China:
Research Report on
Gender Gaps and Poverty Reduction

October, 2006
Acknowledgements

This study was a joint effort between the World Bank and Asian Development Bank with funding support from DFID. National Bureau Statistics (NBS) provided great support on data to the study. It mainly includes two parts: a “Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty in China”, which was managed by Wang Chaogang, Gender Coordinator in the Environment and Social Development Unit at the World Bank Office Beijing, and an “Overall Country Gender Assessment”, which was managed by Amy Leung and Sri Wening Handayani of the ADB. Prof. Duan Chengrong from Renmin University, Chen Shaohua and Martin Ravallion of the WB, and Yu Hongwen from NBS, contributed to preparation of quantitative study reports; Prof. Li Xiaoyun from China Agricultural University and his team prepared the qualitative study report; Ms. Du Jie, Ms. Lin Zhabin drafted the overall country gender assessment; Prof. Bettina Gransow from Berlin Free University drafted the synthesis report. To further improve the quality of the study, consultations with researchers, policymakers, non-government organizations and donor agencies were undertaken in China.

A number of domestic and foreign development scholars or practitioners have contributed in various ways to this study. For reviewing and commenting on various draft of reports, we would specially like to thank: Ms. Judith Banister formerly with the U.S. Bureau of the Census; Prof. Guo Zhigang and Prof. Zheng Xiaoying from Beijing University; Ms. He Xiaojun from Foreign Capital Project Management Center of Poverty Alleviation and Development Office of State Council; Rahul Malhotra, Katy Oswald, and Jillian Popkins from DFID; Ms. Shireen Lateef from ADB, and Mayra Buvinic, Juan Carlos Guzman, Gillian Brown, Daniel R. Gibson, Karen Mason, Liu Xiaofan, Li Shaojun, Anis Wan, Xiao Liping and Andres Liebenthal from the World Bank.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACWF</td>
<td>All China Women’s Federation</td>
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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>CASS</td>
<td>Chinese Academy of Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<td>CGA</td>
<td>Country Gender Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPC</td>
<td>Communist Party of China</td>
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<td>CPPCC</td>
<td>Chinese People’s Consultative Conference</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>DG</td>
<td>Director General</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>HIC</td>
<td>High Income Counties</td>
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<td>HIP</td>
<td>High Income Provinces</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMR</td>
<td>Infant Mortality Rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>IUD</td>
<td>Intrauterine Device</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIC</td>
<td>Low Income Counties</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIP</td>
<td>Low Income Provinces</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBS</td>
<td>National Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPC</td>
<td>National People’s Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>NWCWC</td>
<td>National Working Committee on Women and Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<td>PSC</td>
<td>Poverty Stricken Counties</td>
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<td>SC</td>
<td>State Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRB</td>
<td>Sex Ratio at Birth</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>URC</td>
<td>Urban Resident Committee</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>WorldBank</td>
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Executive Summary

China has achieved a great deal through its efforts at implementing the basic state policy of equality between men and women in social economy and political affairs. Even in poor communities, gender equality has made obvious progress in grass roots women’s organizations, community participation, training, family planning, health, education and the prevention of domestic violence. In poor areas today, compared with the past, greater progress has been made in providing boys and girls with equal educational opportunities at primary level. However, gender inequality is still very common in poor rural areas and emerging news forms of urban poverty are accompanied by gender specific forms of discrimination and personal dependency.

Gender gap or gender inequality is defined here as the inequalities between men and women, based on socially constructed norms, practices and power relations. Gender inequality is clearly not, or not only, a left-over phenomenon originating from a patriarchal agrarian society which is dissolving as a result of increasing economic growth; gender inequality – as well as poverty – should be seen as dynamic social phenomena which are reproduced in the context of China’s transformation into a modern industrial, information and service society, into a responsible part of the global world system. Gender imbalance and its long-term impacts should be considered as a serious policy area by the Chinese Government with regard to developing a harmonious society and building a new socialist countryside. At the same time, it should be a key area for international donor agencies in their China strategies and interventions.

The Chinese government has been making large investments in poverty reduction and has had considerable success in reducing poverty. Learning from national and international development experience, the government poverty reduction programs have started adopting participatory approaches to meet the needs of the poorer sectors of the population and communities and this has certainly provided an opportunity for women’s empowerment and gender equality, even though the policy language is still gender absent. The gender dimensions of poverty in the PRC are largely under-diagnosed in official statistics since many figures are collected on a household basis and are not sex-disaggregated. Little is officially recorded on intra-household income and welfare distribution. The absence of gender in poverty statistics makes it difficult for the government to give the anti-poverty strategy a gendered face.

Crucial questions posed in this paper are

- What are the manifestations of gender inequality in China and what are the ways in which gender inequality affects the poverty reduction efforts?
- What contribution does public policy make towards bringing about favourable or unfavourable conditions for achieving greater gender equality?
- What kind of measures are necessary to mainstream gender into poverty reduction policies?
Long-term trends in gender inequality in China

Based primarily on population census data and encompassing findings from participatory poverty assessments, long-term trends in gender inequalities can be identified in the areas of population and health, education, employment and governance. The main gender gaps identified are the following:

Population: Surviving circumstances for girl infants are not for optimism
Since the early 1980s, sex ratios at birth\(^1\) have deviated from the normal range in China, the elevation of which has been constant, increasing and widespread. In the past 20 years, China has seen a clear drop in infant mortality rate. However, in both rural and urban areas, there appears an abnormal phenomenon of higher female infant mortalities compared to the male ones, which exists in most regions of the country. The surviving circumstances of girl infants in China are not for optimism. Marked deviations from expected patterns of gender difference can reveal not only female but also male disadvantage or interdependent impacts. The extreme masculine sex ratio at birth in China might be followed by a distorted “marriage market” within the next twenty years, bringing the institution of marriage under heavy pressure. Given the long-term trend of continuing high sex ratios at birth, trafficking in women for marriage and other purposes will be probably become more serious in future decades.

Health: New issues concerning women’s reproductive health
New issues have recently emerged concerning women’s reproductive health. For the groups of young women, there have been increasing numbers of abortions among young unmarried women in urban areas. As for middle-aged women, there has been an increase in cases of gynaecological diseases, particularly in rural areas where clean water is scarce or difficult to come by. If women fall ill, furthermore, they usually delay seeking medical treatment (due to lack of money and time), and also because their health is ignored and not prioritized by the family. Recent years have seen some efforts being undertaken to link HIV/AIDS prevention and care issues with gender equality. In China, women still form a minority of the HIV/AIDS-infected population, but their numbers have increased rapidly in recent years. Although migration experiences have empowered women to some extent, migration exposes women to unprotected sex, an increase in abortions, and an increased risk of HIV/AIDS due to lesser access to needed services at the destination. There is an increasing demand for local reproductive health and family planning agencies to tailor their services to make them more appropriate for migrants.

Education: Medium-level education is increasing, but gender inequalities are significant at both ends of the education level

\(^1\) Sex ratio at birth (SRB) shows the number of boy infants compared to girl infants who are born within a given period, usually represented by the number of boys per 100 girl infants. A ratio standing between 103 and 107 is considered normal. When SRB deviates from the normal range, it indicates a preference of male (or female) infants and the neglect of the other gender in society. An analysis of the statistics on SRB in China in the past 50 years shows that before the 1980s, SRB remained within the normal range in China. Since 1982, the elevations in SRB have been constant. For nearly 20 years, the ratio has climbed increasingly higher. By the year 2000, it had already reached close to 120.
In the field of education, be it urban or rural, in regions with more developed or less developed economy, or in areas where the Han ethnic group is concentrated or the ethnic minority groups, education level of China’s population has been rising. Although gaps still exist between male and female in terms of indicators such as illiteracy rate or years of school attainment, the gender gaps have been closing and already diminished to relatively small extent. However, gender inequalities are significant at both ends of the education level. Female illiteracy rates are markedly higher than the male ones. In regard to attainment of high-level education, women are disadvantaged. Generally, lower-income and poverty-stricken areas are at a pronounced disadvantage in terms of educated population. Education for girls is still a central concern in poor and low income areas.

**Employment: Gender segregation in the labor market**

Since the 1990s, China has been experiencing increasing pressure in the field of employment. Many urban people of working age have lost their jobs. Two basic characteristics can be identified from the 2000 gender-age specific employment rate curve for urban China: 1. The decline in the curve for the women’s labor force occurs five, or even more than five years earlier than it does in the curve for men; 2. The curve declines faster for the women’s labor force than it does for men. The most prominent change in the sectoral structure of the Chinese labor force between 1982 and 2000 was the decline in numbers of both men and women in the labor force concentrated in farming, forestry, animal husbandry and fisheries. The proportions in this sector fell from 74% in 1982 to 64% in 2000, with a decrease of more than nine percentage points for men (from 70% to 61%) as well as for women (from 78% to 69%). Differences in the sectoral distribution of men and women have an impact on their wages. Whether we look at the distribution nationwide, in the urban areas or in the rural areas, the concentration of women in low-wage sectors is always higher than that of men; in the high-wage sectors, it is vice versa. In terms of employment and wages, women are in disadvantage.

**Governance: China is lagging behind in terms of women’s representation**

China is lagging behind in terms of women’s representation in parliament in a global context. The ranking of the proportion of Chinese female NPC deputies is dropping in comparison with the number of women parliamentary members in many other countries. The enforced retirement age policy exerted negative impacts on women’s participation in decision-making bodies at different levels, particularly in high-level politics. Regulations for promoting officials set women at a disadvantage with regard to their gaining promotion when they reached middle age and thus resulted in a gender gap in career development between men and women. When the party and government reform the management of cadres or civil servants, gender differences have not been taken sufficiently into account. The goal of equal numerical representation in village decision-making is still far from being achieved. Although elections to village committees and assemblies have enhanced political participation in China’s rural areas, women are conspicuously absent from village governance and their participation in village management is much less than that of men. On most village committees, the number of women representatives has yet to reach the critical mass of thirty per cent in decision-making bodies as advocated by the United Nations and the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995.
Gender inequality may hamper efforts at poverty reduction

From the data presented, it becomes clear that there is no simple or one-way relation between gender inequality and poverty. Gender inequality does not arise out of poverty per se and both gender inequality and poverty may have different causes. Given that gender and poverty are both defined as complex and multi-dimensional phenomena, more efforts have to be invested in understanding not only the causes and effects of poverty and gender inequality, but also in understanding the nature of the causes and the way they interrelate (see Oyen 2004). On the one hand, it is quite obvious that capabilities in terms of health and education are closely linked to the economic development levels of certain regions. Being born female and living in a poorly developed area may serve as an additional disadvantage. This disadvantage could also turn into an obstacle to development and thus hamper further efforts at poverty reduction. A rising female IMR can be interpreted as an obstacle to efforts to reduce poverty through economic growth, even if the male IMR is decreasing. On the other hand, the data suggests that gender inequalities are not necessarily related to regional patterns of high or low income; gender inequalities cannot be attributed to a low level of development alone. They may also be related to cultural variations, to a patrilocal marriage system and a male-dominated political culture, to public policy and its intended and unintended impacts, or they may represent some combination of poverty, male domination and public policy.

Quantitative and qualitative studies shed light on the relationship between gender inequality and poverty from different perspectives. Quantitative data such as those collected from the three censuses in 1982, 1990 and 2000 respectively, show the long-term and representative trends of gender inequality. They indicate trends which have continually strengthened over the years, whereby the imbalances in SRB and IMR obviously require particular attention.

The Chinese government made gender equality a basic state policy

In recent years, the Chinese government has made fairness and justice, including gender equality, an important part of its efforts to build a harmonious socialist society. This is formulated in the government’s “White Paper on Gender Equality and Women’s Development in China”, published in August 2005 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. At the Beijing conference, the previous President, Jiang Zemin, stated: “Attaching great importance to the development and advancement of women, we in China have made gender equality a basic state policy in promoting social development. We are resolutely against any forms of discrimination against women and have taken concrete steps to maintain and protect the equal status and rights of women in the country’s political, economic and social life.” This high-level commitment to gender equality is reflected in the Constitution of the PRC and in many of the policies and legislative measures adopted by the Chinese government since 1949, and especially in the 1990s.

Poverty reduction: Targeting women, but gender-blind?
Since 2001, the Chinese government has made gender indicators a component of the poverty monitoring work in rural areas, and has stressed that attention should be paid to gender equality in the poverty-reduction work. On the basis of the specific conditions in different areas, they have endeavoured to help rural women out of poverty by way of providing small-sum credit loans, labour export and pairing-off assistance. In spite of these measures, politicians and policy-makers are often too little aware of gender-related inequalities. This does not only apply to cadres at lower administrative levels, but also to some of those involved in central decision-making in the government and ministries, thus, those who have the influence and resources at their disposal to implement a gender-sensitive policy. Although the Chinese Party/state advocates increasing the proportion of women leaders and improving women’s capacity in management and decision-making in state and social affairs, the policies or programs, including poverty reduction programs, have been compromised by gender blindness on the part of the public administrative reform that has left the gender norms and structures untouched.

In the field of poverty alleviation, too, it can be assumed that there is only very limited awareness of the very diverse effects on men and women which can ensue from legislation and public policies. In addition, due to the pressure of working with limited resources in poor rural areas and to the fact that, even at local level, the strategies for reducing poverty are geared towards economic success, there is very little incentive to develop and implement gender-sensitive policies. But gender-blind laws and policies can lead to unintended and unwanted discrimination against girls and women. It is therefore necessary, at all levels of the administration and during all stages of legislation and policy development, to be aware of gender differences and the possibility that those differences may turn into discriminating practices.

**Giving public policy a gendered face**

Giving public policy a gendered face is an important precondition for developing a response to recent policy changes embodied in the revised poverty reduction policy, which include the willingness to explore methods based on local participation, gender targeting, community-based planning and expanded roles for NGOs in implementation, progress monitoring and impact assessment. The emphasis on participatory, bottom-up procedures implies changes in governance at both national and local levels, including gender sensitive public policy. Such changes represent a development of poverty planning in China towards a demand-responsive approach to poverty reduction in contrast to the top-down approaches in the past.

In order to mainstream gender into poverty reduction policies, the following intervention strategies are recommended:

1. **Promote research on the interaction between public policies, gender issues, economic growth and poverty dynamics in China**

   To back up suggestions for gender sensitive poverty reduction policies and to target these policies more accurately, more research is required on gender related constraints
to poverty reduction efforts at both macro level and micro level. This research should include

- studies of the root causes of the imbalanced sex ratio at birth and the increasing gender gaps in the infant mortality rate, including their impacts on poverty reduction efforts;
- gender assessments of poverty reduction policies (including security, opportunity and empowerment as an expanded framework for poverty reduction) and of specific interventions such as grain for green (tuigenghuanlin), micro credits, compulsory education, resettlement, infrastructure, labor mobility, etc.;
- gender sensitive analyses of the complex dynamics of poverty production embedded in processes of transformation, marketization and urbanization in China (including urban unemployment, unfavorable environmental conditions, impoverishment related to loss of land and/or involuntary resettlement, labor (and return) migration (e.g. in cases of illness and injuries), old age poverty and children’s poverty, interaction between gender, poverty and minority issues, students from poor areas etc.);
- evaluation of the effectiveness of international donor activities in promoting gender equality as part of poverty reduction interventions, including more systematic attention being paid to gender issues as part of social assessment in investment projects outside the human development sector; these may have poverty reduction as a secondary project objective (such as projects in the transport, energy or environmental sector, agricultural development or natural resource management projects which all may be accompanied by resettlement and impoverishment risks for the population affected by the project).

2. Develop general guidelines to improve gender responses in the government system related to poverty reduction

It is recognized that government agencies, NGOs and researchers working in the area of poverty reduction tend to have a higher level of gender awareness. This is largely because they are influenced by international cooperations that place great emphasis on poverty reduction and normally have a strong gender focus. However, such gender awareness often stagnates at project level and has not yet been integrated into the government system. One suggestion is to establish a joint working group under the NWCWC and the NDRC Social Development Department to prepare general guidelines on improving gender responses in various departments of the government system related to poverty reduction (such as the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labor and Social Security, National Bureau of Statistics/Rural Survey Department etc.). This may be seen as an entry point for the relevant departments to develop their own guidelines on strengthening gender awareness and gender responsive action plans in their specific fields of poverty reduction. If appropriate, the establishment of ‘gender officers’ may be considered. For example, in cooperation with the ILO, the Ministry of Labor has established a gender responsive system; two ‘gender officers’,
one at director general level and one at staff level, have been nominated. One good practice in one ministry has certainly opened a window for change.

3. Develop and coordinate gender action plans indifferent government departments related to poverty reduction

Different Chinese governmental departments are in charge of civil affairs, education, health, and land administration. The Ministry of Civil Affairs is responsible for autonomous elections among villagers; the Ministry of Education is responsible for the education system and the Family Planning Commission is responsible for birth control. These ministries do not have close relations with the All China Women’s Federation and the Women and Children Working Commission of the State Council at micro level. Gender inequality in the process of autonomous village elections is serious, and women comprise a very low proportion of the representatives on village committees. The gender imbalance in birth control is high in rural and urban areas. There is also serious gender inequality among school-age children in poverty areas. Planned policy interventions for these phenomena are absent at community level. These departments should therefore concentrate their attention on strengthening gender equality in their grass-roots work. On the basis of general guidelines government departments involved in poverty reduction should design specific gender action plans. The following measures could be part of gender action plans:

- **Gender disaggregated statistics.** Sex-disaggregated data from the National Bureau of Statistics and relevant ministries will have to be obtained for sound gender-responsive poverty reduction policies to be formulated. The inclusion of gender statistics into national and ministerial data collection systems is an important step towards promoting gender sensitive poverty reduction policy making.

- **Gender checklists** for poverty reduction interventions, including key action points and gender sensitive indicator systems for project preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

- **Gender budgets:** analysis of poverty reduction budgets. Gender budgets are tools and processes designed to facilitate gender analysis in the formulation of government budgets and the allocation of resources. Gender budgets are not separate budgets for women, or for men. They are attempts to break down or disaggregate the government’s mainstream budget according to its impacts on women and men. They are an important tool for analyzing the gap between the expressed commitments of governments and the decision-making processes involved with how governments raise and spend money.

4. Build capacity for mainstreaming gender in poverty reduction offices at all levels

The Chinese government is now undertaking mid-term reviews of its ambitious program for poverty reduction in poor areas (2001-2010). Under the unified
coordination and planning of the State Council Leading Group, this program is being carried out in 592 poor counties all over China. This program is aimed at 100 million poor people, half of whom are women. The poor areas have received great financial support through poverty reduction funds, work for food funds and credit loans. However, distinct gender-sensitive principles and framework are absent from the operating process of such support. The relationship between gender inequality and poverty has not been made one of the key issues in China’s rural poverty reduction policies. The poverty alleviation system lacks the capacity to formulate gender sensitive policy and plans. It is therefore proposed that capacity building should be carried out within China’s poverty alleviation system on gender mainstreaming and gender budget; there should also be a poverty reduction plan aimed at promoting gender equality jointly organized by the State Council Poverty Alleviation Leading Group and All China Women’s Federation. Training should be carried out at central, provincial and county levels and should include the training of trainers. It is recommended that international donor agencies provide technical assistance for such a plan.
Introduction

China has achieved a great deal through its efforts at implementing the basic state policy of equality between men and women in the social economy and political affairs. Even in poor communities, gender equality has made obvious progress in grass roots women’s organizations, community participation, training, family planning, health, education and the prevention of domestic violence. In poor areas today, compared with the past, greater progress has been made in providing boys and girls with equal educational opportunities at primary level.

However, gender inequality\(^2\) is still very common in poor rural areas and emerging new forms of urban poverty are accompanied by gender specific forms of discrimination and personal dependency. Gender inequality is clearly not a left-over phenomenon originating from a patriarchal agrarian society which is dissolving as a result of increasing economic growth; gender inequality – as well as poverty – should be seen as dynamic social phenomena which are produced and reproduced in the context of China’s transformation into a modern industrial, information and service society, into a responsible part of the global world system. Gender imbalance and its long-term impacts should be considered a serious policy area by the Chinese Government with regard to developing a harmonious society and building a new socialist countryside. At the same time, it should be a key area for international donor agencies in their China strategies and interventions.

The Chinese government has been making large investments in poverty reduction and has had considerable success in reducing poverty. Learning from national and international development experience, the government poverty reduction programs have started adopting participatory approaches to meet the needs of the poorer sectors of the population and communities and this has certainly provided an opportunity for women’s empowerment and gender equality, even though the policy language is still gender absent.

Crucial questions posed in this report are

- What are the manifestations of gender inequality in China and what are the ways in which gender inequality affects the poverty reduction efforts?
- What contribution does public policy make towards bringing about favorable or unfavorable conditions for achieving greater gender equality?

The report starts, in Chapter 1 to 4, by giving an overview of the long-term tendencies of gender-related developments in China during the reform period, presenting analyses and interpreting data mostly obtained from the population censuses. The gender gaps are measured using the following indicators:

- **Population and health**
  - sex ratio at birth,

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\(^2\) Gender inequality (or gender gap) is defined here as the inequalities between men and women, based on socially constructed norms, practices and power relations.
infant mortality rate, 
reproductive health and HIV/AIDS

- **Education**
  - adult illiteracy rate
  - educational composition among population aged 6 and older
  - years of school attainment and enrollment rate

- **Employment**
  - employment rate
  - sectoral distribution of labor force, including wage differences
  - informal and migrant labor
  - unemployment rate

- **Governance**
  - female delegates in political institutions

After identifying the most striking gender gaps in Chinese society, each chapter examines whether and how the identified gender inequalities are related to regions/provinces with different levels of economic development and cultural variation. Regional disparities are looked at from the perspective of
- rural and urban areas,
- minority nationality areas,
- the three provinces (and fifty counties) with the highest GDP per capita (hereafter called high income provinces or HIPs and HICs) in comparison with the three provinces (and fifty counties) with the lowest GDP per capita (hereafter called low income provinces, or LIPs and LICs),
- 592 poverty stricken counties (PSC)

**Chapter 5** discusses the relationships between gender inequality and poverty as seen from the results of quantitative and qualitative studies. **Chapter 6** provides a discussion of the policies and programs related to gender equality and poverty reduction, looking at the norms, laws and policies which promote gender equality, at the institutional framework which has been established to address women’s issues, and at the political culture of public policy and its gender dimensions. Taking these factors into consideration, presents recommendations for mainstreaming gender into poverty reduction policies.

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3 Provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, from now on referred to as provinces.
4 Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Yunnan, Guangxi
5 Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin
6 Guangxi, Gansu, Guizhou
7 In order to improve the assistance given to poverty-stricken areas in the struggle to eliminate poverty, the Chinese government developed a list of poverty-stricken counties as priorities for assistance in 1986. The counties included in this list were provided with favorable assistance in terms of funds, projects and policies. The list has been adjusted when necessary. A total of 592 key PSCs appears on the latest list of those being targeted for state assistance.
Chapter 1  Gender Inequality in Population and Health

Based primarily on population census data and encompassing findings from different sources, this chapter presents some long-term trends in gender inequalities in reform China, in the areas of population and health.

**Sex ratios at birth: little optimism regarding survival chances for girl infants**

Sex ratio at birth (SRB) shows the number of male infants compared with female infants who are born within a given period, usually represented by the number of boys per 100 girl infants. A ratio standing between 103 and 107 is considered normal. When SRB deviates from the normal range, it indicates a preference of male (or female) infants and the neglect of the other gender in society. An analysis of the statistics on SRB in China in the past 50 years shows that before the 1980s, SRB remained within the normal range in China.

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<td>114.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>106.6</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>116.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>105.9</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>114.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>105.8</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>114.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>107.2</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>117.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>111.0</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>120.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>111.3</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>119.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data sources: calculated by using data taken from the population censuses, sampling surveys on 1% population, and annual sampling surveys on population change.

Since the early 1980s, China’s SRB has gradually diverged from the norm, taking on continuing, increasing and widespread elevations. The specific manifestations are:

1. The ratio exceeded the normal range of 103 to 107 in 1982 and has remained higher than normal ever since;
2. Since 1982, the elevations in SRB have been constant. For nearly 20 years, the ratio has risen systematically and continually, rather than showing occasional increases in some years;
3. The ratio has climbed increasingly higher. By the year 2000, it had already reached close to 120;
4. Instead of being local, elevation in SRB has been widespread in the bulk of regions in China, the highest being in Guangdong province and Jiangxi province at 138 and higher.
### Table 2  Sex ratios at birth by province, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>SRB</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>SRB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>114.58</td>
<td>Heilongjiang</td>
<td>107.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tianjin</td>
<td>112.97</td>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>115.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebei</td>
<td>118.46</td>
<td>Jiangsu</td>
<td>120.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanxi</td>
<td>112.75</td>
<td>Anhui</td>
<td>130.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Mongolia</td>
<td>108.48</td>
<td>Zhejiang</td>
<td>113.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaoning</td>
<td>112.17</td>
<td>Fujian</td>
<td>120.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jilin</td>
<td>109.87</td>
<td>Jiangxi</td>
<td>138.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shandong</td>
<td>113.49</td>
<td>Chongqing</td>
<td>115.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henan</td>
<td>130.30</td>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td>116.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hubei</td>
<td>128.02</td>
<td>Yunnan</td>
<td>110.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunan</td>
<td>126.92</td>
<td>Guizhou</td>
<td>105.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guangdong</td>
<td>137.76</td>
<td>Tibet</td>
<td>97.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guangxi</td>
<td>128.80</td>
<td>Shaanxi</td>
<td>125.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hainan</td>
<td>135.04</td>
<td>Gansu</td>
<td>119.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qinghai</td>
<td>103.52</td>
<td>Ningxia</td>
<td>107.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinjiang</td>
<td>106.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data sources: provincial data taken from: Population Census Office under the State Council, 2002: 1681; county data calculated using data by county gathered by NBS.

Unusually high sex ratios at birth, which are also found in other East Asian\(^8\) and South Asian countries,\(^9\) may either indicate excess female mortality in utero, presumably the result of sex-selective abortion (which is forbidden by law in China) or may result from the sex-selective undercounting of children in the data sources. The difference here depends on whether girls are nominally missing or truly missing. Undercounting implies that girls are hidden in the population. The truly missing girls have various demographic effects: they never go to school, never join the labor force, never marry, etc. The growing dearth of females in the population – whether virtual or real - has a variety of social and policy implications, including potential effects on the “marriage market” and other social costs (Cai and Lavely 2003:14,21). From 2000 to 2002, 25,116 cases of kidnapping and selling women were reported. There were 6,766 cases of kidnapping and selling children during the same period (Department of Population 2004:98) Given the long-term trend of continuing high sex ratios at birth, trafficking in women for marriage and other purposes will be probably become more serious in future decades.

Investigation disaggregated by rural and urban areas shows that between 1990 and 2000, there was a consistent trend towards increasingly higher SRBs in cities, urban towns and rural areas.

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\(^8\) Taiwan, Republic of Korea  
\(^9\) India, Nepal, Pakistan
Table 3  Sex ratio at birth by rural-urban areas in China (1990 and 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Urban Town</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990 Census</td>
<td>110.4</td>
<td>113.5</td>
<td>114.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Census</td>
<td>114.2</td>
<td>119.9</td>
<td>121.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data sources: Calculated by using data obtained from 1990 and 2000 population censuses.

The data in Table 3 also reveals that, although the problem was more prominent in rural areas and urban towns, an imbalance in SRB has also been encountered in cities in recent years. A look at the birth rates for second and third children shows this even more clearly.

Figure 1  Sex ratio at birth by parity (urban and rural), 2000

(Boys per 100 girls)


The sex ratio at birth assumes an even more clearly disparate shape particularly with the births of the second and more children, particularly in urban areas.

In the ethnic minority areas, the SRBs are relatively normal. The populations of the minority groups are concentrated in the six provinces of Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Ningxia and Yunnan. Disaggregated by province, except for an obviously abnormal ratio in Guangxi (128.80) and a relatively abnormal ratio in Yunnan (110.57), all the other four minority nationality provinces have SRBs which are normal (Tibet, Xinjiang) or slightly higher than normal (Inner Mongolia, Ningxia). According to data obtained from the long version of the 2000 Population Census, only the four provinces of Tibet, Qinghai, Guizhou and Xinjiang had SRBs lower than 107. Whether the more normal SRB in minority nationality areas is due to more relaxed family planning policies or cultural variations in son preference (e.g. the Zhuang minority, like the Han, is characterized by the severe neglect of girls) is a subject for future research.

The mean SRBs for the fifty counties with the highest incomes and the fifty counties with the lowest incomes both exceed the norm. Via the county specific data from the 2000
Rural Socioeconomic Survey\textsuperscript{10}, the 50 counties with the highest GDP per capita in 2000 and the 50 counties with the lowest GDP per capita\textsuperscript{11} are generated. The mean SRB for the 50 HICs was 111.3 and that for the 50 LICs, 111.7, according to the 2000 Population Census data. The two ratios are close and both are significantly in excess of the normal range, but below the national average (119.9). Thus, there is no correlation between regional income levels and higher or lower SRBs. The SRBs in poverty-stricken counties present a similar picture. According to data obtained from the 2000 Population Census, the mean SRB for the 592 PSCs was 114.7, which obviously falls outside the normal range, but is still below the national average (119.9).

Infant mortality rate: absolute increase in female IMR in rural areas

Using population census data, the health status of a population can be studied with the indicator of infant mortality rate (IMR). Yet IMR is restrained by the quality of data, which must be carefully selected for analysis\textsuperscript{12}. In the past 20 years, China has seen a clear drop in infant mortality rates, which decreased from 38‰ in 1981 to 28‰ in 2000. However, in both rural and urban areas, there is an abnormal phenomenon of higher female infant mortality than male infant mortality which seems to exist in most regions of the country.

Women are biologically at an advantage compared with men, so in a normal case, the mortality rate for female infants would be lower than that for males. The Chinese male and female IMRs revealed in the 1982 Census were consistent with this rule. However, in 1989 and 2000, the Chinese IMR deviated from the above rule: the female IMR started to exceed the male IMR. In 1989, the male and female rates stood at 32.36‰ and 33.48‰, respectively, with the female rate one point higher than the male; in 2000, the rates were 24‰ and 34‰ respectively in China, the female rate being 10 points above the male rate. Over a period of ten years, the abnormal gap between the male and female IMRs was critically reinforced.

The IMR in rural China is much higher than the urban rate, and the disadvantaged status of the rural rate has been further reinforced during the past twenty years. By the time the 1982 Population Census was held, the rural rate was 1.67 times that of the urban rate and by 2000, the rural rate had reached 2.68 times that of urban areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1982 Census</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{10} Provided by the General Team for Rural Socioeconomic Survey of NBS.
\textsuperscript{11} 50 HIC and 50 LIC are defined by GDP per capita of 2000. 50 HIC includes some counties from Western China, such as Kuerle, Shanshan and Geermu.
\textsuperscript{12} Analysis of the relevant data shows that the quality of mortality data in the early 1980s was relatively reliable in China. However, by the early 1990s, the variation between calculations of 1989 IMRs from different researchers using the 1990 Population Census data had increased dramatically. The 2000 Population Census IMR was calculated and provided by NBS. When calculating IMRs from the 2000 Population Census data, NBS multiplied the number of deaths directly enumerated from the census by 1.08 and obtained the gender-age specific number of deaths between November 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1999 and October 31, 2000.
A female IMR higher than the male exists in both rural and urban areas of China, but only in rural areas has there been an absolute increase in the female IMR compared with 1982, while the male IMR has decreased significantly.

**Figure 2** IMRs in rural and urban areas, 2000

By 2000, the regional differences in terms of IMR had changed considerably. While in regions such as Beijing and Shanghai, the IMR had been lowered to a level of some 4‰, the IMR remained as high as 70‰ in Yunnan province. Provinces have been consistent regarding the abnormally high female IMR compared with that of the male. With the exception of a few regions, including Heilongjiang, Ningxia, Tibet and Xinjiang, where female IMRs are slightly lower than the male, the remaining provinces have female IMRs quite obviously much higher than the male IMRs. In some provinces like Jiangxi, the female rate even amounts to more than twice that of the male. The ‘abnormal’ phenomena related to IMRs mainly originate in the abnormal rises in female IMR in rural China; although there are disparities in IMR between regions at varied income levels in absolute volumes, the trend toward a higher female than male IMR does not reflect any difference between the HICs and LICs.

As with SRB, IMR data may suffer from sex selective underreporting. We should therefore distinguish the truly missing from the nominally missing girls. It is estimated
that one third of the nominally missing girls are hidden in the population and around two thirds are truly missing from China’s population. In the 1980-2000 birth cohorts, the number of truly missing girls is estimated to be about 4% or 8.5 million (Cai and Lavely 2003: 20-22).13

In the HIPs, the IMRs have fallen to around 4‰. In the year 2000, the average IMR was 4.1‰ for male infants and 4.3‰ for female infants in these provinces. In the 3 LIPs, however, the rates were much higher. In 2000, the IMRs in Guangxi, Gansu and Guizhou were 31‰, 53‰ and 66‰, respectively, which were far above the rates in the higher income regions. In the LIPs, the average IMR was 50‰ (59.5‰ for females, 42‰ for males), which is much higher than the national average level. This finding indicates a clear negative correlation between a high IMR and a low level of local development.

The average IMRs (39.94‰) of the 592 PSCs are much higher than the national average. In these counties, both their male rate at 35.2‰ and their female rate at 45.44‰ are critically higher than the national level. This finding is of crucial importance, because poverty equations looking into the effect of health indicators on the elasticity of poverty to growth in China show that a higher IMR reduces the elasticity of poverty with respect to the primary output per capita. In other words, the higher the IMR, the more difficult it is to reduce poverty through economic growth. This result holds true for the female IMR as well as for the male IMR. This means that if the male IMR alone is lowered, and not the female IMR, this will have a negative impact on poverty reduction efforts.

Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS: lack of services and increasing risk for women

It is still mainly women who shoulder the responsibility for family planning in both urban and rural areas. The two most common methods of contraception in 2001 were the IUD at 45.6 percent, and female sterilization at 38.1 percent. Methods undertaken by women constitute 83.7 percent of the total. (Department 2004:31, Table 3.9). As a matter of fact, recent years have seen an increase in the demand for men’s participation in sharing responsibility for family planning.

New issues have recently emerged concerning women’s reproductive health. For the groups of young women, there have been increasing numbers of abortions among young unmarried women in urban areas. It is reported that women between 20 and 29 years old have the most abortions and the percentages of those who are unmarried vary from 23 to 65 percent depending on the region. Unmarried women accounted for about 65 percent of abortions in 2004, compared with only 25 percent in 1999, in major cities such as Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin (Shanghai Daily June 6, 2005). Experts have asserted that the high abortion rate is due to the growing prevalence of premarital sex, the lack of contraceptive knowledge and the inappropriate counseling and service (UNFPA & CFPA, 2004).

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13 The estimate (by Cai and Lavely 2003) is based on a comparison of cohorts enumerated as small children in the 1990 census with the same cohorts enumerated 10 years later in the 2000 census. The comparison reveals that fewer than a third of the girls missing in the first enumeration subsequently appeared in the second.
As for middle-aged women, there has been an increase in cases of gynaecological diseases such as vaginitis and cervicitis, particularly in rural areas where clean water is scarce or difficult to come by (Liu 2004). However, in many cases, reproductive tract infections were left untreated (Ford Foundation 1997). If women fall ill, they usually delay seeking medical treatment (due to lack of money and time), and also because their health is ignored and not prioritized by the family. The lack of women doctors contributed to the unwillingness on the part of the infected women to seek treatment. On the other hand, the state of the migrant women’s reproductive health has aroused the attention of more and more scholars.

HIV/AIDS infection still poses a serious public health problem across the borders of rural and urban areas. In China, women still form a minority in the HIV/AIDS-infected population, but their numbers have increased rapidly in recent years. The proportion of reported female HIV cases as a proportion of all cases increased from 14.3% in 1999 to 39% in 2004 (Joint 2004:4, Table 1). This reflects the increase in HIV cases reported among former blood and plasma donors and the higher numbers of HIV cases found among sex workers.

Recent years have seen some efforts being undertaken to link HIV/AIDS prevention and care issues with gender equality. For instance, a national team of experts for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission has been established to conduct training; a project on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission was launched to provide HIV virus testing and a counseling service for perinatal women in areas of high HIV/AIDS prevalence. At same time, ACWF and the Central Communist Youth League have collaborated with the Ministry of Health to conduct “face to face” educational activities for women and young people in order to disseminate knowledge about HIV/AIDS Prevention and Treatment, and to raise awareness of these issues.

However, a gender equality and rights-based approach has yet to be fully integrated into various governmental and non-governmental responses to curb the increase in HIV infection and to provide services and care for the infectors and infected. In general, interventions are carried out in a gender-neutral way that, disregarding gender discrimination, place women in a more vulnerable situation. For example, the lower economic and social status of women makes it difficult for them to negotiate safer sex. Particularly in rural areas of China, the high pressure exerted by parents-in-law and the community on women to have sons makes it difficult for them to refuse to have unsafe sex with their husbands. Female HIV+ are more discriminated against both as HIV infectors and as women. Those who are involved with sex services are even more despised by society. In addition, it is usually women – wives, mothers, daughters, grandmothers - who, without any payment, take care of sick people. None of these issues, however, has been taken sufficiently into consideration in the relevant policies or programs. In fact, “ignoring gender is discriminatory, because this results in going along with and reinforcing existing gender inequalities” (DFID, 2002: 9).

14 By the end of 2003, the cumulative number of HIV cases in China was estimated 840.000; the cumulative number of reported HIV positive cases from 1985-2004 was 89.067 (Joint 2004:4).
Research has (Zheng and Gu 2004) shown that although migration experiences have empowered women, to some extent, in terms of self confidence and the gaining of relevant skills, “migration exposes women to unprotected sex, an increase in abortions, and an increased risk of HIV/AIDS due to lesser access to needed services at the destination” (Zheng and Gu 2004:68). There is an increasing demand for local reproductive health and family planning agencies to tailor their services to make them more appropriate for migrants.
Chapter 2  Gender Inequality in Education

The direct output of education is people with skills and knowledge, who will probably profit from the return of education investment in the human resource market. Knowledge and skills endow people with the rights to make decisions and choices, so it is safe to say that economic rewards and empowerment are the dual benefits of education. The gender gaps that are now going to be explained show the consequences of unequal gender relations in the existing social structure. Through indicators such as the adult illiteracy rate, the educational composition of the population aged six and over, and the years of school attainment, this section presents the differences between males and females in terms of education in China, and the related trends during the last twenty years.

Adult illiteracy rate: the gender gap exceeds the gap between urban and rural areas

China has made great achievements in illiteracy elimination during recent decades. The adult illiteracy rate\textsuperscript{15} dropped considerably among people aged fifteen and over throughout the nation between 1982 and 2000. The national adult illiteracy rate fell from 34% in 1982 to 9% in 2000.\textsuperscript{16} During the same period, there were synchronous decreases in both the male and female adult illiteracy rates. The rate for male adults declined from 21% in 1982 to 5% in 2000, and the rate for women from 49% in 1982 to 13% in 2000.

The higher illiteracy rate among the elderly population is attributed to the lack of educational opportunities for these people when they were young. Since the foundation of the PRC in 1949, the Chinese government has been committed to developing education, in particular, basic education, and also, in the meantime, to providing literacy education for adults. Regarding the extent of the decrease, the adult illiteracy rate among women has dropped faster than that among men. Although these gains are worth celebrating, it should also be noted that, in eliminating illiteracy, China still has a long way to go, because

- firstly, despite the general decrease in the adult illiteracy rate, one in twelve Chinese adults is still illiterate
- secondly, women comprise a high proportion of the illiterate population: on average, three out of four illiterates are women.

During the period from 1982 to 2000, the adult illiteracy rate dropped considerably among the population aged 15 and above. There were synchronous decreases in both the male and female adult illiteracy rates.

| Table 5: Male and female illiteracy rates in rural and urban areas (%) |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
| Year                  | 1982 | 1990 | 2000 |

\textsuperscript{15} The adult illiteracy rate is the percentage of illiterates and semi-illiterates in a population aged 15 years and over.

\textsuperscript{16} It is necessary to point out that there have been changes in data collection methods for China’s population censuses. The changes may not alter the declining trend in illiteracy rates in general, but they are likely to affect the extent to which the rate drops.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male Nationally</th>
<th>Female Nationally</th>
<th>Total Nationally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Nationwide</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Nationwide</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ‘Urban’ in the table refers to the total of city and urban town data.

In a perspective disaggregated by rural and urban areas, the adult illiteracy rates in urban areas are far lower than the rural rate, which indicates that there is a need to prioritize rural areas for illiteracy elimination.

**Figure 3** Urban and rural adult illiteracy rates, selected years

![Urban and Rural Adult Illiteracy Rate](image)


In both rural and urban China, the adult illiteracy rates among women are much higher than the rates among men. The urban female rate (8%) is even higher than the rural male rate (6%). Regarding the adult illiteracy rate, the gender gap exceeds the gap between urban and rural areas.\(^{17}\)

Adult illiteracy rates are obviously lower in high-income areas than those in the lower-income areas. This point can be demonstrated through a comparison of provinces. In Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin, where the GDP per capita ranks the highest, male adult illiteracy rates have declined to 2-3% and the female rates to about 10%, with an average

\(^{17}\) This statement may not be consistent for the category of “city” (chengshi) alone; it may only apply when “city and town” (chengshi and zhen) are lumped together.
male illiteracy rate of 2.4% and a female rate of 9.5%. On the other hand, among the 3 LIPs, only Guangxi has a lower illiteracy rate (the male and female rates stand at 2% and 9%, respectively), similar to the average of the three HIPs, but the rates in Guizhou and Gansu provinces are high at about 10% for males and some 30% for females. The average rates of the 3 LIPs are 8% for men and 22% for women. The mean adult illiteracy rate stands at 13.6% for males and 30.81% for females in the 592 PSCs, whose rate is far above the national average (5% for males and 13% for females). The work of illiteracy elimination is more difficult in the poorer areas.

**Educational composition: the gender gaps are closing**

This section examines the proportionate numbers of boys and girls in the population aged six and above with their different levels of educational attainments, and also the underlying trends. From 1982 to 2000, among the population aged six and above, the numbers of those who received a medium-level or high-level education increased greatly. The proportion of those who received a medium-level education almost doubled, climbing from 28% to 48%; those who received a high-level education increased proportionately from 0.7% to 3.8%, showing a more than five-fold increase. Over the same period, the proportion of the population who received a basic-level education rose from 40% in 1980 to 42% in 1990 and dropped back to 40% in 2000, a small increase followed by a small decrease. The slight drop between 1990 and 2000 was attributed to the rapid progress in medium-level and high-level educational attainments which resulted in a rapid increase in their numbers respectively and thus in a relatively decreased proportion of basic-level education attainments.

**Table 6 Composition of educational attainment of population aged 6 years and older (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Level</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med. Level</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Level</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Marked differences still exist between the composition of the educational attainments of men and women in 2000: among the female population, 42% received only a basic-level education. This was a higher percentage than that of men at 38%, but the percentages of women who received medium-level and high-level educations were much lower than those of men, although female rates increased faster than those of men, especially from 1990 to 2000.¹⁸

The educational attainments of the rural population, especially the female population, were fairly low, compared with those of urban residents. The proportionate number of the rural people who had received medium-level education was markedly lower than the

¹⁸ The faster increase in female rates is probably due to demographic changes, with better educated younger cohorts gradually outweighing the less well educated older cohorts.
comparable number of the urban population and the number of those who had received a high-level education in the rural areas was almost zero.

**Figure 4 Educational attainment composition of population aged 6 years and older in urban China**

![Educational attainment composition of population aged 6 years and older in urban China](image)


**Figure 5 Educational attainment composition of population aged 6 years and older in rural China**

![Educational attainment composition of population aged 6 years and older in rural China](image)
The numbers of years of school attainment are important indicators for any study of a population’s educational level. Between 1982 and 2000, the years of school attainment for China’s population aged 6 and above went up from 5.2 years to 7.6 years, an increase of 46%. Over the same period, there was a rise in the years of school attainment for both males and females, the latter achieving a higher rate (67%) of increase than men (32%). Nevertheless, the women’s years of school attainment were still one year lower than the men’s. Disaggregated by urban and rural areas, a clear increase was evident in the proportionate numbers of people who received medium-level education in both urban and rural China.

Between the high and the low income provinces, there was a considerable gap, in terms of educational attainments composition, among people aged six and above. In the 3 HIPs, the numbers of people who had received a high-level education were ranked at 14% for men and 11% for women, both far higher than the national average level (4.6% for men and 3.0% for women). The percentages in the Beijing municipality even reached 19% and 16%, respectively. In contrast, in the 3 LIPs, the proportion of those who had received a high-level education was much lower, on average only 3% of men and 2% of women.

There was an even wider gap in the educational attainments of the population aged 6 and above between the 50 HICs and the 50 LICs than between the HIPs and the LIPs. In the 50 HICs, the proportionate number of people who had received a medium-level education amounted to 57% for men and 48% for women, much higher than the comparable figures for the 50 LICs (31% for men, 19% for women).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basic-Level</td>
<td>Medium-Level</td>
<td>High-Level</td>
<td>Basic-Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean value for 3 HIPs</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean value for 3 LIPs</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean value for 592 PSCs</td>
<td>45.06</td>
<td>41.84</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>46.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean value for 50 HICs</td>
<td>35.01</td>
<td>56.93</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>36.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean value for 50 LICs</td>
<td>49.03</td>
<td>30.62</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>42.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Calculated by using data obtained from the 2000 population census.

The table shows that in the 50 HICs, the proportionate number of the population who had received a high-level education amounted to around four times that of the 50 LICs. The education level was lowest in the 50 LICs, even when compared with the PSCs. Lower-income areas are generally at a prominent disadvantage in terms of educated population, both male and female, but particularly with regard to the female population.

In the 592 PSCs, the numbers of people who had received medium-level and high-level education were slightly higher than the average figures for the 50 LICs. In the 592 PSCs, the years of school attainment for males amounted to 7 and the years for females amounted to 6, both far below the national averages (male: 8 years, female 7 years) and levels of the 50 HICs (male:9 years, female:8 years). Lower-income and poverty-stricken areas are at a particular disadvantage with regard to shortages of talent.

**Disproportionate sex ratio for enrolled graduate students**

Despite the shrinking gaps between the educational attainments of men and women, the inequalities between men and women in terms of higher education still persist. In China, women continue to be in the minority among that proportion of the population which is currently receiving an undergraduate education. At the higher levels, in postgraduate education, women are seen to be even more under-represented. The 2000 Population Census revealed that among undergraduate students enrolled in China, there were 146 male students for every 100 female students. Similarly, among Chinese postgraduate students enrolled, there were 164 male students for every 100 females. In each case, the males markedly out-numbered the females. The phenomenon of male undergraduates and postgraduates outnumbering females occurred in most provinces and manifested basically the same trend. The only variation was in the extent to which females were disadvantaged.
Chapter 3 Gender Inequality in Employment

The employment situation is crucial to gaining a perspective on the social status of a population group. This section looks into the employment inequalities among Chinese men and women, for example, the employment rate and the sectoral structure of the employed population (including wage distribution) as well as the unemployment rate of the Chinese population.

Employment rate: the curve declines earlier and faster for the female labor force

Between 1982 and 2000, generally speaking, there was a decrease in the employment rate among the Chinese working age population. The national rate decreased from 87% to 82%, a drop of five percentage points, for both male and female employment rates. The male employment rate was always some 8% higher than that of women.

Table 8 Gender-specific employment rates, selected years (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1982</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Total</td>
<td>86.59</td>
<td>87.15</td>
<td>81.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Male</td>
<td>91.01</td>
<td>90.07</td>
<td>85.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Female</td>
<td>81.55</td>
<td>83.82</td>
<td>76.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data sources: Calculated by using data obtained from the 1982, 1990 and 2000 population censuses.

There was a considerably high employment rate among the working age population in China; especially at the peak employment age, the male employment rate was higher than 95% and the female rate also reached close to 90%. Such high rates are rare in other countries worldwide. There is a marked difference between the age patterns of male and female employment. The female employment rate is higher than the male in the young group aged 15-20. The higher rate of female employment in this young group is an indication of their disadvantage in terms of educational attainments, particularly in higher education. After the age of 22, the average age at which males start to be employed, the employment rate for women never surpasses that of men.

According to statistical data, the employment rate for the working age population in rural China is higher than in the urban areas. Distinct differences exist between the trends in rural and urban employment rates for working age people. Over the past twenty years, both male and female rural employment rates for working age people remained, basically unchanged, at a high level. Meanwhile, there was a large decrease in the urban employment rates, with the men’s rate dropping by fourteen percentage points and the

---

19 Prior to calculating the employment rate, the age limits of the working age population must be defined. To do this, two methods are frequently employed: one is to regard that proportion of the population aged 15-64 as the working age population, and the other is to define men aged 15-59 and women aged 15-54 as the working age population. The latter approach is more often used in Chinese research on employment rates and, also in this report, the employment rate is calculated using the second method.
women’s rate by seventeen points. Given that women have to retire five years earlier than men, it may be assumed that the figures do not accurately represent the employment rate of urban women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9 Gender-specific employment rates by urban-rural (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Obvious differences exist between China’s urban and rural employment rates. These differences are concentrated in the following three aspects: firstly, compared with urban areas, rural China has a higher employment rate among younger age groups, which is mainly accounted for by the decreased opportunities for the rural young people, many of whom become employed after they graduate from junior middle school (some even fail to graduate); secondly, the employment of an able rural labor force has reached its peak, nearly 100% of the able men being employed, while the urban peak employment rate remains relatively low; lastly, after reaching old age, the employment rate for the urban labor force declines rapidly, falling below 10% after the age of sixty. In contrast, the rural employment rate is still very high among the elderly: this is a well-established tradition passed down from older generations, and is also related to the poor status of social security in rural China. The absence of social security provisions forces the elderly rural population to work for as long as they possibly can.

The employment disparities between men and women are more prominent regarding the employment of the urban middle-aged labor force. Since the 1990s, China has been experiencing increasing pressure in the field of employment. Many urban people of working age have lost their jobs. Two basic characteristics can be identified from the 2000 gender-age specific employment rate curve for urban China:

- The decline in the curve for the women’s labor force occurs five, or even more than five years earlier than it does in the curve for men.

- The curve declines faster for the women’s labor force than it does for men.
The causes of the disparities between the male and female employment rates in urban China are many and various. The main causes include: (1) gender differences regarding legal code provisions for the retirement ages of men and women, with women having to
retire some five years earlier than men; (2) increasing pressure in the urban employment situation since the mid-1990s which has placed a heavier burden upon women and put them at a greater disadvantage with regard to employment. In some urban areas, women workers in their forties, and even some in their thirties, were forced out of their jobs, were laid-off or had to retire early.

**Gender segregation in sectoral distribution of the labor force**

The most prominent change in the sectoral structure of the Chinese labor force between 1982 and 2000 was the decline in numbers of both men and women in the labor force concentrated in farming, forestry, animal husbandry and fisheries. The proportions in this sector fell from 74% in 1982 to 64% in 2000, with a decrease of more than nine percentage points for men (from 70% to 61%) as well as for women (from 78% to 69%).

**Table 10 Gender-specific sectoral composition of China’s labor force (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>1982</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farming, Forestry, An.Husbandry, Fishery</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance &amp; Insurance</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Research &amp; Technical Services</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agencies &amp; Organizations</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Culture</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care &amp; Sports</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Post &amp; Telecommunication</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geological Prosp. &amp; Water Conservancy</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric Power &amp; Gas</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale &amp; Retail Trade, Catering Serv.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and Quarrying</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining &amp; Wood</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data sources: Calculated by using data obtained from the 1982, 1990 and 2000 population censuses. Note: There were changes in the sectoral classification criteria in the three population censuses.
While the labor force was declining in the farming, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery sectors, other sectors were experiencing a rise. The proportions of the labor force increased between 1982 and 2000 for men and women in the following sectors: finance and insurance, agencies and organizations, health care and sports, manufacturing, electric power and gas. In transport, post and telecommunications there was a greater increase in men than in women in the labor force and in the wholesale and retail trades and the catering services,\(^{20}\) there was a greater increase in women than in men. In the construction sector, the labor force only showed an increase in men; in education and health, there was only an increase in women.

Differences in the sectoral distribution of men and women have an impact on their wages. Whether we look at the distribution nationwide, in the urban areas or in the rural areas, the concentration of women in low-wage sectors is always higher than that of men; in the high-wage sectors, it is vice versa. In addition, the average years of schooling in the low-wage sectors are fewer for women than for men, but in the high-wage sectors, the average years of education are one year longer for women than for men (Wang 2006:260/61)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education and sector distribution</th>
<th>Countrywide</th>
<th>Urban areas</th>
<th>Rural areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low wages sectors</td>
<td>Employment (%)</td>
<td>94.67</td>
<td>89.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years of education</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>8.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High wages sectors</td>
<td>Employment (%)</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>10.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years of education</td>
<td>11.68</td>
<td>10.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Where the income level was lowest, the percentage of women in agriculture (68.8 per cent) was considerably higher than the percentage of men (60.7 per cent of the male labor force were in agriculture). From 1990 to 2000, however, the female population employed in non-agricultural sectors increased from 24 to 31 per cent (Department 2004:45). Off-farm labor markets began to develop for both men and women during the 1990s. Nevertheless, age and marital status have to be taken into account: the majority of rural migrant women are young and unmarried whereas the married rural women stay behind more often and fill vacancies in agricultural production when their husbands go away to work.

\(^{20}\) in 1982 classified as business, food and beverage services, material supply and sale and storage; in 1990 as business, public food and beverage services, material supply and sale and storage
Informal and labor migration

In China, although there is no agreed definition for the “Informal Sector”, it generally refers to the “own-account” production of the self-employed urban and rural poor, and the relatively more productive workers engaged in wage-labor in a capitalistic setting with close links to the formal sector. Those who are self-employed workers, private entrepreneurs, employees of the private entrepreneurs, household workers, members of collectives for production, and informal employees of formal sectors, have all been referred to as workers in informal sectors (You 2005).

As in most countries, women in China also comprise the majority of informal sector workers who work in the segments that have low productivity; the links to the formal economy are marginal. The results of the 2nd national survey on women’s status by the ACWF and the NBS showed that the numbers of women employed in non-public and private enterprises have increased by 60 percent since 1995 (ACWF & NBS, 2002). In 2000, 52.2% of the urban female labor force and 40.2% of the urban male labor force were employed in non-state enterprises (Jin 2006:181). Moreover, women are concentrated at the lower stratum of the informal sector, where they involve themselves in community and home-based work. Very few of them have ascended the employment ladder to become entrepreneurs with their own private capital.

Women with lower levels of education, particularly female migrants, are the cheapest source of labor in the labor market. In recent years, many joint enterprises have drawn young unmarried female migrants from rural areas to work long hours in export-oriented industries under poor working conditions. However, some enterprises did not abide by the law, for example, they did not sign labor contracts with women workers; they used girl child labor; they refused to provide women workers with the necessary labor protection facilities (State Council, 2005). Reports of infringements of women workers’ labor rights and interests have indicated cases of injury among female migrant workers, involving for example, poisonous chemicals in the factories in some areas along the Southern coastline in China. (Nan 2003; Tan 2000 & 2004; Yi 2002).

Between 1998 and 2003 the number of labor migrants with a temporary resident certificate nearly doubled. According to the Statistical Yearbook in 2003, 105.85 millions of the population were registered in other places, but had actually resided in the enumeration area. Out of these 105.85 million migrant population, 53.64 million (50.7%) were male and 52.22 million (49.3%) were female. (China Statistical Yearbook 2004:103) From these different sets of figures, it may be assumed that there are fewer registered female migrants than male migrants (Gransow 2003), a finding we are familiar with from international migration research. It is estimated that the number of migrants is at least double the number of registered migrants.
Table 12  Employment of labor migrants with temporary resident certification (1998 und 2003 (Mio.))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40,5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>69,9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>24,3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>41,0</td>
<td>58,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>16,2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>28,9</td>
<td>41,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labor migration</strong></td>
<td>32,6</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>61,5</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>19,6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36,1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>13,0</td>
<td>25,4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment of labor migrants</strong></td>
<td>32,6</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>61,5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industry</strong></td>
<td>21,8</td>
<td>66,9</td>
<td>45,8</td>
<td>74,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>13,7</td>
<td>27,5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>8,2</td>
<td>18,2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>1,4</td>
<td>4,3</td>
<td>1,8</td>
<td>2,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>0,9</td>
<td>1,1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>0,5</td>
<td>0,7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trade</strong></td>
<td>5,9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8,0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>3,8</td>
<td>5,1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>2,1</td>
<td>2,9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services</strong></td>
<td>3,3</td>
<td>10,1</td>
<td>5,5</td>
<td>8,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>1,3</td>
<td>2,3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>2,0</td>
<td>3,2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domestic helpers/Nannies</strong></td>
<td>0,22</td>
<td>0,7</td>
<td>0,36</td>
<td>0,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>0,01</td>
<td>0,02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>0,21</td>
<td>0,34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Gongan 1998:2; Gongan 2004:2; own calculations.

Unemployment rate: higher female rates in most provinces

It should be pointed out that the definition of unemployment applied in the 1990 and the 2000 Population Censuses was not exactly the same and the comparability of the unemployment rate data from the two Population Censuses is not high. However, this data still represents the basic tract of China’s unemployment rate, especially the reported unemployment rate.

In China, it was once believed that there was no unemployment. Even in cases of enormous employment pressure, it was only viewed in terms of people waiting to be employed. Not until the 1990s did unemployment become a widely accepted fact. In the 1990 Population Census, the unemployment population mainly referred to the urban population waiting to be employed. In the 2000 Population Census, the unemployment population included the following two types of individuals: those who had never worked and were seeking jobs, and those who had lost their jobs and were seeking jobs.
Table 13 Gender-specific unemployment rates by urban and rural areas in China (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Total</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Male</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Female</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Total</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>8.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Male</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>7.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Female</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>9.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Total</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Male</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Female</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data sources: Calculated by using data obtained from the 1990 and 2000 population censuses.

Over the last ten years, the unemployment rate among the Chinese working age population has been increasing. The national unemployment rate for working age people rose from 0.88% in 1990 through 2.44% in 1995\(^{22}\), to 3.68% in 2000. A period of ten years saw a fourfold increase in China’s unemployment rate. The results of population censuses and sample surveys indicate that the unemployment rate for Chinese women (3.88 per cent) has been somewhat higher than that of men (3.60). The male and female unemployment rates in Tibet, Yunnan and Shandong are all about 1%, compared with male and female rates as high as 10% in Shanghai and Liaoning. With the few exceptions of Guangdong, Guangxi and Hainan provinces, the female unemployment rates are higher than the male rates in most provinces.

The 3 HIPs had the highest unemployment rates, which ranged from 5% to 10% for males and females. The average male unemployment rate for the three provinces was 8% and the female, 9%. In contrast, the unemployment rates were lowest in the 3 LIPs, where both male and female rates were around 2%. The lower unemployment rates in the regions where economies are less developed are mainly attributed, first of all, to the higher proportion of agricultural population in the regions. In the vast area of rural China, where a natural economy prevails, people continue to work for as long as they can. Hence, the unemployment rate stays low among the older population in rural areas. Secondly, young people in rural areas receive less education and leave school early to join the labor force, which makes the employment rates for younger age groups in rural areas higher than in urban China.

Unemployment rates for the male and female rural labor forces revealed by population censuses have been low. Yet this phenomenon is primarily caused by defects in the methods of rural labor force unemployment registration. According to the relevant requirements of the population censuses, the rural labor force with contracted land was not included among the figures for the unemployed. Hence, the rural unemployment rate attained via population census registration cannot properly reflect the actually higher unemployment situation in rural China.

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\(^{22}\) Result obtained from the 1% population sampling survey in 1995 conducted by NBS.
Chapter 4 Gender Inequality in Governance

Many efforts have been made to raise the representation of women in China’s political institutions. In spite of these efforts, however, the number of women entering high-level politics in China is only increasing very slowly.

**Representation in China’s political institutions**

The NPC is very gradually gaining a large role in the political system in China. In recent years, the NPC has been responsible for reforms to make the Chinese legislative process more representative and transparent. (Information Office of the SC of the PRC, 2004). However, the increasing importance of the NPC in politics in China was accompanied by a decreasing numerical presence of women deputies in the recent session in 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Female Delegates</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Department of Population 2004:87; Ding Juan 2006:56

There is an unevenness in the distribution of female deputies in the Tenth NPC in different provinces and autonomous regions, ranging from as high as 30.51 percent in Beijing to as low as 11.94 percent in Jilin, a northeastern province of China, known for its heavy industry (China Women’s Newspaper, 5 March 2003). Moreover, in a global context, China is lagging behind in terms of women’s representation in parliament. The ranking of the proportion of Chinese female NPC deputies is dropping in comparison with the number of women parliamentary members in many other countries. The percentage of female NPC deputies in China ranked 12th in 1994, 16th in 1997, 24th in 2000, 28th in 2002, and dropped further to 41st by 2005 (Inter-Parliament Union, 2005).

The People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) is the multi-party and political consultation organ in China, comprising various other political parties, mass organizations and personages of different social circles, which serve as the political consultation organ of the state. The proportion of women deputies in the CPPCC rose from 15.5% at the Ninth Session (1998-2003) to 16.8% at the Tenth Session (2003-2008). The presence of women is rare in the country's supreme political institution, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Women’s share of the seats in the Central Committee of the CPC peaked at 10 percent in 1973 in the Maoist socialist regime. However, their numbers dropped particularly after the 1978 Economic Reform and have continued to fall since the end of the 1980s. At the Sixteenth Party Congress in
November 2002 only five women were elected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which was only 2.5 percent of the total 198 seats, a decline from 4 percent at the last Congress in 1997. Since the late 1980s, women have not held any seats on the all-important Politburo Standing Committee of the CPC (WSIC 2004). There has never been a female general secretary of the Central Committee since the creation of the CPC in 1927. Although the percentage of women members in the CPC increased by 3.3%, women members only constituted 17.8% of the total members of the CPC in 2002 (Department 2004:83).

By 2002, women constituted 8.3% of the ministerial/provincial leaders, 11.7% of the total Director Generals (DGs) or vice DGs among prefecture level leaders, and 16.1% of the total number of County Directors or Vice Directors. The figures were still far from the 30% proposed by the UN 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. The proportion of female civil servants was 37.4% in 2002. However, very few of them were in the principle decision-making positions. Female officials constituted 8.3% of the ministerial rank officials, 11.7% of the prefecture level officials and 16.1% of the county level officials in 2002. The general percentage of women as first leaders is 5.4% of the total, which shows the characteristics of the lower female ratio at decision-making levels.

The competitive village election, the most significant political reform to have taken place in China since the 1980s, opened channels for both men and women to participate in village governance. The Village Committee Organization Law (1998) indicated that ‘the village committee should have an appropriate number of women’. Although elections to village committees and assemblies have enhanced political participation in China’s rural areas, women are conspicuously absent from village governance and their participation in village management is much less than that of men. The goal of equal numerical representation in village decision-making is still far from being achieved. On most village committees, the number of women representatives has yet to reach the critical mass of thirty per cent in decision-making bodies as advocated by the UN and the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995. Although there is no data available at national level, sample surveys showed that the percentage of female village heads was only one percent and the number of female members in the VCs had reached sixteen per cent by 2002 (Fan 2003).

At the same time that competitive village elections were instituted, China also introduced Neighborhood Committee Election to communities in urban areas; compared with the participation of women in village elections, women’s participation in Neighborhood Committee Election is much higher in terms of numerical representation. Since the Economic Reform in 1978, the Urban Resident Committees (URC) have been taking over more and more of the social services that had previously been covered by the government. In 1989, the National People’s Congress enacted the “Law of resident committee in People’s Republic of China”, which guaranteed women’s proportional representation on the URCs. The presence of women on URCs has been above 50% since 2000; the number peaked at 60.6% in 2002 (Department 2004:89). However, the real question is whether this is indicative of women holding high positions in community level decision-making processes. Historically, the URCs were mainly operated by women throughout the 1950s. They were also called Neighborhood Committees and they have, in fact, been identified
as women’s work. The portfolio of the URC has been very much welfare-oriented which includes mediating over disputes within families, delivering government instructions, etc. The staff received low salaries from the local government. After the reform, some URCs opened small enterprises. The positions of the URCs are increasingly being used as re-employment opportunities for laid-off workers from the State Owned Enterprises, where women constitute a majority. In this context, the increasing percentage of women in URCs cannot be interpreted as an increase in the status of women in politics at community level. Recent years have seen the emergence of autonomous organizations created voluntarily by local residents in new districts. There are an ever-increasing number of cases to show how successfully these autonomous organizations have protected residents’ rights and interests. There is, however, a lack of gender-disaggregated data to show women’s participation in these new organizations at community level.

**Gender impacts of enforced retirement policy**

An enforced retirement age policy was introduced by the Government as one of the core components of the administration reforms in the 1980s prior to its organizational restructuring. The government recognized that the cadre system produced under the planned economy which was endowed with senility and low expertise was not able to serve the development of the market economy effectively. Early reform measures included the imposition of a mandatory retirement age (60 for men and 55 for women) for officials in the middle ranks of the bureaucracy or the ranks below in the Government Civil Servant Regulations. High-ranking officials were exempted from this policy of enforced retirement. By implementing the enforced retirement policy, the government has considerably “lowered the average age of government officials from 1981 to 1998, and the number of senior officials aged 60 or older dropped from 81 percent to 54 percent” (ADB 2001: 33)

Attention should be drawn to the fact that the above-mentioned reductions in the average age were achieved at the expense of the female civil servants, whose numbers of working years were reduced compared with those of their male colleagues. Apart from their pension losses after retirement, the enforced retirement age policy exerted negative impacts on women’s participation in decision-making bodies at different levels, particularly in high-level politics. It proved to be discriminatory against female cadres, shortening the duration of their participation in social and public affairs administration, and thus putting them at a disadvantage with regard to promotion to higher level administrative posts. Many researchers (Chen 1995; Du 2001; Liu 2001) have argued that when women cadres reached senior age, they were seen as a worthless investment in terms of further promotion. They had to leave their posts in favor of promising “young, well educated, professional, and revolutionary” cadres who were preferred by the personnel departments of the Party and governmental organizations. This goes some way towards explaining the low numbers of women who have been involved in high political positions in China especially since the reform.
Relationships between Gender Inequality and Poverty: What can be Learned from Quantitative and Qualitative Studies

From the data presented, it becomes clear that there is no simple or one-way relation between gender inequality and poverty. Gender inequality does not arise out of poverty per se and both gender inequality and poverty may have different causes. Given that gender and poverty are both defined as complex and multi-dimensional phenomena, more efforts have to be invested in understanding not only the causes and effects of poverty and gender inequality, but also in understanding the nature of the causes and the way they interrelate (see Oyen 2004). On the one hand, it is quite obvious that capabilities in terms of health and education are closely linked to the economic development levels of certain regions. Being born female and living in a poorly developed area may serve as an additional disadvantage. This disadvantage could also turn into an obstacle to development and thus hamper further efforts at poverty reduction. A rising female IMR can be interpreted as an obstacle to efforts to reduce poverty through economic growth, even if the male IMR is decreasing. On the other hand, the data suggests that gender inequalities are not necessarily related to regional patterns of high or low income; gender inequalities cannot be attributed to a low level of development alone. They may also be related to cultural variations, to a patrilocal marriage system and a male-dominated political culture, to public policy and its intended and unintended impacts, or they may represent some combination of poverty, male domination and public policy.

Quantitative studies: long-term and representative trends of gender inequality and their relation to regional patterns of poverty

Quantitative and qualitative studies shed light on the relationship between gender inequality and poverty from different perspectives. Quantitative data such as those collected from the three censuses in 1982, 1990 and 2000 respectively, show the long-term and representative trends of gender inequality. They indicate trends which have continually strengthened over the years (for example, the male birth-rate and the disproportionate development of the IMR) and also trends which have gradually become more in line with each other (for example, in the field of education but with exceptions, however, at the upper and lower ends of the education ladder. Important starting points emerge here for the assessment of the spread, the relevance and the potential developing tendencies of certain gender inequalities, whereby the imbalances in SRB and IMR obviously require particular attention. A comparison of these findings for urban and rural areas, for higher-income and lower-income areas indicates a clear correlation, in some cases, between gender inequalities and the lack of development or income level in a region; other indicators show patterns which are not necessarily the same as regional patterns of income or poverty.

Son preference in China is often explained by pointing to the lack of a social security system in rural areas. From the data, however, we can see that son preference is not only dominant in rural areas, but also in urban areas. What, then, is the reason for son preference in urban areas? In addition to cultural explanations, the low social position of women as indicated by the low percentage of women in responsible positions, such as
government officials, high ranking party cadres or managers, can be seen as another reason for the low female birth rates. This assumption is reinforced by the finding that according to the 5th census the SRB in families of government and party cadres in responsible positions was as high as 250. This finding can be interpreted to a certain extent as the acknowledgement by these families of the better position of sons regarding upward mobility. (Cai Fang 2005:22) The low social position of women may result in low investment in female human capital, lower educational levels and discrimination against women in the labor market. This is a vicious circle. Policies and interventions are needed that benefit families with girl children. Existing programs and projects that aim to balance the sex ratio at birth, such as the “Care for Girls Campaign”, should be promoted countrywide.

There is no significant correlation between low regional income levels or poverty areas and extreme masculine SRB. More research is needed to clarify whether (or to what extent) high SRB results from sex selective abortions and/or from the sex selective undercounting of female children in the data sources. The role of birth control policies and its interaction with cultural preferences should be analyzed more thoroughly. Comparative research on minority nationalities (who are exempted from birth control policies or subject to moderate forms of it) may contribute towards clarifying the complex interactions between gender differences, cultural preference, birth control policies and poverty. On the contrary, a clear correlation can be found between a high (female) IMR and a low level of local development. More research is needed to find out whether there is a causal correlation and why the IMR is higher in LICs than in poor counties.

**Qualitative studies: Complex dynamics of gender inequality and poverty**

Qualitative studies of gender differences in designated poverty areas, on the other hand, show the complex and dynamic interlacing and interweaving of gender inequality with poverty. They highlight the ways in which different aspects of poverty and gender inequality are interrelated. Ill-health, for example, may be both a major cause and a consequence of poverty. It may also be related to the eco-environment. This underlines the need for a comprehensive approach to poverty reduction. Hunger may undermine school attendance as well as the capacity to learn, while food-for-education programs help to address both. Qualitative studies can show that gender differences cause women and men to experience poverty differently – and not only poverty, but also poverty reduction policies.

Despite the birth control policy, most families interviewed in poverty-stricken areas\(^\text{23}\) had two to three children because they had been trying for a male child. High education costs often result in these families being debt-ridden. In addition, wives may not have any

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\(^\text{23}\) Interviews and surveys undertaken by Li Xiaoyun and his team were conducted in June 2005 in the following poverty regions of China: Cangxi County of Sichuan province; Xiushui County of Jiangxi province; Maijishan District in Tianshui of Gansu province; Pucheng County of Shaanxi and Dawukou District in Shizuishan City of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.
decision-making powers regarding child-bearing, but may be manipulated by their husbands and mothers-in-law. During interviews, some women in poverty-stricken areas said that when their first-born child turned out to be a girl, their mothers-in-law did not allow them to breast-feed their baby girls, because they wanted them to become pregnant again as soon as possible so that the family would have another chance of getting a male child. For this reason, some infant girls had suffered from poor health since birth. Child-bearing renders women more vulnerable to disease, and if these diseases are not treated in time, women have to continue to live and work in spite of illness, which places their health at further risk. Birth control operations undertaken by women may result in their suffering ill-health, thus preventing them taking on heavy laboring work. Women in poverty-stricken areas who suffer from poor health have fewer opportunities to work for a living, to participate in community affairs and social communication. As a result, they are unable to acquire more information about development opportunities. A lack of access to health services is not only found in rural areas, but also applies to female rural migrant workers in urban areas. Measures to improve access to health care services for rural women and female migrant workers are recommended.

Poverty makes education a scarce resource. Under normal conditions, villagers invest in the education of boys and girls maybe almost the same. But when household expenditure increases or when the provision of finances becomes scarce, gender inequality may occur in allocating educational resources in families with a few children in school at the same time. Depending on conditions of agricultural production in mountainous areas, the contributions by male members of the household to economic income are higher valued than the female contributions. This may result in unequal allocation of resources biased towards female members, including allocation of educational resources. When primary or middle schools are far away from villages, poor road conditions are impacting on children, especially girls. The vulnerability of girls may make them go to school at older age. In families with a shortage of laborers, girls tend to drop out from school earlier than boys thus resulting in a phenomenon in which girls have a later start of schooling and an earlier drop-out.

The two main factors which prevent women from benefiting from economic development are the lack of educational opportunities or gaining only a low level of education. To solve this problem, the underlying causes must be identified. Education is an investment, and receiving education means acquiring resources. In this sense, education is a process of resource distribution, which is mainly effected at two levels: national policy and family. The social structure of gender relations has an influence simultaneously at both levels and affects the distribution of educational resources between the two sexes. A social revolution is necessary to reverse unequal gender relations within the family structures, which all takes time. To tackle this problem, government must provide females with affirmative support to enable them to overcome the barriers raised by unequal resource allocation within the family.

In the poverty-stricken rural areas, if peasants go away to seek employment outside agriculture, they can earn a higher income to increase the living standard of the family. In the survey, it was found that in most comparatively better-off families, both men and
women are engaged in non-agricultural employment, while in the poverty-stricken families, they spend more time on crop production and livestock breeding and seldom go away to find employment. Women’s lower educational levels and physical condition become obstacles to their employment. The illiteracy rate of women is high in poverty-stricken areas. Both formal and informal employment needs social capital. The differences in social capital owned by men and women influences the opportunities of the individuals’ entry into the labor market. Lack of social capital results in more restricted employment opportunities for women.

Due to the limited participation of women in community administration and decision-making, women lack opportunities to express their needs and wishes. In the process of village self-government, the policy of holding intersectoral positions in two committees is the main obstacle to women being elected to village committees, because this policy increases the difficulties for women to be elected. The low level of women’s representation does not only hold true for rural community administration and decision-making, but also for village level poverty reduction and development programs.

The biggest change we have seen in poverty reduction in China in the new century is the shift in targeting, from county level to village level, which has been achieved by identifying key poverty reduction villages nation-wide and formulating participatory village-level poverty reduction and development program. The former top-down approach to poverty reduction and development deprived the poor of the right to know the inside story and to participate. The current approaches and the extent to which the poor are now involved in poverty reduction activities are more far-reaching than in the past. The main means of participation among the poor in the poverty reduction measures is their involvement in the formulation and implementation of the participatory village-level poverty reduction and development program. The current operation of the village-level poverty reduction program lacks any clear gender-sensitive principle and framework, and this will restrict, to some extent, the national poverty reduction programme. Half the target group in the national poverty reduction programme is made up of poor women and it is very important to deal consistently with the relations between gender inequality and poverty.
Chapter 6  Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction: Conclusion and Recommendations

In recent years, the Chinese government has made fairness and justice, including gender equality, an important part of its efforts to build a harmonious socialist society. This is formulated in the government’s “White Paper on Gender Equality and Women’s Development in China”, published in August 2005 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. At the Beijing conference, the previous President, Jiang Zemin, stated: “Attaching great importance to the development and advancement of women, we in China have made gender equality a basic state policy in promoting social development. We are resolutely against any forms of discrimination against women and have taken concrete steps to maintain and protect the equal status and rights of women in the country’s political, economic and social life.” This high-level commitment to gender equality is reflected in the Chinese Constitution of the PRC and in many of the policies and legislative measures adopted by the Chinese government since 1949, and especially in the 1990s.

China has made substantial efforts to set up government institutions to promote the development of women and children. The governmental and legislative institutions on women’s issues serve as venues or coordinators to put women’s concerns onto policy agenda. The government created the National Working Committee on Women and Children (NWCWC) in 1992 and by 2000, its membership had expanded to twenty-four ministries and five mass organizations.

The NWCWC plays an important role in protecting women’s and children’s rights and interests in China. It has succeeded in promoting the promulgations of laws and national plans on the development of women and children in China, and acts as a “watch dog” in monitoring the implementations of the policies and laws concerning women’s and children’s rights and development. However, like many national mechanisms for women in development worldwide, the NWCWC suffers under constraints concerning its location, resources, and staffing problems. The NWCWC is under-resourced by the central government. Most of its funds come from donors, a fact which implies that it will be driven by the donors’ priorities. In addition to the NWCWC (under the State Council), the Office of Workers, Youth and Women Committee in Internal and Judicial Affairs of the National People's Congress are the most important institutions. At same time, the All China Women’s Federation (ACWF) also plays an important role in national women’s affairs.

The reform policies gave the ACWF a new role. It formulates the problems facing women and has contact and advocacy functions, attempting to support women, especially in their careers. Funding and personnel have, however, been notably cut back. At the same time, however, the beginnings of a non state-run, active women’s movement in China are developing, aiming to reach a wide audience in different social domains. In recent years, government departments have cooperated with women’s federations,
international donor organizations and a variety of NGOs to organize all kinds of activities for the promotion of gender equality and women’s development.

Nevertheless, the discourse of basic policy has yet to become prevalent among policy/law makers. There is a lack of a concrete framework for enforcement.

**Poverty reduction policies: targeting women but gender-blind?**

Programmatic documents such as China’s White paper on gender equality (see above) and the White paper on poverty reduction in China’s rural areas (2001) have formulated preferential policies for the elimination of poverty among women in poor areas. Over the past years, while calling for the equal protection of women under the law, the government has intensified efforts to solve the poverty problem existing among the rural female population through various methods, such as organizing job opportunities in wealthier areas, skills training for poor women, extending small loans to women entrepreneurs, and passing legislation to ensure all pregnant women receive medical insurance coverage.

Since 2001, the Chinese government has made gender indicators a component of the poverty monitoring work in rural areas, and has stressed that attention should be paid to gender equality in the poverty-reduction work. On the basis of the specific conditions in different areas, they have endeavored to help rural women out of poverty by way of providing small-sum credit loans, labor export and pairing-off assistance.

In recent years, women's federations at all levels have launched, in view of local conditions, the "Poverty-Reduction Action for Women". The China Population Welfare Foundation has launched the "Happiness Project" with the aim of helping poor mothers. This foundation raises funds to help poor mothers participate in economic and social development, and to enhance their health and cultural standards. The project of "Love of the Earth, Water Cellars for Mothers," initiated by the China Women's Development Foundation, has raised funds to build more than 90,000 rain-water collecting cellars and 1,100 small central water supply projects in the water-short northwest part of China, benefiting nearly one million poverty-stricken people.

In spite of these measures, politicians and policy-makers are often too little aware of gender-related inequalities. This does not only apply to cadres at lower administrative levels, but also to those involved in central decision-making in the government and ministries, thus, those who have the influence and resources at their disposal to implement a gender-sensitive policy. This is the result of a survey which was carried out in September 2004 among 242 policy-makers ranked as ministers, vice-ministers, department leaders and their deputies (Nanfang zhoumo 9.9.2004). In these upper echelons of the administration hierarchy, the numbers of female cadres (who are generally more open to gender-related forms of inequality) are very scarce. In the male-dominated political culture of the administrative apparatus in China, investment in equal opportunities for the sexes does not figure high on the list of priorities. It is certainly not a field which counts as being particularly prestigious among the - mostly male - cadres. There is the widespread assumption that equality of the sexes has already been achieved
since the legal groundwork for it has already been established. Furthermore, it is also widely assumed that the position of women has improved as a result of the general improvements in living standards. The participants did not see any need for special action to be taken. 28% of those who were asked whether they considered it possible that special measures for men and women would have unjust and unfair consequences, answered in the negative.

In the field of poverty alleviation, too, it can be assumed that there is only very limited awareness of the very diverse effects on men and women which can ensue from legislation and public policies. The gender dimensions of poverty in the PRC are largely under-diagnosed in official statistics since many figures are collected on a household basis and are not sex-disaggregated. Little information is officially recorded on intra-household income and welfare distribution (ADB, 2004). The absence of gender in poverty statistics makes it difficult for the government to give the anti-poverty strategy a gendered face. In addition, due to the pressure of working with limited resources in poor rural areas and to the fact that, even at local level, the strategies for reducing poverty are geared towards economic success, there is very little incentive to develop and implement gender-sensitive policies.

It has been shown over and over again that a lack of gender awareness in the formulation of laws, regulations, political measures and public policies can have unintended consequences. A first example of this is found in apparently sex-neutral laws, the practical effects of which, however, have led to sex-specific discrimination, as in the case of the Land Administration Law of 1998. According to this, land use contracts were valid for thirty years. Readjustments of land use contract distribution in response to changing household circumstances were handled differently in different communities, with some communities readjusting the land distribution once a year, others once in several years. In the case of young families, where the bride had recently moved into the husband’s house and there were newborn children, special hardship could result unless there was readjustment of the land to provide a land use contract to support the new household. Here the patrilocal marriage system in China’s rural areas was not taken into consideration when designing a law and this, later on, gave rise to numerous complaints by rural women without land. A second example is provided by regulations which are directly discriminating. Thus married couples in rural areas can have a second child, but only if the first child is a daughter. A third example is found in laws and regulations which were actually intended to protect women but which, in practice, however, have had a rather discriminatory effect, such as, the bringing forward of the retirement age for women (55 instead of 60) or the generous guarantees of maternity leave which actually result in unemployment with minimal security or early dismissal.

Measures and projects to reduce poverty, which appear to be sex-neutral, can prove to have discriminatory effects. If, for example, a new potential for earning arises in a household as the result of a measure to reduce poverty, the children (particularly the girls) might be taken out of school in order for them to be able to take part in income-generating activities. There is, in addition, the possibility that a considerable number of additional tasks arising from the poverty reduction projects will devolve upon women which will lead to an increase in
working hours. For this reason alone, rural women often suffer under time constraints because they have to allocate much of their time to unpaid work: housework, including washing and cleaning; reproductive work, including caring for children and the elderly; household subsistence work, including water and firewood collection; and low productive work for household food security, agricultural and animal husbandry work. It is also possible that a project will offer training activities to rural households on some agricultural techniques. If these activities are mostly carried out by women, it would be advisable for them to participate in the training courses offered, but the training courses might well be attended mainly by men, because the location (outside the village) and the duration of the training period (several days) would create difficulties for women who would otherwise attend.

All these are examples of the ways that gender-blind laws and policies can lead to unintended and unwanted discrimination against girls and women. It is therefore necessary, at all levels of the administration and during all stages of legislation and policy development, to be aware of gender differences and the possibility that those differences may turn into discriminating practices.

Public Policy: Lack of Gender Perspective, Make it hard to Achieve the National Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

The requirements of the UN MDGs include the reduction of poverty (goal 1: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) and the promotion of gender equality (goal 3). Sex-disaggregated data should be reflected in all MDGs progress reports; this is not yet the case, however, for China. Here, goal 4 will be taken as an example to explain the gender implications of MDGs. Goal 4 is: Reduce Child Mortality. The target is a two-thirds reduction in the under-five mortality rate between 1990 and 2015. China is on track for reducing infant mortality and the mortality rate among under-fives. In order to meet the MDGs in 2015, the under-five mortality rate must be reduced to 20‰. As previously stated, the female infant mortality rate should be lower than the male infant mortality rate but the opposite is now the case in China. In 1990, the female infant mortality rate was 33.5‰, while the male infant mortality rate was 32.4‰. In 2000, the gender gap widened: the female infant mortality rate was 33.72‰, while the male infant mortality rate went down to 23.90‰. China will not be able to reach the MDG (Goal 4, target 5) of reducing the IMR by two thirds between 1990 and 2015, if the female IMR in the countryside is not curbed.

Poverty Reduction: Giving Public Policy a Gendered Face

Public policy in various sectors such as finance, education and health, is of crucial importance in promoting gender sensitive poverty reduction policies. Giving public policy a gendered face is an important precondition for developing a response to recent policy changes embodied in the revised poverty reduction policy, which include the willingness to explore methods based on local participation, gender targeting, community-based planning and expanded roles for NGOs in implementation, progress monitoring and impact assessment. The emphasis on participatory, bottom-up procedures implies changes
in governance at both national and local levels, including gender sensitive public policy. Such changes represent a development of poverty planning in China towards a demand-responsive approach to poverty reduction in contrast to the top-down approaches in the past.

In order to mainstream gender into poverty reduction policies, the following intervention strategies are recommended:

1. **Promote research on the interaction between public policies, gender issues, economic growth and poverty dynamics in China**

To back up suggestions for gender sensitive poverty reduction policies and to target these policies more accurately, more research is required on gender related constraints to poverty reduction efforts at both macro level and micro level. This research should include:

- studies of the root causes of the imbalanced sex ratio at birth and the increasing gender gaps in the infant mortality rate, including their impacts on poverty reduction efforts;
- gender assessments of poverty reduction policies (including security, opportunity and empowerment as an expanded framework for poverty reduction) and of specific interventions such as grain for green (tuigenghuanlin), micro credits, compulsory education, resettlement, infrastructure, labor mobility, etc.;
- gender sensitive analyses of the complex dynamics of poverty production embedded in processes of transformation, marketization and urbanization in China (including urban unemployment, unfavorable environmental conditions, impoverishment related to loss of land and/or involuntary resettlement, labor (and return) migration (e.g. in cases of illness and injuries), old age poverty and children’s poverty, interaction between gender, poverty and minority issues, students from poor areas etc.);
- evaluation of the effectiveness of international donor activities in promoting gender equality as part of poverty reduction interventions, including more systematic attention being paid to gender issues as part of social assessment in investment projects outside the human development sector; these may have poverty reduction as a secondary project objective (such as projects in the transport, energy or environmental sector, agricultural development or natural resource management projects which all may be accompanied by resettlement and impoverishment risks for the population affected by the project).

2. **Develop general guidelines to improve gender responses in the government system related to poverty reduction**

It is recognized that government agencies, NGOs and researchers working in the area of poverty reduction tend to have a higher level of gender awareness. This is largely because they are influenced by international cooperations that place great emphasis
on poverty reduction and normally have a strong gender focus. However, such gender awareness often stagnates at project level and has not yet been integrated into the government system. One suggestion is to establish a joint working group under the NWCWC and the NDRC Social Development Department to prepare general guidelines on improving gender responses in various departments of the government system related to poverty reduction (such as the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labor and Social Security, National Bureau of Statistics/Rural Survey Department etc.). This may be seen as as an entry point for the relevant departments to develop their own guidelines on strengthening gender awareness and gender responsive action plans in their specific fields of poverty reduction. If appropriate, the establishment of ‘gender officers’ may be considered. For example, in cooperation with the ILO, the Ministry of Labor has established a gender responsive system; two ‘gender officers’, one at director general level and one at staff level, have been nominated. One good practice in one ministry has certainly opened a window for change.

3. Develop and coordinate gender action plans indifferent government departments related to poverty reduction

Different Chinese governmental departments are in charge of civil affairs, education, health, and land administration. The Ministry of Civil Affairs is responsible for autonomous elections among villagers; the Ministry of Education is responsible for the education system and the Family Planning Commission is responsible for birth control. These ministries do not have close relations with the All China Women’s Federation and the Women and Children Working Commission of the State Council at micro level. Gender inequality in the process of autonomous village elections is serious, and women comprise a very low proportion of the representatives on village committees. The gender imbalance in birth control is high in rural and urban areas. There is also serious gender inequality among school-age children in poverty areas. Planned policy interventions for these phenomena are absent at community level. These departments should therefore concentrate their attention on strengthening gender equality in their grass-roots work. On the basis of general guidelines government departments involved in poverty reduction should design specific gender action plans. The following measures could be part of gender action plans:

- **Gender disaggregated statistics.** Sex-disaggregated data from the National Bureau of Statistics and relevant ministries will have to be obtained for sound gender-responsive poverty reduction policies to be formulated. The inclusion of gender statistics into national and ministerial data collection systems is an important step towards promoting gender sensitive poverty reduction policy making.

- **Gender checklists** for poverty reduction interventions, including key action points and gender sensitive indicator systems for project preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
Gender budgets: analysis of poverty reduction budgets.

Gender budgets are tools and processes designed to facilitate gender analysis in the formulation of government budgets and the allocation of resources. Gender budgets are not separate budgets for women, or for men. They are attempts to break down or disaggregate the government’s mainstream budget according to its impacts on women and men. They are an important tool for analyzing the gap between the expressed commitments of governments and the decision-making processes involved with how governments raise and spend money.

4. Build capacity for mainstreaming gender in poverty reduction offices at all levels

The Chinese government is now undertaking mid-term reviews of its ambitious program for poverty reduction in poor areas (2001-2010). Under the unified coordination and planning of the State Council Leading Group, this program is being carried out in 592 poor counties all over China. This program is aimed at 100 million poor people, half of whom are women. The poor areas have received great financial support through poverty reduction funds, work for food funds and credit loans. However, distinct gender-sensitive principles and framework are absent from the operating process of such support. The relationship between gender inequality and poverty has not been made one of the key issues in China’s rural poverty reduction policies. The poverty alleviation system lacks the capacity to formulate gender sensitive policy and plans. It is therefore proposed that capacity building should be carried out within China’s poverty alleviation system on gender mainstreaming and gender budget; there should also be a poverty reduction plan aimed at promoting gender equality jointly organized by the State Council Poverty Alleviation Leading Group and All China Women’s Federation. Training should be carried out at central, provincial and county levels and should include the training of trainers. It is recommended that international donor agencies provide technical assistance for such a plan.
Appendix 1  Background Papers

This synthesis report is based on:

1. A statistical facts and figures report about gender inequality, prepared by Prof. Duan Chengrong, People’s University, based on the data from three censuses taken in 1982, 1990 and 2000. It contains information on a broad range of demographic, economic and social issues. The material provided allows for discovering long-term tendencies as well as regional disparities, especially between rural and urban areas, and low and high income regions.

2. A quantitative analysis of the effect of gender on the elasticity of poverty to growth in China, prepared by Chen Shaohua and Martin Ravallion, World Bank, which aims to explore the nature and significance of the correlation between gender inequality and poverty, and tries to establish the direction of causality. The analysis poses the question of whether gender inequality is affecting poverty reduction through economic growth by using education and health indicators.

3. A qualitative analysis (of rural poverty based on survey questionnaires), prepared by Prof. Li Xiaoyun and his team, China Agricultural University, which tries to identify the underlying stories behind the results of the quantitative analysis and also seeks to reveal the "other part" of the gender/poverty interaction that could not be captured by the quantitative analysis but that would help us to understand the stories behind the facts and figures presented in the statistical report.

4. A comprehensive country gender assessment (CGA) for the PRC, prepared by Dr. Lin Zhibin and Prof. Du Jie, Institute of Women’s Studies, ACWF, which not only provides an in-depth analysis of poverty and gender inequality and updates gender-related data, but also creates harmonization among different international development and donor agencies, including the WB, ADB and DFID. The purpose of the CGA is to analyze the gender dimensions of development, identify the gender-responsive policies and actions important for poverty reduction and development effectiveness in the country, and provide information on the gender-related issues to assist the staff of the Bank and ADB in mainstreaming gender concerns in country programming, project design and implementation, and policy interventions. The collaborative CGA process will culminate in suggested priorities for gender-related interventions, including those offering opportunities for effective involvement of the WB, ADB and DFID.
Appendix 2  Methodology - Gender Dimensions of Poverty Assessment

Policies that seek to address the gender dimensions of poverty are confronted with a multitude of definitions, with multidimensionality, and with the infinite number of causes and effects of poverty. In its most basic form, three approaches to poverty analysis dominate the development literature24:

1. The poverty line approach which measures the income level of households and individuals which is required to meet their basic needs
2. The capability approach which explores a broader range of means and ends
3. Participatory poverty assessments (PPAs), which explore the causes and outcomes of poverty in more context-specific ways and from the perspective of the poor themselves

1. The poverty line approach

Data on household income collected routinely through household expenditure surveys form the basis for measuring the incidence of poverty in China as well as internationally. The PRC uses the income per head measure. In 2002 prices, the official rural poverty line was 627 Yuan annual net income per capita. Using this poverty line, the number of rural poor was estimated at 28.2 million in 2002, or 3% of the rural population. In addition to these absolute poor, 88.2 million (or 9.2%) of the rural population with a per capita income below 869 Yuan in 2002 were defined as the low income rural population. The 869 Yuan benchmark comes close to the World Bank calculation of one US$ a day in PPP values in year 2002 prices. The PRC does not have an official urban poverty line. The urban poverty line is estimated at three times the official rural poverty line. Under the Minimum Living Standard Scheme (MLSS), each city sets its own poverty (or benefits) line. The floating population is not included in the MLSS scheme (ADB 2004:4).

The poverty line approach, which measures poverty at household level, has become the most widely used method of separating the poor from the non-poor. This has revealed, worldwide, a disproportionate number of female-headed households among the poor which, in turn, has led to the claim that there has been a “feminization of poverty”. Female-headed households may, however, occur within or outside the poverty population and for very different reasons (such as custom, widowhood, divorce, migration etc.) with different implications for household poverty. Female-headed households tend to be smaller and to have higher dependency ratios. As part of the poverty population, female-headed households will need special attention because of their specific vulnerability, but from a policy perspective, it is unlikely that female-headed households will be effective in all cases as criteria for anti-poverty programs.25

Since it has become clear that economic growth does not necessarily benefit poorer sections of society, a concern with the poverty line method has emerged. Other

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24 The following section is based on Kabeer 2003 (Chapter 4) and adjusted to the Chinese situation.
25 See also Chapter 3.4. “Is there evidence to support the feminization of poverty hypothesis?”
approaches, all of which are relevant to the gender dimensions of poverty, are becoming increasingly important.

Criticism of the poverty line approach includes the following points:

- People meet their survival needs not only through monetary income but through a variety of resources, including subsistence, production and access to public goods,
- People have assets such as health, education, natural resources, financial resources (e.g. access to credit) and social networks
- The well-being of human beings does not only depend on their purchasing power, but also on dignity and self-respect.

The most serious concern with the poverty line approach from a gender perspective is that it neglects to take into account intra-household inequalities, the most pervasive of which are those related to gender. Household-based calculations have little to say about women’s and girls’ experience of poverty relative to that of men and boys within the same household.

2. The capability approach

The capability approach\textsuperscript{26} sees income and commodities as important only in as much as they contribute to people’s capabilities to achieve the lives they want (their ‘functioning achievements’). Capabilities are about what individuals are able to achieve; they depend partly on personal circumstances and partly on social constraints; the term does not only include basic individual capabilities such as education and health, but also more complex social capabilities, such as taking part in the community and self-respect. Unlike the poverty line approach, which is defined in relation to the household, capabilities are defined in relation to the individual and this is why they can be measured and interpreted in gender-disaggregated ways. The UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) provides an example of this.\textsuperscript{27}

In the same year as the 4\textsuperscript{th} World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the UNDP launched two new measures to track progress in tackling inequalities between women and men. These were the Gender-related Development Index (GDI)\textsuperscript{28} and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM).\textsuperscript{29} These measures have been used every year since then in the UNDP annual Human Development Report alongside HDI.

A look at the outcomes of GDI-Indices gives rise to the need to differentiate between those aspects of gender inequality that are responsive to economic growth and those that may need to be addressed through additional policy measures. This differentiation would,

\textsuperscript{26} This approach was based on the idea of “functionings and capabilities” by Amartya Sen (1987, 1992; Robeyns 2003)
\textsuperscript{27} The HDI was created to re-emphasize that people and their lives should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth or interest rates. A country is certainly not in a healthy state if a substantial number of people are living in poverty.
\textsuperscript{28} The GDI measures the same variables as the HDI except that the GDI makes adjustments for gender inequalities in the three aspects of human development.
\textsuperscript{29} The GEM also measures gender using the following variables: seats in parliament held by women; female legislators, senior officials and managers; female professional and technical workers; ratio of estimated female to male earned income (http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2002/en/pdf/backtwo/pdf)
in addition, also help to identify those aspects of inequality that are most resistant to change. The first of the three basic human capabilities identified by the GDI relates to economic opportunity and is measured by per capita GDP. It reveals inequalities in labor force participation and in wages earned. The second component of GDI relates to life expectancy (including maternal mortality) which represents gender differences in health and physical well-being. Sex ratios of populations are another indicator of gender discrimination at the level of basic survival chances. Masculine sex ratios\textsuperscript{30} are associated with high levels of excess female mortality in the younger age groups. The “geography of gender” (of sex ratios) is mirrored in the regional distribution of strong son preference. Education is the third of the capabilities included in estimates in the GDI. It is widely agreed that the most effective strategy for eliminating poverty and achieving sustainable development in any country is to expand educational access and improve educational quality (Zhang 2004). Keeping girls out of school is costly and undermines development.

The capability approach makes a number of useful contributions towards understanding the relation between gender and poverty: it helps monitor gender differences in basic achievements across regions and time and it draws attention to patterns of gender inequality that are not necessarily the same as regional patterns of income or poverty.

3. Participatory Poverty Assessments

PPAs use a variety of mainly qualitative methods which have originated from earlier attempts by practitioners of PRA methods to promote “bottom up” approaches in the assessment and evaluation of development projects.

Key contributions of PPA approaches have shown that

- the poor themselves, men and women, rural and urban, young and old, sick and healthy, have their own perspectives on the experience of poverty
- poverty is multi-dimensional and includes not only economic deprivation but also various forms of vulnerability
- poor people are not only concerned with meeting their immediate food needs but also have long-term goals such as security, accumulation of savings, social standing and self-respect
- poverty may force poor people into humiliating patron-client relations or extremely exploitative forms of work
- poverty tends to be associated with insecurity, vulnerability and dependence

PPAs highlight the ways in which different aspects of poverty are interrelated. This underlines the need for a comprehensive approach to poverty reduction. Ill-health, for example, may be both a major cause and a consequence of poverty. It may also be related to the eco-environment. Hunger may undermine school attendance as well as the capacity to learn, while food-for-education programs help to address both. PPAs may identify gendered aspects of poverty, such as the following:

\textsuperscript{30} A sex ratio at birth with more than 105 (103-107) males per 100 females may be characterized as “masculine sex ratio".
• forms of disadvantage that have a greater effect on poor women, including women’s greater time burden, domestic violence, daughters seen as “tools”, e.g. when their wages are taken to subsidize investment in sons’ education or marriage
• forms of disadvantage that have a greater effect on poor men, including the risk of remaining unmarried because of unaffordably high marriage costs
• the connections between production and reproduction
• the vulnerability of female-headed/single-parent headed households
• gender differences in individual priorities
• policy-related inequalities and unequal treatment
• women’s lack of access to resources

The limitations of PPAs are:
• they may be as gender-blind or as gender-aware as those who conduct them
• they may use gender issues simply as a synonym for women
• ‘poor people’s perception’ may reflect the norms and values of society that do not attach any weight to gender inequalities or to violations of women’s human rights. Women themselves frequently subscribe to such value systems and accept that they have lesser worth as human beings.

The three approaches are complementary rather than competitive. Each approach reveals different insights and, taken together, they provide a more comprehensive understanding of the gender dimensions of poverty than any single approach on its own.
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