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Hope in Hard Times[1]: Women's Empowerment and Human Development

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[1] The title is taken from that of a conference at the University of Connecticut. I would like to thank Barret Katuna and Lwendo Moonzwe for their research assistance.

Abstract

This paper addresses the conceptual and methodological issues related to women's empowerment, the trends in women's empowerment over the last 20 years in key areas such as education, health, economic and political participation, and finally the best practices of state and non-state actors in empowering women. Following a brief critique of human development, it begins with a discussion of the growing conceptual consensus around empowerment, i.e., empowerment being control over resources, women's agency, a process and outcomes, to the methodological issues involved in its measurement, specifically focusing on the Gender Empowerment Measure and arguing that minimally the measure needs to move away from its urban, elite, and formal employment bias. The trends in women's empowerment over the past 20 years show that while there have been gains in primary and secondary education, in political representation at the national level, and in waged labor, and a decline in fertility and maternal mortality, violence against women and HIV/AIDS continue to be endemic and these trends vary across regions and within countries urban and rural poor, ethnic minorities, and older and disabled women fare worse on all indicators with the current economic crisis reversing many gains. Furthermore, a decrease in measures of gender gap do not translate into gender equality and positive trends are often accompanied by negative trends resulting from unintended consequences of development. Finally, it highlights some government best practices such as quotas, cash transfer programs, gender budgeting, and community based micro enterprises, some movement practices, i.e., local women run community based programs to combat violence and HIV/AIDS and transnational exchanges, unions campaigns such as Decent Work for Women and corporate practices such as gender equality seals and corporate social responsibility.

Keywords: gender, women's empowerment, human development

JEL classification: Y8

Introduction

"Human development is about putting people at the centre of development. It is about people realizing their potential, increasing their choices and enjoying the freedom to lead lives they value" (http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2009/). First articulated in 1990 by UNDP, human development was seen as an inspiring start to what practitioners, academics, and policy makers hoped would be a challenge to the dominant perspective of development as economic growth. Coming on the heels of the decade of structural adjustment programs, which most development analysts agree had resulted in increasing inequalities around the world particularly between women and men, it was seen as a sign of change in development thinking.

For women's empowerment, the 1990s were an important time. The world conferences of the 1990s --human rights, population, and social development -- all provided opportunities to mobilize and build a consensus among many actors around women's empowerment. This was crystallized in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) which remains the most comprehensive document of the world's commitment to women's rights. The 1990s brought international attention to issues of sexual and reproductive rights, violence against women, and gender inequality. The changing political context at the international level, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and increasing democratization in Latin America and other regions, allowed women to organize locally and transnationally and to use national and international political

structures to highlight issues of gender inequality, and to get commitment from leaders everywhere to acknowledge and address inequality.

But the optimism of the 1990s was short lived as the first decade of the 21st century and the events of September 2001 marked a turning point. The "war on terror" and the increasing militarization and conflicts that followed, the resurgence of religious fundamentalisms in various parts of the world, and the continuing focus on market based strategies and the redefinition of the state's role in development, all posed challenges to progress in women's empowerment. Now, two decades after the articulation of "human development," many agree that it has not lived up to its potential. As one analyst notes:

> Despite its promise to put people at the centre of development in order to realize their choices and freedom, human development has been in many ways co-opted by the dominant mainstream that in the end put economic growth ahead of people's choices. Human development has been whittled down to competitive indexes and measurements of nations in the Human Development Index (HDI) and ultimately in the measurable goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Harcourt 2010:1).

Development and progress are contested terms and many today question the narrative of progress that links human development to modernity and economic growth (e.g., Escobar 2010, Harcourt 2010, Molyneux and Razavi 2006). Instead, inspired by indigenous movements in Latin America, some have articulated the narrative of *buen vivir* that is

based on community and individual well-being and rights, reinstating the commons, and working from cooperative rather than capitalist economic relations (e.g, Walsh 2010). Various versions of this alternative narrative are articulated by social movements in many parts of the world (e.g., Conway 2007, Pooniah and Fisher2003). Yet within the development establishment, although market fundamentalism has declined in the 1990s, the policies of poverty reduction, good governance, and social capital formulated by the World Bank and the United Nations' MDGs are still based on a paradigm of economic growth as engine of social change. This has led some scholars to argue that this is only a new moment in neo-liberal policies, not a new paradigm (Molyneux and Razavi 2006). This is unfortunate as the current financial crisis provides an opportunity and demands new thinking about human development and women's empowerment.

This frustration with "business as usual" was evident at the 54th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meetings in New York in March 2010, whose focus was the 15-year review of the BPA. The over 8000 activists and advocates from around the world were not in a celebratory mood as the current crisis has pushed back progress for most of the poor women in the world. Women at the CSW meeting demanded a renewed commitment from their governments and the UN agencies to implement the BPA and to express this by moving from "paper commitment" to allocating resources, ensuring implementation, and being accountable to women. Given this context of despair, it is important to examine trends in women's empowerment and to highlight possible ways forward. Towards this end, the current study approaches conceptual and measurement issues about women's empowerment, the progress made, the challenges that remain, and

finally outlines some practices and policies that have been successful in empowering women.

I. Women's Empowerment and Its Discontent

Although defined in feminist literature in the 1970s, empowerment became popular in the development field in the 1980s. Many feminists bemoan this popularization as they see a concept meant to enable women individually and collectively to transform unequal power relations and unjust structures and institutions, being reduced to an instrumental concept that focuses on individual rights (e.g., Batliwala 2007, Elliott 2008, Harcourt 2010, Parpart, Rai, and Staudt 2002, Bisnath and Elson 1999). As women noted at a parallel event at the 54th CSW meetings, empowerment has become "em-ment" (Harcourt 2010), a de-politicized notion of empowerment. In particular, feminists are wary of its use in neo-liberal policies and in mainstream development agencies as a way to mobilize women through self-help groups as better economic and social change agents, filling the vacuum left by the retreat of state services and the economic crisis. Empowerment thus becomes about mobilizing grassroots women, encouraging their participation and giving them voice in predetermined development strategies without giving them the power to challenge existing narratives of development and to articulate new alternatives (Elliot 2008). Given this domestication of the concept, feminists seek to rescue it and bring back the power imbedded in it, so women can collectively seek to transform themselves, their families, communities, state, and international institutions.

At the same time, feminists recognize the need to quantify empowerment through measurable indicators so it can be used to demand equality and make state and non-state actors accountable for gender-justice. Hence, as Malhotra et al. (2002) note, there is a great deal of consensus around the concept and its measurement.

Conceptual Consensus

Most current definitions of empowerment in the development literature draw upon Amartya Sen's articulation of "Development as Freedom" (1999) where development is about expanding people's choices. For example, Bennett (2002) defines empowerment as "the enhancement of assets and capabilities of diverse individuals and groups to engage, influence and hold accountable the institutions which affect them." Sen (1993) defines empowerment as "altering relations of power…which constrain women's options and autonomy and adversely affect health and well-being." For Batliwala (1994) empowerment is "how much influence people have over external actions that matter to their welfare." Kabeer (2001) defines it as "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them."

Hence, **control over resources** (physical, human, intellectual, financial, Kabeer 1994) **and ideology** (values, beliefs, and attitudes, Batliwala 1994) is one of the most important dimensions of most definitions. The second dimension shared by most definitions is **women's agency**, i.e., that women themselves have a right to make choices and should be involved in determining which choices make the most sense for them and their

families (e.g., Kabeer 1999). Third, since empowerment implies a move from being without power to having power, most definitions also imply that it is a **process** that involves change over time. Finally, empowerment is also understood as **outcome**, such as improvement in education, health, and economic and political participation. Very often, however, women's empowerment and gender equality are used interchangeably. While they are related, they are not the same. Gender equality is about women's status relative to men while women's empowerment is about women's ability – in an absolute sense - to exercise control, power, and choice over practical and strategic decisions (Grown 2008).

Despite this consensus, there are differences in emphasis. Those who draw upon Amartya Sen, highlight capabilities of individuals and the social constraints that prevent them from making the strategic choices that would enhance their freedom. Very often this results in policies and programs that focus on the individual level and emphasize entrepreneurship and self-reliance as opposed to collective efforts to transform power structures (Oxaal and Baden 1997). To avoid this slippage to the individual level, Jakimow and Kilby (2006) suggest thinking of empowering women, rather than women's empowerment, which recognizes both that women need to be active agents of change but also that for social transformation other actors are necessary beyond those who are disenfranchised and marginalized.

Feminists focus on the structural and collective nature of empowerment by conceptualizing empowerment as power within (or consicentization), power with others,

and power to transform unjust social structures and institutions (e.g. Rowland 1997). This recognizes that women have a right to determine their lives without making them responsible for their own empowerment. It therefore focuses on the collective as well as the structural nature of inequality.

Despite these differences, all analysts understand empowerment as a multidimensional and multilevel concept.

Measuring Empowerment

While there is consensus on defining empowerment, most measures have only quantified the dimensions of control over resources and outcomes. Women's agency and process remain difficult to measure. Review of the ways in which control over resources and outcomes have been measured follows, and then focus on the challenges that remain in measuring agency and process.

The most common indicators measure capabilities, education and health in particular, and control over economic and political resources and decision-making. Malhotra et al. (2002) suggest expanding empowerment to include six dimensions: economic, socio-cultural, family/interpersonal, legal, political, and psychological. Each of these dimensions is complex with various sub dimensions. For example, the economic dimension would include labor force participation, wage differential, and sex segregation among others. They also identify three levels for measuring empowerment, household,

community and broader areas. Charmes and Wieringa (2003) have defined a Women's Empowerment Matrix that consists of six dimensions -- physical, socio-cultural, religious, economic, political, legal – and six levels: individual, household, community, state, region, and global. Grown (2008) defines three domains of empowerment (adopted by the Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality): the capabilities domain, which evaluates knowledge and health factors through indicators of education, health, and nutrition; the access to resources and opportunities domain, which primarily refers to access to political decision making and economic assets; and the security domain, which considers violence and conflict matters.

There have been several challenges to measuring the dimensions and levels identified above: (1) There is a lack of gender disaggregated data for most dimensions and levels. While gathering statistics and building national capacity for data collection have been reiterated in most UN agencies' reports, much remains to be done. Hence, most measures are able to identify only aggregate or household level empowerment. Community, state, and regional level data exist for very few countries. (2) All analysts agree that empowerment is context specific. While the international declarations and conventions represent a universal framework for equality, empowerment varies within and across countries. Hence reconciling context specific indicators with a universal measure remains an issue. Some empirical studies have successfully addressed this. For example, Mason and Smith (2000) and Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001) used similar indicators with slight modification in wording in five countries in Asia, across 59 communities. But it is harder to do on a global level. (3) Measuring process is elusive.

Most quantitative measures are unable to capture this except as changes over time of proxy variables such as education or employment. The best measure would capture decision-making control in various dimensions over time. As Malhotra et al. (2002) note, process is also difficult to measure as behaviors change over time and what was once rare becomes normative. For example, the use of birth control by women in rural Bangladesh in the 1990s was considered empowering but now that more than half of all married women do so, it is normative. Moser (2007) indicates another issue with measuring process. The measurement cannot be just linear, as change happens over a long time and in unexpected ways. (4) Similarly agency is difficult to measure. It has been measured at the household level in terms of women's ability to make economic and social decisions. But since agency implies that the woman's own consciousness has been transformed, it would have to be measured based on women's own interpretation of what is important to them and what they perceive has changed about their own knowledge and perspective. This can mainly be achieved through ethnographic studies or surveys at local levels. Alternatively, Malhotra et al. (2002) suggest that at an individual level, it could be measured in terms of difference between individual behavior and community norm.

Because of these difficulties, most measures like the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) focus on a few indicators at the aggregate level and actually measure gender equality rather than empowerment per se.

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)

GEM is essentially a measure of three indicators: control over economic resources, measured by men and women's earned income; economic participation and decision making, measured by women and men's share of administrative, professional, managerial, and technical positions; and political participation and decision making, measured by male and female share of parliamentary seats.

As Klasen (2006) noted in the 10 year review of the GEM, it has not been influential in shaping gender-sensitive policies nor has it provided the advocacy community with an easily interpretable, internationally comparable, composite measure to use in their work. The limitations of GEM have been discussed at length in the 10-year review published in the special issue of the Journal of Human Development and Capabilities (2006). While the criticisms range from methodology of aggregation, to use of international versus national data, to choice of indicators (Cueva Beteta 2006), choice of indicators is of chief relevance to the current study.

The most common criticism of GEM is that it uses income levels as a measure of control over economic resources, making it difficult for low income countries to get a high score. Using income shares has been suggested by numerous analysts as a possible remedy (e.g., Klasen 2006, Pillarisette and McGillivray 2002). Pillarisette and McGillivray (2002) note its aggregate bias as it varies within countries, e.g., urban versus rural, and between countries as well as the dilemma between context specificity and universality as noted above. Aggregate data also do not measure agency, and access to economic resources does not imply control over those resources. Moreover, given the multilevel nature of

empowerment and the reality that the household is often the site of disempowerment for women, many critics note the need for including indicators at the household level to measure empowerment. Another common problem is the lack of data, which makes it a measure of primarily high-income countries. Data are missing for 60% of medium income countries and 90% of low-income countries (Cueva Beteta 2006).

Beyond these general criticisms, the more specific criticisms deal with the urban, elite, bias of the three indicators. The economic component does not include agricultural or informal work (in which most women around the world labor), or work in the lower levels of the formal economy, nor does it measure the unpaid labor of care work. To address these limitations, Cueva Beteta (2006) suggests using a sex-specific unemployment rate, while Moser (2007) suggests including lower levels of the employment hierarchy. Given the reality of a majority of the women in developing countries, including gender gaps in agriculture and informal economy, as well as a measure of sex segregation in the economy is important, although this might be difficult to measure or calculate given the lack of data. Folbre (2006) suggests incorporating indicators of gender gaps in disposable time and care responsibilities. As a radical alternative, she suggests a Gender Care Empowerment Index which would be the mirror of GEM and measure men's participation in "feminine" domains of care rather than women's participation in "masculine" activities as measured by the GEM. In the political component, critics note that participation rates in national parliament do not reflect the realities at the local political level nor is it the most pertinent measure of women's engagement in decision-making. Hence, at a minimum, it should include women's share

in local political institutions, the strength of local women's movements, and women's share in other civil society organizations (e.g., Cueva Beteta 2006, Moser 2007).

There have been three responses to the critiques of GEM: (1) to fix the index by elaborating the current indicators, as noted above; (2) to devise new indices, the most important being the Social Watch's Gender Equity Index, the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap, and the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI); (3) to move away from a composite index and instead focus on a series of indicators (Morrison, Sabarwal, and Sjoblom 2008). Malhotra et al. (2002) suggest a cluster of aggregate measures around their six domains. For example, for the economic domain, indicators would include labor force participation, wage differentials, sex segregation of the market, participation in agriculture and in the informal economy. Then a triangulation of these domains would give a fuller sense of gender equality.

In addition to the above responses, analysts have also proposed a measure of Gender Empowerment Enabling Environment (Cueva Beteta 2006, Klasen 2006) that would measure the legal (i.e., gender equal laws, ratification of CEDAW and its optional protocol and the BFA, policy machinery and its implementation), socio-cultural (norms, attitudes, practices around gender roles), and support factors (evident in the presence of movements and NGOs that support gender equality) to gauge a society's commitment to gender equality.

Such a composite gender equality support index could be modeled on the Cingranelli Richards Human Rights Index which gives a human rights score to each country based on the government's respect for 15 internationally recognized human rights, such as torture, women's rights, and workers rights (http://ciri.binghamton.edu/). The CIRI data set also has separate indices for women's economic, political, and social rights. Women's economic rights include 10 rights from equal pay, to equality in hiring, to non-discrimination. A score of 0 indicates that women had no economic rights, a score of 1 indicates women have some rights but they were not effectively enforced. A score of 2 indicates that women have some rights and the government enforced them but still allowed some level of discrimination. A score of 3 suggests that women had most of the 10 rights and the government fully and vigorously enforced those rights. Women's political and social rights are similarly composed of rights that are scored from 0-3. The data set contains information for 195 countries from 1981-2007. It contains disaggregated data on specific human rights practices in addition to the aggregated data.

Others have argued for a measure of female deprivation or vulnerability, which would include economic, physical, and decision-making vulnerability at the household level (e.g., Grown 2008, Klasen 2006, Parpart, Rai, Staudt 2002, Malhotra et al. 2002).

What this discussion demonstrates is that it is difficult to measure empowerment with a single composite index. However, practitioners and activists have voiced the need for a composite index that could be used effectively in their work of gender-justice. So

minimally, if GEM could be modified to address the elite, urban bias of its indicators, it could better serve this community.

But even with its limitations, GEM indicators can provide a starting point to analyze the trends in women's empowerment. In addition to those indicators, given women's disproportionate involvement in the informal and care economy and continuing vulnerability to violence in the home and communities, these dimensions are utilized to map out the trends in women's empowerment in the next section.

II. Trends in Women's Empowerment

Education

Even before the capabilities approach, education had been regarded as a key to women's empowerment for its ability to raise awareness and open possibilities as well as its instrumental link to economic growth and children's health. Hence universal primary education has been a goal in many developing countries for many years. With the articulation of the MDGs there has been increased focus on meeting this challenge.

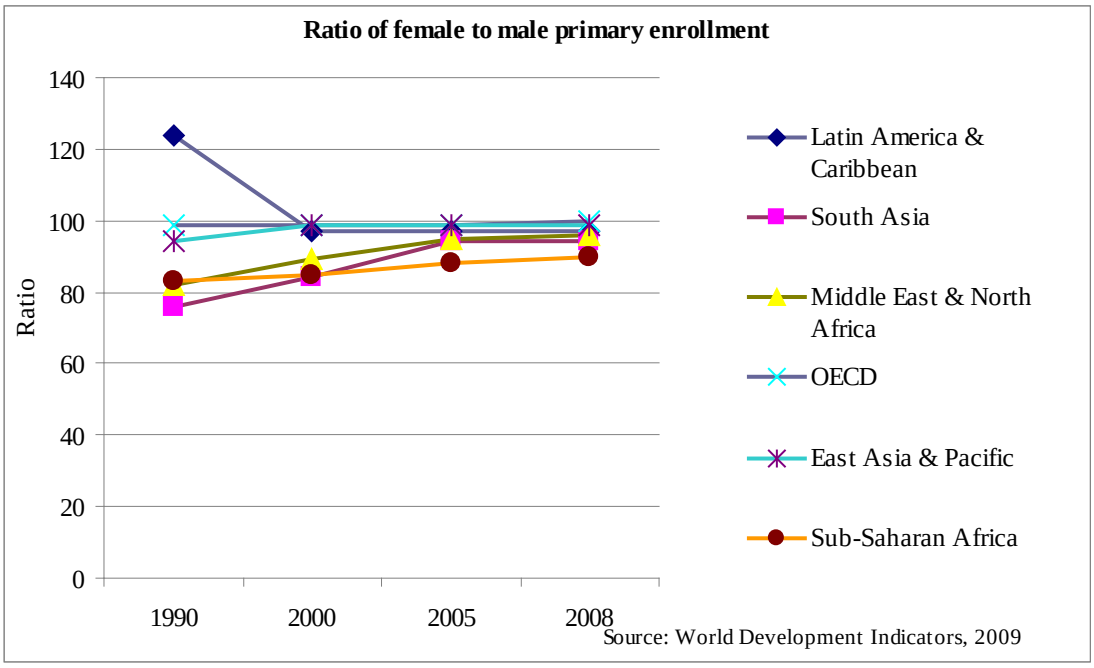

Figure 1

As figure 1 shows from 1990-2008 the ratio of female to male primary enrollment has increased in all regions, with the exception of Latin America where it declined. The most gain has been in developing countries where the enrollment ratios were lower to begin with, and it has stayed the same in developed countries. Only 53 of 171 countries reached gender parity with over 100 countries lagging behind (MDG Report 2009).

Enrollment rates, however, do not tell us whether girls persist in school and attain literacy. Hence the MDG3 task force added completion rate and literacy rates among 15-24 year olds as better indicators (Morrison et al. 2008). As Figure 2 below shows, primary school completion rates have also improved in all regions including sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia with Latin America and the Caribbean reaching slightly higher

rates than Europe and Central Asia. South Asia and Latin America had the most dramatic gains while in sub-Saharan Africa the gains were less so.

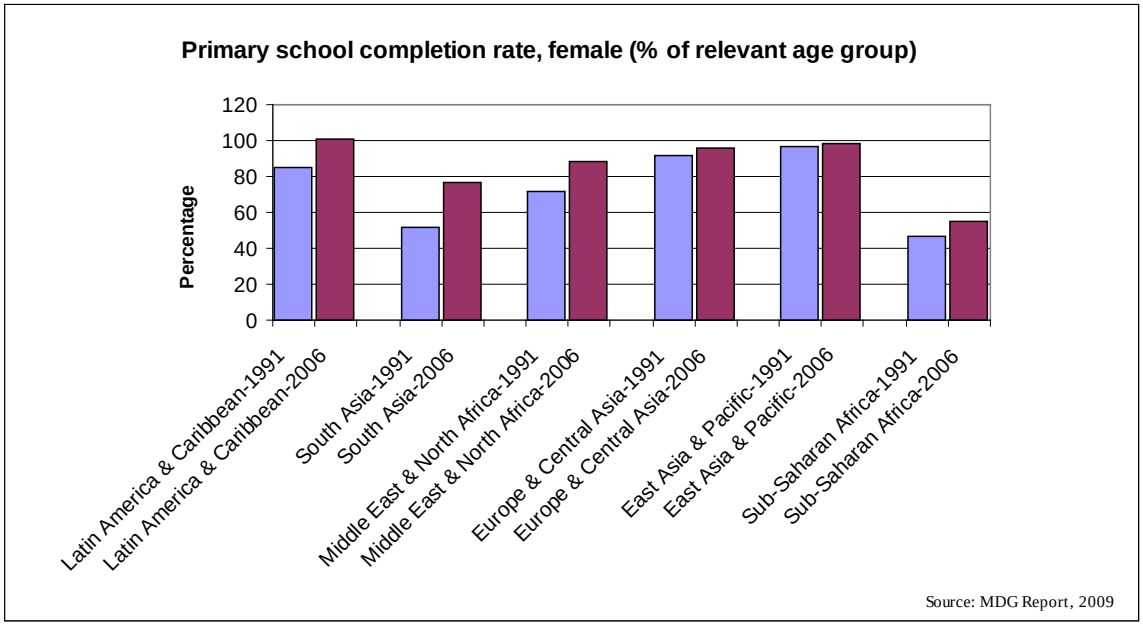

Figure 2

In a study comparing enrollment to completion rate, not all high enrollment countries have high completion rates. Malawi, Mauritania, Oman and Rwanda had high enrollment but low completion while countries such as Cape Verde, Nicaragua, Swaziland, and Trinidad and Tobago have low enrollment but high completion (Morrison et al. 2008). Most children drop out of school due to lost opportunity cost to the family, access to and safety in schools, particularly rural areas, and the discriminatory policies and behaviors of teachers and family members. The high completion rates in Latin America reflect the investment made by the states through cash transfer programs such as *Bolsa/Escala Familia* in Brazil, *Oportunidades* in Mexico, and *Solidario* in Chile (e,g., Barrientos

2010). Thus, behavior and normative change can be initiated by cash transfers provided they are adequate and sustained.

The picture for secondary school enrollment, Figure 3 below, is similar where progress has been made in all regions between 1990 and 2008. The most remarkable gains have been in Latin America where there are more girls than boys in secondary schools. This reverse gender gap in secondary education is evident in Latin America and East Asia and Pacific, perhaps a reflection of more employment opportunities for adolescent boys than girls. Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa have made progress but the gaps are still large and progress towards parity is modest. Thus, policies have to support education beyond the primary levels to ensure gender parity beyond primary levels.

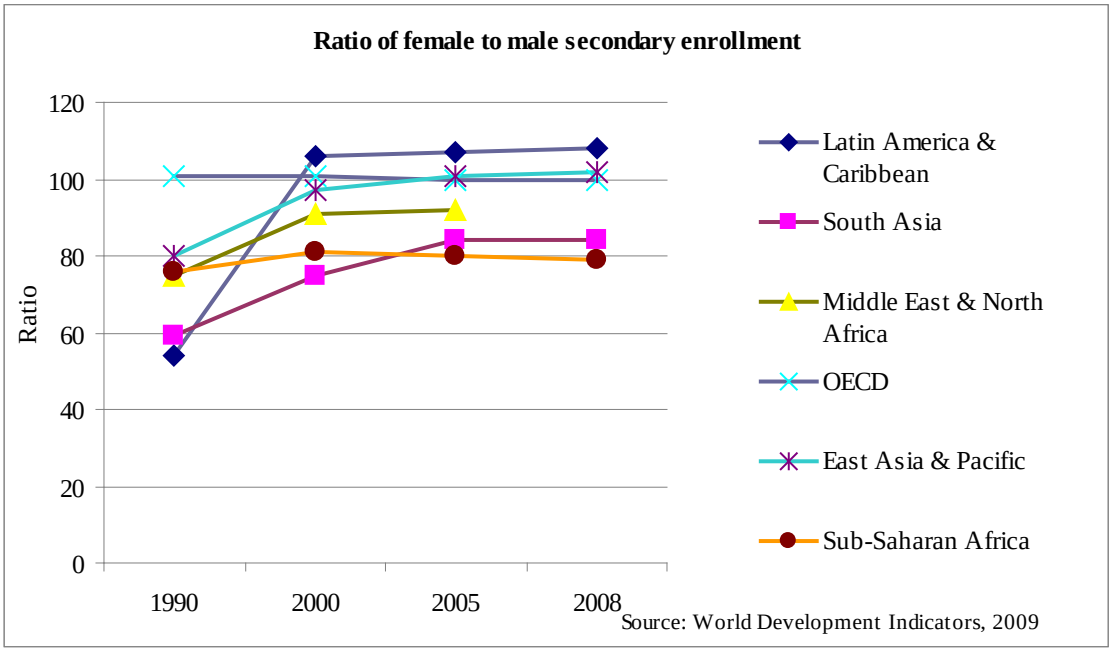

Figure 3

Despite the continuing disparities, the gains in primary and secondary school enrollment have improved literacy rates for male and female between the ages of 15-24 as evident in Figure 4 below.

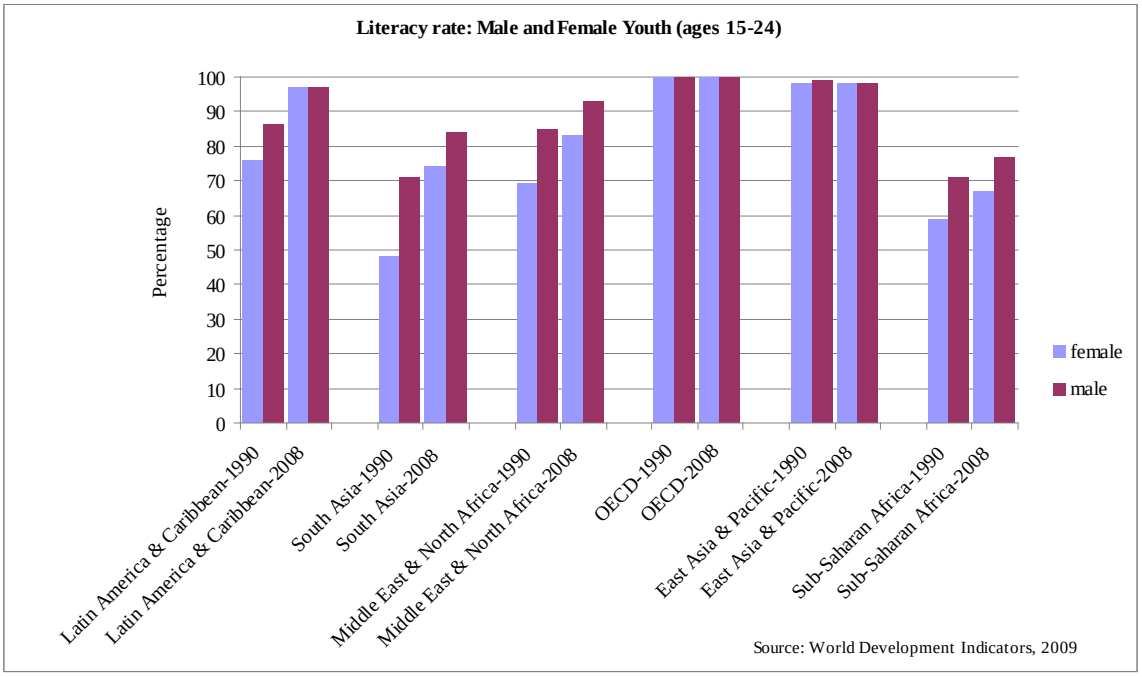

Figure 4

The literacy rate for girls 15-24 between 1990-2008 increased in all regions of the world. There is no gap in literacy in Latin America and Caribbean, OECD countries, and East Asia and Pacific. While gains were made in South Asia, Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Sahara Africa, there is still a large gap of 10% between male and female literary and in sub-Saharan Africa the overall literacy rate is also low. This reflects low completion of secondary education as well as poor education quality.

While the above data measure literacy for 15-24 year olds, illiteracy continues to be a problem for adult women, especially poor, older, rural, and ethnic minorities. Two thirds of the 776 million adults who are illiterate worldwide are women and this number has not changed in 20 years (UNESCO 2010). Hence, governments need to develop informal education policies to reach this group of women.

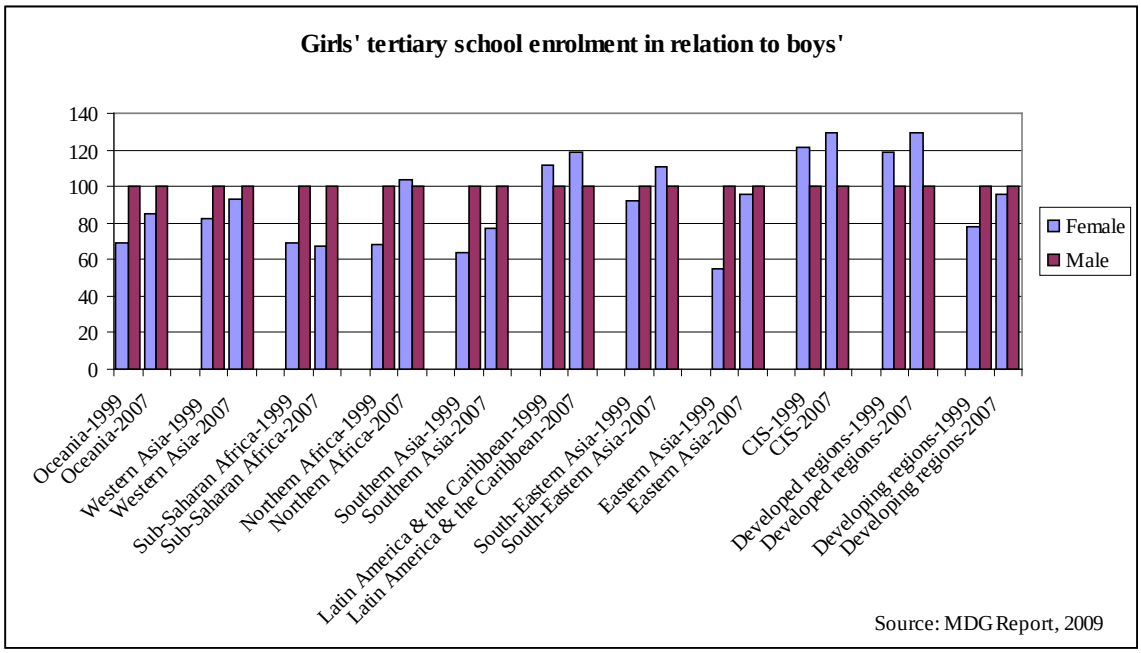

Figure 5

In the tertiary education sector, Figure 5 above, as well there were increases in enrolment in developed and developing regions and in the developed world, CIS, and Latin America females have overtaken boys in enrollment. Even in the developing world, in some countries in Asia there are more females than males. While South Asia does better than Sub-Saharan Africa in tertiary education, it lags behind Sub-Saharan Africa in primary

education. But the increase in South Asia and Oceania hide the still low enrollments of girls to boys, 77/100 and 85/100 respectively.

Overall, 60% of countries have achieved gender parity in primary school, 30% in secondary school, and only 6% in tertiary education. Within countries, rural and urban poor girls and those with disabilities have more difficulties in accessing education at all levels. A study of primary school attendance in 108 developing countries by location of residence and household wealth showed that gender parity could be seen in urban areas and among the richest 40 percent of households. In contrast, girls from rural and poorest households are more likely to be excluded from primary education. This becomes even more so at the secondary level (MDG Report 2009). Therefore, there is need for policies to specifically target these groups.

Given the continuing disparity at the secondary and tertiary levels, it is important to focus policies at these levels, in part by defining basic education as education upto the secondary level or age 16 (Grown 2010). In addition, there should be more informal education and vocational programs for girls who have dropped out and will not seek further education (Grown 2010).

The current global economic crisis, the HIV/AIDS crisis, as well as conflict situations have affected girls education through their increased burden of unpaid care work, the lack of funding by donors, and state cutbacks (UNESCO 2010). Negative attitudes and practices towards girls' education, valuing sons over daughters, early marriage

(particularly in South Asia) and pregnancies continue to lead to high drop-out rates. Lack of safety on the way to school remains a disincentive as well (CSW 2009).

Health

Women generally live longer than men but in parts of Asia, particularly China and India due to gender-based discrimination female life expectancy is lower that for males (WHO 2009). At the global level, life expectancy has improved slightly but in Latin America and East and Central Asia it is now above 70 yrs, Figure 6 below. South Asia and Middle East and North Africa have made the most gains, while sub-Saharan Africa lags behind at mid-50s. The HIV/AIDS crisis is among the reasons for this situation.

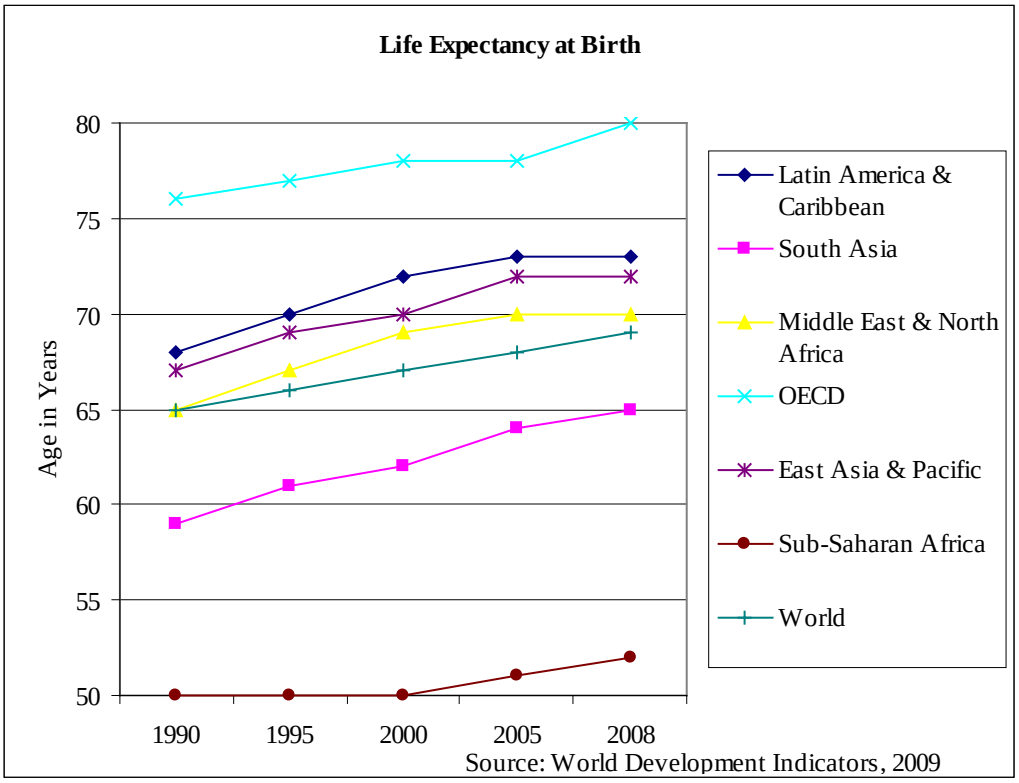

Figure 6

While life expectancy has improved in most regions of the world, the maternal mortality rate, in Figure 7 below, a good correlation of women's health, continues to be a problem in many regions. Grown (2010) notes that the least progress has been made in preventing maternal mortality, even though it is easy to do, primarily due to lack of health care. While gains have been made, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa continue to have very high mortality rates. Lack of access to primary care, births without attending midwives, and poor nutrition are among the reasons for this high mortality in addition to the HIV/AIDS crisis which has affected all health outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa and will to a greater degree in South Asia as its rates of infections increase.

Policies that support training of community level midwives have been effective in both South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. But the most important policies need to focus on building basic health care infrastructure in poor urban and rural areas.

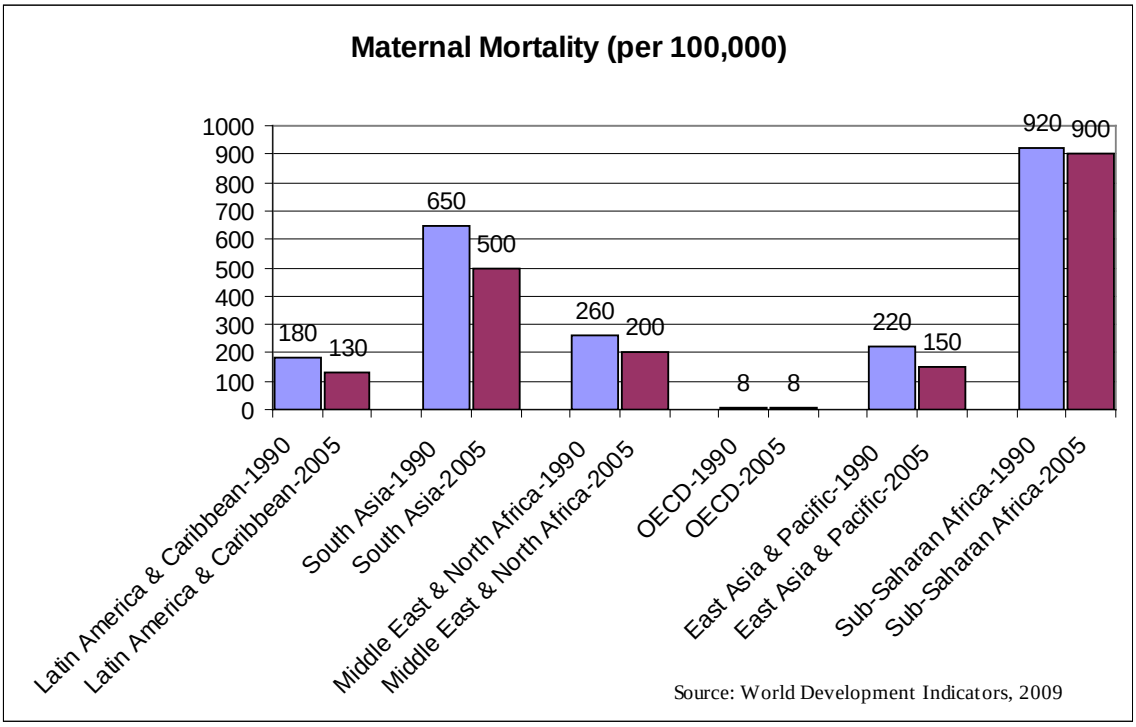

Figure 7

Another indicator of women's health is adolescent fertility. This is important as teenage pregnancies carry higher risk for both mother and infant, teen mothers are more likely to drop out of school, and more likely to live in poverty. This rate has declined for women between the ages of 15 and 19, Figure 8 below, everywhere though it continues to be high in Sub-Saharan Africa.

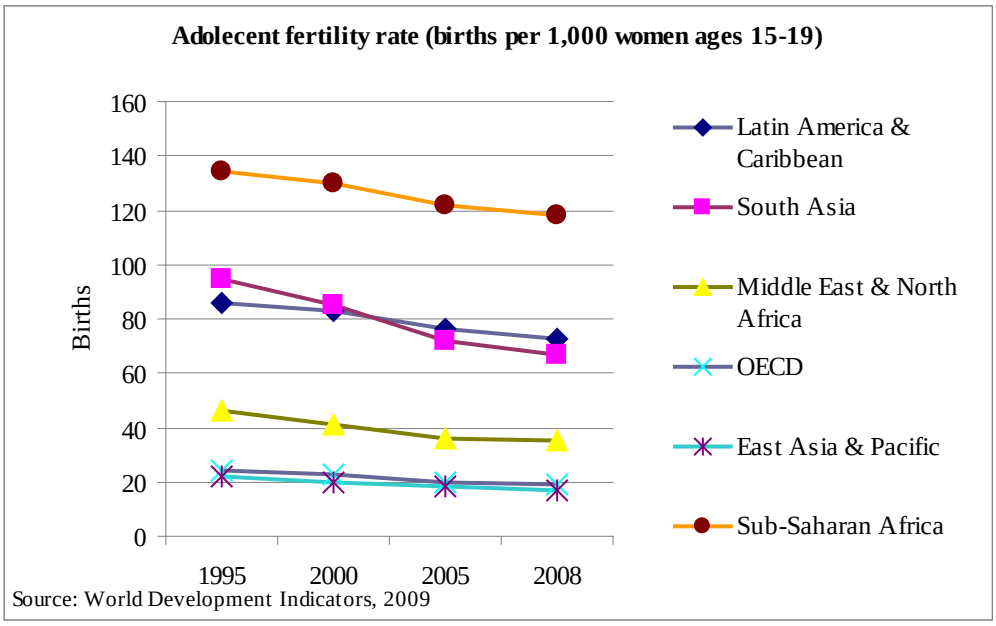

Figure 8

A country breakdown of these data show that some countries in Africa like Burkina Faso and Ghana had reduced their adolescent fertility rates by 10% each while Columbia, Peru, Dominican Republic, Madagascar, Zimbabwe showed a reverse trend of increasing rates (Morrison et al. 2008). In South Asia, high adolescent fertility takes place within marriage, hence an important policy consideration is raising the age of marriage (Grown 2010). The Coalition for Adolescent Girls recommends national laws that prevent child marriage and the need to mobilize communities to seek alternatives to early marriage (Grown 2010). Since adolescents also have a high HIV infection rate, the Coalition also recommends focusing on this population in terms of sex education as well as reproductive services and working with men and boys to change their behavior. Lack of knowledge and access to modern contraception and ability to influence male partners are among factors that influence the use of contraception, seen in figure 9 below.

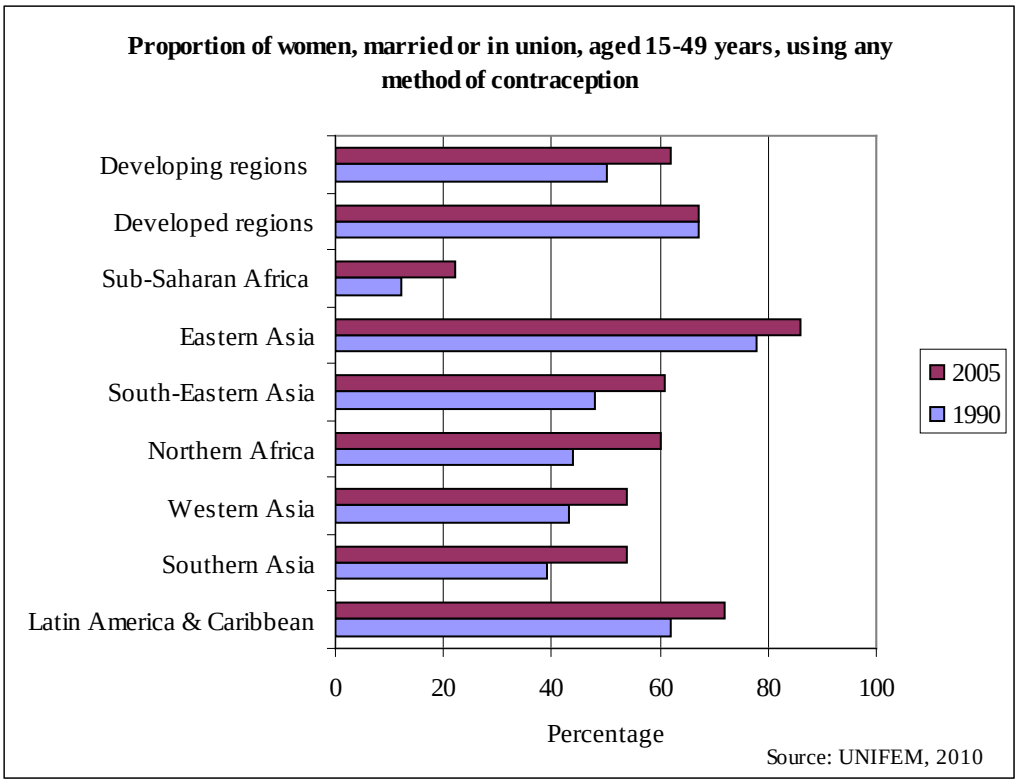

Figure 9

Overall, contraception use in the developing regions is close to that in the developed region. Though there are great variations regionally with East Asia leading the way and Southern and Western Asia doing better than sub-Saharan Africa. This is especially troubling as condom use could also protect from HIV/AIDS infections.

While the indicators show an uneven pattern of health outcomes for women in different parts of the world, what still affects women's health is their lack of autonomy to make health decisions. As figure 10 below shows in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia over 50% of married women have no say in their health care. So in terms of women's empowerment, this is a more telling statistic, which might influence the other outcomes

discussed above. Among the reasons for this are pervasive patriarchal practices that shape gender roles and attitudes that are slow to change even as other behaviors change more quickly. In South Asia and China, where sons are valued over daughters, this lack of autonomy is particularly evident in the increase in sex-selective abortions, often against women's wishes. Women's movements in India have been successful in getting legislation against such abortions and have also focused on public awareness campaigns that promote the value of daughters.

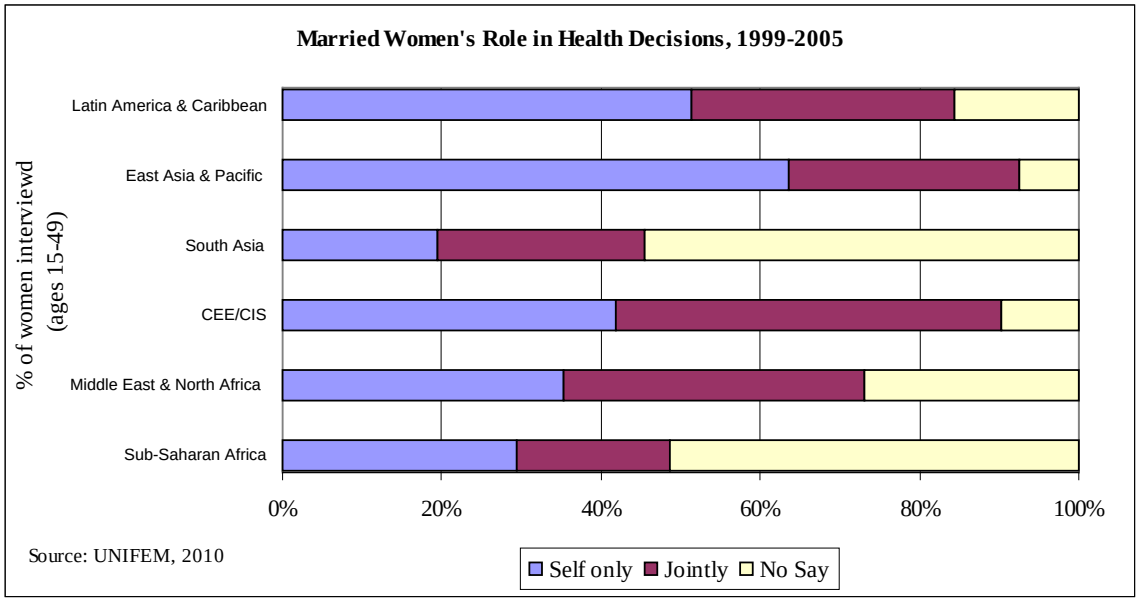

Figure 10

In addition to lack of autonomy in making choices regarding one's health care, violence against women remains a key detriment to women's well-being worldwide. Between 15% -71% of women in regions around the world experience physical or sexual violence, usually by an intimate partner and some studies show that 1 in 5 girls experiences sexual abuse before age 15

(http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/women_health/en/index2.html). While there are data for specific countries and regions, there are no systematic data on a global scale. In a 10-country study conducted by the WHO in 2005 in several provinces and cities (see figure 11 below), the prevalence of physical and sexual violence varied widely across countries. Physical violence ranged from a low of 13% in Japan to a high of 61% in Peru. Japan also had the lowest level of sexual violence (6%), with the highest in Ethiopia (58%). In general sexual violence was less frequent than physical violence except in provincial Bangladesh, Peru, and Ethiopia and urban Thailand. Where both cities and provinces were measured, violence was consistently higher in the provinces, which had more rural populations. The most common form of violence was being slapped (WHO 2005).

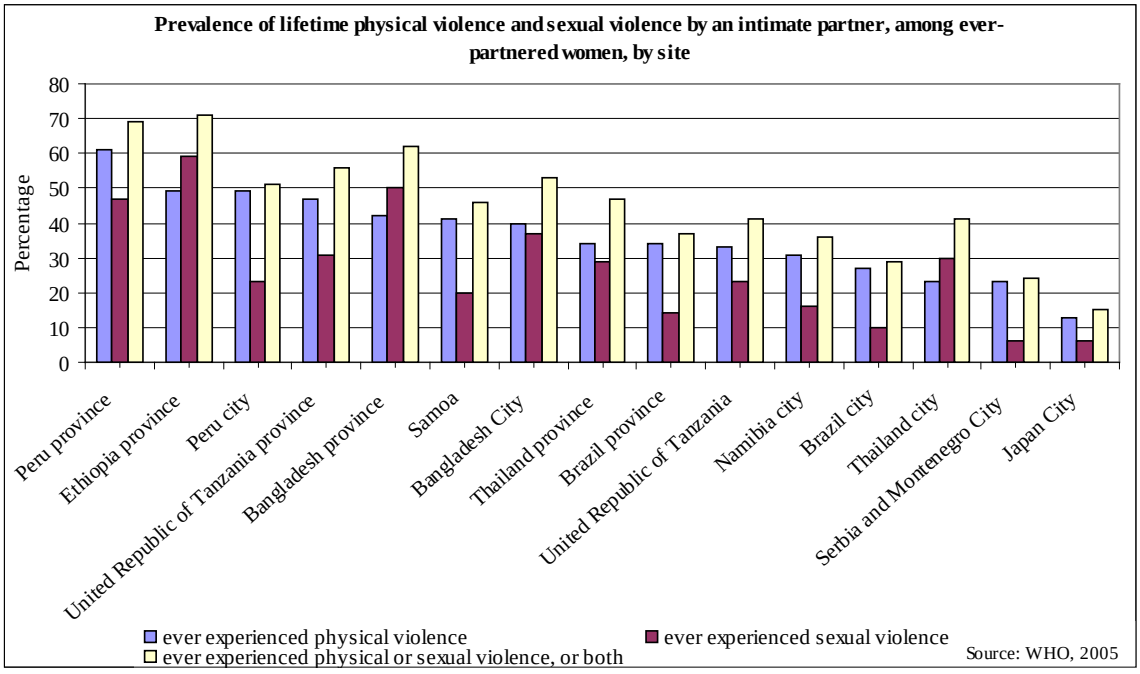

Figure 11

While three quarters of the women in most sites expressed that violence against women was never justified, only a quarter in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru, and Samoa thought it was unacceptable. Acceptance of wife-beating was higher among women who had been abused than those who were not. The factors associated with violence were both the level of education and autonomy of the woman, partner's education, employment, as well as the social expectations of gender roles, male-male violence, and extended family intervention in domestic violence.

Richards, Haglund, and Kuppers (2009) have developed a multidimensional measure of violence against women based on four socio-political dimensions: level of societal discrimination (formal and informal cultural or customary practices that discriminate against women), outcomes (the extent of occurrences of violence against women), legal guarantees (the extent to which country legally prohibits violence against women), and enforcement of legal guarantees, for private and public violence against women. Each of the four dimensions, except legal guarantees, is measured on a scale of 0-2 with 0 being high discrimination, high outcome, and low enforcement and 2 being low discrimination and outcome and high enforcement. Legal guarantees is measured on a 0-3 scale with 0 being non-existent to 3 being fully provided for. They have coded data on 196 countries for each of these dimensions based on US State Department Reports on Human Rights. For 2007/2008 they found that 77% of the countries had frequent or widespread violence, and slightly less than half had no or rare enforcement of legal guarantees, and only Oceania and Western Europe had better than the worst level of societal discrimination. Of those countries with high level of discrimination, 85% had widespread violence.

Except for rape, there is a great deal of variation regarding legal guarantees: most countries either had specific protection or legal equivalent protection for rape, trafficking, and domestic violence but not for sexual harassment and marital rape. So while domestic violence has become increasingly recognized, marital rape and sexual harassment have not. While social, political, and economic factors were all found to be related, the country's respect for women's economic rights and average income level were the strongest correlates of low violence against women. Muslim majority-countries also had higher levels of societal discrimination and violence.

As both the WHO and the Richards et al. studies show the continuing challenges to measuring violence remain the lack of systematic data. In response, in 2008 the Secretary-General launched a global campaign "Unite to End Violence Against Women" and established a database on violence against women, a "one-stop" site for information on how states are preventing violence against women and improving data collection and analysis (CSW Report 2009). By 2009, more than 80 members had contributed information. But because this database relies on states' responses to questionnaires, there is a variance in what information is provided and what is excluded. On March 4, 2010 UNIFEM launched a new Virtual Knowledge Network that will be a place for states, advocates, and others to see best practices to eradicate violence against women as well as getting information about monitoring and measuring violence against women. While laws and enforcement of laws against violence against women are an important first step, policies that support women's economic rights, and community level awareness

programs that include men and boys in changing the culture of violence are key to stopping violence against women.

Another disturbing trend in terms of women's health is the increase in HIV/AIDS rates. Women and girls account for 50% of HIV/AIDS cases worldwide, or 15.5 million. Yet there is a persistent gap in treatment for women and it is now a leading cause of women's ill health and death (UNPF 2005); this in spite of a recent survey of 158 countries, conducted by WHO, UNICEF and UNAIDS, which found that more women have access to HIV testing and counseling than men (WHO 2009a). The same survey also found that 21% of pregnant women received HIV testing in 2008 and 45% of HIV positive pregnant women received antiretroviral treatment for the prevention of mother to child transmissions, and more adult women received antiretroviral treatment than men in middle and low income countries.

There is a direct correlation between women's health and economic empowerment. At all stages women and girls in developed countries fare better than women and girls in poorer countries, though there is variation within countries based on urban/rural location as well as class and minority status. Access to education, household wealth, and place of residence are important factors in women's and girls' health outcomes in developing and developed countries. Women and girls in wealthier households have lower mortality and higher use of health care services than those living in poorer households (WHO 2009:2). In most cases, lack of health education and access to affordable health care continue to prevent women from enjoying good health.

Gains in women's health have been uneven and gaps continue to exist in accessing health care, which reflect class, ethnic, and rural/urban inequalities among others. Lack of infrastructure, capacity building, and financing continue to be issues as does societal discrimination (CSW 2009). Hence, the 2008 WHO report focuses on primary health care as a means to address inequalities in access.

Economic Participation

Women's economic participation is marked by three trends in the global economy: increasing feminization of the labor force, increased participation in the informal or vulnerable economy, and migrating to work in the service industry in the developed world. Women's increasing economic participation is one of the most visible trends of the global economy. As figure 12 below indicates, between 1980 and 2007, the increase was highest in Latin America followed by North Africa. In South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, the increases were more modest and in Europe and Central Asia there was a decline, primarily in the CIS countries. But despite this increase, the gender gap in labor force participation remains large, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

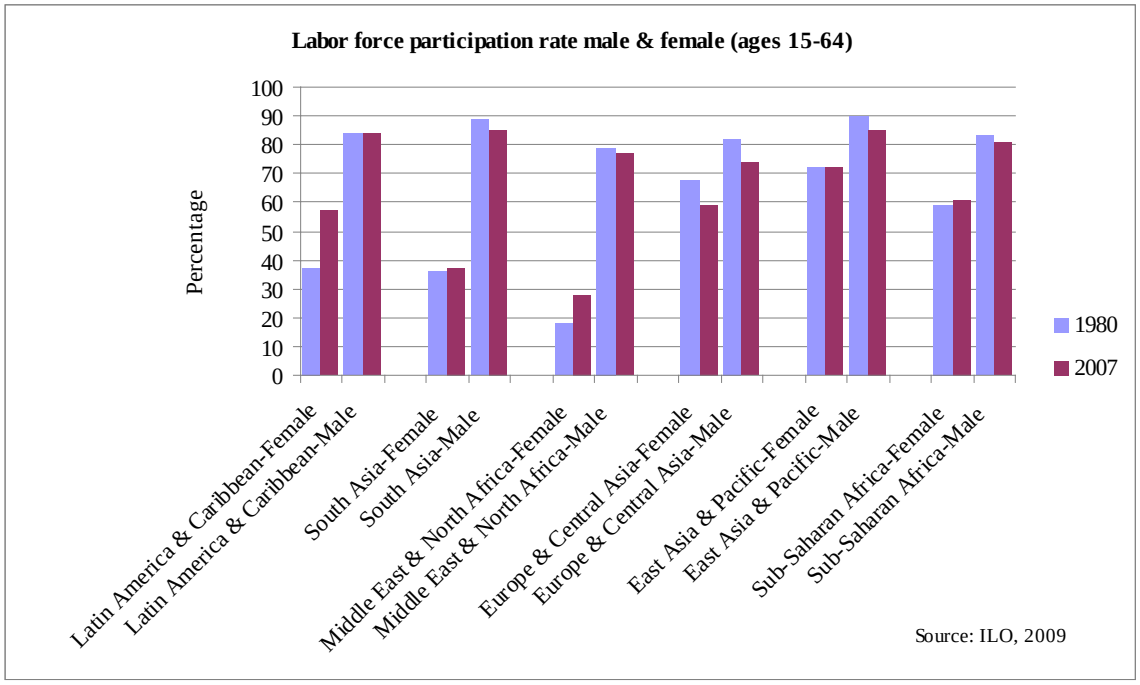

Figure 12

Furthermore, as we examine this economic activity more closely (Figure 13 below), we see a troubling pattern of segregation. In the developed world, over 80% of women are employed in the services industry compared to 60% of men, while in Latin America just under 80% are in the services industry compared to 45% of men in similar industry. Only in North Africa and the Middle East do we not see a gender gap in services, where 60% of both men and women are employed in the service industry. While service includes highly paid professional work as well, most of the women in these regions are not in the highly paid sector of the service industry. In South Asia, more than 60% are employed in agriculture compared to 40% of men. Sub-Saharan Africa has a very small gender gap in agriculture, which employs over 60% of both men and women. East Asia and the Pacific have the least sex-segregated workforce.

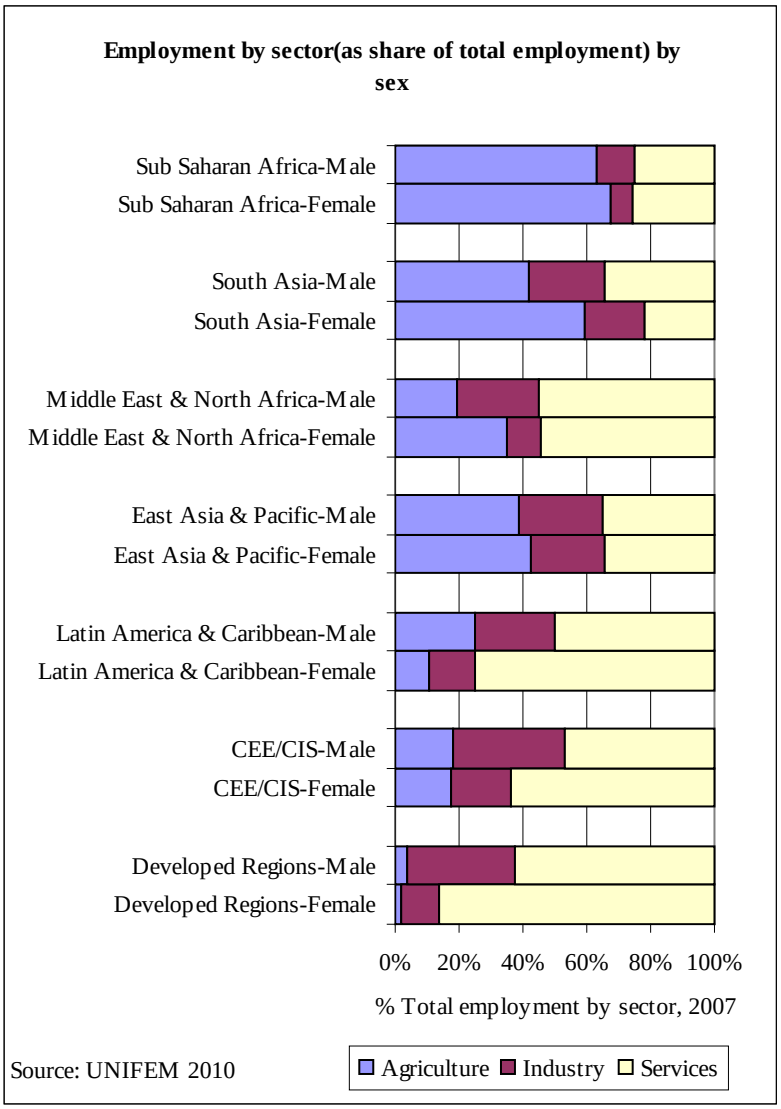

Figure 13

A very small percentage of women are employed in industry, ranging from 7 to 23% in all regions compared to 12 to 34% for men. This was reiterated by The World Economic Forum's Corporate Gender Gap report released on March 8, 2010 which was based on interviewing 600 leaders across 16 industries in 20 countries. Very few companies have gender equity in employment and women still tend to be concentrated in entry and mid level positions

(http://www.weforum.org/en/media/Latest%20News%20Releases/PR_CorpGenderGap). Many women employed in manufacturing have lost their jobs in the current crisis. ILO expects that women's unemployment rates will be higher than men's and up to 22 million will join the ranks of the poor in 2010 (ILO 2009). The same ILO report also notes that the impact on women's employment will be longer than men's. This gender segregated work force results in a wage gap, which ranges from 3 to 51% with an average of 17% (ITUC 2009). In an analysis of hourly wage differentials between men and women by sector, Morrison et al. (2008) found that women's hourly wages compared to men are the highest in the tertiary sector and lowest in the manufacturing sector. Within sectors, there is little interregional variation and overall in Latin America and the Caribbean there has been a decline in the wage gap. State policies and legislations that address wage gaps and occupational segregation are important to women's access to better work. Since the current crisis will mean that women's unemployment will rise, states should ensure employment for women through stimulus programs that include gender parity in all job programs (Grown 2010).

In addition to the segregation of the work force, women are concentrated in particular kinds of work, such as in Export Processing Zones (EPZ) as the figure 14 below shows. For example, women now account for 60-90% of the fresh produce and clothing labor force, and dominate in the export processing zones (UNIFEM 2010), which are characterized by low wages, low status, poor working conditions, and high turnover rate. Women dominate this sector as managers consciously recruit them based on patriarchal assumptions about their naturally better fine motor skills and because they are seen as

flexible workers with no families to support and hence can be employed at lower costs with no benefits. This myth about women continues despite the evidence that most women support families and are often single heads of households. Pearson (2003) has proposed a Maria Tax, akin to the Tobin Tax, to be imposed on all EPZs that would be used for funding health care and other benefits for women working in the EPZs. Thus, women are increasingly entering the global labor force but in a sex segregated market place with low wages, status, and benefits.

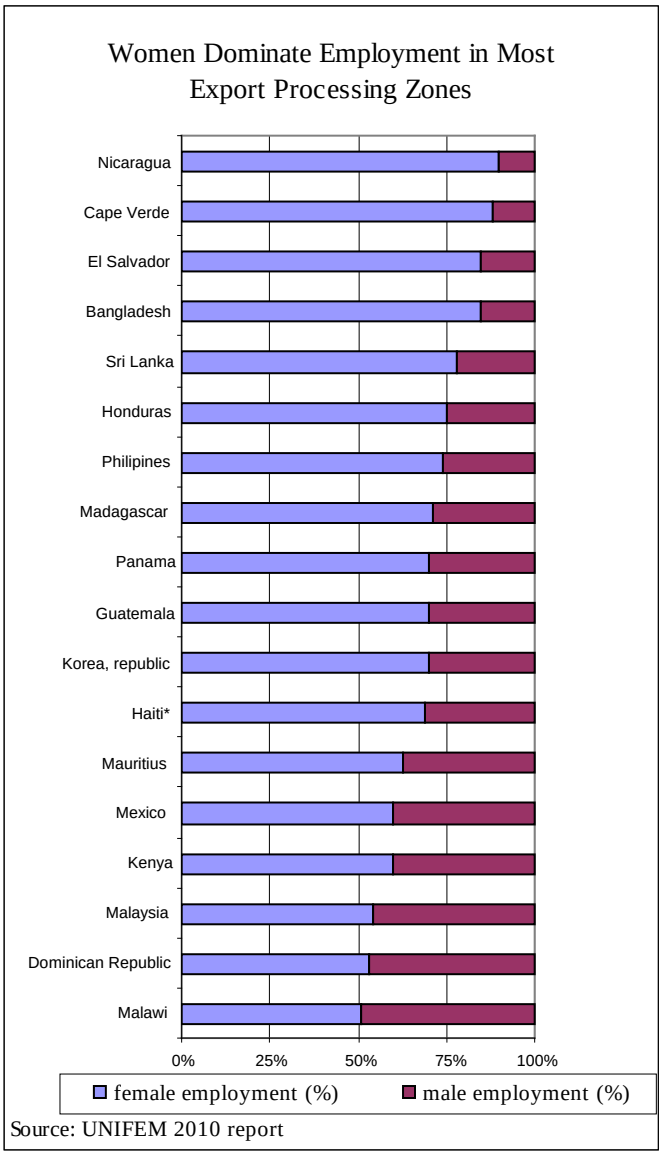

Figure 14

Elson (2006) calls this segregation the domestication of the public sphere, and sees it as a result of hybridity in the economy which reworks the public/private and modern/traditional dichotomies in new ways.

The second trend in regard to women's economic participation is their overrepresentation in the informal economy, or vulnerable economy, 52.7% compared to 49.1% for men (ILO 2002). In most developing regions, about one half to two thirds of women hold vulnerable or informal employment. The situation is particularly stark in Oceania and South Asia where 64% and 46% respectively, of women work in family owned business or farms (MDG Report 2009). Although the percentage of women in vulnerable employment has dropped since 1997 in most regions, disparity between men and women exists, especially in the Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa (UNIFEM 2010:54). Part of this increase is a result of the popularity of the micro-credit programs most of which support women in the informal economies. In 2007 microfinance organizations reached 154.8 million clients of whom 106.6 million were women (CSW 2009). While they do provide women with access to credit and income through entrepreneurship, they do not reach the poorest women or meet the needs of women who want to expand their businesses. In many cases, they have resulted in unintended consequences such as an increase in violence against women, increase in drop-out rate of older girl children in order to look after the younger children while the mother works. The most important outcome, however, as Lairap-Fonderson (2002) argues, for sub-Saharan Africa, is that these programs discipline women and children into "efficient economic actors."

But there has also been progress in many countries to unionize informal sector workers based on the model of SEWA in India. They have successfully changed legislation at the state and national levels to award the same protection to informal workers as formal

workers and they have also formed global networks to facilitate this process, such as Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (*.www.**wiego**.org).* But in times of economic crisis, workers in the informal sector fare even worse than those in the formal sector. Hence, it is important that governments include informal workers in their stimulus plans.

Finally, numbering approximately 100 million, women migrants comprise nearly half the total migrant population. Evidence shows that women now dominate the categories of migrants with tertiary education, and this represents a feminized brain drain that has implications at various levels in the sending countries (UNIFEM 2010). For some women, whether migrating for domestic or professional work, migration offers the chance of economic independence and empowerment. But for many, migration means leaving their children behind, poor working conditions, abusive employers, and few means of demanding redress for violations of their rights (UNIFEM 2010). Most migrant women perform domestic work and hence at this year's ILO conference there was discussion of a Convention on Domestic Work that would address the issues of women domestic workers (http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Beijing-15/Communicating-Beijing-15/Communicating-Beijing-15/Advancing-Rights-for-Migrant-Women).

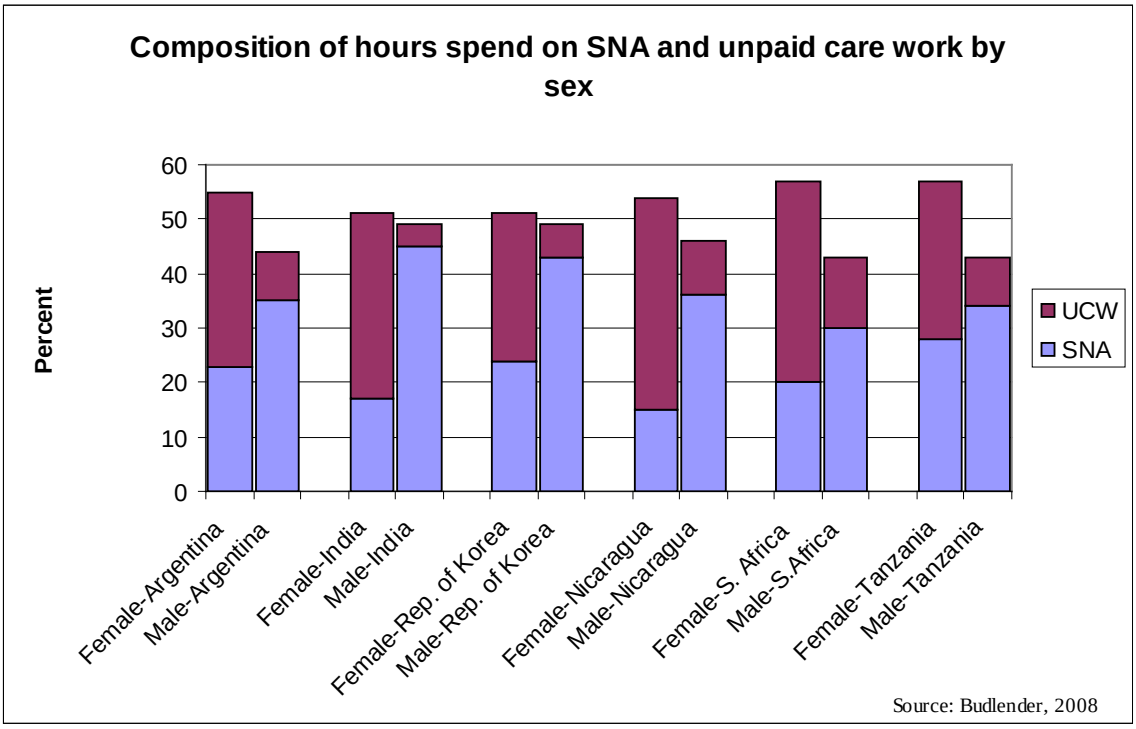

Figure 15

One of the continuing trends of women's work is their burden of unpaid care work. Surveys in both the developed and developing worlds show that men are engaged in more paid work and women in unpaid care work. The survey in Figure 15 above, adapted from Budlender 2008, shows the weekly hours spent by men and women on Systems of National Account (SNA) work and unpaid care work in 6 countries in the developing world (Budlender 2008). Men in India spent the least amount of time in unpaid care work while men in South Africa spent the most, a reflection of the high unemployment rate among men in South Africa. But even in South Africa women spend almost three times as much time in unpaid care work. Furthermore, when you combine both SNA and unpaid care work, women in all countries do more work than men. When the unpaid care work is further measured in terms of the kinds of unpaid work, figure 16 below, most of

men's unpaid work is in community service rather than house work or person care.

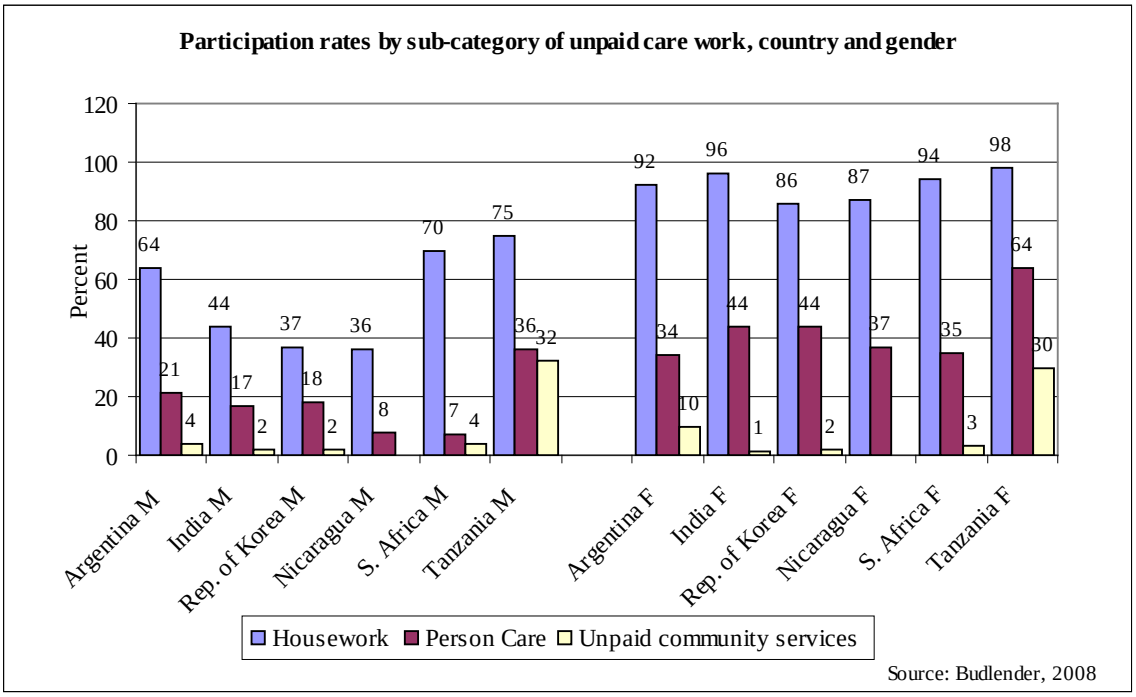

Figure 16

In another study of four countries in Africa -- Benin, Madagascar, Morocco, and South Africa -- and France, in urban areas women spent between 16 and 55% of their time in paid market activities compared to men's 80 to 84% of their time in paid activities. By contrast in all countries except Benin, women spent two to five times more time doing unpaid domestic work (Latigo and Nejwa 2005). In rural areas, women spent between 30 minutes to an hour fetching water compared to men's 15 and 10 minutes a day. Fetching firewood takes 25 minutes for men in Madagascar and women in Benin. This equals 9 days a year spent in fetching water and firewood for rural women over the age of six. "In economies characterized by family-based agricultural production and informal employment direct care activities may be so integrated with other productive activities as

to become literally invisible. If direct care becomes easier to define and measure in the course of economic development, it will appear to increase over time" (Folbre and Joon 2008:10). An important way to address this burden on women's time in the developing world is through infrastructure development. Access to energy sources such as electricity or other fuels, water and sanitation, and good roads would go a big way in reducing this burden for women in the developing countries.

Even in the developed world, as Figure 17 below shows, where infrastructure is not an issue, the division of labor has not shifted very much. While men in all countries are taking on child care and elder care responsibilities, women still spend between 15 and 40 hours a week in child care compared to between 10 and 30 hours spent by men, with most men spending less than 20 hours a week. Finland, Denmark, and Sweden come the closest to parity. This lack of change is partly responsible for the declining birth rates in many advanced capitalist countries, including Italy, Spain, Japan, and Korea. As a recent OECD report (cited in (Folbre and Yoon 2008:4) emphasizes, levels of maternal employment in Europe are positively related to state policies that subsidize care provision, which, in turn, are positively related to birth rates.

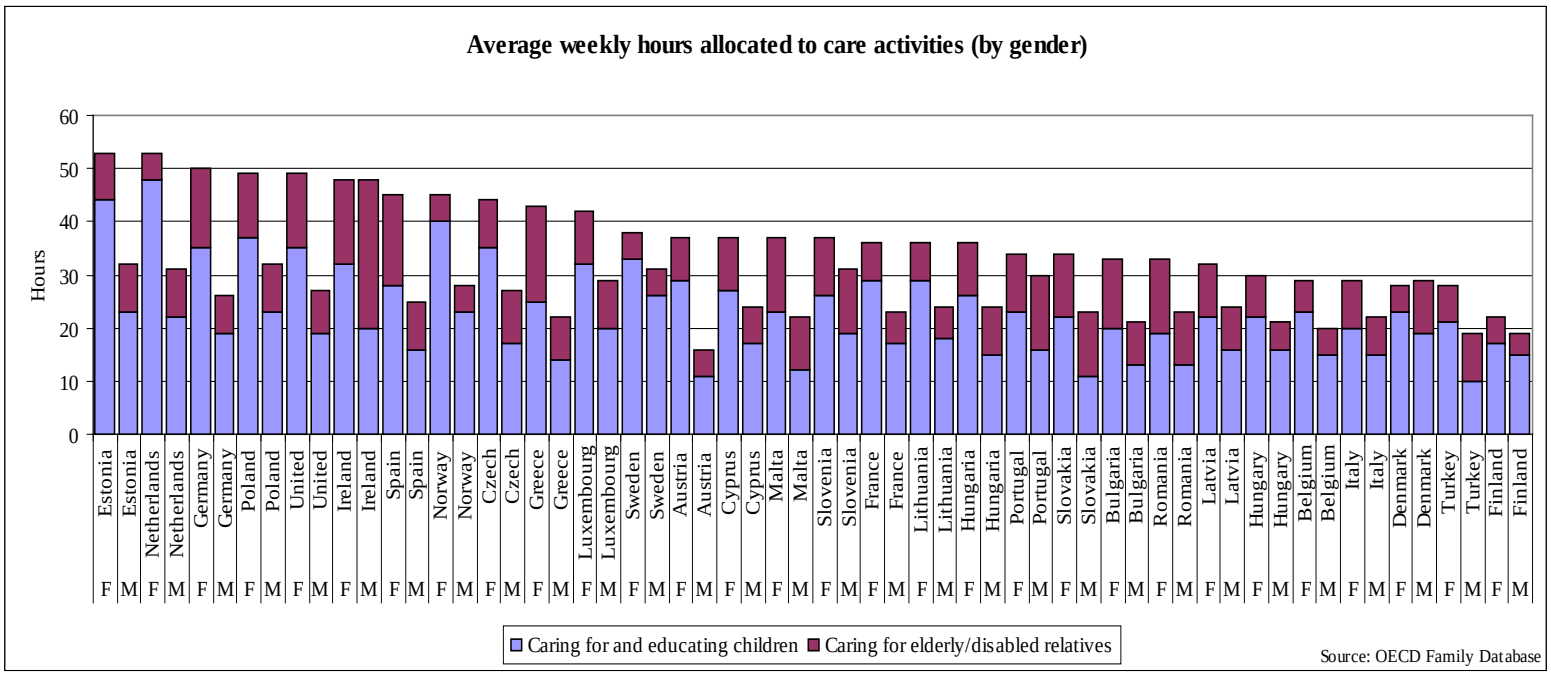

Figure 17

Most of the unpaid care work is for raising children and it declines from a high of 30 hours for mothers with infants to nearly 0 as their children mature beyond 13 years of age. But as figure 18 below shows, the United States is an outlier among the OECD countries in the number of hours women with small children work, as it alone has no state supported child care programs. So state funded child care programs are important to addressing women's unpaid work in the developed world. Another factor that both the developed and developing world share are the patriarchal assumptions about men and women's role which despite decades of women's movements have not led to a major change in the domestic division of labor. Hence, changing social norms and behaviors continues to remain important in all parts of the world.

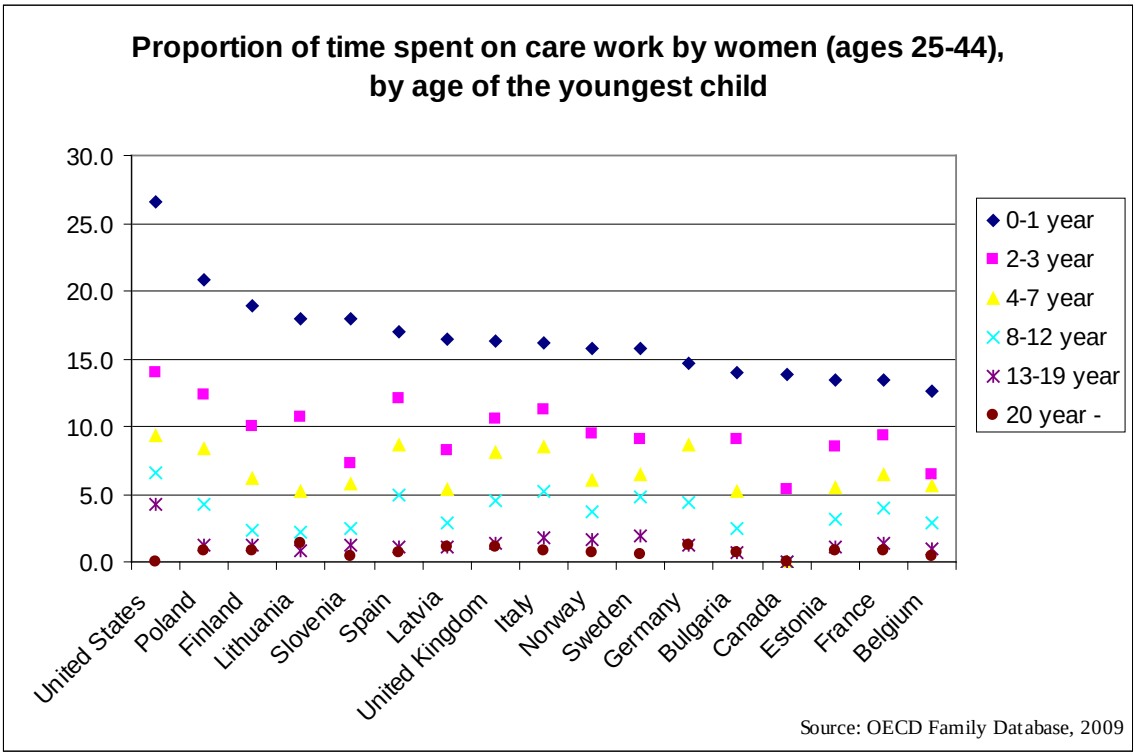

Figure 18

The disproportionate burden of unpaid work in and outside the household limits women's abilities to engage in paid work and perpetuates the male wage earner myth. Women at the CSW meetings suggested governments should keep in mind the "three R's" of care work -- recognize, reduce, and redistribute -- as they consider progress in women's status. The state can certainly help in the first two R's by counting it and helping to reduce it by addressing basic infrastructure needs such as clean water, energy, sanitation, and transportation as well as paid child care. Redistribution can be achieved by changes in gender norms and practices that can be supported by both state and social movements.

Access to full and decent employment, remains a challenge for most women who still continue to be in low paid, insecure jobs and informal economies, and bear a

disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. Women also face harassment in the workplace and dismissal for being pregnant. Women also have limited access to credit to engage in entrepreneurial activity. Hence, a new gender policy approach is needed that will focus on changing norms of unpaid care work through parental leave policy; quantify and reduce care work; develop educational systems that erase gender stereotypes; challenge notions of women's work based on stereotypes; and raise the quality of work in all sectors (ILO 2010).

In addition, corporate culture as well as social cultural expectation of women's roles continues to lead to constraints on women's access to employment, concentration in low paid jobs, gender segregated labor markets, pay gaps, and discrimination and harassment in the workplaces, both formal and informal.

This situation of women's economic participation is partly responsible for women's lack of access to assets and productive resources. Women's lack of access to land and the insecurity of their property rights pose significant constraints on women's access to agricultural services, including credit, that require formalized ownership of land. In Latin America, a survey of five countries found that only between 11 and 27 per cent of landowners were women (UNIFEM 2010). In Uganda, women account for most agricultural production but own only five per cent of the land, and women's tenure is highly insecure. Weaker property rights is one reason women farmers in Ghana were more likely to be subsistence farmers rather than cultivators of more profitable pineapple crops, like their male counterparts. In countries opening up their markets, where farmers

are encouraged to formalize their land tenure to enable long-term productive investment, women's persistently low land ownership undermines their voice in claiming property that they have traditionally used (UNIFEM 2010). Women in many countries such as Kenya, Rwanda, India have had difficulties in gaining inheritance rights. Still, many countries have passed land reforms that have included gender parity in ownership of communal land such as Tanzania, Namibia, and Rwanda (www.un/daw/csw). Policies such as joint ownership and spousal consent on issues relating to property have been passed in several countries. In Maharashtra, India, a social movement developed a program called *"Laxmi Mukti"* or freeing the goddess of wealth which involved transferring property to women or joint ownership. Villages in which 100 families had done so were called Laxmi Mukti villages.

Land reform policies have not been successful in many countries as they fail to recognize women's contributions to agricultural production and hence exclude them from ownership. As Patel (2002:15) notes: "Although land reforms were based on principles of *redistributive justice* (no concentration of land in the hands of a few), *empowerment* (control to workers over the productive asset, i.e. land) and *economic justice* (control over means of production to reduce severe indebtedness and poverty of a majority of the agrarian population), the principle of gender equity was ignored." Cuno and Desai (2009) show that in many countries, customary and religious family law and practices continue to privilege male rights to parental property even when legal reforms, such as those in Hindu Reform Act, guarantee females rights of succession. And even as legal reforms undertake social change by giving women rights where none existed, they

simultaneously also undermine that reform by retaining important religious beliefs and values that undermine that equity. Hence, in addition to national laws on equal ownership and gender equity in land reform, there also needs to be community based mobilization to teach women legal literacy and work with leaders around religious and customary laws that prevent women from gaining access to these assets.

A major issue in this regard is the lack of data on women's ownership of land and other assets. FAO's new data base on gender and land rights provides data on six topics, legal frame work, land tenure, international treaties, customary laws, civil society organizations, and statistics, for 24 countries (http://www.fao.org/gender/landrights/). Such data bases provide important information for formulating policies.

Political Participation

Both the MDG3 and GEM measure political participation by the percentage of seats held by women in parliament. Those numbers like all others have improved over the past two decades, figure 19 below.

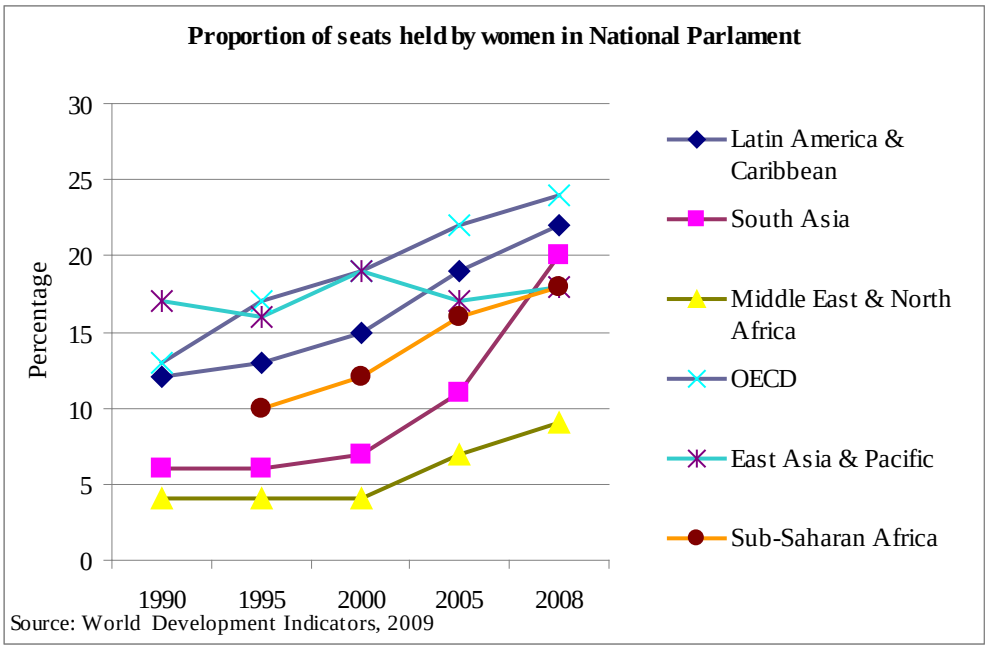

Figure 19

Compared to 11.3% in 1990, women's participation in parliaments is now 18% globally. From the period of 1990 to 2008: "all regions increased the number of women in national parliaments with Middle East and North Africa showing the least improvement. The greatest progress was observed in South Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, with increases of over 10 percentage points (in both cases, an increase of more than 100 percent). The increase is not evenly distributed with the greatest gains in the Americas with 22%, Europe 21.5%, Asia 18.6%, Sub-Saharan Africa 17.8%, Pacific 13% and Arab states 9%. In CIS countries there has been a reversal, particularly in Russia, where women's share fell from 32% in 1987 to 5.6% in 2000 and increased only to 6.4% in 2002 (Elson 2006). Nine countries, mostly in the Pacific Islands and Gulf states, have no women at all.

While the trend is toward increased women's representation in national parliaments, no region has yet reached the goal of 25 percent women in parliament as set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Middle East and North Africa lag furthest behind in female political participation (UNIFEM 2010). In 2008, Rwanda became the first parliament with a majority of women members 56.25% , followed by Sweden (47%), Cuba (43.2%) Finland (41.5%), and Argentina (40%) (www.un.daw/csw). Given this pace, a critical mass of 30% will not be achieved by 2015. The parity zone between 40% and 60% will not be reached in developing countries for another 40 years. Women tend to fare better in proportional representation systems than in majority representation systems. SADC countries resolved in 2008 to increase women's share of public and private decision-making from 30-50% by 2015 (CSW 2009).

The target of 30% representation has been met in only 24 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America (CSW 2009). In a majority of these countries there were quotas for women's participation. Quotas with sanctions are more effective than quotas alone (UNIFEM 2010). In addition to quotas in parliament, democratization of political parties, building women's caucuses, and training and capacity building are important to ensure efforts towards gender-just policies. Women's presence in parliament does not translate into gender-just social policies on its own. But women's presence does increase attention to women's issues and tends to decrease corruption (e.g., Maddison and Patridge 2007). Even when there is political will to implement policies there is lack of capacity, resources, and knowledge to translate it into social policies.

In terms of senior leadership positions, only 35 women preside over one of the houses of the 18 parliaments (Inter Parliamentary Union 2009 www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm). In the executive branch, women held 16.1% of ministries, few countries met or exceeded 50% ministerial positions. Only 22 countries have 30% women in cabinet positions. Like occupational segregation, however, there is also political segregation, with women ministers concentrated in health, women and children's welfare, and environmental ministries. Very few women lead labor, trade or foreign affairs ministries. In ministry posts we find another example of the domestication of the public sphere (Elson 2006). Women have, however, made some progress in representation in foreign service but not as ambassadors or as representatives to the UN. Between 2005 and 2009, women representatives to the UN increased from 13 to 23 (CSW 2009).

In the civil service, women have made progress in gaining middle management positions, but not at the top level. Women's presence in this sector is seen to be highly correlated with formulating and implementing gender-just policies (UNIFEM 2010). Yet most countries have not focused on increasing women's participation in this area.

Judiciary and law enforcement remain male domains though women have made some inroads in appointments as judges, including in the Supreme court. The International Criminal Court has 50% women among its 19 judges (UNIFEM 2010). Women make up 30% of the police force in Australia and South Africa, with the global average of 10% (UNIFEM 2010).

Women's participation in local decision-making is not well documented. Data from Latin American, Caribbean and European countries show that 10% of mayors and 25% of seats in local councils were held by women (CSW 2009). India is among the countries that have passed legislation to increase women's participation in local government, *panchayats*, to 30%.[1] Evidence on the presence of women in panchayats has been mixed. While it has increased women's participation in local government and has often increased their status in families and communities, in many instances it has reproduced existing caste and class inequalities. However, in places where there is local mobilization of women, they have been successful in making gains for women's issues such as water, education for girls, and health care (e.g., Rai 2008). In all cases training and capacity building are important for all politicians.

In the private sector women were only 24% of senior management in 2009 compared to 19% in 2004. In Europe and Asia women held 10% of executive positions, while they accounted for 25% in North America. In Europe women held 9.7% of seats on corporate boards. Both Norway and France have passed laws to reserve 40% of seats on private boards for women (CSW 2009).

There are no comprehensive data for women's participation in civil society. But data suggest that here too there is gender segregation with men primarily active in political

[1] On March 8, 2010 India's upper house passed a bill to reserve 30% of seats in the national parliament. The session was disrupted by members who protested the bill claiming that this bill was anti-Muslim and anti-*dalit* as it would only increase the presence of upper caste women.

parties, sports clubs, and trade unions while women are active in education, arts, religious and care and service organizations (Elson 2006).

Despite increase in numbers, women are still underrepresented in upper levels of decision-making positions. This is particularly true for rural, indigenous, and minority women in most countries. Women's participation in parliament also does not mean that women are able to negotiate the power hierarchies. Furthermore, gains can be easily reversed as was the case in the Soviet Union and Eastern and Central Europe after the 1990s, when communist party quotas were lifted both in politics and in the work place (Elson 2006). A similar reversal took place in Australia where conservative governments in the 1990s undermined the policy machinery and with it two decades' worth of gains. So progress is not always linear, nor is it always in the direction of greater equality. Gender stereotypes and attitudes remain a factor as do women's unpaid care work, which makes it difficult to find work/life balance. As the World's Women report notes, normative, procedural, and cultural changes need to be undertaken in the political realm for there to be real gender-justice (UNIFEM 2010).

In summary, some important patterns in women's empowerment are: (1) there have been positive changes in some key indicators of women's empowerment particularly in enrolment at the primary education level and to some extent in secondary and tertiary levels and increased participation in national parliaments and in the labor force, though the latter is declining in the current crisis. To a lesser extent there has also been a decline in maternal mortality and fertility and increase in contraceptive use. However, the

changes vary across regions -- with South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa showing the greatest gaps -- and within countries urban and rural poor, ethnic minorities, and older and disabled women fare worse on all indicators. As Buvinic et al. (2008) note there is some progress in expanding women's capabilities, particularly education, but not in opportunities for economic and political control. For example, the 2009 Gender Equity Index found that women's economic activity gains in 2008 were wiped out in 2009 with 59% of countries regressing and only 39% of countries showing progress. Similarly, in terms of women's empowerment, 15% of the countries regressed so severely that the value of the indicator dropped from 35% in 2008 to 34.5% in 2009 (http://www.socialwatch.org/node/11562). (2) A reduction in gender gap does not translate into greater gender equality with women experiencing greater freedom or being able to develop their capabilities more fully or a decrease in violence. For example, the increase in women's labor force participation has not been accompanied by significant changes in division of labor in the home even in the Scandinavian countries. The wage gap and gender segregation of the workforce continue, thereby undermining women's equality. (3) Positive trends are often accompanied by negative trends such as increasing unemployment for women in the current crisis, and reversal of gains in several countries. (4) Broad indicators do not reveal the contradictory nature and unintended consequences of development. For example, while rapid decline in fertility improves women's life chances and well-being, in India and China it is also associated with imbalanced sex ratio, particularly where son preference has led to neglect and abandonment of infant girls as well as use of sex-selection technologies to abort female fetuses. India and China, with the fastest economic growth rates, also have the highest number of missing girls, so

economic growth does not guarantee gender equality or security (e.g., Beneria 2007, Elson 2006, Harcourt 2010, and Molyneux and Razavi 2006).

The most important challenges to women's empowerment in all dimensions continue to be: (1) neoliberal policies in a globalized economy that have shifted the role of the state away from social policies of redistribution and justice, in many instances bankrupted states due to taxation policies that decrease business taxes so states have to depend on labor and consumption related taxes and most importantly, have eroded the value of collective approaches for social well-being (Beneria 2007). Hence, it is not easy in a globalized economy for one state to change its social policies. This has severely curtailed the state's funding and implementation of gender equality commitments. (2) Patriarchal structures and values that shape both the "public" world of work and politics as well as the "private" world of intimate relationships, families, households, and communities are deeply entrenched and resistant to change.

III. Best Policies and Practices

As many feminists have noted, there are no magic bullets for gender equality. Social change has multiple causes and is not necessarily linear. Even institutional changes can be reversed. But, a normative framework that guides policies and strategies is important because otherwise as Shirin Batliwala (2007) notes:

> There is growing evidence from research and grassroots experiences that mechanical and depoliticised implementation of . . . strategies ensures that none of these, singly or together, necessarily empower women. More importantly, these strategies have, in many contexts, merely shifted greater responsibility and burden for economic survival and political change onto women themselves, or ended up as a numbers game.

Hence, feminists propose a social justice framework in which the state, market, and civil society are guided by the well-being of people rather than concern over economic growth and profits. In particular, they emphasize: the role of the state in ensuring normative, policy, and funding initiatives that will provide women economic, political, sexual, and reproductive autonomy and eradicate violence against women; the role of social movements in organizing to transform patriarchal structures and values and mobilize women to make states accountable to them; and the role of the development community in moving away from market oriented strategies to alternative strategies based on social and environmental sustainability (e.g., Arizpe 2010, Beneria 2007, Conway 2007, Grown 2010).

State Policies and Practices

In the last two decades the role of the state has been redefined in the global economy. From the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s to the more risk management and social protection policies of the 1990s, the state in most countries seems to have

abandoned its role in redistributive and social justice policies. With the current crisis, there is an opportunity to redefine the role of the state, not just to manage the crisis but to transform systems. Like the stimulus plan for the economy, the state needs to develop a stimulus plan for women's empowerment, central to which would be normative, procedural and funding changes to implement the commitments to women's equality that most states have already made over the last three decades. Explicitly articulating commitment to gender equality in national plans and allocating resources to it, incorporating gender responsive budgetary processes at all levels and across all sectors, and formulating policies based on people's needs is an important step in the right direction.

Below are some examples of innovative state interventions.

Normative

Among the most radical examples of normative commitments to equality are the new constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador, which enshrine equal rights not only for men and women and indigenous communities but also for nature or *Pacha Mama and* most importantly define a new form of citizenship whose aim is to reach buen vivir or collective well-being (Esteva 2010, Walsh 2010). Both these documents were passed in popular referenda. Buen Vivir is not only about a new way of organizing economic and social relations based on equality and harmony with nature but also an acknowledgement of the importance of varied forms of knowledge including indigenous understandings.

This normative commitment is being translated into social and economic policies that distance themselves from capitalism and include other forms of solidarity economies

(Escobar 2010). How this new vision of collective well-being is implemented remains to be seen, but it is an important step in formulating alternatives.

Policies in Capabilities Domain

The most successful social policies that have improved education and health outcomes are various conditional cash and asset transfer policies (Barrientos 2010). From *Misiones* programs for universal education and health care in Venezuela to *Oportunidades* in Mexico, these programs involved funding from the state to neighborhood based institutions for education and health care. Funds supported textbooks and uniforms to financial aid and in-kind assistance, take-home food, and in-school canteens (UNESCO 2008). Building schools in rural areas, separate latrines for girls, and providing child-care facilities for teen mothers, and teacher training have all increased girls' enrolment and continued school attendance. The government of Benin has used these policies effectively and halved their primary dropout rate and is likely to achieve universal primary education by 2015 (UNESCO 2008).

Health care policies such as *Plan Remediar* in Argentina organized distribution of basic medicines in poor urban and rural communities. Evidence from several countries shows that removing user fees for maternal health care, especially for deliveries, can both stimulate demand and lead to increased use of prenatal services (WHO 2009:4). Training community-based health care providers has also been successful in addressing basic health care as well as supporting HIV/AIDS patients in South Africa and India.

Using financial incentives to change behavior can result in normative changes if the incentives are sufficient and sustained. Given the economic crisis, most states will face challenges in continuing such programs. But as Grown et al. (2008) note, if the donor countries meet their target of contributing 0.7% of their GDP to international aid and doubling aid to Africa, and domestic commitments continue, it is possible even for low income countries to fund these programs.

Policies in Opportunities Domain

South Africa's Expanded Public Works Program and India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which mandates a third of the jobs for women, have both been successful in increasing women's livelihoods, which has also resulted in better education and health outcomes for children. In 2005, the Indian government passed the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), which has resulted in the creation of the world's largest social security system (UNIFEM 2010). The law guarantees 100 days of employment on rural public works projects to a member of every rural household, and one-third of the workers are intended to be women. NREGA reflects the government's commitment to supporting women's employment, notably through locally available projects and child care facilities. Women's share of employment in the scheme has been over 40 percent, rising to 82 percent in the state of Tamil Nadu. The Indian government has also undertaken a social insurance program for workers in the informal sector, Unorganized Sector Workers Social Security Scheme Bill, which will cover a majority of

urban workers. This bill, if passed, will be one of the first of its kinds for informal sector workers (Barrientos 2010).

In Andhra Pradesh, India, poor low-caste women in groups of 5 to 15 have purchased or leased land through government schemes for subsidized credit and grants and are now farming these lots productively. Such collective cultivation of land by women is now occurring in 75 villages (Agarwal 2010). Collective ownership of assets in rural India has been a more effective strategy for increasing women's access to economic resources than individual ownership. Such collective ownership programs and production cooperatives have also been successful in Latin America and countries in Africa.

The Peru Roads project was a community-based micro-enterprise that involved men and women in maintenance of rural non-motorized roads that enabled the rural poor to have access to social services, easy access to markets and provided employment. Gender equality was promoted from the beginning of the project. 77% of the women surveyed said it made their access to markets easier and safer. It facilitated girls' access to schools, involved over 100 community organizations, and 500 micro-enterprises worked on routine road maintenance. Twenty-four percent of the jobs went to women (UNDP 2008).

The Norwegian government in 2008 mandated Norwegian companies to have at least 40 percent female membership on their management boards. Publicly listed firms that failed to comply could be closed down. The measure affects 487 public companies. Today, women fill almost 38 percent of the 1,117 board seats at companies listed on the Oslo

stock exchange. This is up from under seven percent in 2002. It is twice as many as in Sweden, four times as many as in Denmark and nearly seven times the number in Iceland. It is also well above the average of nine percent for big companies across Europe, 11 percent for companies listed among Britain's FTSE 100, or 15 percent for United States companies listed among the Fortune 500 (UNIFEM 2010). This month the government of France announced a similar policy to increase women's representation in corporate boards and higher management.

In 2008 Southern African Development Community countries signed a protocol on gender and development that calls for 50% representation of women in all levels of government by 2015. It also promotes equal participation of men and women in economic policies and utilization of gender sensitive and responsive budgeting. It calls for examining all laws relating to access and control of resources both in formal and informal economy to ensure women's equal access.

Gender Responsive budgets have been used in many countries to both highlight the inequities in spending as well as to make changes in spending. In Morocco, for the past three years government departments have been required to prepare a gender report annexed to the annual national budget. In 2007, this analysis covered 17 departments and as a result agricultural budget for women's programs increased by 50% from 2005. In India 50 ministries and government departments prepare gender budgets and this has led to a near doubling of resources allocated to women's programs. Most governments have not used this tool at all levels of spending (UNIFEM 2010).

The use of quotas for women in national and local government has been effective in promoting women's political participation and decision-making. Forty countries around the world have some type of quota. A majority of the twenty-four countries that have 30% representation of women in their parliament, have done so by the effective use of quotas. As noted before, quotas are effective when they are accompanied by sanctions, changes in law, and support of political parties. In addition to electoral quotas, some countries have used quotas for civil service recruitment and appointments to administrative and advisory appointments. Women elected at local levels have formed networks to help each other, e.g., the Latin American Network of Associations of Elected Women in Local Governments and the network of Arab women in local government (CSW 2009).

In Rwanda, the cultural practice of *Imihigo*, or contract, was used for local government reform. In this practice two parties publicly commit to achieving certain tasks. Failure to do so brings dishonor to the individuals as well as the community. This practice has been institutionalized in contracts between the president and district leaders to ensure achievement of specific targets. Since 2006, Imihigos have been established at local and household levels and they are evaluated three times a year by a taskforce comprised of the President's office, the Prime Minister's office and the Ministry for Local Administration. In the recent round of Imihigos, violence against women will be added to the household contracts (UNIFEM 2010).

Best Practices of Non-State Actors

Best Practices In Women's Movement Organizing

Over the past several decades of organizing, women's movements have learned the value of strategies at multiple levels. At the local level, women-run, community-based organizations are the most effective means of supporting the poor and most vulnerable, and also most effective at including women in leadership and decision making at the local level. They have also learned the power of networks at the local, national, and transnational levels for both advocacy and learning from each other. Hence, the best practices in the women's movements include both local and transnational networks.

There have been many strategies to improve women's control over economic resources through cooperatives and fair trade movements. In Ghana the Kuapa Kokoo cocoa cooperative through fair trade markets has produced over a million dollars in an eight-year period to give women profits and invest in community projects. Similarly, in Samoa a local NGO has provided women's coconut cooperatives with new technologies that has enabled women to export organic coconut oil to New Zealand and Australia (Randriamaro 2007).

Violence against women and HIV/AIDS are two important factors that prevent the well-being of women. Hence many efforts have focused on these two issues. At the local

level, two kinds of efforts have been particularly effective. Media campaigns are useful in awareness raising and mobilizing community organizations. For example, a national TV campaign in India, called "What Kind of A Man Are You,?" raises the issue of husbands transmitting the virus to their wives. Undertaken by Breakthrough, a human rights organization in the US and India, it reached 124 million people in 4 months. Mothertongue, in South Africa, has used plays on the issues of HIV/AIDs and violence against women and women's equality more generally (Rothschild, Reilly, and Nordstrom 2006). Tutu Tester in Cape Town is a mobile testing van funded by the Desmond Tutu foundation that enables people to get tested and remove the stigma associated with it. Other innovative strategies have included counseling at truck stops in India and peer counseling.

Women's movement groups have also worked to train police officers and establish telephone hotlines for domestic abuse and to coordinate efforts between the police, health care providers, and women's NGOs. Albania and India have both had successful examples of such efforts in the past year.

Another effective strategy in addressing these two issues has been community-based support groups. Huairou Commission launched the Home-Based Care Alliance in six countries in Africa and organized the Compensations for Contributions research project which involves caregivers in identifying needs and organizing themselves to get support from the government to meet those needs. Action India's *Mahila Panchayats*, or women's courts, have been very successful in addressing issues of violence against

women by training women from multiple castes and religions to form councils that work with families to develop a plan of action to stop the violence. Women in Cebu, Phillipines have organized Community Watch Against Domestic and Gender Violence, which trains community members in gender issues as well as legal rights to work with women experiencing violence. Members have organized shelter as well as food and other legal and medical services for women (http://www.bestpractices.org/bpbriefs/women.html).

Support groups such as Sonke Gender Justice in South Africa work with men in the communities to stop violence against women. It launched the One Man Campaign, which encourages every man in the community to pledge to stop violence against women. Men As Partners is another group in South Africa that focuses on bringing men into the struggle to end violence. Several such men's groups have also formed in Brazil. Milana in Karnatak, India, is another community-based group that works with women living with HIV/AIDS. They function both as support groups to help women deal with the stigma and isolation that comes with the diagnosis, and to help them access treatments (Rothschild, Reilly, and Nordstrom 2006).

Women have also organized transnationally around violence and HIV/AIDS through networks. UNIFEM's Global Virtual Knowledge Center to End Violence Against Women, launched on March 4, 2010, is an example of sharing knowledge and best practices to end violence against women. The Global Coalition on Women and Aids is

another transnational network that works with groups around the world to stop the spread of HIV/AIDs.

Building capacity of men and women in communities so they can form partnerships with local leaders and institutions to bring about social change has been another effective means to empower women and engage them in transforming their lives. *Mahila Samakhya* (Women's Collective), *Swayam Sikhshan Prayog* (Self Learning Experiment) in India, Women of Color United in the US, an umbrella group of 70 organizations, are examples of groups that work to empower women to advocate for policy changes at the local level. Part of this organizing also engages women in conducting research in their communities and using the findings to shape local policies and gain services. The collective approach and focus on transforming local power relations differentiate these groups from self-help groups that are promoted to enable individual women to gain access to micro-credit for micro-enterprises.

Union Efforts

The Decent Work for Women Campaign of the International Trade Union Conference raised issues of women's representation in trade unions as well as the issue of gaps in wages between men and women. Its Global Wage Gap Report was instrumental in changing legislation and policies in 16 countries relating to workplace issues such as wage gap, harassment, child care facilities for mothers, and work-life balance. The campaign was launched in 56 countries and its aim is to foster equality for women at

work in terms of workplace policies but also to increase representation in unions at all levels and in making policies and programs (www.ituc.org).

In Northeastern Brazil, Rural Workers Union was successful in organizing women laborers working in the export-oriented horticulture industry. The union efforts not only led to better pay and working conditions but also resulted in women's increased participation in local political and civic activities. While trade unions have been faulted for ignoring gender-specific needs of women, they cannot be abandoned but have to be made accountable to women and their needs, particularly in the rural areas (Selwyn 2009).

Formed in 2000 in New York, Domestic Workers United, has been organizing mostly immigrant women for "power, respect, and fair labor standards to end exploitation and oppression for all" (http://www.domesticworkersunited.org). At the first USSocial Forum in 2007 in Atlanta, the National Domestic Workers Alliance was formed which is working to pass legislation in the New York State Assembly for Domestic Workers Bill of Rights.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The past two decades have seen an increasing focus on the role of the corporate sector in promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. Corporate Social Responsibility is one of the commonly used strategies. While there is a critical literature that questions

this strategy (e.g., Pearson 2007), there have been some innovative examples that are illustrative.

The Seal of Gender Equality in Central America, is a partnership between state and private companies that promotes gender equality. The seal certifies that the company is meeting the gender equality standards in recruiting, remuneration, training opportunities and labor rights. Fresquita Vegetables in Costa Rica demonstrated that such practices led to increased productivity and a work environment free from discrimination and harassment (UNDP 2008).

Most examples of Corporate Social Responsibility, however, are about empowering women through microfinance and tying them to the companies' core products. For example, Unilever in India formed Shakti Entrepreneurs to use women's self-help programs to sell Unilever products directly to rural communities. They have reached over 100,000 villages and 3 million homes in 19 states in India and are now expanding the program to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Their claim is that the income generated allowed women increased say in decision-making in their homes and improved their families' health and hygiene (UNDP 2008).

As the above discussion shows, there are many examples of effective policies and practices. What is often lacking is the political will, resources, implementation, and knowledge and understanding of gender mainstreaming policies. While the efforts of the state will not in and of themselves undermine patriarchal values and attitudes, they can

begin to erode some of the economic and political structures and institutions that perpetuate gender inequalities. Then it is the consistent work of social movements and human rights and other organizations to work at community, local, and transnational levels towards creating new values and attitudes around gender-justice. This work of socio-cultural transformation is evident in some of the best practices noted above.

Moving Forward

In the two decades since the first Human Development Report, the record of women's empowerment has been uneven and in the current conjuncture of multiple crises -- financial, care, food, HIV/AIDs, and environmental -- there is a deterioration in the well-being of the majority of the world's women. While the 1990s were the highpoint in terms of international consensus on women's rights and equality, they also coincided with increasing integration of the world's economies and the continuation of neoliberal economic policies, albeit with some consideration of social protection for the poor and those most vulnerable to those policies. This new "neoliberal moment" saw the state's role as primarily that of risk management rather than of redistribution and justice. In the next decade, the events of September 11, 2001 in the US and the US government's response to them set into motion two wars and increased militarization and surveillance and this along with the resurgence of religious conservatism around the world have undermined the tenuous gains women had made in the previous decades.

These multiple crises have galvanized a consensus on the responsibilities of the state in addressing them as they impinge not only on women's empowerment but also on the well-being of the poor people around the globe. This was evident at the 54th CSW meetings in New York in March 2010. To fulfill their promises to women's empowerment and gender-justice, the world's governments will need to undertake a stimulus plan for women's equality that will: (1) make explicit the focus on gender-justice in law, policies, and budget allocations at all levels and in all sectors, including macroeconomic policies; (2) finance and implement these commitments; and (3) ensure changes in government structures and machineries at all levels to institutionalize the process of gender-justice. Political will at all levels of the leadership is important to this success.

To mobilize and sustain this political will, women's movements and other human rights movements and NGOs will have to demand accountability at local, national, and international levels. In addition to that, movements will have to undertake the long term and challenging task of transforming patriarchal values and attitudes that are another major impediment to women's empowerment. This work has already begun with promising results in many parts of the world. Thus, this era of crises can perhaps propel us towards a new vision of human well being that is in keeping with the spirit of the first Human Development Report but moves beyond it in terms of alternatives.

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