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## Gender-Sensitive Indicators: The State of the Art'

Extensive work has been undertaken in the last five to ten years on indicators at the national level. This section reviews some of the main work specifically on gender-sensitive indicators that have been carried out by the UN and donors.

### **UNDP 1995 Human Development Report**

Since 1990 the UNDP has produced an influential Human Development Report which has included a discussion of development related issues and a composite index of human development, the Human Development Index (HDI). This composite index is made up of three areas: purchasing power parity, adult literacy and years of schooling, and life expectancy. While there have been a number of criticisms of the HDI, mainly related to technical aspects of indicator use and the HDI's conceptual underpinnings, the *Human Development Report* is at present the most widely quoted and widely used report on indicators at the national and regional levels.

Some Commonwealth countries, including Bangladesh, Ghana and India, have prepared human development reports based on the UNDP methodology. Few of these reports, however, have included a gender focus.

In preparation for the 1995 UN World Conference on Women, the 1995 UNDP *Human Development Report* focused on gender, by introducing two composite indexes to measure gender equity (the GDI) and women's empowerment (the GEM). These two composite indexes are likely to be very important indexes in future discussions on the measurement of gender inequality and gendered country level planning, and deserve the attention of governments.

### **Gender-related development index (GDI)**

The GDI utilises country level achievements in the same areas as the HDI, that is income, education and life expectancy. The greater the gender disparity within a country in these areas, the lower a country's GDI becomes as compared to its HDI. The reference group in this index and the GEM is men. The methodology used for the GDI imposes a penalty for inequality, so that the GDI achievement of a country falls when the achievement levels of both women and men in a country go down, or when the disparity between their achievements increases. Calculation of the GDI involves the use of complex econometric techniques which will not be discussed here, but which may hinder the widespread use and understanding of such indexes. The GDI was developed to show that no society treats its women as well as its men and that gender equality does not depend on the income level in a society.

Some countries' HDI ranking changes considerably when gender inequality is factored in. Figure 2 gives the GDI rank of selected countries from the 130 countries included in the *Human Development Report*. It also gives the HDI rank minus the GDI rank, showing the extent to which countries improve or worsen their global ranking once gender inequality has been factored in to the HDI calculation (the higher the figure, the greater the improvement; a worsening is indicated by a negative figure).

**Figure 2 Gender-Related Development of Selected Countries**

Country	GDI Rank	HDI Rank Minus GDI Rank
Sweden	1	8
Canada	9	-8
Malaysia	38	11
Jamaica	52	14
Botswana	55	4
Sri Lanka	58	11
India	99	-3

The GDI is a useful methodological tool which can capture changes in gender relations over time both within a country and between countries, as measured by a small number of important indicators of the quality of life.

### **Gender empowerment measure (GEM)**

The GEM examines whether women and men are able to participate actively in economic and political life. To do so, it uses easily accessible data to measure 'empowerment' in the spheres of economic and political participation. It uses three indicators:

- ◆ per capita income in purchasing power parity in US dollars;
- ◆ the share of jobs classified as professional and technical, and administrative and managerial, going to men and women;
- ◆ the share of parliamentary seats going to women and men.

The three dimensions of empowerment are valued equally in the measure, and as with the GDI a complex econometric analysis is performed to determine the GEM for the 116 countries for which data is considered reliable.

The *Human Development Report* draws various conclusions by comparing the GEM and HDI, the GEM and GDI, and the GEM and income per capita. Such comparisons are useful for countries to make in order to determine how progressive countries are in achieving gender equality. Among the findings which can be extrapolated are:

- ◆ Some developing countries outperform much richer industrial countries in gender equality in political, economic and professional activities.
- ◆ Some countries have low GEM values as compared to their GDI ranking, which means that they are achieving more in terms of education and literacy than in terms of employment and political participation.

- ◆ Several countries in East and South East Asia that have followed an East Asian development model have low GEM values, pointing to the marginal participation of women in high-level decision-making in politics and management, despite widespread participation in economic activity which has contributed to economic growth.

### Limitations of the GDI and GEM

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Countries could attempt to improve gender-related reporting by using composite indexes such as those in the Human Development Report. But if they are to be used it should be recognised that both the GDI and GEM are limited. Some of the limitations include:

- ◆ **Choice of indicators:** As in all composite indexes the choice of indicators is to a certain extent arbitrary. For example, if the GEM had chosen as one of its indicators 'membership of unions', rankings would also have been quite different.
- ◆ **Weighting of indicators:** This is a problem with all composite indexes, as there is no objective reason why, for example, education should be weighted equally with life expectancy.
- ◆ **Lack of participation in indicator choice:** This is one of the main problems with the GDI and GEM, as well as the HDI. They have been developed with very little public participation, with indicators chosen by specialists. In addition, the calculation of the GDI and GEM can be understood only by specialists because of the complexity of the calculations involved, making it difficult to facilitate public participation.

### UN Publications

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*The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics* (UN: New York, 1995a. Social Statistics and Indicators, Series K, No. 12):

This is probably the most comprehensive source of data on the situation and status of women at the national level. It was developed from the UN *Women's Indicators and Statistics Database* (WISTAT) which is available on CD-ROM. WISTAT is taken mainly from official national sources, that is from national population and housing censuses and household sample surveys, or estimates based on these.

*The World's Women* covers five main areas: population; health; education and training; work; and power, influence and violence against women. Its comprehensive nature and sectoral organisation makes this document a very useful guide for governments looking to summarise data concerning gender at the national level. Several gaps, however, remain in *The World's Women*, particularly as far as availability and reliability of data is concerned. These gaps include lack of up-to-date data in some areas, lack of data to allow comparison to the situation of men, and lack of data from some countries.

In addition, the UN has published a number of guides and handbooks on gender-sensitive indicators (see References), which were used for the production of this guide:

*Gender Indicators of Developing Asian and Pacific Countries* (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 1993).

This document was produced by the Centre for International Research of the US Bureau of the Census, with the aim of grouping and disseminating statistics that were scattered among sectoral statistics and publications. Indicators are organised by sector and by country. Commonwealth countries covered in the document are Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Kiribati, Malaysia, The Maldives, Singapore, The Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu.

The document includes indicators on:

- ◆ population size and age characteristics, including sex ratios by age;
- ◆ fertility, mortality, and population change, including crude birth and death rates, maternal mortality at delivery, and infant mortality rates;
- ◆ contraceptive use;
- ◆ marriage and households, including average household size and women heads of households;
- ◆ literacy and education, including literacy rates by age and enrolment rates;
- ◆ labour force participation, including labour force distribution of employment and unpaid female employment.

This is a very useful source for quality of life indicators. However, the focus of the document is somewhat limited as it does not include areas related to women's empowerment and participation, such as political participation or violence against women.

*FAO's socioeconomic indicator programme following from the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD)*

At the 1979 WCARRD, FAO member countries agreed to collect on a regular basis quantitative data on a range of indicators pertinent to agrarian reform and rural development, and to "establish bench-marks on a range of socio-economic indicators ... for the year 1980 and to report changes in the levels of these indicators at every other FAO conference, i.e., 1983 and every four years afterwards" (Dey-Abbas and Gaiha, 1993: 235).

WCARRD guidelines stress the need to disaggregate data by socio-economic grouping, age and sex. WCARRD is developing, in collaboration with other UN agencies, a database on women in agriculture, which will be incorporated into the main WCARRD database. Country reports on progress in agrarian reform and rural development are generally prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture in FAO member countries. Ensuring that these country reports are prepared by countries on a regular basis and contain relevant gender-disaggregated data would be one means of identifying relative changes in the status of women over time in the area of rural development. Commonwealth countries which have provided Country Reports to the FAO to date are: Bangladesh, The Gambia, Kenya, Jamaica, Malawi, Malaysia, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Vanuatu and Zimbabwe.

## **Yearbook of International Labour Statistics**

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Produced by the ILO, this includes gender-sensitive indicators on: total and economically active population, employment and unemployment, hours of work, and wages.

The ILO has also published a seven-volume series entitled *Sources and Methods: Labour Statistics*, the following of which are of particular relevance:

- ◆ Volume 2: Employment, wages and hours of work (establishment surveys) (Geneva, 1987)
- ◆ Volume 3: Economically active population, employment, unemployment, wages and hours of work (household surveys) (Geneva, 1990)
- ◆ Volume 4: Employment, unemployment, wages and hours of work (household surveys) (Geneva, 1989)
- ◆ Volume 5: Total and economically active population, employment and unemployment (population censuses) (Geneva, 1990)
- ◆ Volume 6: Household income and expenditure surveys (Geneva, 1994)

## World Bank

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The World Bank publishes *Social Indicators of Development* on an annual basis. This publication provides sex-disaggregated indicators on: population, labour, education, enrolment ratios, life expectancy and maternal mortality. The main sources are the UN Statistical Office, ILO, and WHO, supplemented by national databases.

The World Bank has recently explored the extension of the use of what it has termed Key Performance Indicators at the sectoral level as a part of improving its monitoring and evaluation systems. It has, as part of its 'Next Steps' indicator programme, developed a series of sectoral indicators, including indicators of population, education, agriculture, poverty and housing (World Bank, 1995a). While there is little gender-specific information in these publications there is an extensive discussion of use of different kinds of indicators. The section on indicators of poverty (also published separately as Carvalho and White, 1994) is a good source for a general discussion of indicators.

## Other Donors

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*Developing Baseline Gender Indicators and Analysis for Country Program Planning: A Resource Guide* (Hull: CIDA, Asia Branch, 1996):

The Asia Branch at CIDA is in the process of producing a comprehensive Resource Guide to the use of gender-sensitive indicators at the country level. This Resource Guide is intended for use in the production of country-level planning documents at CIDA. It includes:

- ◆ a general discussion of the use of indicators at the country level;
- ◆ indicator tables relating to political, economic, social and environmental gender-sensitive indicators at the country level;
- ◆ factors which are likely to cause changes in indicators over time; and
- ◆ the availability of indicators by country, including data availability tables.

Commonwealth countries covered in this Resource Guide are: Bangladesh, The Cook Islands, India, Kiribati, Malaysia, Samoa, Singapore, The Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

This Resource Guide is one of the most useful documents to be produced by the donors on gender-sensitive indicators at the country level. Although its focus is on the Asia-Pacific its contents are of relevance to both developed and developing countries from other regions as well.

### Notes

- 1 This draws on CIDA (1996a).