Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

A Companion to the World Development Report

WORLD BANK EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL REPORT

Conference Edition
Well known for their economic success and dynamism, countries in the East Asia and Pacific region must tackle an increasingly complex set of challenges to continue on a path of sustainable development. Learning from others within the region and beyond can help identify what works, what doesn’t, and why, in the search for practical solutions to these challenges. This regional report series presents analyses of issues relevant to the region, drawing on the global knowledge and experience of the World Bank and its partners. The series aims to inform public discussion, policy formulation, and development practitioners’ actions to turn challenges into opportunities.
Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

A Companion to the World Development Report

WORLD BANK EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL REPORT

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Contents

Foreword ............................................................................................................................................. ix
Acknowledgments ............................................................................................................................... xi
Abbreviations ..................................................................................................................................... xiii
Chapter 1. The State of Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific ........................................ 1
  Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 1
  Why does gender matter for development? ...................................................................................... 4
  Recent progress, pending challenges ............................................................................................... 7
  Endowments: Human and productive capital .................................................................................... 7
  Economic opportunity: Participation and returns in the economy .................................................. 13
  Agency: Women’s voice and influence .............................................................................................. 18
  Emerging trends in the region ............................................................................................................ 22
  Gender equality in East Asia and the Pacific: A roadmap to the report .......................................... 23
  Notes .................................................................................................................................................. 25
  Education: Gender equality in education has improved greatly with growth and development .......... 28
  Health: Many, but not all, health outcomes for males and females improved with development .......... 37
  Productive assets: Gender equality in assets is constrained by complex legal, social, and economic factors ........................................................................................................................................... 51
  Policies: Promoting gender equality in endowments ...................................................................... 60
  Notes .................................................................................................................................................. 61
Chapter 3. Gender and Economic Opportunity ............................................................................. 63
  Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 63
  Why is income growth alone not sufficient to close the gender gap in access to economic opportunities? 65
  What gender differences in economic activity currently exist in the East Asia and Pacific region? ......... 66
  What are the determinants of gender inequality in productive activities? ........................................... 74
  What can policy do? ............................................................................................................................ 90
  Notes .................................................................................................................................................. 93
Chapter 4. Agency: Voice and Influence within the Home and in Society ................................... 95
  What is agency? ................................................................................................................................. 95
  Why is agency important for gender equality and development? ....................................................... 95
  What is the state of agency in the East Asia and Pacific region? ....................................................... 98
Contents

What factors explain progress in some areas and lack of progress in others? ................................................. 109
Policy approaches to promote gender equality in agency .................................................................................. 120
Notes .......................................................................................................................................................... 124

Chapter 5. Gender and the Region’s Emerging Development Challenges .......................................................... 125

Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 125
Globalization .................................................................................................................................................. 126
Migration ...................................................................................................................................................... 135
Urbanization ................................................................................................................................................ 141
The aging population ................................................................................................................................... 145
Notes .......................................................................................................................................................... 149

Chapter 6. Promoting Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific: Directions for Policy ...... 153

Closing gender gaps in endowments ............................................................................................................. 154
Active measures to promote gender equality in economic opportunity ..................................................... 161
Active measures to close gender gaps in agency .......................................................................................... 173
The way forward .......................................................................................................................................... 178
Managing the risks associated with key emerging trends ............................................................................ 178
Filling the knowledge gaps .......................................................................................................................... 180
Notes .......................................................................................................................................................... 181

References .................................................................................................................................................. 183

Figures

Figure 1.1 Economic growth by region ........................................................................................................... 2
Figure 1.2 Poverty reduction by region ........................................................................................................... 2
Figure 1.3 Ratio of female to male gross enrollment in secondary education by region ............................... 8
Figure 1.4 Ratio of female to male gross enrollment in tertiary education by region .................................... 8
Figure 1.5 Ratio of female to male gross enrollment in secondary education in the most recent year* in each country in EAP ........................................................................................................ 8
Figure 1.6 Ratio of female to male gross enrollment in tertiary education in the most recent year* in each country in EAP ......................................................................................................................... 8
Figure 1.7 Net secondary school enrollment in Vietnam by sex and ethnicity, 2008 ..................................... 9
Figure 1.8 School participation of 13-15 year olds in Indonesia by sex and expenditure quintile, 2009 .......... 9
Figure 1.9 Ratio of female to male performance in math, science and reading tests (TIMSS and PISA) .... 10
Figure 1.10 Total fertility rate by region ........................................................................................................ 11
Figure 1.11 Under-5 mortality rate by sex and by country .............................................................................. 11
Figure 1.12 Maternal mortality rate by region ............................................................................................... 11
Figure 1.13 Maternal mortality rate by country, 2008 .................................................................................. 11
Figure 1.14 Male-female ratio at birth by region ........................................................................................... 13
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>Population sex ratio by country</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>Female labor force participation rate by region, 2008</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>Female labor force participation rate by country in EAP, 2008</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>Employment sectoral composition in EAP over time</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>Employment sectoral composition by sex in Thailand and Indonesia over time</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>Share of temporary workers among male and female employees by exporting and non-exporting firms</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>Enterprises with female management are most prevalent among smaller firms</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>In Lao PDR, women—particularly those with young children—balance household work commitment with market work</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>Wage Inequality between Women and Men for Similar Work, 2007</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>Share of women with some control over decisions</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>Gap between actual and desired fertility</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>Women in Parliaments in East Asia and Pacific, by Country, 2011</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>Share of men and women over 30 who believe that men make better political leaders than women, 2006 and 2007</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>Percentage of firms with a female top manager and female participation in ownership</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>Increasing old age dependency ratio in most East Asian countries</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Enrollment for both genders has been converging even among the poorest populations</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Smaller gender gaps in youth literacy compared to gaps in adult literacy</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Girls in some ethnic minority groups lag even further behind in enrollment</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Even girls in wealthier households in Lao PDR and Cambodia lag behind boys</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Females tend to dominate certain fields like education and health but be under-represented in law and engineering</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Ratio of female to male performance in math, science and reading tests (TIMSS and PISA)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Lower maternal mortality in higher income countries</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Lower female infant mortality in higher income countries</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Most EAP countries do not have female-skewed under-5 mortality and infant mortality, except China</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Women in wealthier households are more likely to have births assisted by trained medical staff</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>Contraceptive Prevalence across EAP countries</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>The fraction of births attended by skilled professionals varies across EAP countries</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>Women in rural areas are less likely to have births assisted by trained medical staff</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>Sex ratios at higher order births are still concerning even though the overall sex ratio at birth has approached the normal range in Korea</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>Current smoking of any tobacco product prevalence (2006)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>Prevalence of Drinking, past 12 months (2002-2006)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>Positive correlation between tobacco use and mortality due to lung cancer</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>Positive correlation between alcohol consumption and mortality due alcohol use disorders</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>The poor are slightly more likely to engage in smoking</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2.2 0 The probability of owning land is not substantially lower for female-headed households than for male-headed households  
Figure 2.2 1 But female-headed households own less land in terms of land size  
Figure 2.2 2 Vietnamese men own more agricultural land plots than women in 2008  
Figure 2.2 3 Female-headed households are less likely to own livestock  
Figure 2.2 4 Female-headed households are slightly less likely to borrow from a financial institution  
Figure 2.2 5 Women are slightly less likely than men to report having an account at a formal financial institution  
Figure 3.1 Female labor force participation in Korea has risen for women of all ages between 1960 and 2005  
Figure 3.2 Female labor force participation in EAP is the highest in the developing world  
Figure 3.3 Female labor force participation varies substantially across the region  
Figure 3.4 Women earn less than men in the majority of EAP countries and in all sectors of the economy  
Figure 3.5 Male and female-owned firms in the formal sector do not display substantial differences in productivity  
Figure 3.6 In the informal sector, differences in productivity are not substantially lower than in the formal sector  
Figure 3.7 Women are more likely than men to work as unpaid family workers  
Figure 3.8 Women are slightly more likely to be employed in the informal sector than men  
Figure 3.9 Males and females work in different sectors throughout the EAP region  
Figure 3.10 Female-managed enterprises are likely to be small  
Figure 3.11 The pattern of female ownership by firm size varies across countries  
Figure 3.12 In Indonesia, female-led enterprises are clustered in lower productivity and capital intensive industries  
Figure 3.13 Female Labor Force Participation in EAP is high by world standards, but also varies substantially within the region  
Figure 3.14 and Figure 3.15. The fraction of the gender wage gap explained by differences in characteristics is smaller than the fraction of the wage gap attributable to differences in returns in the majority of EA countries  
Figure 3.16 Differences in productivity across informal and formal firms in Vietnam are larger than differences across male and female-led enterprises  
Figure 3.17 There is little difference in self-reported access to finance between male and female run firms  
Figure 3.18 Male and Female led informal firms report similar constraints in Indonesia  
Figure 3.19 In Lao PDR, women—particularly those with young children—balance household work commitment with market work  
Figure 3.20 Women spend more time on domestic activities than men, and these differences are found among richer as well as poorer households  
Figure 4.1 There is a Positive Relationship between Economic Development and Civic Activism  
Figure 4.2 The Relationship between Economic Development and Women’s Representation in Parliament is Not Clear  
Figure 4.3 Who decides how wives’ cash earnings are used varies widely across the region  
Figure 4.4 A Majority of Wives Control Decisions Regarding Their Own Health Care and Household Purchases
Figure 4.5 Share of women with some control over decisions by economic quintile (%) 100
Figure 4.6 Fertility rate, total (births per woman) 101
Figure 4.7 Adolescent Fertility Rate, 2009 101
Figure 4.8 Proportion of Intended, Mistimed, and Unwanted Pregnancies in East Asia and Pacific Countries (%) 101
Figure 4.9 Percent of firms with female participation in ownership and how ownership and principal voice in managing differ 103
Figure 4.10 Civic Activism in EAP Countries from 1990-2010, % by year 103
Figure 4.11 Regional average of women’s representation in Parliament in 2000 and 2010 (%) 105
Figure 4.12 Percentage of women in Parliament, 2011 105
Figure 4.13 Physical and/or sexual violence by intimate partner 106
Figure 4.14 Women’s experience of intimate partner violence as an adult, by her and her partner’s exposure to violence as a child, Kiribati 2010 107
Figure 4.15 Share of men and women over 30 who believe that men make better political leaders than women 112
Figures 5.1 and 5.2 Women are more likely to be working in export orientated firms than in non-export orientated firms 127
Figure 5.3 Employment in textile and apparel in Vietnam has grown substantially over the 2000s 128
Figure 5.4 Females predominate in the garment sector in four East Asian countries 128
Figure 5.5 Internet use has increased substantially in EAP and across the world since 2000 131
Figure 5.6 The number of cell phone subscribers per 100 people in EAP has grown substantially over the 2000s 131
Figure 5.7 Internet usage has grown quickly in many countries in the region, but has grown slowly in others 132
Figure 5.8 The number of cell phone subscribers in the population has grown across most of East Asia, but has remained limited in some Pacific countries 132
Figure 5.9 Women are less likely to be mobile phone subscribers than men in the EAP region 133
Figure 5.10 Internet use has grown for both men and women in China, although a persistent gender gap in access remains 133
Figure 5.11 The fraction of female migrants has increased over time in Indonesia and Vietnam 136
Figure 5.12 The urban population now accounts for more than 50 percent of the world’s population 141
Figure 5.13 Urbanization is expected to be rapid in East Asia 142
Figure 5.14 The rates of urban growth are predicted to vary substantially across countries in the Pacific 142
Figure 5.15 In most EAP countries, urban areas have better access to improved sanitation 143
Figure 5.16 Rural areas have lower access to improved water sources in the majority of countries in the region 143
Figure 5.17 The old age dependency ratio is expected to increase for both men and women in the next two decades, and the female will exceed the male dependency ratio in the future 146
Figure 5.18 Share of widowers and widows among the elderly aged 65 and above 147
Figure 5.19 Women devote more time to housework and care-giving activities than men, particularly in households with elderly members 149
Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1</th>
<th>Labor market returns to studying engineering are high relative to studying education</th>
<th>36</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.2</td>
<td>School curricula in a number of East Asian Countries have gender stereotyping</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.3</td>
<td>EAP region, mainly driven by China, is characterized by its large number of missing girls at birth compared to after birth</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.4</td>
<td>Most EAP countries do not differentiate by gender in inheritance and property laws</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.1</td>
<td>Legal Retirement Ages in EAP</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1</td>
<td>Legislation against gender based violence (a)</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.2</td>
<td>Political Affirmative Action in EAP</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5.1</td>
<td>There are no systematic gender differences in consumption poverty among the elderly, regardless of family status</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6.1</td>
<td>Selected policy approaches to tackle excessive tobacco and alcohol use</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword

Over the past few decades, the East Asia and Pacific Region has been the most economically dynamic region in the world. In most countries in the Region, incomes have grown dramatically, and with that growth, absolute poverty has declined rapidly. Most of the Region’s economies have also shifted away from agriculture and toward manufacturing and services. Rapid growth, structural transformation, and poverty reduction have been accompanied by progress toward gender equality in several key areas. Economic development has led to the closing of gender gaps in school enrollments and a decline in maternal mortality rates: girls in the Region as a whole now enroll in secondary schools at a higher rate than boys, and maternal mortality has fallen by half over the past 20 years. Access to economic opportunities has also increased, particularly among younger, better educated women. In many ways, women in East Asian and Pacific countries are better positioned than ever before to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from development.

Yet, the experience of the Region illustrates also how growth and economic development are not enough to attain gender equality in all its dimensions. Women still have less access than men to a range of productive assets and services, including land, financial capital, agricultural extension services, and new information technologies. Substantial employment segregation by gender remains. Women are less likely than men to work in formal sector jobs and more likely to work in poorly remunerated occupations and enterprises. Despite the closing of education gaps, women still earn less than men for similar work all across the Region. Women in East Asian and Pacific countries still have a weaker voice and less influence than men, whether within the household, in the private sector, in civil society, or in politics. And women across the Region remain vulnerable to gender-based violence, often at the hand of an intimate partner.

The main message of this book, Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific—a regional companion to the World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development—is that policy makers in the Region need to understand why progress in closing gender gaps has been mixed and to implement corrective policies where gaps remain persistent. The reason is that gender equality is both an important development objective in its own right as well as good development policy. A growing body of evidence shows that promoting gender equality in access to productive resources, economic opportunity, and voice can contribute to higher economic productivity, improve the economic prospects and wellbeing of the next generation, and lead to more effective development policy making. Yet, gender equality in many areas does not happen automatically. Thus, gender-aware public policy is required if countries are to achieve both gender equality and more rapid development.

As a regional report, Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific focuses on issues that are particularly pertinent to the Region. Among other things, the report examines the gender dimensions of several emerging trends in the Region—increased global economic integration, the rising use of information and communication technologies, migration, urbanization, and rapid population aging—all of which are generating new opportunities, but also new risks, for promoting gender equality. The report also contributes to the development of new data and evidence on gender and development, significantly strengthening the ability of countries to formulate evidence-based policy in this area.
Drawing on this evidence base, the report identifies four priority areas for public action in the countries of East Asia and the Pacific. First, promoting gender equality in human development remains important where gender gaps in education and health outcomes remain large. Second, policies to close gender gaps in economic opportunity have a critical role. Such measures are often warranted on both equity and efficiency grounds. Third, initiatives to strengthen women’s voice and influence—and to protect them from violence—are also called for across the Region. Strengthening women’s agency will enhance the quality of development decision making and, thus, development broadly. And, finally, public policy can foster the opportunities and manage the risks associated with emerging trends in the Region; taking a gender-aware approach to policy making in this area will lead to better gender—and development—outcomes.

This report shows that in East Asia and the Pacific, as in other parts of the world, gender equality is both the right development objective as well as good development policy.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADAPT</td>
<td>An Giang Dong Thap Alliance for the Prevention against Trafficking</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td>AED</td>
<td>Academy for Education Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGI</td>
<td>Adolescent Girls Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALMPs</td>
<td>Active Labor Market Policies</td>
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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of South East Asian Nationals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aus/AID</td>
<td>Australian Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFC</td>
<td>Better Factories Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMI</td>
<td>Body Mass Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPWIP</td>
<td>Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics</td>
</tr>
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<td>CAREM-Asia</td>
<td>Coordination of Action Research on AIDS, Mobility-Asia</td>
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<td>CCT</td>
<td>Conditional and Unconditional Cash Transfers</td>
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<td>CDD</td>
<td>Community-driven Development</td>
</tr>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGA</td>
<td>Country Gender Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWCC</td>
<td>Cambodian Women’s Crisis Centre</td>
</tr>
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<td>CWDI</td>
<td>Corporate Women Directors International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>UK Department for International Development</td>
</tr>
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<td>DHS</td>
<td>Demographic and Health Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>East Asia and Pacific</td>
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<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Europe and Central Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECPAT</td>
<td>End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPZs</td>
<td>Export Processing Zones</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FODE</td>
<td>Flexible Open and Distance Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender-based Violence</td>
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<td>GDC</td>
<td>Gender and Development for Cambodia</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GEM</td>
<td>Gender Equity Model</td>
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<td>GNP</td>
<td>Grand National Party</td>
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<td>G-PSF</td>
<td>Government Private Sector Forum</td>
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<td>Global Resource Information Data Base</td>
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<td>HEF</td>
<td>Health Equity Fund</td>
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<td>HIS</td>
<td>Hang Seng Index</td>
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<td>IDEA</td>
<td>International Development Evaluation Association</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
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<td>International Finance Corporation</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>INSTRAW</td>
<td>United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISCO</td>
<td>International Standard Classification of Occupations</td>
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<td>Indices of Social Development</td>
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<td>KDP</td>
<td>Kecamantan Development Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>Lao’s People Democratic Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIC</td>
<td>Middle Income Countries</td>
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<td>MMR</td>
<td>Maternal Mortality Rate</td>
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<td>MPDF</td>
<td>Mekong Project Development Facility</td>
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<td>MSMEs</td>
<td>Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises</td>
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<td>NCRFW</td>
<td>National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women</td>
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<td>NDRC</td>
<td>National Opinion Research Center</td>
</tr>
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<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organizations</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>PEKKA</td>
<td>Indonesia Women Headed Household Program</td>
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<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
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<td>PNG</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
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<td>PPP</td>
<td>Purchasing Power Parity</td>
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<td>Science Connections</td>
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<td>Special Economic Zones</td>
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<td>Self-help Groups</td>
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<td>Social Institutional and Gender Index</td>
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<td>Sex Ratios at Birth</td>
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<td>Sexually-transmitted Infections</td>
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<td>ThaiHealth</td>
<td>Thai Health Promotion Foundation</td>
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<td>TIMSS</td>
<td>Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nation Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNESCAP</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Fund for Population Activities</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNIEFEM</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCCI</td>
<td>Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry</td>
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<td>WBL</td>
<td>Women, Business and the Law</td>
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<td>WDR</td>
<td><em>World Development Report</em></td>
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Chapter 1. The State of Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

Introduction

In recent decades, women across the globe have made positive strides toward gender equality. Literacy rates for young women and girls are higher than ever before, while gender gaps in primary education have closed in almost all countries. In the past three decades, over half a billion women have joined the world’s labor force (World Bank 2011e).

Strides toward gender equality in East Asia and the Pacific have been similarly noteworthy. Most countries in the region have either reached or surpassed gender parity in education enrollments. Health outcomes for both women and men have improved significantly. Female labor force participation rates in the region are relatively high. Yet despite considerable progress in this economically dynamic region, gender disparities persist in a number of important areas—particularly in access to economic opportunity and in voice and influence in society. For policy makers in East Asian and Pacific countries, closing these gender gaps represents an important challenge to achieving more inclusive and effective development.

The East Asia and Pacific region’s significant economic growth, structural transformation, and poverty reduction in the last few decades have been associated with reduced gender inequalities in several dimensions.

The region grew at 7 percent on average between 2000 and 2008 (figure 1.1), the structure of the region’s economies has shifted away from agriculture toward manufacturing and services, and extreme poverty has fallen dramatically. Indeed, the share of the region’s population living on less than US$1.25 a day has declined by more than 50 percent since 1990—from the highest poverty head counts in the world to among the lowest (figure 1.2). Growth, structural transformation, and poverty reduction have been accompanied by considerable progress toward gender equality in several key areas, particularly education and health. Many countries in the region have experienced closing gender gaps in school enrollments and declining maternal and child mortality rates.

But growth and development have not been enough to attain gender equality in all its dimensions.

Women still have less access than men to a range of productive assets and services, including land, financial capital, agricultural extension services, and new information technologies. Substantial employment segregation by gender still remains an issue. Women are less likely than men to work in formal sector jobs and more likely to work in poorly remunerated occupations and enterprises. And despite closing of education gaps, women continue to be paid less than men for similar work. Women in East Asian and Pacific countries still have a weaker voice and less influence than men, whether in household decision making, in the private sector, in civil society, or in politics. Moreover, women across the region remain vulnerable to gender-based violence, often at the hand of an intimate partner.
The East Asia and Pacific region is vast and diverse, with large differences in economic and social progress, including toward gender equality

Achievements in growth and development have not been uniform across the region. While average annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth during the first decade of the 2000s neared 10 percent in China, it was close to zero in several small Pacific Island countries. By the end of the decade, levels of GDP per capita among the low- and middle-income countries of the region also varied widely, from US$623 in Timor-Leste to US$8,373 in Malaysia (World Bank 2011). Nor has progress toward gender equality been uniform. Despite widespread progress toward gender equality in schooling, a few (mostly low-income) countries continue to face challenges in closing gender gaps in basic education. And in spite of broad improvements in health outcomes, China—and to a lesser extent Vietnam—face significant gender imbalances in the ratio of boys to girls at birth, a function of prenatal sex selection stemming from strong the preference for sons in those societies. As a result, the region has more than a million “missing” girls at birth per year.

At the same time, a number of Pacific Island countries face particular challenges with respect to promoting women’s voice, influence, and empowerment—in both the private and public spheres. For example, though gender-based violence remains pervasive in the region, the prevalence of violence against women in the Pacific is among the highest in the world. Data indicate that upward of 60 percent of adult women have experienced physical or sexual violence during their lifetime, often at the hands of an intimate partner (SPC 2009, SPC 2010, VWC 2011)). Moreover, female representation in politics in the Pacific is among the lowest in the world. Although female political participation is relatively low worldwide—only 19.6 percent of the world’s parliamentarians were women in December 2011—four of the eight countries in the world with no female parliamentarians were located in the Pacific (www.ipu.org)).

A growing body of literature also suggests that patterns of growth—not just levels—can affect gender equality by differentially affecting incentives to invest in and to create opportunities for women and girls. Cross-country evidence indicates, for example, that gender gaps tend to be smaller in countries that export
more in relatively female labor-intensive sectors (Do, Levchenko, and Raddatz 2011). Ross (2008) found that natural resource extraction, namely oil, reduces and discourages female labor force participation, which in turn reduces their political influence (Ross 2008; World Bank 2012). Such distinctions are relevant to the East Asia and Pacific context. Although East and Southeast Asian economies rely heavily on export-oriented manufacturing growth, the economies of the Pacific Islands are dominated by natural resource extraction, tourism, and remittances. These differences in economic incentives generated by distinct patterns of development may help to explain, at least in part, differences in progress in East Asian and Pacific countries, particularly with respect to voice and influence in society.

**East Asian and Pacific countries are at the forefront of a number of global trends that will have significant impacts on gender equality**

The East Asia and Pacific region’s economic dynamism has placed it at the forefront of several global trends. Much of the region is characterized by high levels of openness and global economic integration with the rest of the world. The region is also at the forefront of adoption of new information and communication technology (ICTs), which are breaking down information barriers, opening up new economic opportunities, and in many contexts enabling collective action. Much of the region is also characterized by migration and rapid urbanization that have occurred as the center of economic activities has moved from rural to urban areas and as increasing numbers of the region’s citizens cross national boundaries in search of economic opportunity. Swift declines in fertility and mortality are dramatically changing the demographic profile of the region, and many countries in the region will face rapid population aging in the coming years.

These trends are likely to have important gender dimensions, generating both new opportunities and new risks for gender equality. For instance, while increased economic integration has contributed to higher demand for female labor in several East Asian countries, it has also increased worker vulnerability to external shocks, with different effects on female and male workers. Similarly, while increased migration has opened up new economic opportunities in the region, it has also been accompanied by new risks—among the most severe is the risk of human trafficking.

**This report clarifies empirically the relationship between gender equality and development and outlines an agenda for public action to promote gender equality in East Asian and Pacific countries**

This report has been written as a companion to the *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*, yet its contribution is distinct in several ways. First, the analysis in the report focuses specifically on those issues and policy challenges that are most pertinent to East Asian and Pacific countries. For example, relative to other developing regions, female access to basic education is no longer a first-order issue in most East Asian and Pacific countries. At the same time, the region still faces critical challenges with respect to gender “streaming” in education and persistent gender stereotypes in school curricula, both of which are factors that contribute to persistent employment segregation and affect both women’s and men’s behaviors and aspirations in the economy and in society. Second, the report examines the gender implications of several key emerging trends in the region: global economic integration, growing importance of ICTs, migration, rapid urbanization, and population aging. These trends have important gender dimensions that are not commonly recognized by policy makers, but will generate a distinctive set of challenges for promoting opportunities and managing gender-specific risks. Third, by focusing in detail on gender, development, and public policy in East Asia and Pacific countries, the report has contributed significantly to the development of
basic indicators and analysis on gender, development, and public policy that have not been available previously.

This chapter examines the state of gender equality in the East Asia and Pacific region, highlighting both recent progress and pending challenges. Consistent with the framework of the World Development Report 2012, the discussion—both here and in the broader report—focuses on gender equality in three domains: (a) endowments, (b) economic opportunity, and (c) agency. Endowments are defined here as human capital and other productive assets that allow individuals to live healthy and productive lives. To analyze gender equality in endowments, the discussion focuses on education and health as well as other productive assets, such as land. Economic opportunity pertains to an individual's ability to fully and freely participate in and receive returns from their work in the economy. The report focuses on a range of economic indicators, including labor force participation, earnings, and employment segmentation, whether in the labor market or in own-run enterprises. Agency is defined as the ability of women and men to express themselves (exercise voice) in accordance with their preferences and to take actions on their own behalf (to influence their surroundings). Since people exercise agency in all aspects of life, the report focuses on multiple dimensions: agency within a household and in several aspects of the public domain, including civil society, the private sector, and politics. The report also focuses on safety and security as a dimension of agency, defining violence against women as the extreme deprivation of agency (box 1.1).

Why does gender matter for development?

Gender equality matters intrinsically

Nobel prize–winning economist Amartya Sen transformed the discourse on development when he argued that development is not only about raising people’s incomes or reducing poverty, but, rather, it involves a process of expanding freedoms equally for all people (Sen 1999).1 Viewed from this perspective, gender equality is intrinsically valued. The near-universal ratification and adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)2—and the subsequent commitment of the international community to Millennium Development Goals 3 and 5—underscores a near-global

Box 1.1. Defining and measuring gender equality

Gender refers to the social, behavioral, and cultural attributes, expectations and norms that distinguish men and women. Gender equality refers to the extent to which men's and women's opportunities and outcomes are constrained—or enhanced—solely on the basis of their gender. This report focuses on gender equality in three domains: (a) endowments—human and productive capital; (b) economic opportunity—participation and returns in the economy; and (c) agency—the voice and influence of women in multiple dimensions in the private and public domains.

Gender equality can be conceptualized in two ways: in terms of equality of opportunities and equality of outcomes. Equality of opportunities measures inequalities that arise from circumstances beyond the control of individuals. Equality of outcomes measures equality of results (World Bank 2011). Both concepts can be useful, depending on the domain.

In some domains, such as in health and education, where gender equality in outcomes may be inherently valued, it is reasonable to focus on equality of outcomes. In contrast, equality of opportunities may be the more relevant conception of gender equality in the economic sphere, where people’s preferences may lead to different outcomes, even if their opportunities are equal. Despite these distinctions, it is often difficult to distinguish opportunities from outcomes empirically. As such, though the report will rely on both conceptions of gender equality in its analysis, data limitations often necessitate that the evidence focus on measuring outcomes.
consensus that gender equality and women’s empowerment are development objectives in their own right.

**Gender equality also matters for development**

A growing body of empirical literature from around the world demonstrates that promoting gender equality is also good development policy—or as stated in the *World Development Report 2012*, “Gender equality is smart economics” (World Bank 2011e). Indeed, the literature shows that greater gender equality in endowments, access to economic opportunities, and agency can (a) contribute to higher productivity, income growth, and poverty reduction; (b) improve the opportunities and outcomes of the next generation; and (c) enhance development decision making. This section explores the evidence on these three pathways, in turn.

**Gender equality in endowments, economic opportunities, and agency can contribute to higher productivity and income growth**

For households and economies to function at their full potential, resources, skills, and talent should be put to their most productive use. To the extent that societies allocate resources on the basis of one’s gender, as opposed to one’s skills and abilities, their approach comes at a cost. The economic costs of gender inequalities—whether due to the persistence of traditional norms or to overt discrimination—can be considerable. A recent study commissioned for the *World Development Report 2012* found that in the East Asia and Pacific region, output per worker could be 7 to 18 percent higher across a range of countries if female entrepreneurs and workers were to work in the same sectors, types of jobs, and activities as men, and have the same access to productive resources (Cuberes and Teignier-Baqué 2011).

Evidence suggests that the misallocation of female skills and talent commonly begins before women enter the labor force, when families and societies underinvest in girls’ schooling. A number of cross-country studies have found a robust inverse relationship between the size of the gender gap in education and GDP growth, controlling for average education levels and other factors associated with economic growth (see, for example, Klasen 2001; Knowles, Lorgelly, and Owen 2000). Moreover, to the extent that young women (or men) choose fields of study on the basis of their gender as opposed to abilities, their action too will exact costs on the individuals’ employment and earnings, but also on a country’s economic productivity more broadly.

Gender inequalities in access to productive assets also have costs in terms of productivity and income. Microeconomic studies from a number of countries across developing regions show that female farmers and entrepreneurs are no less productive, inherently, than male farmers and entrepreneurs; rather, they tend to have less access to productive inputs. A recent study by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) estimates that equalizing access to productive resources between female and male farmers could increase agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4.0 percent (FAO 2010).

A number of studies show that gender-based violence imposes significant costs on the economies of developing countries, for example, through lower worker productivity and incomes, lower human capital investments, and weaker accumulation of social capital (Morrison, Ellsberg, and Bott 2007). In addition to indirect costs, gender-based violence has large direct economic costs on society. A study in the United States found, for example, that the direct healthcare costs of intimate partner violence against adult women were more than 4 billion USD in 1995 (USCDC 2003). Reducing gender-based violence would thus have significant positive effects on the region’s economies by reducing healthcare costs, increasing investments in women’s human capital, female worker productivity, and women’s accumulation of social capital.
As the global economy becomes more integrated, the productivity effects associated with greater gender equality are likely to be increasingly important to East Asia and Pacific countries. Recent studies on the relationship between gender and trade suggest that gender inequalities have become financially detrimental for countries in a world of open trade (Do, Levchenko, and Raddatz 2011). To participate effectively in an increasingly competitive world, countries will need to harness their resources efficiently by improving opportunities for all and allocating based on skill instead of gender. Gender inequality—whether in endowments, economic opportunities, or agency—reduces a country’s ability to compete in this increasingly globalized economic environment (World Bank 2011).

**Strengthening women’s endowments, economic opportunities, and agency is also an investment in the next generation**

A large body of cross-country and country-specific literature has shown that healthier, better educated mothers have healthier, better educated children, which can be expected to positively affect children’s future productivity and economic prospects. The effects begin before childbirth. In Timor-Leste, highly educated mothers are more likely to have their babies delivered by skilled attendants (88 percent) than are mothers in the wealthiest households (69 percent) (Timor-Leste, Demographic and Health Survey [DHS] 2009–10). Similarly, Cambodian women with little education are relatively less likely to receive antenatal care and assistance from trained health personnel during birth deliveries than women with higher education (Johnson, Sao, and Hor 2000). A mother’s health and nutrition status is also found to have strong impacts on children’s physical health as well as cognitive and noncognitive abilities, which can have long-lasting developmental and societal consequences (World Bank 2011).

Higher female labor force participation and associated income—as well as asset holdings—in the hands of women has also been shown to have positive effects on the next generation. In Indonesia, for example, women with a higher share of household assets prior to marriage tend to use more prenatal care and are more likely to have their births attended by skilled health care providers (Beegle, Frankenberg, and Thomas 2001). Similarly, in China, increasing adult female income by 10 percent of the average household income increased the fraction of surviving girls by 1 percentage point and increased years of schooling for both boys and girls. In contrast, a similar increase in male income reduced survival rates and educational attainment for girls, with no impact on boys (Qian 2008). Studies from across developing and developed regions (for example, from places as diverse as Brazil, Ghana, South Africa, and the United States) show that income in the hands of women positively affects their female children’s health (Duflo 2003; Thomas 1995). Indeed, the marginal effects of income and assets in the hands of mothers are commonly found to be larger than similar income and assets in the hands of fathers.

Reductions in gender-based violence through greater female agency can also have important intergenerational benefits. Several studies show that children experiencing domestic violence between parents contributes to a higher risk of women experiencing domestic violence as adults and of men perpetrating violence against their spouses (Fehringer and Hindin 2009). In Timor-Leste, 56.4 percent of women who were victims of spousal violence had a father who beat their mother (NSD, Ministry of Finance, and ICF Macro 2010). In Cambodia, women who reported that their mothers experienced domestic violence were more likely to experience physical and psychological domestic violence as well (NIPH, NIS, and ORC Macro 2006). Efforts that increase women’s safety and security and reduce domestic violence can thus lead to the lower intergenerational transmission of violence within families.\(^5\)
Strengthening women’s endowments, economic opportunity, and particularly agency can enhance the quality of development decision making

Several studies also have shown that women and men have different policy preferences (Edlund and Pande 2001; Lott and Kenny 1999). Despite perceptions in some East Asian and Pacific countries that women do not make as good of leaders as men, recent studies suggest that capturing these differences in perspective can lead not only to more representative decision making, but also to better decision making. Evidence from South Asia suggests that development policy making can benefit from greater gender equality in voice. For example, a study of women elected to local government in India found that female leadership positively affected the provision of public goods at the local level—in ways that better reflected both women’s and men’s preferences (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004). Similarly, studies from rural India and Nepal found that when women who were previously excluded by decisions about local natural resource management had greater voice and influence, local conservation outcomes improved significantly (Agarwal 2010a, 2010b).

Collective agency, at all societal levels, can be transformative for an individual and for society. For example, among a group of ethnic minority women in rural China, information sharing helped empower them and raised their social standing in the Han-majority villages into which they had married (Judd 2010). In a more formal setting, over the past 15 years, migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong have been active in organizing and participating in political protests focusing on local migrant workers’ rights as well as international human rights (Constable 2009). This organizing has contributed to the enactment of laws that provide migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong with some of the most comprehensive legal protections in the world.

Recent progress, pending challenges

Over the past few decades, many East Asian and Pacific countries have experienced considerable progress toward gender equality, at least in some areas. In others, gender disparities have been more persistent. The following sections develop an overview of recent progress and pending challenges in achieving gender equality in endowments, economic opportunity, and agency. In doing so, they highlight the considerable diversity of experience within the region as well as among certain population subgroups within countries. The basic gender profile developed in these sections will provide the foundation for the deeper analysis of gender, development, and public policy that is presented in the chapters that follow.

Endowments: Human and productive capital

Economic growth and poverty reduction in the region have been associated with rapid increases and convergence in school enrollment, at all levels of education . . .

Over the past two decades, the East Asia and Pacific region has seen rapid convergence in the educational enrollment of males and females at all levels, including tertiary. In 2010, the region had the highest female-to-male enrollment ratio of all regions at the primary level; at the secondary enrollment level, only the Latin America and the Caribbean region had a higher ratio (figure 1.3). Although the female-to-male enrollment ratio in the East Asia and Pacific region is still below 1 at the tertiary level, it has been rising consistently over the last two decades (figure 1.4).
Figure 1.3. Ratio of female to male gross enrollment in secondary education by region

Figure 1.4. Ratio of female to male gross enrollment in tertiary education by region


Note: EAP includes developed countries. Mongolia is included in Europe and Central Asia (ECA), not EAP.

...although outcomes vary considerably across countries...

However, substantial variation is seen both in overall enrollment rates and in female-to-male enrollment ratios across countries. Lower-income countries such as Cambodia and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, as well as Papua New Guinea, have low female-to-male enrollment ratios above the secondary school level (figure 1.5 and figure 1.6); generally these gender gaps accompany low overall enrollment rates.

Figure 1.5. Ratio of female to male gross enrollment in secondary education, most recent year

Female to male ratio of secondary school gross enrollment

Figure 1.6. Ratio of female to male gross enrollment in tertiary education, most recent year

Female to male ratio of tertiary school gross enrollment


Note: Data are as recent as 2008 and 2009 for most countries, except the following: Solomon Island 2007 and Papua New Guinea 1998.
At the same time, the gender gap in education has reversed in several countries; girls’ secondary enrollment rates now exceed those of boys in the Thailand, Vanuatu, the Philippines, Mongolia, Malaysia, China and Vietnam. In the Philippines, the male high school participation lagged behind by 9.5 percent in 2008–09, with boys demonstrating lower levels of interest in education than girls (Government of Philippines 2009). Furthermore, though countries have generally experienced convergence in school enrollments among young people, substantial gaps in the educational endowments of the working age and elderly populations still remain (World Bank 2010).

... and across socioeconomic groups within countries

In addition, there is substantial heterogeneity in outcomes within countries, with lower educational enrollments often found among economically disadvantaged and minority populations. Gender inequalities are often exacerbated when interacting with other socioeconomic categories. In Vietnam, school participation among 15- to 17-year-olds is substantially higher among the Kinh and Hoa (Chinese) majorities than among many of the 52 ethnic minority populations. Among the more economically disadvantaged and less well integrated Hmong, Dao, and Khmer minorities, for example, far fewer girls than boys attend school (figure 1.7, and Baulch et al. 2002).

Globally, poverty and gender often interact to compound gender inequalities. Data suggest that poverty is not as important a contributor to gender disadvantage in education as elsewhere in the world, however. Household survey data from several countries indicate that gender gaps in enrollment do not vary substantially or systemically across income quintiles. In Indonesia, for example, there is actually a slight female advantage in enrollments among poorer households among 13- to 15-year-olds; a slight female disadvantage persists among the wealthiest households (figure 1.8). Overall, the data from the region suggest that gender gaps in enrollment tend to be smaller than income or wealth gaps.

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**Figure 1.7.** Net secondary school enrollment in Vietnam by sex and ethnicity, 2008

Percentage of 15- to 17-year-olds enrolled in secondary school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
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<th>Female</th>
</tr>
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<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tay</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central ethnic</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hmong/Dao</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
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</table>

Majority

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minority</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tr>
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<td>85</td>
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<td>Tay</td>
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<td>Central ethnic</td>
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<td>65</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hmong/Dao</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>40</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Figure 1.8.** School participation of 13- to 15-year-olds in Indonesia by sex and expenditure quintile, 2009

Percentage of 13- to 15-year-olds enrolled in school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure Quintile</th>
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<th>Female</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>III</td>
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Although gender disparities in enrollment have closed, gaps in education quality and choice of academic streams persist

Males and females differ in the types and quality of education obtained. This “gender streaming” in education contributes to persistent inequalities between women and men in access to economic opportunities. Data from Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam indicate that the fields of engineering and law are heavily dominated by males, whereas the fields of education, health, and business administration are dominated by females. In principle, there could be multiple reasons for individuals’ divergent choice of education streams, including gender-specific patterns of academic performance. Evidence based on Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test scores from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand suggests, however, that there are no systematic differences between males and females in mathematics and science scores (figure 1.9). Moreover, consistent with the global findings, women in East Asia outperform men in reading assessments (Schleicher 2008). Different norms and expectations for males and females, including those promoted from an early age through school curricula, however, are likely to influence preferences by gender and, therefore, affect the choice of education streams.

Growth and development have also been associated with substantial improvements in key health indicators

During the past half century, the region has experienced significant advances in some health indicators. Fertility rates have sharply declined, both in the region as well as across the world (figure 1.10). Under-five mortality rates have more than halved since 1990 for both boys and girls (figure 1.11). Noteworthy gains have been made in birth attendance by health professionals. In 2006, 87 percent of births were attended by physicians compared to 47 percent in 1992. Gains of this magnitude were not witnessed in any other region. In addition, the East Asia and Pacific region has also seen declines in the maternal mortality ratio, from approximately 200 deaths per 100,000 births in 1990 to 100 in 2008 (figure 1.12). The region has experienced consistent increases in both male and female life expectancy at birth since 1960. Female life expectancy in the region has increased from 48 to 74, and male life expectancy has increased from 45 to 70.
The State of Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

As with education, progress in health has been uneven across the region

Despite important gains, progress in health has not been uniform. Maternal mortality remains high in lower-income countries and in the Pacific, especially in Lao PDR, Timor-Leste, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea (figure 1.13). In Lao PDR, for example, maternal mortality rates were approximately 580 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2008.

Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

births in 2008, among the highest in the world (World Bank 2012). Indonesia’s maternal mortality rate remains high compared to other countries in the region at similar levels of development (World Bank 2011e), and progress in reducing maternal mortality has been slow. Rural women, and in particular those in remote areas, have more limited access to health care in parts of the region and thus remain at higher risk. Indeed, although Vietnam has, on average, experienced noteworthy declines in maternal mortality over the past decade, progress has been much slower in remote and ethnic minority regions (World Bank 2011a).

Moreover, the region has seen alarming trends with respect to “missing” girls and women

Among the most troubling issues is that East Asia has a substantial number of missing women. The term missing women was first coined by Sen (1990) to refer to the phenomenon that there are far fewer women than men in many low-income countries, relative to what is observed in developed countries. Sen argued that this imbalance in sex ratios reflected severe forms of gender bias in affected societies. At birth, biological differences between males and females imply that approximately 105 boys are born for every 100 girls. Nonetheless, China, Vietnam, and, until recently, the Republic of Korea have experienced substantial deviations from the biological norm. Moreover, the trend over time in China has been alarming (figure 1.15). The number of missing girls at birth in China, calculated by comparing the sex ratio at birth in China to this ratio in high-income countries, increased from 890,000 in 1990 to 1,092,000 in 2008 (World Bank 2011e).

Men tend to experience more ill health related to risky behaviors

Men face gender-specific health risks as well. For example, men are more likely to experience higher morbidity and premature mortality related to substance abuse, war and conflict, and violence. The decline of the male population in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime of Pol Pot can be clearly seen in figure 1.15; similar declines are visible for Vietnam. Moreover, differences between men and women in the incidence of tobacco use are higher in East Asia and the Pacific than in other region of the world; the gender differential in heavy episodic alcohol consumption is also particularly stark. Male abuse of tobacco and alcohol in the region has important affects on men’s health and mortality rates, which in turn can impose significant costs on economic productivity and growth.

Gender disparities in the ownership and control of productive assets persist and appear to be less responsive to economic growth than investments in human capital

Gender disparities in the access to and control of productive assets, such as land or farm inputs, are pervasive around the world and remain issues in the region despite significant growth and development. In most countries, women remain less likely to own land (or hold formal land titles) than men. Moreover, data from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam indicate that when women—or, specifically, female-headed households—do own land, they typically have smaller holdings. A recent study of women’s land holdings in post-Tsunami Aceh similarly found that women’s land holdings were considerably lower than men’s (World Bank 2010c). Female-headed households in the region also tend to have poorer access to other productive inputs and support services, including livestock holdings and access to agricultural extension services.
Even with improvements in women’s access to microcredit, important challenges remain in accessing enterprise finance.

Despite improvements in women’s access to microcredit, important challenges remain in accessing enterprise finance.

Women have traditionally also had systematically less access to capital than men. This disparity has been compounded by their poorer access to land, an important source of collateral. In response to gender disparities in access to credit, the microfinance movement has focused on increasing women’s access to capital across the world. Of the 106.6 million poorest clients worldwide who have been reached by microcredit initiatives by the end of 2007, 83.2 percent were women (Daley-Harris 2009). New evidence on access to credit among female and male entrepreneurs tells a more nuanced story. Among micro- and small firms in Indonesia, both female- and male-run enterprises cite access to finance as the most significant business constraint, with the share of female-run firms reporting this constraint only slightly higher than the share of male-run firms (30 vs. 25 percent, respectively). Among small and medium enterprises in nine East Asian and Pacific countries, only in Timor-Leste and Tonga do a greater share of female-led enterprises report access to credit as a significantly more important constraint than reported by their male counterparts.10

Economic opportunity: Participation and returns in the economy

Female labor force participation is relatively high in East Asia and the Pacific

The East Asia and Pacific region has the highest average female labor force participation rate and highest ratio of female-to-male labor force participation in the developing world. In 2008, 70.1 percent of females were participating in labor market activities (figure 1.16). The gender gap in labor force participation was approximately 15 percentage points. In comparison, the average female labor force participation rate in Latin America and the Caribbean was 55 percent in 2008, and in Europe and Central Asia it was 58 percent. The gender gaps in labor force participation in these other regions were 27 and 16 percentage points, respectively.
Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

**Figure 1.16. Female labor force participation rate by region, 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Female labor force participation rate of 15-64 years of age (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>East Asia &amp; Pacific</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Europe &amp; Central Asia</td>
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<td>Latin America &amp; Caribbean</td>
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<td>South Asia</td>
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<td>Middle East &amp; North Africa</td>
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**Figure 1.17. Female labor force participation rate by country in EAP, 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Female labor force participation rate of 15-64 years of age (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
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<td>Samoa</td>
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<td>Malaysia</td>
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<td>Philippines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korea, Rep.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tonga</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timor-Leste</td>
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<td>Mongolia</td>
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<td>Thailand</td>
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<td>Vietnam</td>
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<td>Cambodia</td>
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<td>Vanuatu</td>
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<td>Laos</td>
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**Substantial variation is seen in female labor force participation across countries, however, and participation rates have not risen uniformly with development**

Substantial variation is seen within the region, both in the levels of female participation and in their trends over time. In general, countries with strong state commitment to female empowerment have had the highest female labor force participation rates. In Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam, for example, female labor force participation was over 75 percent in 1980. Between 1980 and 2008, these countries witnessed declines in female participation of between 5 and 10 percentage points despite strong economic growth—although these declines, except in China, were mirrored in similar drops in male participation, leaving the ratio of female-to-male participation rates unchanged. Participation rates in Korea, Indonesia, and Malaysia were significantly lower than the average in the region—in 1980, only 45 percent of working-age females participated in the labor market. Female participation rates have increased over time in Korea and Indonesia (figure 1.17), while they have remained stagnant in Malaysia despite strong economic growth. Female labor force participation varies substantially in the Pacific, from rates of over 75 percent in Vanuatu to 40 percent in Fiji in 2008. Although time series data for these countries is limited, female participation rates appear to have risen over time in the countries with lower initial rates—in Fiji, they rose from a low 25 percent in 1980 to 40 percent in 2008, and in Tonga they rose from 45 percent to 57 percent over the same period.

**Structural transformation in the region’s economies has changed the type of work conducted**

The region has seen a significant decline in the fraction of the workforce in the agricultural sector over the last half century. Between 1960 and 2000, agriculture’s share of total employment declined from over 80 percent to under 50 percent in Thailand, while in Indonesia the share declined from 70 percent to approximately 45 percent (Butzer, Mundlak, and Larson 2003). In China, the fraction of the workforce employed in agriculture fell by 14 percentage points between 1988 and 1995, while the nonagricultural labor
force expanded by the same amount over the period (Rozelle et al. 2000). Nonetheless, agriculture remains important; in 2008, it was still the largest sector of employment in the region (figure 1.18).

**Women’s labor market responses to structural transformation have, in part, reflected country-specific patterns of development**

Thailand, for example, moved from a heavy concentration of workers in agriculture in 1980 to a rise in the industrial and service sectors (figure 1.19). The data indicate that the early 1990s saw a substantial movement of females away from agriculture and out of the workforce. Similar patterns were seen in the United States during the early stages of the transition away from agriculture (Goldin 1995; Mammen and Paxson 2000). In Indonesia, by contrast, female labor force participation increased by 9 percentage points between 1980 and 2007, with the bulk of the increase coming from the service sector (figure 1.19). Participation in industry and agriculture was fairly similar in 1980 and 2007.

**Nonetheless, clear gender-specific patterns of employment persist**

Labor market “sorting”—or employment segregation—along gender lines is pervasive, by industry, occupation, formality, and flexibility of employment. Such sorting affects a number of economic outcomes, by gender, including earnings, social security coverage, the intensity of work conducted, returns to education and experience, and exposure to shocks. In every country in the region, women are more likely than men to conduct unpaid family labor in agriculture and in the informal sector (World Bank Country Gender Assessments, various; UNESCAP 2003). In addition, they are more likely to be found in some occupations—such as teaching and nursing—and are less likely to be found in others, such as mining. Within the manufacturing sector, women are more likely to be found in industries such as textiles and food processing, and are also found in large and export-oriented firms. Within firms, women are more likely than men to be temporary workers (figure 1.20).
Characteristics of female- and male-led enterprises also tend to sort along gender lines

Female-led enterprises across the region tend to be smaller and more precarious than male-led enterprises (figure 1.21). They are more likely to operate in the informal sector (less likely to be registered) and to be home based or operate out of nonpermanent premises. In general, female-led enterprises across the region have fewer employees and assets and command lower profits. Although female-owned and -managed enterprises are not inherently less productive, they tend to be less capitalized and located in less-remunerative sectors. For instance, in Indonesia, female-led enterprises are relatively more likely to locate in the food, retail, and garment manufacturing sectors—among the least capital intensive and least productive sectors—whereas male-led enterprises are more likely to locate in sectors such as transportation—among the most capital intensive, highest productivity sectors.

Gender norms regarding the allocation of time to household and market work also affect women’s economic opportunities

Women in East Asian and Pacific countries continue to undertake the majority of household work, in addition to market work, a function of longstanding gender norms regarding the division of labor within households. In many contexts, this tradition constrains women’s economic opportunities, affecting their labor force participation, choice of sectors and occupations, time worked, and, ultimately, earnings. Global evidence indicates that women tend to work longer hours than men once both market and nonmarket work are taken into account (Ilahi 2000; World Bank 2001). The composition of work also varies substantially by
gender; men devote relatively more time to market work, while women devote more time to domestic activities. Evidence from East Asia is consistent with global patterns. Recent data from Lao PDR indicate that both gender differences in hours worked and in the division of labor between market and nonmarket work are exacerbated once families have children (figure 1.22).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 1.22. In Lao PDR, women—particularly those with young children—balance household work commitment with market work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours spent on activities per day</td>
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![Figure 1.22: Hours spent on activities per day](image)

**Source:** World Bank staff estimates using Laos Socioeconomic Survey, 2008.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Figure 1.23. Wage Inequality between Women and Men for Similar Work, 2007</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ratio of female wages to male wages</td>
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![Figure 1.23: Wage Inequality between Women and Men for Similar Work, 2007](image)

**Source:** World Development Indicators 2010, Gender Statistics, World Bank.

**Men continue to earn more than women in the region**

Cross-country evidence on wages indicates that in the low- and middle-income countries of East Asia, women earn between 70 and 80 percent of what men earn for similar work (figure 1.23). These gender wage gaps are partially attributable to differences in education, experience, and industrial choice across men and women. Indeed, differences in education endowments, experience, and industrial and occupational segregation explain up to 30 percent of the gender wage gap in East Asian countries (Sakellariou 2011).

**And gender wage gaps have not always narrowed with growth and development**

While gender wage gaps have evolved over time, they have not always closed. In Vietnam, the process of economic transition from a centrally planned to a market-based economy has been associated with a sharp reduction in the gender pay gap among salaried employees. The average gender pay gap halved between 1993 and 2008 with the majority of the contraction evident by 1998 (Pham and Reilly 2007; Sakellariou 2011). Pay gaps still persist between men and women, however, with women earning on average 75 percent of the male wage in 2009 (Pierre 2011). By contrast, in the Philippines the wage gap widened between 2000 and 2009, a change that has been partly attributed to growing differences between men and women in terms of their returns to education and other characteristics (Sakellariou). In Indonesia, the average wage gap and the gap by age cohorts widened between 1976 and 1999 (Dhanani and Islam 2004), although more recent evidence
suggests that the gender gap declined between 1997 and 2009 (Sakellariou). This complex relationship between growth, development, and the gender wage gap reflects a number of factors at the country level, including changes in the structure of the economy and in labor demand; the gender composition of the labor force; changes in the relative education, skill, and experience among male and female workers; and labor market institutions and policies, each of which affect how remuneration is evolving by gender.

**Agency: Women's voice and influence**

This report focuses on agency—women's voice and influence—in two main dimensions: (a) the ability of men and women to make choices related to themselves and to their households, and (b) the ability of men and women to make choices and be represented in the political and economic spheres. Although some progress has been made in raising women’s voice through development, substantial work remains to be done in strengthening the voice of women in both private and public spheres.

Agency refers to the ability of women and men to take action on their own behalf, in accordance with their preferences, and to influence outcomes that affect them in both private and public domains. This ability of people to express and act on preferences and influence outcomes is both affected by and affects their ownership and control over endowments as well as their access to economic opportunities (box 1.2). This ability to influence one’s life by making choices and taking actions is also a key dimension of well-being in and of itself (Sen 1999).

**Women in East Asia experience relatively high levels of agency at the household level compared with other developing regions**

Cross-country data suggest that women across the wealth distribution in East Asia have greater control over large household purchases and greater freedom to visit family and relatives without husbands’ permission than do women in other developing regions (figure 1.24). Women in East Asia also have as great as or greater control over their own earnings compared with women in other developing regions.

**Box 1.2. Defining and measuring agency: Women’s voice, influence, and participation**

All individuals in a society have ideas and preferences on how to use scarce resources and live their lives. The ability of women and men to express and act on their preferences are affected by—and also affect—their ownership and control over endowments and their access to economic opportunities (Kabeer 1999). This ability to act on one’s preferences and influence outcomes that is referred to as agency. Changes in the underlying characteristics of individuals in a household, community, or society will affect the strength of their voices relative to others, and may also influence their preferences. This influence, in turn, will affect choices made at the household, community, and societal levels. For example, an increase in the education of a woman will affect investments in the education and health of her children through its effect on both her relative bargaining power within the household (the extent to which her voice is heard) and, potentially, her preferences.

The concept of agency has multiple dimensions that lend themselves to being measured. The form of agency that is most frequently measured is the decision-making power of men and women (Mason 2002; McElroy 1990). Agency may be more explicitly measured by examining women’s mobility in the public domain, their participation in public action, and the incidence of male violence (Kabeer 1999). Finally, gender differences in bargaining power within a household have been assessed by examining the extent to which people's choices change when factors affecting their bargaining power, such as education, relative earnings, or asset holdings, also change (Dulfo 2003; Quisumbing and Maluccio 2003; Thomas 1990, 1993).
Data on actual and desired fertility suggest that the strength of women’s voice in personal and household decisions has increased over time

The gap between actual and desired fertility is often taken to represent a woman’s ability—or lack of it—to make decisions in a household context. Data from several East Asian countries show that this gap narrowed between 1997 and 2009, which suggests that women have gained greater control over their fertility (and perhaps other household-level decisions) over this period (figure 1.24). Greater influence in personal and household decisions could be a function of several factors, including recent increases in female education and access to economic opportunity in some countries. Mason (2000) found that local gender norms also influence the weight given to husbands’ and wives’ preferences in household decision making and, thus, affect the relative influence women have in determining contraceptive use and family fertility.

Women’s voice in public domain—as measured by political representation—remains weak despite development

Women have relatively low levels of representation in political assemblies, whether at the national or local levels. For example, women make up just over 19 percent of national parliamentarians worldwide. The share of female parliamentarians in East Asian and Pacific countries is just below the global average, at approximately 18 percent in 2011. As shown in figure 1.26, female representation in the region has not increased over time with economic growth and development; the overall share of female parliamentarians in East Asian and Pacific countries has barely changed since the 1990s. This stands in contrast to other developing regions, where levels of female political representation have tended to increase, at least since 2000.
Levels of female political representation vary considerably across the region but are particularly low in the Pacific

The share of women in national parliaments varies tremendously across the region. In December 2011, the highest levels of female representation were found in Timor-Leste (32.3 percent), Lao PDR (25 percent), Vietnam (24.4 percent), the Philippines (22.4 percent) and China (21.3 percent) (figure 1.27). The systematically lowest levels of female parliamentary representation are found in the Pacific, where four countries—the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau and Solomon Islands—have no female representation in parliament (www.ipu.org). Approximately one-third of countries in the region have some form of political “reservation” aimed at raising women’s political participation (Quota Project n.d.). Those countries with quotas or other forms of affirmative action have achieved higher levels of female representation in parliament—an average of 27 percent in 2009, compared with 14 percent for those countries without systems of political reservation.


Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) data extracted from World Development Indicators 2011, World Bank. www.ipu.org

Figure 1.27. Women in Parliaments in East Asia and Pacific, by Country, 2011

Share of parliamentary seats held by women in the lower or single house (%), as December 2011

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Figure 1.28. Share of men and women over 30 who believe that men make better political leaders than women, 2006 and 2007

Share of men and women over 30 (%)

**Barriers to female political participation include perceptions that women are not competent leaders**

Women are more likely to be elected under systems of proportional representation than under majority or plurality systems (UN 2010). Furthermore, barriers to political representation in the region reflect perceptions, held by both men and women, that female politicians make less competent political leaders than their male counterparts (figure 1.28). Evidence from India suggests that people’s perceptions of women as political leaders improve with exposure to female elected officials (Beaman et al. 2009). However, these perceptions may take time to evolve, reinforcing the case for concerted action to support increased political participation on the part of women. Ensuring that women are represented, whether at the local or national level, is a first step to ensuring that their views and preferences are expressed in public policies.

**At the same time, more women are actively participating in civil society**

Women from East Asian and Pacific countries have experienced improvements in their voice and ability to actively participate in civil society and grassroots movements. Civil rights groups tackle a variety of issues to improve gender equality in their community, country, and region. PEKKA, in Indonesia, was created to address the needs of widows of conflict in Aceh and now provides training for village paralegals that focus on domestic violence and family law. The program also holds district forums to bring together judges, prosecutors, police, nongovernmental organizations, and government officials to raise awareness of gender issues (PEKKA 2012; World Bank 2011). The Fiji Women’s Crisis Center lobbied for a nationally representative quantitative survey on violence against women, to be released in 2012.

**Women’s voice in the economic domain is relatively strong in East Asia, although challenges remain**

Women’s representation in top management and participation in ownership is high relative to other developing regions and the world average. In the East Asia and Pacific region, women are represented among the owners in over 50 percent of small, medium, and large firms, higher than in any other developing region (figure 1.29). Female participation in management in the region and all other regions is lower than participation in ownership, however, indicating that women have a more limited voice in running a firm and making a decision, despite being represented in the ownership of the firm.

**Gender-based violence—defined here as the extreme deprivation of female agency—remains pervasive in the region**

The incidence of gender-based violence in the region remains high. Evidence suggests that the prevalence of violence against women in Pacific countries is particularly high. A recent study (AusAID 2008) indicates that the two most common forms of violence against women in these countries, consistent with global trends, include (a) physical, psychological, and economic violence against women by intimate partners and (b) sexual violence perpetrated by intimate partners or others. Although the factors that enable gender-based violence
are multiple and complex, the phenomenon is exacerbated by a lack of adequate legal protections in many countries, most notably in the Pacific islands. A recent United Nations Development Programme study (UNDP 2010) found that although more than three-quarters of the countries in East Asia have strengthened legislation on domestic abuse in recent years, more than 60 percent of countries in the Pacific still lacked relevant legislation on domestic violence.

**Emerging trends in the region**

*As the region continues to develop, several emerging trends will present both new opportunities and new risks to achieving gender equality*

As noted earlier, East Asian and Pacific countries are at the forefront of several global trends: increasing global economic integration, rising availability and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), increasing domestic and cross-border migration, and rapid urbanization and population aging. Though not necessarily recognized by policy makers, these trends are likely to have important gender dimensions and, thus, affect the evolution of gender equality in the region. Thus, these trends will create new challenges for public policy, in terms of fostering new opportunities and managing new risks to gender equality.

**Global economic integration offers new benefits and increases risks**

For example, evidence indicates that greater *global economic integration* can contribute to greater access to economic opportunities for women and reduce gender wage gaps by raising demand for female workers in export-oriented enterprises (Boserup 1970; Schultz 2006). At the same time, increasing global integration also increases risk and uncertainty, as shocks are more quickly transmitted across integrated markets. Although evidence suggests that these shocks are likely to affect the well-being of both male and female workers (and their families), many studies, including those from the recent global financial crisis, identify gender-specific effects of shocks on outcomes as diverse as employment, earnings, labor force participation, education investment, health, and nutrition (e.g., Bruni et al. 2011; Rodgers and Menon 2010).

**Similarly, advances in ICTs are revolutionizing the ways in which both men and women in the region are exposed to ideas, share knowledge, and network**

Existing evidence suggests, however, that women in the region still have lower access to *information technologies* than men. New and emerging technologies, if accessible, can help to empower women—by opening new economic opportunities, breaking down information barriers, helping women in isolated communities engage in distance learning or commerce, or enabling women to take collective action. As in the case of other productive resources, such as land, machinery, or credit, growing gender gaps in access to ICTs could lead to widening gaps in access to economic opportunities as well as in voice and influence in society.

**Opportunities gained by migration are balanced by new risks**

High economic growth and increased economic integration in the region over the past three decades has spurred significant *migration* across the region. Women make up nearly half of all migrants in East Asia and the Pacific and in some countries represent the majority of new migrants. Migration can provide both women and men with access to new economic opportunities, which commonly differ by gender because of employment segregation in receiving areas’ labor markets. At the same time, migration brings with it
important gender-specific risks. For example, many female migrants find employment as domestic workers, a sector with particularly weak worker protections in most countries. Female migrants are also disproportionately susceptible to risk associated with human trafficking.

*Unprecedented levels of urbanization are affecting all aspects of life*

Many East Asian and Pacific countries are experiencing *unprecedented levels of urbanization* as migrants move to urban areas in search of economic opportunity. Between 2000 and 2015, Indonesia, China, and Cambodia are predicted to see an increase in the percentage of the population residing in urban areas by 17, 13, and 9 percentage points respectively (World Bank 2009a). Urbanization affects all aspects of life—from the nature of employment to the availability of services to individuals’ ability rely on extended family and community networks. These changes almost certainly have gender-specific impacts. Although urban residence can open up a wider range of economic opportunities for both men and women, women’s ability to take advantage of new opportunities is likely to depend more fundamentally on the nature and availability of urban services—for example, whether transport systems facilitate safe travel of women to job sites or if affordable child care can compensate for loss of extended family networks.

*Aging populations will add another burden for women*

Finally, the high-income economies in East Asia are experiencing *rapid population aging.* Most emerging countries in the region have also begun this process; dependency ratios are already increasing in many middle-income countries in East Asia and the Pacific. Also, old-age dependency is expected to increase even more quickly in the coming decades (figure 1.30). Population aging is likely to have gender-differentiated impacts at all age levels. Gender differences in the time devoted to caring for the elderly imply that in the absence of institutionalized care services, women are likely to bear the brunt of the increased demand for elder care (Dwyer and Coward 1992; Ofstedal, Knodel, and Chayovan 1999). Moreover, while women tend to live longer than men, gender differences in education and labor force participation imply that women are less likely to be vested in formal pension systems and may have fewer assets to ensure a basic level of well-being in old age.

*Gender equality in East Asia and the Pacific: A roadmap to the report*

This chapter has provided a basic profile on the status of gender equality in the East Asia and Pacific region, taking into account several important factors that have characterized development in the region. Specifically, the region has experienced significant growth, poverty reduction, and economic structural transformation.
Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

over the past several decades. The chapter has shown that rapid growth and development have been accompanied by reduced gender inequalities in several key dimensions, most notably in education and several key aspects of health. At least in East Asian countries, women’s voice and influence, whether in the home or in the economy, are relatively strong. In many ways, women in the region are better positioned than ever before to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from their economies and societies.

At the same time, the evidence makes clear that economic growth and development alone are not enough to attain gender equality in all its dimensions. While gender outcomes in education and health have been responsive to growth, other areas have proved “stickier”; significant gender inequalities persist in a number of important areas despite development. Women still have less access than men to a range of productive assets and services. There remains substantial employment segregation, by gender. And despite closing of education gaps, women continue to earn less than men. Moreover, women in the region still have weaker voice and influence than men, whether in household decision making, in the private sector, in civil society, or in politics. And women across the region remain vulnerable to gender-based violence.

Moreover, progress toward gender equality has been uneven—both across and within countries. Despite widespread progress, a few, mostly low-income, countries have yet to close gender gaps in basic education. In China (and to a lesser extent Vietnam) there are significant imbalances in the sex ratio at birth, reflecting strong son preference in those societies. At the same time, a number of Pacific Island countries face particular challenges with respect to promoting women’s voice and influence. Specifically, women in Pacific countries experience among the highest rates of violence against women in the world; they also have among the lowest levels of female representation in politics. Within countries, gender frequently interacts with other socioeconomic characteristics, such as ethnicity or geographic remoteness, resulting in specific subgroups of countries’ populations facing a “double disadvantage.”

Because many aspects of gender inequality do not disappear automatically with growth and development, and because persistent gender inequalities impose high costs on women and girls and on societies more broadly, a case can be made for public policy to promote gender equality. In the above context, an important contribution of this report will be to (a) clarify empirically the relationship between gender equality and development, (b) analyze the factors that contribute to or impede gender equality in its different dimensions, and (c) identify effective avenues for public action to promote gender equality and, thus, more effective development in East Asian and Pacific countries.

To achieve these objectives, the three chapters that follow focus on providing a deeper understanding of the factors affecting gender equality in endowments, economic opportunity, and agency. Specifically, chapter 2 examines in more depth the evidence on gender dimensions of human and physical capital accumulation. Chapter 3 analyzes access to economic opportunity, by gender, including the factors affecting female labor force participation, employment segregation across occupations and industries, and persistent gender gaps in wages and earnings. And chapter 4 focuses on factors that enhance or constrain women’s voice and influence in society, both in the private and public domains. In carrying out their analyses, each of these chapters seeks to frame an agenda for effective public action moving forward.

The report also analyzes the gender dimensions of several important emerging trends in the region. Specifically, chapter 5 examines globalization and economic integration, enhanced access to ICTs, increasing migration, rapid urbanization, and population aging, while identifying both the emerging opportunities and the emerging risks to gender equality that these phenomena entail. Building on the in-depth analyses
presented in chapters 2 through 5, chapter 6 then outlines directions for public policy to promote gender equality and, thus, more effective development in East Asian and Pacific countries. The report concludes by framing a forward-looking agenda for analysis and action—to continue to fill knowledge gaps and strengthen public policy responses to promoting gender equality in the region.

Notes

1 Sen defines freedoms and “unfreedoms” in five categories: (a) political freedoms, (b) economic facilities, (c) social opportunities, (d) transparency guarantees, and (e) protective security (Sen 1999).

2 Adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly, CEDAW is often referred to as the international bill of rights for women. The convention defines what constitutes discrimination against women and provides an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. To date, it has been ratified by 187 countries worldwide. (http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/)

3 These studies should be interpreted with caution, given the difficulty in establishing a causal relationship between gender equality in education and growth in cross-country studies.

4 Evidence from Africa and Latin America, for example, suggests that ensuring equal access to productive assets and technologies could significantly raise agricultural production and household income (Goldstein and Udry 2008; Quisumbing 1995; Udry 1996).

5 A number of studies show that gender-based violence itself imposes significant costs on the economies of developing countries, including through lower worker productivity and incomes, lower human capital investments, and weaker accumulation of social capital (see Morrison, Ellsberg, and Bott 2007 for a review of key findings. For related evidence from the United States, see National Center for Injury Prevention and Control 2003).

6 Similarly, in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, men are more likely to be found among mathematics and computer science graduates than women and have also been found to outperform women in mathematics (Schleicher 2008).

7 This estimate for material mortality ratio (MMR) in Lao PDR is a modeled estimate, to make it comparable to MMR estimates in other countries. Lao PDR’s national estimate in 2005 was lower, at 405 deaths per 100,000 births (World Bank 2012).

8 For data on land holdings, by gender, in China, see de Brauw et al. (2011). Data on other countries are based on World Bank staff calculations, using household survey data.

9 Evidence from other parts of Indonesia suggests that land ownership patterns, by gender, can differ in important ways, depending on local norms and customs. In the matrilineal region of West Sumatra, Indonesia, for example, at the time of marriage, husbands commonly own more forest land than their wives, and wives commonly own more paddy land (Quisumbing and Maluccio 1999).

10 Self-reported information on credit constraints, by gender, should be interpreted with caution. As discussed below, female-led enterprises are smaller, on average, use less capital, and operate in difference sectors than male-led enterprises, making direct comparisons of self-reported credit constraints, by gender, difficult.

11 Mason (2000) provides a review of this literature.

12 In the Europe and Central Asia region, female representation in national assemblies fell substantially following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, although levels increased again between 2000 and 2008.

13 For example the share of the elderly (age 65 or above) in Japan; Hong Kong SAR, China; Korea; Singapore; and Taiwan, China, is above 10 percent and is expected to increase substantially in the next two decades.
Chapter 2. Gender and Endowments: Access to Human Capital and Productive Assets

Access to human capital and productive assets allows individuals to live healthy and productive lives. Imbalances between such opportunities for men and women, as argued in chapter 1, are costly to individual welfare, to society, and to development.

The East Asia and Pacific region, with its remarkable growth and poverty reduction, is well placed to promote strong improvements in access to human capital and productive assets for the many men and women in those countries. This momentum in economic growth, the spread of education, and progress in health have continued from the latter half of the 20th century into this first decade of the 21st century. Have men and women in the region benefited equally in terms of their endowments, defined here as the human and productive capital that enables opportunities to improve welfare?

This chapter aims to understand gender differences in endowments in the region and to lay the foundations for policy priorities. To do so, it examines factors undermining those differences and identifies what drives progress toward gender equality or impedes it. The analysis relies on the framework of the interactions between households, markets, and institutions to understand gender outcomes in endowments. The different types of endowments—specifically, education, health, and assets—are clearly linked. They also have strong ties with economic opportunities and agency. For clarity, the chapter will discuss gender disparities in education, health, and assets each in turn while acknowledging these links as relevant.

Education and health are areas in which gender equality has generally been the most responsive to growth and development in the region.

- Girls’ enrollment has recently caught up with that of boys, except in several countries and subpopulations experiencing slower progress in education overall.

- Health indicators such as infant and maternal mortality have also had impressive gains, except in several places with slower economic progress.

- However, the region is home to a large number of missing girls, a persistent issue that appears not to be mitigated by growth and development.

- Gender equality in assets has been less responsive to development than that in education and health, and is constrained by complex legal, social, and economic factors.

These messages, stemming from the analysis in this chapter, help shape thinking about policies to promote gender equality in endowments. The end of the chapter sets the stage for that purpose, and a policy discussion placing priorities in the endowment domain in the broader development context will follow in chapter 6.
Education: Gender equality in education has improved greatly with growth and development

Closing the gender gaps in education is broadly beneficial. Several cross-country analyses find a positive relationship between female education and growth in gross domestic product (GDP) (Klasen and Lamanna 2009; Knowles, Lorgelly, and Owen 2002). Looking at households within countries, an extensive literature has found clear evidence of correlation between mothers’ education and children’s education and health, particularly children’s health and nutrition status (Schultz 1993; Thomas and Strauss 1992). Women are usually the primary child rearers, and a mother with more education can be expected to provide better child care. In East Asian and Pacific countries, analyses of the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) show that Cambodian women with little education are less likely to receive antenatal care and assistance from trained health personnel during birth deliveries (Cambodia DHS 2000). Similarly, in Timor-Leste, highly educated mothers are most likely to have their births delivered by skilled attendants (88 percent), as are mothers in the wealthiest households (69 percent) (Timor-Leste DHS, 2009–10).

In addition, gender inequality in endowments can feed into development indirectly through links to gender inequality in economic opportunities and agency. If part of the motivation for educating children is to broaden economic opportunities, girls’ equal access to education is expected to provide more return, or payoff, to them in the labor market. Income in women’s hands is likely to then have positive effects on children’s health (Duflo 2003; Fiszbein and Schady 2009; Thomas 1995). More education and more income also empower women and provide them with more bargaining power, voice, and representation, as discussed in chapter 4.

Countries at various levels of development have recognized the importance of educating girls. Chapter 1 highlights the closing enrollment gaps between girls and boys in many parts of the East Asia and Pacific region, except in several countries and subpopulations experiencing slower progress in education overall. The discussion on education in this chapter will analyze these patterns in more depth to understand their dynamics and their determinants. These gains in enrollment have been responsive to changes in both supply-side and demand-side factors that enable better education outcomes. Where the education system as a whole is lagging, progress on the gender front has generally been more limited. But even with equal enrollment, issues of education quality and choice of education streams still affect girls and boys differently and have strong implications for young people’s school-to-work transition.

Girls’ enrollment has recently caught up with that of boys

As highlighted in chapter 1, most of the East Asia and the Pacific region has seen narrowing gender gaps in school enrollment and completion over the past two decades. Nowadays, girls’ and boys’ enrollment rates are roughly on par at all levels, including tertiary education. The female-to-male enrollment ratio in secondary school has approached parity in most countries. Tertiary enrollment ratios between females and males are more dispersed, but mostly on an upward trend. The East Asia and Pacific region has performed better than any other region at increasing both enrollment levels and the female-to-male enrollment ratio. In 2010, the region had the highest primary school and second-highest secondary school ratio of enrollment between females and males.

The narrowing gender gap in education since the 1990s is observed not only at the aggregate level but also for the poor and nonpoor alike. Figure 2.1 shows the ratio of female-to-male enrollment rates in upper secondary
schools for children in the poorest quintile. In most of the countries depicted, female and male enrollment rates among the poor have been converging. Similar patterns are also observed for primary and lower secondary education.

Another way to see the significant progress in education is through the smaller gender gaps in youth literacy compared to gaps in adult literacy. Figure 2.2 shows Indonesia and Cambodia as illustrative examples, but the observations are similar in many East Asian and Pacific countries. Younger generations are more likely to be literate. In addition, although the gender gaps in adult literacy can be quite stark, such as in the case of Cambodia, youth literacy tends to be more equal across genders in both urban and rural areas, as well as across income quintiles. The gender gaps continue to close over time.

Given this trend, some countries are even starting to experience a reverse gender gap: girls’ secondary enrollment exceeds that of boys in China, Fiji, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Samoa, and Thailand. The reverse gender gaps at the tertiary level are sometimes even starker: in Thailand, 122.4 females were enrolled for every 100 males in 2008. And this underachievement in enrollment for males affects academic performance. In Samoa, for example, secondary education enrollment rates have consistently been higher for girls, by a large margin that is widening over time. In tests taken in year 4 and year 6, girls significantly outperform boys in all three tested subjects: English, Samoan, and numeracy. A significantly higher proportion of boys than girls have been at risk of not achieving minimum competencies in these years. In year 8, girls still outshine their male counterparts in all subjects, including science and mathematics, but the gender gap is smaller than it was in the earlier years (Jha and Kelleher 2006). Box 2.1 discusses the reverse gender gap in education in further detail.
Box 2.1. Various parts of the world experience a reverse gender gap in education

Although this reverse gender gap phenomenon is relatively new in the East Asia and Pacific region, it has long been documented in parts of Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. The range of possible reasons varies, including returns in the labor market, norms and gender identity, and the school environment itself. Interactions between households, markets, and institutions influence households’ decisions about education investments; therefore, explanations for gender gaps in education are also context-specific. Given the differential payoffs in the labor market, by which men tend to earn more (discussed further in chapter 3), men have an incentive to drop out earlier to join the labor force. The common social norm perceiving men as the breadwinner and stressing masculinity values can reinforce this incentive. In many cases, such as Mongolia or the Philippines, male underachievement in education is most stark among the poor. The figure shows the biggest enrollment disadvantage for boys in the poorest quintile. A U.K. Department for International Development study in Botswana and Ghana also shows a similar relationship between economic disadvantages and boys’ underperformance (Dunne et al. 2005). The study identifies reasons for boys dropping out in the studied areas of Ghana as related to employment opportunities.

The biggest enrollment disadvantage for boys in the Philippines is among the poor

Gross enrollment rates of secondary schools, by expenditure quintile, gender, and region, Philippines 2006


The school environment itself may perpetuate this set of norms and gendered identity. Gender stereotyping and how the set of masculinity values within society is reflected in the classroom have been argued to contribute to high dropout rates among boys in the Caribbean (Bailey and Bernard 2003; Davis 2002; Figueroa 2000). Marks (2001) shows that by age 14, girls in the United Kingdom start to substantially outperform boys in English. Boys’ lower performance in the United Kingdom has been attributed to the use of more “female-oriented” reading materials, with suggestions that the inclusion of more factual, male-oriented works could increase male performance. Other authors argue that teachers have low expectations of boys’ behavior and academic effectiveness, which contributes to the levels of boys’ underachievement in Latin America and the Caribbean (Davis 2002; Figueroa 2000; Martino and Berrill 2003). The experimental literature on test grading suggests that there can be gender bias, but it is context-specific. For example, Lavy (2008) finds that male high school students in Israel face discrimination in teachers’ test grading, but Hanna and Linden (2009) does not find such bias in their study in India. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF 2004) outlines the role that poverty has to play in boys’ underachievement in the Caribbean and Latin America, where governments have become increasingly aware that boys and young men are more likely to be alienated from school if they come from poor socioeconomic backgrounds.
Gender gaps in schooling remain in several countries, and subpopulations are experiencing slower progress in education overall

Despite clear progress in narrowing the enrollment gaps between genders, several countries and disadvantaged populations within countries still experience more visible gender disparities than elsewhere in the region. Girls’ enrollment has not quite caught up with that of boys in precisely those places where the overall education level, regardless of gender, is also low.

Gender gaps in enrollment are still high in Papua New Guinea and low-income countries such as Cambodia and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. Papua New Guinea’s education enrollment rates are among the lowest in the region, although they have been rising moderately in recent years. In 2007, primary education (elementary preparation through grade 8) gross enrollment rates were 73.3 percent for males and 66.1 percent for females (Papua New Guinea Department of Education, 2009). Cambodia and Lao PDR have notable gender gaps in enrollment at the secondary level, and more extreme gaps at the tertiary level. As shown in Figure 1.7 in chapter 1, the secondary education enrollment ratio is about 8 females to 10 males in Cambodia and Lao PDR. Household survey data from 2008 indicate that although the ratio in enrollment between girls and boys is about equal up to around age 14 in Cambodia, it diverges significantly above that age. In 2008, at the tertiary level, 40 percent of urban males in Cambodia were enrolled, while only about 20 percent of urban females were. Enrollment rates in these countries are relatively low regardless of gender. Cambodia’s adult literacy rates are also the lowest in the region, with the biggest gender gaps. About 60 percent of Lao women are literate, as opposed to 80 percent of Lao men and more than 90 percent of people in most other countries in the region.

In some cases, girls in disadvantaged populations have the lowest education outcomes when gender interacts with other forms of vulnerability, such as poverty and ethnicity. Calculations from household survey data indicate that girls in the poorest quintile in rural areas in Cambodia and Lao PDR have the lowest secondary school enrollment rates in these countries. In Cambodia and Lao PDR, gender gaps in school enrollment can be particularly stark among the Hmong population. Girls in the Hmong and Mon-Khmer groups have a lower chance of being in school than boys of the same ethnicity, a disparity that has been slow to change over this past decade. They are only half as likely to be enrolled in lower-secondary school as Lao-Tai (ethnic majority) boys and girls. Even in Vietnam, where gender gaps in enrollment have virtually closed at the
aggregate level, the Hmong and Dao populations have stark gender ratios in enrollment: about one girl to two boys is enrolled in secondary school (figure 2.3).

**What explains the rapid convergence in most countries and the lack of strong progress in some?**

What explains the progress? The observed gains in enrollment in East Asian and Pacific countries have been responsive to changes in supply-side and demand-side factors that enable better education outcomes. Explanations for progress (or lack of progress) in reducing gender gaps in education are context-specific because interactions between households, markets, and institutions influence households’ decisions regarding education investments. Responding to market returns, or payoff, to investment choices, household decisions reflect individual preferences, constraints, and the relative bargaining power of members. The returns to education, as determined in the labor market, and the expected duration of payoff play a role. Costs or prices in the form of direct costs (fees and uniforms), indirect costs (distance to schools), and opportunity costs (wages earned outside of school) also matter and can be shaped by markets and institutions. Households have preferences, which may be influenced by cultural norms. They face budget and possible credit constraints. With this framework in mind, what follows will discuss how changing demand-side constraints for households (for example, household income), institutional constraints that affect the supply side (for example, reducing the cost/prices of education), and returns to educating girls each and together have led to more gender equality in school enrollment in most East Asian and Pacific countries.

First, factors affecting households’ demand for education matter. Household survey data in East Asian and Pacific countries indicate that education enrollment is always higher for children in richer families. Rising household income has been shown to alleviate households’ budget constraints and to decrease the need to differentiate education investment across children (Filmer 1999). Poor households in developing countries tend to face borrowing constraints, and, under limited budgets, they tend to invest more in sons than in daughters. Income gains are thus likely to raise school participation relatively more for girls than for boys, as empirically documented in various countries (World Bank 2001). Behrman and Knowles (1999) show that, in Vietnam, the income elasticity of demand for education is 6 percent lower for boys than for girls in terms of passing grades per year of schooling. Cash transfers that alleviate households’ budget constraints have also been shown in many developing countries to increase children’s school enrollment. In the East Asia and Pacific region, a program providing scholarships to poor girls only in lower secondary school in Cambodia had large effects on girls’ enrollment, an increase of 20 percentage points. A related program for both boys and girls had similar positive impacts on enrollment and attendance for boys and girls (Filmer and Shady 2008, 2009). Economic development in the region, which brings more stable income to households, also helps protect girls’ education. In times of income shocks, families with girls are more likely to reduce education expenditure, as shown, for example, for the case of Indonesia (Cameron and Worswick 2001).

In addition, norms and preferences also affect households’ demand for schooling by gender. Changing norms in some contexts have led to changing girls’ status relative to boys. Qualitative research through focus group discussions in six communities in Fiji suggests that parents value girls’ education more now than in previous generations (Chattier 2011). In Indonesia today compared to a few decades ago, women exhibit a stronger preference for fewer children and stronger emphasis on children’s health and education. This preference change is attributed to decreased preference for sons over daughters compared to the past, as well as to other social changes (Niehof 2003). There is no evidence that Indonesian parents now intrinsically value daughters less than sons (Kevane and Levine 2003).
Second, changes in formal institutions, such as better service delivery and easier access to schools, have improved the supply of education services and lowered the cost of education. Economic development in East Asian and Pacific countries has been associated with better infrastructure and service delivery, either through the public or private sector. The massive school construction program in Indonesia in the 1970s led to significant increases in education attainment and earnings, presumably through reducing costs in terms of distance to schools (Duflo 2000). Although expanded service delivery might not specifically target girls, the benefits may be disproportionately high because distance and safety tend to be larger barriers for girls than for boys.

Third, in some cases, better employment opportunities and returns to education for females could have encouraged parents to educate girls. Cross-country evidence shows that trade liberalization, which has led to the expansion of nonagricultural jobs for women, is positively linked to greater human capital and more gender equality in human capital investment (Schultz 2006). The literature also shows that education investments do respond to expected returns as long as information is available (Jensen 2010; Oster and Millet 2010). Longer expected durations of receiving payoff from daughters, as a result declining maternal mortality, can also induce parents to invest more in girls’ education (Jayachandran and Lleras-Muney 2009). However, this component might have played a relatively small role in the East Asia and Pacific region, because the gender wage gaps and gender gaps in expected returns to education in the labor markets are still large, as discussed in chapter 3.6

What constrains progress? Where the education system as a whole is lagging, progress on the gender front has also been limited. Although the explanations can be very context-specific, factors related to both the supply and demand side of education play important roles in constraining progress in education outcomes in general as well as outcomes for girls.

Low household income coupled with high costs of education can limit demand for schooling, but income is probably not the whole story. The high direct cost of education to be borne by the families has been raised as a concern in the Cambodia context (Velasco 2001). But as shown in figure 2.4, in both Cambodia and Lao PDR, gender gaps in secondary school enrollment exist even among the richer quintiles and persist over time. Aside from income, norms also have a strong influence on household decisions. Participants of focus group discussions in a qualitative research exercise in Papua New Guinea report that males will carry the family name and become household heads. Females are expected to submit to their husbands and be caregivers and homemakers; therefore, parents value boys’ education over girls’ (Tararia 2011). The absence of female teachers as role models and the role of girls as surrogate caregivers are other possible factors underlying the gender gaps (Velasco 2001). In Lao PDR, social norms about gender roles within the

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**Figure 2.4.** Even girls in wealthier households in Cambodia and Lao PDR lag behind boys

Gross enrollment rates of upper-secondary schools of the poorest 20% and richest 20% of population, by gender, 2008

![Figure 2.4](image)

family may mean that girls face higher opportunity costs of schooling as a result of their socially defined value in home production. Poor rural girls spend the fewest hours in school but spend almost three hours a day fetching water, collecting firewood, and caring for other household members (King and van der Walle 2007). Families’ perception of lower benefits from educating girls is also expected to impede girls’ enrollment in Cambodia, particularly after puberty (Velasco 2001).

The supply side of service delivery also matters for the overall school enrollment as well as for girls’ enrollment. Low enrollment rates in Papua New Guinea are the result of limited access and high dropout rates. Apart from demand-side factors such as affordability of school fees and low perceived value of education, elementary schools have not been established in many communities. Even urban areas may have inadequate capacity to admit all children wanting to enroll. Poor learning environments (often due to lack of education materials), poor school infrastructure, poor teacher attitude and attendance, lack of teachers in remote areas, and negative pupil behavior all influence poor enrollment overall. In the context of both Cambodia and Lao PDR, the long distance to schools has been noted. The unequal provision of schools in Lao PDR makes schooling more costly for girls than for boys (King and van der Walle 2007). In Cambodia, given the long distance to schools, boys can live in wats (temples) while attending secondary school, but there is no comparable system for accommodating girls. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that the lack of toilets at school also makes it more difficult for girls than boys to attend (Velasco 2001).

Limitations of the education system in catering to the rural poor and ethnic minorities mean that the gender disadvantage can interact with these forms of vulnerability. It should be noted that, in East Asian and Pacific countries, gender gaps within a subpopulation are usually smaller than the enrollment gaps across income quintiles or between major and minor ethnicities. In Vietnam, though the ethnicity gap in primary enrollment had almost closed between 1993 and 2006, enrollment at the secondary level among the Kinh/Chinese majorities is still substantially higher than that among the ethnic minority populations. With the exception of the Hmong and Dao, the gender gaps within an ethnicity in Vietnam are smaller than the gaps across ethnicities (figure 2.3). In Cambodia, the gap in secondary school enrollment across quintiles also exceeds gender gaps within any given quintile (figure 2.4). Similar patterns are observed in many other East Asian and Pacific countries. This observation suggests that general improvements in the education system to reach these subpopulations are very important and would contribute to closing the gender gap as well. Therefore, to alleviate the disadvantage for girls in poor families and in socially excluded groups, an important goal is to reduce inequalities across groups.

**From school to work: Gender differences remain in the quality and choice of education streams**

Education investment does not end at enrollment. In middle-income countries in the East Asia and Pacific region, despite the closing of gaps in enrollment and attainment, males and females still differ in their choice of education streams. It is important to look at factors influencing gender streaming in education because it affects returns in the labor markets. The persistence of these patterns implies a gender-differentiated school-to-work behavior and ultimately sustains gender inequalities in job placement and earnings. Earning gaps across genders largely reflect differences across occupations and sectors of employment. Chapter 3 discusses further the importance of education and labor market streaming to labor market outcomes.

Evidence from the East Asia and Pacific region shows clear patterns of each gender choosing different fields of study, therefore implying different types of skills acquired. Figure 2.5 shows the fraction of females in each
Figure 2.5. Females tend to dominate certain fields such as education and health but are underrepresented in law and engineering.

Proportion of women within field, by country (%).

Source: Sakellariou 2011.

field of study in Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. The fields of engineering and law are heavily dominated by males, whereas the fields of education, health, and business administration are dominated by females. In addition, data on how female or male students choose their university major also reveal similar patterns: the average man selects engineering, the average woman selects education. These gender differences in the choice of field are larger than the gender differences in enrollment or completion rate in secondary or tertiary education in these countries. This positive relationship between being male and choosing science, engineering, or law is confirmed to be statistically significant in multinomial logit analysis that also accounts for characteristics such as parental education and area of residence (Sakellariou 2011). These patterns of education streams can be slow to change over time and are less responsive to economic growth than enrollments, at least as evidence indicates for Indonesia from 1997 to 2009. Indeed, such gender streaming in education is not unique to East Asian and Pacific countries but is evident in many OECD countries as well. Flabbi (2011) documents for many OECD countries that relatively more women enter the social sciences and business and more men enter the fields of engineering and architecture.

There could be multiple reasons for men and women’s choice of education streams. The relative payoff of the different streams—the expected returns from the labor markets—are likely to influence this decision. However, evidence shows that women do not necessarily take up fields with the highest premiums in the labor market in terms of wages. Table 2.1 shows the estimated returns to selected fields of study in Indonesia. The returns to studying engineering are high for females and are much higher than the returns to studying education. For example, among the female adults surveyed in 2009, the premium for having studied engineering (rather than religion) was 71.6 percent higher earnings, whereas the premium for having studied education was 17.4 percent. This phenomenon has been the case since over a decade ago, in the late 1990s, implying sufficient time for society to learn about these expected payoffs to different fields. Still, females very much prefer education to engineering. These statistics should be interpreted with caution since they do not account for differences in unobservable characteristics among those choosing the different fields. They capture only monetary returns, whereas nonmonetary aspects—such as values, attitudes, and social expectations about women as mothers and homemakers or caregivers—also play an important role in influencing the decisions. Nonetheless, the statistics indicate what appear to be persistent patterns that also translate into patterns in the labor market, as discussed in chapter 3.
Table 2.1. Labor market returns to studying engineering are high relative to studying education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of study (compare to field: Religion)</th>
<th>1997 Males</th>
<th>1997 Females</th>
<th>2006 Males</th>
<th>2006 Females</th>
<th>2009 Males</th>
<th>2009 Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>71.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sakellariou 2011.

Note: The estimate was based on a wage regression, accounting for characteristics such as experience and experience squared, marital status, and urban/rural residence. All coefficients were significant at the 5 percent level.

Alternatively, females and males might have different comparative advantages in a particular field based on their academic performance. The available evidence from the East Asia and Pacific region does not support this evidence, however. Female students do not systematically perform worse than males in key subjects related to male-dominant fields of study. As shown in figure 2.6, results of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) indicate no evident gender differences in math and science scores in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, unlike the findings for OECD countries that men tend to outperform women in math and computer science (Schleicher 2008). Moreover, female students even outperform male counterparts in reading assessments, according to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test scores.

In addition, norms and expectations may influence preferences and, therefore, the choice of education streams. They can do so, for example, through shaping parental expectations, shaping role models in the labor market, or shaping how gender roles are portrayed in school curricula. Social norms about the role of females as “homemakers” translate into expectations about appropriate jobs for men and women. In fact, women in the region work more hours and devote more time to caregiving and housework activities than men. Given these expectations, female students may be inclined to choose a field of study that will lead to a job with sufficient time flexibility, such as teaching, to balance their home and labor market work. The absence of female role models in the labor market has also been identified as a contributing factor in influencing aspiration and career choice and in limiting women’s access to nontraditional careers. These topics will be explored further in chapter 3. The rest of this section focuses on how gender roles are portrayed in school curricula, which pertains directly to the education system.
School curricula are important in shaping choices of what to study, because the way in which gender roles are portrayed in school curricula is believed to affect children’s performance and aspirations. Curriculum analysis in developed and developing countries alike indicates that gender stereotyping in curricula as well as differences in teacher interactions with male and female students affect the probability of girls staying in school. Gender stereotyping also appears to affect school performance of boys and girls in key subjects (science, mathematics, and computer science), ultimately contributing to varying occupational choices (Blumberg 2007; Eccles and Blumenfeld 1985; Shel 2007). This literature also explores the importance of the gender roles conveyed through teaching materials in shaping boys’ and girls’ aspirations. School, in particular primary school, is believed to be a key element of socialization for children and a site where key social values are transmitted. Teaching materials and teachers’ feedback are the key instruments through which ideas about what are appropriate areas of study and acceptable professions for men and women are conveyed to children (Blumberg 2007; Niels and Davies 2007).

In East Asia and the Pacific, the results of a 2008 review of the Education for All (EFA) initiative indicated that teaching materials in the region included stereotypical portrayals of boys and girls (UNICEF 2009). The findings, in line with those of other regions, stress that boys appear more than girls in the learning materials, that they are portrayed as more active (and girls as more passive), and that they are shown more frequently in leadership roles. The report also found a lack of female role models in teaching materials. Women in the school textbooks reviewed were portrayed as secretaries, assistants, nurses, and teachers more frequently than men, who often appear as doctors, politicians, or police officers.

Qualitative research involving both the review of teaching materials and classroom observation, which allows for an analysis of teacher-student interaction, has highlighted how gender stereotyping is frequently encountered in curricula in a number of East Asian countries. Table 2.2 provides selected examples of the types of issues typically encountered in curriculum analysis. Similar stereotyping is also observed in other countries throughout the region. One of the key trends noted is the extent to which male characters are portrayed as dominant in the public sphere. The depiction of women in China’s history and social sciences manuals illustrates this point. Guo and Zhao’s (2002) analysis of elementary language textbooks highlights that only about a fifth of the historical characters portrayed are female. When they are depicted, they also tend to be portrayed in stereotypical roles. A particular example is provided of an influential female leader of the Chinese Communist Party; she is depicted twice: once mending Premier Zhou Enlai’s clothes, and another time bringing an umbrella to a guard on a rainy day.

**Health: Many, but not all, health outcomes for males and females improved with development**

There is little disagreement over the importance of promoting healthy outcomes for both genders, in their own right, and to enhance welfare. Most societies would recognize that girls and boys should have equal access to the elements of a healthy life. Maternal health is also considered important. The mother’s health and nutrition status have strong impacts on children’s physical health as well as cognitive and noncognitive abilities. Research shows that delays in cognitive and overall development from the time a child is conceived to before age six, a sensitive period for brain formation, have long-lasting consequences that are difficult to
Table 2.2. School curricula in a number of East Asian countries have gender stereotyping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall visibility of male and female characters or authors in teaching materials</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Vietnam</th>
<th>Korea, Rep.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male characters significantly outnumber female characters in the teaching material reviewed (ranging from texts for young children to mathematics and social sciences manuals). The proportion of male characters rises from 48 percent in books for four-year-olds to 61 percent in books for six-year-olds. Female characters appear most commonly in reading materials for very young children.</td>
<td>In grade 4 and grade 5 texts analyzed, most authors mentioned and quoted were men (74 of 85 and 77 of 84, respectively). In mathematics textbooks analyzed, female characters were found to appear in illustrations more often than men (some grade levels); however, they were associated with less challenging activities.</td>
<td>Curricular materials used presented traditional gender roles with women depicted doing housework versus office work for men, male characters leading activities and female characters assisting.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portrayal of male and female characters follows gender role stereotypes in both mathematics and social sciences manuals. An analysis of mathematics texts indicated that male characters were 74 percent of those in stimulating activities and female characters represented 70 percent of those in passive roles. Men and boys are therefore typically portrayed as courageous, independent, and ambitious, in contrast to “passive, obedient, neat, cooperative girls.”</td>
<td>Stereotypical depictions of men/boys and women and girls are present in a range of textbook illustrations and exercises. A detailed analysis of materials used in grades 1 to 5 highlights the following depictions of men and boys: (a) heroes/courageous; (b) strong/able to do complicated and physically challenging jobs; (c) knowledgeable/smart; (d) naughty; (e) creative; and (f) leaders. In contrast, women and girls are typical portrayed as (a) “nice and lovely”; (b) caring (as teachers, nurses); (c) clean and ordered; and (d) weak/emotional. Interestingly, men and boys were also more frequently associated with “forbidden” or dangerous activities.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student-teacher interaction</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Vietnam</th>
<th>Korea, Rep.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-pupil and peer interaction were observed to follow the same stereotypes, to girls’ disadvantage.</td>
<td>Explanations and examples reflecting gender role stereotypes were used frequently, as was gender-discriminative language. Male students had more teacher-student interaction opportunities as well as more social contact with teachers. Teachers were found to discipline male students more severely than female students.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Jung and Chung 2005 (Korea); Ross and Shi 2003; Shi and Ross 2002 (China); UNESCO/Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training 2011 (Vietnam).
compensate for later on in life (Nadeau et al. 2011). In addition, improved maternal health has been shown to enable women to reconcile work and motherhood, playing a role in raising married women’s labor force participation in the United States (Albanesi and Olivetti 2009). Research has also shown that with declining maternal mortality—that is, longer life expectancy for women—parents can expect a longer duration of payoff from daughters. In Sri Lanka, for example, parents respond with more investment in girls’ education (Jayachandran and Lleras-Muney 2009).

To illustrate progress or the lack thereof in terms of gender equality in health in East Asian and Pacific countries, this section focuses on several key indicators, such as fertility, child and maternal mortality, and sex ratios at birth. The chapter argues that many, but not all, health outcomes for males and females in the East Asia and Pacific region improved with development. Fertility and child and maternal mortality have had impressive gains, except in a few places with slower economic progress, such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Timor-Leste. However, the region can claim a large number of missing girls, a persistent issue not easily mitigated by growth and development. The chapter also sheds light on two behavioral health issues associated with high adult mortality risks for men in all East Asian and Pacific countries: excessive smoking and drinking.

**The trends: Substantial declines are seen in fertility and in child and maternal mortality, with a few exceptions**

Gender differences in health outcomes reflect biological differences as well as gender-differential behaviors, which are difficult to separate in what can be observed. As a result of biological factors determining life expectancy, for example, women tend to live longer than men (Eskes and Haanen 2006). Male mortality is naturally higher than female mortality for the first six months of life (Waldron 1998). Men and women are also susceptible to different diseases, such as different types of cancer. But health outcomes are also affected by differences in behaviors and health investments that could disadvantage one particular gender. Thus, many unobservable factors are known to affect morbidity and mortality for men and women.

This chapter focuses on mortality risks throughout the life cycle. For early childhood and childbearing periods, most East Asian and Pacific countries have experienced impressive progress in narrowing the gender gaps in the infant mortality rate and reducing maternal mortality. However, as discussed later, the period before birth is a concern, with male-skewed sex ratios at birth in several parts of the region.

Many East Asian and Pacific countries have significantly improved several health outcomes during the past two decades, as described in chapter 1. Fertility rates went down sharply. Infant and child mortality rates for both boys and girls have declined substantially since 1990, closing the gender gaps in the infant mortality rate. The maternal mortality rate (MMR) has also been declining, and, along with the female infant mortality rate in most of East Asia and the Pacific, is now low relative to the region’s income level. Figures 2.7 and 2.8 illustrate this point: in the cross-country graph of these health indicators and income measured in terms of purchasing power parity, most East Asian and Pacific countries lie below the downward-sloping curve representing this relationship.

As in the case of education, there are exceptions to this progress. First, China differs from other East Asian and Pacific countries in having a high rate of female child mortality relative to that of males. Figure 2.9 graphs the ratio of female-to-male child mortality as well as the ratio for infant mortality against GDP per capita. Although in most countries, male infant and child mortality rates are slightly higher than female rates,
consistent with biological factors, China experiences the opposite patterns. Females there face higher mortality risks during infancy than males, and even more so before birth—the “missing girls at birth” topic, discussed later.

Second, the maternal mortality rate is still a dire concern in a number of places in the region. As shown in figure 2.7, Lao PDR experienced more than 500 maternal deaths per 100,000 births in 2008, a rate much higher than other countries of similar income level. The maternal mortality rate remains high—above 240 maternal deaths per 100,000 births—in several other countries, such as Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, and Timor-Leste, despite progress over the past two decades. Some parts of Indonesia also have relatively high maternal mortality rates (World Bank 2011a). Even for Vietnam, a country that has successfully reduced its

Figure 2.9. Most the East Asia and Pacific region countries do not have female-skewed under-five mortality and infant mortality, except China

<table>
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</table>
The reasons: Growth and development contributed to improvements in health outcomes

Maternal health and child health outcomes are a result of many factors, including service delivery related to the public and private health systems, prices and the availability of insurance mechanisms, and the demand side of households’ fertility and health-seeking behavior. Social norms regarding childbirth practices also have an important influence in many contexts.

The reduction in total fertility observed in the East Asia and Pacific region is worth noting, since a decline in fertility in countries with high fertility rates reduces the risk of maternal health complications and death. The share of women using modern contraception, and thus presumably more able to control fertility, has been on the rise in many of East Asian and Pacific countries. Government policies such as family planning programs and China’s one-child policy were expected to control fertility. Schultz and Yi (1997) argue that institutional reforms, such as the replacement of the collective production team with the household responsibility system starting in 1979 in China, may have contributed to the decline in fertility in the long term for a variety of reasons. For example, the intensified market competition encouraged parents to educate children and focus on the “quality” rather than quantity of children. Increased mobility and migration for better economic opportunities were also linked to delayed childbearing. The declining fertility in Thailand before 1980 has been attributed to government subsidies to public and private family planning systems and to the rapid increase in female education (Schultz 1997). Breierova and Duflo (2004) show that higher education among females in Indonesia led them to have fewer children early on, and the increased education of mothers and fathers led to lower child mortality. As mentioned earlier, in Indonesia today compared to a few decades ago, women exhibit a stronger preference for fewer children and for more per-child investment in health and education. This preference change is attributed to decreased preference for sons over daughters and to other social changes (Niehof 2003).

Growth and development in the East Asia and Pacific region have contributed to the region’s progress in reducing maternal health and child mortality through a combination of demand-side and supply-side factors. In fact, living in a high-income country is generally associated with lower risk of maternal death or female infant death (as well as male infant death, not shown in figure 2.10). Figures 2.7 and 2.8 show a negative relationship between a country’s maternal mortality rate or female infant mortality rate with its GDP per capita level.

For the household, rising income in the region appears to have positive impacts on health outcomes. When the

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*Figure 2.10. Women in wealthier households are more likely to have births assisted by trained medical staff*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of women having birth deliveries assisted by trained medical staff; comparison of the poorest and richest 20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: World Bank staff estimates using household income and expenditure surveys of various countries and years, and the World Bank Health Nutrition Population Statistics (HNP Stats) database.
budget constraint can be relaxed, rising income loosens the incentives to differentiate health investments across boys and girls. Evidence from a large data set of developing countries shows that, on average, a one-unit increase in log GDP per capita is associated with a decrease in mortality of between 18 and 44 infants per 1,000 births. This negative relationship holds true even when various factors—such as the mother’s characteristics, weather shocks, conflicts, and the quality of institutions—are accounted for. Female infant mortality is more sensitive to changes in economic conditions than male mortality (Baird, Friedman, and Schady 2007). In addition, households with higher income can afford more health services, such as the use of prenatal care and hospitals during births. As shown in figure 2.10, in every East Asian and Pacific country examined, women living in richer households are more likely to have birth deliveries assisted by trained health professionals. In some cases, such as Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, the gap between the richest quintile and the bottom one can be fourfold. Over time, as the economy grows, the rate of professional birth attendance increases. Lastly, the availability of insurance mechanisms has also made health care more affordable. The expansion of health insurance coverage in Vietnam, from 25 percent of the population in 2004 to 40 percent in 2006, and serious efforts by the government to extend health insurance to the poor and ethnic minorities in recent years have had positive impacts on access to health services (Vietnam CGA 2011).

Improvements in health technologies as well as improvements in the institutions supplying health care have led to lower costs of health services and better health outcomes. Medical progress with the medicalization and hospitalization of childbirth contributed to the substantial decline in maternal mortality in the United States in the first half of the 20th century (Albanesi and Olivetti 2009), and these technologies, when adopted in developing countries in the region, were likely to have similar effects. In addition, the share of women using modern contraception has been on the rise in many East Asian and Pacific countries. Contraception use allows families to control fertility and avoid extremely short periods between pregnancies, which tend to pose higher health risks. Figure 2.11 suggests that countries with a high rate of contraceptive use (for example, the high and increasing rate in Vietnam) are also those with a low maternal mortality rate.

The functioning of the health system, including infrastructure, medical facilities, and equipment and staffing, is also key. Experience in the United States illustrates the importance of public health investments: two-thirds of the decline in overall infant mortality and the entire decline in excess female infant mortality in the early 20th century were attributable to clean water and sanitation (Cutler and Miller 2005). Vietnam’s remarkable achievements in bringing down child and maternal mortality have been attributed to a general strengthening of the health system (Vietnam CGA 2011). The gains in the share of births attended by professionals from 2000 to 2008 were very impressive in the East Asia and Pacific region, larger than any other region—close to the top-performing regions, Europe and Central Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, in terms of this indicator. Bringing services closer to women can change their patterns of use, and better access to services in turn positively affects health outcomes. Frankenberg and Thomas (2000) analyzed the Indonesia Family Life Survey panel data using community-level fixed effects to measure the impacts of a major expansion in
midwifery services between 1990 and 1998 on health and pregnancy outcomes for women of reproductive age. The authors show that the addition of a village midwife to communities between 1993 and 1997 was associated with a significant increase in body mass index (BMI) for women of reproductive age, as well as associated with increased birthweight of newborns. Frankenberg et al. (2009) further investigate the reasons behind this impact on outcomes. The presence of village midwives appears to have increased women’s receipt of iron tablets and influenced their choice of childbirth practice away from reliance on traditional birth attendants toward delivery attended by skilled professionals.

**Progress is sometimes constrained by poor service delivery and social norms**

East Asian and Pacific countries with high maternal mortality rates—Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Papua New Guinea, and Timor-Leste—are precisely those with low rates of contraceptive use and low rates of births delivered by professionals (figure 2.11 and figure 2.12). As shown in figure 2.11, Pacific Island countries tend to have low contraceptive prevalence compared to East Asia. In Timor-Leste, for example, only 20 percent of women age 15–49 use contraception, leading to high fertility rates and very short periods between pregnancies. Less than 20 percent of the births there are assisted by professionals. Delivery at home without professional help and without easy access to a functioning referral center poses high risks, particularly in case of complications. The absence of the factors that explain progress elsewhere is at play in these countries. Demand-side constraints from households, including social norms about pregnancy and birthing practices, and poor supply-side provision of care explain the poor health outcomes in these countries. The exact reasons can vary from context to context.

**Figure 2.11. Contraceptive prevalence across East Asian and Pacific countries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Contraceptive prevalence (% of women ages 15–49)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall Islands 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia 2005</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lao PDR 2005</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micronesia, Fed. Sts. 2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor-Leste 2007</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.12. The fraction of births attended by skilled professionals varies across East Asian and Pacific countries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Births attended by skilled health staff (% of total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor-Leste 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


On the supply side, poor access to quality obstetric health services, particularly among rural and remote areas, place women at higher risk for maternal death. Rural areas tend to be less well served by the health system;
figure 2.13 shows that rural residents have substantially less access to birth deliveries attended by trained staff than urban residents. Delivery in the home is of particular concern for poor, rural women because they lack the basic sanitary conditions needed for a safe delivery. As a result, there is a large disparity in maternal mortality rates between urban and rural areas in Lao PDR, at 170 versus 580 maternal deaths per 100,000 births, respectively (Lao Gender Profile, 2005). In Timor Leste, three-fifths of urban births (59 percent) are assisted by skilled providers, compared with 21 percent of births in rural areas. Births in the capital city, Dili, are most likely to be attended by skilled providers (69 percent), but less than 10 percent of births in the Oecussi region are attended by skilled providers (Timor-Leste DHS, 2009–10). Plus the quality of prenatal care is limited: in 2001–02, only 41 percent of those giving birth were protected against neonatal tetanus, a major cause of neonatal death (UNICEF 2003). Substantial disparities also are seen across provinces in Indonesia: Jakarta has 97 percent of births attended by a skilled provider while Maluku has only 33 percent (Indonesia Maternal Health Assessment 2010). In Lao PDR, almost 90 percent of rural women deliver at home, compared to approximately a quarter of urban women.

Distance to the nearest health center and the poor infrastructure available can both pose high costs of access. Although high in all rural areas, the rate of deliveries at home is highest among highland women in Lao PDR, at 87 percent, for whom both distance and infrastructure are of concern (Lao Gender Report, 2005). Chine-Tibet women appear to be most at risk during childbirth since they are very likely to give birth outside of a hospital, and a large majority of Chine-Tibet villages (76 percent) lack even safe water, let alone access to other sanitary measures (NSC et al. 2006; Lao Gender Profile 2005). In Cambodia, low quality of health care, the poor state of rural roads, lack of transport, and poor access to a clean water supply have all been shown to impede progress in bringing down maternal mortality (Cambodia CGA 2004).

On the demand side, tight household budgets can constrain the use of health care services. Women from poor families cannot afford health costs, which are the major barrier to seeking health care in many developing countries. As shown earlier in figure 2.10, in every country examined, women living in poor households are less likely to have birth deliveries assisted by trained health professionals. In some cases, such as Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, the gap between the richest quintile and the bottom one can be fourfold. In Indonesia, the community health insurance scheme, Jamkesmas, has had little effect on facility-based deliveries because some delivery costs such as transport and costs for family members are not covered (World Bank 2011a). Even in a country with health insurance subsidies for the poor, only 60 percent of Vietnamese women in the poorest quintile had births attended by trained medical staff in 2002 (figure 2.10).

Women’s access to reproductive health care could be constrained by norms. Culture and tradition play an important role in the choice of health practices, such as the location of childbirth, the use of birth attendants,
and sterilization practices. For instance, birth deliveries at home are culturally preferred in parts of Indonesia (World Bank 2011a). Following a traditional practice, a number of Mon-Khmer women in Lao PDR deliver neither in the home nor in a medical center, but rather in the forest (ADB/PPA 2001; Lao Gender Profile 2005). In Cambodia, cultural beliefs that pregnancy and childbirth are part of the natural process lead families to perceive that women do not need prenatal care or delivery supported by skilled attendants. Thus, many women continue heavy physical labor and long work hours during pregnancy and immediately after childbirth (Cambodia CGA 2004).

The reasons for slow progress in health outcomes in several East Asian and Pacific countries underscore the importance of improving service delivery. Given the central influence of social norms in birthing practice, service delivery could and should be strengthened by providing services in a culturally acceptable way. Policy implications and recommendations are discussed at the end of this chapter and in chapter 6.

**Data show an alarming number of missing girls at birth**

One concerning issue that persists in the East Asia and Pacific region despite tremendous growth and development is the phenomenon of missing girls, particularly at birth. The term “missing women” was first coined by Sen (1990) to refer to the phenomenon that there are far fewer women than men in many low-income countries, relative to what is observed in developed countries. At birth, the biological norm is approximately 105 boys born for every 100 girls. Yet, the male-female ratio at birth in East Asian and Pacific countries far exceeds that of other regions, mainly driven by China’s ratio.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, database provides estimates of cross-country sex ratios at birth (SRB) over time. These estimates are based on projections from national census data and a fertility modeling exercise. Estimates from national statistical offices can sometimes stem from more recent data and, as a result, differ from the UN projections. According to these UN projections, over the 2005–10 period, 120 boys in China were born for every 100 girls. Outside of China, new concerns are emerging regarding Vietnam’s rising SRB. According to the Vietnam General Statistical Office’s Annual Population Change Surveys, the SRB increased regularly from 2004 and crossed the 110 threshold in 2005 (UNFPA 2009). But trends in sex ratios in the East Asia and Pacific region are not all bad news. Korea has seen declining SRBs, from 110.2 in 1998 to 106.4 in 2008, now close to the biological ratio (figure 2.14).10

Sex ratios at higher order births (that is, second children or above) are usually worse than the average ratios. In China, although the sex ratio at birth in the 1980s was within the normal range for the first birth, it became
unbalanced at higher orders—1.3 for the fourth or later child in 1989. The sex ratios for higher order births, conditional on earlier female births, were even more starkly skewed toward males (Zeng et al. 1993). Chung and Das Gupta (2007) use data from Korea’s 2003 fertility survey to show that the sex ratio at birth after the first birth is 128.6 if all the previous births were girls, and it is 112.3 if at least one previous birth was a boy. This difference is even starker among those women who stated that it was imperative to have a son. Even more recently in Korea, where the average sex ratio at birth is close to the normal range, the ratios for the third birth and for the fourth or higher births were still 115.8 and 123.9, respectively, in 2008 (figure 2.14). In Vietnam, the pattern is rather unusual in that the sex ratio for the first birth is already high, higher than that for the second birth and similar to that for the third or later births. But the pattern that is conditional on at least one previous birth being a boy is analogous to the Korea case above. According to Vietnam’s 2006 population survey, the SRB for third-order births decreases with the previous number of sons born between 2000 and 2006: No sons (110.3), one son (103.5), and two sons (102.2) (UNFPA 2009).

As a consequence, in comparison to other developing regions, the number of missing girls at birth in the East Asia and Pacific region, particularly China, far dominates the excess mortality risks for females after birth. The World Development Report 2012 uses the following methodology to calculate the number of missing girls at birth and excess female deaths in other parts of the life cycle. The number of missing girls at birth is calculated by comparing the sex ratio at birth in a particular country to the SRB ratio in high-income countries (105.9 boys for 100 girls). Throughout the age distribution, excess female mortality is calculated by comparing the mortality risks of females relative to males in a particular age group in a country with the mortality risks in a reference group of high-income countries. Table 2.3 shows the number of missing girls at birth and excess female deaths per year, calculated using this methodology. Although 71,000 girls under age five were estimated to be missing in China in 2008, excess female mortality in infancy and reproductive years have substantially decreased, consistent with figure 2.9, which shows China’s high female-male child mortality ratio. However, the most worrisome period for China is at birth. The number of missing girls at birth increased from 890,000 in 1990 to 1,092,000 in 2008. Missing girls as a fraction of the total number of female births increased from 8.6 percent in 1990 to 13.3 percent in 2008.

The reason for the missing girls phenomenon has been attributed to son preference. Even though biological factors could play a role in determining the sex ratio at birth—Oster (2005) argued that the prevalence of Hepatitis B among women in China caused a propensity to give birth to boys—evidence suggests that parental preference drives the imbalance in sex ratios in Asia (Das Gupta 2005). Parents’ preferential choices to keep and care for boys over girls can depend on social norms and values, different economic opportunities by gender, and what benefits parents expect from a son or a daughter. As an example of how economic opportunities influence parental choice over the gender of their child, Qian (2008) shows that the sex ratio at birth is responsive to returns in the labor markets for women in rural China. An increase in women’s income relative to men’s led to higher survival rates for girls. Another example of how parental choice responds to changing economic conditions is the rise of marriage migration—cross-border marriages between women from Southeast Asia and men from East Asia. Through a 2007 survey of three migrant-sending communities in southern Vietnam, Bélanger and Tran (2011) document an enhanced status of emigrating daughters sending remittances back home, and, consequently, a change in families’ preference for having girls.
Table 2.3: The East Asia and Pacific region, mainly driven by China, is characterized by its large number of missing girls at birth compared to after birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>At birth</th>
<th>Under 5</th>
<th>5-14</th>
<th>15-49</th>
<th>50-59</th>
<th>Total (under 60)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>1,092</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia (excluding India)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and Pacific (excluding China)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East and Central Asia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,212</td>
<td>1,427</td>
<td>1,010</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Estimates are based on data from World Health Organization (WHO) 2010, and United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs, Population Division UN DESA 2010.

Most societies have some mild degree of preference for sons (Williamson 1976), but the manifestation of extreme sex ratios comes from rather extreme son preferences. The interplay of culture, the state, and political processes appears to generate extreme patrilineality and highly skewed child sex ratios such as in the case of China, northwest India, and Korea (Das Gupta 2009). Chung and Das Gupta (2007) argue that son preference in Korea is correlated with factors such as lower socioeconomic status, livelihoods in rural areas, higher parental control in terms of arranged marriage and co-residence with the parents, and lower education of the woman.

In addition, the manifestation of son preferences is also influenced by public policies and the availability of technology. China’s one-child policy and Vietnam’s two-child policy, while serving to reduce fertility, can put additional pressure on the incentives to have a son and intensify the skewed sex ratios. In fact, Ebenstein (2010) shows evidence of a positive correlation between the fines imposed by China’s one-child policy and the sex ratio. With development and the introduction of prenatal sex determination technology (ultrasound) in the early 1980s, male-to-female sex ratios became unnaturally very high in a few East Asian countries. Li and Zheng (2009) find a strong impact of the B-ultrasound technology on the sex ratio of second-order births for rural mothers in Fujian province, China, but no effect among first-born children. The recent increase in Vietnam’s SRB may be related to supply-side factors, that is, access to quality sex determination technology, rather than to an increasing preference for sons. Ultrasound technology first started to appear in major hospitals in Vietnam during the mid-1990s and was subsequently offered through the private sector (Belanger et al. 2003), but the quality and availability of medical equipment have improved more recently during the past 10 years. It is not surprising to see an increase in the proportion of mothers with prior knowledge of the sex of their fetus, rising from 60 percent in 2003 to 73 percent in 2007 (UNFPA 2009).

With prior knowledge of the sex of the fetus, women can discriminate through less prenatal investment or even through abortion. In China, as well as other countries with prevalent son preference, mothers are 5 percent more likely to acquire prenatal care and visit an antenatal clinic 10 percent more frequently when pregnant with a boy (Bharadwaj, Prashant, and Nielsen 2010). Bélanger and Khuat (2009) examined the timing of abortion among 885 married women in an obstetric hospital in Hanoi, Vietnam, in 2003 to study sex-selective abortions, which generally happen during the second trimester of pregnancy. They found that women with more daughters and without a son were more likely to have a second-trimester than a first-
trimester abortion. Their estimate suggests that 2 percent of all abortions by those women with at least one prior child were intended to avoid a female birth.

Given the above factors, the literature shows mixed evidence on whether development mitigates or worsens son preference and sex ratios at birth in Asia (Chung and Das Gupta 2007). Development can bring about substantial normative change within the entire society rather than solely improvements in individuals’ socioeconomic situations, as argued in the case of Korea by Chung and Das Gupta (2007). However, cross-country evidence shows that modernization does not appear to bring down son preference. For example, in South Asia, son preference is greater for women with more education and is increasing over time (Filmer, Friedman, and Schady 2008). In addition, unbalanced sex ratios at birth could be worsened by economic development, as sometimes argued in the literature, since highly educated and wealthier women tend to have better access to technologies. Vietnam’s 2006 population survey shows that SRB is high for women who are urban residents (109.2), have a graduate education (113.2), have highest grade 10 and above (111.1), work in a foreign organization (117.3), and have previous knowledge of sex (111.1). Of women with a graduate degree, 87 percent knew the gender of their child, whereas no more than 28 percent of illiterate women had prior knowledge of the sex of their child. The SRB increases with the level of education, rising from 103 for illiterate women to 113 for women with a graduate education.

The collection of evidence has several implications for approaches to address the unbalanced sex ratios at birth, and China has taken active measures in this direction. General policies to promote economic
development might play a role, but Korea’s recent experience suggests that active measures to influence social norms and facilitate the spread of new values may be very important, in addition to relying on raising female education and labor force participation alone (box 2.2).

*Men tend to bear the burden of ill health related to risky behaviors*

Men, as well as women, experience gender-specific health risks. Men tend to bear the burden of higher morbidity and premature mortality related to substance abuse, war and conflict, and violence. The latter tends to be context-specific rather than an issue that prevails in the region. However, two behavioral health issues—smoking and drinking—are more concerning among men than women in all the East Asian and Pacific countries, as well as globally. Figures 2.15 and 2.16 show the prevalence of smoking and drinking among males against the prevalence among females. All the East Asian and Pacific countries lie above the 45-degree line, implying a much higher rate among males than females.

The difference in incidence in tobacco use between sexes is higher in the East Asia and Pacific region than in other regions of the world, even though many countries in other regions also experience higher prevalence of smoking and drinking among males. The data for China in 2006 show that tobacco use is 59.5 percent for men and 3.7 percent for women. Similar gender gaps exist throughout the region. Indonesia (61.7 percent versus 5.2 percent), Lao PDR (64 percent versus 15.3 percent), Korea (53.3 versus 5.7 percent), and Tonga (62.3 versus 15 percent) lead the region in the largest gender differentials in tobacco prevalence (figure 2.15).

Alcohol consumption behaviors can vary from occasional drinking to heavy episodic drinking, and the gender differential in the latter is particularly stark. Although women are less likely to report drinking at all in many countries in the East Asia and Pacific region, they do come close to men in places such as Japan and Mongolia (figure 2.16). But in terms of heavy episodic drinking (binge drinking) and chronic heavy drinking, there is a large gender gap, as in Japan (17.6 percent versus 3.1 percent) and Mongolia (13.7 percent versus 0 percent). Overall in the East Asia and Pacific region, men are more than twice as likely to be heavy episodic
drinkers. According to the World Health Organization 2011 database, the countries in the region with the largest gender gaps in heavy drinking are Kiribati (22.0 percent among males versus 0.9 percent among females), Samoa (21.8 percent versus 0.7 percent), Lao PDR (22.4 percent versus 5.1 percent), Japan (17.6 percent versus 3.1 percent), Mongolia (13.7 percent versus 0 percent) and Micronesia (13.4 percent versus 0.7 percent). The level of annual per capita consumption of pure alcohol is especially high for males in Tonga (37.8 liters per capita consumption), Malaysia (32.2 liters), Thailand (29.1 liters), and Korea (28.9 liters).

These behaviors pose substantial risks to men’s health and can translate into high costs for productivity and economic growth. Globally, 6.2 percent of all male deaths are related to alcohol, compared to 1.1 percent of female deaths (WHO 2011). Half of today’s smokers will die from tobacco-related causes. A simple cross-country relationship (shown in figures 2.17 and 2.18) between these behaviors and morbidity and premature mortality related to smoking and alcohol use also indicates positive correlations (other factors may also play a role, such as obesity and heart conditions, which are particularly high in the Pacific countries). In China, the rising risks of noncommunicable diseases, partly linked to men’s smoking and drinking behaviors, put greater pressure on the size of the working-age population, already a concern because of its aging population (World Bank 2011b).

These behaviors are influenced by norms about masculinity, cultural beliefs about health, and the surrounding environment. And they can be slow to change. For men, smoking and drinking alcohol are commonly viewed as masculine behaviors, and studies show that men and boys feel substantial pressure to accept gender stereotypes that they should be strong and tough, and the opposite for women. A recent national survey in Vietnam found that the primary reason women did not use tobacco was the belief that “women shouldn’t smoke.” In a country where 50 percent of men but just 3.4 percent of women smoke, 76 percent of 2,020 young urban Vietnamese women said that this low female prevalence could be attributed to gender norms (that is, social disapproval of women who smoke). Only 20 percent said that the low prevalence was due to
health concerns (WHO 2003). In addition, these patterns of smoking behaviors stayed very stable in Vietnam over the long period from 1993 to 2006.

The poor tend to be slightly more likely to report “ever smoking,” but the relationship is not strong except for Cambodia. As shown in figure 2.19, individuals at least 15 years old in the poorest quintile in Cambodia were almost twice as likely to engage in smoking cigarettes or chewing tobacco as those in the richest quintile. Among those who smoke, the intensity can vary because of the affordability of cigarettes. In Cambodia, particularly in rural areas, the richer smokers consume more cigarettes per day than the poorer smokers. However, no clear pattern between income and the intensity of smoking is observed in Vietnam and Mongolia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 2.19. The poor are slightly more likely to engage in smoking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of adults (ages 15+) that ever smoked cigarettes or chewed tobacco, comparing the poorest and richest 20% of population</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Poor 20%</th>
<th>Rich 20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Bank staff estimates using household income and expenditure surveys of various countries and years.

Productive assets: Gender equality in assets is constrained by complex legal, social, and economic factors

Promoting gender equality in the control of productive assets (such as land, financial capital, social capital, and information and technology) is likely to enhance development, through both economic and empowerment benefits. Asset ownership can influence men’s and women’s income and their voice and influence within the household and within society. This effect can happen through strengthening the ability to take advantage of economic opportunities; for example, evidence shows that clear land-ownership rights have positive effects on agricultural productivity and access to credit (Deininger 2003). In the agricultural sector, evidence from Africa and Latin America suggests that ensuring equal access to productive assets and technologies raises agricultural production (Goldstein and Udry 2008; IFPRI 1995; Quisumbing 1995; Udry 1996). As discussed throughout this report, income in the hands of women has been shown to positively affect children’s education and health outcomes (Duflo 2003; Lundberg, Pollak, and Wales 1996). At the same time, women’s assets prior to marriage have been shown to have positive effects on education expenditures on children in Indonesia and other countries (Quisumbing and Maluccio 2003). Beegle et al. 2001 shows that in Indonesia, women with some share of household assets make more use of prenatal care. Asset ownership can lead to women’s empowerment, such as their reduced vulnerability to domestic violence in India (Panda and Agarwal 2005).

Gender equality in assets has been less responsive to growth and development than equality in education and health. Over time, economic growth can promote access to financing that benefits women and men as well as improve economic opportunities and women’s autonomous income. But development impacts on gender equality in this domain are constrained by the complex legal, social, and economic factors that shape the control of productive assets. Gender disparities in the access to and control of productive assets have been documented around the world and in some parts of the East Asia and Pacific region.
Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

This section focuses mainly on land and credit for the following two reasons. First, these are the major types of assets that strongly influence well-being. Land and property are usually the most valuable assets for a poor person. Aside from itself being a productive asset, land can be used as collateral to acquire credit. Access to financing is also very important because it is usually a major barrier to realizing economic opportunities in developing countries. Second, data and rigorous quantitative evidence on gender and assets in the East Asia and Pacific region are very limited, particularly for assets other than land and credit. Individual-level data of asset ownership are sometimes available for land holdings but rarely for household durables, since many are considered jointly owned. In the face of scarce individual-level data on asset ownership, this section often resorts to comparison of female-headed households and male-headed ones. This section also draws on qualitative evidence and research from outside the region to help complement the limited quantitative evidence from East Asian and Pacific countries.

**Gender disparities in access to productive assets have been documented in parts of the East Asia and Pacific region**

**Gender-differentiated ownership of land persists in several East Asian and Pacific countries.**

Female-headed households tend to own less land than male-headed households. Even though the probability of owning land is not starkly lower among female-headed households (figure 2.20), figure 2.21 indicates that male-headed households own much more land in terms of land size. This gap exists even among richer households and in both middle-income (Indonesia) and lower-middle-income countries (Vietnam and Mongolia). Over time, there have been small improvements in women’s land ownership as well as men’s, although the gender gap has not necessarily narrowed or disappeared except for the case of Vietnam in 2006. Similarly in China, most male-headed and female-headed households had access to rural land in 2008, but the amount of land per capita in female-headed households was roughly 70 percent of that in male-headed households.
households (de Brauw et al. 2011). The pattern that female-headed households tend to own less land is similar to other developing countries (Agarwal 1994; Deere and Leon 2003; FAO report). Exact comparisons of the gender gaps across regions are difficult, however, since the incidence of land ownership varies drastically across countries, even within the same region, and data are available for only a few countries in each region.

Evidence on individual land ownership suggests different ownership rates and different ownership composition by gender, depending on the context. In post-tsunami Aceh, Indonesia, women have fewer land holdings than men (Bell 2010). Vietnamese men owned more agricultural land plots than women in 2008. Figure 2.22 plots the gender decomposition of ownership among agricultural land plots with identified owners on the long-term user right certificates. Overall and among those plots owned by rural households, less than 17 percent of the plots are owned by a woman while more than 65 percent are owned by a man. Plots jointly owned by a male and a female represent a nonnegligible share, in part because of Vietnam’s recent land reform (discussed later). However, women are still clearly at a disadvantage in terms of having their name on the land title. The same 2008 household survey data suggest that the gender gap is even starker among ethnic minorities. In some contexts, the allocation of land assets between men and women can be more complex. For example, in matrilineal parts of West Sumatra, Indonesia, wives own more paddy land while husbands own more forest land (Quisumbing and Maluccio 1999).

In terms of other agricultural inputs, female-headed households tend to own less livestock, and female-run farms tend to have less access to extension services.

In many countries, at least among rural households, livestock is one of the most valuable agricultural assets. It represents a source of income, wealth accumulation, and buffer against shocks. The pattern that female-headed households tend to own less livestock is observed across developing regions (FAO report). Figure 2.23 shows livestock ownership of female-headed and male-headed households in five countries in the region, for households of different wealth quintiles. The gender gap in Lao PDR appears irrespective of income, but this observation depends on the country context. In places such as Vietnam or Timor-Leste, gender gaps are more visible among poorer households. In many countries, this same pattern is observed in urban areas as well as rural areas. The data show that gaps also persist over time.

Extension service provision remains low in developing countries, and women tend to have less access to extension services than men (Meinzen-Dick et al. 2010/FAO report). In Cambodia, few women benefit from agricultural extension services or credit made available to rural people, despite the fact that they make up the majority of farmers and informal sector workers. Agricultural research and extension efforts usually do not consider women’s activities—seed preparation and planting—or take into account the fact that men and
women tend to specialize in different rural tasks (Cambodia CGA, 2004). Distance to the point of service provision, lack of female agents, and insensitivity to illiterate customers (the majority of whom are often women) are other reasons for this lower access of female farmers to extension services (World Bank 2003).

**Evidence is mixed on gender differentials in access to credit.**

Female-headed households are slightly less likely to borrow from a financial institution, as illustrated by figure 2.24. Over time, the rate of borrowing from a financial institution has generally increased. In most of the East Asian and Pacific countries for which there is data, there is a gap between households headed by females and males. But this gender gap varies widely across countries and within country. Most recently, gaps tend to be small except for in Timor-Leste, rural Lao PDR, rural Cambodia, and urban Mongolia. Using survey data from 2000, de Brauw et al. (2011) find no difference between female-managed farms and male-managed farms in terms of access to credit in China. As discussed later in chapter 3, female-run and female-owned firms in East Asia, at least those in the formal sector, do not appear to systematically face more constraints in accessing financing than male-run firms. However, a joint study by FAO/UNDP (2002) carried out in Vietnam reveals that female-headed households borrow less, have less access to formal credit, and pay higher interest on loans than male-headed households.

Individual-level data on access to financing, by gender, suggest that the gender gap in access to formal finance is likely to be small in East Asia, as illustrated in figure 2.24. Access to finance for both men and women is more limited in lower-income countries in the region. Evidence from Gallup surveys conducted since 2011 suggests that men and women have similar access to formal finance in East Asian countries (Demirguc-Kunt and Klapper 2009). As figure 2.25 shows, of the nine East Asian countries surveyed, women were as likely as
men to have an account in a formal financial institution in Cambodia and Thailand; less likely to have an account in China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, and Vietnam (although the difference is statistically significant only in Malaysia and Vietnam); and slightly more likely to have an account in Mongolia and the Philippines. A small-scale study of Vietnam’s rural credit market in 2002 indicates that credit rationing depends on education and credit history, but finds no evidence of bias against women (Barslund and Tarp 2003). The Thailand 2005 Household Socio-Economic Panel data show a similar rate between men and women (with savings) in terms of holding a savings account in a financial institution (46 percent and 49 percent, respectively). This similarity is observed in urban as well as rural areas. But the situation may vary between rural and urban areas and might be very different in the Pacific, for which individual data are lacking.

**Figure 2.25. Women are slightly less likely than men to report having an account at a formal financial institution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIEAP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Global Findex Database, Demirguc-Kunt and Klapper 2012.
(*) denotes a statistically significant difference between men and women at the 1 percent level.

Economic growth alone is insufficient to close the gender gap in asset holdings

Economic growth could, in principle, increase women’s asset holdings through increased income, but it should not be expected that this factor alone would close the gender gap in asset holdings. Market transactions are an important way to accumulate assets, and evidence from Latin America and the Caribbean suggests that, after inheritance, markets are the second most important channel for women in that region to acquire land. In that sense, income plays an important role. However, as shown in chapter 3, gender gaps in earning still persist in the East Asia and Pacific region even though both men’s and women’s incomes have been increasing. Other complex legal and social factors, as discussed below, make it very challenging to close the gender gap in asset holdings with economic growth alone. Actually, wealthier households with more valuable assets are not necessarily willing to give women more ownership rights. Analysis of the Vietnam 2008 household survey data shows that richer households are less likely to have a female name in the title of
Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

their agricultural land plots, even when accounting for factors such as land size and basic household characteristics.

As part of the development process, the expansion of microfinance coverage has been argued to improve women’s access to credit. In terms of coverage, microfinance has greatly expanded all over the world, reaching many poor clients (Daley-Harris 2009). In China, microcredit has been used in various instances to support women. The Tianjin Women’s Association for Business Development and Promotion, the Guangxi Provincial Women’s Federation, and Liuzhou Municipal Women’s Federation are examples of microcredit schemes that target poor, laid-off, and unemployed women (Asian Development Bank [ADB] 2006). But this is not the case in all countries. In Indonesia, although women are considered to be an important market for microfinance, targeting of women has never been a hallmark of the Indonesian microfinance industry. The average proportion of female clients served by major microfinance institutions has remained fairly constant over the past 20 years (IDN CGA 2006).

But a rapid expansion of microfinance does not necessarily imply a de facto control of resources. Goetz and Gupta (1996) show that women’s access to microcredit has not been matched by an increase in their control of these funds. Microcredit facilities have been established for women in Lao PDR, but the program is not achieving its goals because women’s role in decision making has not been improved (GRID 2003, in Lao Gender Profile, 2005). Although women make up a high proportion of membership in credit schemes in Cambodia, they tend to be excluded from the decision-making processes and they receive smaller amounts of credit (Cambodia CGA 2004).

Aside from economic factors, complex legal and social factors strongly influence men’s and women’s control of productive assets

To understand the observed gender disparities in asset holdings, it is useful to understand how assets are accumulated and the factors determining asset accumulation. Individuals can accumulate, or lose, assets in several ways. First, individuals can make market transactions—such as buying land or livestock, or acquiring a bank loan—to generate direct or indirect utility through the investment return on those assets. Second, assets are acquired through inheritance or through allocation or acquisition by the state, for example, through land redistribution. Inheritance is one of the main mechanisms for asset accumulation (Deere and Doss 2006), and equality in asset endowments can be limited by differences in the right to inherit property. Third, life-cycle events such as marriage, including marriage payments, or separation also alter asset holdings. Evidence from across developing regions shows that women are at a disadvantage in asset holdings at the time of marriage. Household surveys in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and South Africa indicate that women bring fewer assets into marriage (Quisumbing and Maluccio 2003). Evidence from the Philippines and other developing countries shows that the husband-wife asset difference at the time of marriage has not changed over time and favors the husband even though gaps in age and education have been closing (Quisumbing and Hallman 2005).

Complex legal, social, and economic factors determine or constrain asset accumulation: (a) formal institutions—particularly the legal framework for property and inheritance rights, family laws, and law enforcement (Deere and Doss 2008 LAC); (b) informal institutions—social norms and customary laws affecting women’s preferences and ability to acquire and accumulate assets; and (c) human capital and other economic factors, such as income and the rate of returns on productive assets. Recent analysis of women and land in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries suggests that these factors constrain women’s equal access to land in the East Asian context.14 Because social factors can be binding constraints,
progressive legislation and better employment opportunities do not necessarily lead to gender equality in access to and control of land, as shown in South Asia (Agarwal 1994). In addition, improving women’s access to one particular asset, such as land, alone may not have the expected impacts on their productivity if they have constrained access to other assets, such as credit.

Despite positive changes in the legal framework in the East Asia and Pacific region, the interactions between formal and informal institutions still leave women at a disadvantage with respect to the control of assets. The discussion below first describes the legal framework and then highlights the challenges in practice due to implementation and the influence of norms and customary laws.

Table 2.4. Most East Asian and Pacific countries do not differentiate by gender in inheritance and property laws

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do sons and daughters have equal inheritance rights?</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The Inheritance Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Law of Succession (Article 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Islamic Law Compilation, Book II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The Inheritance Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Civil Code (Part V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>No*</td>
<td>Presidential Degree No. 1083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>No*</td>
<td>Instate Succession Act; Administration of Muslim Law Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Civil and Commercial Code (Sections 1599-1710)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Civil Code (Art. 635)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>Yes**</td>
<td>Succession, Probate and Administration Act [Cap 60] 1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kiribati</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Laws of Kiribati Act 1989, Schedule 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do men and women have equal rights over property?</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Constitution (Arts. 31 and 45); Law on Marriage and Family (Arts 29, 32-37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Law on Protection of Women’s Rights (Art. 30 and 47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Law of Property (Arts. 20, 26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Civil Code (Ch. 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>No*</td>
<td>Presidential Degree No. 1083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Women’s Charter (Arts. 51, 52, 56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Constitution (Section 30); Civil and Commercial Code (Book IV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Land Law; Civil Code (Sec. 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Constitution (Amendment) Act 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kiribati</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Laws of Kiribati Act 1989; Schedule 4; Magistrates Court Act; Gilbert and Phoenix Islands Land Code</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Implies that unequal legal systems apply only to a minority population.

** Denotes that despite equal inheritance in legislation, Fijian custom in relation to land has constitutional status and may lawfully discriminate against women.

The majority of countries in East Asia no longer differentiate by gender in statutory law. In that respect, the East Asia and Pacific region differs from some other regions: inheritance rights are still unequal in the Middle East and North African countries and half of the countries in South Asia (World Bank 2011e). As shown in
Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

table 2.4, most East Asian countries have legislation for property and inheritance rights with no discrimination against women. These countries—Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Thailand, and Vietnam—do not have parallel legal systems (for example, customary or religious laws), which means that all citizens adhere to civil law. For example, in China, many advances toward ensuring equal treatment and the protection of the rights of women under the law occurred as early as the 1950s. Women’s property and inheritance rights were protected through the enactment of the 1982 constitution, which protects the right of citizens to inherit private property (Article 13),15 and the 1985 Law of Succession of the People’s Republic of China, which states that males and females are equal in their right to inheritance (Article 9).16 The 1992 Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women further promotes gender equality; Article 28 declares that the state shall guarantee that women enjoy the equal right, with men, to property.17

In a few exceptions in the East Asia and Pacific region, males and females are not treated equally, mostly under inheritance laws. Parallel legal systems exist in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore. Muslim laws govern the majority of the populations in Indonesia and Malaysia and a small minority of the population in the Philippines and Singapore. For example, according to the Islamic Law Compilation in Indonesia, when a married person dies, each son is entitled to receive a share twice as large as each daughter (ADB Indonesia CGA 2006). The autonomous Muslim region of Mindanao in the Philippines can independently promulgate its own legislation following Islamic law (as stated in the constitution). Although the Philippines is a community property regime,18 this Muslim family code reflects that it is the husband who has the final say concerning the handling of joint property.19 Among Pacific Island countries, Kiribati and Tuvalu have unequal statutory legislation. Equal inheritance laws exist in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu; however, customary law in relation to land has constitutional status in these countries and may lawfully discriminate against women (UNIFEM and UNDP Pacific Centre 2007).

Beyond the protection of equal inheritance rights, several countries in the region have recently adopted legal changes that actively promote better gender equality in access to land. Since concerns have been raised about promoting gender equity in land titling programs, places such as Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam have recently adopted gender-sensitive reforms in land titling. Since the 2004 Land Law in Vietnam, all new land tenure certificates must include the names of both spouses, a provision intended to reduce gender inequality in access to land, protect families against unilateral decisions by one spouse, and protect women in case of divorce or disputes. Qualitative analysis of impacts in three provinces suggests that joint titling improves procedures and opportunities for women to access loans, empowers women in case of disputes, and leads to higher mutual decision making (World Bank 2008).

However, though women and men may be equal under the law, these legal rights do not always translate into equal access to land in practice. Progress toward gender equality in assets is still limited because of problems regarding implementation and enforcement and the interactions between formal and informal institutions that govern the access to and ownership of assets.

Implementation may be imperfect and sometimes lose effectiveness as a result of challenges in incorporating existing cultural norms and practices. Even where the legal system supports equal access to land, traditional values and norms create difficulty with respect to enforcing the legislation. Studies of existing kinship systems in Vietnam and China show resistance to endowing daughters with land, as land is considered lost when daughters marry out (Bélanger and Li 2009). Since the 2004 Land Law requiring joint titling was introduced in Vietnam, the results have been varied in ethnic majority and minority groups. Analysis of the Vietnam 2008
household survey data shows that ethnic minority households are much less likely to have a female name in the title of their agricultural land plots, even when accounting for factors such as land size and basic household characteristics. In Northern Liaoning, China, women are more likely to become landless at marriage as the population control and land tenure policies work to reinforce traditional forms of gender bias (Chen and Summerfield 2007). The reason is that a daughter is expected to marry out while a son is expected to reside with or near the parents. Therefore, during the redistribution of farmland to households based on household size, township and village officials allocated a larger share of land for each son in the household than for each daughter.

The Lao PDR land titling program 1997–2010 offers useful implementation lessons to account for context-specific social norms. An early assessment during the first phase of the program noted that traditional family roles dedicated the man to handling taxes and, thus, to having only his name on land-related tax documents. Mostly men interacted with government officials and participated in information meetings and titling activities. As a response to this assessment, Lao PDR introduced a stronger gender inclusion program, engaging the Lao Women’s Union, to raise community awareness of land titling, to include special training for women on their rights, and to ensure their participation during titling. Following this active engagement, a higher number of titles went to women than to men (Lao Land Titling Project II ICR 2010).

Qualitative research, more broadly, has stressed that a lack of information about legal entitlement is a key barrier to enforcing women’s land rights throughout the region. Women are generally less aware of the laws governing land ownership. They are also less likely to know about land registration requirements (including whether the land owned by their households is registered and whether their names are included in land titling documents). Dissemination activities on rights and entitlements can exclude women, especially in rural areas. Even if they have information about the legal land rights, women tend not to pursue formal complaints in cases of land grabbing or disputes regarding inheritance or division of property. A 2008 AusAID report on land tenure in the Pacific region stresses the following factors constraining women’s access to the formal legal system to resolve disputes regarding land ownership and use: (a) the system is culturally unfamiliar and based on “adversarial” methods rather than on the consensus building usually preferred by communities; (b) women also faced more “practical” obstacles to accessing courts (limited access to transport, lack of time, income); (c) the “technical nature” of the procedures and inadequate support from court staff were also noted as important barriers (AusAID 2008). A case study on Kampong Pring in Kandal Province, Cambodia, also highlights that female-headed households are particularly vulnerable because they often find it difficult to afford transport costs to attend court proceedings, and they cannot afford to miss work because their income is limited (Cambodia Development Resource Institute 2001).

Customary practices also matter alongside statutory laws. Most land in the Pacific region is under customary authority (approximately 80 percent of total land area). Although rules governing access to and use of land vary widely within the Pacific region, usually in customary systems (a) land can only be transferred within networks of social/political relationships; (b) land use is governed by reciprocal relations within the kinship or customary land groups; and (c) social hierarchies and status are important factors determining one’s rights to land. In these customary systems, women have access to land primarily through their kinship relations with men. Women also have less voice in public decisions about the use of land (AusAID 2008). For example, Fijian women in most parts of the Fiji Islands are excluded from inheritance rights in customary land and have no rights in land other than those permitted them by their fathers or husbands. Nor do they normally receive land rents. Most Indo-Fijians with land also practice father-to-son inheritance (ADB Fiji CGA 2006).
Considerable variation in these practices occurs within the region and within countries. Inheritance practices based on norms can be patrilineal, matrilineal, or bilateral and, as such, are not always tilted against women. In the matrilineal society of Sumatra, Indonesia, together with the shift from communal to individual tenure, the inheritance system became more egalitarian in that sons and daughters inherit the type of land that is most intensive in their own work effort, and gender bias in land inheritance is either nonexistent or small (Quisumbing and Otsuka 2001). In the Philippines, sons are preferred in land inheritance but daughters are favored in education investments (Estudillo, Quisumbing and Otsuka 2001). In Lao PDR, land inheritance and ownership are important elements of women’s autonomy in lowland areas, with daughters customarily inheriting land. However, women in the midlands and highlands, such as those in the Khmu and Hmong ethnic groups, face important barriers to controlling land (Ireson-Doolittle 1999; World Bank 2008). Understanding the specifics of a particular context is thus important for designing appropriate policies and interventions.

In summary, given the limited evidence in the East Asia and Pacific region, understanding gender inequality in assets is an important research agenda. Gender disparities in access to productive assets can hinder women’s ability to participate and benefit from economic opportunities as well as constrain women’s voice and representation in the society. Further research and better data are called for to disentangle the complex mechanisms influencing men’s and women’s control of assets and to shed light on policies.

Policies: Promoting gender equality in endowments

The analysis thus far has identified the factors influencing or constraining gender equality in endowments. These factors shed light on where policies may be used and can have an impact. What follows is an initial discussion, based on the evidence presented, about policy priorities for promoting gender equality in endowments. This section is organized around four themes: (a) countries with persistent gender inequalities in human capital, (b) countries where gender inequalities in human capital have abated substantially, (c) countries with unbalanced sex ratios at birth, and (d) attention to male gender issues. A more detailed discussion on policy directions will follow in chapter 6 on policies to promote gender equality and more effective development.

Countries with persistent gender inequalities in human capital

For countries with overall low and unequal gender outcomes in education and health, the priority remains to improve these outcomes. Actions to strengthen the education and health systems are called for to improve overall outcomes, in addition to any focus on gender. Interventions may be needed at the national level and may yield high economic and social returns. For countries with localized gender disparities among certain ethnic groups or low-income regions, interventions may be targeted to these groups. Though the exact constraints vary by country context, the analysis in this chapter has shown that both demand-side and supply-side factors are responsible for these poor human capital outcomes. Policies can have an impact through improving service delivery (through infrastructure, staffing, incentives, use of ICT) and demand-side interventions (CCT, information campaigns, accountability). For education, policies to improve education outcomes in general are expected to also improve gender equality. For health, the reasons for slow improvements in health outcomes in several East Asian and Pacific countries underscore the importance of improving service delivery in general, including efforts to account for gender norms that affect service utilization and effectiveness.
Countries where gender inequalities in human capital have abated substantially

For many countries in the East Asia and Pacific region, addressing education quality—specifically, gender streaming in education—and gender differential access to assets requires policy attention. Many aspects of gender issues regarding basic access in education and health have abated with growth and development. However, women’s ability to benefit from the human capital they have accumulated and to have the same economic opportunity and agency as men is still limited as a result of other binding constraints.

To relieve some of these constraints, it will be important to tackle the issues of education streaming and gender differential access to assets. Concerted efforts in education and labor market policies are needed to break the traditional patterns of females going into certain fields of study and, consequently, jobs in lower-paying occupations and sectors; however, some measures are possible within the education system. Possible approaches in this agenda include both curriculum reforms to reduce gender stereotyping and active interventions—financial and nonfinancial incentives as well as information campaigns—to promote entrance into nontraditional fields. Policies aimed at promoting equal access to assets, particularly land, require careful thought since complex legal, social, and economic factors are at play, and the evidence base is thin. Usually a good start is to level the legal playing field, but even more important is to work with the informal institutions and take into account norms and customary practices to remove barriers in that domain.

Countries with unbalanced sex ratios at birth

In the few countries with “missing girls” at birth, rooted in the prevalence of son preference, continuing efforts are needed. Even with laws against sex-selective abortion, strong incentives to select the preferred gender can still induce people to bypass the law. A more promising strategy is to adopt policy approaches that aim to enhance the relative value of daughters as perceived by families. General policies to promote economic development may play a role, but Korea’s recent experience suggests that interventions to influence social norms and facilitate the spread of new values may be very important, rather than simply relying on raising female education and labor force participation. Information campaigns, financial incentives, family planning programs, and improved social security for the elderly are worthwhile efforts. China has been adopting many of these programs, and they can be expected to reduce the imbalance in the sex ratio at birth.

Attention to male gender issues

Attention to male gender issues is crucial in many country contexts since they may also hamper growth and development. First, the initial signs of the reversed gender gap in education need to be monitored closely where applicable. Second, the excessive tobacco and alcohol consumption among males in many parts of the East Asia and Pacific region deserves policy attention because the social costs, passed on as externalities to other members of the society, are usually higher than private costs. As discussed in more detail in chapter 6, possible measures to tackle this challenge include providing information about the health risks of excessive tobacco and alcohol consumption, taxation, regulatory measures on advertisement, and restrictions on smoking in public sites.

Notes


2 See Engendering Development (World Bank 2001) and World Development Report 2012 (World Bank 2011d) for similar literature. However, few studies rigorously identify the causal effects as opposed to simple correlation. And female education or income might not always have dominant, widespread
benefits over male education as commonly perceived. For example, controlling for household average education, Breierova and Duflo (2004) find no impact of female education on infant mortality in Indonesia. Edmonds (2005) finds that in South Africa, pension money going to grandmothers improves children's health while that going to grandfathers improves children's schooling.

3 Enrollment in different types of education also shows gender differences that vary across countries in the region. Females’ completion rate in vocational training has been increasing in Thailand and Vietnam. In recent years, this rate among females is still lower than that among males in Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Mongolia, even though the reverse tends to be true for completion of general secondary education. Cambodia experiences the opposite patterns, that is, women have lower general secondary completion rates but higher vocational completion rates than men (Sakellariou 2011).

4 Conflict and postconflict areas also suffer poor education outcomes for both boys and girls, for different reasons, such as the risk for boys of being taken out of school to join the military and the risk of safety for girls at the school.

5 Girls do not always lag behind boys in poor rural areas. Evidence from China's Gansu province shows no significant gender disadvantage (Hannum and Adams 2002).

6 The returns to education for females have not increased uniformly: the returns for females increased relatively in Vietnam but decreased more than males’ returns in Indonesia and Thailand since the late 1990s (Sakellariou 2011).

7 Women appear to study science and math but not engineering because math is part of the core curriculum even from primary school, and science starts in secondary school in many countries. Studying math and sciences is useful for many professions, including becoming a math or science teacher. By comparison, engineering, a field of study starting in tertiary education, is the track leading to the occupation of engineering.


9 Prior empirical evidence on the extent to which income causally affects health status has been controversial, partly owing to methodological challenges such as possible omitted variables and the reversed feedback from health to income (Deaton 2006; Filmer and Pritchett 1999; Pritchett and Summers 1996).

10 Das Gupta, Chung, and Shuzhuo (2009) argue that the recent provincial sex ratios in China suggest an incipient turnaround of the “missing girls” phenomenon in East Asia. However, the concern is far from over. These child sex ratios in China are still high.


12 Prevalence estimates of current smoking of any tobacco product prevalence estimates, resulting from the latest adult tobacco use surveys, which have been adjusted according to the WHO regression method for standardizing described in the Method of Estimation. “Tobacco smoking” includes cigarettes, cigars, pipes or any other smoked tobacco products. “Current smoking” includes both daily and nondaily or occasional smoking.

13 Households headed by women and those headed by men may be very different as a result of unobserved factors. The observation that female-headed households have fewer assets does not necessarily mean that women have less access to assets in general (many are widows or single-parent families that face economic difficulties anyway). Looking at gender of the household head as an approximate measure presumes that females in female-headed households own and control most of the assets while females in male-headed households control and own relatively few assets. This measure could be misleading in cases where male heads of households are temporarily absent.

14 The ASEAN report on women and land identifies the following supply constraints to women’s equal access to land in the region: unfavorable legal framework, pro-male customs, limited opportunities, and lack of data (ASEAN 2008).


16 http://www.chinaembassycanada.org/eng/lswf/Relevant%20Chinese%2FLaws%20and%20Regulations/c37737.htm


18 In a community property jurisdiction, most property acquired during the marriage (except for gifts or inheritances) is owned jointly by both spouses and is divided upon divorce, annulment, or death.


20 In China, for example, it is a common practice for new policies, regulations, and programs to be discussed in village meetings in which heads of households (primarily men) participate. Information on changes to land laws, for example, might reach women later (or partially, as they may rely on other household members to convey the information) (Law, H. R 2008). In Indonesia, land acquired during marriage tends to be registered primarily under the name of the male head of household because most landowners are not aware of the possibility of registering land in more than one person’s name (Brown 2003).
Chapter 3. Gender and Economic Opportunity

Introduction

In the dynamic East Asia and Pacific region, many countries have undergone structural transformations that have shifted the balance of economic opportunities away from rural areas and toward urban areas. This shift has led to substantial and rapid migration of populations to cities and to the growing urbanization of the countries in this region. As discussed in chapter 2, the educational attainment and health outcomes of women, particularly younger women, have been catching up to those of men during this period of growth. Younger women resemble their male counterparts in terms of their initial decisions to participate in the labor force. However, by many other indicators, there are still substantial challenges to be overcome to close the gender gap in access to economic opportunities. The type of work women do remains very different from that of men, and their remuneration for these tasks is lower. Women of all ages are more likely than men to be in poorly remunerated occupations and sectors, women are paid less than men for similar work, and gender norms in the division of labor within the household imply that women work longer hours than men, although fewer of those hours are devoted to remunerated activities. Furthermore, substantial variation occurs among the countries of the region, depending on their levels of development, economic structure, and social attitudes to gender inequality. What is clear is that there is substantial scope in the countries of the region to increase women’s access to productive opportunities and to close the gender gaps in income and other key outcomes, while still furthering economic productivity, income growth, and poverty reduction.

Reducing gender inequalities in economic opportunities can improve economic outcomes in multiple ways:

(a) First, reducing the unequal distribution of male and female workers across occupations and sectors will reduce efficiency losses associated with the misallocation of talent (Anker 1998; Morrison, Raju, and Sinha 2007). Men and women often choose occupations on the basis of norms, gender stereotypes, and, sometimes, prejudice, rather than on the basis of earnings or job match (Klasen and Lamanna 2009). Encouraging workers and employers to make labor choices on the basis of their skills, competencies, and inherent ability is likely to raise productivity and may have a positive impact on economic growth by increasing the size of the labor force as well as by expanding the pool of managerial and innovative talent in the economy (Esteve-Volart 2004). As noted in chapter 1, estimates for East Asian and Pacific countries suggest that output per worker could be 7 to 18 percent higher if female entrepreneurs and workers were to work in the same sectors, types of jobs, and activities as men, and to have the same access to productive resources (Cuberes and Teignier-Baqué 2011).

(b) Second, empirical evidence from other developing regions suggests that reducing gender inequalities in access to productive inputs can increase overall production by increasing the productivity of female-run farms and enterprises (Goldstein and Udry 2008; Quisumbing 1995; Udry 1996).
Gender differences in the economic sphere manifest themselves in myriad indicators, including differences in labor force participation, in the time spent on productive and reproductive activities, in the sectors in which men and women work, in the tasks and occupations that they do within those sectors, and in the types of firms that employ them. Differences in these indicators contribute to and are themselves determined by gaps in the earnings of men and women. Women are often paid less than men for the same work, and female-run enterprises and farms typically produce less than those of men.

Gender inequalities in economic opportunities are driven by many interacting factors. The most important are discussed in this chapter, namely, gender differences in access to human and physical capital, technologies, and government services; gender stereotypes; and gender roles. These factors are, in themselves, determined by the household, market, and institutional environment in which preferences and gender roles are learned and in which education and time allocation choices are determined.

This chapter examines differences in productive opportunities for men and women within and across countries in the East Asia and Pacific region and explores the economic and institutional factors that have determined how those opportunities have evolved over time. Because education enrollment and attainment are growing and labor markets are changing, this chapterdifferentiates between the experiences of older and younger generations. It also uses examples from both high-income and low-income countries across the globe to understand these trends.

Three main messages for the East Asia and Pacific region emerge in this chapter:

(a) In some dimensions, gender inequalities in the economic sphere in the region have improved in recent decades and are narrower than those in other regions, such as labor force participation; however, multiple dimensions of inequalities remain that will require concerted effort to change, such as persistent gender wage and productivity gaps. In several areas, policies and public investment can help to ease the constraints on women and support them in their multiple roles as entrepreneurs, farmers, wage and salaried workers, mothers, and caregivers.

(b) Second, the constraints faced by women vary across sectors of the economy and also by country according to the institutional environment. Some common themes emerge, however. In the agricultural sector, female farmers’ access to productive capital, technologies, and governmental services is lower than that of male farmers; improving access to these inputs is tantamount to increasing productivity. In the nonfarm sector, female-run enterprises are smaller and in different sectors than male-run enterprises. The constraints and productivity differences of female enterprises are predominantly attributable to their small size and to the sectors in which they are found. Thus, two questions can be asked: Whose response is likely to differ across countries? Where can policy act to diminish the constraints that affect both the size of the enterprise and the choice of sector of operations? Constraints in all countries are likely to be greatest at start-up, when access to finance and entrepreneurial skills are likely to be important determinants of sector and initial scale of enterprise. In the labor market, gender-based segregation is evident across the region and affects both the wages women earn as well as productivity in the economy, because both men and women sort into occupations on the basis of sex rather than skill. Policies that encourage both men and women to think outside of gender-based occupational norms will be productivity enhancing and likely to have positive repercussions for female empowerment.
Finally, as in other parts of the world, women have multiple roles in the region and will require more support to manage competing demands for their time from productive, reproductive, and community management activities as development proceeds and greater nonfarm sector opportunities emerge. Nearly all countries in the region see declines in the female labor force participation of young mothers. Furthermore, to manage their dual roles, women are often obliged to enter into different occupations and work fewer hours, both of which are found to have negative implications on their wages and earnings. Policies that support women to juggle the competing demands of home and work will be required, particularly as women start moving into “male” occupations that have not traditionally allowed them the flexibility to lead their dual lives.

The chapter is structured as follows. The first section explores whether growth is sufficient to reduce gender inequalities in productive activities, drawing upon evidence from high-income countries within and outside the region. The second section describes the current situation with regard to gender inequalities in economic opportunities in East Asian and Pacific countries. The third section examines the determinants of the most persistent gender inequalities, and the fourth section concludes by highlighting several directions policies can take to tackle the factors that are causing these gender inequalities in economic opportunity to persist.

Why is income growth alone not sufficient to close the gender gap in access to economic opportunities?

The empirical literature suggests that economic development alone is not sufficient to narrow gender differences in earnings (Blau and Kahn 2003; Hertz et al. 2008; Tzannatos 1999). In high-income countries across the world, economic growth has been accompanied by institutional and social transformations that have been instrumental in reducing gender inequalities within countries over time. Evidence from East Asian and Pacific countries suggests instead that social, political, and cultural factors are as important as economic development in determining gender wage gaps and, indeed, that these factors interact with the development process to determine the degree to which growth narrows gender inequalities (Meng 1996).1

In high-income countries, the age profile of women’s economic participation and the sensitivity of their participation to life-cycle factors have changed with development. Between 1950 and 2010, female labor force participation in Hong Kong SAR, China; Japan; the Republic of Korea; and Singapore increased substantially across all age cohorts. For example, in Korea, women’s labor force participation has increased monotonically over birth cohorts (figure 3.1). Similar changes were seen in the United States,
particularly among married women (Juhn and Potter 2006). Furthermore, the decline in labor force participation by women in their early 30s has been less severe in all countries. Rising female labor force participation with development has been attributed to a number of demographic factors, including later marriage and childbirth and lower fertility rates.

However, income growth in these countries has not been enough to eliminate gender inequalities in all dimensions of economic opportunities. In the high-income countries in the East Asia and Pacific region, despite a substantial increase in young women’s labor force participation, sharp gender differences in employment status, occupational status, and wage rates continue to exist. In Japan, women are more likely than men to be in nonregular employment, including temporary work, contract work, and part-time work (Hill 1996; Yu 2002). Women continue to leave the workforce in substantial numbers during their childbearing years, even if only temporarily. The greatest drop in female labor force participation rates comes for married women in their mid-20s to early 30s when they start having children and assuming greater family responsibilities (Hill 1996; Lee, Jang, and Sarkar 2008; Miller 1998, 2003; Sasaki 2002).

Welfare, child care, and tax reforms; legislative changes; and women’s movements have helped to narrow gender differences in economic opportunities in high-income countries. The United States provides a good example of how the combination of economic forces as well as social changes and legal reforms has transformed women’s labor force participation. Explanations of changes in female labor force participation include demand-side factors that shifted women’s market wage as well as supply-side factors that reduced women’s opportunity costs of working (Fang and Keane 2004; Galor and Weil 1996; Greenwood, Seshadri, and Yorukoglu 2005; Weinberg 2000). Since the 1980s, Korean labor and family law has sought to improve women’s status within marriage and the family, and to eliminate gender bias in other areas, including in labor law (Kim 2005). In addition, the Korean government has undertaken several measures to support married women with their child-care responsibilities, such as reforming maternity and paternity leave and expanding expenditures on child-care facilities. Legislative reforms to level the playing field for women in the labor market have been difficult to enforce in Japan, however (Lam 1992; Liu and Boyle 2001; Miller 2003). Women’s and labor organizations have played an important role in advocating for legislation that reduces gender discriminatory practices (Kim 2005).

What gender differences in economic activity currently exist in the East Asia and Pacific region?

Gender differences in the economic sphere manifest themselves in myriad indicators. This section focuses on examining gender differences in labor force participation, earnings, and the labor market segmentation of men and women.

Labor force participation

The region is characterized by high labor force participation and by substantial variation across countries

Female labor force participation in the East Asia and Pacific region is the highest in the developing world—70 percent of females were participating in labor market activities in 2008 (figure 3.2). Labor force participation is defined as all productive work conducted by women, whether as wage workers or as unpaid family workers. The participation gap (the difference between the participation of men and women in paid or
unpaid market-oriented work) was approximately 15 percentage points. In comparison, the female labor force participation rate in the Latin America and Caribbean region and Europe and Central Asia region was 55 and 58 percent in 2008, respectively, and their gender gaps in labor force participation were 27 and 16 percentage points.

Substantial variation is seen in average rates of female labor force participation within the region (figure 3.3). Participation and gender gaps in some parts of the region are among the highest in the world, whereas in others they are among the lowest. For example, in Fiji, Samoa, and Malaysia, participation rates in 2008 were an order of magnitude lower than the average for the region, with approximately 55 percent of working-age females in these countries participating in the labor force. Female labor force participation is highest in countries where the state has put a priority on gender equality, for example, in socialist or formerly socialist countries, as well as in agrarian and rural economies.

National averages of labor force participation fail to capture important differences in participation across rural and urban areas, as well as regional variation within countries. In all countries within the region, rural labor force participation is higher than urban labor force participation, for both males and females. Substantial gender differentials in participation have also been noted within countries in the region. Participation gaps in all countries, apart from the Philippines, are substantially greater in urban areas than in rural areas. In Vietnam, higher levels of female participation and lower gender differentials are found in poorer and often low-productivity areas where female participation in employment to supplement household income is necessary (see box 3.1; Pierre 2011).
Even in countries with high overall participation rates, female labor force participation rates and ratios decline during childbearing years and old age

Average female labor force participation rates hide important variation over women’s life cycles, such as marriage and childbearing, whereas male participation rates remain fairly constant throughout their life cycles. The gaps between men and women in labor force participation, earnings, and job composition increase after marriage and childbearing in many East Asian and Pacific countries, as they do globally. In the United States, for example, young single men and young single women have more similar labor participation, earnings, and career profiles than do married men and women. In many East Asian and Pacific countries, it is important to look at the life-cycle patterns of participation by birth cohorts, because during periods of rapid growth and structural transformation, average rates of labor force participation can mask specific trends. Rapid increases in the acquisition of education, the availability of new economic opportunities in growing sectors, and urbanization mean that young women are more likely than older women to participate in the labor force, and to participate in different sectors (Mammen and Paxson 2000).

Female participation is more sensitive to life-cycle factors such as marriage and childbearing in some countries than in others

The birth cohort life-cycle participation patterns of women vary substantially within the East Asia and Pacific region and have also exhibited considerable change over time. Three patterns can be distinguished in the region (Horton 1996). The “plateau” pattern exhibits relatively flat female labor force participation until women reach their early 50s, and then declines into old age. The “double-peaked” or “M” pattern is generally observed in more industrialized countries: it is characterized by high participation in the labor market prior to marriage and childbearing, with a subsequent return to the labor force once children are older. A “single-peaked” pattern exhibits higher rates of participation at younger ages, which then fall after the peak. This is a more extreme version of the double-peaked pattern and characterizes a labor market in which few women return to work after marriage and childbearing. In the region, this pattern can be seen only in Malaysia, where it continues despite increasing female participation among younger age cohorts. The plateau pattern, in contrast, describes a situation in which female labor force participation is less sensitive to life-cycle effects than in the single- and double-peaked patterns. The plateau pattern can be seen in countries with political regimes that encouraged women’s economic independence, such as China, Mongolia, and Vietnam. In addition, the evidence suggests that rural and urban females may fall into different categories, and that these categorizations may evolve over time.

East Asian and Pacific countries with higher rates of female labor force participation overall have smaller declines in participation during childbearing years, though predominantly in urban settings

Women with young children are substantially less likely to participate in the labor market. In some countries, such as Mongolia and Vietnam, a reduction in labor market participation is seen in either urban or rural areas alone, whereas in others, such as Indonesia and the Philippines, it is seen in both rural and urban areas. Data from the Vietnam Labor Force Survey 2009 show that rural Vietnamese women between ages 25 and 35 with a child under the age of 2 are a third less likely to participate in the labor market than men of the same age with a child. In comparison, the participation of women between ages 25 and 35 without a child is fairly similar to that of men in this age group. In Vietnam, the effect is smaller and short-lived. The participation gap disappears by the time the child reaches school age, whereas in Mongolia the participation gap continues to be substantial even for children under the age of 10. The magnitude of the participation gap difference is
substantially smaller than in other countries in the East Asia and Pacific region, such as in urban Indonesia and in Malaysia.

In countries where female labor force participation is lower on average, it is also likely to be highly sensitive to marriage and childbearing years. Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and Malaysia have historically displayed a single or double-peaked pattern; that is, women participate in the labor market prior to marriage and childbearing and, in the case of a double-peaked pattern, eventually return to the labor force once the children are older. These countries also have lower average female labor force participation than countries in the region that exhibit a plateau pattern. In Indonesia and the Philippines, in marked contrast to the examples of Mongolia and Vietnam above, female-male participation gaps are substantial even among women who do not have children, and the gaps widen with age.

**Earnings**

*Clear evidence shows a persistent gender gap in wages and earnings in the region*

Male and female wages differ in multiple sectors and settings across the region, with female agricultural wage workers earning less than male agricultural wage workers, and female urban wage workers earning less than their male counterparts. Female entrepreneurs and farmers often display lower revenues and profits than their male counterparts.

A substantial body of evidence has accumulated over the past three decades to suggest that women are paid less for similar work in the region and across the world. A cross-country comparison of wages indicates that women earn between 70 and 80 percent of the wages men receive for similar work (Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi 2010). Evidence from across the world suggests that economic development is not sufficient to reduce the gender earnings gaps, because women earn less than men in low-, middle-, and high-income countries (Blau and Khan 2003). Even in high-income countries in the East Asia and Pacific region—notably Japan and Korea—the average woman earns less than half the wage of the average man. Lower-income countries, including Mongolia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Papua New Guinea, and Vietnam, have lower gender wage gaps, on average, than many richer countries. This suggests that economic growth alone is not sufficient to reduce gender inequality in earnings.

Within the agricultural, manufacturing, service, and government sectors, women earn less than men on average (figure 3.4), although the ratio of male-to-female earnings varies substantially across sectors as well as across countries. Female-to-male wage ratios tend to be lower in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors and higher in the service sector and in government, with some exceptions.
In contrast to most OECD countries, gender wage gaps are greatest between men and women with the lowest educational endowments and in the lowest paying occupations.

In the East Asia and Pacific region, several studies have indicated that there is a wider gap at the bottom end of the wage distribution than at the top (Chi and Li 2007; Li and Song 2012; Sakellariou 2011). In contrast, in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, gender wage gaps tend to be wider at the top than at the bottom of the wage distribution (Albrecht, Björklund, and Vroman 2003; Arulampalam, Booth, and Bryan 2007; de la Rica, Dolado, and Llorens 2005).

Earnings gaps also exist in the nonfarm sector in the East Asia and Pacific region

In the nonfarm sector, there are also substantial differences in the performance of male and female firms around the world, as measured by total factor productivity, labor productivity, profitability, and capital intensity (Sabarwal, Terrell, and Bardasi 2009). In the East Asia and Pacific region, formal sector firms with at least one female owner do not have significantly lower sales than those with no female owners, with the exception of firms in the Philippines (figure 3.5). However, in the informal sector, output per worker in female-owned enterprises is substantially lower than that in male-owned enterprises. Data from Indonesia and Vietnam suggest that in the informal sector, gender earnings gaps are more pronounced than in the formal sector: female-owned enterprises with fewer than five employees generate only approximately 60 to 70 percent of the output per worker generated by male-owned enterprises (figure 3.6).

Labor market segmentation

There is substantial evidence that men and women work in different sectors, industries, occupations, and types of firms (Anker 1998; Boserup 1970).

More women than men work in the informal sector

As can be seen in figures 3.7 and 3.8, in every country in the East Asia and Pacific region women are overrepresented in unpaid family work, particularly in rural areas, and are slightly more likely to be employed in the informal sector.5,6 Within the informal sector, women are more likely to be own-account workers (self-employed workers working by themselves) and subcontracted workers, whereas men are more likely to be employers or paid employees of informal enterprises (World Bank 2011g). Globally, women are more likely than men to work part-time (ILO 2010).

Across the world, women in the nonagricultural workforce are more likely to work in social sector communal services (such as education and health) and in commerce and restaurants, while men are more likely to work in transportation, construction, public administration, and manufacturing (ILO 2010). Similar trends are found in East Asian and Pacific countries. For example, men in Cambodia and Indonesia are disproportionately found in the mining, transport, construction, and public administration sectors, and women are found in manufacturing, education, health and social services, and commerce (figure 3.9). Estimates from household survey data suggest that, in Fiji and Vietnam, men are more likely to work as professionals and managers and as plant and machine workers, whereas women are more likely to work as technicians, sales workers, and clerks, and in elementary occupations.7 Women also make up a smaller fraction of the public sector workforce than men in Cambodia, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. The Philippines, however, displays much higher levels of occupational segregation and also has a higher fraction of women in the public sector than men, a trend that is likely to be related to the relatively high investment in education by Filipino women.
Figure 3.5. Male- and female-owned firms in the formal sector do not display substantial differences in productivity.

Ratio of female-to-male value added per worker


Note: Data are for small (20 employees or less), medium (20–99 employees), and large (100 and more employees) firms in the formal sector. Female-owned firms are defined as those with at least one female owner. Value added is measured as revenues minus material expenses.

Figure 3.6. In the informal sector, differences in productivity are not substantially lower than in the formal sector.

Ratio of female-to-male value added per worker


Note: Based on a sample of firms with fewer than five employees.

Figure 3.7. Women are more likely than men to work as unpaid family workers.

Percentage of employment, by sex and location


Figure 3.8. Women are slightly more likely to be employed in the informal sector than men.

Percentage of workers in the informal sector, by sex and location


Note: The informal sector is defined using information on an individual's occupation and sector of employment. Rural-urban differences in informality are greater than gender differences within rural or urban areas.
Within the manufacturing sector, women are more likely to be found in industries such as textiles and food processing, and are also found in large and export-orientated firms. Data from country enterprise surveys (2002–2005) indicate that, in all regions, the fraction of full-time female workers is greater in export-orientated firms. The East Asia and Pacific region has the second largest fraction of full-time female workers, after Europe and Central Asia. However, within export-orientated firms, women are also more likely than men to be temporary workers in all countries apart from Thailand.

Women are underrepresented in managerial positions and positions of power in all sectors, from government to manufacturing (Anker 1998). The East Asia and Pacific region performs relatively well compared to other regions in terms of the fraction of firms with a top female manager. However, women remain less likely than men to serve as managers and directors. The share of female directors ranges from 10 percent in the Philippines and 7 percent in China and Thailand to 5 percent in Indonesia and under 2 percent in Korea and Japan (CWDI 2010). Globally, only one country in the world has succeeded in having more than 30 percent female representation on corporate boards (namely, Norway), while one-third of countries have female board representation over 10 percent (CWDI 2010).

**Segmentation goes beyond the wage labor market, with smaller female-owned and managed firms occurring in less-capital-intensive sectors than male-owned and managed firms**

Female-owned and run enterprises are, on average, smaller than male-run enterprises - in terms of the number of employees hired, sales and profits (Aterido and Hallward-Driemeier 2009; Costa and Rijkers 2011; Badiani and Posades 2011; Sabarwal, Terrell, and Bardasi 2009). Among formal sector firms in the East Asia and Pacific region, enterprise survey data suggest that small firms are more likely than medium and large firms to have a top female manager (figure 3.10). Evidence by ownership displays a more mixed picture. In Indonesia, Mongolia, Timor-Leste, Tonga, and Vanuatu this pattern still holds, but evidence from the Philippines, Samoa, and Vietnam suggests that female owners are not disproportionately represented among small firms (figure 3.11). This pattern may be the result of more open cultural norms regarding women’s role in business. However, the lower levels of female management relative to ownership suggest that women may still have less control or representation within firms.

Female-run enterprises are also more likely to be found in labor-intensive sectors, such as services and trade, than in capital-intensive sectors (Klapper and Parker 2010). For example, a study commissioned by this report finds that women are more likely to be found in manufacturing, food sales, and food preparation in Indonesia and less likely to be found in transport, construction, and services (Badiani and Posades 2011). Similar patterns have been observed in other countries in the region, including Lao PDR (Davies and Record 2010),
Gender and Economic Opportunity

Mongolia (World Bank 2011c), and Vietnam (Bjerge and Rand 2011). This pattern may be because the jobs women are found in can be seen as extensions of women’s traditional roles and thus are culturally acceptable.

The enterprises that women work in are also less productive and capital intensive. In Indonesia, for example, the food, retail, and food and garment manufacturing sectors, where women are more likely to be employed than men, are among the least capital intensive and productive sectors (figure 3.12). By contrast, the transportation sector—where male entrepreneurs are most likely to be found—has higher productivity and capital intensity.

Having a female presence in management may have positive implications for workers, however, even if productivity per worker is lower. Female-run firms have been found to influence factors beyond productivity—from the provision of benefits to gender-sensitive policies. In Vietnam, Rand and Tarp (2011) found that workers in female-run small and medium enterprises are more likely to receive fringe benefits in addition to wage compensation. Female owners are more likely to provide health and social insurance and to allow sick, vacation, and maternity leave with pay.

Labor market sorting has been found to contribute to gender wage and earnings gaps. Women are likely to be found in lower-paying occupations and sectors, in both the labor force and as entrepreneurs, than men. Differences in occupational and industrial sorting explain a greater fraction of gender wage gaps in the East Asia and Pacific region and across the world than differences in human capital (Ñopo, Daza, and Ramos 2011; Sakellariou 2011). Among entrepreneurs, differences in industry and size of enterprise have been found to explain a substantial fraction of the raw performance gaps in profits and revenues among male and female firms.11

**Figure 3.10.** Female-managed enterprises are likely to be small

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Large</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Survey data are for small (less than 20 employees), medium (20–99 employees), and large (100 and more employees) firms in the formal sector. Female-managed firms are defined as those with at least one female manager.

**Figure 3.11.** The pattern of female ownership by firm size varies across countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Large</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What are the determinants of gender inequality in productive activities?

Men and women differ in their economic activities in a number of respects. These activities may represent differences in choices, but they may also represent differences in the constraints that individuals face in their working lives. This section explores the economic, demographic, and cultural factors that determine the current gender inequality in access to economic opportunities in the East Asia and Pacific region.

Determinants of labor market participation

Female labor force participation is affected by development. As development occurs, changes in household income, education, wages, marital, and fertility choices affect participation. The evolution of market opportunities alters the types of jobs present in the economy, as well as the relative demand for skills. The institutional framework of society affects and is affected by the economic participation of women during the process of development; that is, gender norms, expectations, and perceptions within the household and society affect female labor force participation and are also likely to be affected by its evolution.

Female labor force participation and its determinants vary over the life cycle. Early in their careers, women are similar to men in terms of their decisions to join the labor market, but their participation begins to differ as their domestic responsibilities increase. This change is partly due to the increased time that women devote to household activities, such as housework and child rearing, as their status changes, but it is also a reflection of differences in the roles of and expectations of married and single women. Younger women in the region are investing more in education and hence have delayed their entry into the labor market, in both rural and urban areas. Married women appear to take substantial time out of the workforce due to childbearing, while the same is not true for men. Furthermore, large labor force participation gaps open up toward the end of women’s careers, in part as a result of labor market regulations such as retirement policies.

The stage of development of the country and its institutions

Evidence from across the world suggests that, as countries develop, female labor force participation displays a U-shaped trajectory. Female labor force participation usually declines as incomes rise and opportunities in the labor market become less attractive to female workers; it then increases again when more attractive employment opportunities emerge (Bloom et al. 2009; Chaudhuri 2009; Goldin 1995; Sinha 1967, cited in Mammen and Paxson 2000; Tam 2011). In poor, agricultural economies, female participation tends to be high because agricultural work and family responsibilities can easily be combined. However, in middle-income
countries dominated by the manufacturing sector, female participation declines in part because most new jobs are difficult to combine with family responsibilities. Female participation rates are higher in high-income countries that have large service sectors and a highly educated workforce. This finding holds both across and within countries over time (Fatima and Sultana 2009; Fuwa 2005; Juhn and Ureta 2003; Tansel 2001).

The stylized U-shaped curve holds for countries in the East Asia and Pacific region, as well as globally. It can be seen in figure 3.13, which depicts the relationship between economic development (as captured by income per capita) and female labor force participation across the globe between 1990 and 2008. The position of the East Asian and Pacific countries relative to the rest of the world is depicted in red. Two key features emerge. First, the U-shape pattern holds across countries for both periods of time. Second, the participation rate associated with each level of development has increased between 1990 and 2008, as can be seen by the upward shift in the U-shaped pattern over time. In the East Asia and Pacific region, Vietnam and China have substantially higher levels of female labor force participation than the world average relative to their income levels, while participation is near the world average in countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines. The pattern of female labor force participation seen in the Pacific partly reflects economic structure, whereby labor force participation is higher in agriculture-based economies. For example, although Fiji has lower rates of participation relative to its income level, the rates of participation in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu are substantially higher.

**Gender norms, expectations, and perceptions within households and society**

Gender norms regarding women strongly influence labor force participation rates and help to explain variation in participation across countries not explained by the level of economic development. An important question is why labor force participation varies so much between countries with similar per capita income levels, as can be seen in figure 3.13. Societal perceptions of women in the workplace and gender norms strongly influence labor force participation decisions (Antecol 2000; Fernández 2010; Fernández and Fogli 2005; Fernández, Fogli, and Olivetti 2004). Countries in which strong socioreligious views exist about women’s role in the public sphere, including the workplace, have been found to have lower female labor force participation rates (Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos 1989).

Whether a woman is entitled to make her own choices in the economic sphere, such as entering the workforce or starting a business, varies substantially from country to country. For example, in Vietnam, young single women are increasingly choosing to migrate for employment and to commute long distances (World Bank 2011a). However, in rural Morobe Province in Papua New Guinea, young women are not...
allowed by their families to migrate out of the village because of the fear of “early marriages,” which are regarded as taboo.

In countries with large male-to-female participation gaps throughout the life cycle—such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines—female labor force participation is considered socially and culturally acceptable as long as it does not interfere with women’s primary role as wives and mothers. For example, public gender discourse in Indonesia and Malaysia places particular emphasis on motherhood and child care as a “woman’s true vocation” (Blackburn 2001, 2004; Stivens 2006). This is a common feature to both Indonesia’s New Order ideology and Malaysia’s Nation of Character national projects.

Political and institutional evolution also affects the scope for women’s participation in education and then in the workplace. Women’s labor force participation is substantially higher in socialist and ex-socialist countries, such as China, Mongolia, and Vietnam, than in others.

Legislation can codify social norms into discriminatory labor practices. In Korea, marriage bars to private and public employment were common until the 1980s (Hill 1996). In Mongolia, women retire approximately 10 years earlier than men; this practice is, in part, attributable to a lower retirement age for women (World Bank 2011c). In Mongolia these differences in retirement ages have resulted in the female-male participation gap rising by approximately 20 percentage points between the ages of 50 and 60.

However, gender roles and relations within households do change over time, particularly in evolving environments. In China, the economic reforms of recent decades have increased the range of opportunities available to both men and women in paid employment, as the structure of the economy has moved away from predominantly agrarian with a capital-intensive heavy industry sector toward labor-intensive light industry and services (Hughes, Maurer-Fazio, and Zhang 2007). However, this transition appears to have created new obstacles for women: the state has retreated from its former commitments to gender equality and to strong enforcement of workplace protections for women, thus allowing the reemergence of traditional patriarchal values (Entwisle and Henderson 2000).

**Individual and household-level factors affecting labor market participation: Income, education, and marriage**

Changes in the characteristics of women and households—notably, changes in educational attainment, changes in the demographic profile of the population, and growth in household incomes—do not, for the most part, explain changes in the male-female gap in labor force participation in many countries in the East Asia and Pacific region during the past decade (Sakellariou 2011).

Rising education levels among girls in countries across the region has led to a substantial decline in girls’ workforce participation rates. For example, women’s participation in rural Vietnam has declined from 88.5 percent in 1998 (similar to men) to about 81 percent in 2008 (versus 84 percent for men). Most of the decline occurs in rural areas and is accounted for by rising education participation. Given the corresponding though smaller decline in male participation, the overall male-female participation gap increased from about 1.5 percentage points in 1998 to 4.5 percentage points in 2008 (Sakellariou 2011). Similarly, in China the population census indicates that the labor force participation of 15- to 22-year-old urban males and females dropped from 70.6 and 72.7 percent in 1982 to 43.8 and 46.4 percent in 2000, respectively, largely because of an increase in educational enrollment (Hughes, Maurer-Fazio, and Zhang 2005). In rural areas, participation
of females ages 15 to 22 declined from 84.3 percent to 67.3 percent between 1982 and 2000 for the same reason. Where education acquisition varies by sex, a gender gap in participation can be observed.

Although changes in education have not explained a large fraction of changes in participation within countries, they contribute to the explanation of variation in female labor force participation within a country. In Indonesia, women with higher levels of education are more likely to enter the labor market, particularly in urban areas, which may reflect their higher wage premiums and higher opportunity cost of being inactive (Ogawa and Akter 2007; World Bank 2010a). Literacy in Indonesia is also strongly correlated with both employment and occupational segregation for women, posing a double barrier to labor force outcomes (Gallaway and Bernasek 2004). In Vietnam, women with no educational qualifications are more likely than their male counterparts to be inactive, those with primary or secondary education are slightly less likely than their male counterparts to be working, and those with higher levels of education are more likely than their male counterparts to be working (Pierre 2011).

Declines in fertility have been found to exert a large positive effect on the labor force participation rate across the world. The effect is strongest for women ages 20 to 39, with an additional child being associated with a reduction of approximately four years of paid work over a woman’s lifetime (Bloom et al. 2009). In Korea, the reduction in the total fertility rate, from 5.6 children per woman in 1962 to 1.2 in 2002, has been suggested to have increased per capita income by approximately 36 percent over the period, because of an increase in the size of the workforce and higher female labor force participation as well as a longer-term increase in the capital-to-labor ratio (Bloom et al. 2009).

“What will stop us from getting a job is having plenty of children and having nobody to mind them.”

Young woman, Indonesia (World Bank 2011a)

Child care costs have a negative impact on female labor force participation, particularly in families without the support of familial networks. Reductions in child-care provisions in China and Mongolia have had a negative impact on labor force participation. In China, participation of women of childbearing age has declined in urban areas, a trend that is attributable to higher child-care costs now that child care is no longer subsidized by the state (Du and Dong 2010; Chi and Li 2009; Li and Song 2012; Maurer-Fazio et al. 2011). Similar patterns have been observed in Mongolia, where state-funded early child care and education were rolled back in the 1990s (World Bank 2011c; World Bank and ADB 2004).

The labor force participation of older women is also affected by the presence of children, since they are often responsible for caring for younger household members. In Mongolia and rural Vietnam, the evidence suggests that a “grandmother effect” is present. Older women in households with children under the age of 10 have a 15 percentage point larger participation gap than women in households with no children under the age of 10, a difference that may be attributable to older women staying at home to look after their grandchildren.

**Retirement policies**

In nearly all countries in the region, the male-female participation gap rises after the age of 50, indicating that women retire earlier than men. These differences can be partly attributed to gender-differentiated retirement policies. In 4 of 12 countries studied in the region (see table 3.1), the statutory age of retirement for women in
the private sector is five years earlier than that of men, although only in China is it mandatory to retire at the statutory age. Gender differences in mandatory retirement ages introduce significant differences—which vary by gender—in the expected returns to hiring older workers (Giles and Kartaadipoetra 2011). Men and women in rural and urban China face very different retirement systems and prospects. In urban areas, where most long-term residents have had formal wage employment, residents retire at a relatively young age and receive substantial pension support. In contrast, rural residents lack pension support and hence make their labor supply decisions in the absence of pension availability and the constraint of mandatory retirement (Giles and Kartaadipoetra 2011b).

Differences in retirement ages are likely to affect outcomes beyond labor force participation, including educational investment, the number of women in positions of power, and the risk of poverty for elderly females. Because women anticipate having a shorter working life than men, differences in retirement ages affect education and occupation choices. Gender differences in retirement ages also imply that women are less likely to rise to the top of occupational ladders, because they have less experience than men toward the end of their careers. Fewer women in Mongolia reach higher-level managerial positions, despite women having one of the highest rates of education in the region. Furthermore, early retirement reduces pension payouts, which depend on the length of tenure. This barrier can increase the risk of poverty for low-income households headed by females—women accounted for approximately 70 percent of elderly single-headed households in Mongolia in 2010 (World Bank 2011c).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retirement age</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>China</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong SAR</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Malaysia</strong></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mongolia</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan, China</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vietnam</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>55</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Determinants of the gender earnings gap**

Differences in earnings and wages may reflect differences between men and women in education and other characteristics, as well as differences in the returns to these characteristics by gender, potentially reflecting discrimination. The literature separates gender gaps into aspects that are “explained” by measured factors, such as education, age, experience, and marital status, and those that are “unexplained,” often regarded as a measure of discrimination against female workers. Care must be taken in interpreting the remaining
component of wages in this way, however, since this interpretation assumes that all relevant factors have been considered.\footnote{15}

The level and changes in the gender wage gap over time in the East Asia and Pacific region vary by country and across the income distribution, suggesting that the forces that lead to narrowing wage gaps over time are idiosyncratic. For example, a study commissioned for this report, which examined six countries in the East Asia and Pacific region—Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam—showed that the evolution of gender wage gaps over time has followed different paths (Sakellariou 2011). In Thailand, the gender wage gap substantially closed between 1996 and 2006, over all points in the wage distribution. Changes in experience, education, and return to experience have contributed significantly to this reduction. In contrast, in the Philippines the wage gap widened between 2000 and 2009, a change that is partly attributable to growing differences between men and women in terms of their returns to education and other characteristics. Indonesia has the widest earnings gap among the six countries examined, and the study found substantial heterogeneity between rural and urban areas, both in terms of the size of the gap and the factors contributing to it.

Average differences between the characteristics of men and women, such as education, experience, and the sector and occupation of employment, explain up to one-third of the male-female wage differentials across the region and the world.\footnote{16} Occupational and industrial sorting have been found to contribute more to explaining the gender wage gaps than differences in human capital, in both the East Asia and Pacific region and across the world (Nopo, Daza, and Ramos 2011; Sakellariou 2011).

The narrowing of gender wage gaps over time can be partially attributed to the converging of educational attainment of men and women. Between 1985 and 2005, the average characteristics of the female wage and salaried workforce in Thailand improved over time relative to those of males. Nakavachara (2010) found that the substantial increase in the education of females between 1985 and 2005 was the major source of the narrowing of the gender earnings gap in Thailand during this period. Dhanani and Islam (2004) found that, although females earned on average about 30 percent less than men between 1976 and 2000, overall wage inequality varies with industrial affiliation as well as education and age. The wage gap in Indonesia increases substantially with age, reflecting in part growing differences in education and experience between older men and women.

Differences in the characteristics of men and women in some countries in the region suggest that men should earn more than women. In the Philippines and Mongolia, where women’s levels of human capital are, on average, higher than those of men, measures that account for gender differences in human capital increase the gender wage gap because human capital differences fail to account for the substantial differences in earnings between men and women. In Mongolia, taking into account the different characteristics of men and women, women should have earned 22 percent more than men in 2006 (Pastore 2009). Similarly, in the Philippines, education and other characteristics of women would suggest that, on average, the wages of women should be higher than those of men (Sakellariou 2011).

The bulk of the gender wage gap within the region is due to differences in the labor market value of male and female characteristics.\footnote{17} In the East Asia and Pacific region, the fraction of the gender wage gap explained by differences in characteristics—the explained component—is smaller than the fraction of the wage gap attributable to differences in returns—the unexplained component (Sakellariou 2011). This difference can be seen in figures 3.14 and 3.15 for Indonesia, where the component due to differences in characteristics
constituted just over 40 percent of the gross gap in 1997 (but over 50 percent in urban areas) and about 35 percent in 2009 (but only 19 percent in rural areas). Differences in labor market experience and returns to labor market experience constituted the major contributor to the characteristics component in both years. In Vietnam, the fraction of the gap explained by differences in characteristics is only 11 percent in urban areas, whereas in rural areas the characteristics of females would suggest that, on average, the wages of women should be higher than those of men (Sakellariou 2011). In China, the mean gender pay gap increased substantially between 1987 and 2007, from 18 percent in 1995 (Chi and Li 2009) to nearly 30 percent in 2007 (Shi and Song 2012). Over this period, the majority of the increase was not attributable to differences in characteristics but rather was due to unexplained differences in the return to male and female characteristics.

Marriage and childbearing have a larger negative effect on the wages of females than on the wages of males. The trade-off for women between career, earnings growth, and family does not appear to exist for men. Indeed, for some women, this trade-off is associated with increasingly stark choices. Anecdotal evidence suggests that women in richer parts of East Asia are increasingly less likely to marry and marry later when they do, in part because of the perceived incompatibility of marriage and career (Economist 2011). The negative effect of childbearing on earnings and employment has been found across the world as well as within countries in the East Asia and Pacific region. In Cebu, in the Philippines, children have a strong negative effect on a woman’s likelihood of participating in the labor force and, once in the labor force, on her earnings over time. The negative effect of children on women’s earnings represents both a reduction in the number of hours worked and a shift to lower-paying and often less secure jobs that are more compatible with childbearing responsibilities (Adair et al. 2002). In China, married women have substantially larger gender wage gaps than their unmarried counterparts (Hughes and Maurer-Fazio 2002). Furthermore, the proportion of the gender wage gap unexplained by differences in the productive characteristics of men and women is greater for married than single women, though the gap is narrower in the case of more educated married women. These results may be attributable to the greater responsibilities borne by Chinese women for household chores and child care.

Figure 3.14. The fraction of the gender wage gap explained by differences in characteristics is smaller than the fraction of the wage gap attributable to differences in returns in the majority of East Asian countries, 1997–2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics component</th>
<th>Returns to characteristics component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="source" alt="Characteristics component graph" /></td>
<td><img src="source" alt="Returns to characteristics component graph" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender wage paths over careers may reflect differences in male and female workplace behavior, as well as differences in the types of characteristics that men and women value in a job. Evidence from the organizational and human resources literature shows females as being less competitive, more risk averse (Croson and Gneezy 2009), less likely to push for pay rises (Babcock and Laschever 2003), and more likely to be content with lower starting salaries. This acceptance may be due in part to women having different demands for job characteristics and expectations of labor market outcomes than men. For example, Bender, Donohue, and Heywood (2005) find that flexibility is an important job characteristic that appeals to women and may play a contributing role in gender-based labor market segregation.

In sum, men earn more than women across countries in the East Asia and Pacific region, though the reasons for this vary from country to country. Education differences between men and women are not able to explain the bulk of gender gaps in labor market wages. In some countries, such as Mongolia and the Philippines, education differences in fact imply that women should earn more than men. The most important differences between men and women are those related to occupational choice and family life. Marriage and childbearing are likely to affect men’s and women’s earnings in different ways, partly reflecting their respective responses to these life-cycle transitions.

**Earnings gaps between male and female entrepreneurs**

Women-run firms have fewer employees, lower sales, and capital stock than those run by men, as evidence from Europe and Central Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean has shown (Amin 2011; Bardasi, Blackden, and Guzman 2007; Bruhn 2009; Costa and Rijkers 2011; Sabarwal and Terell 2008). Various explanations have been put forward to motivate why female-run firms produce less per worker than male-run firms and, in particular, why women tend to head smaller firms in less capital-intensive sectors than men. The three predominant explanations examined here are sectoral segmentation, skills, and constraints.

**Figure 3.16. Differences in productivity across informal and formal firms in Vietnam are larger than differences across male- and female-led enterprises**

![Chart showing productivity differences between informal and formal firms run by men and women in Vietnam.]

In Vietnam, a study commissioned for this report found that there were no gender differences in short-term revenue growth or survival probability evidence in firms in the formal sector between 1997 and 2009 (Bjerge and Rand 2011). In the informal sector in Indonesia, the sector of operation and the firm’s size accounts for almost 90 percent of the observed gender gap in productivity in rural areas (Costa and Rijkers 2011), although they account for substantially less of the gap in urban Indonesia (Badiani and Posades 2011).

Informality is likely to be a greater determinant of an enterprise’s success than the gender of the manager or owner. Evidence from Indonesia and Vietnam suggests that differences in profits between female-headed firms and male-headed firms are substantially smaller than the differences between female-headed firms in the formal sector and those in the informal sector (figure 3.16). This mirrors evidence from Africa (Hallward-Driemeier 2011).

Evidence on gender constraints in informal enterprises within the East Asia and Pacific region is more limited than evidence from the formal sector, however. More data are urgently needed on the informal sector because microenterprises constitute a substantial fraction of enterprises and employment in the region. In Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, microenterprises make up 98.9, 98.2, and 92.3 percent of all micro-, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), respectively, and they make up 79.3 percent of all enterprises in Malaysia (Kushnir, Mirmulstein, and Ramalho 2010). The East Asia and Pacific region has the highest ratio of MSME employment to total employment of all regions, mainly driven by China, where MSMEs account for 80 percent of total employment.

**Skills.** Evidence on whether female entrepreneurs have a lower level of managerial skills than male entrepreneurs is limited in the region. However, it is clear that gender differences in both education and soft skills are likely to affect men’s and women’s respective decisions to participate in self-employment and in their sector of choice (Brush 1992). Furthermore, differences in entrepreneurial and managerial skills (such as being able to identify market niches and do bookkeeping) between men and women may explain differences in the size of the firms that they establish and earnings gaps (Bruhn, Karlan, and Schoar 2010).

Although evidence from studies of entrepreneurial skills in the region is limited, the evidence from outside the region is mixed with regard to whether the lack of skills is an important constraint for entrepreneurs. A study from Peru suggests that giving business training to female clients of a microcredit program did not lead to higher profits or revenues on average, although the clients did adopt some of the activities taught in the program, including thinking proactively about new markets and profit-making opportunities (Karlan and Valdivia 2011). In Pakistan, business training was found to increase the survival and profitability of male-run firms but had no effect on female firms (Gine and Mansuri 2011). However, in India, a two-day training program for female clients of an Indian microfinance institution was found to increase both the amount that they borrowed and the likelihood of the clients’ receiving labor income (Field, Jayachandran, and Pande 2010).

Within the region, female entrepreneurs themselves consider that their skill limitations are a barrier to their success. In Vietnam, a survey of 500 female owners of enterprises revealed that female entrepreneurs felt the need to improve their skills, particularly in business management and leadership, through training and education (IFC and MPDF 2006). These findings are supported by another survey that indicated that females have lower general training levels than men (VCCI 2006).
Constraints. In the formal sector, the constraints faced by female-run firms do not appear to be uniformly greater than those faced by male-run firms (Davies and Record 2010; IFC 2011; IFC/NORC Indonesia 2010; World Bank 2011b). In the Philippines, qualitative and quantitative research suggests that there is little evidence of gender differentiation in lending or borrowing in small and medium enterprises (IFC 2011). In Indonesia, insufficient finance and financial management were found to be less of a concern for women (IFC/NORC Indonesia 2010).

Data from enterprise surveys carried out in five Pacific and four East and Southeast Asian countries in 2009 show that entrepreneurs, regardless of gender, named competition, finance, and electricity as their top three constraints in five of the nine countries. Male and female firms reported the same constraints as being the most important in all countries, except Vietnam, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Vietnam. The difference between self-reported access to credit constraints for male- and female-run formal sector firms is negligible in all countries, with the exception of Timor-Leste and Tonga (figure 3.17).

However, credit constraints are greater in the smallest firms and in the informal sector where female-run firms are concentrated. Constraints to female entrepreneurs may arise in both formal and informal institutional structures, for example, because of difficulties interacting with male officials who adhere to cultural norms of female propriety. In Indonesia, access to capital is the most important constraint reported in both male- and female-run informal firms (figure 3.18), and female-run informal firms appear to have substantially less capital than male-run informal firms. Female microfirms also have lower levels of start-up capital than male-run microfirms.

Access to capital may be more limited—and more expensive—for female entrepreneurs because they lack collateral (World Bank 2011g). According to calculations from the World Bank Enterprise Surveys database of 2006–11, in all countries in the region for which data were available, land and buildings were the predominant forms of collateral used to acquire a loan for production purposes. This practice puts female
entrepreneurs at a disadvantage since they have fewer of these assets as well as less secure access to land or other immobile assets. However, the most important determinant of access to credit is the size of the firm (Beck et al. 2006). Credit institutions tend to regard small firms as a bigger risk than large firms, and, since women tend to manage smaller firms, this is likely to lead to female-run businesses being more constrained in the credit market than those that are run by men (Simavi, Manuel, and Blackden 2010).

**Female farmers**

The agricultural sector continues to be the major sector of employment in many countries in the region. In Vanuatu, 80 percent of the population rely upon small-scale agriculture (IFC 2010), whereas in Cambodia and Lao PDR, over 70 percent of the workforce is employed in agriculture.

As the countries across the world have developed, agriculture has been taken over by women as men move to the cities in search of non-farm work (Deere and Leon 2003; Ganguly 2003; Mu and van de Walle 2010). This “feminization” of agriculture can be seen in multiple countries in the region. In China, the number of households in which women performed all the farm work, conditional on farm participation, rose from 14 percent in 1991 to just under 30 percent in 2009, while the fraction of households in which men do all the work has remained fairly stable (de Brauw et al. 2011; Rawski and Mead 1998). In Cambodia, women make up the majority of farmers—1.4 million female farmers compared to 1.2 million male farmers (World Bank 2003). In Vietnam, agriculture accounted for 64 percent of working women in rural areas in 2008 compared to 53 percent of working men (World Bank 2011e).

Despite the important role played in agriculture by women in the region, little evidence is available on whether there are gender differences in productivity, access to inputs, or agricultural services. Better evidence is sorely needed for policy makers to understand whether and how gender differences affect productivity and access to inputs in agriculture. Indeed, remedying this information gap is likely to become increasingly important if the feminization of agriculture continues to be seen within the region.

While evidence from the East Asia and Pacific region is scarce, evidence from other regions suggests that female farmers earn less than male farmers. Evidence from Africa suggests, for example, that within a household, yields on male-run plots are higher than those on female-run plots, predominantly because of increased male access to fertilizer and labor inputs (Goldstein and Udry 2008; Udry 1996). The available evidence from the East Asia and Pacific region suggests that, in China, female farmers are just as productive and efficient as male farmers, despite differences in mechanization and fertilizer use (de Brauw et al. 2011). Although female farmers are able to produce similar amounts per hectare to men, they do not produce as much overall owing to differences in land and nonland inputs between male and female farmers.

Agricultural production varies between male and female farmers because of differences in access to land. Female farmers across the world own and operate less land, and often have lower-quality land than male farmers (Deere and Doss 2006; Quisumbing 1998; Quisumbing, Estudillo, and Otsuka 2004). Evidence from the East Asia and Pacific region suggests that there are substantial differences in access to land between male and female farmers. In China, female-headed households own 30 percent less land per capita than male-headed households (de Brauw et al. 2011). In Lao PDR, male-headed agricultural households own approximately 16 percent more land than female-headed households on average, although in the north of the country men have access to 28 percent more land (FAO 2010). A World Bank study of women’s
landholdings in post-tsunami Aceh found that women’s landholdings were considerably less than men’s (World Bank 2010b).

Female farmers have also been found to have less access to technological inputs such as fertilizers and improved seeds (Peterman, Behrman, and Quisumbing 2010). An important theme in the literature on the use of productivity-enhancing technology is that access to inputs, not the propensity to use inputs or productivity once the inputs have been used, is the key factor for many farmers. In a review of 24 studies of technological input use, access, and adoption of fertilizer, seed varieties, tools, and pesticides in Africa and South Asia, Peterman, Behrman, and Quisumbing (2010) found that men have a greater mean access to technological resources in the majority of cases. Unfortunately, given little evidence from the region on this topic, it is difficult to know whether the same constraints are pertinent in the region.

Gender differences in access to extension services are also likely to contribute to differences in the adoption of new technologies and farming practices and to perpetuate existing gender inequalities in access to inputs. In Cambodia, access to agricultural extension services was found to be substantially lower for female farmers than for male farmers in the early 2000s, despite the fact that there were more female farmers than male farmers (World Bank 2003b). Reasons for the lower access to extension service among female farmers include a focus of extension services on activities normally conducted by men, the focus of extension services on literate farmers, and the need to travel several kilometers to access services (World Bank 2003b).

Finally, gender-based differences in social and political capital have been found in a number of rural areas, reducing women’s access to information on farming techniques and their ability to protect and regulate local resources and their marketing channels. In the Philippines, men and women do not differ in their participation in local groups, but they do differ in the types of groups that they join. Men are more likely than women to be members of production-based groups, whereas women are more likely to be members of civic groups, which include women’s groups, village youth associations, school committees, and village officials (Godquin and Quisumbing 2008). In Indonesia, men usually participate in civil society organizations related to community-level governance, physical infrastructure, environmental improvements, and neighborhood security, whereas women participate in organizations that focus on family welfare, economics, and health (Beard 2005).

**Determinants of labor market segmentation**

The determinants of persistent gender segregation across countries and over time can be found at all levels of the economy and society, from gender norms within households and communities to economic signals in the marketplace and ideological predilections at a societal level. Factors that influence labor market segregation along gender lines include (a) differences between men and women in the level and composition of their education and experience, (b) differences in their preferences for types of work and job characteristics, (c) their comparative advantages due to their differences in the physical endowments, (d) employers’ perceptions about male and female employees (sometimes to the extent of discrimination), and (e) labor market institutions that limit or restrict occupational choices. These factors are, in themselves, determined by the economic signals, institutions, and norms facing individuals, households, and communities.

This section examines the effects of three key factors: (a) gender differences in education levels and labor market skills; (b) gender differences in time-use patterns and gender roles within households, both of which
affect the characteristics and types of work that women are able to do; and (c) labor market and institutional barriers to women’s choices.

**Education and skills**

Education levels and the type of education acquired (for example, vocational versus general education) affect the skills that individuals bring into the labor market and hence are likely to contribute to their sectoral and occupational choices. In the East Asia and Pacific region, male and female education at every level has been converging over the past two decades, and in some countries, such as Mongolia and the Philippines, education acquisition by women has overtaken that of men. These trends are discussed extensively in chapter 2, which showed that at the tertiary level of education (universities, technical training schools, and so forth), a student’s field of specialization was likely to be closely related to his or her subsequent sectoral choices. Any gender differences in education choices are therefore likely to be mirrored in sectoral dissimilarities among men and women. As the number of men and women continuing to higher and tertiary education rises, if women tend to choose different fields than men, sectoral and occupational segregation is likely to increase.

However, in the lower- and middle-income countries in the East Asia and Pacific region, only a small fraction of men and women continue to higher education. Therefore, the nexus of education choice and occupational segregation isn’t currently a primary driving force for labor market segregation in the region. However, it is likely to play a larger role among younger cohorts and future generations as education continues to expand. For example, in Taiwan, China, gender wage gaps have declined substantially between 1979 and 1995, a period during which there was a rapid increase in average educational attainment and a shift from academic general-curriculum education toward vocational training. Among university graduates, differences in degree type between men and women are able to explain between 20 percent and 50 percent of the gender wage gap, although the link between occupation and degree type is lower among women than men (Baraka 1999).

**Time use and gender roles within households**

Differences in the ways men and women spend their time are informative in illuminating why they may invest differently in human capital, how gender differences in labor market participation may arise, and what their occupational and industry choices will be. Time is a valuable resource that is endowed equally across men and women—everyone has just 24 hours in a day. Time can be devoted to a number of uses: labor market work; unpaid work within the household, such as conducting domestic chores and caring for children and the elderly; and personal activities, including sleeping, eating, and leisure (Becker 1965, 1981).

Women across the world work more than men. This stylized fact holds true in multiple low- and middle-income countries across the world (Berniell and Sanchez-Páramo 2011), as well as in several OECD countries (Burda et al. 2007; Slootmaekers-Miranda 2011). This gender difference in time-use patterns is seen at all ages. Whereas men are able to focus predominantly on their single productive role and conduct their other roles sequentially, women are more likely to play these roles simultaneously and have to balance competing uses of their time (Blackden and Wodon 2006).

However, time differences in hours worked by men and women diminish however growth in gross domestic product (GDP) is combined with gender-neutral social norms. In a study of 25 countries across the world, men and women were found to do the same amount of total work in rich northern countries (Burda et al. 2007). The gender difference in total working time is close to zero for countries with relatively high female employment.
“Women indeed work harder. We go to the field and return home at the same time as our husband. Afterwards, we still have to cook, do laundry and do other household chores. The men after they return home from the field do not want to work anymore.”
Adult woman in rural Batu Palano, Indonesia (World Bank 2011d)

In the East Asia and Pacific region, women work more hours and devote more time to caregiving and housework than men, while men specialize in market-oriented activities. Since women’s share of unpaid work is higher than that of men, this translates into shorter time in paid work.

A number of stylized facts emerge from time-use patterns by gender in the region. First, women work more hours than men; this holds true at all ages. In Lao PDR, women work on average 2 hours extra per day than men, and in Cambodia they work on average 1.2 hours more per day.

Second, gender differences in time-use patterns are starker during the childbearing years. In Cambodia, men and women spend similar amounts of time in market work until they are 20, but after that point, women devote less time to market work than men and more time to domestic activities (Government of Cambodia 2004). The greatest difference between male and female hours worked is during childbearing years—in households with young children, women work on average 1.5 hours extra per day in Cambodia and 2.6 hours extra per day in Lao PDR (figure 3.19).

Third, gender differences in the time devoted to household activities are smaller in high-income households, although this represents a reduction in female working time rather than an increase in male working time. In Timor-Leste, rural women in the highest income quintile spend more time on domestic activities than men (figure 3.20). The difference between men and women narrows with rising income. The narrowing of time-
use differences, however, arises from a reduction in the time devoted by women to these activities, thus reflecting increased access to technologies and household help rather than an increase in male participation.

Finally, gender differences in the time devoted to household activities start at an early age. In the Philippines, Pörtner (2009) studied time use of children between the ages of 7 and 16 and found that, although there is little difference in the participation rates and time spent in school by boys and girls, time spent on work and household chores is closely related to the sex of the child. Boys participate in market-related activities more than twice as often as girls, whereas from the age of 14, girls spend on average twice as much time on household chores than boys.

Spending greater time on household activities has implications for women’s labor market outcomes. Because women do a greater proportion of household work and child care than men, they have less time for productive activities. This pattern makes them less likely to enter the labor market and implies that, when they do, they are more likely to choose occupations that give them the flexibility to conduct their domestic responsibilities (Anker 1998; Becker 1965).

Women may regard the informal sector as more compatible with childbearing and household responsibilities than the formal sector, since it offers greater flexibility in hours, though flexibility comes at a price—less security, lower status, and a lack of nonwage benefits such as social security, health insurance, and paid sick leave. Female entrepreneurs may similarly prefer to keep their businesses small because doing so allows them to combine household responsibilities with work (Sabarwal, Terrell, and Bardasi 2009). In Thailand, single women without children are more likely to be found in the formal sector, while married women with children are found in the informal sector, particularly in self-employment. The evidence suggests that the movement of married women with children into self-employment is a choice rather than an effect of discrimination (Bosch and Maloney 2011).

Differences in the time-use patterns of men and women also reflect society’s norms regarding gender roles and “appropriate work.” These social norms and customs affect the ability of both men and women to participate in the economic, social, or political domain. In China, despite strong governmental support for gender equality on multiple levels in the workplace, cultural norms have still emphasized the role of women as xianqi hangmu (a good wife and a good mother) and as the bearer of responsibility for household work (Chen 2005; Honig 2000). These norms persist even as development progresses and women’s share of income in household economies rises. In Beijing, even when the wife’s income represents a larger share of the couple’s combined income, women still do the majority of the household work (Zuo and Bian 2001). Both men and women justified this in terms of their gender roles in the household. Similar patterns are found in Nanjing (Kim et al. 2010).

In spite of high rates of participation in the labor force, gender discourse at all levels in the region stresses how women’s primary obligations are to the family and the well-being of children. This is often reinforced at the level of the nation-state, where the role of women as “homemakers and mothers” and of men as “breadwinners” is reinforced in political discourse. In Malaysia, the Nation of Character project focused on 25 key values important for the development of good character in children. This project very clearly put forward that women’s most important tasks were related to the home and to strengthening the family. The division of labor between men and women in the public and private sphere is further emphasized from an early age in parts of the region. In Cambodia, a book of moral codes—the Chba’p srey—emphasizes the
“proper” behavior and conduct of women, and constrains their opportunities outside the household (Dasgupta and Williams 2010).

_Labor markets and formal and informal institutions_

Labor laws and regulations can directly affect the demand for female workers and constrain these workers in their choice of occupation. In many countries, restrictions on women’s working hours or industries were introduced as measures to protect the health of women (particularly those who are pregnant or lactating) or women in potentially hazardous jobs. However, with improvements in labor market conditions in dangerous industries and with the passing of employment legislation designed to protect the health and safety of workers, many of these restrictions may no longer be relevant and could be changed (Anker 1998). Measures that limit women to work only daytime hours or restrict their work to a subset of industries limit their employment options and also drive employers to hire only men for jobs that women might otherwise do.

A study on labor laws commissioned for this report found that protective legislation prohibits women from working in industries and occupations in 9 of the 12 low- and middle-income countries examined in the region (China, Fiji, Kiribati, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam) (World Bank 2010c). In Thailand women are prohibited from working in certain occupations, including mining; working on a scaffold more than 10 meters high; and producing or transporting explosives or inflammable materials. In Vietnam, the Labor Code prohibits assigning female workers to “heavy or dangerous work, or work requiring contact with toxic substances, which has adverse effects on her ability to bear and raise a child.” The code also provides that women, regardless of age, cannot be employed in mines or in deep water. No similar provisions are applicable to men. In Mongolia, until 2008 extensive labor market regulations limited female participation in multiple sectors of the economy, including mining, transport, and construction (World Bank 2011c). Pregnant women are even more limited in their choices: in 6 out of 10 countries in the region, they have more restrictions on industry choices than other men and women (World Bank 2010b).

These protective restrictions may increase the cost of employing women. For example, in Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines, women are not allowed to work the same night hours as men. In the Philippines, the law states that women are unable to work between 10 at night and 6 in the morning of the following day. The restrictions on women’s work have been criticized as particularly restrictive by the call center industry, which employs a large proportion of women who are required to work at night (Keitel 2009). Paid maternity leave also increases the cost to employers of hiring female workers rather than male workers, particularly in countries where paternity leave policies are not in place. In contexts where employers bear the burden of this cost, this is particularly likely to raise the cost of hiring female workers.

Discriminatory laws in the area of family and marriage also affect women’s economic opportunities. Laws relating to family, marriage, and inheritance play a key role in influencing women’s economic rights, including access to land, housing, and other forms of property (Ellis, Kirkwood, and Malhotra 2010). The law of succession in Tonga’ constitution, for example, allows only males to inherit. In Indonesia, the civil code prevents women from entering into contracts on their own behalf, whether to sell or buy property, which enables men to influence women’s access to collateral. Access to land is dependent on a woman’s married status, and her control and ownership can be lost upon divorce, widowhood, migration, or desertion by her husband (IFC and MPDF 2006).
Women also have less access to information on opportunities and job networks. Personal connections are recognized as facilitating job search, but women’s domestic responsibilities make it difficult for them to forge useful social connections (Timberlake 2005). In Nanjing city, China, a case study suggests that women secured less-attractive jobs through their own networks than through those of their husbands. Women who have fewer social contacts also were more vulnerable to redundancy and experienced more hardship in finding a new job after having been displaced from their old job (Hiroko, Liu, and Tamashita 2011).

Finally, occupational segregation may be related to persistent stereotypes about what are appropriate occupations for men and women. Stereotypes of women as homemakers and men as breadwinners can translate into their skills in the labor market (Anker 1998). For example, positive stereotypes of women—having a caring nature, manual dexterity, skill at conducting household work, and greater honesty—could lead to the hypothesis that women would be better qualified to work as nurses, teachers, clerks, and sales assistants, among other occupations (Anker 1998). In qualitative work undertaken in Fiji, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Vietnam, gendered beliefs about appropriate employment for men and women were remarkably consistent across these countries and among genders (World Bank 2011a). See box 3.2 for more detail.

**What can policy do?**

The analysis in this chapter has identified several indicators of gender inequalities in the productive sphere where challenges remain and where policy may be able to reduce persistent gender-based differences in economic opportunities and outcomes.

**Policies and investments that address the trade-offs between women’s household and market roles are critical to promoting gender equality in economic opportunity**

Women often face stark time trade-offs between household chores and market work, particularly in rural areas. In such contexts, programs targeted at reducing women’s time on chores—for example, through investment in infrastructure—are likely to increase their ability to engage in market-based income-earning opportunities. Policies that support women in balancing their caregiving and market roles are also critical to strengthening their access to economic opportunity. Access to affordable and accessible child care can be critical in this regard. Community child-care centers, particularly those targeted at low-income neighborhoods, have been found to increase maternal employment in a number of Latin American countries.

Parental and paternity leave can promote greater parity between the sexes by facilitating a more equitable division of child-rearing responsibilities, thus allowing women to have the same opportunities as men for advancing their careers in the formal sector. Within the region, only Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines currently have provisions for paternity leave. Evidence from the OECD on the take-up of paternity leave is mixed, however, suggesting that providing paternity leave alone is not sufficient to change the current gender division of child-rearing responsibilities within households. Rather, it needs to be combined with approaches to breaking down gender norms regarding household caregiving roles.
**Policies for breaking down gender silos in the labor market also are critical**

A key element of breaking down gender silos in the labor market involves supporting young women and men to invest in skills on the basis of productivity rather than on gender norms and perceptions of “appropriate” occupations. Beyond efforts to reduce gender streaming in education, discussed above, programs that encourage both women and men to think outside of gender silos in the job market will likely improve the allocation of talent toward jobs in a way that both enhances equality of economic opportunity and productivity.

Breaking down social norms and perceptions is an area where the public sector can also lead by example. Even if women enter more “male” occupations, stereotypes are likely to persist with respect to women as leaders and managers. The public sector is in a unique position to establish good practice in this regard by encouraging women’s professional advancement, either through direct measures such as targets or quotas, or through specialized training programs. In this context, the government of Malaysia put in place a system of quotas for female managers in the public sector; the approach has recently been extended to private sector firms to encourage women to assume leadership roles. In Mexico, the government initiated a system of grants to firms to improve gender-based employment issues in their workplace and also to improve the gender distribution in management.

... and for eliminating resource constraints on female-led farms and enterprises

Despite progress, the existing evidence suggests that women continue to have less access to a range of productive resources than do men, as a function of their gender as opposed to their innate productive capabilities. Public policies may thus have an important role to play in promoting gender equality in the control of productive inputs—whether land, agricultural extension, technology, or financial capital. Improving women’s access to productive assets can play an important role in raising enterprise productivity, whether in the farm or nonfarm sector, as in the following examples:

- Several countries in the region have made headway in recent years in increasing ownership and control of land. In response to concerns about persistent gender inequalities in land, several countries in the region—including Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam—recently adopted gender-sensitive reforms in land titling. Because the reasons for women’s lower access to land differ across the region—from unfavorable legal frameworks to cultural norms and practices that deem land a male asset—effective policies to increase female landholdings need to account for context-specific constraints in developing context-specific solutions.

- Increasing women’s access to information and training, extension services, and other productive inputs can also play a key role in enhancing the productivity of female-led enterprises, both within and outside agriculture.

- Although evidence on access to finance in East Asian and Pacific countries is mixed, women do face particular challenges in accessing credit, given their weaker access to land, which is an important source of collateral.

Where evidence is thin there is a need to invest greater resources in uncovering where constraints are greatest. For example, there is very limited information on gender-based differences in access to inputs in the
agricultural sector in the region, as well as weak evidence on gender differences in access to inputs and productivity in the informal sector.

As in the case of education and health, broader systemic weaknesses—whether in the form of cumbersome registration procedures, weak systems of financial intermediation, and lack of electricity—affect both female- and male-led enterprises. Evidence suggests that such constraints may be more onerous among small and informal firms than among larger firms and, as such, may constrain female-led enterprises disproportionately. This suggests that interventions that focus on improving the overall investment climate and, in particular, promoting small business development will be a critical part of a strategy to promote gender equality in access to economic opportunity. In sum, it will be important to address systemic as well as gender-specific constraints as part of a strategy to promote gender equality in economic opportunity.

Creating an enabling environment for gender equality in employment is a key component of efforts to promote gender equality in economic opportunity in the long term in East Asia and the Pacific

An important starting point for promoting equal opportunity in employment is to ensure that women and men face a level legal playing field with respect to jobs and sectors. Labor regulations that result in asymmetries in the costs of hiring male and female workers can be found in across the region. Ostensibly protective legislation—in the form of restrictions on women working at night, working overtime, and working in so-called dangerous sectors—in practice inhibits women’s economic participation. Priority should be given to reducing labor market restrictions that limit women’s employment options. Where the original concerns motivating these policies continue to be valid—for example, health and safety concerns—measures should be taken to ensure that these concerns are addressed more directly and for both men and women, whether through workplace safety codes or provision of safe and reliable transport infrastructure.

Although formal sector employment is still small as a share of total employment in most East Asian and Pacific countries, an important role for public policy is to strengthen the enabling environment for gender equality in economic opportunity. Active labor market policies are one means of overcoming gender differences in access for formal employment. For example, wage subsidies may allow individuals, albeit temporarily, to signal their abilities to future employers and make it cheaper for employers to hire female workers whom they may not otherwise have considered. This approach provides the opportunity to reduce stereotypes through directly observing their skills, and also gives women valuable labor market experience. Skills training programs may enable women and men to move into professions outside of gender silos, particularly when paired with apprenticeship opportunities. Although evidence on the impact of active labor market policies in East Asia and the Pacific is limited, studies from Latin America and the Middle East suggest that well-designed active labor market policies can help to improve women's employment outcomes.

Affirmative action policies have also been used to overcome gender-specific barriers to employment, whether those barriers are due to implicit or overt discrimination in hiring and promotion. Although there is a debate in the literature regarding the benefits and costs of affirmative action, the collection of evidence (largely from high-income countries) suggests that carefully designed policies can help break down barriers to female employment with few or no adverse effects on firm productivity (World Bank 2011f). Affirmative action hiring and promotion in the public sector can also have important demonstration effects. For example, in 2004, the government of Malaysia introduced a public sector gender quota of 30 percent female representation across all decision-making levels, including positions such as department heads or secretary-general (ASEAN 2008).
Gender and Economic Opportunity

Notes

1 Using cross-country data for selected Asian economies, Meng (1996) found no significant relationship between economic development and the relative earnings of men and women. In fact, inequality in earnings within the East Asia and Pacific region was worse in high-income countries such as Japan and the Republic of Korea than in the low- and middle-income countries.

2 Unfortunately, data constraints prevent looking at birth age-cohort patterns within the majority of countries in the region.

3 Gender wage gaps do not capture earnings differences among all men and women of working age. First, they miss a large fraction of the workforce, notably those in unpaid work or self-employed workers. Second, since there may be differential selection between males and females into the labor force—and into wage-employment rather than entrepreneurship and agriculture—gender wage gaps are also likely to reflect these selection decisions.

4 Aggregate relative wage data should, however, be treated with caution since it confounds differences in human capital and experience, occupational and sectoral selection, underlying ability, selection into the labor market, and discrimination.

5 Household surveys in Thailand and Vietnam corroborate this: in urban areas, women are approximately 10 percentage points less likely to receive benefits than men in Vietnam, while they are 3 percentage points less likely to do so in Thailand. In the post-reform period in China, a growing number of women and urban workers have been pushed into temporary, part-time, insecure, or low-paying work in the informal sector (Yuan and Cook 2010).

6 Notably, an individual is defined as working in the informal sector if he or she works in agriculture or is self-employed, working in the household enterprise, or working as an unpaid family worker. However, an individual is classified as working in the formal sector if he or she works as a legislator or manager, professional, technician/associate professional, or plant machine operator or assembler, or is in the armed forces.

7 Elementary occupations consist of simple and routine tasks that mainly require the use of hand-held tools and often some physical effort. For a more detailed explanation, please refer to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) by the International Labour Organization.

8 Care should be taken when interpreting the data from Samoa, Timor-Leste, Tonga, and Vanuatu because of very small sample sizes.

9 Evidence from across the world suggests that firms with greater female representation in management display lower levels of gender inequalities, including wage gaps and inequalities within firms (Cohen and Huffman 2007; Graves and Powell 1995; Huffman, Cohen, and Pearlman 2010).

10 Occupational and industrial segregation by gender is detrimental for labor market efficiency and welfare for four principal reasons (Anker 1998). First, men and women are not working in occupations or industrial sectors to which they are best suited and most productive but are rather choosing their work based on other factors. This trend reduces overall incomes and aggregate productivity. Second, gender-based segregation increases labor market rigidity and reduces the ability of labor markets to respond to economic reforms and labor market shocks, such as those related to globalization. Third, segregation reinforces and perpetuates negative gender stereotypes, consequently reducing women’s status, income, education, and skills. Finally, segregation of the current generation has negative effects on future generations.

11 In Indonesia, controlling for sector of operation and firm size accounts for 17 percent of differences in profits in rural areas, and 50 percent in urban areas (Badani and Posades 2011), and industry accounts for 9 to 14 percent of earnings among self-employed individuals in the United States (Hundley 2001).

12 Several hypotheses suggest why female labor force participation first falls before rising with economic development levels. Boserup (1970) suggests that men’s greater access to education and technologies implies that they displace women from the labor force during the early stages of a country’s development. As development continues and women gain more access to education and technologies, female labor force participation increases. Another well-established hypothesis for this phenomenon focuses on income and substitution effects (Goldin 1995; Mammen and Paxson 2000). As development occurs, households’ unearned incomes rise, reducing the incentive of women to work outside the home. The negative impact of rising incomes on women’s labor force participation is termed the “income effect,” since greater household income implies that households are able to afford more female leisure time. The substitution effect works in the opposite direction—as female wages rise, more women are enticed to enter the workforce (Goldin 1995; Mammen and Paxson 2000).

13 In the East Asia and Pacific region, evidence of declining female labor force participation as incomes rise has been found in Thailand (Mammen and Paxson 2000).

14 In the OECD, a number of studies find childcare costs negatively impact rates of female labor force participation and that the provision of subsidized childcare raises participation (Anderson and Levine 1999; Blau and Currie 2006; Chevalier and Vittasen 2002; Del Boca 2002; Gelbach 2002; Gustafsson and Stafford 1992).

15 For example, even if differences in average human capital have been considered, the residual is likely to still contain differences between the composition and quality of education of males and females that may help to explain gender earnings gaps, as well as other unobserved characteristics that may vary between males and females, such as the intensity of work conducted, workplace characteristics, and unobserved measures of ability.
Furthermore, if the occupation choice or tenure trajectories within a firm reflect the impact of discrimination, then measuring discrimination as the unexplained component of wage gaps will underestimate its true extent.

16 In the OECD, Blau and Kahn (2000) find that 38 percent of the total gender wage gap is unexplained by differences in occupational and sectoral choice, education, and experience. In addition, women have less labor market experience—in OECD countries as well as developing countries (Goldin, Katz, and Kuziemko 2006)—in part because they are more likely both to take time out from the work force and to work part-time.

17 The evidence suggests a similar pattern in the United States. Bertrand, Goldin, and Katz (2010) find that women master of business administration (MBA) graduates earn less, even if they choose similar professional paths as men. Bayard et al. (2005) find that a large portion of the gender wage gap in the United States can be explained by pay differences between males and females within narrowly defined occupations and within establishments.

18 Evidence from across the world suggests that marriage and childbearing have a large impact on the gender wage gap. In the United States, marital status and young children account for approximately half the gender wage gap faced by young women. A large component of the gender gap in earnings is attributable to women having more career interruptions and shorter work hours, including more work in part-time positions and self-employment (Becker 1981; Bertrand, Goldin, and Katz 2010; Korenman and Neumark 1992; Mincer and Polachek 1974; Sasser 2005; Wood, Corcoran, and Courant 1993). These estimates may, however, underestimate the effect of parenting and gender divisions of household labor on wage gaps, since the demands placed on women at home can influence education, career, and work choices (O’Neill 2003).

19 Indeed, household survey data in Vietnam, which also cover microenterprises, suggest that female-run household enterprises were more likely to survive compared to male-run enterprises between 1993 and 1998 (Vijverberg and Haughton 2004). The higher rates of female-run firms’ survival are linked to women’s predominance in certain sectors.

20 Evidence from the enterprise surveys conducted in 2009 in Lao PDR suggests that female-run firms consistently report business environment constraints to be less severe than male-run firms (Davies and Record 2010). Similarly, in rural Indonesia, there are no differences in the severity of reported business constraints between female- and male-run household enterprises (Costa and Rijkers 2011).

21 In Indonesia, start-up capital is 3.4 times smaller in female-managed nano- and microenterprises than in male-managed enterprises (Badiani and Posadas 2011).

22 Data on female-managed or owned plots and on female farmers are extremely limited in the world and, in particular, in the East Asia and Pacific region. Therefore, wherever necessary, this report examines differences between farms run by female-headed households and those run by male-headed households. Because female-headed households are different from male-headed households in a number of respects, this comparison is likely to exaggerate gender differences in agricultural productivity and access to inputs because it will confound differences in socioeconomic characteristics with differences in productivity.

23 In Latin America, women constitute between 13 and 27 percent of landowners in Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Peru and own smaller plots of land than men in all of these countries (Deere and Doss 2006).

24 It should be noted that the fraction of farmers overall receiving agricultural extension services is very low.

25 Gender differences in “soft skills,” which are acquired within and outside of school, also contribute to gender differences in occupations. Personality traits have wage returns that are both occupation and gender specific (Cobb-Clark and Tan 2011). Women have been found to be employed in safer or lower risk jobs, which is consistent with evidence that women are more risk averse than men (Eckel and Grossman 2008).

26 Women tended to consider men’s “over-engagement” in household chores as “unmanly” and “non-ambitious.” Women often explained the fact that they carried out most domestic work (while having a full-time job) as fulfilling their obligation to care for their families. In addition, the view was expressed that women with extreme career ambitions—who did not assume much household responsibilities—would be criticized as “selfish” or “non-feminine.” Interestingly, wives with higher income and “occupational prestige” than their husbands often retained the primary responsibility for taking care of domestic work. This was seen as a “counter-balance” to their violation of cultural values about who should be the primary breadwinner.
Chapter 4. Agency: Voice and Influence within the Home and in Society

What is Agency?

In much of the world, women have a more limited voice and influence than men in decision-making in their homes, their communities and in society. Women are also more likely to be victims of gender-based violence, which significantly impacts their ability to translate their preferences into desired outcomes. The lack of ability for women to voice and act on their preferences negatively impacts their own welfare and has detrimental impacts on development more broadly.

This chapter analyses women’s “agency” in East Asian and Pacific countries. Agency is defined here as an individual’s or group’s ability to give voice to and act on their preferences, and to influence outcomes that affect them and others in society. Agency is affected by – and also affects – an individual’s ownership and control over endowments and their access to economic opportunities (Kabeer 1999). The discussion of agency in this chapter also focuses on the ability of countries to ensure the safety and security of women in their homes and in society, as the prevalence of gender-based violence and trafficking of women reflects the extreme deprivation of women’s agency in society.

Within a household, one’s relative power affects the strength of one’s voice and influence in household decisions, whether related to how many children to have or how to spend or invest family resources. Similarly, at the community or societal level, the relative power of individuals and groups affects their ability to act on their preferences and influence outcomes in the economic, social, and political domains. The relative power of different members of society, which often differs systematically by gender, reflects a complex combination of one’s personal characteristics, prevailing social norms, and the broader legal and institutional environments. Changes in these factors can alter the weight given to women’s and men’s voice and, thus, affect the outcomes achieved. Changes in women’s and men’s personal characteristics affect not only the strength of their voice and influence in society; it may also affect their preferences. Therefore, increasing a woman’s education may not only affect investments her children’s education and health through its effect on her bargaining power within the household, but also by affecting her preferences.

Why is Agency Important for Gender Equality and Development?

The ability to act on one’s preferences, regardless of one’s gender, and to translate those preferences into desired outcomes is a development objective in its own right. As discussed in chapter 1, development is not only about raising incomes or reducing poverty, but also involves a process of expanding the freedoms and choices available to all people (Sen 1999). Having agency is integral to attaining freedom in development; it is a measure of a person’s well-being, reflecting both their ability to achieve as well as their actual achievements (Sen 1993).

Women’s agency enhances development. When women are free to make choices, it has positive impacts at all levels of society. Increasing women’s voice and influence in the home has been found to improve children’s education, health and welfare (Hoddinott, Alderman, and Haddad, 1997, Thomas 1995, Duflo 2003, Fiszbein and Schady 2009). Increasing women’s representation in firm ownership and management, and on corporate
boards, has been found to increase gender equality within firms and to increase the provision of non-wage benefits to workers (Ely 1995, Cohen and Huffman 2007, Hultin and Szulkin 2003, Rand 2011). Increasing women’s representation in elected office not only ensures that decisions are more representative of the voting population, but can lead to increased provision of public goods, better natural resource management, and increase the reporting of crimes against women (Ban and Rao 2008, Agarwal 2009, Beaman et al. 2011, Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004). Global evidence shows that violence against women has lasting negative effects on economic development in addition to causing significant social, psychological and physical harm to those who experience and witness it (Morrison and Orlando 2004, Morrison, Ellsberg and Bott 2007). Reducing gender-based violence thus results in healthier workers and higher economic productivity, with dynamic benefits across generations.

**Economic growth and development can, in turn, contribute to strengthening of women’s agency in some areas.** As discussed in earlier chapters, growth and development result in better education and health outcomes for women; and, better human capital outcomes for women contribute directly to stronger voice and influence, whether in the home, in the economy or in society. Economic development, as measured by GDP per capita, is also associated with higher levels of civic activism, including on issues related to gender equality (Figure 4.1). Civic activism is a measure of “collective agency” – of the space citizens have, both male and female, to express their voice in the public sphere. Similarly, to the extent that development is accompanied by stronger legal and judicial systems, more developed societies provide women (and men) better access to justice, strengthening their voice and protecting them against the extreme deprivation of agency.

**But, growth and development alone are not enough to enhance women’s agency in all its dimensions.** As shown in previous chapters, women have made positive strides toward gender equality in education and health, yet gender gaps remain in access to assets and economic opportunity. Increasing women’s ability to earn and accumulate assets – and closing gender gaps in economic opportunity – are critical to strengthening their voice and

![Figure 4.1. There is a Positive Relationship between Economic Development and Civic Activism](image1)

![Figure 4.2. The Relationship between Economic Development and Women’s Representation in Parliament is Not Clear](image2)

Source: World Development Indicators 2010 and ISD.
influence in society and making them less vulnerable to domestic violence and other types of abuse. Moreover, the relationship between economic development and women’s political representation, an important pathway toward agency in society, is unclear (Figure 4.2). Thus, while development can contribute to strengthening women’s agency in some dimensions, it is clear that improvements are a number of areas are not automatic. Policies that actively raise women’s agency will thus be necessary to induce meaningful change toward gender equality in agency.

This chapter aims to strengthen understanding of gender and agency in East Asian and Pacific countries, and to lay the foundation for identifying policy priorities to strengthen women’s voice and influence in pursuit of gender equality and more effective development. The analysis in the chapter focuses on agency in the following three domains.

- **Agency in the household and personal decisions** – examined through household decision making, control of resources and reproductive decisions
- **Agency in the public sphere** – examined through women’s participation and representation in the private sector, civil society, politics and public institutions
- **Safety and security in expressing one’s agency** – examined through the prevalence of gender-based violence (defined as the extreme deprivation of agency)

The form of agency that is most frequently measured is the decision making power of men and women (Kabeer 1999; Mason 2002; McElroy 1990). Agency may be more explicitly measured by examining women’s mobility in the public domain, their participation in public action and the incidence of male violence (Kabeer 1999). Gender differences in bargaining power within a household have been assessed by examining the extent to which people’s choices change when factors affecting their bargaining power, such as education, relative earnings or asset holdings, also change (Thomas 1990, 1993; Quisumbing and Maluccio 2003; Dulfo 2003).

Agency at a household level is difficult to measure, since negotiations for decision-making power often occur within private spaces in the household. Furthermore, since measures of agency are of relatively new interest to the international development community, many indicators have not yet been measured over time. Where possible, the chapter will present information on how women’s agency has evolved over time in the region. When data on different dimensions of agency are not available over time, however, the chapter will provide evidence – both qualitative and quantitative —for a single moment in time. In such cases, efforts will be made to present the most recent available data.

The remainder of the chapter is structured as follows. The section that follows provides an analysis of the state of agency in the region. Section 3 then analyzes the factors that influence agency in the region, while section 4 identifies key policy priorities for promoting gender equality in voice and influence in the region. These directions for policy will be discussed in further detail on chapter 6.

It is important to note that despite the geographic proximity between East Asian and Pacific countries, their development experiences and paths toward gender equality have been different, especially with respect to women’s voice and influence. For this reason, the chapter will distinguish where possible between the progress made and challenges faced by East Asian and Pacific countries in the different domains of agency.
What is the State of Agency in the East Asia and Pacific region?

The East Asia and Pacific Region has experienced uneven gains in women’s agency over the last decades. While women have more household decision-making power, more influence and voice in the public sphere, and new laws to protect the choices and interests of women in society, progress has been uneven across countries and many challenges still remain. Women’s representation in national parliaments in East Asia was the highest in the developing world in the 1990s, yet the share of women in parliaments has reached a plateau and fallen behind other regions in the past decade. Women are almost unrepresented among parliamentarians in the Pacific. There have been increases in women’s participation in the private sector, but women remain in the minority as firm owners and on corporate boards. Moreover, the Pacific and parts of East Asia have among the highest rates of prevalence of violence against women in the world. The sections that follow examine evidence on women’s voice and influence in the home and in the public domain, as well as on gender-based violence in the region.

Agency in the Household and Personal Decisions

Women’s household decision-making power in the region is relatively high. As highlighted in chapter one, women in East Asia and the Pacific from all wealth quintiles are more likely to have control over making large purchases and over decisions to visit family/relatives than women in other developing regions; and they are among the most likely to have control over their own earnings (Figure 4.4). However, there is important intra-regional variation; a higher share of women in East Asia than in the Pacific control their own income and have autonomous power over other household decisions.

Women in East Asia in particular have high levels of autonomy, as reflected in their control over their own earnings. According to Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data, nearly 70 percent of married women aged 15-49 in Cambodia and Indonesia report that they control their own earnings, while 31 and 28 percent, respectively, report joint control of their earnings with their husbands. Only one percent of women in Cambodia, and three percent of women in Indonesia report that their husbands decide how their earnings are used (Figure 4.3). Surveys indicate that women in Cambodia and Timor-Leste not only have high levels of control over their own income, but over their husband’s income as well (DHS Surveys, various years).

Women in the Pacific have relatively less control over their own earnings, however. Over 15 percent of women in the Marshall Islands, 15 percent in Samoa, and 13 percent in Tuvalu report that their husbands have control over their cash earnings (Figure 4.3). Studies in different countries in the Pacific also find high levels financial control by men in the household. In Kiribati, for example, 19 percent of women report that their partners do not allow them to make any financial decisions for household expenditures, and 12 percent of women report that they cannot exercise control of their own incomes because their partners take it away. When intimate-partner violence occurs, women have an even weaker voice over household financial decisions; 23 percent of women who experience intimate-partner violence report that their partners do not allow them to make any financial decisions related to household expenditure, and 22 percent report having no control of their own income. Qualitative evidence also suggests that men often take their partner’s income to spend on drinking (SPC 2010).
Most women in the region have the ability to make other household decisions, whether related to their own healthcare, household purchases, or visits to family and relatives. Women in the Pacific have slightly less ability to make decisions on their own healthcare and household purchases, on average, than women in East Asia. In the Philippines, 93.6 percent of women make her own healthcare decisions solely or jointly with her spouse, while only 69.8 percent of women in the Marshall Islands do the same (Figure 4.4). Similar patterns are also seen in wives say in decisions regarding visits to her family and relatives. However, each country is different and, in some areas, women in East Asia also have relatively little decision making power. For instance, 18 percent of women surveyed in Indonesia report that men have the final say in making decisions on household purchases. Women in Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands report having the lowest control over their own healthcare decisions and household purchases (Figure 4.4, DHS surveys, various years).

Evidence from the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Kiribati suggests that women in these countries have relatively low levels of autonomy with respect to household decision making. While data from these countries are not strictly comparable to those presented above, surveys from Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Kiribati indicate a high prevalence of controlling behaviors by husbands and male partners over household, financial and mobility decisions, which can greatly deter a woman from exercising her own agency. Fifty-eight percent of partnered women in the Solomon Islands and 69 percent in Vanuatu said they have experienced some sort of controlling behavior by their partners, including: preventing her from seeing family; wanting to know where she is at all times; forbidding contact with other men; and controlling access to healthcare. As discussed later in this chapter, controlling behaviors by husbands are often correlated with a lack agency in other dimensions, as well as with personal characteristics, such as poor endowments and economic opportunities, that hinder agency. In both the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, women with little-to-no education are more likely to have partners who exhibit controlling behaviors than women with higher educational attainment. Women who experience intimate partner violence are also significantly more likely to
experience controlling behaviors than those women who have not experienced violence (SPC 2009, Vanuatu Women’s Centre 2011). In that sense, the factors that inhibit women’s agency can be mutually reinforcing.

Globally, women living in wealthier households are likely to have more decision-making power than women living in poorer households. This pattern bears out in Pacific countries but less so in East Asia. The evidence for countries in other regions of the world shows that women in households with more resources have a wider set of choices and face fewer financial constraints; as a result, they have more freedom to make purchasing decisions and rarely have to forego human capital investments of their children or ration their access to goods and services. Available data for East Asia suggests, however, that women in wealthier households reported having only slightly more control over resources (these include making large purchases, visiting family members and managing their own earnings) than women in lower income earning households (Figure 4.5). Data from countries in the Pacific show that there is a difference by income level. For instance, in Vanuatu, 50 percent of women in poorer households have to ask permission to visit family or others, while the estimate is 41 percent for women in wealthier households (Vanuatu Women’s Center 2011).

Lower fertility may be an indicator of increased female agency in itself, but having fewer children also enables women to invest in ways that increase her agency. In some parts of the world, the availability of family planning services continues to be limited, affecting the number and spacing of children a woman may have. It can therefore be difficult to tell whether high birth rates are the result of a lack of family planning services, low female agency, social norms about family size, or health concerns or inconvenience related to birth control use. Most likely, high birth rates reflect a combination of all these factors. However, decreases in female fertility can help contribute to women’s welfare and agency in several ways, including through improvements in health status and lower maternal mortality. Bearing fewer children with more space in between births also gives women more time to invest in their human capital and to participate in the economy. For adolescents, in particular, unintended pregnancies can have significant health and long-term economic effects, including lower education and delayed entry into the labor force (World Bank 2011).

Women have made advances in their ability to make reproductive decisions in nearly all countries in the region. Reductions in fertility rates and fertility gaps—defined as unwanted fertility—observed across most countries in East Asia suggest that women have gained greater control over their reproductive decisions. In many East Asian and Pacific countries the use of contraceptive methods—whether modern or traditional—have become increasingly more common. For example, in Cambodia, the percentage of married women using modern methods of family planning increased between 19 percent and 35 percent. The percentage of married women using traditional methods increased from 5 percent to 16 percent during the same period (Cambodia DHS 2010).
Most countries in both East Asia and the Pacific have seen decreases in the number of births per woman (Figure 4.6). In 2009, Thailand, China and Vietnam had the lowest fertility rate in the region, at less than two births per woman. The Pacific Islands (barring Fiji at 2.7 births per woman) have the highest fertility rates in the region at over 3.5 births per woman. Timor-Leste is the exception of the region; it experienced a spike of 7.8 births per woman in 2003 before declining to 5.7 births per women in 2009-102. Despite progress, fertility remains the highest among the poorest Timorese at 7.3, compared to 4.2 among the wealthiest. Women with no education have significantly more children than women with more than a secondary education: 6.1 versus 2.9 children per women (Timor-Leste World Bank, May 2011). The high fertility observed in Timor-Leste is attributed to the collapse of the family planning program after pro-longed political conflict, and deeply rooted pro-natalist cultural norms.

Countries with the highest fertility rates also have the highest percentages of adolescent pregnancies. As can be seen in Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7, the countries in the region with the highest fertility rates also have the highest percentage of teenagers aged 15 to 19. Among young women in the Pacific in this age range, a large number of pregnancies are unwanted or mistimed. In the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and Nauru more than half of young women report having had an unwanted pregnancy (Kennedy et. al, 2011) (Figure 4.8).
Even in countries where fertility rates have decreased, women still have more children than they desire. In the past 50 years in the Philippines, the average number of children per woman decreased from 7 children to 3.3 children (Costello and Casterline, 2002). However, the fertility gap in the Philippines is still high—the average number of children per mother is 3.3 while the desired number of children per mother is 2.4 (DHS 2008). This may be more the result of a knowledge gap, norms, or weak service delivery than control from the spouse; 65 percent of women who do not use contraceptives cite health concerns, fear of side effects and inconvenience of use, 18 percent cite opposition by women/partner or religion, 23 percent cite issues of access, distance or cost and only 2 percent cite lack of knowledge of method or source (DHS 2008). Women who experience violence are more likely to have an unplanned pregnancy. In Kiribati, for example, 22 percent of women who experienced domestic violence had an unplanned pregnancy, compared to 12 percent who did not experience domestic violence (SPC 2010).

It is worth noting that advancement toward gender equality in agency in the household in one dimension may not translate into progress in all dimensions. A study of twenty-one communities in Thailand found that women are relatively free to make fertility-related decisions and participate in the labor market, but they have only moderate levels of freedom of movement and high levels of fear about disagreeing with their husbands within the household (Mason and Smith, 2003). There are even more striking differences in levels of agency across dimensions in countries in the Pacific. For instance, data collected for the international Social Institutions and Gender Index indicate that women in Papua New Guinea face a relatively high level of agency in some public dimensions (e.g. freedom of movement and freedom to dress), while they experience very low levels of agency in their households, (e.g., with respect to violence) (SIGI, 2010).

Agency in the Public Domain

Women in East Asia have made dynamic strides in participation and influence in the private sector, civil society and political institutions; however, current levels are still far from equal. In the Pacific, women have experienced little change in many public domains, and continue to face large challenges.

The private sector

Progress has been made in women’s participation and leadership in the private sector in East Asia. In Hong Kong, the percentage of women on corporate boards increased from less than 5 percent to 8.9 percent over the past decade (Mahtani, Vernon and Sealy, 2009). The sub-region of East Asia has a high percentage of firms owned by women and firms with female top management compared to other developing regions, and Mongolia, the Philippines and Vietnam have among the highest levels of female participation in business ownership—well above 20 percent (IFC, 2009).

Within companies, women are still less likely to be found in management and decision-making positions. The East Asia and Pacific region performs relatively well compared to other regions in terms of the fraction of firms with a top female manager. However, women remain less likely than men to serve as managers and directors. The share of female directors ranges from 10% in the Philippines and 7% in China and Thailand to 5% in Indonesia and under 2% in South Korea and Japan (CWDI, 2010). While 67 percent of all publically traded companies in Hong Kong have at least one woman on its board, yet, only 15 percent of these companies have more than one (Mahtani, Vernon and Sealy, 2009). Globally, only one country in the world, Norway, has succeeded in having more than 30% female representation on corporate boards while one-third of countries now have female board representation over 10% (CWDI, 2010).
Despite the presence of women as owners in several countries in the region, women comprise a much lower share of female top managers. Most countries in the region have firms with female participation in ownership. However, owning an asset might be significantly different as having the principal voice in managing and running the enterprise. Of the five countries in the region for which there is data—Indonesia, Vietnam, Mongolia, Malaysia and the Philippines—there are more firms with female participation in ownership than firms with female top managers, demonstrating that although women might be owners, there are fewer women in decision making positions to articulate their voice and preferences (Figure 4.9).

**Civil society and grass roots movements**

East Asian women have seen some improvements in the strength of their voice and their ability to actively participate in civil society and grass root movements. There is a positive relationship between the strength of civil society and gender equality. Civil society groups and women’s organizations and movements, in particular, have been important in creating broader space for women to have voice and influence in society. The size and nature of civil society have not been static over the last two decades. Figure 4.10 shows that even though wealthier countries such as Japan and Australia still have a more thriving civil society than poorer ones, over the last two decades there has been an increase in the presence of civil society in poorer

Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

countries. As a whole, civil society has increased in the region, which has in part been influenced by increasingly amicable relationships between civil society and governments.

While most civil society organizations are focused on broad development issues (e.g. poverty reduction, education, and health), more organizations now focus on a wider range of gender issues than two decades ago. Of those that currently focus on gender, some operate at the local level or on the national level. In Indonesia, the civil society organization PEKKA (Women Headed Household Empowerment program) was created to address the needs of widows who were victims of conflict in Aceh, and to improve their access to legal and financial issues, and to improve their overall welfare. The program provides training for village paralegals that focus on domestic violence and family law, and also holds district forums to bring together judges, prosecutors, police, NGOs, and government officials to raise awareness of gender issues (World Bank 2011, PEKKA website 2012). In PNG, there has been an expansion of CSOs targeting their assistance to women and working to enhance their opportunities to access services. For instance, some provide services such as micro-credit and savings to economically empower women. Many Mother’s Groups flourished throughout this period to address local women’s needs such as nutrition and health services. Through their services they enable women to engage actively in their children’s health care (Imai and Eklund, 2008). Activist groups such as Gender and Development for Cambodia, the National Council of Women in Thailand (under the patronage of the Queen), and the Liberal Women’s Brain Pool in Mongolia, represent a particular type of gender focused CSOs. Others that operate at the international level, for example, are Save the Children, Coordination of Action Research on AIDS, Mobility Asia (CARAM-Asia), and End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT). CSOs interested in tackling policy issues such as eliminating human trafficking, increasing political representation of women, and changing laws to decrease the discrimination of women have also emerged throughout the region.

Pacific countries have seen some progress in the growth of gender focused civil society organizations (CSO). Civil society continues to be a vital feature of development in the Pacific island countries, especially in delivering services (Swain, 2000). The Pacific region has seen an increase of civil society organizations at the country level as well multi-island network organizations in the last few decades. Even though there are only a few organizations that focus solely on the promotion of gender equality, such as Young Women’s Christian Association’s (YWCA) in the Pacific, Tuvalu National Council of Women’s, and Fiji Women’s Rights Movement (FWRM), an increasing number of organizations are recognizing the importance of taking a more active role in promoting gender equality by giving voice to women.

Politics

For countries in the region that have experienced growth in female political representation, progress has been slow and in most countries levels remain below what is commonly perceived to be an acceptable threshold for women’s voice in the political domain; 30 percent of electoral seats at the national and local levels (Agarwal 2010a and b). When women do enter politics or public administration, they tend to be in lower rank positions and streamlined into sectors and positions perceived as “soft” and “female” such as ministries of women, health, education or social welfare and not where the power to make influential decisions reside, e.g. in finance or planning ministries (World Bank 2011).

East Asia has experienced advances in women’s participation and representation in national politics, whereas the Pacific has experienced little positive change. Data on female representation in national parliaments provides an insight into the level of agency in political decision-making. As show in Figure 4.11, East Asian countries including
Singapore, the Philippines, Cambodia and Lao PDR have increased the share of parliamentary seats held by women since 2000. In contrast, Mongolia has experienced a steep decline in female representation during the same period, from about 10 percent in 2000 to 4 percent in 2009. Figure 4.12 illustrates the variability across the region with respect to parliamentary seats held by women, with Lao PDR, Vietnam and Timor-Leste with the highest percentage of seats held by women and the Pacific Islands on the other side of the spectrum.

Women’s voice and participation in politics in the Pacific remains largely absent. Women in Pacific countries have had little progress in terms of political representation over the last decade. Currently, women represent about 2.5 percent of post in political leadership roles in the Pacific, and the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu have zero women in parliament (UNDP, 2010; Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development, 2011; and WRAP, 2011). As of 2008, the lowest rates to parliamentary representation among females were in the Pacific Island states (Nauru, Palau, Tonga, Vanuatu, Solomon Island, Micronesia and Tuvalu) (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2009).

Several countries have elected or appointed female heads of state in recent years. The Philippines, New Zealand, Indonesia, South Korea, Australia and most recently Thailand have or have had a woman heading their government since the year 2000. At the ministerial level, Palau and Samoa have the highest percentage of women ministers (at 25 percent and 23.1 percent, respectively) in the East Asia and Pacific region. These percentages are similar to the percentages found in Australia (23.3 percent) and slightly below New Zealand (28.6 percent). As of 2010, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu had no women ministers appointed to head a ministerial position (IPU 2010).

For many countries, the level of female representation at the national level is not necessarily reflected at the local level, and vice versa. In Mongolia, there are 3.9 percent of parliamentary members are women at the national level, and women represent 22.3 percent at the sub-national level (UNDP, 2010). Overall local government level participation in Cambodia was 14.67 percent in 2007, similar to the national estimate; but elected women at the commune level and people’s level was only 10.7 percent and only 3.3 percent at the people’s chief level. The
Philippines provides another good example for the disconnectedness between national and sub-national levels. During the period when the country had a woman president and a relatively high level of parliamentarians compared to other countries in the region, the representation at lower levels of government remained low, with only 22 percent of governors and 17 percent of elected mayors being female (IPU, 2009).

**Protection from Violence and Loss of Freedom**

*Gender-based violence— including human trafficking— represents the extreme deprivation of agency. East Asia and the Pacific have among the highest numbers of trafficked persons in the world, and the Pacific has the highest incidence of violence against women in the world.*

Gender-based violence is internationally recognized as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (UN 1993). Violence against women can take the form of physical, sexual and psychological, and can take place within the household, at the workplace, or in the form of the human trafficking of women and girls, among others. Violence against women is historically under-researched and under-reported due to a variety of factors including the sensitivity of the topic and concerns for the safety of respondents. Despite the lack of dynamic, easily comparable international statistics, the increasing availability of studies show that violence against women is a major concern for many countries in the region, and particularly in the Pacific.

A high prevalence of gender-based violence is prevalent throughout the region and, in the Pacific Islands, violence against women is among the highest in the world. Consistent with international patterns, women in the region are at far greater risk of violence by an intimate partner or somebody they known than from violence by other people. In East Asia, the prevalence of intimate partner violence is high and is consistent with international statistics (Figure 4.13). Areas including Bangkok and Nakhonsawan, Thailand have a high incidence of 44 percent. Evidence from the Pacific Islands suggests that violence is endemic. As shown in Figure 4.13 68 percent of ever-married women aged 15-49 in Kiribati, 64 percent in the Solomon Islands and 60 percent in Vanuatu have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner (SPC 2009, SPC 2010, Vanuatu Women’s Centre 2011). Although no nationally representative data exists for Papua New Guinea, recent regional studies suggest that violence is just as prevalent (Lewis et al. 2008, Ganster-Breidler 2009).

Figure 4.13. Physical and/or sexual violence by intimate partner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% of Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor-Leste</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiribati</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Isl.</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonga</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DHS Reports, various years.

Sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner is a significant concern in much of the Pacific. As shown in Figure 4.13, in most of East Asia, barring Thailand, physical violence against women far exceeds that of sexual violence. In the Pacific, however, both physical and sexual violence is extremely high. In the Solomon Islands, sexual violence by an intimate partner is more prevalent than physical violence. Sexual violence by non-partners is also relatively prevalent, as is childhood sexual abuse (SPC 2009).
Emotional and psychological violence, as well as harassment are also common in the region. In 2005, over 30 percent of women in the labor force reported having experienced some form of gender-based harassment (verbal, physical or sexual) across the EAP region (UN, 2006). Psychological and emotional violence is also pervasive and debilitating, but often under-reported because it is frequently viewed as normal behavior. In Vietnam, over half of ever-married women reported lifetime emotional abuse from their spouse, with 25 percent reporting that the abuse was current (World Bank—Country Gender Assessment, 2011). In Vietnam, the Philippines and Cambodia, the prevalence of emotional violence far exceeds that of physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner. In Kiribati, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, high prevalence of intimate partner emotional violence matches the high incidence of physical and/or sexual violence (Vietnam CGA, SPC 2009, SPC 2010, Vanuatu Women’s Centre 2011). Conversely, women in Timor-Leste experience a high prevalence of physical violence, yet very low levels of emotional and sexual violence (Timor-Leste DHS 2010).

Some societies in the Pacific still tolerate violence—sexual or otherwise—against children. A study finds that sexual violence has increased in part due to low access to services and poverty faced by families, and the rising prevalence of logging, mining and fishing industries, which employ large numbers of single men who seek the services of young women (Meleisea and Meleisea, 2007). The prevalence of sexually related violence against young girls (under the age of 15) in Vanuatu is 30 percent; and for most of these children assaults are repetitive and carried out by family members (54 and 55 percent respectively) (Government reports, 2011). A 2007 survey of youth in six Pacific countries found that 22 percent of young women exchanged sex for money or a gift in the previous year. In Vanuatu, the figure was 40 percent. Child prostitution in Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Fiji is an organized venture with formal and informal brothels in urban centers (RRRT, 2008; Laqueretabua, Naaidu, Rolls, 2009; Meleisea and Meleisea, 2007).

The intergenerational effects of gender-based violence continue to be a concern. Domestic violence, and its acceptance, continues to be passed down from parent to child (Fehringer and Hindin, 2009). In Vanuatu, it is estimated that 57 percent of children whose mothers experienced violence either saw or heard when it happened; these children were not only witnesses to the violent episodes, many also experienced a beating at the same time (17 percent of the time) (Vanuatu Women’s Centre 2011). Children in Kiribati who witnessed violence at home while growing up, between parents are more likely to experience violence themselves as adults (Figure 4.14) (SPC 2010). Daughters of violent men have also been shown to be more likely to endure violence from their husbands later in life. In Timor-Leste, woman whose father beat their mother are more than twice more likely to experience emotional, physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner than women whose fathers or mothers were not abusive, at 59.2 percent versus 23.9 percent (Timor-Leste DHS 2010).
The intergenerational consequences of violence also affect children when they are developing. The negative effects of violence and other forms of extreme loss of freedom impinge on the well being of all of society in the longer term. In the Solomon Islands, a study shows that children who witness violence are more likely to grow up very timid or withdrawn, to repeat a year or more in school and, in many cases, are also aggressive and likely to run away from home at an early age. Given such large potential costs on victims and society it is clear that gender based violence leads to negative economic outcomes that affect economic development (Government report, 2011).

Gender-based violence poses significant socioeconomic costs for countries in the region, and worldwide. This includes lower productivity and incomes, lower rates of accumulation of human and social capital, and promotes other forms of violence in the present and in the future. In Colombia, it is estimated that earnings for women who experience physical violence are 14 percent lower than for women who do not (Sanchez et al. 2004). A study conducted on the United States found that the direct healthcare costs of intimate partner violence against adult women was more than $4 billion in 1995, including both mental health and medical care costs (Morrison, Ellsberg and Bolt 2007). Similar studies have not yet been conducted in the region; however, based on the high prevalence of violence against women in several countries, the socio-economic costs are likely to be high.

Human trafficking is also a growing concern throughout the region. An increase in female migration in the last decade has brought about increased economic opportunities as well as increased risk of being trafficked (ILO 2009). Human trafficking encompasses forced labor, sex trafficking, bonded labor, debt bondage among migrant laborers, involuntary domestic servitude, forced child labor, sale of children (including bride price), child soldiers and child sex trafficking (US Department of State 2011). Although estimates at difficult to generate, the International Labor Organization estimates that Asia and the Pacific account for over half of all trafficked victims worldwide, at an estimated 1.36 million, most of whom are women and girls (ILO 2008). Studies show that women and girls are the main victims of sexual exploitation in Asia and the Pacific. Women are also more likely than men to be trafficked for economic exploitation. While women and children seem to be at higher risk for exploitation, men are also trafficked within and from the region. For instance, in Thailand, women comprise the majority of those who are trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation; however, men, women and children from neighboring countries are trafficked in the labor sectors such as commercial fisheries, fishing-related industries and domestic work (ILO 2008, UNFPA 2006, US State Department 2011).

Human trafficking is pervasive throughout the region; however, the nature of the industry varies. The Greater Mekong region and Indonesia are two main hubs for human trafficking. Thailand is both a destination and source country. The country serves as a transit hub to other Asian countries, Australia, the United States and Western Europe (UNFPA, 2006). In two southern counties in Yunnan, China, most women and children are trafficked for forced marriage or adoption. Rural men are willing to pay substantial sums for a trafficked bride who can bear children and extend the family line. Families will pay traffickers for infant boys, who they will adopt as their own (ILO 2005). While internal bride trafficking is frequently reported in China, systematic empirical research does not exist. In countries such as Japan and South Korea, the majority of human trafficking reported is in the sex trafficking industry. In Cambodia found that there a strong link between migration from domestic work into commercial sexual exploitation (51 percent of commercially sexually exploited women and girls were previously domestic workers). This same study found that the majority, at 89 percent of child domestic workers are female (IOM, 2007).
What Factors Explain Progress in Some Areas and Lack of Progress in Others?

As described in the previous section, women’s ability to exercise voice in their homes and in society has experienced progress in some areas and challenges in others across East Asia and the Pacific. A complex combination of factors that affect progress are socio-economic characteristics, social norms and practices, and a country’s legal environment including women’s access to justice. Civil society is an indicator of voice in itself, but it also functions as a means by which individuals can collectively influence decisions that affect gender inequality. Since the extent of women’s agency – whether in the household or the public sphere—reflects a combination of factors, agency in different dimensions will be discussed in turn for each factor.

Individuals’ Characteristics

A women’s agency is affected in a fundamental way by her endowments and economic opportunities. High educational attainment, good health, economic assets, and one’s own earnings can enable women to influence their circumstances in accordance with their preferences; they can also enable women to leave bad or dangerous situations.

As the education level of women increases, it expands her knowledge and opportunities, and improves her ability to translate her preferences into desire outcomes. Increases in education are positively correlated with women’s increased bargaining power (Cochrane, 1979; Jejeebhoy, 1995). Education creates opportunities for women to connect with the world by removing barriers to knowledge and information. Higher academic achievement can also facilitate better economic opportunities, and decrease economic dependency on others. Evidence from the literature on intra-household resource allocation show that increases in women’s education and their share of earned income in the household result in an allocation of resources that better reflects the preferences of women, and subsequently leads to improvements in women’s overall status in the household and society (Duflo, 2003; Rangel, 2005; Ashraf et al., 2006). In Indonesia, women who obtain an educational level of secondary school or higher are more likely than less educated women to participate in decisions involving their own health care, make household purchases and engage more regularly in social activities (DHS 2002-2003).

Higher education can also facilitate women’s entry into politics, whereas little or no formal education can greatly hinder women’s political participation. In Rudong County in China, women involved in local governance had a much higher level of education than average local female villagers; about 68 percent of them had reached senior high school education levels or above (Wang and Dai, 2010). Where women have low levels of education—overall, as well as relative to men—they are even less likely to participate in politics. As a result, their voice, which often reflects different preferences than men, is even less likely to be heard (UNDP 2010). In some contexts, the legal environment can exacerbate this situation. In Cambodia, indigenous women’s participation in local politics remains low because they lack the education level and language skills necessary to be active participants. The law in Cambodia mandates that a person must speak, read and write Khmer in order to run for political office (Maffii and Hong, 2010).

Evidence suggests that women who are more educated are less likely to experience violence in their household, and hold higher perceptions of self-worth with regards to violence against women. GBV is more prevalent among illiterate women, partly because women are economically dependent on their husbands and feel they have to endure an abusive relationship to survive. This is evidenced in some countries in the Pacific where bride price, young age of marriage, and lack of education for women, perpetuate violence as leaving the marriage would involve having
to repay the bride-price although they commonly have no resources to do so (UNICEF, 2005). Although in absolute numbers still high, in Samoa 48 percent of women with vocational or higher education agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife, which is over 20 percentage points less than the 69 percent of women with primary education or less who believe the same (Samoa DHS 2009).

Higher education provides women with greater economic opportunities. Women with higher education are more equipped to take on skilled occupations do better in the labor market, on average, than those with little or no education. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 3, gender gaps in earnings tend to be smaller as females move up the skills ladder. Furthermore, education and skills training is invaluable to entrepreneurship. Low levels of skills and inability to access information have been suggested to hinder women in Solomon Island from becoming viable entrepreneurs, with productive businesses. Various skills development programs have been put in place, targeted to women, to help improve their basic (e.g. literacy and numeracy) and productive skills (World Bank, Solomon Island Study, 2011).

Increases in women’s educational attainment and relevant training contribute to increasing women’s participation in leadership roles in the private sector. Despite the quick advancement toward gender equality in educational attainment in much of the world, qualitative evidence suggests that the educational disparities from the past still hinder the size and quality of the current pool of female professionals qualified for senior management positions on corporate boards in many countries. Female board members in Hong Kong for instance, argue that in order for companies to appoint qualified—well educated and trained—women to their corporate boards there needs to be support for women moving through the pipeline to become board members. As the educational levels of women have been increasing over a few decades and with the increasing critical mass of qualified women, companies should be able to draw upon a broader pool of potential candidates (Mahtani, Vernon and Sealy, 2009).

Women’s assets and own income can also increase women’s agency within and outside the household in multiple ways. For example, power within the household has been attributed to individual control over economic resources such as individual incomes, assets and wealth (Rammohan and Johar 2009, Quisumbing and Maluccio 2003, Thomas and Chen 1994). Worldwide evidence also suggests that woman’s ownership and control of her own assets and income is associated with a decreased risk of intimate-partner violence, at least in the medium term (Pronyk et al. 2006, Panda and Agarwal 2005, ICRW 2006, Swaminathan, Walker, and Rugadya 2008). Women’s income can also positively affect the accumulation of assets, which significantly affects women’s ability to leave an abusive partner, to cope with shocks and to invest and expand her earnings and economic opportunities (World Bank 2011). Global evidence suggests that comprehensive divorce laws coupled with a supportive legal environment and women’s own wealth improve women’s relative positions in households, even when households experiences an adverse shock (Dercon and Krishnan 2000, Aizer forthcoming).

Economic empowerment in the form of employment can also increase agency by increasing a woman’s physical mobility. The ability to move freely means greater ability of women to expand their knowledge, broaden their networks and create outlets to exercise collective agency through engagements in unions, professional associations, women’s groups and other types of civil society organizations. As discussed later on, civil society has worked to create an environment that enables women to better exercise their agency as well as a vehicle through which women exercise their collective agency to change rules, regulations, laws, and social norms that positively affect gender equality and social and economic development more broadly.
Improvements in women's socio-economic characteristics may not be sufficient to increase their voice and influence in society. Progress in women's economic position can threaten pre-existing social norms on women's role in the household and society, and lead to undesirable outcomes at least in the short run, including increased violence against women (Hjort and Villanger 2011; Panda and Agarwal 2005). For instance, in Timor-Leste, the proportion of women who have ever experienced physical violence from an intimate partner is highest among women with more than secondary education (46 percent), women belonging to household in the highest wealth quintile (45 percent), and those women who are employed for cash (42.9 percent) (Timor-Leste DHS 2009-10). Evidence suggests that increases in violence may be transitional phenomena, as men and women adjust to new roles. This transition can be enabled by a supportive legal and regulatory environment.

Characteristics of males also affect women's agency, particularly in concerns to gender-based violence. Studies in the Pacific Islands of Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Kiribati found that the most significant risk factors associated with women experiencing physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime are the characteristics of her husband or partner. A woman is significantly more likely to experience violence if her husband/partner controls her behavior, drinks alcohol or home brew, has affairs with other women, is violent with other women, is violent with other men, or is unemployed (SPC 2009, SPC 2010, Vanuatu Women’s Centre 2011).

Social Norms and Practices

Social norms and practices provide powerful undercurrents that influence preferences, values and the social behavior that govern gender relations and outcomes. Social norms that serve to perpetuate gender inequality in voice and influence can range from explicit to subtle. They can encourage behavior that on the surface seems to reflect ‘choice’, but in fact can constrain what’s possible for women, whether in the home or in society (Kabeer 1999).

Social norms regarding women's traditional role in the household and in society impact her social bargaining power. In most countries in the region and in the world, housework, childrearing and elderly care are normally considered the responsibility of a woman while men are considered the main financial provider of the family. Qualitative evidence from Fiji and Papua New Guinea shows that girls are expected to work around the house from a very early age while boys have fewer household responsibilities and are expected to become wage earners (PNG and Fiji Qualitative studies). As discussed in Chapter 3, these social norms influence the other factors that affect agency, such as earnings capacity and asset accumulation, as well as constrain the choices an individual can make. In other words, traditional social norms may highly discourage women from pursuing occupations traditionally dominated by males, as well as make it difficult for males to take on traditionally female roles. This, in turn, affects the agency of both genders.

Female expectations in the household often means that women have less time—and thus fewer networks—to exercise influence outside the home. Other societal expectations, such as having larger families, can increase women’s time spent in the household and minimize other activities in society (Pritchett 1994, Freedman 1997). Focus group discussions in Fiji suggest that although men and women may agree in principle of the idea of equal economic opportunity for both genders but, in practice, men are the more feasible breadwinners since women have household responsibilities that family and society expect them to attend to first. Female youth in the community of Baulevu stated that it is easier for men in the household to hold formal jobs than women because women first have the responsibility to care and feed the children, as well as tend to other household needs before leaving for work (Fiji Qualitative Study).
Gender norms and societal expectations about women’s ability to participate in the public sphere hinder participation. Data from the World Value’s Survey suggests that many men and women from across the region believe that men make better leaders than women (Figure 4.15). The quality of women’s participation in voting has sometimes been compromised by their lack of information. A study shows that in rural areas of China women ask their male family members to write the ballot for them at an election or take the opinion of their male family members. In this region of China, many people still think of women as less capable (disuzhi) and norms dictate that they should confine their activities to the domestic settings. This belief, largely based on information perceptions that have been transmitted across generations and people, leads people to discourage women from voting, or participating in public office (Wang and Dai, 2010).

Low female representation and participation in politics (as well as in leadership positions in the private sector) can be reinforcing, where women are less likely to enter politics and other leadership positions because of social beliefs that men are better leaders than women, and women’s absence prevents women from demonstrating their ability to lead (WDR).

In most countries and in the Pacific Islands in particular, violence against women is perceived as acceptable or justifiable by both men and women. In the Solomon Islands, 73 percent of women believe that a husband is justified to beat his wife under certain circumstances. In Vietnam, 64 percent of women aged 15-49 accept violent treatment from husbands as normal (Vietnam Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2006). Men also perpetuate these social norms; 80.7 percent of men in Timor-Leste believe that beating wives is socially acceptable and justifiable under certain circumstances (DHS 2010). These attitudes and acts of violence may be intensified during times of conflict. Violence is believed to have reached its high in some areas of the Papua New Guinea Highlands during tribal fighting in 1995-1996. During this time, gang rape of women was often considered to be a ‘normal’ aspect of inter-village conflict (PNG CGA 1998).

One of the most significant and detrimental cultural practices prevalent throughout the region is the practice of bride price, which hinders women’s perceptions of self-worth. In Vanuatu, about 81 percent of marriages involve a bride price paid to the family of the bride. Over half of women aged 15-49 in this country believe that, if a bride price is paid, a wife becomes the husband’s property (Vanuatu Health and Family 2011). In both Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, bride price is significantly associated with intimate-partner violence (SPC 2009, Vanuatu Women’s Centre 2011). In East Asia, paying for a bride is a tradition across China, Thailand, Indonesia and Myanmar (Anderson, 2007). In Indonesia the practice has dropped significantly since the 1950’s (Boomgaard, 2003). In rural China, where the tradition is still practiced, the groom pays for the right to the woman’s labor and reproductive capabilities. Similar to what is found in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, many young girls in China grow up with the belief that they will eventually become a man’s property with little control over their lives (Zhang, 2000; Brown, 2003).
Social expectations of men’s role in society can influence men’s actions and harm women’s safety and overall agency. The incidence of intimate-partner violence is often associated with societal expectations of men’s role in the home and in society, and can be exacerbated with male alcoholism and financial hardship (Kabeer et al., 2005). In the region, men are subject to a substantial amount of social pressure to be the main provider in the household. So, if a man’s wife defies traditional social norms and starts earning a higher income than her husband, for instance, this challenges the social norm of the male as provider of the family, creating stress and resistance.

Deep seated attitudes that fuel discrimination and enable gender inequality continue to be perpetuated in society by being taught to children. Recent studies show that social attitudes held by both men and women fail to foster an environment conducive to having equality between men and women. Both men and women perpetuate these norms through their actions at home, in schools, in places of worship, social venues, in the media, by teaching them to children. In Vanuatu and Kiribati, 50 percent and 56 percent of women, respectively, believe that a good wife must obey her husband at all times. Also, women in these countries (40 and 61 percent, respectively) believe it is important for a man to show his wife that he is the boss (SPC 2009, SPC 2010). Children grow up absorbing these attitudes and behaviors, accepting them as norms they must follow, and girls internalize their subordinate role in the household and lesser status in society (Bourdieu, 1977; Kabeer, 1999, see more in Chapter 2).

The Legal and Institutional Environment

The legal environment and access to justice forms the underlying environment in which men and women can voice and act on their preferences. Whether women and men are equally supported under the law, and whether their rights are protected in practice are critical to women’s ability to have voice and influence in society directly. This also affects voice by affecting the channels through which women build their access to resources and economic opportunity, which, in turn, affects their voice. The law and access to justice is shaped by, but can also shape the norms that affect women’s agency in society.

Equally as important is women’s equal access to the judiciary system, which can be influenced by social norms or socio-economic characteristics. For example, a legal court may be a day and a half trip away from home, yet social norms discourage women from sleeping outside the household. Or higher illiteracy rates of elderly women hinder their ability to know their rights. Countries in East Asia and the Pacific have made varying degrees of progress in guaranteeing and enforcing equal rights for men and women. As discussed in the previous section and in Chapter 2, several countries in the region have pluralistic legal environments, in which the interaction of customary or religious law and statutory law means that women’s legal stature can vary substantially across ethnic groups, even within a country.

International conventions, national laws and institutions

Nearly all countries in the EAP region have acceded to and ratified international commitments to reduce gender-based discrimination and promote agency for women as laid out by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), with a few exceptions. The ratification of CEDAW indicates a public commitment by governments to abide by a set of internationally recognized standards regarding gender equality. As of the end of 2011, only six countries in the world have not ratified the CEDAW agreement, including Palau and Tonga in the Pacific (CEDAW, 2012).

The signing of CEDAW has served as an instrument to open up space for people to argue for legal and institutional reform to promote women’s agency. In several East Asian countries legal and institutional reforms came about after the
ratification of CEDAW, at the behest of CSOs and government agencies arguing for the fulfillment of their countries’ international commitments. For instance, individuals, civil society organizations and government agencies tasked with women’s issues in Thailand, Cambodia, Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia used CEDAW conventions and frameworks as the basis for promoting women’s participation in local government and to examine whether existing laws on violence and discrimination against women were aligned with the convention. The organizations then used this information to advocate for an overhaul of existing laws and/or propose new ones to rectify omissions (UNIFEM, 2010).

Beyond CEDAW, many countries in the region have put in place domestic laws to support the advancement of women and gender equality (UNDP, 2010). In the past ten years, gender equality laws, such Vietnam’s Gender Equality Law (2006), the People’s Republic of China Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women (amended in 2005), Lao’s Law on the Development and Protection of Women (2004) and the Philippines’ Magna Carta of Women (2009), have been adopted with the aim of providing a more comprehensive approach to addressing gender equality. Most countries in the region have also adopted domestic violence legislation including Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam and PNG over the same period; PNG for example, reformed its criminal code in 2002 to dramatically change its sexual assault regime by introducing offenses grading according to the gravity of harm and eliminating marital immunity. Still, many countries (mostly Pacific) still lack adequate legislation for gender equality (UNDP, 2011).

Most countries in the region have equal rights under inheritance laws. As highlighted earlier in this chapter and throughout the report, women's assets influence women’s bargaining power within the household and in society. Empirical findings from India suggest that women who own a house or land significantly reduces her risk of marital violence (Agarwal and Panda 2007). The majority of countries in East Asia no longer differentiate by gender in statutory law. Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Thailand and Vietnam do not have parallel legal systems, and have legislation for property and inheritance rights with no discrimination against women. However, parallel legal systems exist in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore, and these laws discriminate against women in inheritance (See Chapter Two for more details). In the Pacific, Kiribati and Tuvalu have unequal statutory legislation, and although equal inheritance laws exist in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, customary law practices regarding land rights is recognized by the constitution and may lawfully discriminate against women (UNIFEM and UNDP 2007). Although many areas of the Pacific region have traditionally been matrilineal— where land is historically been transmitted through mother’s lines— however, in practice, it is common for men to make most decisions regarding land management (Stege et al. 2008).

In regards to gender-based violence, gaps in the law still remain across the region (UNDP 2010). As illustrated in Table 4.1, several countries in the region continue to have legal gaps in the protection of women against gender-based violence. Many of the countries where violence against women is the most prevalent does not have legislation against it, including, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, the Marshall Islands, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Timor-Leste.

There are also important gaps in laws protecting against human trafficking, despite efforts by many countries to pass specific legislative provisions. Between 2005 and 2008 about 10 countries in Asia and the Pacific (including South Asia) introduced new laws or modified old ones (UNDOC, 2009). But some countries still lack comprehensive laws to protect men and women vulnerable to trafficking; Thailand and Vietnam, for example, do not have provisions on the exploitation of humans. Some progress has been made on this front in Indonesia Malaysia and the Philippines, where mandates against exploitation of women were introduced in the last few years,
2007, 2007 and 2003, respectively. In Lao PDR, trafficked humans are treated as victims who have legal immunity from criminal prosecution for prostitution and they are provided specific services to reinstate them with their families; namely legal, medical and counseling services, all imparted by the Lao Women’s Union. The Lao government has set up two transit centers for returning victims to help them reintegrate into society (U.S. Department of State, 2008).

Even when countries have appropriate legislation in place, women remain unprotected by the legal system because the laws remain largely unenforced. A recent study highlighted that officers in the Fiji Police Force Sexual Offences Unit, which was set up in 1995, have unwelcoming attitudes when dealing with female victims (UNFPA, 2010). The same is true in some areas in Cambodia, where many local officials still believe that a husband can threaten his wife despite the laws in place (UNDP, 2005). But even in cases where the police or other formal institutions condemn these acts they are unable to pursue them further because of inadequate training to respond to these reports and/or fear of reprisal from the perpetrators, especially in cases where they are people of influence (US Department of State 2011). In Vanuatu, after a long period of lobbying by various civil society organizations and by the Vanuatu Women’s Center, the government passed the Family Protection Act, which focused on advancing women’s rights, in parliament in 2008. Implementation and enforcement of the law did not occur in more remote areas, leaving women unprotected and living under the previous legal (or traditional) system (AusAid, Vanuatu country report).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region/Country</th>
<th>Domestic violence</th>
<th>Sexual assault/rape</th>
<th>Sexual harassment at workplace</th>
<th>CEDAW 1979 (c)</th>
<th>CEDAW optional protocol 1999 (d)</th>
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<td><strong>Pacific</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kiribati</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2004</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marshall Islands</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micronesia, FS</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
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<td>Solomon Islands</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonga</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
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<td>Tuvalu</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>East Asia</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Signed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Signed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor-Leste</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Not signed/Not ratified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Power, Voice and rights UN 2010
Furthermore, the interaction of customary practice and statutory law means that women’s legal stature can vary substantially across ethnic groups, even within a country. Citizens in East Asian and Pacific countries often face a plurality of legal systems within a single country. Statutory laws interact – and often compete – with customary (and sometimes religious) laws and practices. In the Pacific Islands, for example, virtually all constitutions state that the constitution is the supreme law, but simultaneously recognize customary law (UNDP 2010). As a result, inheritance practices vary substantially across the region – from matrilineal systems in most of Micronesia and in parts of Melanesia to patrilineal systems in most other Pacific countries (FAO 2008). The interaction between customary and statutory law can even result in discriminatory inheritance practices that vary substantially across sub-populations within a single country (Box 4.1).

**Box 4.1. Gender and land tenure in a pluralistic legal environment: the case of the Solomon Islands**

Land tenure in the Solomon Islands is characterized by multiple, overlapping arenas, norms and institutions emanating from customary practice, the State and Christianity (Justice for the Poor Briefing Note 2010). The intersection of customary and state legal systems allows only a small number of individuals, predominantly men, to exert control over customary land. This has occurred to the detriment of female landowners who have often found themselves excluded from both decision-making processes and the distribution of financial benefits from the use of land.

In Guadalcanal Island, customs dictate that women be excluded from discussions about land-related issues that occur in formal/state arenas such as courts or land acquisition hearings. A male child or brother is usually appointed as spokesperson for land-related issues. Women often have less education and hence, are considered less able to understand the state legal system and manage land transaction. Moreover, some inhabitants of Guadalcanal state that custom dictates that women ‘no save tok’ (cannot/must not talk) about land, and that they must stand behind men when speaking about land in the public arena.

Women are furthermore limited in their ability to hold land titles. While it is common for people to assert that “women are the real landowners”, land and court records generally show names of a small number of male leaders as landowners. While the state legal system requires that the titleholders consult with other landowners before dealing in the land, they often fail to do so, limiting women’s roles and participation.

The State legal system also tends to recognize only a small number of individuals with the customary authority to speak about land inside a public arena, therefore turning the customary ‘right to speak” into effective ownership. A review of court records for West Guadalcanal suggests that the witnesses and parties to a dispute are predominantly senior male leaders. In addition to these individuals having greater authority to speak about the land, this is compounded by the court system being based on Western legal principles and an adversarial system. Land disputes are sometimes compared to warfare and are matters for men. Women and children are often advised to stay away from meetings regarding disputes. Hence, as hearings are generally conducted by male chiefs, clerks or judges are also likely to act as a further impediment to women's involvement.

Development of mechanisms for ensuring transparency and accountability are essential for sustained peace and security. Land programming would benefit from being gender sensitive and from paying pay attention to differential impacts on state legal frameworks and their implementation. - From *Women, State Law and Land in Peri-Urban Settlements on Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands* (2010)
### Table 4.2. Political Affirmative Action in EAP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quota</th>
<th>Quota type</th>
<th>Enforcement</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Legislated quotas for the Single/Lower House</td>
<td>Reserved seats, 22 percent</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>637 of 2,987 seats (21 percent) held by women in 2008 election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor-Leste</td>
<td>2006/2011</td>
<td>Legislated quotas for the Single/Lower House</td>
<td>The Electoral Law was recently modified to require one third (or 33%) of the candidates of each party be female before 25 percent had to be female.</td>
<td>List will be rejected if target not met.</td>
<td>18 of 65 seats (28 percent) held by women in 2007 election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Legislated quotas for the Single/Lower House, Legislated quotas at the Sub-national level, Voluntary quotas adopted by political parties</td>
<td>The political parties must include 50 percent women on candidate lists for proportional representation election. Political parties are recommended to include 30 percent women candidates.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>44 of 299 seats (15 percent) held by women in 2008 election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Legislated quotas for the Single/Lower House</td>
<td>One in every three candidates on a political party list should be women.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>101 of 560 seats (18 percent) held by women in 2009 election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Legislated quotas at the Sub-national level, Voluntary quotas adopted by political parties</td>
<td>One of three sectoral representatives that sits in every municipal, city, and provincial legislative council should be a woman.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>62 of 280 seats (22 percent) held by women in 2010 election. Philippine Democratic Socialist Party has a 25 percent quota for women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td></td>
<td>Voluntary quotas adopted by political parties</td>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>79 of 500 of seats (16 percent) were held by women in the 2011 elections. The Democrat Party has a target of 30 percent women candidates for election.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Quota Project 2012
States that adopt a commitment to evolve laws and regulations that promote gender equality create more conducive environments for women to exercise their agency. As women’s labor force participation continues to increase, especially in less traditional occupations, some governments have been proactive and adjusted their protection and anti-discrimination laws. In the Philippines for example, 85 percent of an estimated 2.5 million domestic workers are women. Despite their number, until recently they were excluded from enjoying the full range of rights guaranteed to other women in traditional occupations (in industry) under labor law. A bill is presently underway to address the gap and to guarantee their right to decent working conditions and protection from abuse, trafficking, and exploitation (World Bank—Country Gender Assessment, 2008).

Over the last decades, several countries in the region have put in place temporary special measures to promote female participation in political leadership. Gender quotas are defined as setting a fixed goal of a number of women to take on decision making positions, with the aim to ensure that women comprise at least a “critical minority” of 30 to 40 percent (Agarwal 2010a, 2010b). In the political sphere, quotas can be for reserved seats (constitutional and/or legislative), legal candidate quotas (constitutional and/or legislative) and political party quotas (voluntary). While reserved seats regulate the number of women elected, the other two types set a minimum for the share of women on the candidate lists, either as a legal requirement or a measure written into the statutes of individual political parties. In East Asia, countries including China, Timor-Leste, Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand had reservation systems for either the single/lower house, the upper house or at the sub-national level (The Quota Project 2012). Recently the revised Pacific Platform for Action 2005-2015 called for governments in the Pacific sub-region to put in place affirmative action measures to enhance women’s participation in politics.

Other countries, while not mandating quotas, have taken a strong stance on female representation in government as well as the private sector. Lao PDR’s National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) 2011-2015 has the stipulated target to increase the female staff ratio of high ranking positions in government, political party and civil society organizations to at least 15 percent, and to increase women members in the National Assembly to more than 30 percent. Other goals include increasing the number and percentage of women in the paid workforce and working in professional careers (NSED 2011-2015). China’s Outline for the Development of Chinese Women 2011-2020 states that there should be a 30 percent female-to-male ratio in village level government committees and a 50 percent ratio in neighbor committees in urban areas, with at least 10 percent of village committee heads being women.

Access to Justice

Access to the justice system—through reductions in financial costs, bringing services to remote areas, and helping overcome socio-psychological constraints—is critical to helping women exercise their agency. Legal reform should not be limited to fixing the laws; it should also extend to ensuring access to the legal system. Women in poorer areas can be particularly disadvantaged in this regard because, compared to men, they may have lower education levels, travel outside their communities less often, have less resources to pay for the service, and can face higher levels of discriminations once they reach places like police stations and courts. Moreover, when they do have physical access to the justice system, they often face the risk of being treated unequally. In Indonesia, the legal system is vastly underutilized by subsets of women because courts and police stations are not financially or physically accessible. A recent study in Indonesia found, for example, that most female heads of household were unable to access courts to obtain divorce certificates. The average cost of a case filed with the religious courts is about US$90, or four times the monthly per capita income for those living below the poverty line. In civil court, the cost of divorce with a lawyer is US$1,100 or 52 times the monthly per capita income (Sumner, year from REA).
Institutional reforms can open spaces for women to know their rights and exercise them

*Strengthening the capacity of institutions to enforce the law can improve the probability of the law being adopted and used.* Once legal reform comes about, institutional capacity needs to be reinforced to prevent hindering implementation, access and enforcement of the law. And their institutional role as implementers of the law can be hindered further by prevailing social norms. Evidence from many countries shows that, in many cases, government institutions charged with implementing laws related to the prevention of discrimination of women and enforcing gender equality initiatives lack the human capacity, financial resources and influence to address gender issues. For instance, in a report to the CEDAW Committee in 2009, the government of PNG identified the lack of structures for promoting gender equality as a challenge to carrying out the tasks outlined in international commitments. Similarly, the Lao PDR National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in 2006 and Vietnam National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in 2010 cited low capacity of their national institutions as a problem, and asked for help to strengthen—through training and more resources—them to be effective. To address the institutional capacity issues, countries like Philippines and Vietnam put forth efforts to improve their institutional structures and reinforce mandates already in place to promote women’s agency and subsequently promote gender equality (Box 4.2).

Governments use gender-based advocacy organizations that are part of government to remain proactively addressing women’s issues. Several countries have women activist organizations that are part of the government’s machinery. The Lao Women’s Union and the Vietnam Women’s Union are two examples. These are mass social organizations formed to promote information-sharing among women, educate women at all levels of society and promote women’s active participation in society. They mobilize women to be active participants in their community (and in political party related activities), and work to protect women’s rights and interests.

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**Box 4.2. Strengthening State Mechanisms for Gender Equality**

Gender equality laws in the region also focus on the improvement of existing gender equality structures. The Philippine Magna Carta for Women, for example, strengthened the mandate of the Philippine Commission on Women as the primary policy-making and coordinating body on women and gender equality concerns, and emphasized placement of qualified women in all government departments and their attached agencies. These measures include bringing local government units, government owned and controlled corporations, and other government instrumentalities into the discussion of how to best ensure a gender balance in their workforce. It strengthened the gender and development focal points by increasing resources and support. The increased allocation will be evaluated based on its influence in making 95 percent of the budget gender-responsive. It will be subject to an annual audit by the Commission on Audit.

Also, Vietnam’s Law on Gender Equality emphasized state responsibility to promote gender equality by identifying a state management agency to unify efforts by all government entities on gender equality as well responsibilities of agencies to mainstream gender in their work. Moreover, Articles 20-22 of the laws outline a process for integrating gender into legislation. A designated National Assembly’s Committee, together with other parliamentary committees, shall verify the integration of gender equality issues in the draft law, ordinances by drafting agencies.

*Source: UNDP, 2010*

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**Collective Agency: Women’s Organizations and the Space for Civic Action**

*Civil society functions as both an indicator of voice and participation, and a lever to create an enabling environment where women can affect change in the legal environment, public priorities, social norms, and facilitate dialogue and cooperation between parties that can influence the other determinants of agency.* Collective agency through civil society does not necessarily need
to focus on women specific issues, but instead, it is a forum in which men and women can exercise voice on any issues that they care about.

Civil society organization, social movements and civic activists have helped expand women’s agency by magnifying their voice in public forums and strengthening their influence. Having a collective voice, through mass movements, is critical in the process of influencing policy, culture, and social environments. Grass root movements have been instrumental in changing attitudes and behaviors that maintain gender inequalities, such as those that limit women’s participation in politics, by promoting new ideas and actively sharing information in the mainstream. In Indonesia, in 1997, a group of women got together to protest policies in response to the crisis which made them unable to afford powdered milk for their children. The group, known as Voice of Concerned Mothers (or Suara Ibu Pedulu), was the first group led by women in the country since the beginning of Suharto’s New Order (Robinson and Bessell, 2002). These protests flourished and evolved into a collective voice representing the voices of mothers throughout the country. Its success prompted wider voicing against the government, which contributed not only to the end the Suharto regime but also to creating new space for women to participate actively in the post-Suharto period (Rinaldo, 2002).

Civil society organizations and citizen movements have often facilitated dialogue and cooperation between ordinary women and those in public office. In Cambodia, CSOs helped promote awareness and political education among women through organization such as the Women’s Media Centre of Cambodia. Party-affiliated organizations, semi-governmental unions, as well as autonomous groups have served as incubators for female leaders to run for office or become appointees in key government positions. These gender grass-roots movements worked effectively in promoting the participation of women in local politics through information dissemination campaigns. They concentrated much of their efforts throughout Cambodia producing written and graphic awareness materials—explaining their rights, responsibilities, and the process for participating—and encouraging women to play an active role in politics. Currently, an increasing number of women organize forums at provincial levels to champion gender-related causes and to pressure politicians into action (Singh 2009).

Intense lobbying efforts by gender focused CSOs and civic activists, in matters related to increasing women’s role in policymaking, has prompted changes in social behavior and has engaged the commitment of politicians. Institutional factors such as parliamentary frameworks coupled by societal norms continue to hinder women’s entrance into the political stage (UNDP, 2010). For instance, the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP)—based in the Philippines with sub-regional offices in Mongolia, Fiji, Korea, and Nepal—is an active advocate for increasing the roles of women in politics. This and other similar CSOs are able to actively lobby for expanding the capacity of women in decision-making roles and working toward equity in representation between the two genders. In the Pacific, decreasing patterns in women’s participation in Politics prompted the recent reaffirmation of the commitment by the Women’s Rights and Advocacy in the Pacific (WRAP) to lobby for the promotion of women to be active in public office and political leadership (WRAP, 2011).

Policy Approaches to Promote Gender Equality in Agency

The analysis thus far as focused on the state of agency in the region and identified the factors facilitating or constraining gender equality in agency. Knowing the main factors that facilitate improvements in women’s agency can help to identify specific policies and programs to strengthen women’s voice and influence in practice. What follows is an initial discussion, based on the evidence presented, about policy priorities for promoting gender equality in agency. This section addresses the following factors in turn: (i) strengthening women’s endowments and
economic opportunity in support of agency, (ii) promoting gender-equal social norms, (iii) promoting legal and institutional reforms to eliminate discriminatory laws and gender unequal institutional practices and, (iv) strengthening role of civil society as a way to promote women’s voice and influence.

**Strengthening Women’s Endowments and Economic Opportunities**

Policies aimed at investing in women’s socio-economic development are described in Chapters 2, 3 and will be elaborated upon in greater depth in 6. Educated women in good health, with assets and income are able to better able to act on her preferences and influence outcomes that affect herself and others in society.

**Transforming Social Norms and Practices**

Social norms are not static, and several factors can influence them. The preferences that men and women express at the individual and household level as well as in the public sphere are in part determined by their socially constructed gender roles. Individual experiences as well as large-scale political and economic processes are capable of bringing about dramatic, and often rapid, social change. China’s 1949 Communist Revolution, for example, had the effect of reducing gender inequalities to an unprecedented extent (Whyte & Parish 1984; Bian, Shu, & Logan 2000; Wolf 1985). Moments of social change and structural transformation, create opportunities for women and men to rethink their roles and choices. In East Asia, the process of rapid urbanization that is currently underway brings with it the possibility of newly defined roles for men and women, as traditional social norms and production relations become more relaxed and new parameters regarding appropriate forms of behavior are formed.

*The education system can be a vital source to change gender inequality promoting social norms from a young age.* The integration of gender equality principles into the school and professional curricula can tackle the value system of children early on and challenging discriminatory social norms (Utomo et. al. 2009). In Indonesia, a recent project evaluated the textbooks used in various classes and found that textbooks contained gender biased material; they identified messages on sexual harassment, GBV and gender based stereotypes. Evidence of the positive effects of changing the curriculum is available for adults in Thailand where gender sensitivity was integrated into the curriculum for medical education in the Chulalongkorn medical school. The evaluation showed that respondents had a positive attitude to gender issues and tended to apply gender concepts and concerns into their work and personal lives. However, it was also clear from the exercise that there is limited evidence available on gender pertaining to many of the topics taught in a medical school, thus, many of the lessons were unable to properly incorporate gender into the curricula (WHO, 2006).

*Increases of information obtained from exposure to television programming also play a critical role in changing social norms, especially with respect to violence and fertility.* Evidence shows that people can be prompted to rethink gender roles in society when they are exposed to new information and experiences that challenge existing norms. The introduction of cable television in remote (rural) areas is associated with changes in social gender norms. Programs such as soap operas challenge traditional notions of gender roles and behaviors. There is growing evidence of the positive role of television in other regions around the world (i.e. Latin America and South Asia). In countries such as Brazil, Mexico and India, television influenced decreases in fertility rates and increases in the incidence of divorce rates among women exposed to soap operas in cable television. There is also evidence that television contributed to changes in attitudes towards violence and preferring male offspring. Interestingly, in Brazil, despite having strong traditional norms to have many children and against divorce (and strong stigma), increased exposure to the contrary behavior of popular women in soap operas
Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

led to a measurable decline in fertility and an increase in divorces (La Ferrara, Chong and Duryea, 2008; Chong and La Ferrara, 2009). In India, increased exposure to television contributed to decreases in the acceptance of wife beating, decreases in fertility rates and influences noticeable shifts away from son preference (Jensen and Oster, 2007).

*Policies that promote women’s voice and participation in public settings may have positive impacts for future generations.* Recent evidence shows that the use of political reservation policies in the Indian context not only improved people’s view of female politicians but also how they view their children and their future opportunities, as well as how children view their own ambitions— with corresponding changes in behavior within a generation (Beaman et al., 2012).

**Improving the Legal and Institutional Environment**

As discussed above, while improvements have been made, continued improvements in the legal protection of women are needed to ensure they have rights of equality under the law. Also, apart from legal reform, it is also necessary that institutions have the capacity to enforce the law and are able to provide adequate services. This section lists some policies and programs that have been shown to contribute to improving the enabling environment for women to exercise their agency in their household, their community and to decrease gender-based violence in their countries and communities.

*Continue to actively participate in international treaties that promote gender equality.* The ratification of international treatise such as CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action serves to signal the state’s commitment to gender equality. Through active participation, governments help its partners—policymakers, CSOs, individuals, development agencies—strengthen their position to call for further reform of the civil and criminal laws in order to be consistent with international standards.

*Review the legal code to ensure that it contains gender equality principles that are consistent with those advocated through CEDAW.* After ratifying international conventions against the discrimination of women, the next step is to review the laws and the way institutions function to ensure that they actively promote equality between the genders under the law, actively promote nondiscrimination based on individual characteristics, and that the state is legally empowered to eliminate all discrimination based on gender. In cases when an overall legal reform is not possible, governments should identify its priority areas. For instance, in contexts where women’s agency in the household is weak, reforms can focus on marriage, divorce, maintenance laws, and on the protection of women from gender based violence. Governments should also commit to undertaking regular assessments to make sure the laws are upheld, legal gaps are filled, and to monitor its progress towards gender equality. Also, in countries where plural systems of law coexist, governments should continuously assess customary practices to ascertain whether they curtail women’s agency and develop strategies to address them.

*Strengthen the capacities of institutions to enforce the law.* The judicial system fails women when it is reluctant to pursue crimes against them, and refuses to uphold judgments in their favor largely based on their gender. Investments need to be made, financial and human, to ensure that public sector personnel have the capacity to enforce the law and are able to work following gender equality principles. Police forces in several countries in the region—including Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia—have been criticized for being too passive in investigating trafficking and enforcing anti-trafficking laws (US Department of State 2011). Gender trainings regarding important issues including human trafficking should be mandatory for all law enforcement...
personnel, including judges, lawyers, police officers, mediators, social workers, and all those involved in enforcing the law and dealing with gender related matters.

**Strengthening Women's Access to Justice**

*Take steps to make the judicial system more accessible to women.* Provide innovative methods to improve access to the judicial system so women can exercise their agency in the courts when needed. For instance, use mobile courts, such as those in rural areas of China and Indonesia, to provide a solution to the problem of accessibility and security for women who wish to exercise their rights in the legal system but are unable to access the court. Use technology to provide basic legal services; for instance, telephone hotlines and websites can be used to undertake basic legal transactions. For women with few economic resources, consider waiving or subsidizing the costs of legal aid to ensure access to the judicial system.

**Active Measures to Enable Women's Participation in Politics and Policy Making**

*Facilitate the adoption of affirmative action policies if the context necessitates it.* In both the private and public sectors, voluntary and/or mandatory affirmative action policies have been used in many countries to increase the representation of women, throughout the institution, from entry level positions to managerial posts. In many countries, private sector companies actively pursue these policies on their own, while in others public sector intuitions take the leadership in promoting gender-based temporary special measures to act as a signal to the rest of the labor market. In policies, the range of affirmative action mechanisms also varies. Quotas for example, can be in the form of constitutional changes to reserve a certain number of posts for women, legislative and (formal or informal) political party quotas. They can be informally used or formally mandated at the sub-national level or national levels (Dahlerup, 2002). The suitability of affirmative action measures should be evaluated well before embarking into implementation. Take into account that affirmative action measures can open doors to women in politics and public office and fast track them into positions of power. They can also help to transform people’s views about the efficacy of female political leaders. Special Measures can have the benefit of raising the number of women participating in electoral politics, but it may not be costless. Under such measures, the perceptions that women are less qualified may persist and in some cases, women may hesitate to take such positions because of concern they’ll be perceived as less capable.

**Creating Space for Women’s Collective Agency**

Collective action has drawn “private life” into the public arena, identifying and addressing gender bias in statutory, religious, or customary law (UNRISD 2005). It has also reduced the hold of social norms blocking greater gender equality. During the debate in Cambodia leading to the 2005 Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims, the draft law was denounced for being antagonistic to Khmer culture. Parliamentarians criticized it for ‘providing women with too many freedoms and rights, which will cause them to be so happy with their freedom that they do not respect ancient Cambodian customs… A cake cannot be bigger than the cake pan (as cited in Frieson 2011).’ The Cambodia committee of Women, a coalition of 32 nongovernmental organizations (NGOS), persistently lobbied the government and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs to secure the legislation’s passage.
Notes

1 Civic activism is defined as the set of practices among citizens which demand greater involvement and scrutiny of public decisions and outcomes and is often used as a proxy for agency. Examples of civic activism are memberships in civil society organizations, petitions, protests, and peaceful demonstrations.

2 All countries in the region have experienced a decrease in female fertility rates except for Timor-Leste.

3 There is large variability within countries in how individual CSOs interact with government; and there have been distinct paths of evolution in the relationship over time among more developed countries in East Asia. In Korea, prior to 1990, the relationship between the government and civil society was not close in part because their goals did not seem to be aligned. After 1990 the relationship changed because the government sought to find common ground with CSOs (Kim, 1998). The role of civil society in Japan also continues to evolve; it had a limited role in the 1990’s due to a cumbersome regulatory framework that made entry of new CSOs and operations of existing ones difficult (Amemiya 1999; Yamaoka 1999). A new legal framework was put forth in 2006, which prompted some positive changes, especially in the relationship between the government and CSOs (Lowry, 2008).


5 Psychological and emotional violence is defined by acts or threats of acts, such as shouting, controlling, intimidating, humiliating and threatening the victim. This may include coercive tactics.

6 Circumstances include if she doesn’t do her housework to his satisfaction, if she disobeys him, if she refuses to have sex with him, if she asks him whether he has other girlfriends, if he suspects that she is unfaithful, and if he finds out that she has been unfaithful.

Chapter 5. Gender and the Region’s Emerging Development Challenges

Introduction

The world is more integrated now than it has ever been in its history, bringing regions together economically, socially, and culturally as never before. The EAP region is one of the most dynamic in the world and has been at the forefront of the trend towards greater global integration. Over the course of two decades, many countries in the region have changed the structure of their economies and have gradually opened to greater inflows and outflows of people, goods, and physical capital. Technological advances have changed production processes in all sectors – from better market access in agriculture to mechanization in manufacturing. The region has seen shifts in geographic patterns of settlement and work as the center of economic activities has moved from rural to urban areas and as international and national migration has increased. Rapid declines in fertility and mortality are anticipated to change the region’s demographic profile – in some countries, the proportion of the population aged over 65 is already larger than the proportion aged 15 and under.

This chapter examines how these five key trends are affecting the men and woman of the East Asia and the Pacific region: (i) globalization and integration; (ii) information and communications technology; (iii) migration; (iv) urbanization; and (v) aging. Each of these trends involves a number of gender-related challenges, but also presents new and encouraging prospects for women. Policymakers in the region will have to manage these challenges while simultaneously fostering new opportunities.

(a) **Globalization:** The trend towards greater global economic integration, which has been particularly marked in EAP, has the potential to increase economic opportunities for women and narrow the gender wage gap. However, globalization also raises the likelihood that shocks are transmitted from country to country through integrated markets. Many studies, including those from the recent global financial crisis, have found that these shocks often have a disproportionately negative effect on women in a wide range of outcomes including human capital investment, labor force participation, earnings, and mortality.

(b) **Information and Communications Technology:** Advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) are revolutionizing the ways in which men and women in the region are exposed to ideas, share knowledge and network. These technologies can empower women by opening new economic opportunities, breaking down information barriers, changing social norms and enabling collective action. Evidence suggests that women in the region may still have less access to information technology than men, reducing their ability to harness their transformative potential.

(c) **Migration:** The economic growth experienced in the region over the past three decades has spurred significant movements of people within and across countries in search of better economic opportunities. Women comprise nearly half of all of these migrants in EAP. Migration can provide women with more and better economic opportunities, but it can also put them at greater risk than men of exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking.
(d) **Urbanization:** There have been unprecedented increases in migration to urban areas in recent decades as men and women move in search of jobs. Urbanization can transform women’s lives through improved access to infrastructure, education and health services and a wider range of economic opportunities. Their ability to take advantage of these opportunities depends on whether gender sensitive infrastructure and service delivery has been considered and whether they are able to balance their home and work lives.

(e) **Aging:** The population of EAP is aging rapidly, in many countries at a faster pace than in the rest of the world. Women, both the elderly and the young, are likely to face particular challenges as a result of this demographic change. Although they tend to live longer than men, they have fewer economic assets and resources and are less likely to be covered by formal social security systems. They are also more likely to be caregivers to the elderly than men.

### Figure 5.1 and 5.2: Women are more likely to be working in export orientated firms than in non-export orientated firms

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### Globalization

Globalization presents opportunities as well as challenges for reducing gender inequality. The opening up of domestic economies to specialization spurred by international trade may increase economic opportunities and women’s empowerment, but this trend also brings with it an increased risk that shocks will be transmitted from country to country through increasingly integrated markets.

### Globalization and the EAP Region – Growth in Trade and Capital Flows

Developing countries are experiencing structural change at a rapid pace. Since 1987 the share of both male and female employment in manufacturing and services in developing countries has grown faster than in developed countries, reflecting changes in the global distribution of production and labor (WDR, 2011). These trends have been mirrored in the EAP region (Chapter 3).
Behind these changes in economic structure lie the powerful global forces of economic and social integration and economic reforms. In many countries in the region, reforms during the 1990s and early 2000s laid the foundation for institutional change and rapid growth. The export of goods and services as a proportion of GDP has risen from 17 percent in 1980 to 43 percent in 2008. However, these flows are volatile. The recent financial crisis has caused exports to fall to 35 percent of GDP in the region. Within the region, there is wide variation in the ratio of exports to GDP. For example, in Vietnam this ratio has increased hugely over time – from 7 percent in 1986 to over 70 percent in the late 2000s – while in Indonesia the ratio has remained in the range between 20 and 40 percent over the last three decades.

**Gender and Globalization**

These trade and capital flows have generated new employment and income-generation opportunities within the region, particularly for females. However, these flows have also been associated with greater economic volatility as global or regional macro-economic shocks, such as the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98, the food and fuel crisis of 2004 and 2008, and the global financial crisis, can spread more rapidly throughout the world. This section explores the ways in which globalization has changed the lives of men and women in the region.

**Globalization has increased economic opportunities for women.**

The important role played by women in the expansion of export-orientated manufacturing has become a stylized fact of economic development and structural transformation (Standing, 1999 and Wood, 1991). Several studies have argued that increasing trade and mobile capital has expanded job opportunities in EAP, particularly for women who make up a large proportion of the labor force in the export-orientated manufacturing sector in EAP and around the world (UNIFEM, 2008).

Export orientated firms are more likely to hire females than non-export orientated firms, both across the world and within the region (Figure 5.1 and 5.2). East Asia and the Pacific is second only to Europe and Central Asia in the proportion of female workers working in the export-orientated sector. Within East Asia, the fraction of female workers is substantially higher in export orientated firms than in non-export orientated firms, with Indonesia as a key exception in this regard (Figure 5.2).³

Female workers predominate in certain export-orientated sectors, such as the garment sector. These sectors have grown substantially and quickly in recent years. Figure 5.3 depicts employment in Vietnam’s textile and apparel sectors, which grew significantly between 2000 and 2008. Women are more likely to work in these sectors than men in Cambodia, Lao, Vietnam, and Indonesia, although, overall, garments and textiles account for only a small fraction of the female workforce - less than 5 percent of the female workforce in Indonesia and Lao and less than 6 percent in Vietnam. Among workers aged 15 to 34, who are the most likely to be employed in manufacturing, gender differences in employment are substantial in all countries in the region (Figure 5.4). Interestingly, staff analysis of household data suggests that, with the exception of Indonesia, electronics production does not appear to be an overwhelming female area of work even though, during the earlier waves of export-orientated growth in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, the labor force in this area was predominately female (Wood, 1991).
The experience of developed countries in the region shows that the demand for female labor in export-orientated industries declines as countries transition from labor-intensive to capital-intensive manufacturing. In Korea, women constituted 70 percent of workers in export processing zones in 1990 compared to 42 percent of employees in manufacturing overall (Kusago and Tzannatos, 2001) – a substantial rise over the 28 percent of women employed in manufacturing in 1972 (Seguino, 1997). However, the dominance of females in the export-orientated sector has declined as light manufacturing industries were increasingly replaced by heavy chemical and manufacturing industries, such as steel, cars, and shipbuilding (Kong, 2007). In Taiwan, a concerted shift away towards capital-intensive or technology-intensive exports in the late 1970s and early 1980s was accompanied by a steady decline in the share of female wage workers in the manufacturing sector until the mid-1990s (Berik, 2000).

Although the sectors that are currently expanding due to increased trade opportunities in many EAP countries employ women intensively, as the sectors upgrade, employers may drive female workers out and replace them with more highly skilled men (Gamberoni and Reis, 2011 and Tejani and Milberg, 2010). For example, in Malaysia, only 40 percent of the workers in the Special Economic Zones are now female, down from 60 percent two decades ago (IFC, 2008). There are several possible explanations for this, (Gamberoni and Reis, 2011) including: (i) differences in the level and content of men’s and women’s education (Berik, forthcoming); (ii) discrimination and gender segregation in higher skilled jobs (Tejani and Milberg, 2010); and (iii) tight female labor markets that can force female wages to rise and which may “lead firms to invest in training for male workers, consistent with the view that men deserve more secure employment and are less likely to leave paid work to fulfill domestic responsibilities” (Seguino and Grown, 2006).

How the wages of men and women respond to trade-liberalization and export-orientated growth will vary depending on the type of growth seen, on a country’s comparative advantage, and on institutional and
policy-related factors (Oostendorp, 2009; Black and Brainerd, 2004; Berik et al., 2004; and Seguino, 2000). Seguino (2000) found that, during a period of export-orientated growth, overall gender wage gaps narrowed in Korea while they widened in Taiwan. The author attributed this difference to increasing capital mobility in Taiwan, which moved capital out of labor- and female-intensive industries, whereas regulations in Korea limited the movement of capital. Similar evidence from Bangladesh indicates that a movement up the value chain in the Bangladeshi garment industry had negative repercussions for female workers, who are less likely to work in the more skill-intensive occupations (Frederick and Staritz, 2011). Berik and van Meulen Rodgers (2004) explored the impact of international competition on the gender wage gap in Taiwan and South Korea between 1980 and 1999. They found that, in sectors with strong trade competition, the wage gap between men and women widened over time. In Taiwan, greater export orientation adversely affected both men’s and women’s wages but it reduced gender wage inequality because male employees faced a greater wage penalty than female workers did (Berik, 2000).

The expansion of labor market opportunities as result of trade liberalization may have led to increased investments in education. For example, the expansion of call centers and other economic opportunities for women have been found to increase female educational investment in India (Oster and Millet, 2010, Shastry, 2010, and Munshi and Rosenzweig, 2004).

Globalization raises challenges that are likely to have a gender dimension

Despite these improvements for women, globalization poses challenges in the form of increase exposure to externally driven shocks and in the type and quality of work conducted by women in the export-orientated sector. Externally driven shocks have been found to have a negative effect on women in a number of outcomes, including health, education and employment.

Men and women work in different occupations and industries so they tend to be affected differently by economic shocks. In addition, since crises vary in the sectors they impact and in their propagation mechanisms, the employment and wage effects on men and women also vary across crises. For example, in the Philippines the food and fuel crisis of 2008 affected employment and wages in different ways than the financial crisis of 2009 (Meulen Rodgers and Menon, 2010). In response to the food and fuel crisis, more unskilled workers lost their jobs than skilled workers, whereas skilled workers suffered more than unskilled workers during the financial crisis. Women’s likelihood of employment dropped more than that of men during both crises, but, while most of the decline for men came from falling wage employment, women lost work in both wage and self-employment. In Cambodia, the financial crisis was found to have resulted in labor market churning, where a high destruction of jobs was followed by an even larger creation of low quality jobs. Women accounted for the greatest share of job losses, but also the largest share of jobs created (Bruni et al, 2010).

Across the world, as well as in EAP, women’s employment and the total number of hours that women work both tend to increase during periods of economic crisis. Using data from 63 developing and transition countries, Bhalotra and Umana (2009) found that a 10 percent drop in a country’s GDP is associated with a 0.74 percentage point increase in women’s work participation. The authors also found that the employment of rural women and married women with a child under the age of 5 in the EAP region were more sensitive to cyclical variation than other women, possibly because they tend to be closer to their subsistence requirements.
Women’s employment in EAP may be disproportionately affected by crises due to perceptions that they should step aside for male workers. In South Korea, more women than men dropped out of the labor force and became “discouraged” workers during the 1997/98 crisis (Kim and Voos, 2007). The increase in dropouts was concentrated among young, single women and outweighed the increased labor force participation of married women who entered the labor market to maintain their family’s income (Kang, 1999). Shin (1999) found that the majority of employers targeted women workers for “voluntary” resignation, especially if these women were from double income families or were married. Anecdotal evidence suggests that women in some sectors in South Korea, such as banking, were forced to resign from their permanent positions and were then rehired as temporary employees (Kim and Voos, 2007). The disproportionate dismissal of female employees during the crisis, was partly because of employers’ perception that it cost them more to hire female workers than male workers (Kong, 2007) and partly because employers viewed men as the main family breadwinners and hence believed that women should step aside (Kim, 2006).

Female health has been found to be more susceptible to shocks than male health, both in the region and elsewhere (Strauss and Thomas, 2008). Females are more likely to suffer from physical and mental health deteriorations during periods of crisis (Dercon and Krishnan, 2001; Friedman and Thomas, 2007; and Frankenberg et al, 2008). Data from 59 developing countries show a large negative association between per capita GDP and infant mortality, with a 1 percent decline in per capita GDP being associated with a 10 to 15 percent increase in infant mortality on average. However, the effect on females is approximately twice the effect on males – a 1 percent decline in per capita GDP increases the mortality rates of boys by 0.27 per thousand born, while it raises that of girls by 0.53 per thousand. The quality and quantity of women and girl’s diet is also more likely to have been disproportionately affected by the food and financial crisis than that of men (Jones et al., 2009). In addition, tensions in households increase during periods of economic stress. During the financial crisis of 2009, both men and women reported an increase in the number of arguments between husbands and wives related to their limited financial resources, which sometimes led to violence (Turk and Mason, 2010).

Evidence from macroeconomic crises suggests that, while children’s school enrollment declines in response to these shocks, the gender differences are small relative to their overall impacts (Sabarwal et al, 2010). In Indonesia and the Philippines, the 1997/98 crisis was associated with declines in children’s school enrollment or increases in child labor (Lim, 2000; Frankenberg et al. 1999; and Thomas et al. 2004). In the Philippines, there was a small decline in the enrollment of female children at the elementary level in 1998-99, whereas male enrollment increased substantially during that year (Lim 1999). At the same time, child labor among older boys aged 10 to 14 increased in both urban and rural areas, while female child labor force participation rates increased only marginally (Lim 1999). In Indonesia, Thomas et al (2004) found that real education expenditures as well as the share of the household budget spent on schooling declined between 1997 and 1998. The authors also found that households spent more on the education of young men (aged 15 to 19) than young women and that they found the money to do this by reducing their expenditures on the education of younger male and female children (aged 10 to 14) and of older females (aged 15 to 19).

Finally, globalization poses challenges in the type and quality of work conducted by women in the export-orientated sector. Gender segregation continues to exist. Women are less likely to be employed in managerial or professional positions and are more likely to be in part-time or informal sub-contracted jobs (Seguino 2000). Older female workers also face barriers in these industries. For example, in Shenzhen, the largest of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in China, 90 percent of workers in garment and electronics plants are female and under 25 years of age (Summerfield, 1997 quoted in Davin, 2004). This bias may be because firms in
these zones often use single-sex dormitories to accommodate migrant workers, accommodation that is incompatible with marriage and family formation (Davin, 2004 and Ngai, 2004).

Many studies have suggested that employment in Export Processing Zones is characterized by unsafe working conditions and the suppression of labor rights. However, it is unclear whether workers in these zones are worse off than their rural and urban counterparts (Murayama and Yokata, 2008). Governments set the legal framework for employment practices in SEZs, which may have the same labor standards as those in the country as a whole or may be unique to the SEZs. For example, in the Philippines, all national laws are officially applicable in EPZs. In practice, however, the Philippines Economic Zone Authority, the most “employer-friendly” state agency, often allows firms in the EPZ to get around these laws (McKay 2006).

Implications for Gender Policy

This expansion of employment opportunities in the EAP region due to globalization has been associated with greater female access to income and rising empowerment, particularly among young rural female migrants. However, challenges remain for women working in these sectors. As in the rest of the economy, women are less likely to be employed in managerial positions and more likely to be employed in temporary positions or in the informal sector than men. Furthermore, experience from developed countries in the region suggests that, as economies develop and industries move up the value chain, female employment in the export-orientated sector may well decline as “male” industries emerge.

Chapter 3 suggested that reducing gender-based segregation in economic sectors is likely to increase labor market flexibility, skill match and also to ensure that the gains from greater trade and financial integration are felt by all. In addition, there is scope for improving labor standards in export-orientated industries and in special economic zones, for example, through initiatives such as the Better Factories Cambodia (BFC) program or by creating zone-level social services that are sensitive to women’s needs.
Information and Communication Technologies

The exponential growth of information and communication technologies in the developed and developing world is widely lauded as the defining economic and social force of the late 20th and early 21st century. ICTs include a plethora of technological advances, from radio, cell phones, computers, emails, and the Internet. Figure 5.5 and Figure 5.6 show the rapid expansion of the ownership of cell phones and access to the Internet in developing countries around the world. The EAP region falls behind both Latin America and Europe and Central Asia in both indicators and ties with the Middle East and North Africa.

The spread of ICTs has increased access to information by enhancing knowledge sharing and gathering and by changing business practices and production structures. ICTs have impacted many aspects of men and women’s lives, from their economic opportunities and health outcomes to women’s empowerment.

There is little evidence on how access to and use of ICTs varies by gender (see Melhelm and Tandon 2009 for a more in-depth discussion of why this may be the case). Therefore, this section provides predominantly anecdotal or project-specific evidence from across the world of how men and women may be benefitting from the spread of ICTs.

The reach of technology, at the national level, has been growing in parts of the EAP region. In 2000, the majority of countries in the region had fewer than 2 Internet users per 100 people. By 2009, China had overtaken Thailand as the country with the greatest number of Internet users – 28 per 100 people – closely followed by Vietnam with 27 users per 100 people (Figure 5.7). However, rapid growth of Internet use has not occurred in all countries. In Lao, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, and the Solomon Islands, Internet use is still close to its levels in 2000. Similar but starker patterns can be seen for cell phone usage. In 2000, there were fewer than 5 cell phones per 100 people in many countries in the region while in the rest of the countries, with the exception of Malaysia and New Caledonia, there were fewer than 20 cell phones per 100 people (Figure 5.8). By 2009, the number of cell phones in use has risen, as have disparities between

Figure 5.7. Internet usage has grown quickly in many countries in the region, but has grown slowly in others

Figure 5.8. The number of cell phone subscribers in the population has grown across most of East Asia, but has remained limited in some Pacific countries.

countries. In Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, and the Solomon Islands, the number of cell phones per 100 people was still below 10 while in Samoa, which started from a similar base to the other Pacific countries, the number of cell phones per 100 people had risen to 84.

Where gender disaggregated data are available, they indicate that there are gender differences in access to ICTs in EAP. Figure 5.9 displays the proportion of male and female subscribers to mobile phones in the population. In multiple but not all regions across the world, there is a gender gap in cell phone subscriptions. Furthermore, gender differences in access to technology have been suggested to be greater among certain sub-groups of the population. In other words, gender is likely to interact with socioeconomic characteristics such as income, education, location, and social and cultural constraints (Huyer and Hafkin, 2007).

Evidence from China suggests that the number of Internet users multiplied by a factor of 200 between 1997 and 2005. The gender gap in access declined from 80 percent in 1998 to approximately 20 percent in 2001, but has remained constant since then (Figure 5.10).

ICTs can improve the welfare of men and women in several different ways. First, they can enhance their economic opportunities. Second, the widespread dissemination of information on how men and women live their lives in other parts of the world may gradually change attitudes to gender norms and roles. Third, e-governance initiatives can make people more aware of their rights and of their country’s laws. Fourth, access to television, radio, and the Internet enables people to increase their knowledge and training through
distance learning. Finally, rural populations can use ICTs to gain access to better health care through increased access to medical advice.

ICTs can enhance economic opportunities by increasing access to markets, for example, by allowing farmers to benefit from arbitrage opportunities (Jensen, 2007 and Aker, 2010), and by making production-enhancing information available (for example, through tele-agriculture).\textsuperscript{10} “Traditional” technologies – such as radio and television programs - have been used for decades in the developing world to provide advisory services to farmers in agricultural areas (Goyal, 2010). With the growth of mobile phone coverage, some countries have been expanding such services to include using cell phones and the Internet (Aker, 2011). Examples include telephone based agricultural extension services that provide farmers with advice on farming methods, radio broadcasts that give out market prices and agricultural information, text messaging (SMS) extension services that answer simple agricultural questions, and tele-centers and internet kiosks that allow farmers to access the Internet to access e-learning programs and search for agriculture-related information (Aker, 2011).\textsuperscript{11}

Second, female empowerment and autonomy may be raised through the representation of lifestyles, autonomy, and gender roles in other parts of the world.\textsuperscript{12} One of the earliest examples of the power of “entertainment-education” to change behavior occurred in Mexico in 1977. The soap-opera Acompáñame promoted family planning, which was a socially sensitive topic at the time, after which there was a substantial increase in both awareness and use of birth control among Mexicans (Singhla and Rogers, 1999).\textsuperscript{13} In another example, approximately 150 million individuals gained access to cable television service in India between 2001 and 2006 (National Readership Studies Council, 2006 cited in Jensen and Oster, 2009). This development was found to have had a large and swift effect on attitudes towards domestic violence and women’s participation in household decision making (Jensen and Oster, 2009). Exposure to cable television was also found to increase school enrollment for girls (but not for boys) and to decrease fertility – an outcome that was associated with the increase in female autonomy (see Chapter 4).

In societies in which social customs limit interactions between males and females, television may reduce stereotypes by increasing interaction or knowledge of others. For example, the introduction of televisions across the US in the 1940s and 1950s increased the exposure of African-American children to images of white children (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2007). This resulted in African-American children expressing a preference for interacting with whites and increased the frequency of inter-racial friendships for both blacks and whites. In Rwanda, a radio program aimed at discouraging blind obedience and at promoting independent thought and collective action in problem-solving was found to have increased listeners’ willingness to express dissent and to have changed the ways in which communal problems were resolved (Paluck and Green, 2009).

Technology can also be used to give women more control over their money and their actions. For example, in Bangladesh, before mobile phones were common, a migrant husband’s relatives had greater control over his remittances than his wife did, but the advent of cell phones allowed closer communication between husband and wife on how to best use the remittances (Schuler et al, 2010).

Third, ICTs can enhance governance by increasing women’s knowledge of their rights and of laws that affect them. For example, in Andhra Pradesh in India, the e-government services (e-Seva) have targeted women by providing them with free and current information and services related to women’s rights and inheritance and family law.
Fourth, education programs conducted through ICTs can particularly benefit women by enabling them to pursue their education on a more flexible basis than normal education programs allow. It also has the potential to increase access to higher education for women living in restrictive social situations who may not be able to travel or live away from home to engage in higher education. Cell phones can also be used to increase adult literacy. Indeed, because sending text messages is cheaper than making voice calls, cell phone users have a financial incentive to send text messages and, thus, practice their reading and writing skills.

Finally, ICTs can also be used to improve the provision and quality of health care services. In remote communities where access to high-quality medical care is limited, women often have less access to health care than men (see Chapter 2). Therefore, increasing access to health care through ICTs may diminish existing health care disparities, but only if women are able to access ICTs to the same degree as men. For example, Sehat First provides health care and pharmaceutical services across Pakistan through tele-health centers where local clinic staff can confer via video phone with qualified physicians and specialists to whom they would not normally have had access (Sehat case study, cited in Melhelm and Tandon, 2009).

Implications for Gender Policy

ICTs can enhance the lives and economic opportunities of women in many ways. The widespread dissemination of information in the media on how men and women live their lives in other parts of the world may gradually change gender norms and roles, thus giving women in many countries the chance to live less restricted, more empowered lives. Technology can enhance women’s economic opportunities as well as give them more control over their money. However, for this to happen, women must have access to these technologies. There is little evidence on how access to and use of ICTs varies by gender, but the few snapshots that we have show that women are lagging behind men in this respect. This implies that they may be less able to reap the direct benefits of having access to, for example, distance learning opportunities, and online agricultural extension services. More research is needed to explore whether and why women in the EAP region may be failing to benefit from these technologies to the same extent as men.

Migration

The movement of people, both on a national and international scale, has increased across the world in the last two decades due to improvements in transportation technology and infrastructure (WDR, 2009). Worldwide, women account for almost half of all international migrants, rising from 46.8 percent of migrants in 1960 to 49 percent in 2010 (UNPD, 2008). A shift in the motive for migration has been noted among female migrants. Previously, women predominantly migrated for marriage or as dependents of spouses or other male family members who worked abroad. Increasingly, women are migrating independently to improve their economic opportunities and in the role of the primary breadwinner for their families (Sorensen, 2004).

The economic growth experienced in the East Asia and Pacific region over the past three decades has spurred a lively and complex intra-regional movement of people. Evidence of these flows is highly visible within the region – from the 200 million people travelling across China to be with their families for the Lunar New Year to the substantial cross-border migration flows seen in the Greater Mekong Subregion (WDR, 2009). Economic booms in East Asian cities have created labor force shortages, which have been met by a growing supply of migrant labor as people have moved to urban areas in order to improve the well-being of their families and communities. The flow of migrants to several cities in the region has become increasingly female,
and international migration from the region as a whole is female-dominated (UN, 2001b cited by Hugo, 2005 and Guzman, 2006).

In this section, we examine the following in the context of the EAP region: (i) emerging migration trends; (ii) the socioeconomic characteristics of male and female migrants; (iii) factors influencing female migration; (iv) the mixed impact of migration on women’s status and; (v) the mixed impact of migration on those who stay behind.

Migration Trends in the EAP Region

Although there are significant information gaps because of the often informal and undocumented nature of female migration in the region, three salient facts have emerged in recent years. First, women are migrating and their numbers are increasing. At the turn of the 21st century, the number of female migrants in the region is estimated to have surpassed that of male migrants (Lee, 2005). In Fiji and Tonga in 2005, approximately 50 percent of migrants were females (World Bank, 2006a). The bulk of female migrants in the region come from Indonesia and the Philippines. Thai women are underrepresented among legal migrants but dominate among irregular migrants or those presumed to be trafficked. Thailand has also been an important destination for irregular migrant women, such as Myanmar and Lao women working as domestic workers (Piper, 2009). More than half of the Laotian migrants and close to half of the Cambodian migrants to Thailand are women (World Bank, 2006b).

Second, the proportion of women in the migrant population is increasing. A study in China covering six provinces found that, between 1995 and 2000, the migration rates for women increased twice as quickly as those for men (de Brauw et al, 2002). The annual proportion of females migrating among Indonesian workers reached approximately 80 percent in 2007, an increase from about 70 percent in 2000 (Figure 1.9). In Vietnam, women constituted 57.1 percent of individuals who had migrated internally or who were international migrants in the previous five years (Pierre, 2011c).

Third, those female migrants who used to migrate out of the region are increasingly finding opportunities to migrate within the region. Although the most frequent destination for female migrants from Indonesia is Saudi Arabia, more and more of these women are finding employment in other Asian countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. This is different from the trends of Indonesian male migrants. While the majority of male migrants find work in Malaysia, many are now going to Saudi Arabia (Nyugen and Purnamarsari, 2011).

Socioeconomic Factors characterizing Male and Female Migrants
The socio-economic factors that characterize male and female migrants in the region appear to be similar. Migrants, both male and female, are young and relatively low-skilled but are not necessarily among the least educated in their country of origin (World Bank, 2006b; Jampaklay et al., 2009; and World Bank Migration Report, 2011). The exception to this trend is the Philippines, where both male and female migrants tend to be older and highly educated (Cabegin and Alba, 2011). High-skilled female migration is different in character to low-skilled migration: the destination countries for this type of migration are usually high-income developed countries in North America and Western Europe. Female migrants participate in all types of migration. They can be found among both internal and international migrants, within temporary as well as permanent flows, and are both regular and irregular.

**Factors Influencing Female Migration**

A combination of factors has influenced the feminization of migrant flows in the region. The perceived comparative advantage of women in growing industries has led to an increase in female labor demand and to the expansion of labor opportunities for women in both the formal and informal sectors in urban areas. Women are more likely than men to work in export-orientated industries, where they are perceived by employers to have a comparative advantage. China’s Pearl River Delta region is one of the most popular destinations for internal rural migrants. Young rural migrant women comprise 65 to 70 percent of the region’s labor force because they are favored by the region’s transnational clothing, textile, toy, electronic, and other labor-intensive manufacturing and processing firms (Gaetano and Jacka, 2004).

There has been a rapid increase in demand for domestic workers as a result of urbanization and an expansion of the middle class in many countries in the world. Women migrate to work abroad as domestic workers in response to gender-specific labor demand. Female migrant workers from East Asia and the Pacific are also employed as domestic workers in other regions including the Middle East, North America and Western Europe. Approximately 1 million migrant domestic workers are in Saudi Arabia, with the majority from Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. In 2003, an estimated 200,000 migrant domestic workers were found in Hong Kong, China, and 155,000 in Malaysia. In Singapore, there is a domestic worker employed in one of every seven households (UNFPA, 2006).

More women are moving independently for educational and employment reasons. When migration is not restricted, many women choose to migrate to obtain new skills, increase their income and broaden their education. In Vietnam, approximately 14 percent of male and female migrants migrate to attend school; since females are more likely to migrate, they constitute a larger fraction of those migrating for schooling (Pierre, 2011c). Women are over-represented in the brain drain, which may be a consequence of their unequal access to labor markets in developing countries. Econometric estimates show that emigration of highly skilled women is higher the poorer the country of origin (Dumont et al., 2007). While this can be beneficial to the individual in terms of opportunities, the female brain drain can be detrimental to the economic growth of source countries, especially those with increasingly aging populations.

The informal sectors of cities have many opportunities for females as well as males, promoting rural to urban migration. The informal labor sector in Cambodia has absorbed female migrants from rural areas in work such as street peddling, construction, manual labor, domestic service and garbage collection (UNIFEM, 2006). Males conduct different, generally brawn-intensive, types of work including construction, mining, fishing and logging.
Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

In recent decades there has been a substantial growth of sex and entertainment industries in Asian cities and in cross-border areas. Almost all women involved in these industries are rural-urban migrants and of circular nature (Hugo, 2003). Global tourism, which has been promoted as a national policy in countries such as Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia for decades, is cited as the primary reason for the rapid growth of the sex and entertainment industry (Pasuk et al., 1998; Bell, 1988). Cambodia and Lao PDR are also now facing this social challenge.

The Mixed Impact of Migration on Women’s Position in Households and Communities

Migration can increase a woman’s empowerment, economic opportunity, knowledge and skills, as well as increase her participation as an active member of society. Through these channels, it can contribute to economic growth, the well-being of her family and make an inter-generational impact by acting as a role model for other women and girls. However, female migrants are more likely to be at risk of exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking than male migrants.

Many women become empowered when they move from rural to urban areas and away from familial and rural community social controls. Increased autonomy, access to information and status can empower women to create new identities for themselves. Rural migrant women in Chinese cities experience more autonomy and independence than they did at home (Zhang, 1999). Migrant women who return home may act as role models to other women by transferring or demonstrating newly acquired skills, ideas attitudes and knowledge (Hugo, 2005 and UNFPA, 2006). Many domestic workers in Chiang Mai and Mae Sot, Thailand, stated that, when they go back home, they want to establish a small business based on the new skills learned (Punpuing et al, 2005). The women of rural Anhui and Sichuan, China, who participated in circular migration and returned home strongly related to adopting the urban norm of only desiring one child and experienced lower rates of domestic violence than women who did not migrate. These women also hold the belief that women should be able to exercise their choice in choosing a marriage partner and believe that it is acceptable to divorce (Connelly et al., 2010).

Empowerment may furthermore arise in the form of participation in collective organizations, including non-governmental organizations and labor associations that lobby for gender equality. Domestic workers in Hong Kong have been active in the past fifteen years in organizing and participating in political protests that concern not only local migrant workers rights but also global, transnational and human rights (Constable, 2009).

Migration provides women with increased economic opportunities, which can improve the standard of living of the migrant and their families. For many female rural-urban migrants in China, migration is the first time they earn wages and choose how to spend them (Connelly et al, 2010). In Cambodia, the porous border to Thailand provides Khmer female migrants the opportunity to sell home and farm production in Thailand’s markets at higher prices, where the per capita GDP is 12 times that of Cambodia. Khmer women also engage in paid and formal employment as shop assistants, fruit sellers and sweet sellers for mostly Thai employers. This migration is largely circular and non-permanent in nature, ranging from day migration to stays for two to three weeks at a time (UNIFEM, 2005). Economic estimates combining a survey of Indonesian maids and factory workers in Malaysia with data from the Indonesia Family and Life Survey find that these young female migrants may gain an additional US$80 to US$130 per month compared to earnings had they stayed in Indonesia. These income gains are as high as five times their income in Indonesia (Tan and Gibson, 2010).
Migrants contribute to the economic development of their destination countries through their competencies and skills. Furthermore, they contribute to the economic development of the sending countries through remittances and increased experience and knowledge upon return. Female migrants can improve the well-being of family members at home and potentially foster economic growth. In Indonesia, the proportion of households receiving remittances from female migrants increased from 2000 to 2007, at which point it far exceeded the proportion receiving remittances from male migrants. Their contribution to their family back home in remittances as a percentage of per-capita consumption among recipient households also surpassed that of male migrants from 2000 to 2007 (World Bank, 2011).

In destination areas, women are particularly vulnerable due to their status as migrants and their status as women. Women are more likely to be found in occupations where they are subject to labor exploitation and health risks, which can make migration detrimental to a woman’s well-being. Furthermore, progress in empowerment made in destination areas may be negated upon return to a home community.

Gender-based labor segregation channels direct migrant women into occupations in which they may be subject to physical and psychological abuse as well as labor exploitation and human rights violations (Yamanaka and Piper, 2005). Many female migrants in the region, both documented and undocumented, work as live-in maids, caregivers, entertainers, sex workers and other service employees (Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 2003). These occupations are generally not covered by labor legislation, leaving female migrants vulnerable to exploitation.

The largest and one of the most isolating segregated occupations is domestic work. Indonesian domestic workers employed in Malaysia typically work 16 to 18 hour days, seven days a week, without holiday (Human Rights Watch, 2004). In the Chiang Mai and Mae Sot provinces of Thailand, almost 98 percent of domestic workers worked for more than 12 hours a day (UN Perspectives on Gender and Migration, 2006). Over half these domestic workers were subject to verbal abuse, 1 in 10 experienced physical abuse and 14 percent stated they experienced some form of sexual harassment (Punpiung et al, 2005). In addition to these abuses, employers frequently limit the freedom of movement of their domestic workers and their communication with the outside world.

Weak labor laws may exacerbate the vulnerabilities of transnational migrants and internal migrants. This is the case for both male and females, although females tend to be more clustered into at risk occupations. Domestic workers are in particularly precarious situations because, in major domestic worker receiving countries such as Thailand, Japan, South Korea and Malaysia, they are not fully recognized as workers and are not protected by the law (UN, Domestic Workers in Thailand).

One of the greatest vulnerabilities facing women and girls is trafficking for prostitution and forced labor. A highly profitable and growing industry, human trafficking is the third most lucrative illicit business in the world after arms and drug trafficking, and is a substantial source of organized crime revenue (ILO 2008; UNFPA, 2006). The International Labor Organization estimates that at least 2.45 million trafficking victims are currently being exploited worldwide and that another 1.2 million are trafficked annually, both across and within national borders. Asia and the Pacific accounts for over half of these trafficked victims at an estimated 1.36 million (ILO, 20089). Women often arrive in destination countries such as Malaysia through legal channels but without a job. These women are particularly vulnerable to trafficking because of financial hardship and limited information.
Male and female migrants are subject to health risks due to the jobs that they are found in. The prevalence of female migrants’ engagements in the sex and entertainment industries increases their likelihood of acquiring HIV. In China, male migrants and non-migrants have similar rates of casual and commercial sex. This is not the case among female migrants - the rates of casual and commercial sex for female temporary migrants are found to be 14 and 80 times those for female non-migrants, respectively (Yang and Xia, 2006). Male migrants, who dominate industries such as mining and construction, face increased health risks including risk of death because occupational safety regulations tend to be low. In China between 2001 and 2005, an average of 6,222 workers died in coal mining accidents each year, the majority of whom were migrants (IOM, 2009). The effects of working in mines develop over time: pneumoconiosis, a lung disease caused by dust inhalation, accounts for 83 percent of all occupational disease recorded in China (Ministry of Health figures, cited in Su, 2005 from IOM, 2009).

Gains in female empowerment in the destination area may not have lasting impacts once returning to rural areas. Context matters in determining empowerment outcomes, as shown in many studies (Mason and Smith, 2003). Mason and Smith (2003) compare autonomy measures across five Asian countries and argue that “community is a far stronger predictor of women’s empowerment than are individual traits.” This is further discussed in Chapter 4. Evidence from China suggests that rural women migrant returnees’ decrease in empowerment through decision-making is more of a result of community patriarchal inequality factors than individual characteristics (Connelly et al, 2010).

The Mixed Impact of Migration on Those who Stay Behind

The spouses, children, parents, and communities of migrants are also affected by their migration, and the evidence shows that this impact is mixed. Females who are left behind may face more financial hardships, difficulties disciplining children, low access to food as well as loneliness and isolation. Frequently, left behind women must engage more in income-generating activities to compensate for the income lost by the migrant relative(s) if the latter do not send adequate remittances or remittances on a regular basis. Women left behind in rural China experience a substantial re-allocation of traditional farm labor, with older women taking on most of the added hours in farm work. This seems to be a persistent effect, and comes at the cost of fewer hours in local off-farm work, with no signs of increased decision-making responsibilities over the household’s farming activities. However, left behind men do not experience this re-allocation (Mu and van de Walle, 2009).

Migration affects the employment of those left behind. In the Philippines, having a migrant in the household reduces the labor force participation and hours worked of non-migrant relatives of both genders, who substitute income for more leisure. (Rodriguez and Tiongson, 2001). In Indonesia, migration reduces the working hours of remaining household members by 33 hours per week if the migrant is male. This negative relationship is not observed for households with female migrants (Nguyen and Purnamasari, 2011). Furthermore, in Indonesia female migration has been found to reduce the labor force participation of children aged 6-18 by 17 percentage points (Nguyen and Purnamasari, 2011). This impact is not seen with male migration. Anecdotal evidence from the Pacific Islands of Fiji, Tonga, and the Samoa suggests a similar phenomenon. Regular remittances from female migrants such as nurses, teachers, domestic workers and caregivers have induced those who receive remittances to increase their leisure time by resigning from their jobs or dropping out of school. This can be a problem as it implies a total dependence on remittances (UN Perspectives on Gender and Migration, 2006).
Migration may have a slightly positive impact on school enrollment among households with male migrants, but this impact vanishes among those with female migrants in Indonesia. This may be because women participate more in childcare and monitoring children’s activities, and when the mother is away from home it more negatively impacts children’s schooling behavior than when the father is away from home (Nguyen and Purnamasari, 2011; and Acosta 2011).

**Implications for Gender Policy**

The number of female migrants in the EAP region is now estimated to have surpassed that of male migrants. Women have benefitted from being more likely than men to be employed in growing export-oriented industries such as clothing, textile, toy, and electronics manufacturing and to provide services that are in demand such as live-in maids or caregivers. By increasing her economic opportunities and ability to generate income, migration can increase a woman’s empowerment, economic opportunities, knowledge, and skills, thus also improving the well-being of her family. It can also increase her participation as an active member of society and make her a role model for other women and girls. However, migrant women are more likely than men to work in occupations where they may be subject to labor exploitation and health risks, or, even worse, physical and psychological abuse. These occupations are generally not covered by labor legislation, leaving female migrants vulnerable to exploitation. The biggest danger faced by women migrants, especially those with no job and little money, is trafficking for prostitution and forced labor, a huge and growing illegal industry that exploits vulnerable women.

Improved laws, safety nets, and knowledge transfers can all help to mitigate the vulnerabilities experienced by migrant women. Some specific policy recommendations include improving the legal and social protections of female migrants, strengthening the monitoring and credibility of labor recruitment agencies, and developing and providing welfare and support services to assist female migrants. Governments in both sending and receiving countries should actively address the issue of human trafficking through prevention, protection, and prosecution. Gender-sensitive training for people involved in the migration process will increase their ability to identify and assist abused female migrants and those trafficked or at risk of being trafficked.

**Urbanization**

Urbanization has increased across the world and, for the first time in world history, the urban population accounts for more than 50 percent of the world’s population globally (Figure 5.12). At the global level, Latin America and the Caribbean has the highest rate of urbanization in the world, which is expected to reach close to 90 percent by 2050. Since 1950, countries in the EAP region have experienced population shifts away from rural areas to urban centers. Individuals in developing countries are attracted to urban areas in search of better...
economic and social opportunities. With their concentration of population and economic activities, cities make a major contribution to countries’ national incomes (WDR, 2009). As economic activity becomes concentrated, local welfare in urban areas may improve although remote areas tend to lag behind until development proceeds and living standards converge (WDR, 2009).

Urbanization affects all aspects of life from the family and community networks relied on (especially during times of shocks such as natural disasters) to the economic activities conducted by men and women (Boserup, 1970; World Bank 2010). Access to urban labor markets is likely to affect female participation in the formal labor market as well as the composition of productive work conducted (Moser, 1993). Urbanization is also likely to alter the time use patterns of both men and women and, in particular, to reduce the time spent on housework for women – gender differences in the time devoted to non-market activities are greater in rural areas, where more limited access to water, sanitation, and energy increases female time spent on basic life-sustaining activities, as discussed in Chapter 3.

This section analyzes urbanization patterns and how they affect men and women in the region. It then discusses opportunities and challenges that males and females face in urban settings and highlights some policy priorities for tackling these challenges.

**Trends in Urbanization in the EAP Region**

Although the rate of urbanization differs across countries in the region, one observation remains clear: in all developing countries in the EAP region, the fraction of the population living in urban areas is expected to grow over the next half century. Figure 1.21 illustrates trends in the proportion of the population living in urban areas for East Asia. The growth of the urbanized population is substantial: in 1950, 12 percent of the Chinese population was living in urban areas, by 2000 this number had risen to 36 percent and is estimated to increase to 73 percent by 2050. Urbanization in the Pacific is heterogeneous (Figure 5.14). In Palau over 90 percent of the population is expected to live in urban areas by 2050; in contrast, less than 30 percent are expected to do so in Papua New Guinea.
How Urbanization Affects Women Differently From Men

Urban areas provide many opportunities for men and women: health care, education, and financial services are better developed and easier to access, and labor markets present a broader range of employment opportunities than in rural areas. In this section, we discuss the opportunities and challenges of urbanization from a gender perspective in three dimensions: (i) economic opportunities; (ii) service delivery; and (iii) agency.

i) Economic Opportunities

Like their male counterparts, women have access to more economic opportunities in urban areas than in rural areas. Urban labor markets offer a wide variety of occupations, from manufacturing and services to clerical activities. Limited access to child care services may however limit women’s ability to take advantage of these opportunities. A study on gender differences in labor market behavior in Mongolia found that women spend about twice as much time on household duties than men, independently of whether they participate in the labor market and that the number of young children decreases female labor market participation in urban areas (World Bank, 2011). The economic restructuring of the 1990s in which Mongolia reduced state-sponsored child care provision may partially explain the time burden on women. Although a set of policies were passed to increase children’s enrollment in kindergartens, only about half of the children aged 2 to 6 were enrolled in a kindergarten in 2007, and urban areas face serious supply constraints (World Bank, 2011). Similar patterns were seen in China in the 1990s and early 2000s (see Chapter 3).

ii) Service Delivery

Public services are less expensive to provide in urban areas than in rural areas, due to population density and economies of scale (UNFPA, 2007). Figure 5.15 and 5.16 show the percentage of the rural and urban population with access to improved sanitation facilities and water sources, respectively. In rural areas in Cambodia only 15
percent of the population had access to improved sanitation in 2005, in contrast to urban areas where 60 percent had access (Figure 5.15). Similarly, in Mongolia, only 45 percent of the rural population had access to safe water sources while this is true for 94 percent of the urban population (Figure 5.16).

Access to improved water and sanitation services is particularly important for women, who are often responsible for the collection, management, and usage of the domestic water supply. Increasing access to improved water sources is likely to reduce female time spent on domestic water management and release time that can be used for other activities. Inadequate access to water may reduce women’s economic opportunities through limiting access to home-based income generating activities such as food production and sale, raising livestock and limit service-oriented business activities (see Soussan et al., 2007). Poor sanitation can cause the spread of infectious disease such as cholera, polio or hepatitis. Finally, there is evidence from outside the region that improving water sources increases girls’ school attendance (Koolwal and van de Walle, Forthcoming).

Transportation is crucial for ensuring that urban populations are able to benefit from the social and economic potential of urban areas. Women and men have different transport needs and patterns. Women’s transport needs and commuting patterns are associated with responsibilities in the household as well as income generating activities. Women in urban areas have been found to travel frequently in off-peak times and conduct multiple stops on a single trip, or to make several short trips. In contrast, men tend to use transport at peak times for reaching work (World Bank, 2010c). Women’s commuting patterns also vary over their lifecycle and according to their reproductive and domestic duties.23

In urban areas, transport systems particularly benefit men since they are often focused on the major routes to and in the city (World Bank, 2010c). Pricing structures during peak times are also likely to encourage longer trips relative to multiple short trips. Given the pricing structures of urban transport, and that men use transport for income-generating activities, transportation costs can constrain women’s mobility if the intra-household distribution of transport expenditure is skewed towards financing trips for those earning incomes outside the household (World Bank, 2010c).

Safety and cultural concerns may also limit women’s access to certain modes of transport. Evidence from Cambodia suggests that female garment workers experience security concerns, principally from accidents, robberies, threats, and sexual assaults during their commute to and from work (World Bank 2006b). Cultural concerns, such as men and women sharing a single crowded vehicle, may also constrain women’s access to certain modes of transport (World Bank, 2010c).

iii) Agency

Urbanization can contribute to changing norms and may alter women’s roles within the society and households. Cities are a melting pot of people and ideas, which change traditional ways of life, structures, and norms. The density and diversity of the urban population can increase women’s access to networks and facilitate their access to and spread of information (WDR, 2009). Evidence from Indonesia indicates that urban women are more likely to be the sole decision-makers on a number of household matters than rural women (Rammohan and Johar 2009).

Some dimensions of women’s agency may, however, be more restricted in urban areas. While offering many opportunities, urban areas can also present various dangers, particularly to young women. Violence in urban
areas may be more pronounced since traditional and cultural norms are less likely to guide behavior and neighborhood networks are less developed (UNFPA, 2007 and Blank, 2008). Exploitative occupations such as sex work are also more likely to be found in urban areas. For instance, in the capital of Papua New Guinea, a large fraction of unemployed young women engage in sex work to bolster their incomes (Blank, 2008). Finally while urban children have better access to education in Cambodia, security concerns for daughters traveling to school were found to be higher among parents in urban than in rural areas (ADB, 2004).

**Implications for Gender Policy**

Growing urbanization in the EAP region has presented women with increased economic opportunities and greater empowerment. However, evidence shows that many women in urban areas are self-employed in the informal sector and in activities that yield low incomes, such as street vending. Limited access to child care can also constrain the ability of women to access employment. Cultural concerns in some countries in the region may limit women’s access to certain modes of transport such as buses, thus making it more difficult for them to commute. Women also face higher security risks than men do in urban areas, particularly from exploitation and sexual abuse and assault.

Whether women will be able to take full advantage of the wide range of opportunities available to them in urban areas will depend on whether the services and infrastructure exist in these cities to enable them to do so. Thus, policymakers need to ensure that their child care, education, infrastructure, transportation, and water and sanitation policies take into account women’s specific social and cultural needs. They should also adopt rigorous laws and policies to protect women in urban areas from the risk of violence and exploitation, as discussed above in the migration section.

**The Aging Population**

The world’s population is aging. The number of people aged 60 years and older will exceed the number of those under age 15 for the first time in history by 2045 (UN, 2007). In Asia, this process is estimated to be even faster; the milestone of more elderly than children will be reached five years earlier, in 2040 (UN, 2007). As a group, Asians above 64 are expected to more than triple from 207 million in 2000 to 857 million in 2050. This demographic change is likely to have significant repercussions for economic development, the quality of life, and the role of public policy. In addition, population aging is likely to have a gender differentiated effect among both older and younger cohorts. Several noteworthy challenges face the EAP region in managing these rapid demographic changes, notably how this population will maintain its standard of living, what types of formal and informal supports are needed to

![Figure 5.17. The old age dependency ratio is expected to increase for both men and women in the next two decades, and the female will exceed the male dependency ratio in the future.](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependency ratio (65 and above) by sex*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Old age dependency ratio of males and females is defined as the ratio of the male and female population of 65 years of age and above over the working age population (15-64 years of age) of both sexes.
do so, what the impact on the working age population will be and what the impact on health care and other services will be.

**Trends in Population Aging in the EAP Region**

Advanced economies in EAP have seen an accelerated aging of their populations. Demographic transitions do not however only affect advanced economies. Most emerging countries in the region have already begun this process. For example, fertility rates have dropped significantly in Mongolia and Vietnam while dependency ratios have increased dramatically in middle-income countries including Thailand, Indonesia and China and in countries in the Pacific, namely Fiji, Timor-Leste, and Tonga. Dependency ratios are expected to increase and, given that women live longer than men, female will exceed male dependency ratios in the future (Figure 5.17).

**Population Aging and Gender**

Life expectancy at birth has improved for both men and women since the 1990s. Reduced fertility and a decreased risk of maternal mortality have contributed to the improvements in life expectancy of women in many parts of the world (WDR 2012). While the gender gap in life expectancy is lower in EAP than in many other regions, it has widened for many countries in the last two decades. In some countries, the widening gender gap in life expectancy is substantial, for example, Mongolia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor-Leste</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: World Bank estimates based on EAP household survey database. Bolded numbers are statistically significant differences between male and female headed households at the 10% level.

Older women have different access to resources than older men, in part because of their different life histories (Hooyman, 1999 and INSTRAW, 1999). Even as gender gaps continue to close for today’s youth, the gender gaps of the past are embodied in today’s older adults through less schooling, different work experiences, lower rates of pension coverage and less control over assets, among other things. Women’s social arrangements within the family and the community are different, and they tend to outlive their spouses.

Therefore, it is important to carefully examine the implications of an aging society from the perspective of both women and men.

The debate is open as to whether men or women are more likely to suffer from being less vested in the labor market and in formal social security mechanisms such as pensions, since women are more likely to be vested in familial relations. Mothers’ closer relationships with their children might lead to larger intra-family transfers later in life (Aboderin 2003). Their abilities in home production might outlast men’s abilities in the workforce, and
psychologically they may be better able to handle old age both because it poses a smaller disruption to their previous roles and because they tend to establish a broader and deeper array of friendships than men.

Gender differences in consumption poverty and housing quality have been found to be small among the elderly in many East Asian countries (Table 5.1; Friedman et al., 2003; Ofstedal et al., 2004; Knodel and Chayovan, 2008; Knodel, 2009; Masud et al. 2008). In countries where data at the individual level is available, elderly men systematically report higher levels of individual income than elderly women (Ofstedal et al 2004, Masud et al. 2008). This is consistent with women's lower participation in the workforce - women are less likely to earn income from work or to draw pensions during old age. However, differences in individual incomes do not appear to translate into significant differences in measures of material well being at a household level - elderly women are not more likely than elderly men to live in poor households.

Marital status, notably widowhood, tends to play a greater role than gender in determining the well-being of elderly men and women. The most striking difference between elderly men and women can be found in their familial status - women are far more likely than men to be widows (Figure 5.18). In Cambodia, the percentage of women having lost a spouse is double that of men and women are also less likely to have living children than their male counterparts (Knodel, 2009). In Thailand 80 percent of elderly men are living with their spouses, compared to only about half of elderly women (Knodel and Chayovan, 2008). In Indonesia, the difference is dramatic: 66 percent of elderly women are widowed compared to only 18 percent of men. In Timor-Leste, 73 percent of the elderly women and 30 percent of elderly men are widowed.

Marital status is the most important correlate of household circumstances among the elderly. Across the region non-married elderly are more likely than the married elderly to live with their children and receive support from their children, either directly through transfers or via their living arrangements (Friedman et al., 2003; Ofstedal et al., 2004; Knodel and Chayovan, 2008; Knodel and Zimmer, 2009). There is however no systematic evidence that widows and widowers are consistently likely to be poorer than married elderly individuals (Ofstedal et al. 2004), although they are more likely to perceive income inadequacy or lower rates of satisfaction with their economic status in many countries in the region, including Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia (Knodel and Chayovan 2008; Masud 2008; Ofstedal et al. 2004; Friedman et al. 2003).

Elderly women have access to fewer personal income sources and less diversified income portfolios than elderly men. The lack of association between gender and poverty in the elderly population is partly because women, and in particular unmarried women, are more likely to receive money from children and other relatives than men and less likely to have their own sources of income (Masud et al. 2008; Ofstedal et al.
Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

2004). Men’s income is furthermore more dispersed across a number of sources than women’s income (Ofstedal et al. 2004). Women’s greater reliance on transfers from informal support networks is likely to place them in a more tenuous position, both within their families and in society.

As migration and urbanization continue and fertility declines, there is concern that informal safety nets may decline and transfers and care from children are likely to erode (World NGO Forum, 2002; and UNESCAP, 2004). A decline in transfers is likely to have a gender differentiated impact, since elderly women are more likely than elderly men to receive support from children and other family members. Evidence suggests that attitudes of respect and responsibility towards the aged population may also be changing in parts of the region. Children from single-child families in China have been reported to be less committed to elder care in more recent generations than in previous ones (Zhan, 2004; Wang, 2010). People in the baby boom generation have been found to have more positive attitudes toward the elderly than those in more recent generations, regardless of gender (Xie et al, 2007).

Older women are worse off than their male peers along a number of non-consumption dimensions, many of which are associated with their age. They are less educated, have fewer assets and are more likely to be illiterate (Knodel, 2009 and Long and Pfau, 2008), have lower access to care, (Knodel, 2009; Long and Pfau, 2008; Magnani and Rammohan, 2009) and more health problems (Chen et al. 2008). Some of these differences are likely to persist without targeted reform, while others are likely to narrow over time. For example, since gender education gaps have declined over time across birth cohorts, these differences are likely to be smaller among the future elderly population.

Since women live longer than men, the evidence suggests that they are also more likely to suffer from disability. The barriers to participating in social life for the elderly directly impact their quality of life, but it also imposes additional costs on their families (Braithwaite and Mont 2009). In Vietnam one study showed that having a disabled household member increased the cost of living over 11 percent (Braithwaite and Mont 2009), and adjusting for these differences would raise the poverty rate of households with disabled members significantly. This is more likely to be an issue for women, since the rate of disability in Vietnam, for example, is 8.5 percent for women compared to 6.6 percent for men, with the gap to a significant measure explained by the difference in longevity (Mont and Cuong, 2011).

Finally, the elderly and, in particular, widows might be especially vulnerable to shocks. Men and women have different capacities to cope with economic shocks given differences in incomes and asset endowments. However, evidence from six provinces in Thailand and Vietnam suggests that rural households headed by widowed, divorced or single women are not more likely to be affected by shocks than their male counterparts (Klasen, Lichtenfeld and Povel, 2011).

Care-giving and its Repercussions for Working Age Women

Population aging is likely to have a gender differentiated effect among the working aged population since the increasing dependency ratios, particularly when accompanied with falling fertility rates, will raise the burden of care-giving. Gender differences in the time spent on caring for the elderly imply that women are more likely to accommodate the increased demand for non-market time.

Within households, younger women bear a greater responsibility for caring for elderly parents, which may reduce the time they spend on income generating activities. This can be seen in Figure 5.19 – among working
age individuals, the time devoted to care-giving and household activities is greater among females in households residing with an elderly member, although the difference is not as large as that seen with children present. Increased time spent on caring activities can affect the next generation of women’s labor market experience.30

**Implications for Gender Policy**

The population of EAP is aging rapidly, in many countries at a faster pace than that in the rest of the world. This demographic change is likely to have significant repercussions for women who live longer than men but have access to fewer economic assets and resources and are less vested in formal social security systems. Traditional arrangements for caring for the elderly within the family are breaking down in the face of greater urbanization and social change but, since older women are less likely than men to be covered by insurance or to have accumulated assets, the burden of their care is still likely to fall on younger women.

Policymakers can ease this burden in several ways – by reducing the differences in access to human and physical assets and in levels of participation in formal employment between men and women, by ensuring that the health care and formal social security systems cover those most in need and by discouraging negative attitudes towards the elderly.

While women are more likely to have access to informal care giving and support systems through greater investment in family environments, traditional system of care-giving are evolving, exposing more elderly to lower levels of familial support. The design of old age security system becomes particularly important in the context of the rapid demographic transition and cultural change that is occurring in many countries in EAP.

**Notes**

1 Exports as a proportion of GDP fell to 68 percent in Vietnam in 2009 due to the global financial crisis, and in Indonesia they rose to over 50 percent during the Asian Crisis in the late 1990s.

2 Macroeconomic and externally driven volatility affects both men and women in many ways, including by affecting labor demand and earnings, credit availability, the prices of consumed and produced goods, and the demand for products (Bernanke, 1983). According to neoclassical trade theory, trade liberalization should encourage countries to specialize in the production of goods in which they have a comparative advantage. Trade liberalization can lead to the expansion of employment in labor-intensive industries in developing economies. Since women are over-represented in labor-intensive sectors, trade liberalization may benefit women by increasing demand for their skills more than for those of men, thereby reducing pay differentials between men and women. The assumption here is that low-income countries increasingly export unskilled labor intensive goods, and that these goods are intensive in the use of female labor. International trade can also affect women’s relative pay by reducing the power of producers to discriminate against female employees by paying them less for the same work as men (Becker, 1957; Berik et al, 2004; and Schultz 2003).

3 The data are unfortunately not available to examine similar patterns in Pacific countries.
Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

4 It is not possible to draw strong conclusions from the literature relating trade liberalization and wage gaps between males and females since different changes in male and female employment after trade liberalization and in the composition of the male and female workforce are also likely to directly affect productivity in the wage sector (Schultz, 2003).

5 However, the rise of an unskilled manufacturing sector increased the school dropout rate in Mexico (Atkin 2010a, and 2010a).

6 Interestingly, the results indicate that in Africa women lose employment during recessions while in South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean, women’s employment increases during recessions, which suggests that households use female employment as a financial coping strategy.

7 There are multiple examples of women working harder during crises in EAP countries. In Indonesia, the 1997/98 crisis increased employment among women, whereas male employment rates fell. These additional female workers were predominantly employed in the informal sector (Frankenberg et al, 2003). During the 1997-98 East Asian crisis, the initial difference in the Philippines between the total number of hours worked by men and women widened, meaning that women were increasingly “overworked” and men “underworked” (Lim, 2000). Turk and Mason (2010) reported that, during the 2009 financial crisis, many women worked longer hours to maintain their household income. In Thailand and Vietnam, women searched for additional work to supplement their primary job, with child care sometimes being taken over by elderly household members or older children.

8 Exceptionally, in Mongolia, women reported an improvement in their domestic relationships because men were working such long hours that there was little time left for fighting (Turk and Mason, 2010).

9 For example, in Vietnam’s apparel sector better jobs with higher skill levels are largely held by male workers while sewing jobs are largely done by female workers (Kabeer and Tran, 2003).

10 Within the region, three self-employment initiatives demonstrate how ICT access can enhance economic opportunities, particularly of women (Melhelm and Tandon, 2009). In the Philippines, the Sharing Computer Access Locally and Abroad project has set up computer livelihood centers to help underprivileged young people access employment opportunities. The project resulted in increased Internet access and greater self-esteem and self-confidence, and 60 percent of the beneficiaries were women. In Malaysia, the e-Homemakers initiative aimed to boost home entrepreneurship by increasing the self-esteem of women who had devoted many years to bearing children. In Fiji, the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development aims to increase economic empowerment in marginalized communities through three programs that focus on income generation, saving, and governance. The program uses the Internet to market products developed by the participants of the program, the majority of whom are women.

11 For example, in Uganda, the Market Information Service Project collected data on the prices of the main agricultural commodities in major market centers and distributed this information to local radio stations to broadcast. Svensson and Yanagizawa (2008) found that better-informed farmers were able to bargain for higher farm-gate prices on their surplus production.

12 Exposure to television can also have less positive outcomes. For example, it can increase discontent within marriages, resulting in divorce. In Brazil, exposure to soap operas that feature modern values such as female empowerment and emancipation have increased rates of separation and divorce (Chong and La Ferrara, 2010). In Indonesia, greater exposure to television and radio was found to reduce social capital – as measured by lower participation in social organizations and lower self-reported community level trust (Olken, 2009).

13 For example, in the United Kingdom, the Open University, which broadcasts lectures over the television and Internet, enables men and women to study on an individually determined schedule. In the United States, 60 percent of the students over the age 25 who are engaged in distance learning are women (Kramarae, 2001).

14 A cell phone based literacy and numeracy program implemented in Niger was found to increase adults’ math test scores, with the greatest increases being achieved by younger participants for whom acquiring new skills via information technology may be easier than for older people (Aker et al, 2011).

15 In internal rural to urban China migration, differences in socioeconomic factors by gender do seem to exist. Migrant women tend to be less educated than rural migrant men, owing to their lower average age and gender inequalities in educational attainment across rural China (Jacka, 2009 in IOM 2009)

16 Employers of the growing export based large scale manufacturing and assembly activities in Asian cities, particularly in the garment sector, often prefer women because they generally accept lower wages, are considered more easily controlled and are considered better able to undertake tasks which involve delicate and intricate finger work as well as repetitive tasks (Hugo 2003).

17 Female migration is complex and context-specific, and studies show that the effect of migration of women’s position is neither wholly positive nor negative. Parrado et al (2005) argue that migration entails a large change in “structural context,” and, depending on the “context of reception, the
degree of labor market segmentation and the extent to which migrants are isolated in the receiving society, migration may mitigate or reinforce patriarchal gender inequality\(^\text{19}\) (Connelly et al., 2010).

This increase is in part due to the fact that there are more female migrants than male migrants from Indonesia. The difference in per capita consumption between households with male migrants and female migrants at the outset is not statistically significant, indicating that this is not because female migrants come from poorer households. There is no hard evidence signifying that female migrants earn more than male migrants, but it is highly likely that female migrants from Indonesia now earn more than in the past due to high demand for their labor in the Gulf countries.

Numbers may actually be higher because respondents are often reluctant to report this form of abuse.

Human trafficking estimates may under represent actual size due to the elusive nature of the industry.

Work opportunities may however be low skilled, precarious and may not be covered by formal labor market regulations. Many women in urban areas are self-employed in the informal sector and in activities that yield low incomes (UNFPA, 2007).

In Indonesia, men and women aged 15 to 19 were commuting in equal numbers; beyond the age of 30, however, the fraction of female commuters decreased (Rachmad et al. 2010). The change in commuting pattern implies that, during child bearing years, women’s labor force participation concentrates in or around the home.

Age dependency ratio is the ratio of elderly dependents (those older than 65) to the working-age population (aged 15-64).

Since women live longer than men, women will constitute the majority of this dependent population.

This conclusion is however questioned by some (Aboderin, 2004 and Hermlin 2003). Effects may differ across countries depending on the interplay between culture, the economy, and the geography of development. A recent study in Thailand, for example, shows that as children migrate to the city they do not abandon their rural elders (Knodel, 2009). As noted above, some evidence from China suggests a generational shift in support may be occurring.

Interestingly, though, this divergence in views only held in higher income groups. No generational differences existed among the lower income groups. As incomes grow this change in attitudes may also grow.

Qualitative evidence from Cambodia also illustrates how disability status increases vulnerability. In a 2008 WB participatory poverty and gender assessment in Siem Reap province, of the 107 households ranked in a participatory wealth ranking exercise by male and female villagers in Dour Dantrei village, 5 were identified as headed by disabled men, with 4 of the 5 ranked as “poor” or “very poor a poverty rate of 80 percent of disabled households, compared to a poverty rate of 50 percent for all households (Kuriakose and Kono, 2008).

Studies in the US have consistently found that daughters play a central role in the more time intensive day-to-day care of elderly parents, whereas sons take on a more managerial role (Ofstedal et al, 1999; Dwyer and Coward, 1992).

In China the impact of elderly parents on female labor market experience was found to depend on whether the parents being cared for were the woman’s parents (where the effect was insignificant) or her in-laws (where the effect was substantial), suggesting the important role of culture on family relations and obligations (Liu et al, 2008). Cultural differences have also been found to affect cross-generational support across different regions in Vietnam and Indonesia (Friedman et al 2003; Kreager and Schroder-Butterfill 2009).
Chapter 6. Promoting Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific: Directions for Policy

The evidence presented in the preceding chapters has shown that growth and development are not by themselves sufficient to ending gender disparities in all their dimensions. The evidence has also shown that persistent gender inequalities can exact costs on countries’ productivity, income growth, and on the quality of development. There is thus a role for public policy. Indeed, East Asian and Pacific countries will benefit from adopting appropriate policies to promote gender equality in endowments, in access to economic opportunities and in agency. This chapter examines policy approaches to addressing the most serious, persistent and costly gender disparities. In doing so, it attempts to answer the question “How can public policies and investments promote both gender equality and more effective development?”

To understand which types of policies and investments can be most productive, it is useful to review briefly which dimensions of gender disparity tend to close with growth and development in East Asian and Pacific countries, and which do not. As the early chapters of this report have shown, rapid growth and development in East Asian and Pacific countries have been accompanied by reduced gender inequalities in several areas: in education, several key areas of health, and female labor force participation, particularly among younger women. At the same time, the report has shown that progress toward gender equality in many domains is not automatic. Progress in education, health, and labor force participation has often been uneven – both within and across countries. Several East Asian and Pacific countries are still home to millions of “missing” girls and women. Women continue to work in less stable, less remunerative employment. And women still possess weaker voice and influence than men. Women remain under-represented in leadership positions in business and government; in a number of countries, gender-based violence remains prevalent.

The collection of evidence in this report suggests the following broad outlines of a regional strategy to promote gender equality (and more effective development):

(a) Promoting human development remains a priority where gender gaps in education remain large and/or health outcomes are poor; investments in these areas are likely to yield high returns.

(b) Active measures to promote gender equality in economic opportunity are often warranted as disparities in opportunity often persist with development. Such measures can often yield positive returns to economic productivity, though specific policy priorities depend on the structure of the economy and which specific constraints are most binding.

(c) Active measures to close gender gaps in agency – as well as to protect women from discrimination and violence – are called for across the region and will contribute to the quality of development decision making (and to development more broadly).
Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

(d) Increasing economic integration, rural-to-urban migration, rapid urbanization, and population aging—key features of the region—all bring with them new opportunities and new risks with respect to gender equality. An important role for public policy will be fostering the opportunities and managing the risks.

Two points should be kept in mind in interpreting this proposed strategy: one about the influence of a policy across several domains—endowments, economic opportunity and agency—and the other about context specificity. First, policy approaches to promote better outcomes with respect to endowments, access to economic opportunities, and agency are likely to be mutually reinforcing. Individual outcomes in these areas are often inter-dependent. Basic human capital, for example, represents a critical enabling factor in women’s (and men’s) access to economic opportunity and agency. Therefore, policies and investments that promote equality in education will also contribute to enhanced economic opportunity and agency. Similarly, measures to close gender gaps in voice and influence will enable women (and men) to be more effective agents on their own behalves, whether in pursuit of education, access to resources, or productive employment.

Second, it is important for the choice and design of policies to consider national and local realities. There is great diversity in the East Asian and Pacific region with respect to gender inequalities and, therefore, policy priorities. For example, even in countries where access to basic education and health services, by gender, is no longer a dominant concern, special policies and programs may be warranted to address large and persistent gender gaps among specific sub-groups of the population (e.g., poor, indigenous, remote communities). Similarly, current policy priorities for promoting gender equality in economic opportunity will differ across countries, depending on the specific obstacles faced by women and on the structure of the economy (e.g., agriculture vs. manufacturing vs. services; informal vs. formal). Some aspects of women’s agency improve with development in East Asian countries, but women in the Pacific Islands tend to experience a severe and persistent lack of agency. As a result, although closing gender gaps in agency deserve policy priority across the region, effective measures will differ as a function of a number of factors, including local social norms regarding women’s voice and influence, differences in countries’ legal systems, societies’ tolerance for violence, and so on.

This chapter examines each part of the strategy in turn while adhering to the following overarching approach. To be most effective in reducing gender disparities, it is sometimes important to address both systemic problems—for example, overall failures in basic service delivery or generalized deficiencies in the system of financial intermediation—as well as gender-specific problems. To the extent possible, the discussion will account for the potential costs as well as the benefits of policies. Such trade-offs can be particularly important in the context of labor market interventions. For example, while raising the minimum wage may serve to close gender wage gaps among those employed in the formal sector, it may also have costs in terms of numbers of women employed in the formal sector. Similarly, affirmative action policies may help to promote female employment, but can also raise questions about worker productivity and may be negatively perceived in the workplace. While the evidence reviewed and generated for this report help to answer many questions about gender and development in East Asia and the Pacific, many knowledge gaps remain. To that end, the chapter concludes by highlighting a number of areas that deserve additional analytical work.

Closing Gender Gaps in Endowments

EAP countries vary in the type of challenges they face with respect to gender equality in endowments, as analyzed in Chapter 2. Where policies may be used and can have an impact also varies. Based on that body of
Promoting Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

evidence, this section is organized around four themes: (i) countries with gender inequalities in human capital, (ii) countries where gender inequalities in human capital have much abated, (iii) countries with unbalanced sex ratios at birth, and (iv) attention to male gender issues. Since basic human capital is an important enabling factor for access to economic opportunity and agency, the discussion below will highlight examples where policy recommendations to promote equality in education also contribute to enhanced economic opportunity and agency.

**Countries with Gender Inequalities in Human Capital**

For the few countries in EAP with overall low and unequal gender outcomes in education and health (e.g. Lao, Cambodia and PNG), the priority remains with promoting human development nationwide. Education and health outcomes are likely to improve as these countries become wealthier, with higher household income, better service delivery, and better expected employment opportunities, as seen in the case of most of EAP. But actions are needed here and now since human capital itself is an important engine for growth and can have long-term effects on well-being. For countries with localized gender disparities among certain ethnic groups or low-income regions, growth in aggregate is not enough to improve outcomes for all subpopulations. Interventions may be targeted to these groups. The same efforts to improve human capital for both genders that have worked elsewhere in these countries may need to be intensified in combination with complementary interventions that address the specific constraints faced by these subpopulations.

What can be done in this group of countries to provide equal access to education and to reduce maternal mortality? Chapter 2 shows that demand-side and supply-side factors are responsible for their poor human capital outcomes. Therefore, the set of education and health policies can range from improving service delivery (e.g. through infrastructure, staffing, incentives, use of ICT) to demand-side interventions (e.g. cash transfers, information campaigns, accountability). The choice and sequencing of policies will be influenced by the exact constraints in each country context.

**Provide equal access to education**

A few countries in EAP still face overall low and gender-unequal access to education, particularly starting at the secondary level. This problem requires solutions to increase the demand for schooling as well as the capacity and incentives of the education system. Policies to improve education outcomes in general, i.e. addressing systemic constraints, are expected to also improve gender equality as the enrollment gaps between genders narrow.

Supply-side solutions can play an important role. While primary schools are widely available in EAP, the presence of secondary schools is weaker in a few countries. School accessibility has been identified as a very important constraint in Cambodia and Laos, posing more cost for girls than boys. School construction and infrastructure improvement are needed the most in poor and remote areas where distance is the key problem. And these types of interventions, though usually with high upfront costs, can have significant impacts on increasing education and future earnings, as shown in an evaluation of Indonesia’s school construction program in the 1970s (Duflo 1999). Supply-side solutions need to be customized to address the context-specific constraints. Making special provisions for girls such as private female latrines may be necessary to ease parents’ concern for girls’ privacy and safety in school. To reach particular excluded groups such as ethnic minorities, additional support may be necessary. Recruiting teachers who speak the local language or
are directly from the relevant ethnic group may be helpful since they can serve as role models and relate to the local social norms about educating children.

Innovative use of ICT in delivering services can enhance learning opportunities for males and females and improve the provision of education. The availability of distance learning, for example, can circumvent the constraints of travel for schooling and deliver education to youths who have no access to formal schooling or have left the formal system. The Flexible Open and Distance Education (FODE) program in PNG presents an interesting approach. It assists public distance learning centers in providing upper primary and secondary level courses in English, Mathematics, Science and Social Science. One key component of the project aims to provide FODE centers with appropriate IT technology and train staff to effectively use that technology in the administration, curriculum development, materials production and teaching/learning activities.

Several demand-side solutions have been shown to work effectively. As discussed in Chapter 2, parents in low-income families in Cambodia have difficulty covering the direct and indirect schooling costs. One way to expand access is then to provide financial incentives to attend school. Evidence in many developing countries worldwide to evaluate the impacts of condition and unconditional cash transfers indicates a significant gain in school enrollment (CCT book 2009). In Cambodia, a scholarship program targeted at girls and a related program targeted at boys and girls from low-income households led to an increase in school enrollment of at least 20 percentage points for both genders (Filmer and Schady 2008, Filmer and Schady 2009). In the Philippines, the Pantawide Pamilyang program provides cash to chronically poor households with children up to age 14 with the conditions that they undertake certain activities such as sending their children to school and ensure that expectant mothers and infants receive checkups. A comprehensive and rigorous quantitative impact evaluation is underway. Cash transfers and school scholarship programs for school-aged girls can also positively influence their long-term agency.

For example, in Pakistan and Malawi, CCTs and school scholarship programs have been found to delay girls’ age of marriage and increase their earnings opportunities after education, which in turn strengthens women’s bargaining power within the household (Alam, Baez and Del Carpio 2010; Baird et al. 2009).

Aside from affordability, school enrollment may be discouraged by the weak incentives of service providers and accountability of the school systems. The 2004 WDR calls for improving accountability in service delivery, and follow-up work has demonstrated the positive impacts of various measures to encourage and enable parents to hold the school and teachers accountable for their children’ schooling outcomes. Evidence on this aspect has been abundant in other developing countries but not in EAP.

**Reduce maternal mortality**

The reasons for slow improvements in maternal health outcomes in several EAP countries, including Cambodia, Laos, Timor Leste and parts of Indonesia, underscore the importance of improving service delivery. Access to pre- and post-natal health facilities and improved access to sanitation and potable water are key to improving maternal mortality rates. Therefore, it is recommended to continue efforts to ensure the basic infrastructure to provide access to safe water. And the low rate of births attended by skilled professionals, especially in poor and rural areas in these countries, calls for interventions related to staffing. Impact evaluation evidence shows that performance-based contracting increases staff attendance and, consequently, the use of antenatal care, as shown in the case of Cambodia. In addition, the training and increased allocation of midwives to villages have been found to increase women’s BMI and children’s birth weight and neonatal health in Indonesia. But just having more midwives is not enough to ensure and sustain
service quality. Malaysia’s experience in successfully reducing maternal mortality suggests that rigorous training, supervision and communication support to midwives are also essential factors for quality. Box 6.1 discusses these examples in further details.

Service provision should also be responsive to non-economic factors: maternal mortality may be reduced through ways of making service delivery culturally sensitive. As described in Chapter 2, norms about birthing practices play a strong role in influencing birthing decisions and outcomes. Programs such as those in Malaysia and Tonga to provide guidance to traditional birth attendants on hygiene practices, diagnosis of complicated cases, and the importance of prenatal care are likely to be beneficial. A few approaches to take into account cultural preferences in hospital services themselves are worth noting. In Malaysia, hospital services have created space for naming rituals for Muslims (Hillier, 2003). Studies in Cambodia and Laos recommend building birth huts in the health center to allow for privacy and to accommodate the presence of family and relatives (UNFPA, 2005).

Box 6.1: Reducing MMR through improving staffing and quality of service delivery

Cambodia Basic Health Service Project. In the late 1990s, a performance-based contracting scheme was initiated in Cambodia with three service delivery forms: contracting-out in which the whole service provision was allocated to the contractor, contracting-in in which an external contractor was hired to improve the existing structure and a comparison group in which no contracting took place (OECD 2009). Using the initial randomization of the program over 12 districts, Bloom et al (na) find that contracting-in increased significantly the likelihood of 24 hour service provision. Both contract forms increased the probability of staff attendance and the existence of supplies and equipment, management quality and public provider usage. Amongst other positive health effects, antenatal health care increased by 36 percentage points for pregnant women in contracting-in districts and both contract forms increased the usage of health facilities for delivery (Bloom et al. na).

Indonesia village midwife program. Initiated in 1989, the program aimed at allocating more midwives to villages, and delivery fees were exempted for poor families (Makowiecka et al. 2008). Using panel data from 1993 and 1997, Frankenberg and Thomas (2001) find that the introduction of a midwife increased the BMI of women in reproductive age relative to the comparison groups. Also, the program has been found to increase birth weight (Frankenberg and Thomas 2001) and reduce neonatal mortality (Shrestha 2007). Although midwife coverage increased in Indonesia as did the number of safe deliveries, progress in maternal mortality reduction has been argued to be below expectations (Dawson 2010). Using data on midwives in Serang and Pandeglang districts, Makowiecka et al. (2008) find that village-based midwives were more likely to have temporary contracts, were less experienced and trained than health center midwives. Also, midwives were found to be attracted to urban areas. In addition, the lack of practical experience and training, supervision and guidance has been argued to have limited midwife retention and, more importantly, service quality (Shankar et al. 2008).

Malaysia. With a reduction of maternal mortality from 1500 per 100,000 live births in 1930 to less than 58 in 2005 (Dawson 2010), Malaysia constitutes one of the success stories of improving maternal health. Amongst others, the quality and the strict supervision of the midwives by certified nurses, support and guidelines as well as training for emergency situations, such as regarding the communication between rural service and hospital staff (Dawson 2010), may explain this. In addition, traditional birth attendants were also trained, registered and received tools, and midwives were briefed on the integration with traditional practitioners. 

Mongolia Maternal Mortality Reduction Strategy. Implemented between 2001 and 2010, this approach is a package of incentive, staffing, and demand-side information campaign. Awareness rising campaigns such as radio and television programs about maternal health needs that were broadcast multiple times a week (Yadamsuren et al 2010). Initiatives such as the “mother-friendly governor” aimed at strengthening the commitment and reward of improving maternal mortality related indicators at the local government level. Several additional measures, such as the provision of attractive contracts to doctors for relocating into remote areas, maternal waiting homes, partial service and transportation cost coverage, and training of doctors and health practitioners contributed to improving maternal health provision (Yadamsuren et al 2010).

Financial assistance such as subsidies or cash transfers has been shown to improve the use of health services and reduce maternal mortality, given the financial barriers faced by poor women. The Cambodia Health Equity Fund (HEF) was a combination of financial assistance to the poor and an incentive scheme for service
providers. In 2007, a voucher program was launched to within the HEF framework to enable poor pregnant women to free prenatal and postnatal health care visits and delivery, as well as cover the transportation costs. At the same time, the government implemented a nation-wide incentive system that paid an additional 12.5 and 15 USD to midwives and other health staff per live birth in hospitals and health care centers, respectively (Ir, Horemans, Souk and Van Damme 2010). Using data from three health districts between 2006 and 2008, Ir et al. (2010) find that deliveries in health facilities increased by 195.9% for HEF voucher beneficiaries (Ir et al. 2010). Laos is also committed to improving health service provision especially for the poor, rural population. In 2006, the Lao Health Services Improvement Project piloted in two districts free birth delivery for analyzing feasibility and impact of such an initiative, in addition to improvements in training, infrastructure and service facilities (World Bank 2005).

Policy interventions to improve accountability in service delivery can lead to more use of maternal care services, as indicated by evidence from other parts of the world. The Uganda community-based monitoring improved the quality and quantity of primary health care services (Bjorkman and Svensson 2009). In Peru, incentives to service providers coupled with mechanism for citizens’ voice to reach policymakers proved useful: professional attention for deliveries from 58% of births in 2000 increased to 71% in 2004 (Cotlear 2006).

**Countries where Gender Inequalities in Human Capital have much Abated**

For many countries in EAP, policy focus is called for to address endowment issues of gender streaming in education and gender-differentiated access to assets. As discussed in Chapter 2, most gender issues regarding basic access in education and health have abated with growth and development. But visible gender streaming in education remains a direct barrier to gender equality in productive activities and voice and participation. This next set of challenges in ensuring equal endowments by gender is, in fact, a core part of EAP countries’ mission to ensure equal economic opportunity and agency.

**Break traditional patterns of gender streaming in education**

Concerted efforts in education and labor market policies are needed to tackle the current equilibrium of females “sorting” into lower-paying occupations and lower-productivity sectors, part of which is rooted in education streaming. The evidence presented in the chapters show that females shy away from certain fields of study, even despite the high economic return, because of reasons such as gender norms about school and work, stereotyping in school curriculum, lack of role models or lack of information. While it is very difficult to change norms, at least limiting the perpetuating influence of gender-bias norms is possible within the education system.

One possible approach on this agenda is to reduce gender stereotyping in school curriculum. Efforts have been noted across the region to review and revise teaching materials from a gender perspective even though additional efforts were called for in a number of countries including to ensure that the revisions introduced to promote gender-sensitive curricula are systematically applied (UNICEF, 2009). For example, in Lao, supplementary learning materials, gender sensitive new primary education curriculum and textbooks were developed following a gender review and training of curriculum writers. In Vietnam, a review of the current curriculum indicated that gender stereotyping was frequent in curricula, and isolated examples of good practice (including collaborative behavior between boys and girls) have been highlighted in teaching materials.
Promoting Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

for replication. Piloting and evaluation are important since empirical evidence on the impacts of gender-sensitive curriculum reforms is very limited worldwide, let alone in the East Asia and Pacific Region.5

Revising school and professional curricula to include better female role models can enable greater agency in the household over time. Young children exposed to the formal educational system can be educated on the basic principles of gender equality by integrating these principles into the formal education curricula. Doing so would help tackle their value system early on in their lives and challenge existing social gender norms that are learned outside the classroom. In Indonesia, a recent textbook evaluation shows strong gender bias starting at the sixth grade, for example, with stereotypes on gender roles, where men are portrayed as income earners while women are portrayed as homemakers. The recommendation from the evaluation is that the government should promote the incorporation of gender equality into the curricula for primary and secondary school to address GBV as well as other social norms that perpetuate gender inequality (Utomo et. al. 2009).

Alternatively, policy interventions can actively promote entrance into non-traditional fields of study. Offering scholarships to females to study fields like engineering or law is one option. Not enough is known about their impact on breaking traditional patterns that are deeply rooted in norms, and small financial incentives may lead to changes only at the margin. Aside from financial incentives, there are interesting approaches that use female role models and encourage female pupils in non-traditional careers, though evidence on their impacts is usually not available either.5 In the US, the Science Connections (SciCon) program offered monthly Science Workshops for girls plus a summer science weekend for the family in order to foster girls’ interest in science. After the program, the retention rate from the first to the second workshop rose from only 10% to 25%-50% for different cohorts. Also, the program has been said to have increased girls’ knowledge about non-traditional careers in science, self-confidence, interests in science as well as motivation to increase effort in science-related courses.7 The Technical/Engineering Education Quality Improvement Project in India takes another approach aiming to create a gender-friendly environment in science and engineering schools and department. The project expands access to training for female engineering faculty and includes refurbishments to enhance the ability of campuses to serve women students.

Activities to reduce traditional patterns of gender streaming in education are likely to become increasingly important as economies move up the value-chain away from labor intensive production. In middle and higher income countries in EAP, movements up the value chain have typically been accompanied by reductions in the fraction of females working in Special Economic Zones (SEZs). For example, in Malaysia only 40% of workers are in SEZs are now female, compared to 60% two decades ago (Simani, Manuel and Blackden 2010). Addressing the skill constraints of workers as transitions up the value chain occur will require policies ranging from appropriate technical and vocational training among school-aged girls and boys to training programs to help retrain workers whose skills are in lower demand.

Countries with Unbalanced Sex Ratios at Birth

In the few countries where the “missing girls” phenomenon is a salient concern, continuing efforts are needed. Son preference is the underlying cause, but this problem can be exacerbated by certain population policy or access to technology that comes with economic growth. While enacting and enforcing legal clauses against sex-selective abortion are important, this is extremely difficult to implement when incentives are very

159
Table 6.1: Selected policy approaches to tackle excessive tobacco and alcohol use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy approach</th>
<th>Examples and impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco and alcohol taxation</td>
<td>Analysis shows that if China transferred its 2009 tobacco tax adjustment from the producer to the smoker, retail price would have increased 3.4 percent, and would have resulted in between 640,000 to two million smokers quitting and between 210,000 and 700,000 quitters avoiding smoking-related premature death (Hu, Mao and Shi, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information campaigns on the related health risks</td>
<td>Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth) uses alcohol excise tax revenues for health promotion. ThaiHealth’s activities range from supporting the establishment of an alcohol control regulations enforcement surveillance center, a research center on alcohol consumption, financial support of advertising campaigns to reduce alcohol-related traffic accidents, to promote abstinence and increase knowledge about the links between alcohol and domestic violence. The agency also was vital in the successful effort to pass a national policy to control alcohol advertising, and to launch a National Committee for Alcohol Consumption Control (WHO 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale restriction and advertising bans</td>
<td>Restrictions may include the types of retail establishments that can sell these products, requiring and enforcing licensing and limiting the hours and days of sale. Counter-tobacco and alcohol-use advertising may encourage changes in the perception of masculinity that breaks the tie between masculinity and substance use (WHO 2005, 2007). In Norway, youths aged 13 to 15 years in 1990 and 1995 that were exposed to tobacco marketing were significantly more likely to be current smokers, controlling for important social influence predictors, than those adolescents who did not have tobacco marketing exposure. Such evidence suggests that bans on advertising would be useful to limit their promotion of adolescent smoking (Braverman and Aaro, 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bans on smoking in public places</td>
<td>China’s ban on smoking in public places became effective in May 2011, after successful trials during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games (WB China, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate drink-driving policies</td>
<td>Establishing maximum blood alcohol concentrations of drivers and enforcing these with sobriety checks and random breath testing can decrease alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes by roughly 20 percent, and are highly cost-effective (Peek-Asa, 1999; Elder et al., 2002 in WHO 2011). Enforcement of the laws and high severity of punishment is imperative for the success of such initiatives (WHO 2008, WHO 2011). In Brazil, infringement of the law culminates in penalties of up to three years in prison, a hefty fine and suspension of the drunk driver’s license for one year (WHO 2011).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

strong to select the preferred gender and bypass the law. Enhancing the relative value of daughters as perceived by families may be more promising as policy approaches since that would alter the incentives themselves.

As discussed in Chapter 2, relying on economic growth to raise female education and participation in the labor market alone may not suffice. General policies to promote economic development might play a role, but South Korea’s recent experience suggests that interventions to influence social norms and facilitate the spread of new values may be very important rather than relying on raising female education and labor force participation alone. Information campaigns, financial incentives, and improving social security for the elderly can be expected to reduce the imbalance in the sex ratio at birth.

China has been taking public actions to address the unbalanced sex ratio at birth with a package of approaches. Aside from regulations outlawing sex-selective abortion, the nationwide Care for Girls program is a well-known example of media campaigns. It started with a pilot in Chaohu from 2000 to 2003 (Shuzhuo Li 2007), which was a combination of advocacy, trainings, and punishments for discrimination in the form of sex-selective abortions and infanticide. The program was considered achieving its main objectives: the sex ratios at birth in Chaohu fell from 125 boys per girl in 1999 to 114 in 2002. Some of the program activities asked men to participate in the discussion as well, and encouraged them to help improve women’s status in the home and in society (Li, 2007). The National Population and Family Planning Commission then scaled up the Chaohu pilot through the national Care for Girls campaign in 24 counties of 24 provinces with severe gender imbalance. This campaign went beyond advocacy and media publicity alone. Direct financial incentives for parents to raise daughters have also been introduced as part of the Care for
Promoting Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific

Girls campaign: families with elderly parents without sons receive an annual allowance of 600 yuans; daughter-only families receive preferential loans; daughters from these families also receive bonus points in college entrance exams. While the exact attribution to the program’s effects has not been evaluated, the sex ratios at birth in these 24 counties fell from 133.8 in 2000 to 119.6 in 2005 (Li, Shuzhuo 2007).

Improving social security for the elderly can also have impacts on the sex ratio, aside from impacts on old age livelihoods, since families might prefer to have sons with the norm that they support their parents in old age. Ebenstein and Leung (2010) assess the impact of the introduction of a rural old age pension program on sex ratios at birth in China. Using cross-sectional data, they find the number of sons decreases the likelihood of participating in the pension program. Using a measure of availability of the program at the village level, the authors compare changes in the sex ratios at birth for cohorts born before and after the introduction of the program in 1991. They find that counties in which the pension program is available exhibit lower increases in the sex ratio at birth. Using an instrumental variables strategy for program availability yields consistent, although less robust, results.

Attention to Male Gender Issues

Attention to male gender issues is crucial in many country contexts since they may also hamper growth and development. First, the initial signs in many parts of EAP of the reversed gender gap in education need to be monitored closely where applicable. Second, in East Asia Pacific, being born male is the single greatest determinant for tobacco use and a main determinant for harmful alcohol use (WHO 2007 tobacco 12, WHO 2005 alcohol 13). Such usage is harmful for households and societies at-large, and warrants the attention of sound public policy since the social costs are usually higher than private costs due to externalities to other members of the society. Costs to economic growth can be even more severe when combined with the effects of an aging population.

While this report does not attempt to present an exhaustive coverage of harmful tobacco and alcohol use, Table 6.1 highlights several policy approaches to tackle the challenge inside and outside the region. These measures include polices to reduce the prevalence of alcohol and tobacco use and others to reduce the harmful impacts of such use. Taxation and sale restrictions are usually not very effective in countries where alcohol and tobacco products are mostly sold through informal markets (WHO, 2008, WHO 2005).

Anti-tobacco and excessive alcohol use policies should consider gender dimensions, gender norms and cultural values. Gender-specific education and communication approaches may be used to more effectively target men (WHO 2007). Warning about male-specific health risks (including reduced potency and fertility), messages about the harmful effects of passive smoking, and campaigns targeting men who are role models to boys such as fathers, teachers and peers are expected to decrease the prevalence of smoking (WHO 2007). Research from Vietnam, Cambodia and Malaysia suggest the usefulness of messages that resonate with core social values of responsibility for family welfare, such as reminding the smoker that smoking harms children’s health, and stressing the role of setting a good example for children (SEATCA, 2007—Thu and Minh, 2006; Sereithida, Cambodia; and Farizah et al., Malaysia).

Active measures to promote gender equality in economic opportunity

Gender inequalities in economic opportunities, such as gender wage gaps, the concentration of females and female-led enterprises in less-remunerative jobs and sectors, can be found in all countries in the region,
although the gravity of inequalities and hence policy priorities vary by country. The focus of policies in all countries however has a common theme – to provide an enabling environment in which women are able to balance their multiple roles and flourish as economic actors. As discussed in chapter 3, the constraints that impinge on women’s ability to flourish as economic actors can be found in households, markets and informal and formal institutions. This section therefore highlights where policy makers can act in these three domains to improve gender equality in economic opportunity. Notably, we focus on three primary areas: (i) reducing the time constraints associated with women’s household roles; (ii) increasing women’s access to resources; and (iii) establishing a level playing field through reforming institutions. Since the most serious constraints faced by women vary across economies according to economic structure (see chapter 3), the end of this section briefly discusses a country’s appropriate policy priorities along this typology.

Reducing the Trade-offs between Women’s Household and Market Roles

In all countries, we find that women’s household roles, such as care-giving, affect their decisions as economic actors – for example, they affect the amount of time that they are able to devote to market orientated activities, the types of occupations that they enter into and the type of enterprises they run. A key policy priority across countries is to reduce the impact of household roles on their economic lives, a priority that will become increasingly important as aging continues and the demands of caring for elderly rise. Addressing women’s dual roles is likely to be the most important in contexts where female labor force participation is severely affected due to the competing demands for women’s time.

Since women across the region spend more time on household work and care-giving activities, they have less time to devote to market based activities than men. While it is challenging to directly change the norms that influence gender divisions of domestic responsibilities, policies can work around existing norms and thereby reduce the impact that these norms have on women’s economic activities. Policies may however also indirectly influence divisions of labor within households, for example via interventions that raise the value of women’s market time.14

Although household responsibilities impinge upon women’s economic activities across all countries, the policy recommendations in this area vary with a country’s economic structure. In countries with predominantly rural populations and where infrastructural constraints limit women’s access to markets and energy and water sources, policies targeted at improving existing infrastructure are likely to have the greatest impact on women’s time balance. In countries with a larger urban population, policies to increase access to affordable childcare should be considered, particularly where informal mechanisms for childcare are more limited. In countries where the formal sector is increasingly important, addressing parental leave policies will help to level the playing field for men and women and may serve to ameliorate gender divisions of labor within households.

Investments in basic infrastructure and transportation

In rural areas or urban areas with limited infrastructure provision, the time spent on domestic activities can be reduced through investing in improved water, sanitation and energy services. This may release time that can be spent on market work or leisure and increase the income potential or well-being of women. Evidence from across the world suggests that water and electrification projects can reduce the time that women spend collecting water and fuel, and can increase productivity through increasing the length of the working day.15 In Lao PDR, evidence suggests that electricity extends the hours available for both productive and leisure
activities, particularly for women and girls (World Bank 2011b). In the Gansu and Inner Mongolia Poverty Reduction project, the construction of drinking water facilities was found to reduce the work load for women (World Bank 2007).

Better access to transport infrastructure can improve access to markets via reducing traveling time constraints. Investments in transportation infrastructure can reduce travelling time constraints and thereby increase access to markets. While benefiting both women and men, this is likely to particularly affect the well-being of women who have less time to devote to market orientated activities. In Papua New Guinea, evidence suggests that a road maintenance and rehabilitation program improved the quality of lives of remote disadvantaged communities and has improved access to markets, particularly for women who were found to have increased the frequency of market visits and their own-generated income (World Bank 2008). Recent experience on infrastructure and transportation projects also suggests that the design of infrastructure projects can have important gender implications (Box 6.2).

**Improving access to affordable childcare**

Access to affordable and high quality childcare options may reduce the amount of time that women spend on caring related activities, particularly among groups of females such as migrants who have limited access to alternative childcare mechanisms. The evidence presented in chapter 3 suggests that having children affects women’s economic opportunities in all countries in the region, although the effects are greatest in urban areas where informal support networks are the most limited. A lack of childcare can affect multiple dimensions of

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**Box 6.2: The Design of Infrastructure Projects has Important Gender Dimensions**

Consultations with both men and women are critical to ensuring that infrastructure projects meet the needs of both men and women since usage and access to infrastructure varies by gender. For example, many rural women lack access to motorized transport, tend to travel on feeder roads and tracks on foot or use intermediate means of transport such as donkey carts and bicycles. Conventional rural transport planning has tended to focus on road networks and long-distance transport, which has led to the neglect of the needs of females in rural areas. In Peru, for example, women’s participation in economic activities increased in response to a program that focused on upgrading non-motorized tracks that are predominantly used by women and aren’t generally covered by traditional road upgrading programs (Valdivia 2010).

In urban areas, integrating gender-specific needs into the design of urban transport systems can increase access for women. Women are more likely to travel during non-peak hours and to conduct multiple short trips, which makes using public transport expensive. To make public transportation more accessible to women, fee structures may compensate gender differences in use by providing tickets that allow for multiple short stops on a single trip, thereby reducing costs. The transportation system can also be improved to off-set social and cultural factors that hinder women’s access. For example, to accommodate the needs of the Muslim majority, Malaysia introduced women-only trains in 2010. In a similar spirit, female-only buses during peak times were introduced to counteract sexual harassment and discomfort by female customers. In Jakarta, Indonesia, women-only train compartments on a busy commuter route have been introduced to address sexual harassment complaints.

Since female headed households may be subject to greater financial constraints than male headed households, gender blind program design may have gender differentiated effects. In Lao PDR the Rural Electrification project didn’t manage to reach poor female headed households at the initial stage. An early assessment of the project suggested that approximately 40% of rural households couldn’t afford the connection fees of approximately $100. These households were predominantly poor, and disproportionately headed by women. As a response, a pilot program targeted the poorest households, with a focus on female-headed households. A revolving loan fund provided these households with interest-free loans to cover 80% of their costs, and all female-headed households were eligible for support under this fund. Within a few years, electrification rates in pilot areas increased from 63% to 90% overall, and from 79% to 96% for female headed households (Boatman et al. 2009).
economic opportunities, including labor force participation, the type of job conducted and gender wage gaps. For example, in Vietnam, a lack of childcare has been found to be an important factor that pushes mothers from formal to informal employment (Heymann 2004). In Mongolia and China, reductions in the provision of subsidized child care led to a reduction in female labor force participation in urban areas (World Bank 2011a; Chi and Li 2009).

Policies to promote better access to affordable childcare should target those women whose needs are the greatest and who have limited alternative access to childcare facilities. Community child care centers, particularly those targeted at low-income neighborhoods, have been found to increase maternal employment in a number of countries across the world.

Targeting childcare towards the needs of mothers is likely to increase its uptake. Programs that have identified and targeted groups with particular needs can increase women’s labor force participation while addressing persistent inequalities. In Vietnam, the Community-Based Early Childhood Care and Development project aims to improve child outcomes with a focus on ethnic minorities and migrant workers (ADB 2010). Migrant workers often have lower access to familial support and informal child care arrangements, and hence have a substantial need for affordable childcare assistance. In Brazil, a lack of flexibility and limited opening hours of publicly provided childcare was found to limit the impact of childcare on women’s earnings (Deutsch 1998).

Tackling negative perceptions regarding the use of child care may be crucial to ensuring that child care services are used. Location-specific social norms may initially limit women’s use of childcare services. Comparative analysis of women’s labor force participation in Taiwan and Japan notes that disapproval of mothers that rely on alternative child care arrangements is frequent in Japan, with women being less reluctant to leave young children in the care of others (particularly relatives) in Taiwan. In Korea, a study suggests that three quarters of men and women believe that a pre-school child will suffer if his or her mother works (Yun-Suk and Ki-Soo, 2005).

**Instituting parental leave policies**

Parental leave policies may improve gender parity in economic opportunities by enabling and promoting a more equitable division of childrearing responsibilities, and by allowing women to have the same opportunities as men for advancing their careers. The success of parental leave policies to achieve these goals is contingent upon their design – poorly designed or incomplete parental care policies can make it more expensive for employers to hire women relative to men, therefore leading to get discrimination or reduced job opportunities for women, while also exacerbating or emphasizing gender divisions of labor in the household. The factors that affect the success of parental leave include who pays for the leave, the employer, the employee or the government; whether a country has both provisions for paternity leave and maternity leave, or only covers maternity leave; and what fraction of wages are received by beneficiaries.

Maternity leave is the most commonly found component of work-family policies internationally and in the region. A study of 13 EAP countries finds that provisions for maternity leave have been instituted in all the countries examined in the region (World Bank, 2010a). Parental benefits in the region vary considerably – by the number of days given, the percentage of leave that is paid, who pays for the leave and whether paternity leave is provided for. In the majority of countries studied, maternity leave is paid for by the employer – only in the Philippines, Mongolia, and Vietnam does the government fund maternity leave. Where paternity leave provisions are not in place, granting only employer paid maternity leave provision is likely to reduce
employer’s incentive to hire female workers since maternity leave introduces differential costs in hiring females rather than males, particularly among younger age groups.

Where paternity leave provisions are not in place, granting only employer paid maternity leave provision is likely to reduce employer’s incentive to hire female workers since maternity leave introduces differential costs in hiring females rather than males, particularly among younger age groups. Within the region, only Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines currently have provisions for paternity leave. Alongside introducing differential hiring costs by gender, the provision of maternity leave policies without matching provision of paternity leave policies is likely to reinforce gender differences in child-rearing responsibilities since the asymmetries in the ability to take time for work reinforces gender divisions of time. However, even in the presence of gender neutral parental leave, evidence from the OECD suggests that progress has been slow in encouraging fathers to take any leave, let alone equal leave (Gornick and Hegewisch 2010). The overarching evidence suggests, however, that providing paternity leave alone is not sufficient to changing the current gender division of child-rearing responsibilities within households, but rather needs to be combined with other approaches to breaking down gender norms regarding household care giving roles.

**Increasing Women’s Access to Resources**

**Promote equal access to land**

Access to land is important in all contexts. But it becomes an even more salient and binding constraint in many EAP countries where women, despite accumulating sufficient human capital, still face barriers in accessing this productive resource.

Policies aimed at promoting equal access to land for women and men require careful thought since complex legal, social, and economic factors are at play. While economic growth and income can help women acquire more land in some contexts, improving gender equality in access to land and land ownership does not automatically result from single interventions targeting economic factors. It requires attention to formal property rights, customary systems, and the informal norms and practices that structure access to resources at household, community and land agency levels. Access to land affects women’s economic opportunities since land is an important productive asset and form of collateral. And as with education, access to land assets and income generated from land contributes to women’s voice and influence. To that extent, policies promoting equal access to land also affect agency.

Leveling the legal playing field with respect to land ownership is essential. Gender-progressive legal review and reform should take place in all legal areas that impinge on land rights, including family code, inheritance rules, and civil legislation regarding women’s rights to land both within a marriage or consensual union, and also in cases of family dissolution or divorce (Giovarelli 2006). Explicit language ensuring equal property rights in the law helps avoid interpretation unfavorable to women. For example, Bolivia’s 1996 land reform law specifies equity criteria in all land transactions, irrespective of the civil status of the party involved. The reference to civil status is important as it does not require that a woman be head of household or married in order to be eligible for land rights (World Bank n.d.).

In addition, countries are likely to benefit from adopting legal changes that actively promote better gender equality in access to land. For example, in 2003, Viet Nam passed the Land Law that requests certification of land under the name of both spouses if plots are used by both spouses. Qualitative analysis of impacts in
Vietnam suggests that joint titling improves procedures and opportunities for women to access loans, empowers women in case of disputes, given the security of land use rights, and leads to higher mutual decision making (WB 2008). Using national survey data from 2004 to 2006, Trung (2008) finds that joint land certification increases the working time and decreases the domestic labor burden for women belonging to Kinh ethnic group. Rural couples with joint land certification increases education expenses for in daughters relative to sons.

Experience from projects suggests the several guiding principles to ensure that on-the-ground implementation of land titling and land administration does not disadvantage women. These include gender- and socially-inclusive land titling policy, procedures and service delivery; and provision of complementary inputs to new landholders, particularly women (see World Bank n.d. for details). Capacity-building for women in legal literacy in relation to land is important, including sufficient outreach and campaigning to women and men regarding upcoming titling programs, the benefits and risks of land title, and procedures for redress (Harrington 2008). The adoption of these project guidelines in, for example, the Lao Land Titling Project (LTP1 and LTP2) yielded impressive results in improving women’s access to land. This project had a special focus on women’s awareness of land certificates and titling to women, including the involvement of the Laos Women’s Union. Increasing the number of female staff in land titling agencies, as was done in the Lao Land Titling Project II, is also recommended. The projects resulted in 38% of titles going to women, with a further 29% issued jointly to both spouses (Bell 2011). Project procedures should also ensure that women are represented in local titling and adjudication and community mapping processes, e.g., through use of female paralegals and para-surveyors (World Bank n.d.). New ICT resources can be introduced to women via training, such as hand-held GPS devices or mobile land registries for help in developing land cadastres and registering land transactions. In the First Kyrgyz Land and Real Estate Registration Project, for villages located 25 kilometers or more from the local registry office, mobile registries were put in place which traveled to the village either weekly or at the request of the village chief (Harrington 2008). Sufficient training of land agency and titling agency staff in women’s and ethnic or other minorities’ rights to land as well as local norms and practices is also helpful to cater to the barriers faced by these groups in accessing titling services (World Bank n.d.).

Apart from securing land title, the gender implications of customary land tenure and use-rights regimes operating in specific communities need to be understood and taken into consideration when designing interventions, and planning for formal land allocation.21 Land titling projects can support issuance titles to all rightful heirs to support women’s legal rights, which women can then transfer, gift, trade or sell as desired (World Bank n.d.). Education around the benefits of land ownership is important for potential beneficiaries. Other target audience for this kind of education include formal organizations—such as state institutions, labor organizations, legal aid organizations, women’s organizations, and donors—and informal, customary institutions—such as councils of elders and neighborhood committees (World Bank n.d.).

Public policies should make specific efforts to support women’s access to justice in formal systems (including for individual land rights), and to improve women’s position in customary, as well as collective, land negotiations. The World Bank’s Justice for the Poor Program (J4P) has developed a number of approaches to increase effective legal services outreach to women, and to cultivate demand among women for their enhanced use of and familiarity with formal legal systems, including for land arbitration and adjudication at individual and collective levels and establishing head of household status in the case of separation and divorce (World Bank, 2011). In the Pacific Islands and Indonesia, it promoted female participation in collective land and natural resource negotiations. In Vanuatu, land leasing arrangements by the state, e.g., for tourism or
extractive industries, as well as agriculture, overlooked women’s customary rights to garden plots, or other productive uses during formal lease registration, until J4P intervened with expanded consultations and legal outreach, including use of community drama for awareness-raising around negotiating with external investors (Stefanova, 2010). Evaluations of the impacts of such approaches are under way.

**Access to other productive resources in agriculture**

Improving access to agricultural extension and rural livelihoods promotion services for female farmers will improve their income. In rural areas, women often play a leading role in agricultural activities as large numbers of men leave in search of employment in larger cities. Acquiring knowledge and skills in agriculture and other rural livelihoods can however be extremely challenging particularly when extension services are orientated around traditionally male concentrated activities or when training occurs outside of rural villages, limiting female participation. Recent projects have sought to address these issues (Box 6.3).

Consulting with female farmers can help to identify gaps in existing service delivery. For example, the Integrated Agriculture Training Project in Papua New Guinea, for example, had a special focus on gender concerns. The project expanded the number of female agricultural extension agents, incorporated women’s needs in the design of the training, and included gender monitoring in the program (Box 6.3).22

ICTs can be used as a means of increasing women’s access to agricultural technologies. In Indonesia, Nokia Life Tools aims to bridge information gaps to farmers through a text message based interface. The program works with local agricultural boards for crop and market information and meteorological departments for climate and weather information. The Kenya Farmer Helpline, introduced in 2009 by Kencell, Kenya’s largest call center, provides free advice to small-scale farmers. Call center operators provide expert advice in local languages on agricultural practices, from controlling pests, raising livestock and poultry and the marketing of

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**Box 6.3. Leveling the playing field in access to resources: Lessons from Papua New Guinea and Mongolia**

In **Papua New Guinea**, men and women have had differentiated access to agricultural extension services for multiple reasons. First extension and training activities have traditionally been focused on the formal commercial agriculture that men are found in, rather than the subsistence and informal agricultural sectors that women are concentrated in (Cahn and Liu 2008). Second, contact between unrelated men and women is not culturally acceptable in PNG, further reducing women’s access to extension services since these services are predominantly provided by men. Thirdly, travelling to training courses can be difficult for women in part due to time limitations, financial constraints and also due to fears about safety, particularly for women in very remote villages where limited transport options are available.

The Integrated Agriculture Training Program (IATP) provided targeted training and information services to men and women in rural areas. The program included a focus on women’s needs. Participatory workshops aimed to ensure that women’s voices were heard, and that the training needs highlighted by women were included in the selection of topics for training modules. The training content included livelihood, credit and savings, accounting and management of poultry and commercial vegetables, which particularly reflected women’s interests (Cahn and Liu 2008). Both male and female trainers were trained to deliver gender-sensitive modules – by 2005, 30% of all trainers were female. This allowed course participants to be split into different groups when discussing topics on which men and women had different perspectives or when discussing more sensitive topics and also represented women are capable of taking important roles in agriculture.

In **Mongolia**, a component of the Gansu and Inner Mongolia Poverty Reduction project provided improved agricultural and livestock technology packages and upgraded agricultural and livestock support services (World Bank 2007). Women were consulted during the development of different farm models to ensure that the gender divisions of labor were taken into account in the choice and development of activities. Approximately half of the total project beneficiaries were women who benefited from women specific project training and production activities such as cropping and livestock raising.
products. Nearly half the 30,000 reached by the program are women, a substantially higher fraction than those reached through standard agricultural extension services (WDR 2012).

**Access to finance and skills for entrepreneurs**

Distinguishing between “systemic” constraints to agricultural or entrepreneurial development from gender-specific constraints is crucial for identifying policies that can reduce gender disparities in economic opportunities. In chapter 3, the evidence from the formal sector suggested that broader constraints to business development, such as cumbersome registration procedures, affect both female- and male-led enterprises. Evidence from the informal sector is more limited but, again, suggests that gender differences in self-reported constraints are not necessarily as large as systemic constraints facing enterprises. Since both the types of constraints facing enterprises and gender differences in constraints vary substantially across countries, focus should be placed in gaining a better understanding of the environment facing male and female run formal and informal sector firms. 23

Where gender-specific constraints to enterprise development are found to bind, promoting gender equality in the control of productive assets – including land, financial capital, information and technology – can help to enhance the productivity of female-led enterprises. Micro-finance is the most pervasive approach to increasing access to finance among entrepreneurs, and has been used extensively through the region to target female entrepreneurs.

A consideration in improving access to finance among female entrepreneurs is how to move their financial portfolios away from informal sources of credit and towards more formal credit institutions. Since women in many parts of the region have more limited assets that may serve as collateral, as discussed in chapter 2, and also often have more limited credit histories than men, they are more likely to be restricted in their sources of borrowing. For example, in the Pacific family law and inheritance law have been identified as important constraints affecting women’s acquire and harness assets that may be used as collateral (Hedditch and Manuel 2010). Customary laws in particular introduce discriminatory practices against women with respect to access to land and property rights.

Beyond financial constraints, training programs that improve business skills may be implemented to address gender differences in entrepreneurial capital. For example, a survey of 500 female enterprise owners in Viet Nam suggests that female entrepreneurs feel the need to improve their business skills via training and education (IFC and MPDF 2006). While greater numbers of women are acquiring higher levels of education and business training, converting the skills acquired on these programs into productive outcomes has remained challenging (World Bank 2009). Therefore it is critical to ensure that training programs address the appropriate skill gaps and target populations. For example, improving life-skills were found to have a greater impact on economic outcomes than improving vocational training skills in the Dominican Republic (Ibarrarán et al 2011).

Programs that improve women’s access to productive resources have been shown to increase women’s self-confidence and empower them to be more actively engaged in society. In Cambodia, the Women’s Empowerment Program provides poor women with literacy, leadership and financial training. Apart from gains in endowments and economic opportunities, the program reports a positive impact on increasing women’s voice and influence. For example, several participating women later joined leadership posts at the local level (Rosenbloom 2004). Similarly, an impact assessment of a women’s entrepreneurship training
program in Aceh, Indonesia shows that business planning and management training helped to promote greater confidence among women trainees, create or strengthen new social networks, and identify ways to improve the business environment for women (ILO, 2008). Other examples of programs that increase women’s agency include community-driven development (CDD) programs and self-help groups (SHGs). In Indonesia, a CDD program named the Kecamatan Development Program (KDP) contributed to developing the leadership skills of local women through its activities to develop the capacity of beneficiaries to plan, prioritize and manage local community investments as well as develop various livelihood skills to make them self-reliant (World Bank, 2009). In India, SHGs have been shown to increase women’s assertiveness as the group offers support mechanisms and resources that enable confidence (Suguna 2006).

**Establishing an Enabling Environment for Gender Equality in the Work Place**

Even though the formal sector in East Asian and Pacific countries is often small, there is a role for the government to strengthen the formal sector work environment as a means of promoting gender equality. Policy instruments available to the government include labor regulations, active labor market policies, and even affirmative action policies. There are also promising ways to work with the private sector through improving business procedures or establishing firm certification for gender-friendly work environment.

**Promoting gender-equitable labor institutions and practices**

Labor regulations that result in asymmetries in the employability and costs of hiring male and female workers can be found throughout the region. In countries where gaps in discrimination legislation exist, closing these gaps should be made a priority. For example, while the Tongan Constitution guarantees equality, although it does not contain a specific prohibition on discrimination on the basis of sex (Hedditch and Manuel 2010). The lack of anti-discrimination legislation raises the possibility for women to be treated unfairly by employers.

Protective legislation, while well intentioned, can restrict the employability of women and should be tackled in a more direct manner. For example, restrictions on night work for women in the Philippines can reduce the attractiveness of hiring female employees. In addition, several countries in the region restrict the industries that women can work in as a means of protecting them from hazardous conditions. While well intentioned, these protective measures can be restrictive, reducing the labor market opportunities of women.

Priority should be given to tackling the motivating factors behind protective legislation more directly. Since employment conditions and protections in industries are continuously evolving, limitations on female work in restricted industries should be regularly revisited in light of current safety standards and practices. Indeed, in these industries safety concerns should be targeted more directly through increasing protections for both male and female employees. Where the original concerns motivating these policies continue to be valid, for example where safety issues restrict women’s movement, measures such as the provision of safe and reliable transport infrastructure should be taken to ensure that women are able to overcome these concerns.

Gaps in the coverage of labor protections imply that certain groups may be at risk of exploitation. Addressing the lack of labor protections covering these groups can help to reduce these infringements. Female migrants in the region tend to be segregated into informal occupations such as domestic work, where they have few labor protections and are more at risk for becoming victims of exploitation. Improvements in legal and social protections of female migrants working abroad will better protect those women in isolating and informal positions. Approaches to improve the well-being of migrants are discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.
Active labor market policies

Active labor market policies can be used to overcome gender based differences in accessing job opportunities. For example, wage subsidies may allow individuals, albeit temporarily, to signal their abilities to future employers and make it cheaper for employers to hire female workers who they may not otherwise have considered. This provides the opportunity to reduce stereotypes through directly observing their skills, and also gives women valuable labor market experience. Promoting female participation in all sectors and in all jobs, management and below, is likely to increase information on the competencies of women as leaders within an organization, and may also be a way to establish environments that are more attuned to the issues faced by women. Skills training programs can be used as a means to reduce occupational segregation by encouraging women and men to move into professions outside of gender silos, particularly when paired with apprenticeship opportunities. Evidence within the EAP region on these programs remains limited; however evidence from other regions suggests some promising lessons (Box 6.4).

Efforts to promote female participation and gender equality in the private sector – by training women in leadership and giving them a space to be activists for gender equality – can also play an important role in strengthen women's voice. The Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI) in countries worldwide is a public partnership that helps young women transition from school to productive employment and active economic participation with a core focus on leadership (World Bank 2011a). In Lao PDR, the AGI has led to the creation of career counseling offices which will provide young women with an avenue to gain information on entering the labor force and long term career planning to be better prepared to influence their own choices from early on in their lives.

Affirmative action policies

Affirmative action policies, both voluntary and mandatory, can be used as a mechanism to increase the representation of women at all levels of the hierarchy, from entry level positions to managerial. In many countries, the public sector may take the lead in promoting gender based quotas; this can act as a signal to the private sector of women’s productivity in private sector of women’s productivity in underrepresented jobs. For example, in 2004 Malaysia introduced a public sector gender quota of 30% female representation across all decision-making levels, including positions like department heads or secretary-general (ASEAN 2008; Washington Post 2011). In 2006, 24.6% of women were found to be holding top positions in the public sector; by 2010, this rose to 32%. The Malaysian government furthermore aims for 30% of key corporate board positions to be held by women by 2016 (Washington Post 2011).

Evidence suggests that affirmative action policies, particularly at a board level, involve trade-offs. Board diversity has been found to increase the attendance of both men and women in the US, and female board members are more likely to participate as tougher monitors than men on corporate boards (Adams and Ferreira 2009). However, tougher monitoring does not necessarily translate into higher firm value. In the US,
The evidence on the effectiveness of training programs in developing countries is mixed. The impact of training programs in developing countries has however been found to be greater than their impact in developed countries, where impacts have been found to be modest albeit higher for female workers (Betcherman, Olivas and Dar 2004; Card et al. 2007). For example, Jovenes en Accion, a subsidized vocational training program, was found to have had a positive effect on paid employment and earnings, where the impact is principally driven by women (Attanasio, Kugler and Meghir 2009). In contrast, the first phase of the ‘Juventud y Empleo’ program in the Dominican Republic, which aimed to increase the employment probability of disadvantaged youth through basic skills training and vocational training, was found to have no effect on employment rates and hours of work (Card et al 2007).

Broadening skills programs to include softer skills may have positive labor market effects. The ‘Juventud y Empleo’ program in the Dominican Republic was modified to include a new life skills. A randomized evaluation of the modified program suggest that the life-skills component of the program plays a central role in improving the employment outcomes of young women who experienced a higher likelihood of having a job, higher wages and higher job satisfaction approximately 12 to 18 months after the program. The program was also found to have had an important effect on reducing pregnancy in young women.

Programs that encourage both men and women to think outside of gender silos will likely have positive ramifications for allocating talent toward jobs in an efficiency-promoting manner. While policies in the education system, as discussed earlier, can help change the traditional gender patterns of what to study and, consequently, what job to do, efforts to address occupational segmentation directly in the labor market and in the business environment are also needed. For example, a vocational and technical training voucher program in Kenya noted that men almost exclusively choose male-dominated courses while females almost exclusively choose female-dominated courses such as hairdressing. To address these misconceptions about the returns to vocational training, the program provided its female beneficiaries with information highlighting the large discrepancy between expected earnings from graduates in traditionally male-dominated trades (e.g. electrician) versus traditionally female dominated trades (e.g. seamstress). In addition, the intervention also used more subjective methods, including presentation showing successful female car mechanics in Kenya, to encourage women to select into more lucrative male-dominated trades. An impact evaluation of the program suggests that women given this information were almost nine percentage points more likely to express interest in a male-dominated course (especially younger and more educated women) and 5 percentage points more likely to enroll in one (Hicks et al, 2011).

Reducing information barriers about female youth may also have positive impact on labor market outcomes. In Jordan, young female graduates in Jordan have a higher rate of unemployment than men, in part due to perceptions that women have lower levels of interpersonal and decision making skills, negative stereotypes that women are less productive than men and beliefs that their commitment to the labor market is lower, potentially because of marriage and child-rearing. The New Opportunities for Women pilot program puts forward two policies to overcome these perceived constraints: short-term wage subsidies, in the form of job vouchers equivalent to the minimum wage for six months, and employability skills training which focuses on interpersonal and professional skills. The skills component focused on “softer” skills that had been identified as a constraint of young female workers, such as communication, team building, presentations and business writing (WB, 2011). Early results suggest that job vouchers have had significant employment effects: employment rates among those who received vouchers or vouchers plus training are between 55 and 57 percent, compared to 17 to 19 percent for those who received training alone or neither training nor vouchers (WDR 2012).

board diversity has a positive effect on firm value among firms with weaker governance, where greater monitoring may be beneficial, but has a negative effect among high governance firms.
The design of affirmative action can affect performance, particularly in circumstances where gender differences in characteristics of the existing workforce imply that individuals with the appropriate skill set may not be available (Pande and Ford 2011). For example, in Norway corporate board quotas of 40 percent were introduced in 2003 with a short implementation horizon. The Norwegian gender quota was found to decrease firm values, but this effect vanishes once board characteristics are accounted for, suggesting that the reduction in firm value is attributable to the comparatively young age and low job experience of women on Norwegian boards (Pande and Ford 2011). This suggests that policymakers may also want to keep the characteristics of the existing workforce in mind when designing affirmative action policies.

**Working with the private sector to foster gender equality**

Business formalization procedures that are gender blind may result in gender differentiated outcomes; in these contexts procedures should be modified in order to increase women’s ability to operate their businesses on a formal basis. A number of factors, such as the need to juggle household and market roles, cultural restrictions on travel and lower education levels, may imply that women are less able than men to maneuver complex formalization procedures and may therefore restrict their ability to register their businesses (Simavi et al., 2010). Simplifying and reducing the cost of business registration procedures as well as introducing flexibility in application procedures to minimize the impact of time constraints are likely to increase the ability of both male and female entrepreneurs to comply with business regulations and registration procedures but have a greater impact on female entrepreneurs.

Encouraging companies to promote greater transparency in recruitment and promotion procedures can level the playing field for women and can help to achieve greater female representation, particularly at a managerial level. Proactive and supportive organizational policies can also help women to acquire relevant competencies and move to managerial levels. For example, in 1996 Mongolia Telecom adopted a human resource development plan to reduce the crowding of women at lower levels. The two-pronged strategy included measures to help women cope better with their dual responsibilities at home and work, and measures to enable professional development and career growth of women. To help ease the work-family conflict on female employees, the company gave assistance to single mothers and financial aid for childbirth and education of children. As a result of these proactive steps women now constitute over 20 percent of senior managers, compared with just 9 percent when the plan was introduced.

Firm gender certification has been found to foster an enabling environment for the promotion of gender equality in companies and organizations, and to provide a means to encourage women to reach their labor market potential. Gender firm certification, such as the Gender Equity Model, has proved to be a successful tool for the promotion of equal opportunities for men and women and to overcome cultural barriers in business practices. This public-private partnership was designed and implemented in Mexico, and has been replicated in Argentina, Columbia, Chile, Dominican Republic and Egypt (World Bank 2011). Firm certification validates and recognizes gender equity actions in private firms. An impartial and independent agency assesses compliance in four areas: recruitment, career advancement, training and sexual harassment. Findings from the GEM in Mexico show that participating firms have eliminated pregnancy discrimination from recruitment practices, communication has improved and 90% of participating organizations reported that workers’ performance and productivity have increased (World Bank 2011). Furthermore, organizations also report that promotion of women to managerial positions has increased, although women at the top tier are rare (World Bank 2011). Certified firms are also more likely to have processes in place to deal effectively with harassment cases, although workers in certified firms are also more likely to have been victims of some
form of harassment, or are more aware that some behaviors are forms of harassment that are inappropriate in the workplace (World Bank 2010b).

**Policy Priorities for Fostering Equal Economic Opportunity**

This section lays out policy recommendations to address the major barriers constraining women and men in the region from fulfilling their potential in the economic sphere. While all these policies—from reducing the trade-offs between women’s household and market roles, addressing occupational segmentation, increasing women’s access to resources and markets, to establishing an enabling environment for gender equality in the workplace—are important, each country needs to consider its own appropriate policy priorities and policy mix. The guiding principles below recommend a way to prioritize policy actions, depending on the country’s economic structure and, therefore, the type of major constraints faced by women.

- In predominantly agricultural economies, the suggested policy priorities are to focus on constraints that affect women in rural areas, such as reducing gender disparities in access to productive resources in agriculture, and improving infrastructural services to increase women’s access to markets.

- In economies with a heavier focus on manufacturing and services, policies should focus on reducing the constraints faced by women in urban areas and in the formal sector, such as the promotion of female friendly work practices or affordable child care.

- In all economies, there is a need to reduce gender disparities in the constraints faced by enterprises, particularly those in the informal sector. A key priority is to identify those constraints that are systemic and those constraints that are gender specific. Continuing to promote women’s access to land will be important in all contexts since it serves as a productive resource, a form of collateral alongside being a status enhancing asset. In addition, identifying and closing discriminatory labor market regulations and practices to make formal institutions more even handed should be a policy priority at all stages of structural transformation.

**Active Measures to Close Gender Gaps in Agency**

The evidence presented in chapter 4 suggests that there is substantial scope to improve women’s agency across all countries in the EAP region. In the Pacific Islands, policy priorities include addressing pervasive gender-based violence and increasing female voice and participation in the public sphere. East Asia must address the increased vulnerabilities specific groups may face—including those who’ve been trafficked and those who are not protected by the law due to plural legal environments. Strengthening women’s agency on multiple fronts is likely to have rewards since increasing women’s voice in one domain of agency is likely to have positive repercussions on others. This section presents a set of policies and programs to strengthen the voice and participation of women in households, in communities and in society. Approaches are discussed primarily through the prism of the levers for change identified in chapter 4: (i) reducing gender-based violence through a multi-pronged approach (ii) strengthening women’s endowments and economic opportunities in support of agency; (iii) transforming social norms and practices; (iv) strengthening the legal and institutional environment; (v) improving women’s access to justice and (vi) taking active measures to enable women’s participation in the policy domain and (vii) creating space for women’s collective action.
Reducing gender-based violence through a multi-pronged approach

Put in place a multi-pronged approach to reduce gender-based violence. Reducing discrimination against women and gender-based violence requires action on a number of fronts: efforts to increase women’s voice within the household; enactment and enforcement of appropriate legislation and strengthening of women’s access to justice; provision of adequate support services for victims of violence; and use of the media to provide information in women’s rights, to increase social awareness, and to shift social norms with respect to violence.

Enact and enforce laws that eliminate discrimination and violence against women. Countries that take a strong stance on gender-based violence legislation and enforcement can make positive strides against gender-based violence in short periods of time. Cambodia saw a significant decrease in the incidence of domestic violence between 2000 and 2005. This was largely attributed to strong efforts by the country’s Ministry of Women’s Affairs, which introduced the domestic violence legislation draft in 2001. The legislation was adopted by the National Assembly four years later, in October 2005. The new law criminalized acts of domestic violence, provided for the protection of victims and allowed neighbors or local organizations to intervene if they witnessed domestic violence. As a complement to the law, women’s organizations and other non-governmental organizations carried out information and dissemination campaigns to help disseminate information on people’s basic rights and responsibilities under the law.

Provide adequate access and support to services for victims of violence. This can include a range of services, from police and judiciary to health and social services. In Malaysia, the government established integrated one-stop crisis centers in hospital that provide easy access to medical care, various social services, and the ability to report the crime with specially trained police officers (World Bank 2011).

Strengthening women’s endowments and economic opportunities

Positive gains in gender equality in economic opportunities and endowments can lead to gains in agency across multiple domains of agency. Skills, knowledge, access to resources, finances and other productive assets equip women with the tools necessary to increase their voice and influence in the household, in communities and in society at large. Therefore policies which strengthen women’s endowments and economic opportunities are also likely to have positive repercussions for women’s voice and influence on multiple levels. Investing in the education and skills of women and girls in particular is likely to be an important lever of change for promoting women’s agency, at a household and societal level. Education and skills promotion can improve women’s agency through increasing their ability to obtain and discern information, increasing their economic opportunities, and through expanding their bargaining power – although the extent of the impact will depend on whether social norms allow women to exercise their rights to voice their preferences and influence their life experiences. Training programs for adult women can increase knowledge and better equip them to make informed decisions on their own behalfs. A discussion on policy approaches to reduce gender inequalities in access to human and productive capital and to improve women’s economic opportunities can be found in the first two sections of this chapter.

Transforming social norms and practices

Socially constructed gender norms that limit women’s ability to act upon and make choices for themselves are pervasive across the EAP region and affect women’s lives through diverse channels – from influence what
they study and the occupations they conduct to the societal acceptance of domestic violence and perceptions of women leaders. While socially constructed norms are difficult to transform directly, evidence from across the world suggests that they can be influenced through several factors, including the public information campaigns and the promotion of role models. There is also substantial opportunity to promote the evolution of social norms in many EAP countries where the societal transformations underpinning rapid urbanization and migration are likely to expose men and women to different models of gender relations.

Approaches that harness episodes of social and structural change occurring in many countries in the EAP region are likely to have a greater impact on changing social norms. Returning migrants are a source of “new” information and can be very influential in changing practices and social gender norms. Returning rural migrants are often better placed to question practices and norms that constrain people from exercising their voice and influence. Countries wishing to make positive change in rural areas, where gender stereotypes are still predominant, can engage the help of returning migrants. For instance, women migrants from Jiangxi province in China who have experienced migration to the city are more aware of their rights as people and are more knowledgeable about social and health practices, including access to services and modern healthcare. In China and Cambodia, a number of civil society organizations call upon the experiences and lessons of return migrants to influence women’s decision making on reproductive matters in rural areas.

Providing a forum for successful women to act as an inspiration to other women and girls can help the evolution of gender perceptions. Women in leadership roles can serve as effective role models for other women and girls. Female teachers are among the first professional women that show girls that being active outside the home is socially acceptable. These women serve as agents of change in the communities they work in by educating and socializing children beyond gender stereotypes (UNESCO, 2006). In Papua New Guinea, for example pastors are also involved in settling disputes between husbands and wives. And they are viewed as role models for youth, while their wives, who typically engage in leadership positions, are viewed as role models for women (World Bank 2011). Exposure to positive female role models from an early age can help break the cycle of gender inequalities across generations.

Policy makers can also support and encourage mass-media outlets—e.g., television, radio and virtual outlets—to promote positive messaging that will help to change gender norms. Mass media outlets are used in countries like the Philippines and Vietnam to regularly disseminate messages raising awareness of women’s contribution in society. These countries have adopted a more extreme approach of requiring mass media outlets to abide by gender equality principles. In the case of Philippines, the requirement states that the media must regularly disseminate messages raising awareness of women’s contribution in society and avoid portraying female stereotypes. In Vietnam, the Government with support of donors is undertaking in information, education, and communication campaign to help curb gender-based violence by “re-defining” male identity with respect to domestic violence. In its essence, the message is: “Real men don’t hit women.”

Increasing access to information through new information technology can improve women’s agency by increasing their knowledge base and exposing them to broader experiences and social practices. In Malaysia, women used information technology to create self-help cyber communities to improve their networking opportunities in an environment that was more suitable to their lives and social gender norms. The Malaysian e-Homemakers project is one example of these self-help communities; through the e-Homemakers, women are able to share information on how to start and run a business, and are able to share their experiences in a safe space. In Japan, the government promotes self-help and external help through cyber community
initiatives; the information provided to women through technology ranges from dealing with domestic violence to promoting women entrepreneurs in the agricultural and fishing industries (Farrell and Wachholz, 2003).

**Strengthening the legal and institutional environment**

For a country to achieve gender equality in voice and influence, concerted efforts by government and civil society are needed across multiple fronts. A key element of this includes the institution and enforcement of legislation to create an enabling environment for equal voice and influence regardless of one’s gender. An important piece of this is to ensure that countries accede and ratify all international conventions that promote gender equality. While most countries in the East Asia and the Pacific region have acceded to and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UNIFEM, 2009), Palau and Tonga have not.

Another important element is to ensure that domestic legislation and the institutions of implementation and enforcement are aligned with countries’ commitments. For instance, despite the fact that CEDAW’s international mandates are compulsory, many countries have laws that continue to discriminate against women by limiting them from their human rights. Many countries that have introduced legislation to parallel the CEDAW mandates have made the language gender-neutral or exempted some types of violent acts, thus, making laws inconsistent with international standards and leaving them broadly open for interpretation. Legislation on domestic violence introduced in Thailand and Cambodia are two such examples, where the language is subjective and needs to be interpreted by the courts; in Thailand a person needs to show that there was “unethical dominance” on the part of the perpetrator, while in Cambodia a man can discipline his wife as long as it is done with compassion. Strengthening the institutions of enforcement is also a critical component of multi-pronged strategy to create an enabling environment for both men and women to have voice and influence in the public sphere. This can be particularly challenging in pluralistic legal environments as seen in several East Asian and Pacific countries.

Programs that increase women’s knowledge of the law with respect to violence and human rights and increase the capacity of justice service providers to address women’s issues contribute to greater safety and security among women in society. The Cambodian Women’s Crisis Centre (CWCC) began a community program that increases the awareness of violence against women and the rights of women, especially of the law on domestic violence and protection that was implemented in 2005. The program promotes initiatives to enforce the law by providing information and training to local authorities and developing community networks. There were 63 community education sessions serving a total of 1638 participants, six training sessions for the police that trained 150 officers and 300 cases received legal advice. The evaluation of the project shows that the program’s targets were met or exceeded. As a result of the program participants believed that the severity and rate of violence was reduced because of the education on the law, human rights and the rights of women, and because information on the expected roles of men and women in their marriage were made clear (Weaner 2008).

**Improving women’s access to justice**

Programs that increase women’s knowledge of the law help them to access the formal justice system and encourage them to exercise agency through formal mechanisms. Having access to the justice system and knowledge of the law and the legal process enables women to exercise their agency. In Indonesia, a civil society organization supporting women heads of household (PEKKA) helped shed light on the need to
provide women with better access to justice services. Building on existing work by civil society, the Women’s Legal Empowerment program encouraged the poor and marginalized (many of them women headed households) to know and demand fulfillment of their rights, while at the same time, it worked on increasing the capacity of legal and justice institutions to respond. At the village level, the program was implemented by trained paralegals who educated people on the law, especially family law and laws on gender-based-violence, and provided assistance and advocacy. The result of this effort has contributed to the opening up of spaces for women to voice out their rights – not only within the home, but in local communities – and to demand better justice services from their government. In the long term, the program is expected to improve women’s livelihoods, and that of their families, through their increased agency (World Bank, 2011).

Programs can make the judicial system more accessible to women in a variety of ways. Technology can help women access the justice system. For example, mobile courts in rural areas of China and Indonesia provide a solution to the problem of accessibility and security for women who wish to exercise their rights in the legal system but are unable to access the court. Courts can also be viewed as financially inaccessible, and in Indonesia, the waving of court fees for poor and marginalized groups has increased the ability of women to bring their cases to court (World Bank 2011). The justice system can also adapt to better address the specific needs of women in the justice system. Countries can institute gender-sensitive training for officials in the system, as well as increase the representation of women within all institutions charged with formulating, implementing and enforcing the laws. For instance, in Papua New Guinea, female local magistrates have helped raise awareness among their male counterparts of the need to adopt gender-sensitive approaches to the cases that come before them (World Bank 2011). A female victim of gender-based violence may find it easier to approach a female police officer after assault than a male police officer.

Taking active measures to enable women’s participation in the policy domain

Implementation of political reservation systems has contributed to increasing women’s participation in electoral politics in a number of countries. Gender-based political reservation systems seek to reduce obstacles in the recruitment process so that more women are attracted to participate in politics, thus adding strength to their collective voice. There is large variability on how these systems work across countries. Quotas – one form of reservation – are seen in the form of constitutional changes to reserve a certain number of posts for women, legislative as well as in (formal or informal) political party quotas. Such measures have been credited, at least in part, for the increased political and administrative participation of women seen across developing regions. India has, for example, endorsed a constitutional amendment that women should constitute one third of the heads of local governments. In East Asia and the Pacific, China, South Korea, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Vietnam, and recently Cook Islands, have all adopted formal or informal measures to promote political representation of women at the local level. For example, in Korea, the Grand National Party (GNP) voluntarily supports quotas of 30 percent women candidates. But at the national level, the law states that political parties must have a list composed with 50 percent women candidates. And at the local level, the party law of 2002 states that city council election must aim to have gender parity (Quota Project, 2010).

Countries can also consider using informal means of promoting women in politics through incentives instead than formal reservation systems. This route may be more effective in countries where formal reservation systems are likely to be contentious or elicit a political backlash. The argument in favor of
formal reservation is that they open doors to women in politics and provide a relatively fast track for women to enter politics. In addition to enabling women to gain experience as office holders, such programs can help to change traditional views about women as political leaders. Evidence from India shows that public opinion about female political leaders improved with increased exposure (Beaman et al. 2009). But active measures to promote women’s political participation can prove controversial – as was the case in Timor-Leste where quotas were not widely accepted. As with affirmative action in the labor market, there are concerns about the pipeline of qualified candidates, along with possible perceptions about the qualifications of women elected through a reservation system (independent of their actual qualifications).

Creating space for women’s collective action

Partnerships with women’s business associations can provide a space for women to interact, learn and advocate for gender equality. Women’s business organizations help their members be better equipped to benefit from commercial opening into international markets by providing them with access to a global network of women’s business associations, information and advocacy on their behalf. More specifically, these organizations can offer access to contacts for sources of credit, access to training in international trade issues, access to mentoring, as well as access to the more basic skills of operations management and marketing. Moreover, their role as advocates for women’s businesses should be highlighted. These organizations seek to raise awareness of broader international stakeholders about the importance of incorporating women into policy planning (e.g. trade pacts). Also, their activism can help to spur laws that provide a level playing field for businesses owned by both genders (Jalbert, 2000).

In Cambodia, the Government Private Sector Forum (G-PSF) was established in 1999 to improve the business environment in the country and promote investment. The G-PSF provides a forum for public-private sector collaboration in the country. Even though the majority of small businesses in Cambodia are run by women, until recently women had little voice in the dialogue on small business policy, as female-owned businesses were barely represented in the G-PSF. In that context, the International Finance Corporation, together with Cambodia’s Ministry of Women’s Affairs, has sponsored an initiative to increase female participation in the private sector’s dialogue with government on how best to enable the growth and productivity of both male and female enterprises. Soon after the gender composition of the G-PSF was changed, new policies addressing the needs of female entrepreneurs were incorporated in the agenda of the forum. As a result of women’s participation in the G-PSF, import tariffs and taxes on silk yarn were cut for a period of three years helping more than 20,000 silk weavers in the country (citation).

The Way Forward

Managing the Risks associated with Key Emerging Trends

Finally, several trends characterizing the East Asia and Pacific region – increasing economic integration, increasing access to ICTs, migration, rapid urbanization and population aging – will bring with them both new opportunities for promoting gender equality and new risks from a gender perspective. An important challenge for policy makers will therefore be to help foster these new opportunities and, in particular, to manage new and emerging risks. Among the most important:

Greater economic integration will bring with it increased exposure to employment shocks which will have gender-differentiated impacts. Adequately addressing the risks associated with greater economic integration
will require designing social protection programs that adequately account for different risks faced by female and male workers. Building on the lessons from recent economic crises, several developing countries, including from within the East Asia and Pacific region, have begun to recognize the gender dimensions of risk and shocks in the design of programs. In Indonesia, for example, a conditional cash transfer program, Keluarga Harapan, targets households with members whose outcomes are particularly vulnerable during times of crisis, such as pregnant and lactating women.

Policies enacted to mitigate crises and their effects are likely to have gender differentiated effects. Labor market programs will experience such effects due to employment segregation gender. In Cambodia, the construction, garment and tourism sectors were directly hit by the 2008 global financial crisis. In response, the government promoted short-term vocational training courses for 40,500 laid off garment factory workers, who were almost entirely females. Furthermore, gender blind policies in response to crises may not be gender neutral in the longer term. Indonesia’s economic crisis in 1997-1998 awakened the pro-labor pressures that led to better enforcement of minimum wages (Narjoko and Hill 2007). While the minimum wage policy helped narrow gender wage gaps, it also was found to decrease female employment, although it did not affect male employment (Survahadi et al. 2003).

As female migration throughout the region increases economic opportunities for women, so too does it create new concerns about female migrants’ welfare. Protecting female migrants from exploitive situations, including from sex work and human trafficking, will require a gender-aware approach. Greater protection through improved laws, safety nets and knowledge transfers will better address the vulnerabilities specific to women traveling abroad. Specific areas for action include improving the legal and social protections of female migrants, strengthening the monitoring and credibility of recruitment agencies, developing, and providing welfare and support services to assist female migrants.24,25

Governments in both sending and receiving countries should actively address the issue of human trafficking through prevention, protection and prosecution. Women and girl migrants are statistically the most vulnerable group at risk of being trafficked for prostitution and forced labor. Policies aimed at prevention, protection and prosecution can assist many of those at-risk or victims of human trafficking. Gender-sensitive awareness programs for people involved in the migration process can help employers, recruiting agencies, police, service providers, co-workers and the general public better assist vulnerable or potentially vulnerable migrants. Those people who are most likely to be front responders in identifying victims of human trafficking—namely police, social workers, and labor inspectors—should be thoroughly trained to both identify and safely support victims of such abuse, as well as prepare victims to pass evidence on to investigators (UNIFEM 2005).

Governments, with the help of relevant actors, should enact and enforce anti-trafficking laws. In the Philippines, the Visayan Foundation works in corporation with the port authorities to set up institutions that provide protective services against trafficking in seaports of the archipelago. The foundation also promotes information in the seaports about trafficking and engages in local networking to encourage actions against trafficking.

Prosecution of traffickers is also an important element to combat trafficking. Strong legislation and policy that holds traffickers accountable for their crimes is essential to downsize the industry. Extensive research in this area suggests that most countries in the East Asia and Pacific region inadequately enforce the prosecution
of human traffickers and more needs to be done in this regard (US State Department Trafficking in Persons report, 2010).

Preventing human trafficking requires a multi-pronged approach, including education, employment and other services. The NGO Development and Education Programme for Daughters and Communities (DEPCD), in Thailand, aims to prevent the trafficking of women and children into the sex industry and other exploitative labor situations. The NGO targets at-risk youth and their families and educates them through seminars, research workshops, awareness campaigns at community and local government levels. In addition to education, DEPCD offers employment alternatives through life skills and vocation skills training programs, in addition to sports activities for kids (www.depdc.org). The Thai Women of Tomorrow deliver information and raise awareness of sex trafficking in villages in Thailand through trained volunteers who are themselves trained and supported by the International Labor Organization. The program includes regionally and locally adjusted materials (IOM 2000). In addition, the program provides financial support to families for facilitating school needs for girls (Smarasinghe and Burton 2007). The locally established Mirror Art Foundation promotes campaigns to raise awareness of trafficking practices to youth and children in Northern Thailand.26

Protection includes providing immediate protection for potential or identified trafficked victims. Protection policies should address immediate needs such as shelter, medical, psychological and psychosocial care, food and clothing, and longer-term care and reintegration of the victim. In Taiwan, a new anti-trafficking law that began in June 2009 provides trafficking victims with continued residency and temporary work permits. These measures enhanced victim treatment and improved victim cooperation in trafficking prosecutions (US Dept of State Trafficking in Persons Report 2010). To prevent trafficking the Visayan Foundation in cooperation with Port Authorities set up institutions to provide protective services against trafficking in seaports of the archipelago in the Philippines. The foundation also promotes information in the seaports about trafficking and engages in local networking to encourage actions against trafficking.

Rapid population aging in the region is likely to have important gender-differentiated effects, among other things, because older women may increasingly find themselves living – and living longer – as widows. Along with urbanization and the breakdown of extended family support networks, these women are likely to find themselves at increased economic risk – with relatively few accumulated assets and little access to formal social security.

Old-age income security programs can protect such women from destitution in old age. Joint annuities and survivor pensions have been argued to be an effective means to compensate and secure women’s incomes at old age (World Bank 2001; World Bank 2004). Equalizing the retirement age for men and women may also be a means to increase pension coverage among those working in the formal sector. Simulations from Latin America suggest that equalizing retirement ages between men and women can increase pension benefits for women and decrease the male-female pension gap (James, Edwards and Wong, 2003). 28

Filling the Knowledge Gaps

While much is known from global and regional evidence on gender and development, much remains to be understood empirically. Closing data and analytical gaps is important to have a better understanding of policy priorities, impacts and cost-benefit tradeoffs in promoting gender equality in the region. This underscores the need for collecting additional gender-disaggregated data and conducting additional empirical analysis, including impact analysis of policies and programs. The following discussion highlights a few priority areas.
Gender-disaggregated data collected for administrative purposes or as part of projects are prerequisites for monitoring progress in gender equality at the national and project levels, as well as for enabling corrective actions and impact evaluations within the scope of projects. While land and credit has been identified as an important factor affecting productivity and female empowerment, there are few sources of information on individual-level land ownership and access to credit in EAP. Collecting gender-disaggregated data within the household is also crucial for individual time-use and consumption information in East Asian and Pacific countries. Without information on time-use, it is very difficult to assess the impact of policies, such as of electrification programs or the provision of childcare services, on the well-being and economic outcomes of men and women.

Information about the reasons as to why there might be differences in performance between male and female owned enterprises is seldom available in EAP. Another area is to gather better information on male and female access to technologies. While evidence is available in household surveys on household-level access to the internet and mobile phones, very limited evidence is available to assess whether males and females have differences in access to ICTs. Similarly, there is limited data available on gender differences in access to productive inputs and services in the agricultural sector.

More evidence is needed to understand whether and why specific policy interventions work. East Asia and Pacific is behind the curve on conducting impact evaluations, and ever further behind on conducting impact evaluations with gender dimensions. For example, rigorous evaluations are necessary of curriculum reforms to reduce gender stereotyping as well as evaluations of existing promising policy approaches that tackle the missing girl phenomenon. While knowledge about new crop varieties and agriculture technology can be crucial for improving farmers’ productivity, very little rigorous evidence has been identified from the region on the impact of extension services for men and women. In general, there is little evidence on the long-run impact of gender quotas on firm performance and the transmission channels of the impact of have women on corporate boards. Information on youth unemployment programs and on their impact on girls’ and boys’ labor market outcomes is very limited in EAP. Gender-differentiated impacts of community driven development and public work programs in the region are still often unknown. Also, it will be useful to have more rigorous evidence on various approaches to increase agency such as: political quotas, role models, and approaches designed to promote communication between spouses to reduce gender-based violence.

Notes


2 UNFPA (2005). Cultural Programming, Reproductive Health Challenges and Strategies in East and South East Asia

3 World Bank (2005) Proposed grant to the Lao People’s Democratic Republic for a Health Service Improvement Project, Project Appraisal Document, EAP, Human Development Sector Unit, the World Bank

4 UNICEF (2009, Gender Equality in Education (East Asia and the Pacific)

5 In the mid-1970’s, both the UK and the US adopted anti-discrimination legislation pertaining to education (Salisbury, J. and Riddell, S 2000; Madigan, Jennifer 2009; Arnot, David and Weiner 1999). Several states passed laws prohibiting the use of sex-stereotyped curricula, and companies producing text-books developed guidelines to eliminate bias. While the literature stresses the central role attributed to the review of teaching materials in this process of promoting “equal opportunity education”, the causal link between curriculum reforms and more “gender-equitable” education is not straightforward. In particular, curriculum reforms in the UK and the US happened within the context of broader social change where greater numbers of women participating in the labor challenged the notion of women’s primary role being in the home.

6 For instance, the Finnish project TiNA included special day courses for girls aged 14 to 16 to provide information about non-traditional female occupations. The project also used female students as role models in the visits to schools (http://tina.tkk.fi/tina_2003/tina_2004_eng/). Another
initiative that was launched in the late 1990s in Norway aimed at increasing the number of female students in Computer Science at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. The initiative included an information campaign for girls at all high schools of the country. Girls who were interested in a career in Computer Science were invited to the University for a day in which they met students, professors and received information (http://www.ercim.eu/publication/Ercim_News/enw38/gjestland.html).

7 (http://oerl.sri.com/reports/up/reportUP_es.html)
8 Braverman and Aaro, 2004 http://ajph.aphapublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/94/7/1230
10 WHO 2008- Strategies to reduce the harmful use of alcohol, report by the secretariat
11 WHO (2011) Global status report on alcohol and health
12 WHO 2007- Gender and Tobacco Control: A policy brief
13 WHO 2005- Gender Health and Alcohol Use
14 Programs that raise the value of women’s time in the workforce has been found to affect gender divisions of labor within the household and to increase the amount of time women have available for market orientated activities. In Ecuador, women’s increased employment in the cut flower industry led to men’s increased participation in housework (Newman 2002). In India, a project that increased the value of women’s time via introducing new economic opportunities in agricultural procurement has been found to have resulted in a decrease in their domestic workload, an increase in mobility and enhanced decision making powers within the household (World Bank 2007).

15 Quantitative evidence from South Africa suggests that the expansion of electrification raised female employment by nearly 10 percentage points and increased female earnings, but had no impact on male employment (Dinkleman, 2010). Furthermore, the evidence suggests that electrification released female time from cooking towards marketed activities through altering cooking technologies (away from wood-based towards electricity-based cooking).

16 Child care centers can furthermore play a key role in reducing inequalities in access to nutritional support and mental stimulation among disadvantaged groups, including ethnic minorities and young girls.

17 Although child care services are found throughout the region in a variety of forms – from publicly provided child care facilities such as the Early Childhood Development Centers in Thailand to childcare centers in factories in the southeast industrial zones in Vietnam (UNICEF 2004; ADB 2010) – there is clearly a greater and unmet need for affordable child care in many countries.

18 While evidence from the EAP region on increasing access to childcare is limited, evidence from the OECD and Latin America region suggests that the impact of increasing access to childcare on female labor force participation and hours worked varies with, among other things, the availability of alternative caring arrangements and characteristics of families (Attanasio et al. 2004; Blau and Currie 2006; Lefebvre et al 2009; Paes de Barros et al 2010).

19 The provision of free publicly provided childcare in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, was found to increase female labor force participation, particularly among women who were previously not working, but has also been found to crowd out private provision (Paes de Barros et al 2010). In Canada, the provision of low-fee universal child care was found to have the greatest impact on the labor supply of less-educated mothers but was found to have little impact on more educated mothers (Lefebvre et al 2009).

20 For example, in Germany, France and Austria, only 2% of men participate in leave compared to 90% of women (De Henau et al, 2007, cited in Gornick and Hegewisch 2010). Men have been found to be more sensitive to levels of wage replacement than women, suggesting that policies that hope to encourage men’s use of parental leave should consider higher wage replacement levels.

21 Note also that individuals often “forum shop” in pressing their land cases, alternating between customary and formal systems depending on which is expected to decide in their favor. For men, particular advantages can often be gained by using customary systems (Giovarelli 2006).

22 While acknowledging the overall positive effect of the program on women, Cahn and Liu (2008) highlight several constraints that limited the gender-effective of program implementation. Except for the credit module in which men and women participated equally, during 2002-2005 female participation was below 20 percent in the other modules. This can be explained by the selection process of participants, which disadvantaged women. The selection of participants was made by ward councillors and district rural development officers, who had no gender training and discouraged female participation. Courses were not held in the home village and so involved travel and stay overnight, making it particularly difficult for women to participate. Finally, educational differences between men and women de-motivated women in mixed learning groups of certain modules.
Care should also be taken when interpreting self-reported constraints since firms are only likely to report constraints when they have indeed tried to access a service – for example, firms who have not applied for a loan are unlikely to report the cost of finance to be a constraint.

To better ensure that females are migrating through legal channels, governments should help strengthen the monitoring and credibility of recruitment agencies and overseas employment service providers. In Malaysia, the Private Employment Agency Act of 1981 requires employment agencies to abide by several terms in order for the government to better monitor the recruitment process. Such terms include providing the Labor Department with the details of the migrant domestic workers and employers employment contract, checking in on the migrant workers welfare and providing the migrant worker with the information of necessary contacts (the employment agency and the Labor Department) should employment conflicts or emergencies arise (UNIFEM 2005).

Well-developed welfare and support services can provide migrants with gender-specific assistance and safety nets. For example, the Philippines provides counseling, legal assistance and liaison services to migrant workers in need of assistance. Resource centers with labor officers are established in countries with more than 20,000 Filipino migrant workers, and are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and staffed with a minimum of four officers. Offices in countries with many Filipina migrants are staffed with more female welfare officers and offer gender-specific assistance (Blokhus, 2004).

The project also includes eco-tourism activities which contribute to increasing incomes, promoting economic activities and awareness of trafficking practices amongst youth in the villages.

The effectiveness of the contributory pension system to increase the wellbeing of elderly women may however be limited in EAP since the formal labor market is small and predominantly found in urban areas in many countries in the region. Therefore gaps in pension coverage between rural and urban areas are likely to be as great as or even greater than gender gaps in coverage within rural and urban areas. For example, evidence from Zhejiang and Gansu provinces in China suggests that 79 and 54 percent of men and women aged above 60 have access to pensions in urban areas, while in rural areas only 5 and less than 1 percent of men and women are covered by pensions (Giles, Wang and Cai, 2011).

Pensions can be crucial to safeguard incomes for the most vulnerable groups among the elderly, but they may cause adverse labor supply incentives. Flat non-contributory, minimum pensions and targeted benefits have been found to be particularly beneficial for women (James, Edwards and Wong (2003); Aguila, Attanasio and Meghir (2011); World Bank (2001)). However, minimum guaranteed pensions may reduce formal sector labor market participation (Aguila, Attanasio and Meghir, 2010). Evidence from urban Zhejiang and Gansu provinces suggests that pension eligibility of urban men and women decreases their likelihood of working by 15.2 and 18.3 percent, respectively. In Indonesia, pension eligibility decreases the probability of working by 23.8 and 24.6 percent for urban men and women, and by 13.2 and 12.6 percent for rural men and women, respectively (Giles, Wang and Cai, 2011).
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