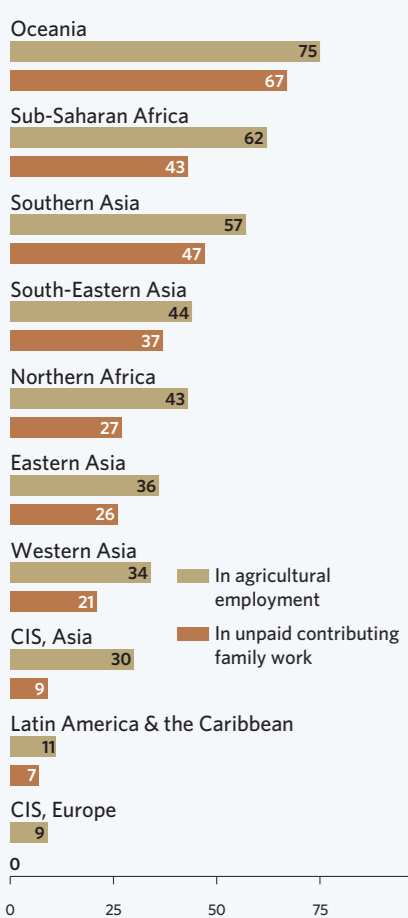


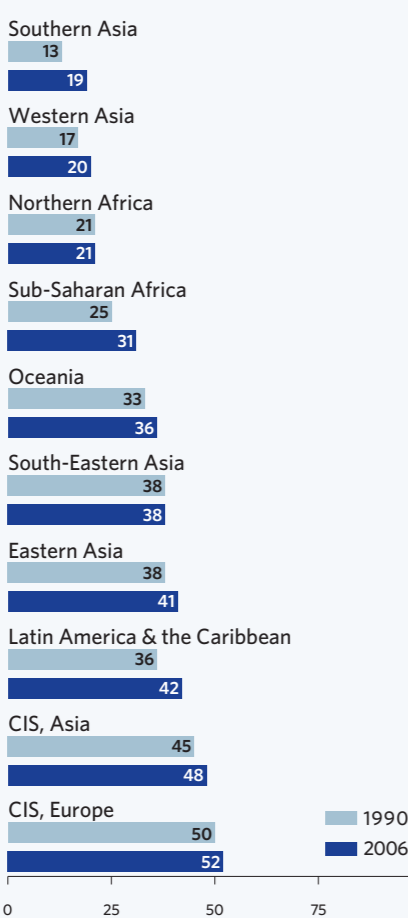
Women's significant contribution to ensuring food security is often not compensated



Share of women in agricultural employment and in unpaid contributing family work, 2007 (Percentage)

In the poorest regions in the world, most women who work outside the home have jobs in the agricultural sector. Although food security for their family, and possibly the population more generally, often depends on their hard labour, these women mainly work as unpaid family workers. Both to improve food security and to improve the well-being of female agricultural workers, additional resources should be applied to raising agricultural productivity.

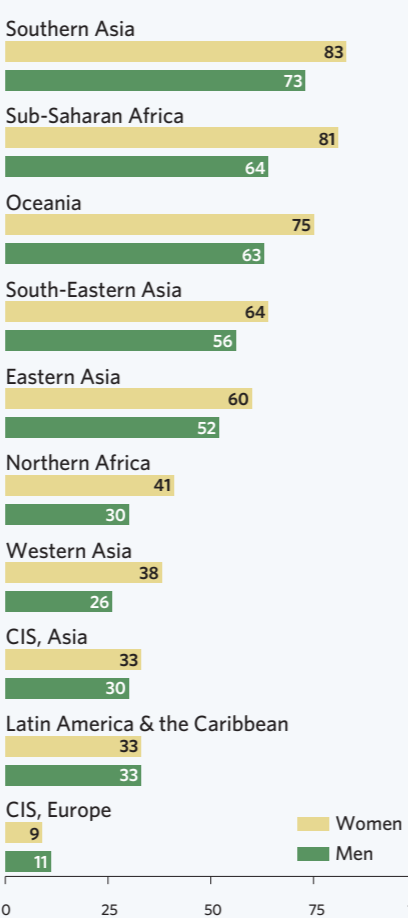
Fewer women than men have a secure paid job



Employees in non-agricultural wage employment who are women, 1990 and 2006 (Percentage)

Although a larger proportion of women is in the labour force than in the past, women still face greater difficulties than men in securing a paid job. Worldwide, women account for less than 40 per cent of total wage employment outside agriculture. Among those in such employment, women continue to lack access to decent work, job security and social protection. In the overall quest to increase the availability of decent work, greater attention should be paid to the special situation of women.

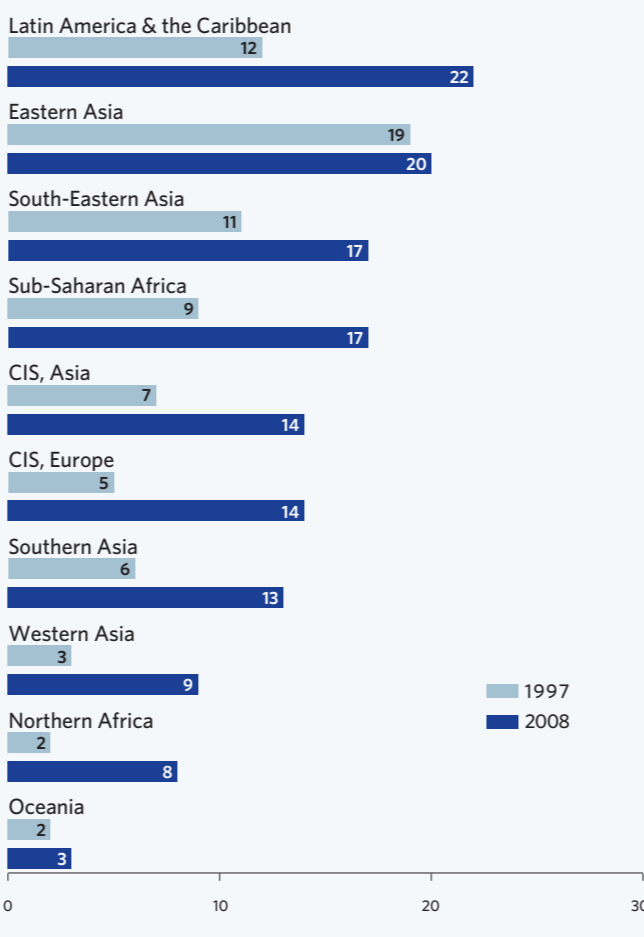
More women than men have jobs that are deemed vulnerable



Proportion of own account and contributing family workers in total employment, women and men, 2007 (Percentage)

Women are more likely than men to be unpaid contributing family workers or own-account workers, especially in the poorer countries where women's access to full and productive employment is limited. Without a decent job, escaping poverty may prove impossible. All countries should increase their efforts to provide women with greater opportunities for decent work, including secure employment.

Women and men do not have equal responsibilities for decision-making at the national level



Proportion of seats held by women in single or lower house of national parliament, 1997 and 2008 (Percentage)

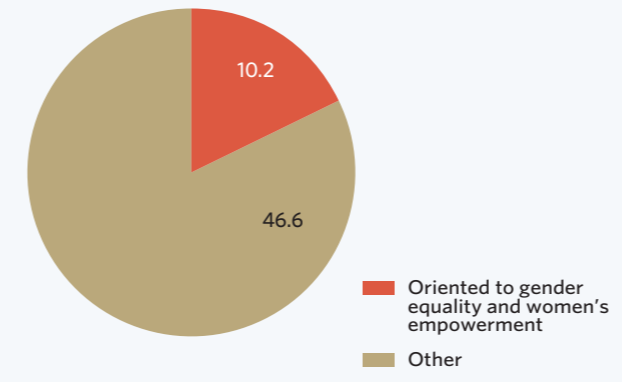
Equal participation of women and men in national decision-making provides a balance of power that is needed to ensure democracy. Progress in this area has been steady, but very slow, and uneven by region. Accelerating the pace of change will require increased political will and concrete measures to address these challenges, including affirmative action, such as the use of quotas, support of women candidates and equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women.

Greater efforts are needed to eliminate violence against women

Violence against women is a fundamental breach of women's human rights and impedes progress towards the achievement of the MDGs in all regions. Efforts to prevent all forms of violence against women, end impunity for perpetrators and provide effective support and redress for victims should be incorporated in all national development plans, policies and strategies for the achievement of the MDGs.

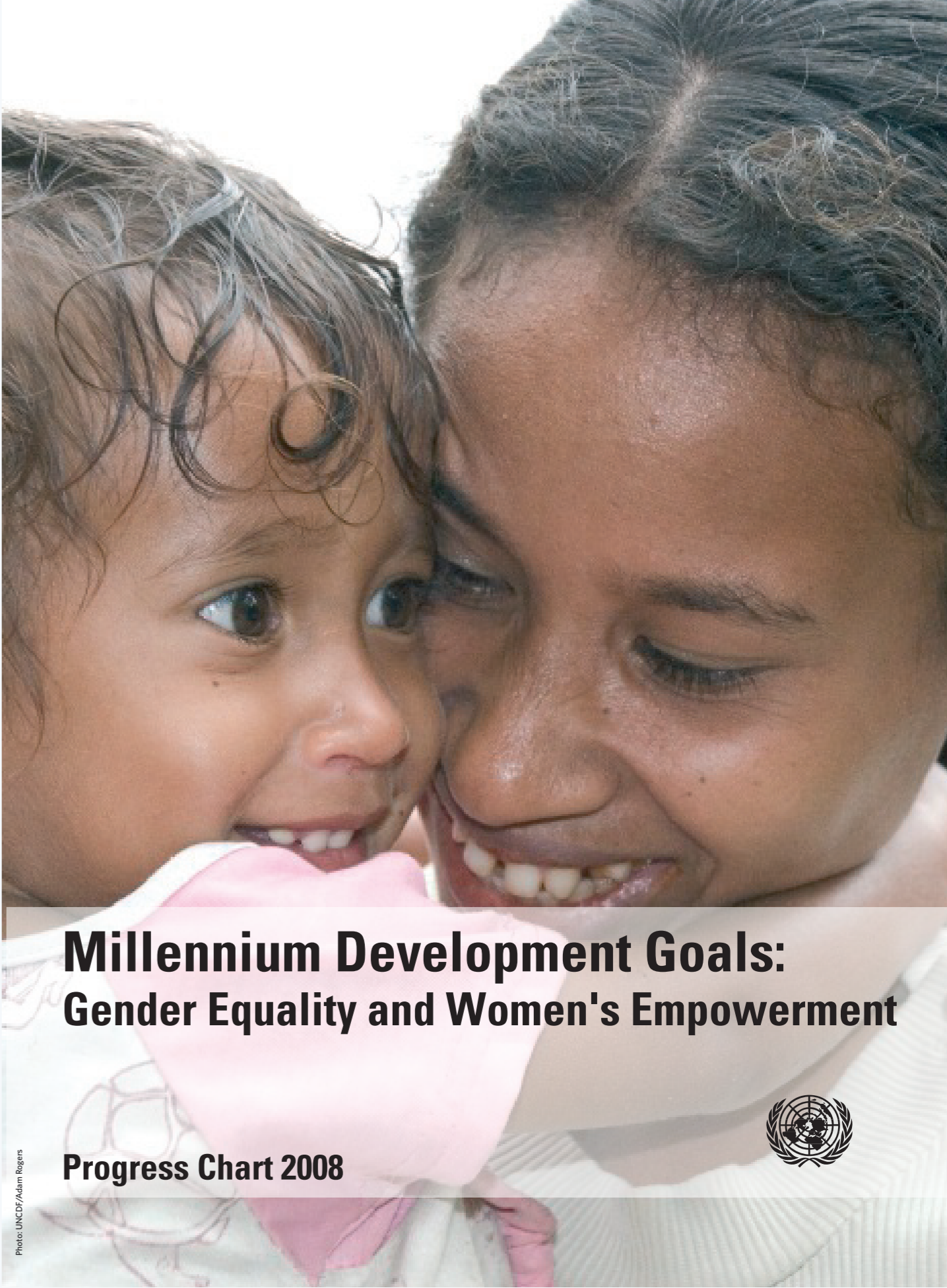
Efforts to design strategies to reduce violence against women and monitor behavioural changes have been hampered by the lack of adequate statistics. A recent study of a handful of countries indicates that the proportion of ever-partnered women experiencing physical or sexual violence ranged from 15 per cent to 71 per cent, with most countries falling between 30 per cent and 60 per cent. In the majority of settings, women who had experienced physical or sexual partner violence, or both, tended to report poorer health than women who had never experienced such violence. Governments should ensure that violence against women is adequately addressed in national legislation and that such laws are effectively enforced.

Insufficient aid is going to gender equality programmes



Bilateral sector-allocable foreign aid, 2006 (Billions of US dollars)

In 2006, only \$10.2 billion in bilateral aid, about one-sixth of the total, was identified by donors as intended to contribute to either gender equality or women's empowerment. In view of the essential roles of gender equality and women's empowerment in achieving all the MDGs, assistance to such programmes should be increased. At the same time, all donors need to incorporate gender assessments into all aid planning, to mainstream gender into all programmes and projects and to report more thoroughly on these efforts and their outcomes.



Millennium Development Goals: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

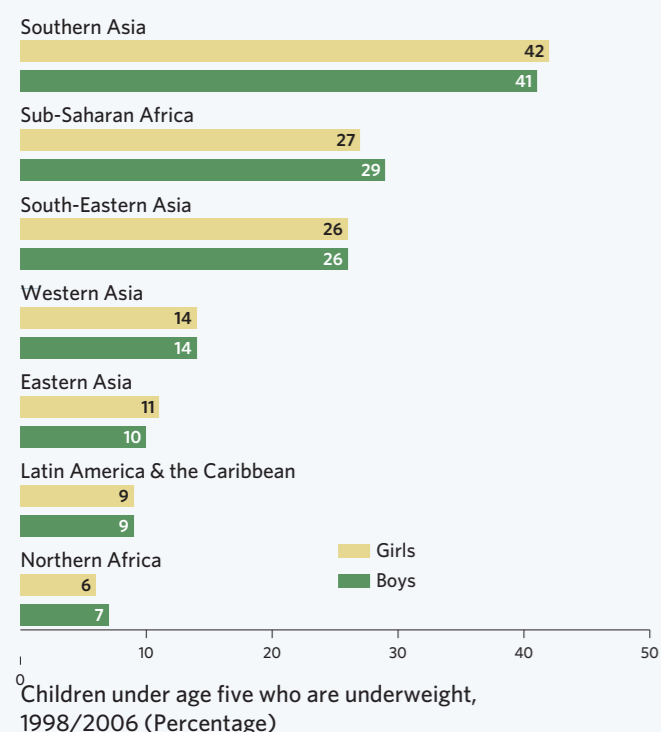
Progress Chart 2008



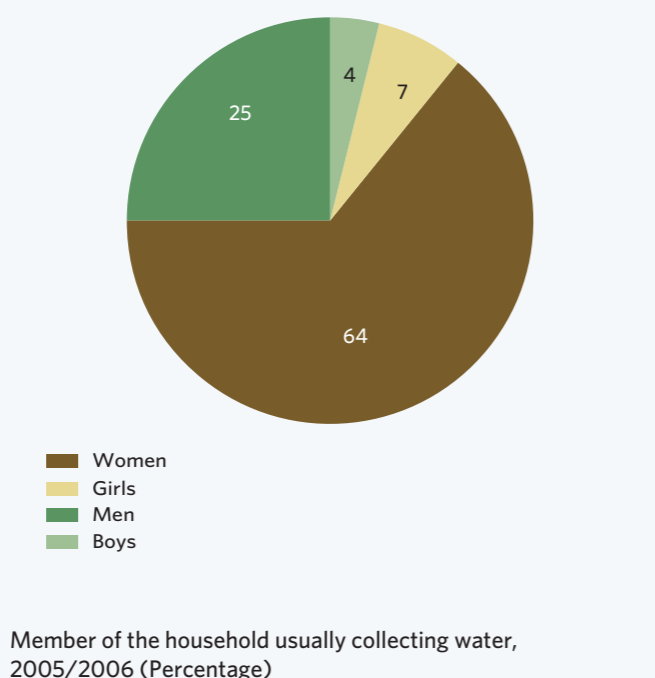
Photo: UNCDF/Adam Rogers

In 2000, all 189 Member States of the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration, in which one of their commitments was to “promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable”. The eight Millennium Development Goals provide a framework of time-bound targets by which progress towards the fulfillment of the commitments in the Millennium Declaration is being measured. The third of these Goals calls explicitly for gender equality and women’s empowerment. More generally, however, ensuring gender equality and empowering women in the developing countries are indispensable for achieving all the other Goals: it is necessary to create the enabling environment envisioned in the Beijing Platform for Action in which women’s rights are recognized as an indispensable part of human rights and where women and men have the same opportunities to realize their full potential. The following data pertaining to some of the gender dimensions of the Goals show that progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women in the developing regions has been mixed. More needs to be done, in every country and at every level, to achieve the pivotal third MDG.

Bias against girls may start during early childhood



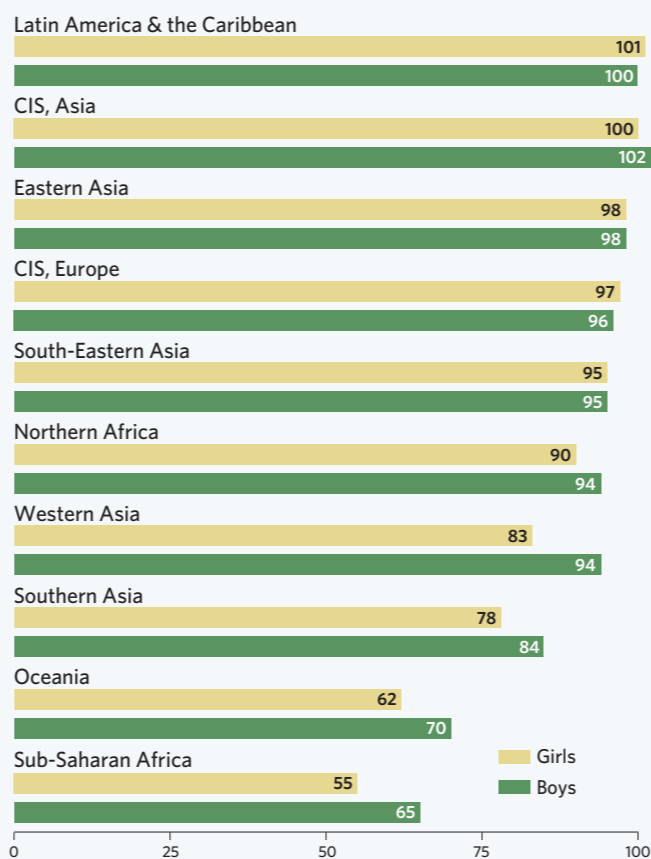
Most of the burden of collecting drinking water falls on women and girls



Girls and boys should be treated equally from the day they are born. Providing both girls and boys with adequate nourishment is essential since malnutrition during early childhood has a permanent negative effect on subsequent personal development. There is no conclusive evidence of what role gender plays in determining differences in the proportion of children under five years of age who are underweight. However, numerous studies have shown poorer nutrition and poorer health treatment for girls than for boys. In Southern Asia and Eastern Asia, girls are more likely than boys to be underweight. More recent data suggest that the bias in favour of boys in Southern Asia may have been eliminated, but that an unacceptable proportion of children of both sexes remain under-nourished. The effort to ensure that all children, both girls and boys, receive adequate nutrition must be reinvigorated, particularly at a time of uncertain food availability.

Most women and girls are not compensated for the large proportion of their daily work that is allocated to sustaining their family. Particularly in the poorer developing countries, many women and girls spend several hours per day on multiple trips to a water source. This task deprives them of time which they otherwise could put to more rewarding use, such as paid work, education, child rearing, family care or relaxation. Achieving the target to increase access to safe drinking water would provide health benefits to all but it would also have more wide-ranging benefits for women and girls. Pending universal access, new communal sources of safe drinking water should, wherever possible, be placed in such locations as schools and health centres in order to reduce the burden on women and girls of collecting water.

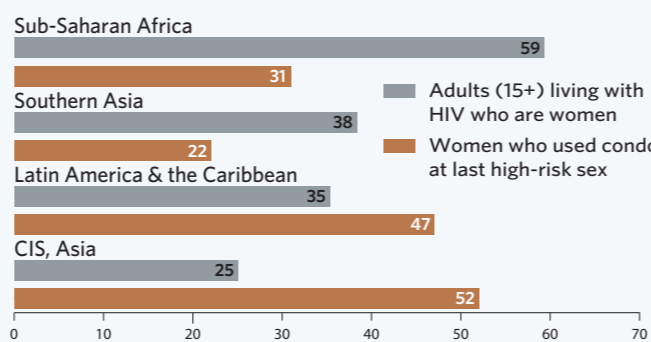
Gender equality and women's empowerment are unattainable without education



Primary completion rate, boys and girls, 2006 (Percentage)

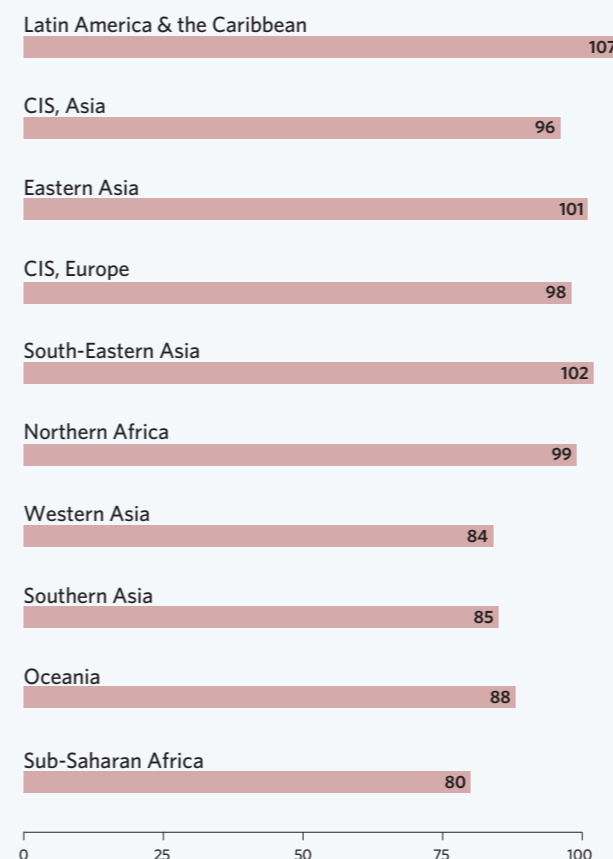
All countries have committed themselves to ensuring that, by 2015, all children, both girls and boys, will be able to complete a full course of primary education. Although the gap has narrowed over recent years, in 2006 girls in several regions were still less likely than boys to complete their primary education. Worldwide, over 40 million girls - about 55 per cent of all children of primary school age who were out of school - did not attend or dropped out of primary school in 2006. Factors such as violence in schools, including sexual violence, insecure school environments, and inadequate sanitation disproportionately affect girls’ self-esteem, participation and retention. Governments must sustain their efforts to ensure universal and timely completion of primary education by all girls and boys as an indispensable step towards gender equality later in life.

Reducing gender inequality is key to addressing women’s vulnerability to HIV/AIDS



Percentage of adults living with HIV who are women, 2007 and Women who used a condom at last high-risk sex, 2005/2006 (Percentage)

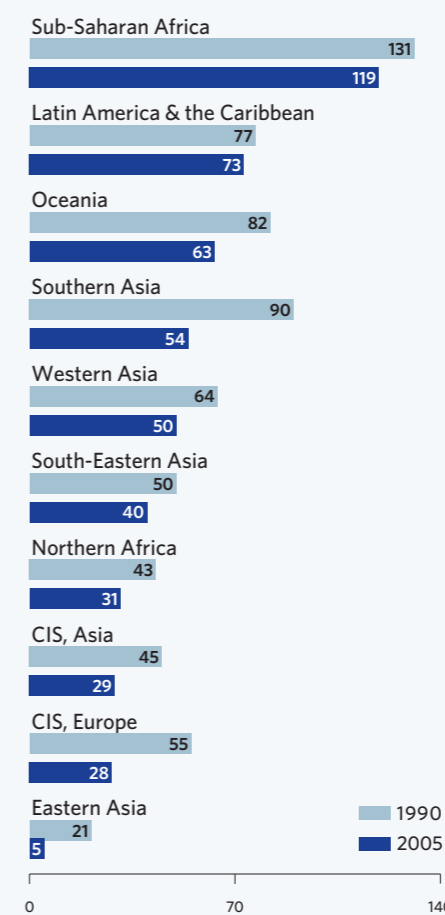
Progress towards gender equality in primary education needs to be replicated at higher levels



Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education, 2006 (Percentage)

Women, as well as men, require higher education if they are to secure well-paid jobs in today’s competitive and heavily knowledge-driven economy, but most regions are far from achieving universal enrolment in secondary education. In addition, negative attitudes of teachers and stereotyped gender roles in school curricula perpetuate gender inequality in education. Of those who do receive secondary education, there are as many girls as boys in many regions, but in others, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and Western Asia, further action is needed to encourage girls to enroll and stay in secondary school. All regions should seek to provide women with equality in economic opportunities when they are in a position to join the workforce.

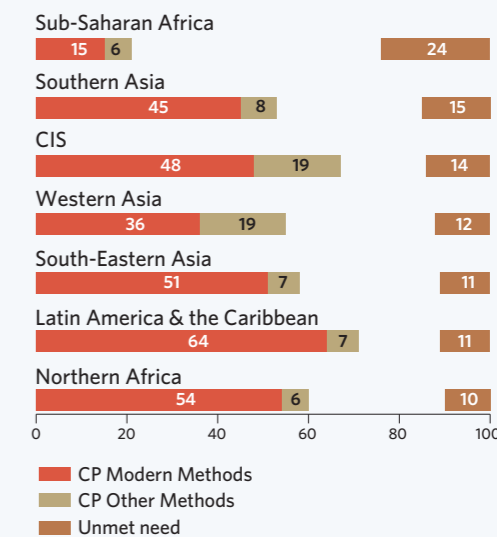
High adolescent fertility rates increase threats to young women’s health and limit their opportunities



Births to women 15-19 years old per thousand women, 1990 and 2005

Adolescent fertility has declined in all regions since 1990 but it remains over 50 births per thousand women in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania, Western Asia and Southern Asia. Giving birth at an early age increases the mother’s risk of dying during pregnancy or childbirth and the child’s risk of dying in infancy or childhood. Early motherhood also reduces the mother’s opportunities for education and socioeconomic improvement. Despite these incentives to reduce adolescent fertility, the proportion of total demand for contraception that is satisfied among adolescent married women is lower than among older women. Greater efforts need to be made to reduce adolescent fertility.

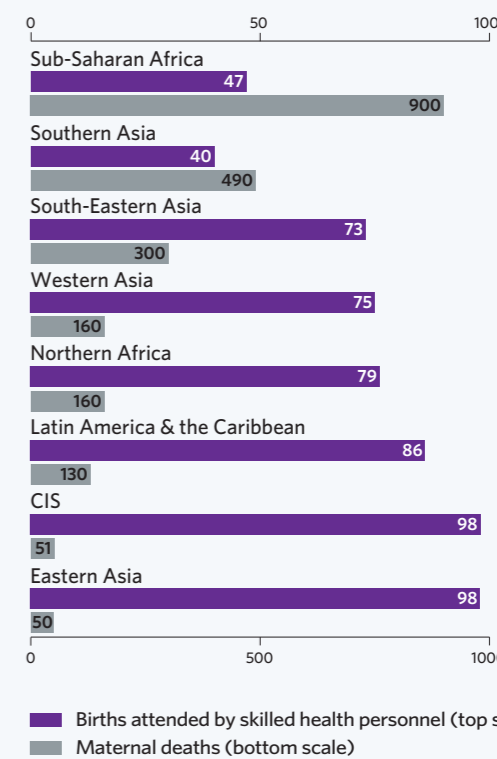
Universal access to reproductive health is fundamental to empowering women



Contraceptive prevalence (CP) and unmet need, 2005 (Percentage)

Access to reproductive health is a basic right that is vital to women’s participation and empowerment in their families, communities, schools and workplaces. It also contributes to poverty reduction. The increased availability of family planning has been a major factor in reducing total fertility rates in developing countries. Nevertheless, there remain more than 200 million women who want to delay or avoid a birth but are not using a modern contraceptive method. Additional resources are needed to address the need, especially among adolescents, for family planning and to improve contraceptive choices.

Health care must be made available to all pregnant women and at all deliveries



Maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, 2005 and Births attended by skilled health personnel, 2006 (Percentage)

In 2005, more than 500,000 women died during pregnancy or childbirth. Almost all of these deaths were in developing countries, with 86 per cent of them in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia alone. Improved antenatal care and availability of skilled assistance during delivery are core components of maternal health care. About a quarter of prospective mothers in developing countries receive neither antenatal care nor the associated interventions that are essential to the health and well-being of both the mother and child; more than 40 per cent of births in the developing world are not attended by either a doctor, nurse or midwife. To reduce the toll of prospective motherhood on women, developing countries need to train and mobilize more personnel able to provide women with medical care and attention before, during and immediately after the birth of their children.