficult to detect and over 30 countries have never published any kind of literacy data. Second, countries mostly use indirect (and problematic) measures of literacy. Third, countries use different criteria to decide whether people are literate. For example, some countries report the percentage of literate citizens based on one type of indirect measure (i.e. self-report) while other report literacy levels using school records (some based on over 4 years of schooling and others on 5 or 8 years). Fourth, UN agencies do not have the same "data points" for all countries.

⁵ The index of dissimilarity is an inequality statistic whose value must be between 0 (no segregation) and 1 (complete segregation) although in practice national values are found to range from about .35 to .75.

⁶ Population-based surveys from around the world show that anywhere between 10 to 69 percent of women report being hit or otherwise physically harmed by an intimate male partner at some time in their lives (WHO 2002). Many, including pregnant women and young girls, are subject to severe, sustained or repeated attacks. See Council on Scientific Affairs, American Medical Association, Violence against women: relevance for medical practitioners, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1992, 267(23).

⁷ Our methodology has a few differences. First, we do not assume that a country that has achieved the target in 2000 will also achieve the target in 2005 or 2015. We also use slightly different terminology: the U.N. uses "achieved, on track, lagging, far behind, and slipping back" whereas our categories are: achieved, on track, falling behind, and off track. This categorization follows the recommendations of Jeff Sachs to MDG Task Forces. Third, we do not assume that countries that have values between .9 -.99 in 2000 are on track because their rate of change in the 1990 decade may not allow them to be on track in 2005 or 2015.

⁸ A second problem with linear predictions for gross enrolment and completion rates is that any increases over 100 signal a problem rather an achievement because it means that students (boys or girls) are repeating grades.

⁹ The following formulas were used for primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment to predict values in 2005 and 2015.

For 2005: $\{[(\text{Value in 1996} - \text{value in 1990})/6] \times 9\} + \text{value in 1996}$

For 2015: $\{[(\text{Value in 1996} - \text{value in 1990})/6] \times 19\} + \text{value in 1996}$

The year 1996 was used instead of 2000 because UNESCO changed the definition of primary and secondary education in 1998, which makes the years 1998 through 2000 incompatible with the years 1990-1996. Additionally, data collection problems in 1997 make that year's data unreliable. To project primary, secondary and tertiary completion rates to 2005, and literacy, primary, secondary and tertiary completion rates to 2015, the following formulas were used:

For 2005: $\{[(\text{Value in 2000} - \text{value in 1990})/10] \times 5\} + \text{value in 2000}$

For 2015: $\{[(\text{Value in 2000} - \text{value in 1990})/10] \times 15\} + \text{value in 2000}$

¹⁰ See explanation in footnote 9 for why predictions are based on data from 1990-96.

¹¹ These countries are: Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Turkmenistan, Australia, Indonesia, Lao, Vietnam, Barbados, Cuba, Guyana, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago, and Canada.

¹² The countries which saw declines included Armenia, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Finland, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Russia, Seychelles, Spain, Yugoslavia, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

¹³ Cluster analysis is a multivariate statistical method that is used to create typologies or classifications. It consists of a wide variety of procedures to empirically form groups of highly similar entities (Aldenderfer and Blashfield 1984). Because it uses a data set containing information about a sample of entities and attempts to reorganize these entities into relatively homogenous groups, it is an appropriate tool for this analysis.

¹⁴ We chose women's secondary education rates as opposed to primary rates because they are more indicative of a country's progress toward building women's capability. There is also more variance in country performance on this indicator. We used the female gross enrolment rate instead of the ratio of female to male gross enrolment rates because, as mentioned above, ratios can mask low enrolment rates. The measure of opportunity, female to male labor force participation rates, was chosen over the female share of non-agricultural employment because it is available for a larger number of countries. Although we would have liked to have other measures of women's agency, such as prevalence of violence against women, we were limited to the female share of seats in national parliaments because it is the only available indicator for a large number of countries. While more recent data are available, we used data from 1999 in the cluster analysis because there were more country observations in that year and because it corresponds to the years of the other indicators.

¹⁵ In one cluster run, we substituted the female to male gross secondary enrolment ratio for the female gross secondary enrolment rate in order to capture the discrepancy in female to male enrolment rates. Most clusters remained the same. There was one exception. A large cluster was formed that contained countries where the ratio of female to male gross secondary enrolment was high but the female gross secondary enrolment rate varied from low to high. Using the ratios of the rates thus misrepresents female capability for these countries.

¹⁶ In some microcredit schemes, women do not control the use of the loan; see Goetz and Sengupta 1996.

¹⁷ Informal employment is comprised of both self-employment in informal enterprises (i.e., small and/or unregistered) and wage employment in informal jobs (i.e., without secure contracts, worker benefits, or social protection). In all developing regions, self-employment comprises a greater share of informal non-agricultural employment than wage employment: specifically, self-employment represents 70 per cent of informal employment in sub-Saharan Africa, 62 per cent in North Africa, 60 per cent in Latin America, and 59 per cent in Asia (WIEGO 2002).

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