

GENDER EQUITY

The need to acknowledge discrimination

For every 100 boys who do not attend primary school, there are 117 girls who do not attend. Women represent 67% of the world's illiterate people and only 16.6% of the world's legislators. What is more, they do not receive equal pay to men for doing the same work. Acknowledging that gender relations relegate women to second class status is the first step in creating policies and political will to put an end to these inequities.

Social Watch Research Team¹

The tables presented in this Social Watch Report 2006 take the year 1990 as their starting point for measuring advances and setbacks in gender equity. For each indicator selected, the data presented are the latest available.

While the necessary consideration of gender inequalities should cover all dimensions of analysis of the social phenomena at play, a set of indicators has been incorporated that intends to show the principal areas in which inequalities complicate the fulfilment of women's rights and women's advancement to more equitable positions. Modifying the position and traditional roles of women in society and changing relations between men and women in the public as well as the private spheres are complex tasks that require formulating and evaluating specific policies. The first consideration to take into account is that societies and governments must accept and assume that there is a gender system functioning that generates inequalities between men and women. Therefore, societal inequities exist that must be acknowledged as such, because to acknowledge them means to recognize that an additional factor exists, namely gender, that as so many other already recognized factors is a generator of social inequalities. This "obligates" governments to promote policies to correct these inequalities. Indicators and statistics are needed in order to monitor the situation and evolution of these relations. As the United Nations report *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics* shows, the compilation of statistics continues to be deficient and fragmented in many low income countries, while in 90% of the developing world essential statistics do not exist by gender. The Report finds that the last 30 years have shown very little progress, both in the number of countries that publish national statistics and in the degree to which national statistics reflect questions of gender.

Since its 2004 report, Social Watch has incorporated a specific thematic area on gender equity with an eye to making the different treatment faced by men and women evident and facilitating its monitoring and evaluation.

Gender: Education

Selected indicators:

- Gap in literacy rates (women/men)
- Gap in net primary education enrolment rate (women/men)
- Gap in net secondary education enrolment rate (women/men)
- Gap in gross tertiary education enrolment rate (women/men)

Gender equity in education becomes relevant through UNESCO statistics that show us that 67% of the world's illiterate individuals are women. The majority of illiterate women live in rural areas of developing countries, especially Africa, the Arab countries and Southeast Asia. Table 1 shows countries in the worst situation in relation to literacy between women and men. In Chad, for every 100 literate men, there are only 42 literate women; in Mali, 52; in Niger, 54, while in Burkina Faso there are 55.

For every 100 boys who do not attend primary school, there are 117 girls who do not attend, generally due to gender discrimination. More than 40 countries have not met the Millennium Development Goal related to gender equality in primary education, set for 2005. At the same time, achieving gender equality in education constitutes one of the six objectives of the Education for All Programme that 164 governments made their own at the World Education Forum at Dakar in 2000. As a first step toward achieving gender parity the commitment was made to reach

equality in the number of male and female students enrolled in primary and secondary education and again the year 2005 was the deadline for achieving this goal. This goal has not been achieved.

The greatest disparities in access to primary education are found principally in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Chad, for every 100 boys at school, there are only 68 girls; in Guinea Bissau and Niger, 71; in Pakistan, Yemen and Burkina Faso, 73.

Considering as a set the four indicators in the area of education, we observe that of a total of 157 countries, 100 find themselves in the best relative situation, of which 83 also have medium to high BCI levels. The 23 countries that find themselves in the worst position in this area all show critical or low BCI levels. Additionally, upon analyzing trends over time, a majority of the countries that currently find themselves in the worst situation are making positive progress: 20 have advanced while 2 are at a standstill (Chad and Gambia) and 2 have fallen back (Angola and Eritrea). If we look at geographical regions, we see that the countries in the worst situation are largely in sub-Saharan Africa.

It is interesting to place the averages for each indicator in comparative perspective for the countries in a better and worse situation in each area (Table 4). Significant distances exist between both groups. While all indicators demonstrate the inequity in the countries that find themselves in the worst position, in some cases it is even more evident. The gap between women and men with regard to tertiary education enrolment rates shows the greatest distance: 0.4 in the worst positioned countries and 1.4 in the best positioned ones.

TABLE 1. Countries with the largest gap between female and male illiteracy rates

COUNTRY	
Chad	0.42
Mali	0.52
Niger	0.54
Burkina Faso	0.55
Benin	0.56
Yemen	0.60
Liberia	0.64
Mozambique	0.64
Sierra Leone	0.64
Central African Republic	0.67

TABLE 2. Countries with the greatest disparity in access to primary education

COUNTRY	
Chad	0.68
Guinea-Bissau	0.71
Niger	0.71
Pakistan	0.73
Yemen	0.73
Burkina Faso	0.73
Benin	0.77
Liberia	0.78
Côte d'Ivoire	0.78
Djibouti	0.80

¹ The members of the Social Watch Social Sciences Research Team are listed in the credits at the start of this book.

CHART 1. Current situation in education and gender by region

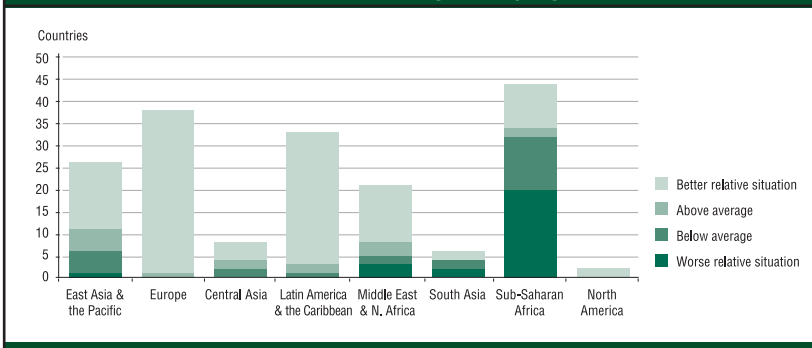


CHART 2. Final position in education and gender according to BCI

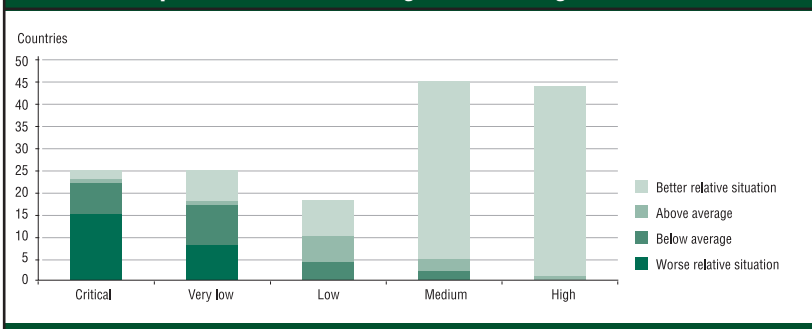


TABLE 3. Current situation based on evolution in education and gender

	SIGNIFICANT REGRESSION	SLIGHT REGRESSION	STAGNATION	SLIGHT PROGRESS	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	TOTAL
Countries in worse situation	2	0	2	6	14	24
Countries below average	0	2	2	6	8	18
Countries above average	0	0	7	5	3	15
Countries in better situation	0	2	91	16	2	111
Total	2	4	102	33	27	168

TABLE 4. Averages by indicator for the countries in the best and worst relative situation in education and gender

		GAP IN LITERACY (WOMEN/MEN)	GAP IN NET PRIMARY EDUCATION ENROLMENT RATE (WOMEN/MEN)	GAP IN NET SECONDARY EDUCATION ENROLMENT RATE (WOMEN/MEN)	GAP IN GROSS TERTIARY EDUCATION ENROLMENT RATE (WOMEN/MEN)
Countries in worse situation	Average	0.68	0.83	0.62	0.41
	Number of countries	20	24	19	25
Countries in better situation	Average	1.01	1.00	1.06	1.44
	Number of countries	76	106	101	105
Total	Average	0.94	0.97	0.99	1.24
	Number of countries	96	130	120	130

Gender: Empowerment

Selected indicators:

- Female professional and technical workers
- Female legislators, senior officials and managers
- Women in government decision-making positions at the ministerial level
- Women members of parliament

An undeniable fact is that the world's women are absent from parliaments. On average, according to figures from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in 2006 women represented 16.6% of legislators worldwide. The level of female political involvement does not depend – unlike other factors involved in development – on the wealth or poverty of a country. Regional averages show that levels of female participation are low in all regions.

Some of the richest countries of the world, including the United States (14%), France (12%), Italy (12%) and Japan (9%) have fewer than 15% female representation in parliament, lower than the 16% average found in sub-Saharan Africa, the poorest part of the world. This region includes some of the most egalitarian countries in terms of the percentage of female legislators, such as Ethiopia (21%), Uganda (24%) and Burundi (31%). One case that stands out is Rwanda, where women make up 48.8% of parliament. At the opposite end of the spectrum are Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, who do not grant women the right to vote or to be elected to office.

In the United Nations system, women comprise 37.1% (2,136 out of 5,754) of all staff in the professional and higher categories with appointments of one year or more. Six out of 37 (16.2%) of the most senior policy-making positions (Under-Secretary-General) are held by women.

There are 39 women ambassadors to the United Nations. They are from Algeria, Australia, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, and Turkmenistan, among others.²

This dimension of gender equity related to female participation in decision-making positions and positions of power is one of the dimensions included in the Millennium Development Goals aiming to strengthen the position of women in the world.

² United Nations. Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women. <www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi>. Accessed November 2005.

In the last 12 months important changes have occurred, among them the election of the first woman president of an African country, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in Liberia, and the first woman president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet. Currently there are 11 women heads of state or of government in countries on all continents. Nevertheless, despite these achievements, progress toward gender equality continues to be slow.

Recently, Rwanda superseded Sweden as number one in the world in terms of women's parliamentary representation – 48.8% women compared to 45.3% in Sweden. Rwanda is an example of the new trend to use electoral gender quotas as a fast track means of achieving gender balance in politics. Despite these exceptions, women are notably absent in parliaments and, as mentioned, on average only constitute 16% of the world's members of parliament. As a result, women's interests and concerns are not represented in the process of creating public policies and women lack influence over fundamental decisions in the social, economic and political spheres that affect the whole of society.

The use of electoral quota systems for increasing the proportion of female officeholders is much more extended than is commonly believed. A growing number of countries are introducing diverse types of gender quotas into their elections. Currently 98 countries have some system of quotas at the electoral, political party or constitutional level.

Given the slow speed at which the number of women in politics is growing, there are increased calls for more efficient methods to reach a gender balance in political institutions. Quotas present one such mechanism. Because of their relative efficiency, there is strong hope quotas can produce dramatic gains in women's representation. At the same time, quotas raise serious questions and, in some cases, strong resistance. "The core idea behind quota systems is to recruit women into political positions and to ensure that women are not only a few tokens in political life"³

Electoral quotas for women may be mandated by constitutional or legislative means, or take the form of a political party quota. They may apply to the number of women candidates proposed by a party for election, or may take the form of reserved seats in the legislature.⁴

Today, quota systems aim at ensuring that women constitute at least a "critical minority" of 20%, 30% or 40%, or even to ensure true 50-50 gender balance. In some countries quotas are applied as a temporary measure; that is to say, to be used only until the barriers for women's entry into

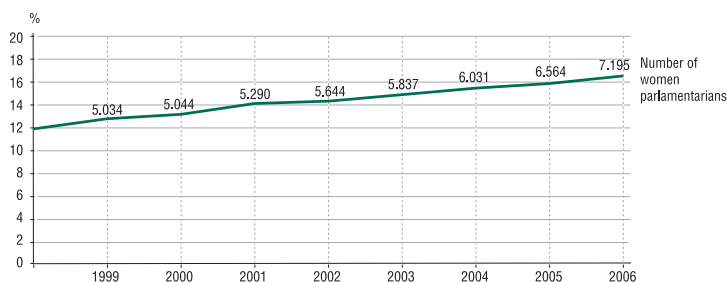
TABLE 1. Regional Averages

	SINGLE HOUSE OR LOWER HOUSE (%)	UPPER HOUSE OR SENATE (%)	BOTH HOUSES COMBINED (%)
Nordic countries	40.0	—	40.0
Americas	20.2	21.4	20.4
Europe - OCDE member countries including Nordic countries	19.6	16.3	18.9
Europe - OCDE member countries excluding Nordic countries	17.5	16.3	17.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	16.5	17.6	16.6
Asia	16.3	14.7	16.1
Pacific	12.3	26.5	14.3
Arab States	8.2	5.9	7.7

Regions are classified by descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single House.

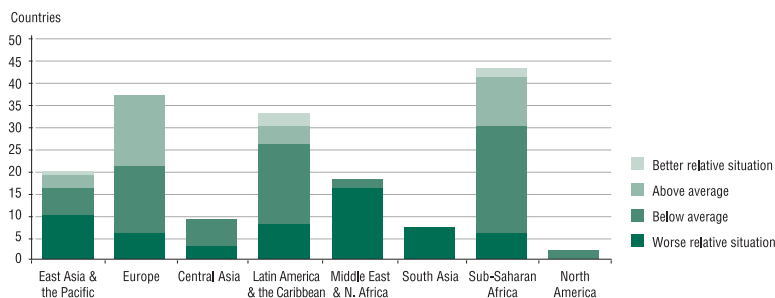
Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2006).

CHART 1. Percentage of women parliamentarians in the world, 1999-2006



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union

CHART 2. Current situation in gender empowerment according to region



³ Global database of quotas for women. A joint project of IDEA and Stockholm University. See: <www.quotaproject.org>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

politics are removed, but most countries with quotas have not set time limits to their use of quotas.

The indicators presented in this Report show that of a total of 150 countries, 33% are in the worst position, 42% are below average and only 25% are above average or in the best position. The countries in the worst position have variable BCI positions. Of the countries that find themselves in the worst position in the area of empowerment, 29 have middle or low BCI (among them Armenia, Mexico, Italy, Thailand and Greece). At the other extreme we find that, of 38 countries that find themselves in the best position or above average, 11 have critical or very critical BCI and 24 have middle or high BCI.

Regarding the countries that find themselves in the worst situation, we find that 75% of them have advanced slightly or significantly, while 13% have regressed. We see a tendency toward slow but meaningful progress.

Upon analyzing the particular situation of each indicator for the countries in the worst and best position relative to empowerment, one can clearly appreciate where the deficiencies are greatest. The average presence of women at the ministerial level in the countries in the best situation is 29%, compared to 6% in the countries in the worst situation. In terms of female members of parliament, in turn, the countries in the best situation reach an average of 33%, while those in the worst situation barely reach 9%. In indicators related to women in professional and technical positions and women who are managers or have high-ranking positions, 31 countries find themselves in the worst relative position. The six countries that find themselves in the best situation in relation to gender empowerment do not publish statistics on these indicators. These six countries are Cuba, Granada, Guyana, Rwanda, South Africa and Timor Leste.

Gender: Economic activity

Selected indicators:

- Women wage employment in non-agricultural sector (as a percentage of total non-agricultural employees)
- Estimated earned income ratio (women/men)

Levels of participation in economic activity provide an important indicator of gender equity because the relationship between participation and poverty is direct; two of the reasons for a great deal of female poverty are unequal levels of access to the labour market and work discrimination that translates into women receiving lower wages than men for the same work.

CHART 3. Final situation in gender empowerment according to BCI

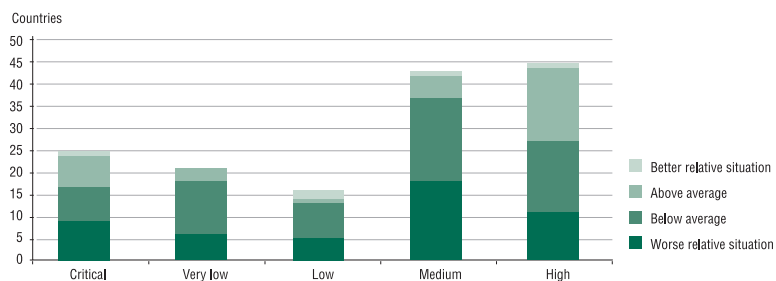


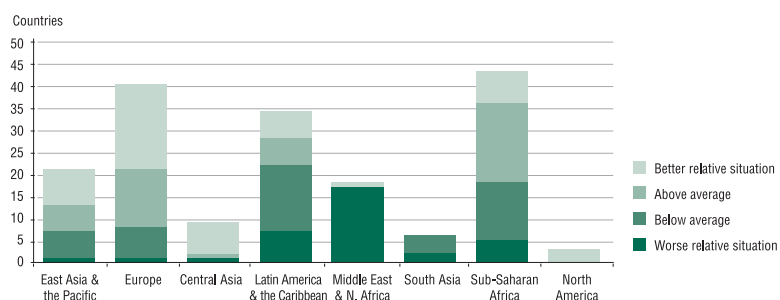
TABLE 2. Current situation according to evolution in gender empowerment

	SIGNIFICANT REGRESSION	SLIGHT REGRESSION	STAGNATION	SLIGHT PROGRESS	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	TOTAL
Countries in worse situation	2	5	7	35	5	54
Countries below average	0	3	7	40	21	71
Countries above average	0	1	3	10	20	34
Countries in better situation	0	0	0	0	5	5
Total	2	9	17	85	51	164

TABLE 3. Averages by indicator for the countries in the best and worst relative position according to gender empowerment

		WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL	WOMEN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT	PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL WOMEN	WOMEN LEGISLATORS, HIGH OFFICIALS AND DIRECTORS
Countries in worse situation	Average	6.52	8.63	38.16	19.35
	Number of countries	54	54	31	31
Countries in better situation	Average	29.5	33.5	N/A	N/A
	Number of countries	6	6		
Total	Average	8.82	11.12	38.16	19.35
	Number of countries	60	60	31	31

CHART 1. Current situation in gender parity in economic activity by region



According to a report from the International Labour Organization (ILO) women represent 40% of the current labour force yet in nearly every position receive lower pay than their male colleagues for doing the same work. Women do not receive equal pay for equal work.

Social Watch monitors gender inequity in economic activity in terms of two indicators: the percentage of women's wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and the gap between the income earned by women and men in the labour market.

In the European Union (EU, made up of 25 countries, among them the most developed countries on the continent) the female employment rate does not exceed 51%, compared to 71% male employment, and the salary gap hovers around 16%.

In over 60 of the world's states, women's income is 50% lower than men's income. Women make up only 39% of salaried workers, but 62% of unpaid family workers.³

If we study the position of women in the area of economic activity within the countries, we find that in 134 countries 1 of every 5 are in the worst position, 30% are below average, 20% are above average and 30% are in the best relative position.

Of the 34 countries ranked in the worst position, 20 are countries with a middle or high BCI and 14 are countries with a low, very low or critical BCI. As we mentioned, gender inequities are not directly related to a country's level of well-being. In turn, if we observe the 43 countries located in the best position, 75% possess middle or high BCI and 25% show a low or critical level.

We find differences in the rates of evolution of gender equity in different countries. Of all the countries observed, 44% are stagnant while 47% are advancing slowly or significantly.

Half of the countries in the worst category are stagnant, while 20% have seen slight progress, another 20% significant progress and the remaining 10% have fallen back.

Finally, half the countries in the worst situation with regard to gender equity are located in the Middle East and North Africa, 20% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 15% in Sub-Saharan Africa and the remaining 15% are located in Europe, Central and East Asia and the Pacific.

Of the best-positioned countries, 37% are European, 16% East Asian and Pacific, 14% Central Asian, 14% Sub-Saharan African, 12% Latin American and Caribbean. While the three countries of North America are among the best positioned coun-

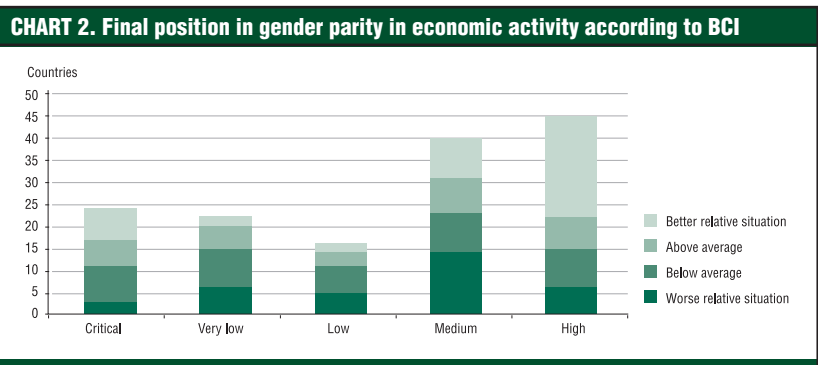


TABLE 1. Current situation based on evolution in economic activity by gender

	SIGNIFICANT REGRESSION	SLIGHT REGRESSION	STAGNATION	SLIGHT PROGRESS	SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS	TOTAL
Countries in worse situation	0	3	15	6	6	30
Countries below average	2	0	11	11	9	33
Countries above average	0	0	11	11	5	27
Countries in better situation	2	3	22	10	5	42
Total	4	6	59	38	25	132

TABLE 2. Averages by indicator for the countries in the best and worst situation with regard to economic activity by gender

		ESTIMATED EARNED INCOME RATIO (WOMEN/MEN)	WOMEN WAGE EMPLOYMENT IN NON-AGRICULTURAL SECTOR (AS % OF TOTAL NON-AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEES)
Countries in worse situation	Average	0.34	24.99
	Number of countries	31	30
Countries in better situation	Average	0.67	49.66
	Number of countries	46	42
Total	Average	0.54	39.38
	Number of countries	77	72

tries in the category, of the 18 countries of the Middle East and North Africa, 17 are in the worst position.

Upon observing the summary of the indicators in this category, it is clear that in the countries with the greatest gender equity in economic participation, nearly half the paid workers outside the agricultural sector are women, while for those countries in the worst position, women do not reach a quarter. Another meaningful statistic in this same

vein is the income gap, that is to say the relationship between female/male earnings: even in the countries in the best position the gap is 66%, while in the countries in the worst position the gap is more extreme, given that women receive earnings that equal a third of the earnings men take in. For all countries combined, women's income barely exceeds half that of men. ■

³ United Nations (2005). *Millennium Development Goals Report 2005*. Available from: <www.un.org/millenniumgoals>, accessed November 2005.