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GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT: A STATISTICAL PROFILE OF THE ESCAP REGION



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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

**GENDER EQUALITY AND
EMPOWERMENT:
A STATISTICAL PROFILE OF THE
ESCAP REGION**



UNESCAP

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper was originally to assist the deliberation of the High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting, Beijing +10, (Bangkok 7-10 September, 2004) by presenting a summary of the current situation of women in relation to men in a number of key areas in the Asia-Pacific region. This revised version forms the first volume in a series of two papers, all aimed at addressing major developments in the situation of women in the Asia-Pacific region. The Asia-Pacific region as defined by ESCAP's membership includes some 50 countries in the region and some 9 territories covering East and North-East Asia, North and Central Asia, South and South-West Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific.

It has repeatedly been demonstrated that data are key to catalyzing and monitoring progress, as well as supporting country-level planning and local accountability. Gender statistics has therefore been a priority area in ESCAP's statistical capacity building work for many years. As a result, considerable statistical progress has been achieved in the region since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 adopted the strategic objective "to generate and disseminate sex-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation".

Assisted by generous donor funding from the Netherlands, ESCAP in 1998 prepared a series of gender publications with 16 countries in the region. A regional report entitled *Women and Men in the ESCAP Region (1999)* was also produced with comparable data on a number of indicators. The Statistics Division has since organized numerous meetings to improve data collection and raise capacity in various areas of concern. More recently, two technical publications relevant to gender analysis and statistics

have been published by ESCAP. *Integrating Unpaid Work into National Policies (2003)*, draws heavily on work done with the countries to promote time use surveys, which are useful for addressing many gender concerns and for better evaluating women's work and contribution to the national economy. The second publication, *Gender Indicators for monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action on women in the ESCAP region (2003)*, outlines some potential policy indicators for countries' consideration in monitoring progress on the 12 critical areas defined by the 1995 Platform for Action. Although, data are not yet available for most of these indicators, it is hoped that they can serve as inspiration for future development of national systems of gender indicators.

In this paper, the current gender situation is described through a small set of indicators relevant to countries in the region and compiled for as many members and associate members as possible. Insight into individual indicators across the region can be obtained from the data in the comparative tables, which are included in Annex 1. The lack of statistical data on a number of important gender issues handicapped the scope of indicators, so that not all of the gender concerns expressed in the Beijing Platform of Action could be covered. Nonetheless, the indicators selected give insight into three major components of equality: basic human capabilities (e.g. education and health); opportunity to apply these capabilities (i.e. through access to employment, status and income) and a third component referring to empowerment or the ability to influence outcomes and to control one's own destiny (e.g. through economic and political decision-making, childbearing and contraceptive choices).



CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING GENDER INDICATORS

To provide evidence of the varied gender situation in the Asia-Pacific region, the availability of data for a large number of countries in the region was an indispensable factor in selecting the indicators. Most of the data used for compiling the indicators came from public databases, which contain the replies countries have sent to international requests for information. Some, however, have been gleaned directly from national statistical sources.

Among the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), one is to “achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women” by 2015. The first part of the goal on the achievement of gender equality is defined in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) as “removing all obstacles to women’s active participation in all spheres of public and private life through an equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making”. The second part, which specifically refers to the empowerment of women, can be interpreted as the ability of women to control resources and decisions that affect them; be they economic, socio-cultural, familial, legal or political. In the MDGs, only four statistical indicators, all of which have been included in the gender profiles, measure the equality-empowerment goal. These indicators are: Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; Ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old; Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.

Most of the indicators used are quantitative, while a few are qualitative and based on normative information. For example, two qualitative indicators used give information on whether a country has ratified the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) or has passed some specific

legislation to stop gender-based violence. The precise definition and origin of each indicator in the profiles, as well as indicator limitations, can be obtained from the methodological information in Annex 2.

A specific challenge of gender indicators is the disaggregation of the data by sex, which it is often difficult to obtain, because the data collection unit was not individuals. For instance, poverty is recognised as a major problem in the region and many studies have shown that it also is a gender issue with women suffering more from poverty than men. Unfortunately, as poverty is usually measured through income/expenditure data at the household level and not at the individual level, there is no information to show differential poverty between women and men. Similarly, it is known that the digital revolution has produced many divides, between countries, income groups, and age groups as well as between women and men in society. However, the information about computers and internet connections is collected at the household level. It is therefore mostly from small scale studies, that we know that women are not harnessing, accessing and using the information and communication technology (ICT) to the same extent as men.

Much information needed for gender analysis, however, is not collected at all because it is too costly and difficult to gather through regular surveys. Moreover, many issues are considered too private or sensitive for public inquiry. For instance, even for the most common and pervasive form of violence that takes place within the home, very few countries have conducted surveys to estimate how frequent it is and where it is most common. As very few cases of domestic violence get reported to the police, little is known about its prevalence, frequency and trends.



DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED INDICATORS

Education for all and equality in education

Education is the primary vehicle through which societies reproduce themselves. The inputs to the education system are teachers, schools and textbooks, as well as the full set of ideas about how a given society is structured and should be in the future. While the outputs are students graduating or completing education cycles, the outcome of the formal educational system is not only educated citizens, but citizens imbued with a particular perspective, including what are considered to be appropriate gender roles. Decisions affecting both what is taught, who is taught and by whom, are part of the process of social reproduction which each generation transmits to the next. Education, therefore, is a capability that should be valued not only as an end in itself, but as an instrument for achieving many other goals – among them gender equality.

The focus on education in gender analysis is fully justified; education is critical in building not only basic capabilities but also in empowering people. Parental education is an essential ingredient for breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, for ensuring child health and welfare and reducing maternal mortality. There is ever-increasing evidence that investing in girls' education in particular yields high returns for the girls themselves, as well as for households and communities.

A recent report from the MDG Task Force on education and gender equality (Birdsall, 2004) notes that education of girls and mothers has the unique ability to enable transformation from a situation in which having children out of school is socially acceptable, to one in which the expectation is that every child completes a course of schooling. Studies from individual countries in all regions reveal an unmistakable pattern: mothers' education is a strong and con-

sistent determinant of their children's schooling, particularly their daughters.

With respect to literacy, there also is a growing body of research that suggests that completion of at least five to six years of schooling is a critical threshold for sustainable mastery of basic competencies. The downward effect of education on fertility, violence against women and HIV/AIDS risk has been found to be strongest at or above the secondary school level. Hence, it is not surprising that the MDG Task Force recommends that the goal of "basic education" should cover more than primary schooling to achieve the long-term goal of prosperity and improved human welfare.

The education indicators chosen in this study are based on gross enrolment ratios, which whilst not ideal, were the only education indicators available for most countries. Converted into number of girls per 100 boys, this indicator has the further advantage of being easy to understand and compare. It should, however, be noted that enrolment rates reflect the input side of the equation, that is how many girls and boys are enrolled in school and not the output or how many complete school at each level. For a more complete picture, drop-out and retention patterns should also be taken into consideration, however very few countries produce school completion rates or information on student learning outcomes.

It is also useful to recall that parity in educational participation is not the same as ensuring that both girls and boys get a proper education, as the quality of education and the education expenditure of parents may still vary according to the child's sex. This is particularly likely to be the case with the non-obligatory education, where boys may be sent to better schools than their sisters. Their capability therefore, even if statistically equal, may differ and young men may be better equipped to participate in the employment or decision-making arenas.



The literacy indicator was chosen, in addition to the enrolment indicator, to reflect performance of the national education system in the recent past. It also is a measure of the quality of human resources within the country in relation to potential economic growth, contribution to development and quality of life. Literacy, however, is not a simple concept with a single universally accepted meaning and different countries use slightly different measures. Often a person is considered literate if he/she has completed five or more years of schooling. In reality of course, a person may still be functionally illiterate and a person with less schooling may have acquired literacy skills by non-formal means.

Most governments in the ESCAP region have subscribed to the principles and goals of the World Declaration on Education for All in 1990 and more recently to the goals of the Millennium Declaration. To achieve universal education and eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education has therefore been on the national agendas for many years. For the purpose of this study, gender equality is defined to be situated within the range of 90-110 girls per 100 boys, this range takes into consideration the differing quality of the underlying data.

Applying this definition of gender equality to the data in Table 1A (Annex 1), shows that equality has been achieved in primary schooling for all but 7 countries in the region (Afghanistan, Cambodia, India, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan and Solomon Islands). A couple of other countries (e.g. Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste) have also not achieved full coverage in primary education, but among the children enrolled there is no gender disparity.

At the secondary schooling level, the gender situation is more varied and 16 countries fall outside the defined range (90-110). More interestingly, in six of these countries the gender imbalance is in favour of girls not boys. In Malaysia, Mongolia, New Caledonia, Philippines, Samoa and Tonga there are 110 or more girls per 100 boys, indicating that once obligatory schooling is over, girls are more likely than boys to continue their education. One can only speculate about why girls are more studious than boys in these societies. While secondary enrolment has improved for both girls and boys in most of the

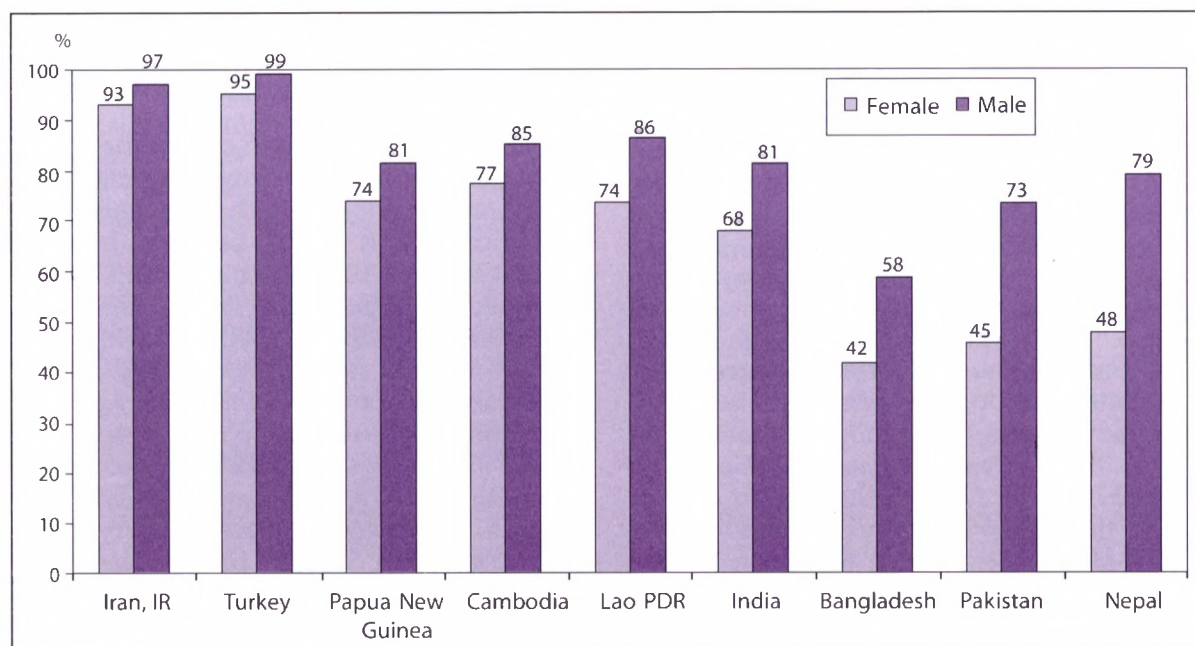
countries since 1990, there are a few exceptions, such as the transition economies in North and Central Asia where secondary enrolments have declined. For example, in Tajikistan almost all children went on to secondary schools in 1990, but in 2002 only 74 per cent of girls and 90 per cent of boys continued their education to secondary level according to the school enrolment ratios.

Since the data presented in Table 1A (Annex 1) are national averages, it is appropriate to note that in all countries poor children and children from rural areas are less likely to start school, more likely to drop out and more likely to engage in child labour or domestic chores that prevent them from attending school. Therefore, universal completion of primary and secondary education cannot be achieved without addressing the specific reasons that keep poor children those living in rural areas from completing school, repeating grades and dropping out.

At the tertiary level, the situation changes dramatically and large gender gaps appear in most developing countries, but also in some of the more developed countries in the region (see Table 1A in Annex 1). Of the 42 countries in the region for which data were available, half had significantly less girls enrolled than boys, while the other half either showed little difference or reported more girls than boys pursuing post-secondary training and education. Indeed, for Brunei Darussalam, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Palau, Russia, Timor-Leste and Tonga, there were significantly more girls enrolled in tertiary education than boys. Almost every country showed noticeable increases in the tertiary enrolment ratios since 1990, with the female rates on average progressing more than the male rates. The region's educational gender picture, therefore, is much more varied than usually believed and particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels. A more detailed breakdown of the different categories, which make up tertiary education would enable a better understanding of the gender imbalances where these exist, but it is beyond the scope of this report. For a fuller discussion of the quality of education, please confer to the discussion of rights within education and rights through education in Volume 2 of this series.



Figure 1: Literacy indicator for youth aged 15-24 for selected countries in 2003



* Limited to Countries with the largest sex difference in youth literacy
Source: UN Statistics Division, Millennium Indicators Database, 2004

Elimination of illiteracy worldwide has been a priority goal for the international community for a long time. Literacy is clearly a fundamental skill that empowers people to take control of their own lives, allows them to deal directly with authority and enables them to expand their options in the labour market. The youth literacy indicator (15-24 years) used in this report is a more sensitive measure than the total literacy rate and can reflect relatively recent improvements in the education system. Indeed, as a measure of the effectiveness of the primary education system, it is often used as a proxy indicator of social progress and development.

The time series data included in the gender profiles show that the literacy rates for this age group have progressed noticeably, so much so that in 2003 the literacy rate was above 90 per cent in all but seven countries (see Figure 1). The nine countries included in the figure are those, which had the largest youth gender gaps in literacy in 2003. Despite the considerable progress, it is worrying to note that in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan less than half of women aged 15-24 years are literate. The same three countries also had the biggest gender gap in literacy, with more than a 15 point difference between young women and men. Again it is worth while recalling that rural and urban differences are particularly

important because of the significant variation in school and transport facilities as well as the demand on children's time for work.

Health for all and health inequalities

Health transition is a part of demographic transition, moving from high to low levels of mortality and fertility. Most countries in the Asia-Pacific region are in the middle of the demographic transition but seven countries (Afghanistan, Cambodia, Lao P.D.R., Myanmar, Nepal, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste) are still in the early stage with women having 4 or more children and a life expectancy below 60 Years (ESCAP 2004). At country level the variation and improvement in health conditions is very large, as reflected in the four health indicators used in this study: the life expectancy at birth, the maternal and child mortality rates and the birth attended by skilled health workers. All are standard development indicators but are also frequently used to reflect women's status and access to health care. As with all indicators, the quality of the underlying data is important to enable interpretation of differences in the indicators over time and between countries.



In the health sector, greater investment in reproductive health services in most countries has led to significant reductions in infant and maternal mortalities, as well as to lower fertility rates. In some countries, women's life expectancy has increased by up to a decade over the last thirty years. Table 2A (Annex 1) reflects some of the huge health inequalities which characterize the region, with women in Japan living twice as long as women in Afghanistan and the maternal mortality rate in Nepal being hundred times bigger than in New Zealand.

Regarding the interpretation of any observed differences in life expectancies between women and men, one needs to know that nature seems to have given women a biological advantage in form of higher resistance to certain diseases, so that in low mortality countries women usually live several years longer than men. It can therefore be assumed that in countries where life expectancy for women does not exceed that of men, it is due to gender discrimination and unequal access to health services for women. The data presented in Table 2A in Annex 1, show that for 11 countries in the region, life expectancy for women was either identical to men's or only marginally better (2 years or less).

Further insight into the mortality patterns in the region can be obtained from investigating the mortality rates for different sub-populations, such as children and women in child-bearing ages. When the overall mortality is high, deaths occur most frequently during the first years of life, while when the overall mortality is low, most deaths take place at older ages. The under-five mortality is particularly useful in gender analysis because it is sensitive to preferential treatment of children of either sex. Moreover, the mortality of children under 5 years is closely correlated with economic well-being, because economic growth usually leads to improvements in nutrition, water and sanitation, which in turn, influences malnutrition and infectious disease.

In the least developed countries in the region, problems of public health are aggravated by malnutrition in children, which is caused by a combination of low income, inadequate or poorly balanced diets and poor food hygiene. According to UNICEF, malnutrition continues to be a problem in countries of South and South-West Asia. Malnutrition in children can greatly influence their risk of death as even mildly underweight children have a two-fold risk of dying compared to those of normal weight. For moderately to severely

underweight children the risk increases 5-8 fold. Preferential feeding of male children in poverty stricken families is happening in many Asian countries and can have very serious outcomes for female children in poor households.

Globally it has been shown that there is a 20-fold difference in child mortality between rich and poor households, which is roughly the same difference that is found between high-income countries (6 per 1000 live births) and the poorer countries (120 per 1000 live births). Similar differences are evident in Table 2A which shows a rate of over 250 for Afghanistan and less than 5 for Republic of Korea and Singapore. Again, due to the higher female resistance to disease, one would expect that the child mortality would be slightly lower for girls. This is clearly the case in most countries in the region, where mortality for the girl child is between 1 to 25 points lower. The best indicator, however, to reveal gender differentials is the ratio of the girl and boy child mortality rates. If male children do not receive preferential treatment, one would expect the ratio to come out well below one. The data in table 2A (Annex 1) show that this is indeed the case for all countries in the region, except for China, Bangladesh, India, Korea, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan, where the ratios are above one, indicating unnaturally high mortality rates for girl children. The highest ratio is found in China (1.32) where close to one third more girls die than boys.

Both the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994 and the Millennium Summit in 2000 identified maternal health as an urgent priority and set the goal of reducing maternal mortality by 2015 by 75 per cent. In the ICPD programme of action, maternal health was defined to include education on safe motherhood, prenatal care, adequate delivery services and post-natal care and family planning. Still 10 years after Cairo, maternal health services are insufficient in many countries in the region and women there do not get the obstetric care they need and die unnecessarily for causes that could be treated. Despite the ICPD's consensus and the strong support of NGOs at country level, maternal health is often not among governments' health priorities.

World Health Organization defines maternal mortality as "the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration or site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management,



but not from accidental or incidental causes". At the global level in 2000, it was estimated that over half a million women died due to birth complications. Moreover, this is but the tip of the iceberg, as an additional eight million women each year suffer complications from pregnancy and childbirth, which will have lifelong consequences for their health. One half of all maternal deaths (253,000) occur in the Asia-Pacific region.

Unfortunately, in many countries in Asia there is neither complete registration of deaths nor medical certification of cause of death, and maternal mortality is measured through population surveys. However, because maternal deaths are relatively rare events, very large sample sizes are needed to produce accurate estimates of maternal mortality. As a result for many countries in the region, the only data available on maternal deaths are estimates from models using data built on maternal mortality's relationship with other health variables such as child mortality and fertility. Any change in the maternal mortality indicator is therefore surrounded by tremendous uncertainty, which calls for great caution when interpreting observed rises or falls. In addition, maternal deaths are relatively rare in most countries and hence randomness and small numbers may also affect the time series data. Even in the Philippines, a government report on monitoring maternal mortality states that "due to large sampling errors associated with these estimates, the observed decline [in MMR] is considered inconclusive"(ARROW, 2004). An international peer review group is currently working on harmonizing methods to generate maternal mortality estimates. The group is composed of WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and members from academia.

According to the currently available estimates, which are yet to be harmonized, the risks of dying from childbirth vary enormously in the ESCAP region, from 7 per 100,000 in New Zealand to 1,900 in Afghanistan (see table 2A in Annex 1). The time series data on the maternal mortality rates, suggest that since 1990 many countries have experienced spectacular falls (e.g. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea and Thailand) but in other high maternal mortality countries there has been no or little progress (India, Lao PDR, Myanmar). More worrying, however, is the fact that in a number of countries, including several with medium to low maternal mortality levels, the data seem to indicate that birth risks for women increased between 1995 and 2000 (e.g. Azerbaijan, Fiji, Kazakhstan, Korea DPR, Mongolia,

Pakistan, Samoa, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu). In Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan the rapid deterioration of the health system following the collapse of the Soviet Union can explain this negative development. However, in some of the other countries the observed increases are more difficult to account for and may not be real but due to unrealistically low estimates for 1995. Similarly, in some of the countries where a sharp decline was observed in maternal mortality, as for instance, Nepal there was no corresponding improvement in two related indicators, i.e. skilled birth attendance or access of women to emergency obstetric care (ARROW, 2004). The maternal mortality data are not sufficiently reliable to allow firm conclusions to be drawn.

Lack of access to or use of essential obstetric services is a crucial factor contributing to high maternal mortality. According to WHO, 80 per cent of maternal deaths are due to direct obstetric complications, which could be solved if health facilities were within reach or if births were assisted by skilled attendants. Consequently, the proportion of birth attended by skilled health personnel was chosen as the second indicator to measure the Millennium Development Goal's for maternal mortality. Compared to maternal mortality, the birth attendance data, has the added advantage of being easier to collect and can be obtained more frequently. Not surprisingly, the eight countries in the region that have less than one third of the births assisted by professionals, also have the highest maternal mortality rates (see Table 2A). In these countries there is strong need for developing the health systems to ensure that women do not suffer added inequity because of their reproductive roles.

Equal opportunity to work and earn income

Labour force participation and status in employment can be used as proxies for access to employment, ownership of assets, access to credit and markets, etc. They are used in this study for measuring equal opportunity to economic roles and employment arenas in society. The overall activity rate reflects the extent to which women and men take part in productive work in the formal or informal sectors.

Often, however, activity rates contain a gender bias due to the way the data are collected. In a standard labour force survey, activities outside the formal economy are easily

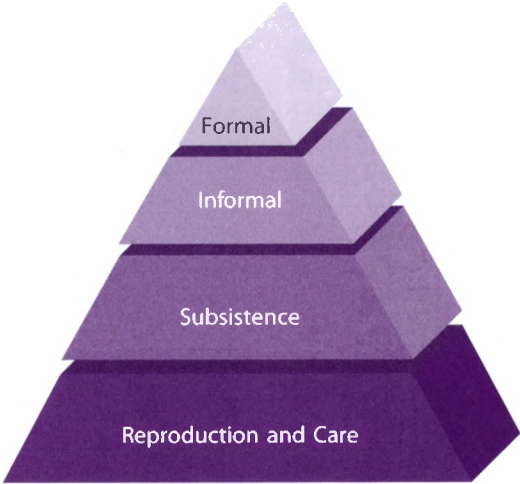


overlooked in official data gathering because they tend to be irregular, part-time, subsistence-oriented, take place at home and sometimes unpaid. As more women than men are found in

these activities, by extension, data on women's labour force participation are likely to be incomplete, unreliable and underestimated in societies where the informal sector is large.

Box 1: Productive and reproductive work

Production traditionally refers to all activities that are traded in the market place and contribute to a country's GDP. Reproduction, by contrast, refers to those activities that add to and take care of societies' human resources including caring for children, the old, sick and disabled. Reproductive work has typically been excluded from economic and statistical analysis because it is unpaid. By using paid economic work as the yardstick, economic analysis and statistical systems have failed to appreciate and measure what is distinctive about women's work patterns and reproductive activities.



As shown in the figure, beyond the visible formal economy there is the less visible informal economy, where a large proportion of the traded goods and services are undocumented by official statistics. Even less observed is the subsistence economy, where goods and services are produced for households' own consumption, which in many countries is an important sub-economy in its own right. These different economic activities rest on the unpaid work, done mostly by women and children, in the reproductive sub-economy. Although both the statistical collection of the labour force data and the national accounting systems (1993 SNA) have tried to develop solutions to account for some of this work, they are difficult to implement and the bias against unpaid work remains.

In Asia, a high proportion of jobs is in the informal sector and characterized by irregularity, low pay and a lack of security. The extent to which each sex is employed in the formal or informal sector is, therefore, a relevant indicator. For instance, Ghosh [2004] points out that in Southeast Asia, women have made up a significant proportion of the workforce in the informal manufacturing industry, in garment workshops, shoe factories and craft industries. Much of their production is done by home-based workers, working on own account or on a sub-contractual basis. Unfortunately, very few countries have labour force surveys, which allow a distinction to be made between formal, informal and other type of casual work. To better capture women's work and improve the measurement of the

informal sector, ILO recommends that countries with large informal sectors use, not only the conventional definition of work which includes only activities done for pay or profit, but an extended definition which allows all types of work to be counted, including productive work for own consumption. Studies undertaken under the APGEN project [2003] that have applied both the narrow and the extended definition have found that women's activity rates increased substantially when the latter was used.

Figure 2 gives an overview of female and male activity rates for selected countries and shows that, between 1995 and the most recent data in 2000/2, there has been no major change in activity rates in the ESCAP region. This is the case

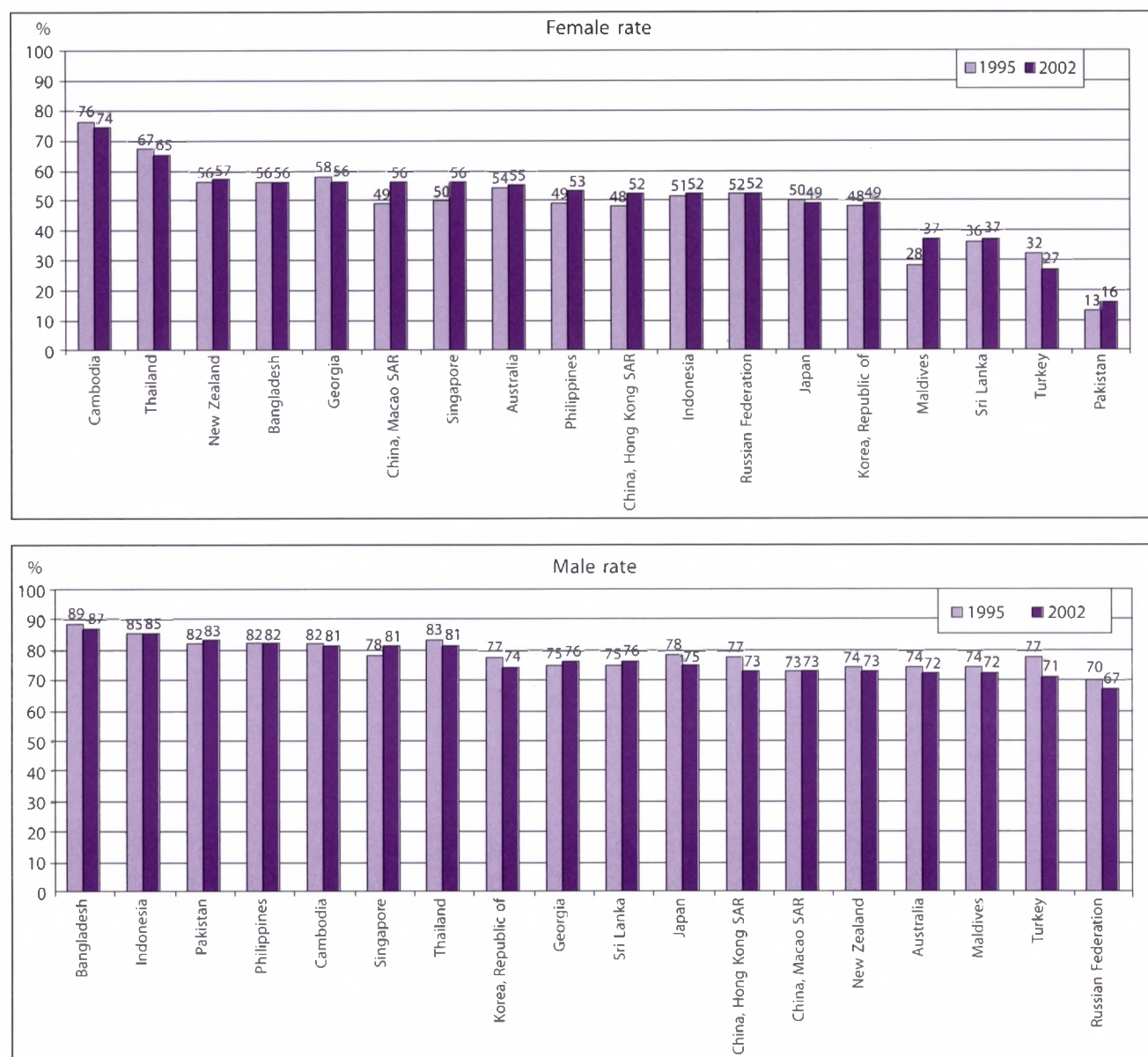


for both women and men, although for women the rates increased moderately in 10 of the 18 countries and more surprisingly declined slightly in 5 countries. Only in the Maldives and Macao, China did women seem to make a substantial entry into the labour force. While activity rates for men vary relatively little between countries, usually from 75 to 85, the range is much larger for women with 74 for Cambodia and 16 for Pakistan.

Since participation in the labour force covers all types of work, a more restrictive indicator was also selected which specifically looks at wage employment outside the agricultural sector.

The same indicator is used to monitor progress on the Millennium Development Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women. In many developing countries there are large differences between women and men in non-agricultural employment. Waged work is considered an improvement in women's lives because such employment is usually associated with migration to cities and a lessening of patriarchal controls. Compared to the irregular and poorly paid forms of employment available in rural areas, factory work with regular wages is preferred for the greater income security and freedom it offers.

Figure 2: Economic activity rate for women and men in 1995 and 2002



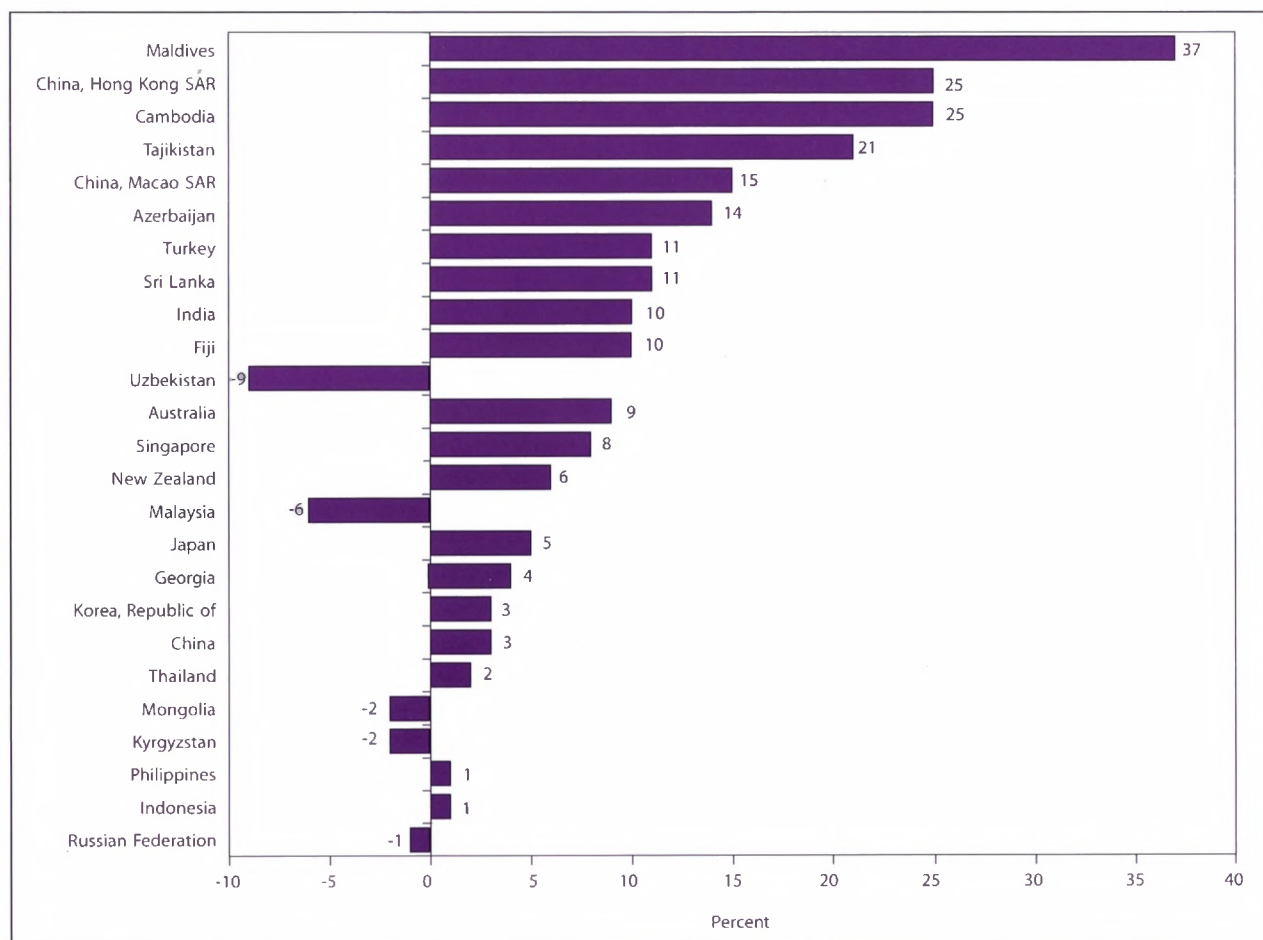
Source: ILO Bureau of Statistics, 2004



Although data were missing for a number of countries, the indicator showed that in the preceding decade as economies developed many women took up waged employment in the industrial and service sectors to gain economic security and better-remunerated jobs. For instance, the development of an export-oriented

textile and garment industry in Cambodia and the needs of the tourist industry in the Maldives have benefited women's waged employment since 1990 (see Figure 3). Malaysia and Uzbekistan, on the other hand, which both had a relatively high proportion of women in waged employment in 1990, experienced some decline.

Figure 3: Change in women's wage employment between 1990 and 2002⁽¹⁾



* Limited to countries where data for 1990 and 2002 are available

Source: UN Statistics Division-Millennium Indicators Database, 2004

(1) The indicator is the number of women per 100 men in wage employment. The data in the chart represent the difference between the two years

The increasing proportion of women engaged in paid employment, however, is largely due to jobs created in export-oriented manufacturing as a result of relocative foreign investment moving to locations of cheaper and more "flexible" sources of labour (Ghosh, 2004). The integration of women into paid work, however, does not mean that gender inequalities have disappeared. Labour markets remain strongly segregated and even when working for pay, women and men are

rarely doing the same jobs side by side. Indeed, evidence suggests that the paid work performed by women is less well remunerated, less permanent and often casual in nature (Ghosh, 2004).

On the global level, a study by the ILO (Anker, 1998) shows that approximately half of all workers in the world are in gender-dominated occupations where at least 80 per cent of workers are of the same sex, a form of labour market



rigidity that reduces employment opportunities. A second caveat is that an increase in women's share of paid employment has added to their overall work burdens, since women continue to bear the main burden of domestic work. The unequal sharing of unpaid work has been demonstrated in all time use studies,

for instance in Nepal it was found that among those employed men spent 4.7 hours a week doing unpaid work while women spent 23.1 hours (ESCAP, 2003). Finally, the increase of women in paid work does not necessarily indicate that the quality of the work they do have improved.

**Box 2: Employment in the informal sector for selected UNESCAP countries
(Most recent year available for the period 1992-2002)**

Country	Year	Informal sector employment			
		as % of total employment	as % of total female employment	as % of total male employment	Females per 100 males
Georgia	1999	6.9	3.8	10.0	39.0
India	2000	55.7	57.0	55.4	25.0
Indonesia	1999	62.7	68.2	59.3	71.0
Kyrgyzstan	1999	24.9	20.8	28.5	63.0
Nepal	1999	73.3	86.5	67.4	58.0
Pakistan	1997	64.6	80.6	-	13.0
Russian Federation	2001	12.9	12.3	12.9	89.0
Thailand ³	2000	71.1	71.1	71.0	82.0
Turkey ¹	2000	9.9	6.2	10.6	12.0
Macao, China	1999	7.4	6.1	8.4	61.0
Philippines ²	1995	17.3	19.4	15.8	91.0

Sources: ILO STAT Working Paper 2002-no1
1. Related other concepts. 2. Urban areas only. 3. Refers to small or micro-enterprise

Regrettably only a few countries have specifically tried to estimate the size of the informal sector, its composition and contribution to the economy. In most countries, it seems that the informal sector represents a more important source of employment for women than for men. In developing countries where jobs are in short supply, men dominate the formal sector, with its more secure employment and women have to settle for the more precarious jobs available in the informal sector.

As can be seen from the data in Box 2, in Asia the informal sector provides a living or additional source of income to many women and men. In Nepal and Pakistan more than 80 per cent of all female employment is to be found in this sector. In Thailand it accounts for 70 per cent of both the female and male workforces. In many countries, the formal sector has not grown fast enough to absorb the growing labour force and without a public social security system, the

unemployed have no choice but to perform work either as self-employed individuals or as workers in informal production units.

It is important to recall that the informal sector is not made up only of street vendors but that its growth is also linked to globalisation and increased competition. As a result there had been a general shift towards more informal forms of work organization. It is now generally agreed



that the defining characteristics of the informal sector is its capacity to accommodate a wide diversity of products, quality, techniques and tools used. Production organisation spans household industrial units, homeworkers and sub-contracted units and activities, which traditionally were low-productivity activities, now span cutting-edge sectors such as information technology and communication. Due to the wide variety of characteristic of informal employment conventional methods of data collection, whether establishment-based or household-based, are inadequate for measuring the sector (Corner, 2002).

The social hierarchy of livelihoods, however, is not only divided into formal and informal sectors but within each of these, a person's status varies according to whether he or she is an employer, an employee, self-employed or unpaid family worker. For instance, individuals who have their own business with employees are likely to have access to assets, credit and markets. Hence, the share of employers who are male or female can be used to gauge economic status and power. Similarly, the share of unpaid family workers can be taken as an indicator of little economic power and independence. In contrast to those who work as unpaid family workers, being an employee usually puts some money directly into the hands of the person working, and the pay is likely to be higher and more secure than for self-employment. Although these categories are standard labour force disaggregations, many countries were not able to provide the data.

Table 3A (Annex 1) shows that gender differences become very striking when the total employment is examined by the above-discussed status of employment. Women are clearly clustered in the category of unpaid family workers, while men are spread more evenly between employees, own account workers and employers. For instance, in Bangladesh in 2000, over 70 per cent of female workers were unpaid family workers while only 10 per cent of men were in this category. Male workers, on the other

hand, were clustered in the category of own account workers, which in many countries contained one third of the total male work force. With the exception of Georgia, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and the Maldives, few women elsewhere worked on own account. In view of the high proportion of women employed in the informal sector in Thailand (71 per cent) and in Indonesia (68 per cent), it is reasonable to conclude that women who work for themselves are mostly in the informal sector.

Women's status in employment is strongly affected by the rights they enjoy under the national civil law. For instance, both the right to own property and to have access to credit facilities is essential for developing entrepreneurship among women. The regulations of the current WTO and GAT regimes create differential opportunities for a small but not unsubstantial portion of legitimate female migrant workers found in certain service sectors and the huge mass of irregular female migrant workers. Of the twelve countries which had data for 1995, five showed an increase in the category of female employers, seven showed a small increase for women in the employee category and a similar number of countries registered a modest growth of self-employed women. If these data are representative of the region, it may be concluded that some improvement have taken place with some women managing to move to higher employment status.

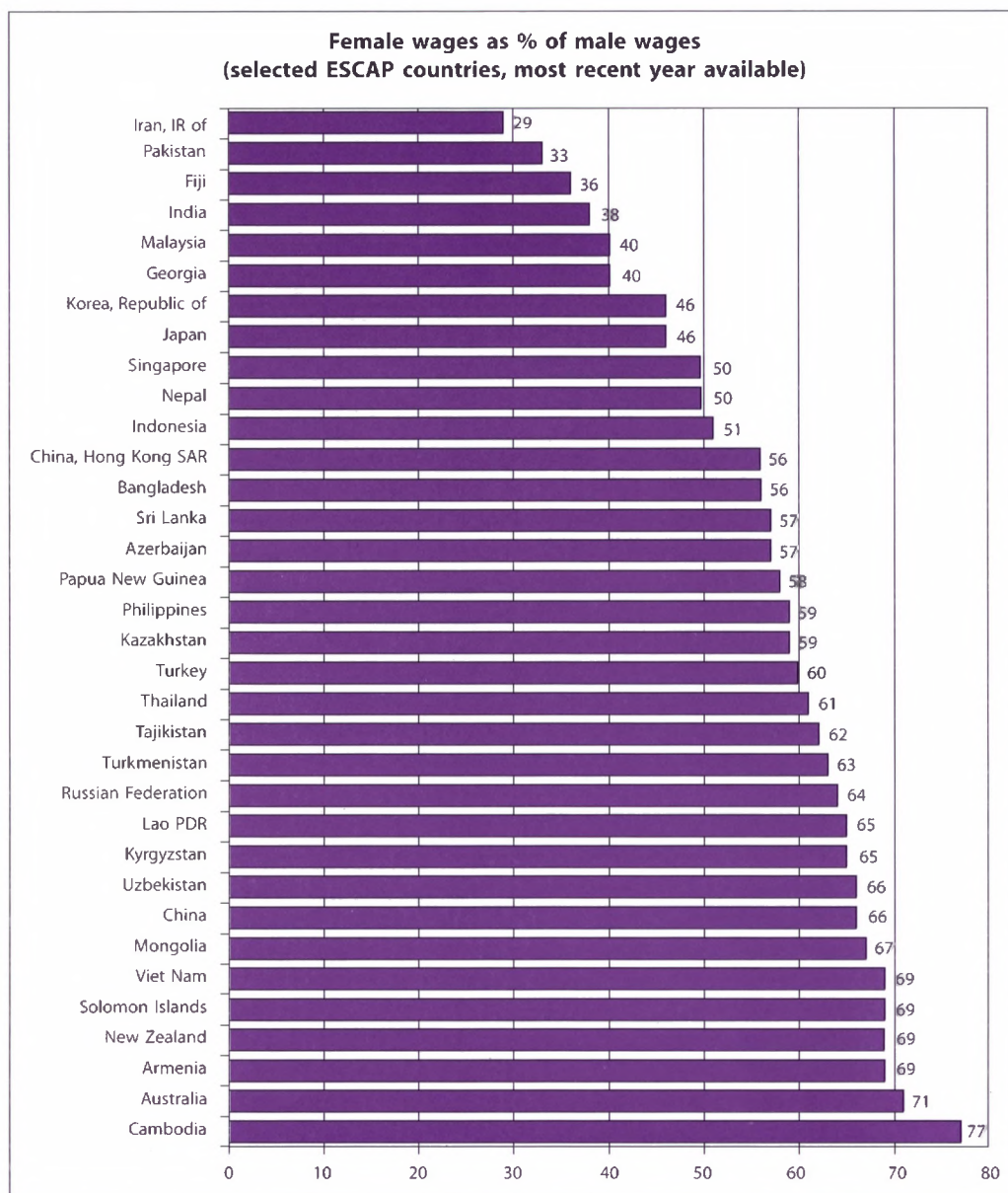
However, even if parity will be reached eventually in the numbers engaged in wage employment, it cannot be automatically assumed that it also will mean income equality. It is well known that even in developed countries women's average income and wages are well below those of men's (UNDP, 2003). Reliable income and wage data are very difficult to obtain, the data presented in Box 3 have on purpose been converted into female wages as a percentage of male's to allow some comparison of the relative proportion since the real wage data would not be suitable for comparisons.



Box 3: Women's income as percent of men's income for selected ESCAP countries

Reliable income data are notoriously difficult to obtain and data on the gender earnings gap – in both paid and self-employment – are currently not available for many countries.

Since 1995 *UNDP Human Development Report* (HDR) has been building up a database on wage differentials to use in their composite indicator: the GEM. The sources of the income information and the calculation to arrive at the final ratio of female to male income are detailed in the HDRs section of the UNDP website <http://hdr.undp.org>. It is important to keep in mind that the data are estimates.



UNDP estimate

The data in the above table are from the UNDP source and are only indicative of the real wage gaps between women and men. In most of the countries in Asia, women earn less than two thirds of men's income and, in a number of countries, the figure is as low as 50 per cent. Surprisingly there do not seem to be clear-cut patterns, neither regional nor in relation to economic development.



Empowerment at all levels is needed

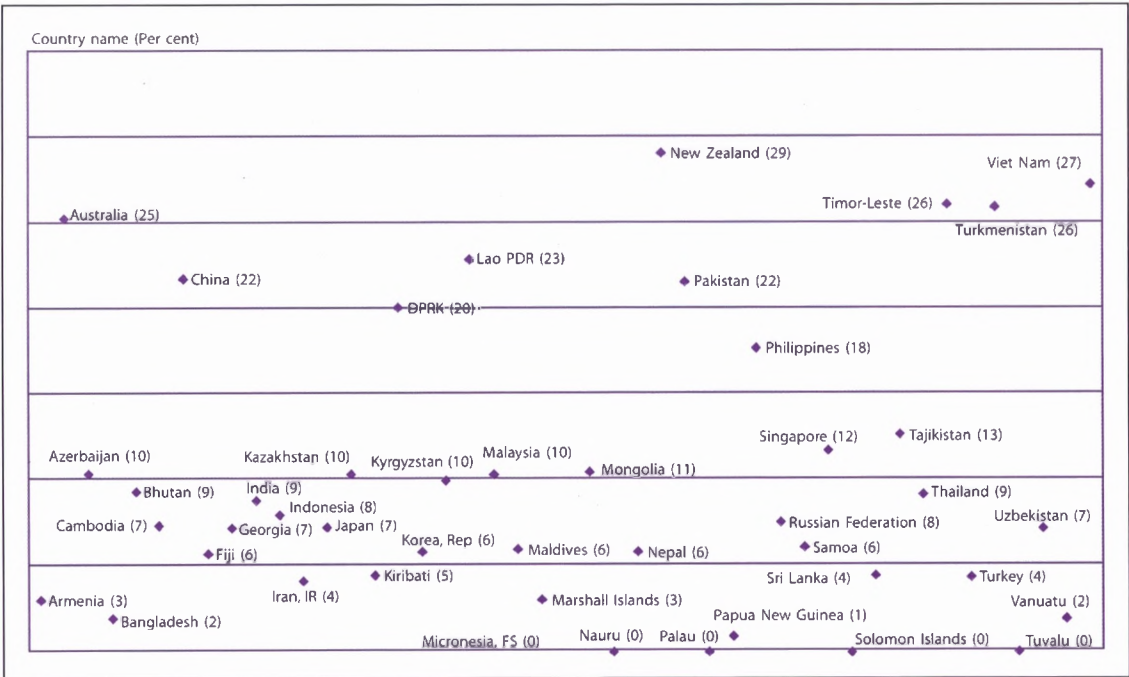
Women’s share of seats in national parliaments is used in most gender studies to reflect their empowerment in the political arena and currently is the only indicator that can be tracked on a global scale. It is, however, an imperfect proxy for empowerment as it does not reveal whether women have power in parliaments to make decisions or whether they are sensitive to gender issues.

Women throughout the world play critical roles in economic growth and development and their contributions have an impact on households, communities and national economies. Yet when it comes to having a voice in public life and to share in societal and political decision-making, women are mostly absent. The low number of seats held by women in national parliaments reflects this state of affairs and the 50 per cent representation by women, which would correspond to gender equality in the political arena, is still a distant dream in most countries.

Data from the Inter-parliamentary Union, presented in Table 4A (in Annex 1), show that in 1990 only four countries in the ESCAP region had parliaments with more than 20 per cent of women. By 2003 this had increased to nine countries and of these Australia, New Zealand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Viet Nam had more than a quarter of female parliamentarians. Compared to the situation in 1990, progress therefore has taken place, although no change is visible in China, DPRK, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkmenistan. The number of female parliamentarians has actually fallen in several countries including Armenia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nauru, Russia, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Figure 4 shows that there is no direct relationship between economic development and women’s political empowerment. Women in Timor-Leste and Viet Nam are seemingly doing as well as women in Australia and New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea and Japan have fewer women in their parliament than India and Cambodia. As representation in the political arena is central to improving civil and political rights, the low representation of women in most countries of the region is therefore a situation of concern for gender equality in the region.

Figure 4: Share of women among members of parliament in 2003

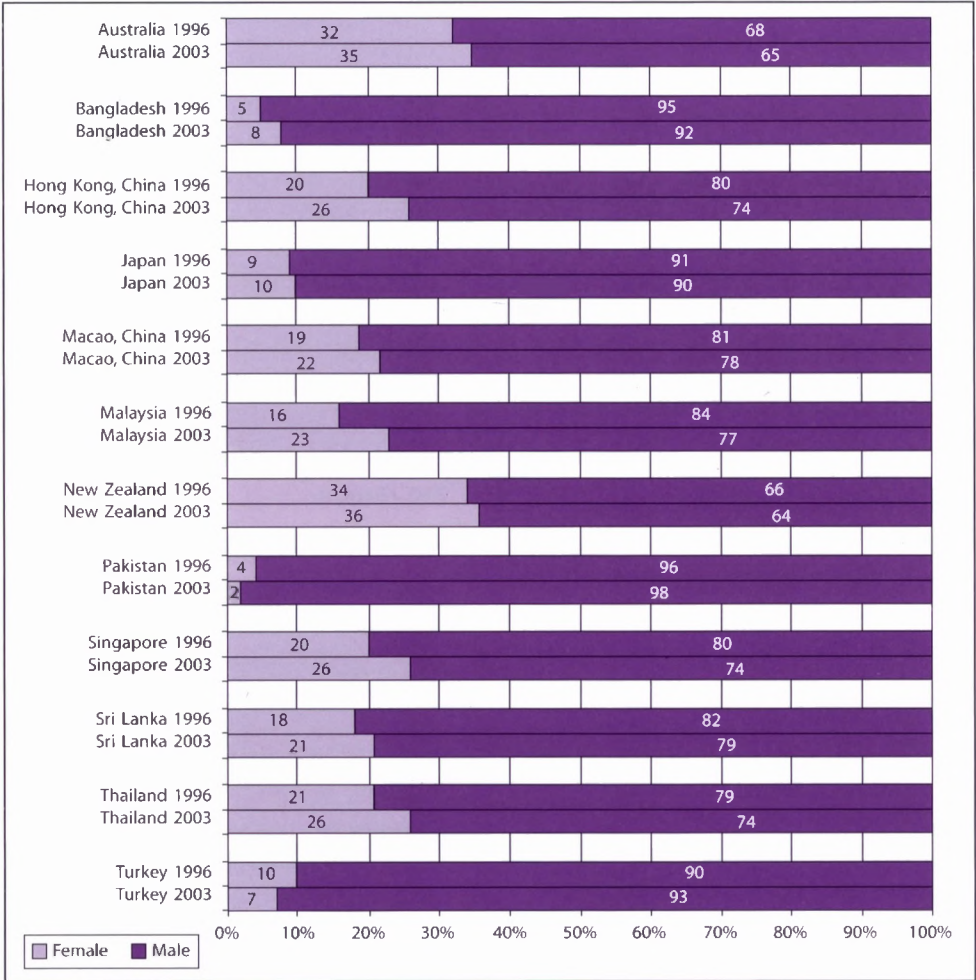




Voice and empowerment in other areas such as economic decision-making and in institutions which shape future generations, are also important for equality. The occupational group, which is likely to contain the most powerful positions with respect to decision-making, is the “managerial group,” which includes all senior officials, legislators, corporate

managers and general managers. The gender balance in this group can therefore be taken as a proxy for the empowerment of women in decision-making at the societal level. Comparable data can only be obtained for countries that have labour force surveys and follow ILO International Standard Classification of Occupations.

Figure 5: Share of women among senior officials, legislators and managers



Source: ILO Bureau of Statistics, 2004

Figure 5 shows the gender balance among the managerial group for 12 countries and confirms that it is a highly male dominated group in all countries in the region. It is interesting to note though that from 1996 to 2003 progress took place in the group’s gender balance in all countries, except Turkey and Pakistan. Eight countries now have more than one in five managers who are female. Although most of the countries that have relatively high proportions of

women in the managerial group are among the more developed, economic development is clearly not a pre-requisite as both Japan and Republic of Korea have a more biased gender balance than Cambodia and Turkey.

Some specific occupations have more potential than others to empower women because they can influence people and make them aware of important life-choices, which can



lead to change. Examples include teachers, trade union and NGO leaders and journalists. For obvious reasons, it is important that women are well represented in occupations that have the power to institute change and promote new ideas.

Only data on the teaching occupations were available for most countries and are shown in Figure 6. With the exception of ten countries, women are the majority among the primary teachers, but more importantly they are well on the way to also becoming a majority among secondary teachers. In 19 of the 37 countries included in the figure, female secondary teachers already outnumbered male teachers. Assuming that teachers play a key role in shaping the minds of future generations, they should be among the prime targets for gender advocacy groups. Similarly governments committed to gender equality and human rights should ensure that teachers are trained to promote the principles of gender equity and human rights.

Empowerment at the individual and household level is the most difficult to measure statistically and can only be estimated using proxy indicators. Commonly used indicators are the extent to which women are able to control their fertility, for instance, measured through their use of modern contraceptive means, their age at first birth or age at first marriage. In the traditional family systems of many Asian countries, relationships were based on the supremacy of males over females and age over youth. In many societies, the inferior position of girls was acknowledged from the moment of birth and children were socialized according to their sex. Young women had no say in who and when to marry and the pressure to bear children was strong. As a consequence of education and development, significant changes have taken place in the status of women in many Asian countries. Women are increasingly able to take greater control of their lives by delaying marriage to after they have finished their education. With the increasing use of and access to contraception, many can also decide how many children they have and when to have them.

Since universal contraceptive usage has been achieved in many countries, Figure 7 only includes those countries where less than three quarters of married women use contraception.

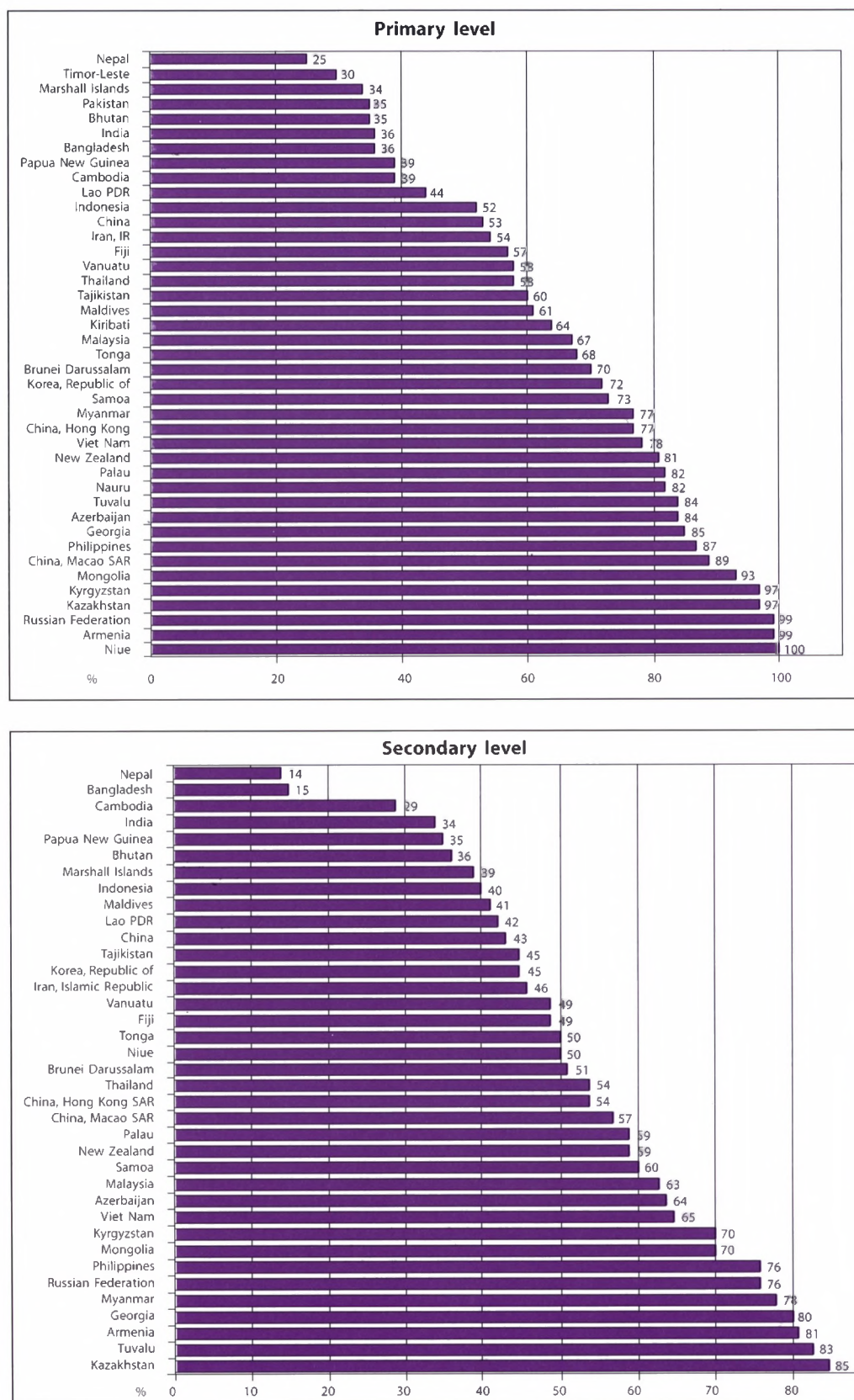
In the majority of these countries more than half of married women of reproductive age have access to and use contraception. Of the countries that have data available, only in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Cambodia is the proportion less than 25 per cent. As a result contraceptive acceptance in many Asian countries, fertility has been rapidly declining as countries have moved through their demographic transition. With it the burden of child-care, which often made it impossible for women to take up work outside the family and to engage in associative activities, has also declined.

The fall in fertility in Asia from an average of 5 to 7 births per woman in the early 1960s to less than half of that level in 2000, has been well documented and described elsewhere. At the same time, there has been radical transformation in the reproductive behaviour of married persons so that childbearing now takes place later and the birth intervals are longer. These changes are primarily the result of the widespread adoption of family planning and contraception, which has rapidly progressed in most of the countries in the region.

The balancing of work and family life is a key gender issue poorly served by statistics, as few countries have data that describe both workers participation in the labour market and their personal and family characteristics. As women are usually mainly responsible for children and the family, those who have small children at home or in primary school are usually carrying a heavy extra burden of work. This is known to affect their levels of employment, their working hours and their chances to engage in work outside the household. In the lack of better data, an indicator which measures women's child care burden was used to show whether this is likely to be an important factor behind women's work participation and working patterns. The child-care index in Table 5A (Annex 1), measures the number of small children (0-9 years) per 100 women (aged 15-44) in a given year. In 2000, Afghanistan had the highest index of all countries in the region with 152 children per 100 women and Macao, China the lowest with 40, clearly pointing to the added difficulties that women in the former country would have in balancing work and family.



Figure 6: Percentage of female teachers in 2002

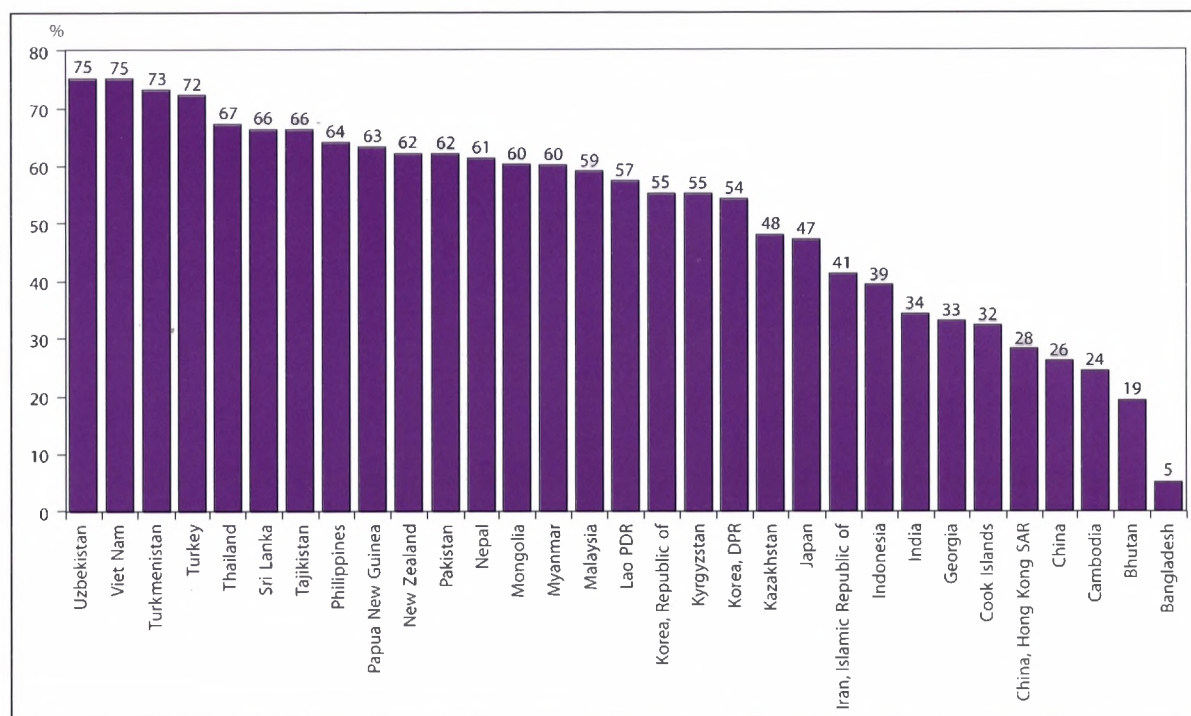


Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2004

1. UNESCO Institute of Statistics estimate. 2. National estimate covers data from 1999 to 2002



Figure 7: Percentage of married women aged 15-49 using contraception for selected UNESCAP countries



Source: UN Statistics Division - Millennium Indicators Database, 2004
Most recent year available for the period 1995-2001

In the decade since 1990, the child-care burden fell in the majority of countries. In some countries like Cambodia, Iran, Maldives, Mongolia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan the indicator showed a fall by 30 children or more per 100 women. By contrast in those countries where the burden of child-care was already light, the declines were much smaller or hardly changed at all (e.g. Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Republic of Korea). Of the six countries with indices above 150 in 1990, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iran, Lao PDR, Maldives and Pakistan, the situation changed the most for women in Iran. By 2000 the index had fallen to under 90 children per 100 women in Iran.

While women in the region have made much progress on reducing fertility and increasing contraceptive usage, a new challenge has appeared in the form of HIV/AIDS, which also involves the empowerment of women. It is widely recognized that one of the root causes of the rapid spread of HIV virus in Asia is the lack of empowerment of women and girls, which often makes it difficult for them to avoid unprotected sex.

Unfortunately, reliable information on the number of new infections of HIV/AIDS is hard to acquire and is not available for many countries by sex. Instead the prevalence rates are therefore used as an indicator. The data in Table 6A (Annex 1) show wide variations in prevalence rates among persons belonging to sexually active age groups (18-49 years) for ESCAP countries, with the highest rates in Cambodia and Thailand and the lowest in Uzbekistan and the Republic of Korea. While in most countries the prevalence rates are still highest for men, Japan (which has low rates) shows a higher prevalence among women. Cambodia, India and Thailand also show relatively high rates for women, while Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Russia and Viet Nam stand out for their high male rates.

Although HIV/AIDS is still in many countries seen as a problem mainly for drug users, sex workers and their clients, there is now evidence that most of the growth in female infections occurs in the general population where wives are being infected by virus-carrying husbands. In India for instance, truck drivers have been found to be one of the largest causes of the spread of HIV/AIDS.



Box 4: HIV/AIDS and gender

HIV/AIDS is a global catastrophe, which is threatening an increasing number of countries in the ESCAP region. The epidemic takes radically different forms in different communities and in some it is no longer limited to key populations such as injecting drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with other men. It has also been found that no effective responses to contain HIV/AIDS can be developed, without taking into account the fundamental ways that gender influences the spread of the disease. In many African societies, women and girls now bear a disproportionate and increasing share of the suffering caused by the epidemic. The crucial link between gender and HIV/AIDS implies that prevention and treatment programs must take gender into account and decisive success against the epidemic may require attacking the gender inequities themselves.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic presents an especially urgent challenge because rates of infection among women are rapidly increasing. Women 15-24 years of age constitute the majority of new cases. Women's economic vulnerability and low social status contribute significantly to their increased risk of HIV/AIDS. The relative powerlessness of women and girls in many Asian societies, together with the socially constructed gender roles and attitudes, render women more vulnerable to the epidemic in a variety of ways. Subordination to men and husbands can make it difficult or impossible for women to refuse sex or to demand the use of condoms. Furthermore, it is now well established that for biological reasons, the virus can more easily be transmitted from men to women during intercourse. As a result, the share of new infections is higher for women globally and was estimated to be 50 per cent at the end of 2002.

Women also suffer more than men from the economic and social consequences of the disease. Inheritance rights can leave widowed women destitute and without family support because of the stigma and superstition connected with HIV/AIDS. Moreover, women shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden of caring for sick and dying family members.

As documented by UNIFEM's reports (UNIFEM, 2003) violence against women remains a major obstacle to achieving gender equality in many countries in the Asian region. According to a study (Heise and Ellsberg, 1999) at the world level, at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Unfortunately, there are no reliable statistics because very few countries in the world have undertaken surveys to measure physical violence against women. The main sources of information, which confirm that domestic violence is taking place, are from police and hospital records, which give little indication about the prevalence and frequency, as they record only the most severe cases leading to medical treatment.

Despite efforts to outlaw violence against women and on promoting legislation against gender-based violence, it is still difficult in many countries to pursue and punish perpetrators and protect the victims, because of the weakness of the legal framework. A survey carried out by

UNIFEM in 2003 to investigate whether legislation existed for certain types of violence found that, surprisingly, few countries have specific laws in place which are suitable for prosecuting offenders in courts.

A lack of quantitative measures of violence against women made it necessary to opt for a normative indicator, which simply states whether legislation exists to protect women against four categories of violence considered to be mainly perpetrated against women and girls: domestic violence; rape; sexual harassment and rape in marriage. If a country has a specific law, which allows prosecution for these forms of violence, a score of two was attributed, while if the law was general and not specifically referring to gender-based violence only one point was given. Hence, the highest score possible a country could achieve was eight, signifying that specific laws were in force in all four areas. Figure 8 shows a crude ranking of countries according to the scores given for their legislation on violence against women.



Figure 8: Rating of legislation on violence against women

Philippines Russian Federation New Zealand Bangladesh Korea, Republic of	High (4+)	
Australia India Nepal Japan Georgia Sri Lanka Kazakhstan Bhutan	Kyrgyzstan Tajikistan Pakistan Singapore Palau Turkey Malaysia Thailand	Medium (2-4)
Uzbekistan Brunei Darussalam Indonesia Myanmar Viet Nam Fiji Papua New Guinea China Mongolia	Maldives Timor-Leste Korea, DPR of Afghanistan Iran, IR of Kiribati Marshall Islands Cambodia Lao PDR Armenia	Micronesia, FS of Nauru Samoa Solomon Islands Tonga Tuvalu Vanuatu Azerbaijan Turkmenistan
		Low (0-2)

The Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, is the most universally accepted instrument for realizing gender equality and influencing cultural and traditional definitions of gender roles and family relations. It is assumed that ratification of this convention by a country is an indication of a general desire to improve the situation of women and promote equality. Although 170 governments have signed the convention, they may not have implemented it due either to lack of political will or resources. As signatories to the convention, each country is required to report within one year of acceding and at least every four years thereafter. The reports are submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women for examination and the Committee reports annually to the UN General Assembly. An additional indicator showing the number of reports that a country has submitted to the UN on their gender policy implementation was therefore selected.

The situation in the ESCAP region with respect to CEDAW is reflected in Table 7A (Annex 1), which shows the countries which have signed on to CEDAW, the year and the number of reports submitted plus whether a country has ratified another important international convention, the ILO Convention C100 on Equal Remuneration. Almost all ESCAP members have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the two latest members were Afghanistan and Timor-Leste in 2003. Not all, however, have submitted national reports on how they are implementing the principles laid out in the convention, which may be a sign that policies to achieve gender equality are low on governments' list of priorities. With few exceptions, all ESCAP member countries have also ratified ILO's Equal Remuneration convention. Again, if the convention is not supported by a national legal framework, implementation is likely to be weak as employers would probably not be aware of its existence.



CONCLUSIONS

Within the scope of this report and with current available data, the selected indicators offer a comprehensive picture of the progress towards gender equality in the ESCAP region. One general conclusion, which immediately can be drawn, is that although the road to gender equality is not a linear one and despite the perpetual shortage of resources to address women's needs, the statistical data show that progress has taken place everywhere. This is important to acknowledge, to encourage those who are working to improve the status of women in the region and to ensure that the movement towards realization of equality remains strong and vigorous.

One of the key messages is that the gender gaps in education and literacy are finally disappearing in many of the region's countries. This is the case not only for primary education but also at the secondary level there are clear indications of general progress. In some countries, more girls are now enrolled in secondary education than boys. The improved access to education will benefit not only the girls individually, but their families and the community as a whole. Similarly, there has been further improvement in the survival chances of women and girls, due to falling maternal mortality and general economic progress. Many more women now have access to contraception and have used it to avoid unwanted pregnancies and to space their children, thereby reducing their reproductive burdens and contributing to their life expectancies. Women have therefore generally improved their capabilities to become full and equal participants in the region's development. These improvements have been regionwide, even in countries where patriarchal oppressions are still very much in evidence. Yet, we must underline that girls and women's rights to education is far from met in some countries, particularly in the South Asian region. It is also in this region that mortality rates of girls and women remain unacceptable high.

Another message is that the strong preference for male children, which has characterized many countries in the region, may have dimin-

ished but is still visible. It is visible in the sex ratios of certain countries which are not only male favoured at birth, but also for the total population, which is a clear indication of excess female mortality. Sadly, it is also reflected in the child mortality rates in a number of countries. The girl child therefore continues today to suffer from discrimination in many ESCAP countries.

Reducing gender inequality in the labour market – as manifested in women's smaller share of wage employment, occupational segregation, gender wage gaps and women's disproportionate representation in informal employment – is key not only to increase women's economic security, but also to challenge the myth of the male breadwinner. The evidence presented in this report shows that in most countries more women have found waged employment and there are also signs of women transferring from the unpaid family workers category into higher status employment categories. In many countries in Asia, despite a high labour force participation, women's roles are little visible in the economy and their increasing entry into formal employment may not be secure. National labour force statistics are generally weak in identifying and describing the "atypical" forms of employment which often characterize women's work situations, as a result their contributions to economic production are often underestimated. Policies and programmes designed on the basis of statistics that only partially reflect women's work may be detrimental to both women and the country's economy.

Similarly, the absence of women from the occupational groups which wield economic power and decision-making is striking. Although some slight advance is noticeable in a few countries, women still have far to go before they will be equal with men among employers and in the managers and senior officials group. The increase in self-employed women could be a sign of growing female entrepreneurship; however, much of this growth may be limited to the informal sector, which continues to be the first resort for many women entering the workforce.



In countries where the informal sector constitutes a significant part of economic activities, it is key to understanding female employment but better data are needed than what is currently produced.

One of the indicators, where gender inequality had improved the least, was in seats held by women in national parliament. More attention and advocacy have to be focused on women's political and civil education so that women can come forward and be part of the political decision-making. Much still remains to be done in the region to improve matrimonial codes, property regimes and other restrictions on women's civil and political rights. By contrast, very noticeable progress has happened in the teaching professions, where women are becoming a majority even at the secondary level in many countries. In view of the informative role teachers can play in educating young people about risks, such as HIV/AIDS, tobacco and substance abuse, as well as about human and equal rights, this is a positive development.

The limited statistical information available on HIV/AIDS shows that in some countries, it is increasingly becoming a concern to women outside the usual target groups. There was strong agreement at the recent AIDS Conference in Bangkok that stopping the spread of the virus will only be successful if governments adopt prevention programmes, which take gender into account and attack some of the gender inequities themselves, which are the root problem.

Lacking statistical data on violence against women, the study used a survey of legal frameworks in the region to assess whether countries, signatories to CEDAW, had introduced legislation for prosecuting violence against women. The fact that most countries fell into the lowest category means that legislation generally is weak and that much work still remains to outlaw gender-based violence. However, that this type of violence has gained recognition as a problem requiring a response by the state, is significant and can be counted as progress. Without real data to monitor the different forms of gender violence, it is not possible to demonstrate trends in violence against women and girls in society. The data can be collected but there has to be the political will to do so.

Because gender inequality is deeply rooted in entrenched beliefs and value systems and because giving up privileges of any kind has always been difficult, gender advocates, with the support of the international community, have to continue to address humanitarian and human rights concerns as well as efficiency considerations. Similarly, they have to make better use of statistics as well as quantitative and qualitative indicators to raise consciousness, expose gender inequalities and monitor progress in all spheres of society. Mobilizing men as visible and credible gender champions, at both the international and national level will become increasingly important to eliminate stereotypes and make further progress towards full equality.



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- (available at <http://www.unifem.org/index.php?f_page_pid=207>).



ANNEX 1: Comparative tables of indicators

Table 1A: Girls per 100 boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education (most recent years available)*

Subregion/Country	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
East and North-East Asia			
China	100	93 ²	57
China, Hong Kong SAR	98	100 ²	100
China, Macao SAR	94	106	51
Korea, Republic of	100	101	85
Japan	100	100	60
Mongolia	103	120	176
North and Central Asia			
Armenia	98	106	116 ²
Azerbaijan	99	98	100
Georgia	100	108 ²	103
Kazakhstan	99	98	123
Kyrgyzstan	97	101	114
Russian Federation	99	100	133
Tajikistan	95	82	32
Turkmenistan	100	99	111
Uzbekistan	99 ²	97 ²	112
South and South-West Asia			
Afghanistan	0 ¹	0 ¹	50
Bangladesh	101	109	50
India	84	71	69
Iran, Islamic Republic of	96	95	100
Maldives	99	106	***
Nepal	87	74	25
Pakistan	74	59 ³	75
Sri Lanka	99	107	67
Turkey	93 ²	77 ²	72
South-East Asia			
Brunei Darussalam	99	107	170
Cambodia	89	59	50
Indonesia	98	100 ²	88
Lao People's Democratic Republic	86	72	50
Malaysia	100	111	108
Myanmar	100	93	188 ²
Philippines	98	110	130
Singapore	99	97	84
Thailand	96	95	109
Viet Nam	93	93	82
The Pacific			
Australia	100	99	124
Fiji	100	106 ²	63
French Polynesia	96	***	***
Kiribati	102	***	***
Marshall Islands	95	***	***
Nauru	103	108 ²	***
New Caledonia	98	111	67
New Zealand	100	108	153
Niue	***	98	***
Palau	93 ²	104	208
Papua New Guinea	101	80 ²	25
Samoa	97	111	86 ²
Solomon Islands	86	64	***
Timor-Leste	***	***	150 ³
Tonga	97	113	133 ²
Tuvalu	95	88	***
Vanuatu	99	104	***

Sources: UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2004; UNESCAP, Asia Pacific in Figures, 2003; and The World Bank - GenderStats Database, 2004.

* Calculated from gross enrolment ratios

1. During the Taliban rule, there were officially no girls enrolled in government schools. 2. UNESCO estimate. 3. National estimate.



Table 2A Key health indicators 2000-2002*

Subregion/Country	Life expectancy at birth years		Maternal mortality per 100,000	Child mortality (2002) per 1,000			% of births attended by a health professional (1995-2002)
	Female	Male		Female	Male	Ratio	
East and North-East Asia							
China	72	68	56	41	31	1.32	76
China, Hong Kong SAR	82	77	---	---	---	---	---
China, Macao SAR	80	76	20	---	---	---	---
Japan	84	77	10	54	56	0.96	100
Korea, DPR	66	61	67	7	8	0.88	97
Korea, Republic of	78	71	20	4	4	1.00	100
Mongolia	64	60	110	66	75	0.88	97
North and Central Asia							
Armenia	75	68	55	35	39	0.90	97
Azerbaijan	75	67	94	70	80	0.88	84
Georgia	77	69	32	20	26	0.77	96
Kazakhstan	71	59	210	28	38	0.74	99
Kyrgyzstan	71	63	110	55	63	0.87	98
Russian Federation	73	60	67	16	21	0.76	99
Tajikistan	70	64	100	57	68	0.84	71
Turkmenistan	69	62	31	47	63	0.75	97
Uzbekistan	71	65	24	26	37	0.70	96
South and South-West Asia							
Afghanistan	42	42	1900	256	258	0.99	12
Bangladesh	59	58	380	73	71	1.03	12
Bhutan	62	60	420	92	93	0.99	24
India	63	62	540	95	87	1.09	43
Iran, Islamic Republic of	70	67	76	36	45	0.80	90
Maldives	65	66	110	43	38	1.13	70
Nepal	57	58	740	87	81	1.07	11
Pakistan	59	59	500	115	105	1.10	20
Sri Lanka	75	69	92	16	20	0.80	97
Turkey	72	67	70	42	44	0.95	81
South-East Asia							
Brunei Darussalam	78	73	37	12	14	0.86	99
Cambodia	59	55	450	124	149	0.83	32
Indonesia	67	63	230	36	45	0.80	64
Lao PDR	54	51	650	131	146	0.90	19
Malaysia	75	70	41	8	10	0.80	97
Myanmar	59	54	360	94	118	0.80	56
Philippines	71	67	200	33	39	0.85	58
Singapore	79	75	30	3	4	0.75	100
Thailand	73	64	44	26	32	0.81	99
Viet Nam	70	65	130	33	41	0.80	70
The Pacific							
Australia	82	76	8	5	6	0.83	100
Cook Islands	---	---	---	19	21	0.90	100
Fiji	70	67	75	27	30	0.90	100
French Polynesia	74	69	20	---	---	---	---
Kiribati	---	---	---	69	80	0.86	85
Guam	76	71	12	---	---	---	---
Marshall Islands	---	---	---	36	46	0.78	95
Micronesia, FS	68	67	---	51	63	0.81	93
Nauru	---	---	---	12	18	0.67	---
New Caledonia	77	72	10	---	---	---	---
New Zealand	80	75	7	6	7	0.86	100
Niue	---	---	---	24	38	0.63	100
Palau	---	---	---	22	24	0.92	100
Papua New Guinea	57	55	300	92	98	0.94	53
Samoa	72	65	130	21	27	0.78	100
Solomon Islands	69	66	130	75	86	0.87	85
Timor-Leste	48	47	660	108	142	0.76	24
Tonga	68	67	---	15	23	0.65	92
Tuvalu	---	---	---	56	72	0.78	99
Vanuatu	69	66	130	40	40	1.00	89

Source: UN Statistics Division - Millennium Indicators Database 2004, UN Statistics Division - Demographic Yearbook 2001

* The data for different countries may be compiled using varying methodologies, while some may be estimates.



**Table 3A: Percentage distribution of employed persons by employment status
(selected ESCAP countries)**

Country	Year	Employees as % of all employed		Employers as % of all employed		Family workers as % of all employed		Own account workers as % of all employed		Not classified workers as % of all employed		Total Employ- ment
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Australia	1995	87.9	82.1	3.3	5.2	1.3	0.7	7.5	12.1	...	...	100.0
	2002	89.7	83.5	2.5	4.0	0.6	0.3	7.2	12.1	...	...	100.0
Bangladesh	1996	8.7	14.7	0.1	0.3	77.3	17.1	7.6	42.7	6.2	25.1	100.0
	2000	8.3	15.2	0.1	0.3	73.2	10.1	11.0	49.6	7.4	24.9	100.0
Cambodia	2001	13.6	19.1	0.1	0.2	53.3	31.6	32.9	49.1	0.1	0.1	100.0
Georgia	1998	43.5	42.9	0.4	2.6	40.2	23.2	14.9	29.6	1.0	1.7	100.0
	2003	34.4	33.8	0.5	1.8	38.8	19.9	26.2	44.5	0.1	0.1	100.0
China, Hong Kong SAR	1995	94.8	85.7	1.8	7.7	1.5	0.1	2.0	6.5	...	...	100.0
	2003	93.3	82.5	2.0	7.4	1.4	0.2	3.4	9.9	...	...	100.0
Indonesia	2001	24.8	31.9	1.1	4.2	38.6	8.1	29.9	48.5	5.6	7.3	100.0
Iran, Islamic Republic of	1996	53.7	51.4	0.9	4.0	20.8	3.4	19.7	37.9	4.9	3.4	100.0
Japan	1995	78.3	83.7	1.4	4.1	12.5	1.8	7.6	10.2	0.2	0.2	100.0
	2003	83.8	84.9	1.2	3.6	9.2	1.6	5.5	9.5	0.4	0.4	100.0
Korea, Republic of	1995	59.1	64.9	19.6	33.5	21.3	1.6	...	...	...	...	100.0
	2000	60.8	63.5	19.7	34.7	19.5	1.8	...	...	...	...	100.0
China, Macao SAR	1996	93.0	86.2	1.0	5.4	2.3	0.3	3.7	8.1	...	...	100.0
	2003	92.9	85.6	1.2	5.3	2.8	0.5	3.1	8.6	...	...	100.0
Malaysia	1995	72.9	72.5	0.7	3.4	13.2	3.3	13.2	20.9	...	...	100.0
	2003	77.5	75.5	1.2	4.6	9.6	2.2	11.7	17.7	...	...	100.0
Maldives	1995	43.9	33.9	2.3	5.7	12.1	4.1	36.3	51.8	5.3	4.4	100.0
	2000	28.8	21.3	1.1	4.5	3.4	1.3	35.1	54.9	31.6	18.1	100.0
Mongolia	2000	43.6	39.3	0.8	1.7	38.6	14.0	16.3	43.9	0.7	1.1	100.0
New Caledonia	1996	89.1	80.5	10.4	19.3	0.5	0.3	...	...	...	...	100.0
New Zealand	1995	84.3	74.3	5.5	10.4	1.6	0.7	8.3	14.4	0.3	0.3	100.0
	2003	86.8	75.5	4.4	9.4	0.9	0.5	7.8	14.6	0.0	0.0	100.0
Pakistan	1995	24.8	35.4	0.3	1.1	61.7	17.2	13.2	46.3	...	...	100.0
	2002	37.1	40.3	0.3	0.9	46.9	16.4	15.7	42.4	...	...	100.0
Russian Federation	1995	94.4	92.1	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.1	1.4	2.3	3.9	4.8	100.0
	1999	93.8	91.6	0.6	1.2	0.2	0.2	3.9	4.8	1.5	2.2	100.0
Singapore	1995	93.5	85.3	2.1	6.8	1.8	0.8	2.6	7.1	...	...	100.0
	2003	92.1	82.0	2.1	6.8	1.3	0.3	4.5	10.9	...	...	100.0
Sri Lanka	1995	67.6	60.0	1.1	3.1	16.2	5.7	15.1	31.2	...	...	100.0
Thailand	1995	32.4	38.3	1.3	4.3	46.5	18.5	19.7	38.9	0.0	0.0	100.0
	2003	40.2	40.9	1.4	4.8	35.2	16.0	23.1	38.4	0.1	0.1	100.0
Turkey	1998	30.8	50.6	0.8	8.1	60.0	11.8	8.4	29.5	...	...	100.0
	2002	38.8	55.7	1.0	7.6	48.1	8.9	12.1	27.8	...	...	100.0

Source: ILO Bureau of statistics, 2004



Table 4A: Percentage of women among members of parliament

Subregion/Country	% women			
	1990	1997	2000	2003
East and North-East Asia				
China	21.3	21.0	21.8	21.8
Japan	1.4	4.6	4.6	7.3
Korea, Democratic People's Republic of	21.1	20.1	20.1	20.1
Korea, Republic of	2.0	3.0	3.7	5.9
Mongolia	24.9	7.9	7.9	10.5
North and Central Asia				
Armenia	35.6	6.3	3.1	3.1
Azerbaijan	...	12.0	12.0	10.5
Georgia	...	6.8	7.2	7.2
Kazakhstan	...	13.4	10.4	10.4
Kyrgyzstan	...	1.4	1.4	10.0
Russian Federation	...	10.2	7.7	7.6
Tajikistan	...	2.8	2.8	12.7
Turkmenistan	26.0	18.0	26.0	26.0
Uzbekistan	...	6.0	6.8	7.2
South and South-West Asia				
Afghanistan	3.7	...	...	...
Bangladesh	10.3	9.1	9.1	2.0
Bhutan	2.0	2.0	2.0	9.3
India	5.0	7.2	9.0	8.8
Iran, Islamic Republic of	1.5	4.0	4.9	4.1
Maldives	6.3	6.3	...	6.0
Nepal	6.1	3.4	5.9	5.9
Pakistan	10.1	...	...	21.6
Sri Lanka	4.9	5.3	4.9	4.4
Turkey	1.3	2.4	4.2	4.4
South-East Asia				
Cambodia	...	5.8	8.2	7.4
Indonesia	12.4	12.6	...	8.0
Lao People's Democratic Republic	6.3	9.4	21.2	22.9
Malaysia	5.1	7.8	...	10.4
Philippines	9.1	10.8	12.4	17.8
Singapore	4.9	2.5	4.3	11.8
Thailand	2.8	5.6	5.6	9.2
Viet Nam	17.7	18.5	26.0	27.3
The Pacific				
Australia	6.1	15.5	22.4	25.3
Fiji	...	4.3	11.3	5.7
Kiribati	0.0	0.0	4.9	4.8
Marshall Islands	...	...	...	3.0
Micronesia, Federated States of	...	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nauru	5.6	5.6	0.0	0.0
New Zealand	14.4	29.2	29.2	29.2
Palau	...	0.0	0.0	0.0
Papua New Guinea	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.9
Samoa	0.0	4.1	8.2	6.1
Solomon Islands	0.0	2.1	2.0	0.0
Timor-Leste	...	...	...	26.1
Tonga	0.0	0.0	...	...
Tuvalu	7.7	7.7	0.0	0.0
Vanuatu	4.3	...	0.0	1.9

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union "Parline" database, 2004.



Table 5A: Child care index
(No children 0-9 years per 100 Women 15-44 years)

Subregion/Country	1990	1995	2000
East and North-East Asia			
China	76	73 ⁰	65 ⁰
China, Macao SAR	55	46	40
Japan	52	49	48
Korea, Democratic People's Republic of	77	81	75
Korea, Republic of	64	58	55
Mongolia	133	113	88
North and Central Asia			
Armenia	90	77	54
Azerbaijan	102	96	78
Georgia	75	66	55
Kazakhstan	96	84	69
Kyrgyzstan	121	111	93
Russian Federation	71	59	43
Tajikistan	149	136	112
Turkmenistan	128	120	99
Uzbekistan	133	121	98
South and South-West Asia			
Afghanistan	158	155	152
Bangladesh	139	130	120
Bhutan	149	161	147
India	119	113	105
Iran, Islamic Republic of	158	132	89
Maldives	176	163	144
Nepal	141	139	134
Pakistan	152	152	142
Sri Lanka	94	80	70
Turkey	111	99	88
South-East Asia			
Brunei Darussalam	98	90	84
Cambodia	167	159	135
Indonesia	106	93	83
Lao People's Democratic Republic	151	149	138
Malaysia	108	105	101
Myanmar	109	101	93
Philippines	127	120	111
Singapore	51	59	62
Thailand	82	71	66
Viet Nam	119	107	87
The Pacific			
Australia	62	63	61
Cook Islands	---	113	---
Fiji	111	101	96
French Polynesia	107	96	84
Kiribati	---	56	---
Marshall Islands	---	---	125
Micronesia, Federated States of	143	129	116
New Caledonia	93	87	84
New Zealand	66	69	69
Niue	---	---	113
Northern Mariana Islands	---	---	63
Palau	---	---	67
Papua New Guinea	129	132	132
Samoa	129	135	140
Solomon Islands	160	151	141
Timor-Leste	144	133	148
Tonga	140	124	113
Tuvalu	---	---	54

Source: United Nations Population Division - World Population Prospects (2002 revision)

* Projected estimate. 1. 1996 data. 2. 1999 data. 3. 2002 data



**Table 6A: HIV/AIDS prevalence
(ages 18-49 years, selected ESCAP countries)**

Country	Prevalence rate, per 100,000		Females per 100 males
	Female	Male	
Armenia	54	220	25
Australia	16	224	7
Azerbaijan	12	51	25
Bangladesh	9	27	31
Cambodia	2249	2764	86
China	62	169	35
China, Hong Kong SAR	31	98	34
Georgia	13	53	25
India	589	827	65
Indonesia	46	157	29
Iran, Islamic Republic of	28	81	33
Japan	23	18	122
Kazakhstan	28	115	25
Korea, Republic of	7	22	32
Lao People's Democratic Republic	27	75	37
Malaysia	180	475	37
Nepal	250	712	33
New Zealand	19	108	18
Pakistan	48	171	27
Papua New Guinea	309	862	34
Philippines	13	35	36
Russian Federation	459	1336	35
Singapore	75	216	34
Sri Lanka	28	61	42
Thailand	1222	2468	51
Uzbekistan	2	9	25
Viet Nam	161	440	37

Source: Computed by ESCAP from UNAIDS data, 2001



Table 7A: Ratification of international conventions*

<i>Subregion/Country</i>	<i>Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)</i>		<i>ILO Convention on Equal Pay (C100)</i>
	<i>Year of ratification</i>	<i>Number of reports submitted</i>	<i>Year of ratification</i>
East and North-East Asia			
China	1980	4	1990
Japan	1985	5	1967
Korea, Democratic People's Republic of	2001	1	-
Korea, Republic of	1984	4	1997
Mongolia	1981	4	1969
North and Central Asia			
Armenia	1993	2	1994
Azerbaijan	1995	1	1992
Georgia	1994	3	1993
Kazakhstan	1998	1	2001
Kyrgyzstan	1997	2	1992
Russian Federation	1981	5	1956
Tajikistan	1993	0	1993
Turkmenistan	1997	0	1997
Uzbekistan	1995	1	1992
South and South-West Asia			
Afghanistan	2003	0	1969
Bangladesh	1984	5	1998
Bhutan	1981	3	-
India	1993	1	1958
Iran, Islamic Republic of	-	-	1972
Maldives	1993	1	-
Nepal	1991	3	1976
Pakistan	1996	0	2001
Sri Lanka	1981	4	1993
Turkey	1985	3	1967
South-East Asia			
Brunei Darussalam	-	-	-
Cambodia	1992	0	1999
Indonesia	1984	3	1958
Lao People's Democratic Republic	1981	5	-
Malaysia	1995	0	1997
Myanmar	1997	1	-
Philippines	1981	4	1953
Singapore	1995	2	2002
Thailand	1985	3	1999
Viet Nam	1982	4	1997
The Pacific			
Australia	1983	3	1974
Fiji	1995	1	2002
Kiribati	2004	-	-
Marshall Islands	-	-	-
Micronesia, Federated States of	-	-	-
Nauru	-	-	-
New Zealand	1985	5	1983
Palau	-	-	-
Papua New Guinea	1995	0	2000
Samoa	1992	3	-
Solomon Islands	2002	0	-
Timor-Leste	2003	0	-
Tonga	-	-	-
Tuvalu	1999	0	-
Vanuatu	1995	0	-

Sources: CEDAW website, 2004; and ILO database of labour standards, 2004

* Unlisted countries have not ratified the convention/s as at July 2004



ANNEX 2: Definitions and concepts

Activity rate: is the ratio of the economically active population (employed +unemployed) aged 15 and over, to the total population of the corresponding age group.

Activity rate by age: refers to activity rate as defined above. The ages are grouped by five year intervals.

Age structure of population: five-year age groups are calculated as % of total of each sex.

Births attended by skilled health staff: refers to the percentage of deliveries attended by personnel trained to give the necessary supervision, care and advice to women during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period, to conduct deliveries on their own and to care for the newborn and the infant.

Child care index: refers to a ratio computed as the number of children age 0-9 divided by the number of women age 15-44.

Employment: the employed comprise all persons above a specific age who during a specified brief period, either one week or one day, were in paid employment or self-employment.

Employment in the informal sector: includes all jobs in informal sector enterprises or all persons who, during a given reference period, were employed in at least one informal sector enterprise, irrespective of their status in employment and whether it was their main or a secondary job.

Gross enrolment ratio: is the ratio of total enrolment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. Estimates are based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

Informal Sector: in January 1993, the *Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statistics (15th ICLS)* defined *informal sector enterprises* on the basis of the following criteria:

- They are private unincorporated enterprises (excluding quasi-corporations), i.e. enterprises owned by individuals that are not constituted as separate legal entities independently of their owners.
- All or at least some of the goods or services produced are meant for sale or barter.
- Their size in terms of employment is below a certain threshold to be determined according to national circumstances.
- They are engaged in non-agricultural activities, including secondary non-agricultural activities of enterprises in the agricultural sector.

Labour Force: the labour force is the supply of labour in an economy. It includes people who are currently employed and people who are unemployed but seeking work, as well as first-time job-seekers.

Life expectancy at birth: indicates the number of years a newborn infant would live if prevailing patterns of mortality at the time of its birth were to stay the same throughout its life.

Literacy rate for 15-24: refers to the percentage of people aged 15-24 who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement about their everyday life.

Married women 15-49 using contraception: is the percentage of women who are practicing, or whose sexual partners are practicing, any form of contraception. It is usually measured for married women age 15-49 only.

Maternal mortality rate: is the annual number of deaths of women from pregnancy-related causes, per 100,000 live births.

Percentage of female primary and secondary teachers (% of total): refers to the percentage of female teachers in the primary and secondary levels of education. It includes full-time and part-time teachers.



Primary education: provides children with basic reading, writing and mathematics skills along with an elementary understanding of such subjects as history, geography, natural science, social science, art and music.

Prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS for ages 15-49: refers to the number of people of that age who are known to have HIV/AIDS in a given year divided by the mid-year population of the specified age group for that year. Usually expressed as per 100 000.

Secondary education: completes the provision of basic education that began at the primary level and aims at laying the foundations for lifelong learning and human development, by offering more subject- or skill-oriented instruction using more specialized teachers.

Sex distribution of legislators, senior officials and managers: refers to the percentage of women and men who hold managerial posts according to the International Standards Classification of Occupations (ISCO-68 or ISCO-88). It includes legislators, senior government administrators, traditional chiefs and heads of the villages and administrators of special interest organizations. It also includes corporate managers such as chief executive and general managers as well as specialized managers and managing supervisors.

Sex ratio of total population: refers to the proportion of females per 100 males in the total population.

Share of women in parliament: refers to the number of women in national parliament over the total number of parliament seats filled at any given period.

Status in employment: it covers, in principle, the total number of persons in employment for all status groups, as defined by the International classification by status in the employment (ICSE-1993) and the groups are:

- **Contributing family workers:** refers to persons who work without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a related person living in the same household.

- **Employee:** a person who works for a public or a private employer and receives remunerations in wages, salaries, commissions, tips, piece-rates or paid-in-kind.

- **Employer:** a person who operates his or her own enterprise, or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires one or more employees.

- **Own account worker:** a person who operates his or her own enterprise, or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires no employees.

Tertiary education: whether or not to an advanced research qualification normally requires, as a minimum condition of admission, the successful completion of education at the secondary level.

Under-five mortality rate: is the number of deaths occurring during a year to children under five (specified by sex) divided by the mid-year population of that age. Usually expressed as a rate per 1,000.

Violence against women legislation index: refers to a normative indicator which states whether legislation exists to protect women against four categories of violence (domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment and rape in marriage) considered to be mainly perpetrated against women and girls. Scores ranging from 1 to 8 are attributed to countries for which such legislation exists (e.g. score of 1 if the country has a general law and a score of 2 if the country has a specific law regarding any of the four categories).

Women's wages as a percentage of men's wages (non-agriculture): is the ratio of female wages to male wages in non-agricultural activities, expressed as a percentage. The statistics of wages from which the ratio is computed are, in general, average earnings per wage-earner (regardless of age) or in some cases wage rates.

Year of ratification of CEDAW and number of reports submitted: refers to the year the country ratified the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW) and the number of reports the country submitted as required by the convention.

Year of ratification of ILO C100 Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951: refers to the year the country ratified the International Labour Organization Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value.

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