

A global agenda for greater gender equality

Domestic action is central to reducing gender inequalities, and global action—by governments, people, and organizations in developed and developing countries, and by international institutions—cannot substitute for equitable and efficient domestic policies and institutions. But global action can complement domestic policies by strengthening their impact and ultimately by influencing whether greater global integration brings about greater gender equality and better lives for all women, or just for some.

This chapter discusses how the World Bank, international partners, and civil society can support countries in their efforts to promote gender equality and proposes an agenda for global action by the international development community that is complementary to the domestic public agenda for action presented in chapter 7.

The agenda calls for action by the international development community in five areas. These include the four priority areas identified in this Report (reducing gender gaps in health and education—particularly among severely disadvantaged populations, promoting access to economic opportunities among women, closing gender gaps in voice and agency, and preventing the intergenerational reproduction of gender inequality)—plus a fifth cross-cutting area, deploying data and knowledge as pillars for evidence-based public action. The agenda identifies those initiatives within each priority area where the rationale for global action is strongest and where the international development community has a comparative advantage.

RATIONALE FOR AND FOCUS OF A GLOBAL AGENDA

The motivation for an agenda for global action is threefold. First, progress on some fronts requires channeling more resources from rich to developing countries (for example, to create greater equity in human endowments or to tackle the root causes of excess female mortality around the world). Second, effective action sometimes hinges on producing a public good, such as generating new global information or knowledge. And third, when the impact of a particular policy cuts across borders, coordination among a large number of countries and institutions can enhance its effectiveness, not least by building momentum and pressure for action at the domestic level.

Based on these criteria, initiatives included in the proposed agenda for global action can be grouped into three types of activities:

- *Providing financial support.* Improvements in the delivery of clean water and sanitation or better health services, such as the ones needed to bring down excess female mortality among girls and mothers in the developing world, will require significant resources—often beyond the means of individual governments, particularly those of relatively poor countries. The international development community can financially support countries willing and able to undertake such reforms in a coordinated manner through specific initiatives or funding facilities to ensure maximum impact and minimize duplication.

- *Fostering innovation and learning.* A great deal has been learned about what works and what does not when it comes to promoting greater gender equality, yet progress is often held back by the lack of data or adequate solutions to “sticky” problems. That is the case, for example, regarding gender differences in time use patterns and the norms around care that foster these differences. The development community could promote innovation and learning through experimentation and evaluation in ways that pay attention to results and process, as well as to context, and could facilitate scaling up of successful experiences.
- *Leveraging effective partnerships.* As chapter 8 makes clear, successful reform often requires coalitions or partnerships that can act within and across borders. Such partnerships could be built among those in the international development community around funding issues, with academia and think tanks for the purpose of experimentation and learning,

and, more broadly, with the private sector in increasing access to economic opportunities. Together, they could support countries in leveraging the resources and information needed to successfully promote gender equality in today’s globalized world.

The relative importance of these three activities will obviously vary across countries. Table 9.1 provides a bird’s-eye view of the proposed agenda for global action. Within each priority area, the table identifies *new* or *additional* initiatives requiring support from the international development community, as well as in some cases existing initiatives where a refocus is called for (all marked with a check). For instance, expanding access to clean water requires new investments, as well as a redefinition of existing service delivery models that better takes into account health impacts. In all cases, the initiatives are consistent with and complementary to those presented in chapter 7 and satisfy the criteria for global action discussed above. Of course, im-

TABLE 9.1 *The agenda for global action at a glance*

Priority area	New/additional initiatives that need support	Directions for the global development community		
		Providing financial support	Fostering innovation and learning	Leveraging partnerships
Closing gender gaps in human endowments	Increasing access to education among disadvantaged groups	√		√
	Increasing access to clean water	√	√	
	Increasing access to specialized maternal services	√	√	√
	Strengthening support for prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS	√		√
Promoting women’s access to economic opportunities	Increasing access to child care and early childhood development	√	√	
	Investing in rural women		√	√
Closing gender gaps in voice and agency	Increasing women’s access to the justice system		√	
	Shifting norms regarding violence against women		√	√
Preventing intergenerational reproduction of gender inequality	Investing in adolescent girls and boys		√	
Supporting evidence-based public action	Generating new information	√		√
	Facilitating knowledge sharing and learning		√	

Source: WDR 2012 team.

portant ongoing efforts occur in the unchecked areas as well—for instance, innovation around the delivery models for the prevention of HIV/AIDS, or partnerships focused on adolescents. In these unchecked areas, the focus should be on sustaining ongoing efforts and partnerships and on meeting commitments.

Finally, the framework and analysis presented in the Report provide four general principles for policy and program design that can enhance the impact and effectiveness of global action across all priority areas and initiatives. These principles are

- *Comprehensive gender diagnostics as the basis for policy and program design.* Gender disparities persist for multiple reasons: there may be a single institutional or policy “fix” that is difficult and easily blocked; there may be multiple reinforcing constraints in markets, formal institutions, and households that combine to block progress; or there may be deeply rooted gender roles or social norms that evolve only slowly. Effective policy design requires a good understanding of which of these situations prevails, and of where and what are the binding constraints. To be useful, this diagnostic must drill down into what happens in households, markets, and formal institutions, their interactions and how they are shaped by social norms.
- *Targeting determinants versus targeting outcomes.* In choosing and designing policies, it is necessary to identify and target the market and institutional constraints that generate existing gender gaps, rather than targeting the outcomes themselves. These constraints may be multiple and are often outside the domain where the outcome is observed.
- *“Upstreaming” and strategic mainstreaming.* Because gender gaps often result from multiple and mutually reinforcing market and institutional constraints, effective policy action may require coordinated multisectoral interventions or sequential interventions. In many instances, such interventions can take the form of general policies that are made “gender smart” by incorporating gender-related issues into their design and implementation. To maximize impact, it is thus necessary for gender issues to be upstreamed from specific sector products and projects to country and

sector programs. This will allow for strategic gender mainstreaming.

- *No size fits all.* The nature, structure, and functioning of markets and institutions varies widely across countries as do norms and cultures, and, as a result, so do household and individual behavior. Depending on the context, the same policy can have very different results. And, as the discussion in chapter 8 made clear, there are multiple paths to reform. Policy design and implementation must be attuned to societal actors and the political economy of reform. Action (both global and domestic) is most likely to succeed when it has broad-based support, but political will and leadership from the top can be an engine of change.

WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT

Priority 1: Closing gender gaps in human endowments

● **Increasing access to education among severely disadvantaged populations**

THE FACTS

Gender issues in schooling are now increasingly concentrated in severely disadvantaged populations:

- In Vietnam, about 30 percent of ethnic minority women older than 15 years have never gone to school—this is three times more likely than ethnic majority women and twice more likely than ethnic minority men.
- In India, the median boy in the poorest fifth of the population reaches grade 6; the median girl only reaches grade 1.
- In 2008 in the Sub-Saharan African countries of Benin, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger, and Togo, the primary completion rate for girls was 75 percent or lower than that for boys.
- In Lesotho, educational gender gaps are reversed. While 70 percent of girls ages 15–19 years complete grade 7, merely 40 percent of boys do so.

Why do we care? A recap (chapter 3)

- Tremendous progress has been made in closing education gaps around the world.

At the same time, in poor and socially excluded populations or in countries with poor economic opportunities, low levels of schooling remain a problem. Education can increase women's and men's access to economic opportunities and productivity and strengthen their voice and agency. Efforts at leveling the playing field for primary and secondary education have to focus on severely disadvantaged populations, be they girls or boys, to ensure that they are not left behind in a globalized world.

What to do?

- **Providing financial resources.** Existing funding commitments need to be sustained and increased to bring in girls who are currently out of school. In some places, these out-of-school girls appear similar to those who are in school, suggesting that *supply-side* initiatives may increase their enrollment and completion rates. Building schools is the first step on the supply side, but it is not enough. To ensure that there are enough teachers, it is important to build up cohorts who are educated beyond the levels they are expected to teach. Financing should also support reforms to strengthen the governance, accountability, and information flows that ensure that schools and teachers are as effective as possible in raising learning and keeping children in school. In other places, where the supply is already in place, it may be low household incomes and poor returns to education that keep children out of school—whether these are boys or girls depends on what other opportunities there are for children. In such situations, *demand-side* interventions—such as conditional cash transfers that give households incentives to keep their children in school when times are bad—have proven successful in increasing enrollment in many countries around the world.
- **Leveraging partnerships.** The Education for All Fast Track Initiative—together with international partners and civil society—provides a strong, partnership-based framework for action. Efforts to mobilize external resources toward meeting the education Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) warrant urgent attention. While the plight of

out-of-school girls continues to be an international priority, in many developing countries it is now boys who are falling further and further behind in secondary school participation, and a lack of international action to reverse this trend poses significant risks. School dropout and underperformance are often associated with increasing likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors, crime and violence, or unsafe sexual behavior (see priority 4 below).

● Improving public health: Clean water, sanitation, waste removal, and vector control

THE FACTS

- Every year, 1.5 billion episodes of acute diarrhea occur among children under five, killing 2 million children.
- Reducing infectious diseases reduces child mortality—more so for girls. Between 1900 and 1930 large-scale public health, clean water, and sanitation campaigns wiped out historical patterns of excess female mortality in today's rich countries. In the United States, these campaigns accounted for virtually all the decline in child mortality during this period.
- The biggest impacts come from clean water at the point of use because considerable contamination occurs between source and use: Contamination of samples from improved water sources increased from 12 percent at source to 41 percent in household storage to 51 percent in drinking cups.

Why do we care? A recap (chapter 3)

- Private solutions can go only so far in reducing the burden of infectious diseases. Public investments are required both because of “externalities”—people with infectious diseases infect others—and because of the difficulties in learning about the causal pathways from actions to consequences.
- These investments will benefit both boys and girls—but especially girls. The provision of clean water, sanitation, vector control, and waste disposal used to be a standard part of public health packages in most countries, but their importance in health budgets has declined over the past three decades. It is time to reverse that trend.

What to do?

- **Providing financial resources.** A simple goal needs to be adopted: clean water for every household and a clean environment for children to grow up in. Reaching this goal requires substantive funding to build and maintain systems. Funding is needed not only for infrastructure improvements but also for systems of accountability that can ensure the continuation and sustainability of these services. In Sub-Saharan Africa alone the estimated costs of clean water run to \$11 billion a year. Large in absolute funding, this amount is small relative to the benefits: in the United States, the benefit-cost ratio of clean water in the early 20th century was 23 to 1.
- **Promoting innovation and learning.** Two areas need urgent attention. First, little systematic information is available on water contamination and even less on sanitation. Collecting and disseminating such data would help the global community to understand the scale of the problem and to monitor the impact of policies. Second, pharmaceutical innovations that provide immediate feedback on water quality to households would engender informed decisions. For instance, contaminated water usually looks clean, but a pill that changes water color when it is contaminated, together with point-of-use treatments like chlorine pills, could lead to immediate improvements even while better delivery systems are being developed.

- **Increasing access to specialized maternal services**

THE FACTS

- For every woman who dies during childbirth in Sweden, 1,000 women die during childbirth in Afghanistan, 815 women in Somalia, 495 in Nigeria, and 122 in Pakistan.
- Excess female mortality in low-income countries is tied to maternal mortality, as it was historically in rich countries. In Afghanistan, 1 out of every 11 women dies in childbirth, and many more face severe functional disabilities from associated risks like fistula and anemia.

Why do we care? A recap (chapter 3)

- Reductions in maternal mortality can increase female education because families in-

vest more in girls with a higher chance of survival in adulthood.

- Reductions in maternal mortality also reduce maternal morbidity, allowing women to lead more productive and healthy lives. Female labor force participation will also increase as lifelong disabilities associated with childbirth decline. Almost all the increase in labor force participation of married women between 1920 and 1950 in countries for which data are available can be attributed to reductions in maternal morbidity.
- And reductions are possible: when countries put their minds to it, maternal mortality has been brought down in a surprisingly short time.

What to do?

- **Providing financial support.** Many maternal deaths can be avoided if mothers give birth in institutions, but the institutions need to function well, with trained staff and surgeons and regular supplies. Providers need to be accountable to local communities—all too often critical health providers are “missing in action.” More funding could help establish a network of facilities dedicated to maternal and child care. These facilities could also engage in valuable outreach to provide prenatal care to expecting mothers.¹
- **Promoting innovation and learning.** In many countries, little is known about maternal mortality and still less about maternal morbidity. And because poor data systems and bad health go together, these are countries where the problem is worse. Investing in better vital registration data is an important step. New technology opens up new opportunities. For instance, increased mobile telephony would allow users to report any maternal death in any part of the world to a central global and open database. These reports could trigger a “maternal audit” so that every maternal death is recorded and publicized. The emphasis on every single death was a key part of successful campaigns to lower maternal mortality in countries like Turkey and Honduras.
- **Leveraging partnerships.** A renewed emphasis on maternal mortality has led to the creation of a partnership, the Grand Challenge for Development, between bilateral

and multilateral agencies and private foundations. This partnership is key to monitoring and building accountability and sharing knowledge. Further partnerships include South-South knowledge exchange programs where countries such as Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Turkey, and Honduras—which sharply decreased maternal mortality in a short time—participate on a global platform to share their experiences.

- **Strengthening support for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS**

THE FACTS

- In countries with high HIV/AIDS prevalence in Sub-Saharan Africa, excess mortality among women under age 60 increased close to 10-fold between 1990 and 2008.
- Adult mortality rates in some southern African countries increased 5-fold between 1980 and 2008 and approached those seen in Rwanda and Cambodia in genocide years.
- An enormous global effort has led to better treatment and better availability of treatment. Innumerable lives are now being saved every day around the world.

Why do we care? A recap (chapter 3)

- The HIV/AIDS epidemic has hit women in Sub-Saharan Africa particularly hard. Greater availability of treatment is saving lives of those affected with HIV around the world. But much remains to be done.

What to do?

- **Providing financial support.** Increasing funding and sustaining existing efforts can ensure universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support by 2015. A new strategic investment framework suggests that investments need to increase from the current \$16 billion a year to \$22 billion a year by 2015. After 2015, resource needs will decline as coverage reaches target rates, efficiency gains from scaling up are realized, and new infections start to decline.
- **Leveraging partnerships.** The existing partnerships through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) are shining examples of interna-

tional coordination that need to be sustained and scaled up.²

Priority 2: Promoting women's access to economic opportunities

- **Increasing access to child care and early childhood development programs**

THE FACTS

- Married women with children under age six spend 14 to 42 percent of their nonleisure time on child care, compared with 1 to 20 percent for married men.
- In 62 countries, of 113 with data, the availability of child care—both formal and informal—is limited or very limited as a result of high costs, insufficient supply, or both. And in most countries where child care is available, it is informally provided by extended family members.

Why do we care? A recap (chapter 5)

- Gender differences in care (and housework) responsibilities imply that women face important fixed costs associated with market work. They are also more likely to value flexible work arrangements and to supply fewer hours of work than men, with a potential risk of being channeled into lower-quality, lower-pay jobs.
- Access to (subsidized) child care is associated with increases in the number of hours spent in market work and, in developing countries, with access to formal employment. Where care options are not available, the opposite is true—for instance, in Botswana, Guatemala, Mexico, and Vietnam, the lack of child care pushes mothers into informal employment.
- (Subsidized) child care can provide an effective platform for the delivery of developmental and nutritional interventions for small children, particularly in low-income settings and among poor households.

What to do?

- **Providing financial support.** Increasing access to quality child care for those who currently do not have access or who rely on informal arrangements will require additional resources—often beyond the means of interested governments. These resources can be

used to directly finance the provision of services or to subsidize the use of existing services, where affordability—rather than supply—is the main constraint.

- **Fostering innovation and learning.** Most successful child-care delivery models have been tested and evaluated in urban (often middle-income) settings; however, significantly less is known about what works and what does not in rural areas or for transient populations. The international development community could support experimentation in this area with a focus on delivery models that address the needs of the poor, who are most likely to use informal care arrangements with potentially negative consequences for children and for those providing the care—frequently older sisters. Attention should also be paid to the possibility of using the provision of child care as an opportunity to create employment locally, while ensuring caregivers are adequately trained. Successful experiences could then be scaled up through the funding window.

● Investing in rural women

THE FACTS

- Women represent 43 percent of the rural workforce.
- For those developing countries for which data is available, women represent only 10 to 20 percent of landholders, and farms operated by female-headed households are smaller in almost all countries. Female farmers and rural entrepreneurs—particularly those running small businesses—are less likely to receive (formal) credit than their male counterparts.
- Women are not worse farmers than men, but lower access to productive inputs and technology means that the average agricultural productivity among female farmers is 20 to 30 percent lower than that of their male counterparts.
- A woman is still 21 percent less likely to own a mobile phone than a man; that rate is 23 percent in Africa, 24 percent in the Middle East, and 37 percent in South Asia. Nearly half a billion women in the developing world have access to a mobile phone only by borrowing it.

Why do we care? A recap (chapters 5 and 6)

- According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, equalizing access to productive resources between female and male farmers could increase agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent.
- Cell phone access and use can alleviate time and mobility constraints for women—particularly those in rural areas—by cutting down the physical labor or travel required to get information, reducing the costs of money transfers, and increasing women's ability to balance family and work life. Over 40 percent of rural women in Bolivia, the Arab Republic of Egypt, India, and Kenya declared that owning a mobile phone had increased their access to economic opportunities and their income, with higher impacts among female entrepreneurs.
- Putting money in the hands of rural women will empower them in and outside their households and will also benefit others in their families.

What to do?

- **Fostering innovation and learning.** Few financial institutions offer products specifically tailored to the needs of female farmers and entrepreneurs. Access to extension services and farmer field schools is still very low, and the information and resources they provide are not always relevant for female farmers. Mobile phones can provide an effective platform for the delivery of information and services to rural populations, but existing gender gaps in access can translate into limited benefits for women. The international development community can support experimentation in three key areas: access to formal credit, access to agricultural technology and knowledge, and access to information and communication technologies—particularly mobile phones. The focus should be on testing and evaluating new business and delivery models that effectively respond to women's needs within local contexts.
- **Leveraging partnerships.** The international development community can partner with the private sector to ensure that successful innovations grow into new services for rural

women, and with academic institutions, civil society, and think tanks to adequately evaluate the impact of these models.

Priority 3: Closing gender gaps in voice and agency

● Increasing women's access to justice

THE FACTS

- 187 countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women, but such rights have not necessarily become effective because women have limited mechanisms to demand that their rights be enforced and to seek redress.
- In many situations lack of awareness of rights, high direct costs, and mobility constraints prevent women from actively demanding enforcement.
- In 9 countries from different regions, only 10 percent of women who had been physically abused reported the event or sought services.
- In Indonesia, the average cost of a divorce case was \$220—around 10 times a poor woman's monthly income. Fee waivers have led to increased access.

Why do we care? A recap (chapter 4)

- Effective rights matter for women. Improvement in the legal status of girls can, by increasing their value, induce other changes: investments in girls' education may increase, ages at marriage may increase, and child-bearing may be delayed. Laws that increase control over income and assets can improve women's position within their own households, and laws that allow or facilitate divorce can increase women's ability to choose.
- For laws to be effective, enforcement needs to be improved and women's access to justice increased.

What to do?

- **Promoting innovation and learning.** Improving women's access to justice requires collection and publication of gender-disaggregated data on access and use; an increase in women's representation in the organizations charged with the formula-

tion, implementation, and enforcement of the law; and the raising of awareness in different elements of the justice systems to make them more sensitive to women's needs. The international development community can support the implementation and evaluation of innovative approaches in these three areas, as well as the evaluation of promising ongoing initiatives. In doing so, attention should be paid to the role that technology, particularly mobile phones, can play in fostering the dissemination of data and other information, as well as in enhancing the accountability of legal institutions.

● Shifting norms regarding domestic violence

THE FACTS

- Domestic violence statistics around the world are horrifying:
 - At least 1 of every 10 ever-partnered women is physically or sexually assaulted by an intimate partner or someone she knows at some point in her life.
 - Even a seemingly low domestic abuse incidence rate of 3 percent in Poland translates into 1,465 women being abused each day.
 - 14 million, or 81 percent of, Ethiopian women ages 15–49 think being beaten by their husbands for disagreeing with him, burning the food, or refusing to have sex is justifiable.
- The prevalence of domestic violence varies greatly across countries with no clear relationship to incomes, but violence against women is higher in societies with higher gender inequality.
- Increased women's education has a protective influence by altering population attitudes toward lower acceptability of violence. Women's asset ownership is associated with lower violence incidence in Colombia, India, South Africa, and Uganda.

Why do we care? A recap (chapter 4)

- Violence is the opposite of freedom—an extreme form of coercion that is by definition the negation of agency. Women are at far greater risk of violence from an intimate

partner or somebody they know than from violence by other people. And women are more likely than men to be killed, seriously injured, or victims of sexual violence from intimate partners.

- The threat of violence can affect women's ability to freely choose and to take advantage of endowments and opportunities.
- Domestic violence has also been associated with long-term health outcomes, negative health outcomes among the children of abused women, and the intergenerational reproduction of the acceptance of violence.

What to do?

- **Promoting innovation and learning.** The international development community can support innovation and learning in three different ways. First, it can invest in rigorously evaluating ongoing initiatives and improving the quality of existing data. Second, it can help scale up those innovations that have worked. And, third, it can help test new approaches aimed at shifting norms regarding violence against women. Two types of programs hold promise for testing new approaches: education and awareness campaigns (targeted to couples), and interventions that increase women's bargaining power within the household. In both cases a broad focus is needed to account for some higher-level determinants, such as norms on income generation and asset ownership and control, legal frameworks on marriage, and divorce and child custody. Finally, bringing service providers—police and judiciary, health, and social services—closer to women to deal with time and mobility constraints can not only help victims but also contribute to changing norms in the community. Experimentation can focus, among other things, on access to paralegals and mobile legal aid clinics for women to use the justice system.
- **Leveraging partnerships.** The international development community should continue to support initiatives such as the United Nations (UN) Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which provides funding to grassroots organizations devoted to the pre-

vention of violence against women, including those in remote or excluded populations.

Priority 4: Preventing the intergenerational reproduction of gender inequality

● **Investing in adolescent boys and girls**

THE FACTS

- The number of adolescents, boys and girls, who are out of school is similar to that of children of primary school age who are out of school (70 million versus 69 million); yet the problem has received limited attention. Some of them have not completed primary schooling, but a large fraction simply dropped out of secondary school. Teenage pregnancy, risky behaviors, and the need to work (either at home or in the market) account for a significant share of dropouts.
- Approximately 16 million girls, ages 15–19, become mothers every year, with 95 percent of these births happening in developing countries. This makes up 11 percent of all births worldwide.
- Young men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators and the victims of violent crime. In South Africa, between 1982 and 1990, murder caused close to half of all deaths of young men between the ages of 16 and 30—the primary cause of death in this age group.

Why do we care? A recap (chapter 3, 4, and 5)

- The “stickiest” aspect of gender outcomes is the way patterns of gender inequality are reproduced over time, and adolescence is a particularly important period in this regard. Gender norms and roles become more binding, and the prevalence of risky social and sexual behaviors increases. In addition, adolescents are underserved by existing institutions, including health systems and labor markets, have limited control over assets, and have lower access to networks.
- In a world where education and skills are becoming increasingly important, keeping young girls and boys in school (and out of trouble) and helping them transition smoothly into the labor market can have

large payoffs both in improved gender outcomes and in economic efficiency.

What to do?

- **Promoting innovation and learning.** Young girls and boys can benefit from access to a network of peers with shared values and aspirations; they can learn from and be inspired by others. The international development community can support experimentation around programs that focus on the creation of “safe spaces”—through support to networks of adolescents with common objectives and expectations—and the promotion of role models. Those transitioning into the labor market can also benefit from interventions that help them overcome information and other constraints that may be particularly binding for new market entrants. In this respect, experimentation with active labor market policies targeted to youth, including placement and apprenticeship programs, wage subsidies, and training hold significant promise, as does experimentation with second-chance programs. Innovative approaches in these three areas have been piloted and, in some cases, evaluated under the Adolescent Girls Initiative, and could be taken to scale and adapted to different contexts.

Priority 5: Supporting evidence-based public action

● **Generating new information**

THE FACTS

- Only 8 of 65 surveys examined (including national household and labor force surveys, and specialized surveys covering rural areas) contain information on land ownership at the individual level; information on ownership of consumer and productive durables, livestock, and other assets is more limited (in most cases 1 survey of 65). And information on decision making within the household is also scarce, with questions being asked only in specialized surveys (such as the Demographic and Health Surveys) and often only of women.
- The coverage and reliability of vital statistics on births, marriages, divorces, deaths (and its

causes), and other important life events remain a challenge in most of the world. The same is true of property registries, including those for land and real estate.

Why do we care? A recap (chapters 3, 4, and 7)

- A key challenge for advances in gender equality is the availability of gender-relevant data.
- Gender analyses of social conditions and the incidence of poverty often rely on comparisons between male- and female-headed households. Still, measuring gender gaps based on characteristics of household heads is based on the underlying assumption that households are undifferentiated units, that resources are evenly shared, and that no intrahousehold inequality exists—assumptions the evidence contradicts.
- Knowledge about what happens within households continues to be, at best, insufficient and, at worst, nonexistent. This knowledge, however, is key to understanding and tackling many of the gender gaps identified in this Report. Information about who controls and has access to different resources, who makes decisions and how those decisions take into account or reflect the views and interests of others within the household, and what factors shape the available options can help identify the most binding constraints behind specific gaps and hence inform the design and implementation of public policy.
- Accurate recording of life events and property are essential to ensure adequate enforcement of existing laws and to fill in important knowledge gaps (for instance, about cause of death).

What to do?

- **Providing financial support.** The international development community can provide resources for the improvement of existing surveys and country information systems. New survey modules can be developed that include questions on assets (ownership, use, registration status when relevant, and path to accumulation), family businesses (ownership and decision-making capacity, employment of household members), time use, and

individual consumption. Clear entry points could be the Living Standards Measurement Study, Demographic and Health Surveys, and other cross-country survey platforms. Resources are also needed to strengthen country information systems by simplifying administrative and registration procedures and computerizing database management to increase the coverage and accuracy of existing records. Emphasis should be put on moving from one-off efforts to sustained action on gender-relevant data collection to provide opportunities for longitudinal trend analyses and overcome the paucity of reliable, high-quality information.

- **Leveraging partnerships.** UN Women—the United Nations organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women—can play a leadership role in this area. The international development community should continue to support existing initiatives, such as the World Bank Statistical Capacity Building program, in these areas and to help forge effective partnerships to promote sharing of information, knowledge, and experiences.

- **Facilitating knowledge sharing and learning**

THE FACTS

- There is limited research on low-income countries, and this knowledge is hard to find and access.
- A survey of the top 202 economics journals between 1985 and 2004 found seven papers published on Afghanistan, one on Chad, two on the Democratic Republic of Congo, and four on Eritrea. These were on all topics.
- There is no systematic way to search for information on gender, parse out the high-quality work, and obtain information on local initiatives that work.

Why do we care? A recap (chapter 7)

- Information and knowledge are crucial to adequately diagnose existing problems, identify relevant constraints, and design effective policy responses.
- Every year, knowledge is lost because entrepreneurs and organizations working at the

frontiers of program design and implementation have no systematic way of moving that knowledge “up” the global chain.

What to do?

- **Promoting innovation and learning.** There is no global repository of knowledge on gender issues. A global repository would serve as a single source for knowledge and information about gender issues, but that is not enough. New technological advances could be used to create a more democratic and open data system that allows us to learn from the best examples around the world. One part of such a global repository would systematize existing information on gender from reports, research, and evaluations of programs. This indexed and searchable database would become a “one-stop shop” for stakeholders and individuals to obtain more information about gender issues. User feedback and reviews would allow for an interactive site that filters high-quality knowledge and points to the global gaps in our understanding.

A second part of the global repository would use new technology to democratize knowledge about gender issues in an open submission system. The Internet and mobile telephony could be used to “crowd-source” information about new initiatives, even at a very small scale, much like in systems such as Ushahidi, an open source project that allows users to crowd-source crisis information to be sent via mobile phone. Allowing those at the front lines to provide information and feedback on gender initiatives can increase knowledge and recognition of gender activities around the world, and this information can feedback into the global community’s understanding of what works and what does not. A global repository could capitalize on ongoing initiatives, such as the World Bank Open Data Initiative, but will still require committed funding to set up and maintain.

NOTES

1. High Level Taskforce on International Innovative Financing for Health Systems 2009. The Technical Working Group 1 of this taskforce argued that strengthening health systems is key to reducing

maternal mortality. Their costing exercise suggests that the health MDGs could be achieved with an additional cost by 2015 of \$36 billion—\$45 billion a year.

2. Schwartländer and others 2011.

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