

Chapter 6

MDG 3: Gender Equality

Women commonly are found to have less attainment than men across the fields of employment, education and politics. Yet the promotion of equality and economic and social empowerment for girls and women is widely recognised as an important catalyst for development, not least because over half the world's population is female.

In some countries the gender gap is closing. In many states girls are doing better than boys. But in employment and in parliamentary representation there is much to be done to move towards equality, especially in the 46 small states, where the performance of some countries has been poor or has gone into reverse since 1990. In seven of the small states not a single parliamentary seat was held by a woman.

Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women

Target 3A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015

Indicators:

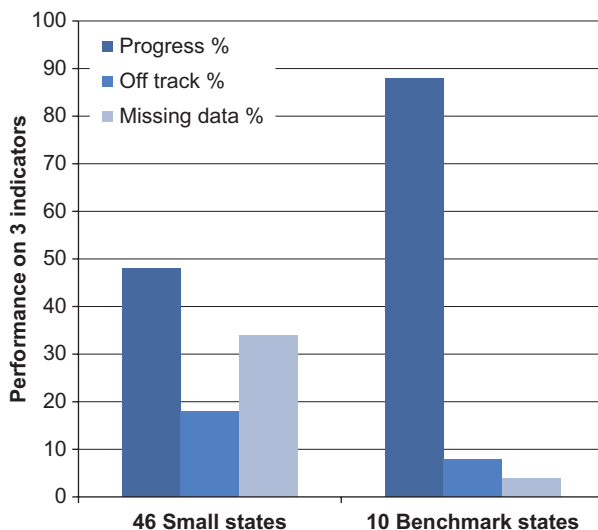
- 3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
- 3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
- 3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

This MDG has one target, three indicators and two sub-indicators (a total of 230 cases of assessment¹ that have to be made for reporting progress in the 46 small states). Indicator 3.1 for gender equality in education is divided into three sub-indicators: 3.1.1 for primary education; 3.1.2 for secondary education; and 3.1.3 for tertiary education. All five indicators for this MDG have universal target values of 50 per cent.

6.1 Overall performance

Figure 6.1 shows that the 10 benchmark states outperformed the 46 small states in making progress towards gender equality across the five indicators.

Figure 6.1 Performance on MDG 3: Gender equality



Source: UN MDG database 2010

In the 230 assessments on gender equality for the 46 small states, in 54 cases (23%) they achieved the indicator; in 57 cases (25%) they were on-track; and in 41 cases (18%) they were off-track. In 78 cases (34%) missing data prevented assessment of progress.

Including missing data, the 46 small states made 48 per cent progress, with 18 per cent off-track and 34 per cent missing data.

The benchmark states substantially outperformed the 46 small states in progress on gender equality. The MDG was achieved in 48 per cent of cases by the 10 benchmark states,² compared with 23 per cent of cases by the 46 small states. There were 4 per cent missing data for the 10 benchmark states, compared with 34 per cent missing data for the 46 small states.

When missing data were included, the 10 benchmark states reported 88 per cent progress compared with 48 per cent progress for the 46 small states.

6.2 Target 3A: Gender equality in education

6.2.1 Indicator 3.1: Ratio of girls to boys in education

There are three indicators for gender equality in education, covering primary, secondary and tertiary

levels. By 2007, the 46 small states achieved gender equality in education (primary, secondary and tertiary) in 52 cases (38%).³ In a further 14 cases (10%) they were on-track and in 26 cases (19%) they were off-track. In 46 cases (33%) missing data prevented assessment of progress. Thus the 46 small states made progress in 52 per cent of cases.

In 26 cases (19%) the 46 small states were off-track. In many of these, however, the difference between the baseline and latest values were marginal and close to target. For example, in Botswana the gender equality in primary education indicator fell between 1990 and 2007 from 1.07 to 0.99; in Cyprus it fell from 1.00 to 0.99; and in Guyana from 0.99 to 0.98. In each case this scored as 'off-track'.

Similarly, in secondary education the gender equality indicator fell between 1990 and 2007 in Palau from 1.07 to 0.97 and in Cyprus from 1.11 to 0.99. This demonstrates that this approach to assessment can be misleading where the difference between the baseline and latest value is marginal. The measure of proximity to target can help provide a supplementary perspective on relative performance and priorities for support.

Proximity to target

In primary and secondary education performance on gender equality enrolment was high and the range narrow. Indeed, in 12 states in primary education and in 26 in secondary education the parity index was 1.00 or greater, with the lowest values in primary education in Papua New Guinea at 0.84 and in secondary education in Solomon Islands at 0.84. Enrolment by girls was close to that of boys and in some cases even higher, for example in secondary level enrolment in Suriname (1.33), Lesotho (1.27) and Dominican Republic (1.20).

In tertiary education, in 13 of the 17 reported states the level of female enrolment was equal to, or greater than, that of male enrolment. In certain states the gender index far exceeded parity, as in Cuba at 1.85, Brunei Darussalam at 1.88, Guyana at 2.09, St Lucia at 2.41 and Bahrain at 2.53.

In these cases the question is why are so few boys continuing to tertiary education compared with girls? São Tomé and Príncipe was an exception,⁴ with a reported gender parity index of zero in tertiary education.⁵

6.2.2 Indicator 3.2: Gender equality in non-agricultural employment

The purpose of this indicator is to track gender bias in employment in industry and services. None of the

46 small states achieved the gender equality target in non-agricultural employment. Thirteen (28%) were on-track; two (4%) were off-track; and missing data in 31 countries (67%) obstructed analysis.

The assessment of off-track on this indicator is somewhat misleading, as in the two off-track cases the differences between the baseline and the latest values were marginal. From 1990 to 2007 the indicator for The Bahamas fell from 50 to 49 per cent and for Jamaica from 46.2 to 45.8 per cent. The use of the measure of proximity to target provides a useful supplementary insight into the states with greatest need of assistance in this field.

Proximity to target

Where missing data were accounted for, eight (17%) of the 46 small states recorded 45 per cent or more women in non-agricultural employment. Twenty-one countries (46%) reported 35 to 44 per cent in non-agricultural employment and 24 (28%) had below 35 per cent. The lowest levels recorded were 28 per cent in Papua New Guinea, and 10 per cent in both Bahrain and Guinea-Bissau.

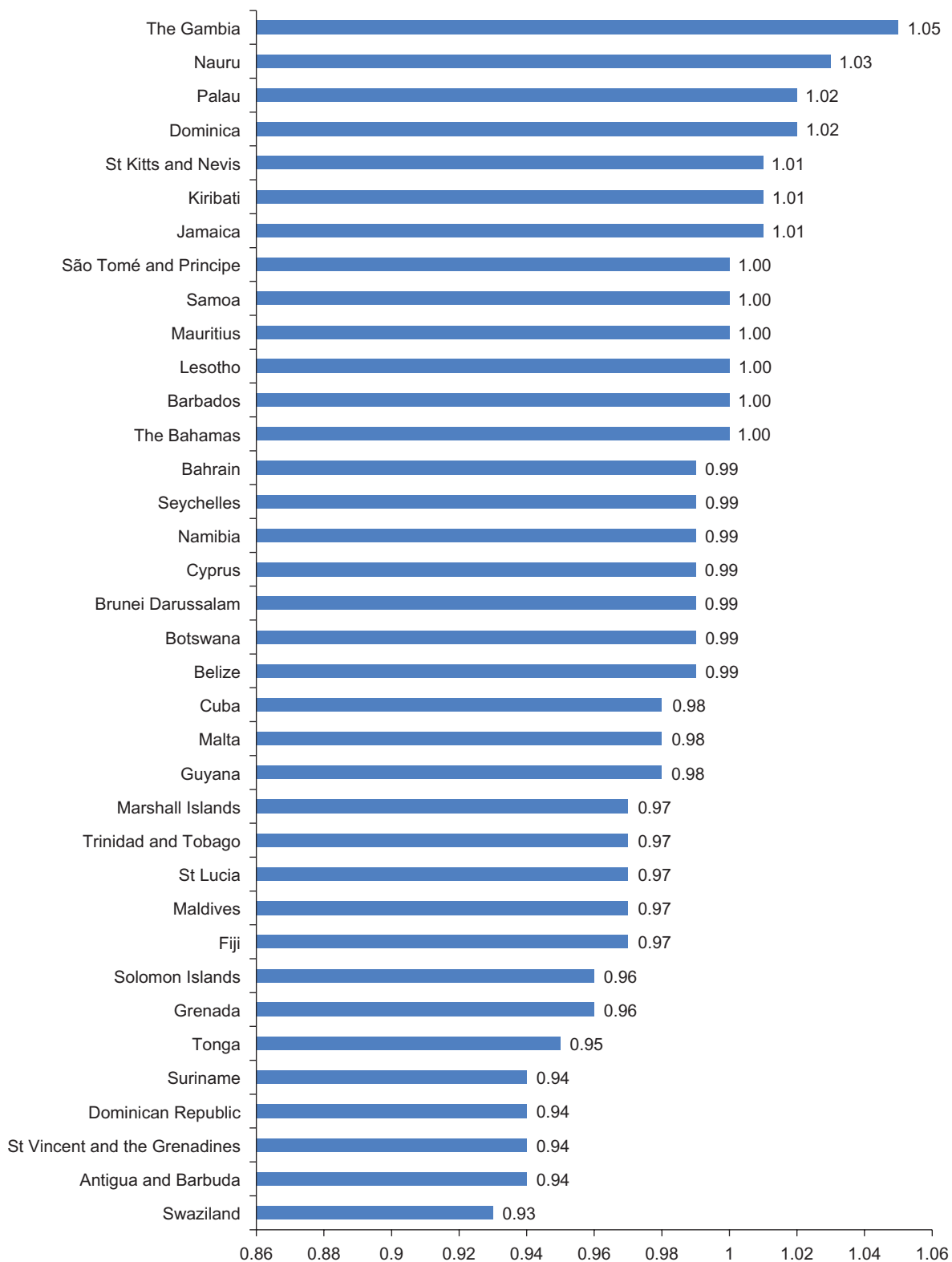
6.2.3 Indicator 3.3: Gender equality in parliamentary seats

By 2007, while none of the 46 small states had achieved equality for women in terms of parliamentary seats, 70 per cent were on-track, 28 per cent were off-track and in only one state, Brunei Darussalam, did missing data prevent assessment of progress.

The off-track states included some in which the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women had not changed between 1990 and 2007 and which had therefore not moved towards the 50 per cent target. In six states the index declined, with fewer women holding parliamentary seats than previously. Among these six, in Belize the percentage fell from 20 to 13 per cent; in Nauru from 6 to 0 per cent; in Tuvalu from 7 to 0 per cent; and in São Tomé and Príncipe from 12 to 9 per cent.

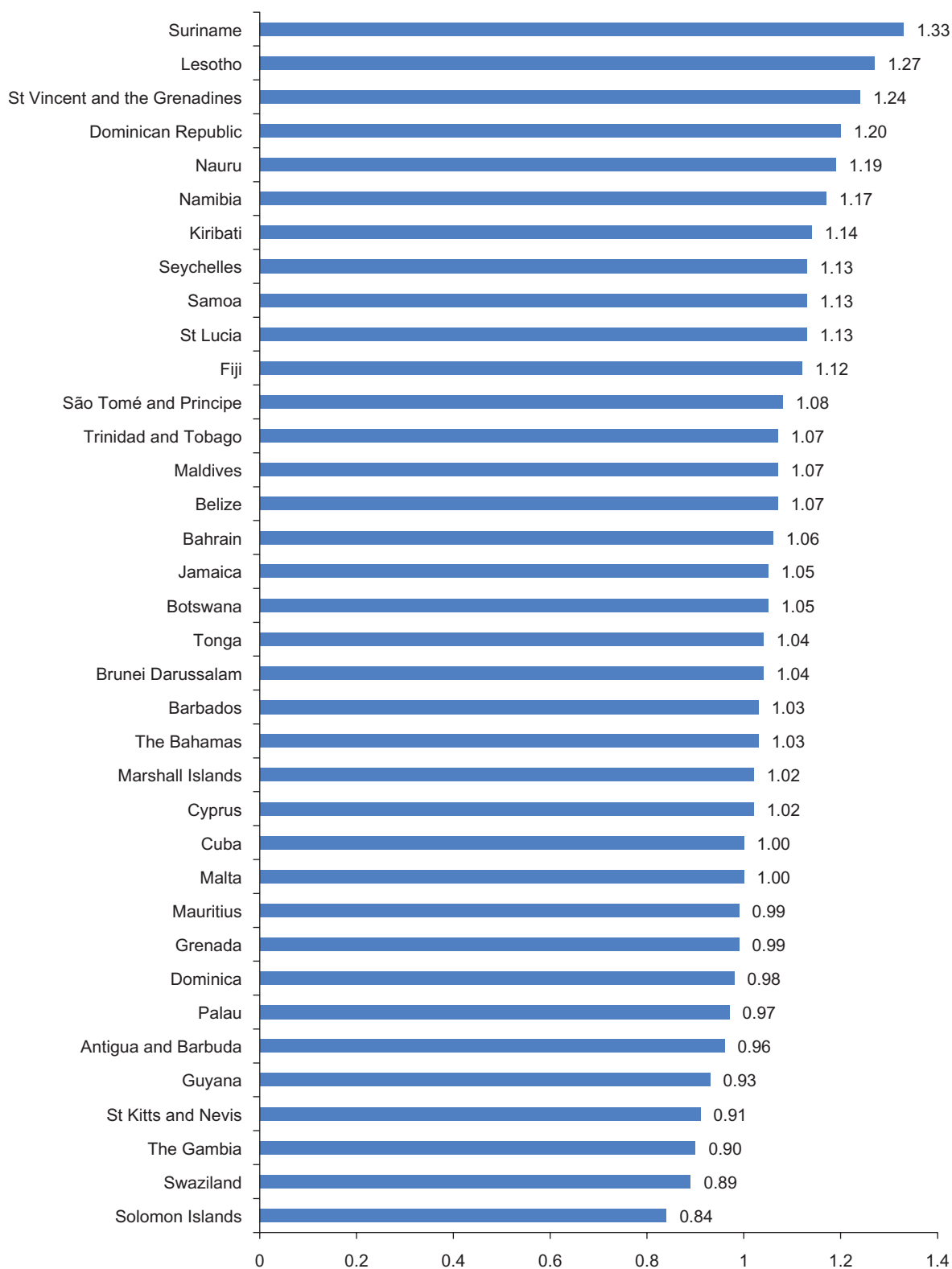
Proximity to target

The highest proportion of parliamentary seats gained by women among the 46 small states was in Cuba with 43 per cent, followed by Guyana with 30 per cent, Namibia with 27 per cent, Trinidad and Tobago with 27 per cent and Lesotho with 25 per cent. Latest data show that in the following six small states no parliamentary seats are held by women: Belize, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

Figure 6.2 Gender parity index in primary level enrolment

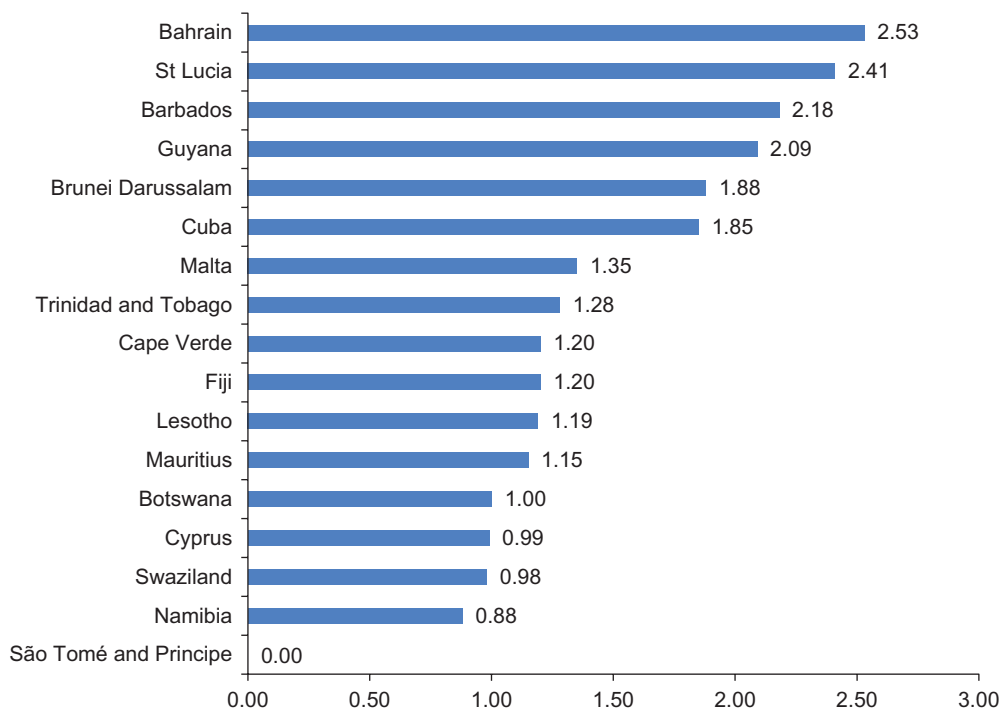
Note: Latest data were for 2007; where these were not available, data for 2006 or 2005 were used.

Source: UN MDG database 2010

Figure 6.3 Gender parity index in secondary level enrolment

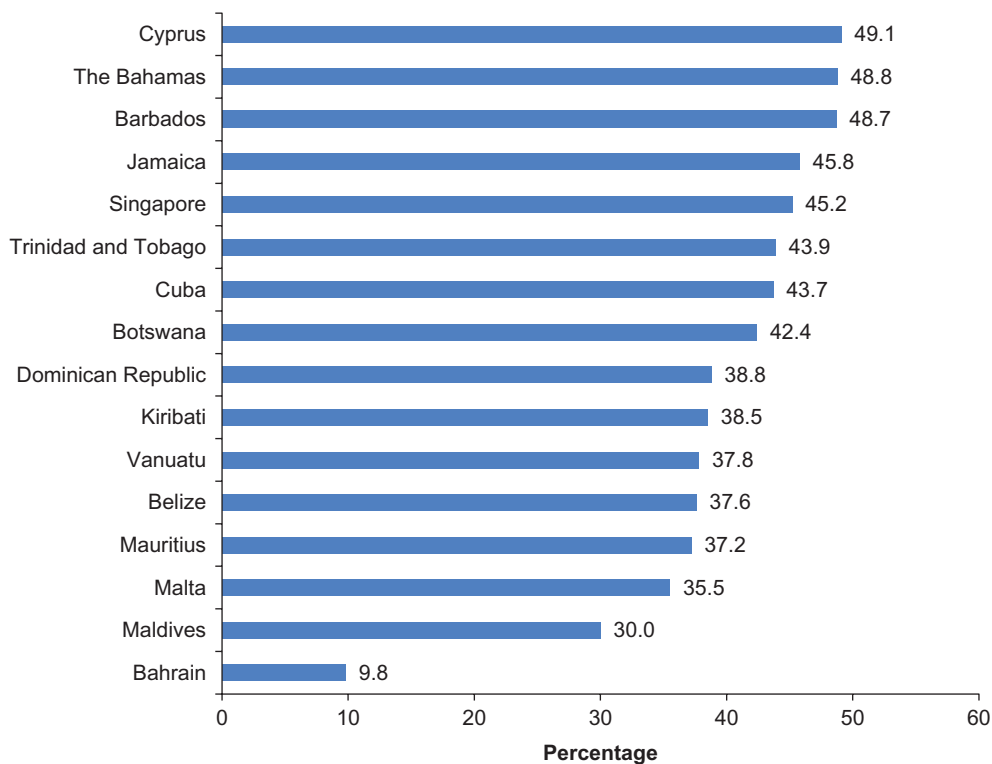
Note: Latest data were for 2007; where these were not available, data for 2006 or 2005 were used.

Source: UN MDG database 2010

Figure 6.4 Gender parity index in tertiary level enrolment

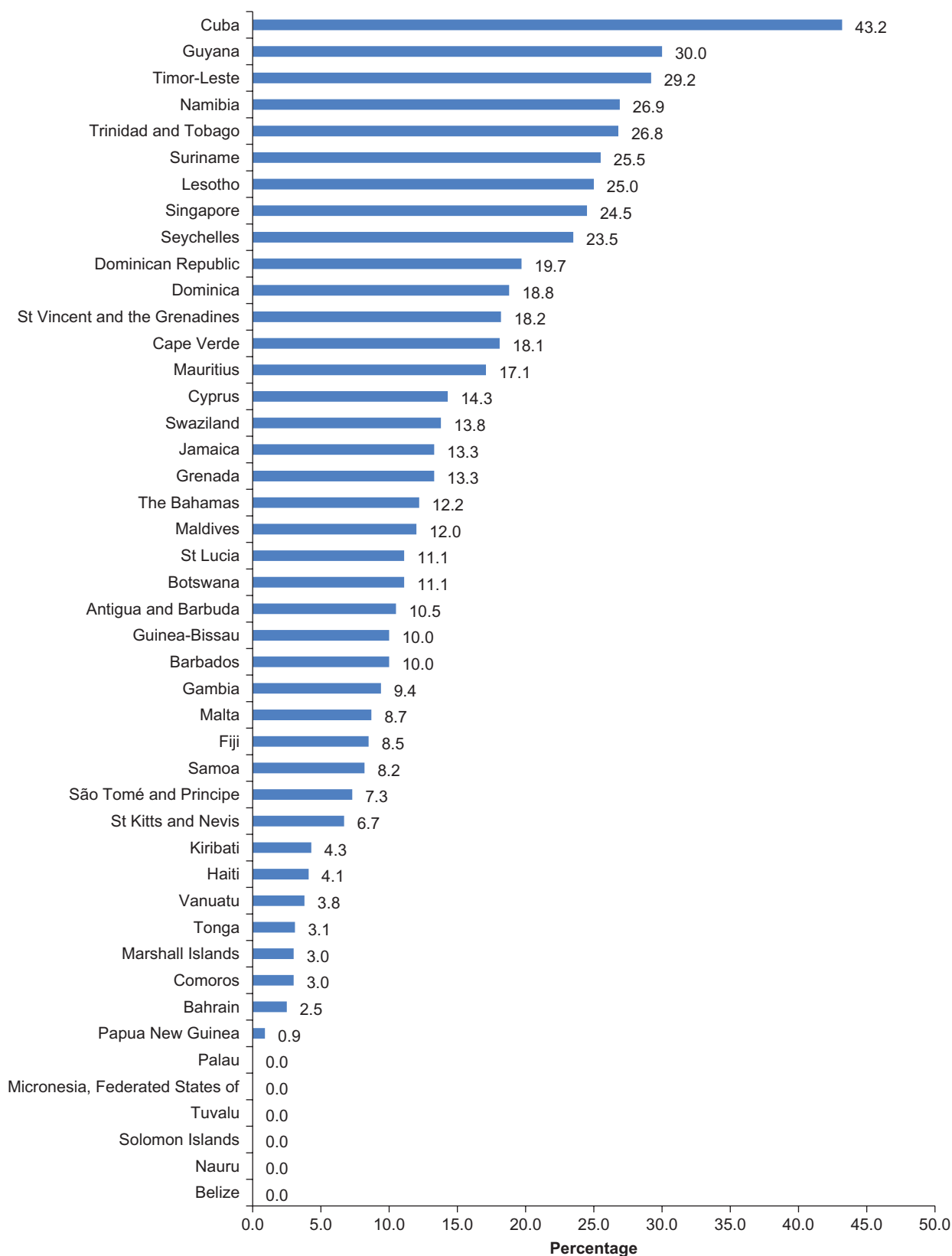
Note: Latest data were for 2007; where these were not available, data for 2006 or 2005 were used.

Source: UN MDG database 2010

Figure 6.5 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector

Note: Latest data were for 2007; where these were not available, data for 2006 or 2005 were used.

Source: UN MDG database 2010

Figure 6.6 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

The Big Divide on gender equality in the 46 small states is well illustrated by the share of women in non-agricultural employment, which ranges from 10 per cent in Bahrain to 49 per cent in Barbados, and by the range in parliamentary seats held by women, which ranges from 0 per cent in seven states to 43 per cent in Cuba.

6.3 Action on MDG 3: Gender equality

Following the global financial crisis few small states have given specific attention to gender equality in their budget and policy statements for development. The exceptions include St Lucia, where special attention has been given to promoting training for women in construction projects, and Mauritius, which has introduced a business mentor programme for women.

Despite the decline in female parliamentary representation in some countries and the zero values in others, the high performance of a few states shows that it is possible to approach the target on this indicator. Progress depends on political and social commitment, rather than on finance. Future progress may be improved by greater publicity given to those states moving towards this target.

Worldwide, there are 22 countries where 30 per cent or more of parliamentary seats are held by women, according to the Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO). Top of the list is Rwanda, with 56 per cent of seats held by women; five other African states are in the top 22 countries. With the majority of the world population being female, what is the secret for getting women

into parliament? It seems that proportional representation (PR) systems are springboards for the election of women, with 19 of the 22 countries that rank highest for the number of women in parliament having PR systems and most having quotas for women with sanctions for non-compliance. In Trinidad and Tobago, in fifth place in the small states league for women in parliament, the slogan 'A woman's place is in the House of Parliament' was used to drum up support and promote cultural and electoral change.⁶

The Big Divide in performance in the 46 small states on this MDG should also stimulate studies on the impact of gender bias on social development and on progress with other gender-related policies.

Notes

- 1 46 small states x 5 indicators = 230 cases of assessment on progress.
- 2 The 10 benchmark states had 24 cases of target achieved on 50 indicators (10 states by 5 indicators = 50 indicators for assessment; thus the percentage achieved is calculated as $24 \times 100/50 = 48\%$); the 46 small states had 54 cases of target achieved on 230 indicators (46 states x 5 indicators = 230 indicators for assessment; thus the percentage achieved is calculated as $54 \text{ cases} \times 100/230 = 23\%$).
- 3 Similar to the above the calculation is $52 \text{ cases of indicators achieved} \times 100/3 \text{ indicators} \times 46 \text{ small states} = 38\%$ of cases with achieved status. This method of calculation has been used throughout the report.
- 4 Data on São Tomé and Príncipe are for 2007.
- 5 São Tomé and Príncipe reported zero enrolment of girls in tertiary education in 1990 and 2007; in primary and secondary education in 2007 the gender parity index was reported as 1.00 and 1.08 respectively.
- 6 See: www.wedo.org