

world development report **2012**

*Gender Equality  
and Development*



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and Development*



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# Foreword

The lives of girls and women have changed dramatically over the past quarter century. Today, more girls and women are literate than ever before, and in a third of developing countries, there are more girls in school than boys. Women now make up over 40 percent of the global labor force. Moreover, women live longer than men in all regions of the world. The pace of change has been astonishing—indeed, in many developing countries, they have been faster than the equivalent changes in developed countries: What took the United States 40 years to achieve in increasing girls’ school enrollment has taken Morocco just a decade.

In some areas, however, progress toward gender equality has been limited—even in developed countries. Girls and women who are poor, live in remote areas, are disabled, or belong to minority groups continue to lag behind. Too many girls and women are still dying in childhood and in the reproductive ages. Women still fall behind in earnings and productivity, and in the strength of their voices in society. In some areas, such as education, there is now a gender gap to the disadvantage of men and boys.

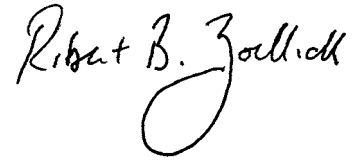
The main message of this year’s *World Development Report: Gender Equality and Development* is that these patterns of progress and persistence in gender equality matter, both for development outcomes and policy making. They matter because gender equality is a core development objective in its own right. But greater gender equality is also smart economics, enhancing productivity and improving other development outcomes, including prospects for the next generation and for the quality of societal policies and institutions. Economic development is not enough to shrink all gender disparities—corrective policies that focus on persisting gender gaps are essential.

This Report points to four priority areas for policy going forward. First, reducing gender gaps in human capital—specifically those that address female mortality and education. Second, closing gender gaps in access to economic opportunities, earnings, and productivity. Third, shrinking gender differences in voice and agency within society. Fourth, limiting the reproduction of gender inequality across generations. These are all areas where higher incomes by themselves do little to reduce gender gaps, but focused policies can have a real impact.

Public actions need to address the underlying determinants of gender gaps in each priority area—in some cases, improving service delivery (especially for clean water, sanitation, and maternal care), for others, tackling constraints that originate in the workings of markets and institutions to limit progress (for example, in reducing gender gaps in earnings and productivity).

Development partners can complement public action. In each of the four priority areas, efforts need more funding (particularly to support the poorest countries as they address female mortality and gender gaps in education); better gender-disaggregated data; more experimentation and systematic evaluation; and broader partnerships that include the private sector, development agencies, and civil society organizations.

Gender equality is at the heart of development. It's the right development objective, and it's smart economic policy. *The World Development Report 2012* can help both countries and international partners think through and integrate a focus on gender equality into development policy making and programming.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert B. Zoellick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Robert B. Zoellick  
President  
The World Bank Group

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# Abbreviations and data notes

## ABBREVIATIONS

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| AIDS     | acquired immunodeficiency syndrome   |
| ALMPs    | active labor market policies   |
| ANC      | African National Congress  |
| APEC     | Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation  |
| ART      | antiretroviral therapy   |
| ASEAN    | Association of Southeast Asian Nations   |
| ATM      | automated teller machine   |
| AUSAID   | Australian Agency for International Development  |
| BPO      | business process outsourcing   |
| CARICOM  | Caribbean Community  |
| CCT      | conditional cash transfer  |
| CEDAW    | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women                       |
| CGAP     | Consultative Group to Assist the Poor  |
| CIDA     | Canadian International Development Agency  |
| CIM-OAS  | Inter-American Commission of Women (Organization of American States)                             |
| CWDI     | Corporate Women Directors International  |
| DANIDA   | Danish International Development Agency  |
| DFCU     | Development Finance Company of Uganda  |
| DFID     | United Kingdom Department for International Development  |
| EAP      | East Asia and Pacific Region   |
| ECA      | Europe and Central Asia Region   |
| ECD      | early child development  |
| ECOSOC   | Economic and social council (United Nations)   |
| EdAttain | Education Attainment and Enrollment around the World database                                    |
| EFM      | excess female mortality  |
| EU       | European Union   |
| EU-SILC  | European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions  |
| FAO      | Food and Agriculture Organization  |
| FDI      | foreign direct investment  |
| FENATRAD | <i>Federação Nacional dos Trabalhadores Domésticos</i> (National Federation of Domestic Workers) |
| FGC      | female genital cutting   |
| FHHH     | female-headed households   |
| FINCA    | Foundation for International Community Assistance  |
| FLFPR    | female labor force participation rate  |
| FPE      | free primary education   |

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| GBA                | Global Banking Alliance for Women   |
| GDP                | gross domestic product  |
| GEME               | Gender Equity Model Egypt   |
| HDI                | Human Development Index   |
| HIV                | human immunodeficiency virus  |
| I2D2               | International Income Distribution Database  |
| ICRW               | International Center for the Research on Women  |
| ICT                | information and communications technology   |
| IFC                | International Finance Corporation   |
| ILO                | International Labor Organization  |
| ITES               | information technology enabled service  |
| ITU                | International Telecommunications Union  |
| JICA               | Japan International Cooperation Agency  |
| KCP                | Knowledge for Change Program  |
| LABORSTA           | International Labour Organization Bureau of Statistics database   |
| LAC                | Latin America and the Caribbean Region  |
| LFPRs              | labor force participation rates   |
| MCC                | Millennium Challenge Corporation  |
| MDGs               | Millennium Development Goals  |
| MNA                | Middle East and North Africa Region   |
| MHHH               | male-headed households  |
| MMR                | maternal mortality rate   |
| MTUS               | Multinational Time Use Study  |
| NAALC              | North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation   |
| NAFTA              | North American Free Trade Agreement   |
| NGO                | nongovernmental organization  |
| NHO                | <i>Næringslivets Hovedorganisasjon</i> (Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises)   |
| NORAD              | Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation  |
| NSS                | national statistical systems  |
| OECD               | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  |
| OECD-DAC Gendernet | Development Assistance Committee's Network on Gender Equality of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PEKKA              | <i>Pemberdayaan Perempuan Kepala Keluarga</i> (Female-Headed Households Empowerment Program)                                |
| PETT               | <i>Proyecto Especial de Titulación de Tierras</i> (Special Land Titling Project)  |
| PISA               | Program for International Student Assessment  |
| PROBECAT           | <i>Programa de Becas de Capacitación para Trabajadores</i> (Labor Retraining Scholarship Program)                           |
| REFLEX             | Research into Employment and Professional Flexibility database  |
| RIGA               | Rural Income Generating Activities database   |
| ROSCAs             | rotating savings and credit associations  |
| SADC               | Southern African Development Community  |
| SAR                | South Asia Region   |
| SDC                | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation  |
| SERNAM             | <i>Servicio Nacional de la Mujer</i> (National Women's Service)   |
| SEWA               | Self-employed Women's Association   |
| SIDA               | Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency  |
| SMEs               | small and medium enterprises  |

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| SSA        | Sub-Saharan Africa Region  |
| UIS        | UNESCO Institute for Statistics  |
| UNAIDS     | Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS                               |
| UNDP       | United Nations Development Programme                                   |
| UNESCO     | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization       |
| UN-HABITAT | United Nations Human Settlements Program                               |
| UNICEF     | United Nations Children's Fund   |
| UNIFEM     | United Nations Development Fund for Women                              |
| UNRISD     | United Nations Research Institute for Social Development               |
| UN WOMEN   | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women |
| USAID      | United States Agency for International Development                     |
| WHO        | World Health Organization  |
| WINGOs     | women's international nongovernmental organizations                    |

## DATA NOTES

The countries included in regional and income groupings in this Report are listed in the Classification of Economies table at the end of the Selected World Development Indicators. Income classifications are based on GNP per capita; thresholds for income classifications in this edition may be found in the Introduction to Selected World Development Indicators. Group averages reported in the figures and tables are unweighted averages of the countries in the group, unless noted to the contrary.

The use of the word *countries* to refer to economies implies no judgment by the World Bank about the legal or other status of a territory. The term *developing countries* includes low- and middle-income economies and thus may include economies in transition from central planning, as a matter of convenience. The term *advanced countries* may be used as a matter of convenience to denote high-income economies.

*Note:* Dollar figures are current U.S. dollars, unless otherwise specified. *Billion* means 1,000 million; *trillion* means 1,000 billion.



# Main Messages of the *World Development Report 2012*

## GENDER EQUALITY MATTERS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Gender equality is a core development objective in its own right. It is also smart economics. Greater gender equality can enhance productivity, improve development outcomes for the next generation, and make institutions more representative.

- **Productivity gains.** Women now represent 40 percent of the global labor force, 43 percent of the world's agricultural labor force, and more than half the world's university students. Productivity will be raised if their skills and talents are used more fully. For example, if women farmers were to have the same access as men to fertilizers and other inputs, maize yields would increase by almost one-sixth in Malawi and Ghana. And eliminating barriers that discriminate against women working in certain sectors or occupations could increase labor productivity by as much as 25 percent in some countries.
- **Improved outcomes for the next generation.** Greater control over household resources by women can enhance countries' growth prospects by changing spending patterns in ways that benefit children. And improvements in women's education and health have been linked to better outcomes for their children in countries as varied as Brazil, Nepal, Pakistan, and Senegal.
- **More representative decision making.** Gender equality matters for society more broadly.

Empowering women as economic, political, and social actors can change policy choices and make institutions more representative of a range of voices. In India, giving power to women at the local level led to increases in the provision of public goods, such as water and sanitation, which mattered more to women.

## DEVELOPMENT HAS CLOSED SOME GENDER GAPS . . .

The disadvantages faced by women and girls that have shrunk most rapidly over the past quarter century include:

- **Educational enrollment.** Gender gaps in primary education have closed in almost all countries. In secondary education, these gaps are closing rapidly and have reversed in many countries, especially in Latin America, the Caribbean, and East Asia—but it is now boys and young men who are disadvantaged. Among developing countries, girls now outnumber boys in secondary schools in 45 countries and there are more young women than men in universities in 60 countries.
- **Life expectancy.** Since 1980, women are living longer than men in *all* parts of the world. And, in low-income countries, women now live 20 years longer on average than they did in 1960.
- **Labor force participation.** Over half a billion women have joined the world's labor force

over the last 30 years as women's participation in paid work has risen in most of the developing world. An important reason has been the unprecedented reduction in fertility in developing countries as diverse as Bangladesh, Colombia, and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

### ... BUT OTHER GAPS PERSIST

Gender disparities still remain in many areas, and even in rich countries. The most persistent and egregious gaps include:

- **Excess deaths of girls and women.** Females are more likely to die, relative to males, in many low- and middle-income countries than their counterparts in rich countries. These deaths are estimated at about 3.9 million women and girls under the age of 60 each year. About two-fifths of them are never born, one-sixth die in early childhood, and over one-third die in their reproductive years. And this number is growing in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in childhood and the reproductive years and in the countries hardest hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
- **Disparities in girls' schooling.** Despite the overall progress, primary and secondary school enrollments for girls remain much lower than for boys for disadvantaged populations in many Sub-Saharan countries and some parts of South Asia.
- **Unequal access to economic opportunities.** Women are more likely than men to work as unpaid family laborers or in the informal sector. Women farmers tend to farm smaller plots and less profitable crops than men. Women entrepreneurs operate in smaller firms and less profitable sectors. As a result, women everywhere tend to earn less than men.
- **Differences in voice in households and in society.** In many countries, women—especially poor women—have less say over decisions and less control over resources in their households. And in most countries, women participate less in formal politics than men and are underrepresented in its upper echelons.

## UNDERSTANDING PROGRESS AND PERSISTENCE

**Income growth by itself does not deliver greater gender equality on all fronts.** Indeed, where gender gaps have closed quickly, it is because of how *markets* and *institutions—formal and informal*—have functioned and evolved, how *growth* has played out, and how all these factors have interacted through *household* decisions. For example, in education, income growth (by loosening budget constraints), markets (by opening new employment opportunities for women), and formal institutions (by expanding schools and lowering costs) have all come together to influence household decisions in favor of educating girls and young women across a broad range of countries.

**Gender gaps persist where girls and women face other disadvantages.** For poor women in poor places, sizable gender gaps remain. And these disparities are even larger when poverty combines with other forms of exclusion, such as remoteness, ethnicity, and disability. For ethnic minority women in Vietnam, for instance, more than 60 percent of childbirths occur without prenatal care—twice as many as for the majority Kinh women.

**Markets, institutions, and households can also combine to limit progress.** Gender gaps in productivity and earnings, for example, are pervasive. And they are driven by deep-seated gender differences in time use (reflecting social norms about house and care work), in rights of ownership and control over land and assets, and in the workings of markets and formal institutions, which work in ways that disadvantage women.

**Globalization can help.** In today's globalized world, forces such as trade openness and the spread of cheaper information and communication technologies have the potential to reduce gender disparities by connecting women to markets and economic opportunities, reshaping attitudes and norms among women and men about gender relations, and encouraging countries to promote gender equality. But their impact will be muted without effective domestic public action.

## PRIORITIES FOR DOMESTIC POLICY ACTION

Policy makers in developing countries will need to focus on those gender gaps where the payoffs for development are potentially the largest, higher incomes by themselves do little to reduce these gaps, and a reorientation of policies would yield the greatest benefit. These priorities are:

- Addressing excess deaths of girls and women and eliminating gender disadvantage in education where these remain entrenched.
- Closing differences in access to economic opportunities and the ensuing earnings and productivity gaps between women and men.
- Shrinking gender differences in voice within households and societies.
- Limiting the reproduction of gender inequality across generations.

Focused and sustained domestic public action is essential to bring about gender equality. And to be effective, these policies will need to target the root causes of gender gaps. In some areas, as with maternal mortality, governments will need to address the single binding constraint to progress (weak service delivery institutions). In others, as with differential access to economic opportunities, policies will be needed that tackle the multiple constraints that come from the workings of markets and institutions to limit progress. In these cases, policy makers will need to prioritize these constraints and address them simultaneously or sequentially.

- **To reduce excess deaths of girls and women** in infancy, early childhood, and the reproductive years, policy action to improve the delivery of services (especially of clean water, sanitation, and maternal care) is of primary importance. Vietnam has been able to reduce excess mortality among young girls by expanding access to clean water and sanitation. And Turkey has reduced maternal mortality through improved health care delivery and a focus on expectant mothers.
- **To shrink persisting educational gaps**, policies need to improve access for girls

and young women when poverty, ethnicity, or geography excludes them, and to reach boys where gender disadvantages have reversed. Cash transfers conditioned on school attendance are often effective in reaching these groups. Pakistan has used such transfers to get girls from poor families to school, while Jamaica has relied on them to keep at-risk boys in school.

- **To narrow disparities between women and men in earnings and productivity**, a combination of policies is needed to address the various constraints that disproportionately affect women's access to economic opportunities. Depending on context, these include measures to:
  - Lift women's time constraints, by providing child care as with Colombia's subsidized day-care programs for working mothers, and improving infrastructure as with South Africa's rural electrification program.
  - Improve women's access to productive resources, especially to land as was done in Ethiopia by granting joint land titles to wives and husbands, and to credit as in Bangladesh.
  - Tackle information problems and institutional biases that work against women. These include the use of quotas or job placement programs as is being done in Jordan, or reforming gender biases in service delivery institutions as was done for agricultural extension through women's self-help groups in the Indian state of Orissa.
- **To diminish gender differences in household and societal voice**, policies need to address the combined influence of social norms and beliefs, women's access to economic opportunities, the legal framework, and women's education and skills:
  - To equalize voice within households, measures that increase women's control over household resources and laws that enhance the ability of women to accumulate assets, especially by strengthening their property rights, are of particular importance. Recent reforms of family law in Morocco that equalized the ownership rights of husbands and wives over property acquired during marriage are an example.

- To increase women's voice in society, policies include quotas on political representation, as has been done by many countries across the world, and measures to foster and train future women leaders and involve women more in groups such as trade unions and professional associations.
  - **To limit the reproduction of gender inequality across generations**, it is important to reach adolescents and young adults because this is the age when they make decisions that determine their acquisition of skills, future health, economic prospects, and aspirations. Interventions, therefore, need to focus on:
    - Building human and social capital as cash transfer programs have done in Malawi, and improving information about returns to education and health education programs, which has kept boys in school in the Dominican Republic;
    - Facilitating the transition from school to work with job and life skills training programs as in Uganda; and
    - Shifting aspirations as with exposure to role models such as woman political leaders in India who challenge prevailing social norms.
- complementing these efforts in each of these four priority areas and, more generally, in supporting evidence-based public action through better data, impact evaluation, and learning.
- In some areas, as with educational gender gaps, this will require adjusting current support, such as ensuring that the Education for All Fast Track Initiative reaches disadvantaged girls and boys, or sustaining existing efforts, as with partnerships focused on adolescent girls.
  - In other areas, it will demand new or additional action on multiple fronts—some combination of more funding, coordinated efforts to foster innovation and learning, and more effective partnerships.
    - The funding should be directed particularly to supporting the poorest countries in reducing excess deaths of girls and women (through investments in clean water and sanitation and maternal health services) and removing persistent gender gaps in education.
    - More support is needed especially to improve the availability of gender-disaggregated data and to foster more experimentation and systematic evaluation of mechanisms to improve women's access to markets, services, and justice.
    - The partnerships should extend beyond governments and development agencies to include the private sector, civil society organizations, and academic institutions in developing and rich countries.

## THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

While domestic policy action is crucial, the international community can play a role in

