



THE EMERGING
MARKETS
SYMPOSIUM



GREEN TEMPLETON COLLEGE | OXFORD

Gender Inequality in Emerging Markets



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Findings & Recommendations

Symposium on Gender Inequality in Emerging Markets

This symposium was the fourth in the series that began in 2009. Its form and format were consistent with those of previous symposia: fifty invited participants from more than twenty countries expressing personal judgments and opinions rather than those of governments, corporations and public or private sector institutions; strict observance of the Chatham House Rule; and an emphasis on conversations rather than presentations. Its theme was also consistent with those of previous symposia, each of which has focussed on issues of human welfare in emerging markets that must be resolved if these countries are to sustain rapid growth and reduce poverty.

The symposium on Gender Inequality was a graphic expression of many of the “global” issues – poverty, conflict, corruption and issues of human welfare including economic and social inequality - with which the EMS had grappled since its inception. It took place against the background of globally reported reactions to rape, murder and other atrocities in India and other countries; heightened awareness of some of the consequences of female subordination; and widespread lack of understanding of aspects of gender discrimination and inequality that the world has, for the most part, chosen to ignore.

FINDINGS

Background

Gender inequality comes in many forms and disguises

Gender inequality in emerging markets, as elsewhere in the world, comes in many forms and disguises. Its manifestations range from bride burning and female infanticide to passive tolerance of systems that deny women equal participation in reproductive decisions, equal access to education and employment opportunities, equal pay for equal work, equal rights before the law, and equal political voices.

Gender inequality is anchored in the belief that females are inferior to males

Gender inequality diminishes the capacity of mothers to promote the rights of daughters; makes women vulnerable to sexual slavery, trafficking and forced marriage; stunts the capacity of boys to become caring fathers; deprives women of inalienable rights; diminishes their quality of life; and limits their opportunities to lead fulfilling lives in the full use of their powers. Gender equality is anchored in the belief that females are innately or circumstantially inferior to males.

Gender equality is about equal rights, opportunities, treatment and obligations

Gender equality is about rights, opportunities, treatment and obligations. It is not about measuring outcomes. Differences in intellectual, physical and other personal endowments make it inevitable that some human beings will achieve more and enjoy greater rewards than others. It means equal chances of survival for male and female fetuses, equal access to reproductive healthcare, equal access to education, equal access to professions and occupations, equal opportunities for career advancement, equal access to credit, capital and financial autonomy and equal legal rights. Today, in most emerging markets, women are more likely than men to be poor and illiterate; less likely than men to have access to medical care, education, training and employment; less likely than men to have access to credit, capital and property ownership; less likely than men to achieve economic, social or political leadership; and far more likely than men to be victims of violence.

Gender discrimination is not unique to emerging markets

Discriminatory male behaviour, tacit female acceptance of that behaviour, and legalized gender inequality, are by no means unique to emerging markets. But gender inequality may be a larger issue in emerging markets than anywhere else in the modern world. First, because public policy has failed to mitigate the distributive consequences of rapid growth in emerging markets that, in the last thirty years has outstripped growth in the rest of the world. Second, because the informal sector, in which large numbers of economically active women earn casual and irregular wages from unreliable and often transitory employment, continues to play a major role in emerging economies. Third, because traditional familial structures and support systems have been disrupted by the consequences of massive urbanisation on an unprecedented scale and at an unparalleled pace.

Working parents throughout the world face fundamentally similar challenges in developing and sustaining careers and caring for children and in some cases ageing parents. In emerging markets as in high income countries in Europe and elsewhere, difficulties in managing the conflicting demands of work and family are reflected in staff turnover, absenteeism and productivity. But there are significant contrasts between most high income countries and most emerging markets. In most emerging markets:

- Rapid GDP growth has been associated with growing disparities in income distribution. As a result, whereas many high income parents have ample child and elder care and household support, poor families, particularly single mothers who cannot afford childcare often leave children to their own devices. Extremes of wealth and poverty mean that the well-off in emerging markets are generally better off than the well-off in high income countries and the badly-off in emerging markets are generally much worse off than the badly-off in high income countries.
- Family fragmentation between rural and urban areas and within cities and megacities associated with massive urbanization means family members are less able than in the past to provide childcare support.

- Government child and elder care programmes, affordable commercial childcare and elder care services and on-site childcare facilities like those that help working parents to bridge gaps between home and work in high income countries are generally less available.
- Parental leave arrangements (which vary widely between high income countries) vary much more within and between emerging markets.

Why Gender Inequality is Wrong

It is morally indefensible

Issues associated with and arising from gender inequality are complex and multifaceted. But despite numerous examples of cultural bias, most world religions and belief systems share a fundamental agreement that gender discrimination and inequality is morally indefensible. In ethical terms it diminishes both men and women.

It is bad economics

Gender inequality is bad economics. It deprives national economies of women's talents. It reduces the productive potential of labour forces. It constrains consumption, diminishes tax yields and curtails the national and personal benefits of investment in female education by forcing women into professions and occupations that make less than full use of their skills and capabilities.

It is bad for business

And gender inequality is bad for business. It reduces talent pools available to firms. It deprives them of the distinctive skills women bring to boardrooms, offices, shop floors, stores and farms. It denies them access to women's distinctive understanding of consumer preferences. And it is a recipe for low morale, weak motivation, poor productivity, tentative commitment, provisional loyalty and bad retention rates.

But it is not a new issue

The belief that gender inequality is morally wrong, bad economics and bad business is not new. The 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has been ratified by 187 countries. In 2010 the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women to accelerate progress on gender equality and women's empowerment. More than 30 countries have established cabinet-level ministerial departments to protect and promote women's interests.

From Words to Actions

Think global.... act in emerging markets

The issues are global, but the need for action in emerging markets is critical. Having powered the world through recession, these countries face growing constraints to sustainable growth, social cohesion and political stability. The constraints include the erosion of international competitive advantages, the consequences of environmental degradation, weaknesses (including corruption) in national, local and corporate governance, the waste of human capital and growing social, economic and gender inequality. Issues of gender inequality are among the least tractable and neglected constraints to growth in emerging markets. The misuse of female talent weakens their economies, the abuse of women weakens their societies and the marginalization of women weakens their political systems. Because most other countries face continued economic uncertainty the world at large has a vested interest in the buoyancy of emerging economies, their collective capacity to sustain global demand for goods and services and their success in managing issues, including gender inequality, that threaten their success.

Laws and statutes are necessary but insufficient conditions of change

Even in the countries that have done most to close them, there are yawning gaps between the promise and realization of gender equality. While social movements retain an essential role in fighting for the recognition of entitlements, rights and norms, the defence and implementation of already-legally protected rights are increasingly at stake. Laws and statutes are necessary but insufficient prerequisites for change. They often conflict with explicit, implicit, veiled or open beliefs that women are inferior to men, exist for their unpaid reproductive work, do not deserve human rights and should accept subordinate roles in families, economies, and societies as normal features of a natural or even God-given order. Laws can also be overruled in practice by local and informal jurisdictions and political institutions. Socio-political movements and campaigns against economic, social, racial and religious discrimination and inequality must ultimately interact with executive powers and lawmakers in order for gender discrimination to be eradicated. Without incorporating and codifying rights and entitlements in national and international law, institutions and politics, little will guarantee equal economic, social and political rights for men and women. History also shows that while laws may offer protection, they are ineffective without sanctions and that behavioural change ultimately depends on changes in values, beliefs and convictions – in this instance predominantly in men. While laws can be changed overnight, and behaviour can follow, pathways to hearts and minds are slow, uncertain and tortuous

Patience... but not too much patience

Even in relatively dynamic and cohesive societies cultural change is a sticky process that demands strong and persistent national leadership and the determination to overcome often entrenched and sometimes violent opposition to change. The history of opposition to religious, racial, ethnic and other forms of inequality also suggests the need for patience – but not too much patience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recognizing that emerging markets have shared economic attributes but are culturally and politically diverse and that their cultural differences may dictate contrasting priorities and approaches, the symposium concluded that government, business and civil society in emerging markets should consider taking thirteen practical steps to promote gender equality.

At School...

1. Address factors that limit or inhibit girls' education

Equal access to education for girls and boys reduces economic inequality, enhances girls' employability and productivity, reduces the incidence of premature marriages and unwanted pregnancies, improves mothering skills, reduces the vulnerability of females to exploitation, diminishes the waste of female human capital and promotes social mobility. The education of females has cross-cutting and tangible effects on entire societies in terms of income, infant mortality rates and health status.

In light of these considerations the symposium **recommended** that emerging market governments should:

- Increase female access to primary, secondary and tertiary education.
- Ensure that girls enjoy safety and privacy including access to segregated sanitary facilities, the lack of which is a widespread impediment to the prolongation of girls
- Encourage the private sector, particularly multinational corporations proactively to provide employment, internships and mentoring for girls who finish secondary school.

In the Workplace...

2. Support women entrepreneurs

Training and microcredit initiatives for women entrepreneurs in emerging markets have had demonstrated success. But programmes like those of the International Trade Centre that provide access to global markets for women-owned small and medium enterprises and the Jita program in Bangladesh which provides products for very poor women to sell in rural areas, have shown how creative thinking can significantly improve access to finance, products and markets. The symposium **recommended** that emerging markets should create supportive financial arrangements, provide market access and product support for women entrepreneurs and develop new financial approaches (such as psychological testing) as substitutes for collateralized lending.

3. Create solutions to the challenges that face working parents

The symposium **recommended** that emerging market governments should:

- Develop national policies to address the economic implications of conflicts between “reproductive work” and paid work including affordable public, public-private, private and cooperative child and elder care support systems.
- Encourage small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that are too small to provide childcare facilities to develop collaborative arrangements with other SMEs.
- Encourage private sector employers to create solutions to the childcare, elder care and work-life challenges of working parents of both sexes bearing in mind successes such as that of Sri Lanka based MAS Holdings, a major garment manufacturer that combines nursing stations, on-site banking, company buses for commuting, sports programmes, and many other innovations to create gender-supportive workplaces, and has reaped positive returns on its investment in terms of staff productivity, loyalty, morale and retention.

4. Leverage technology to free women from isolation

The GSMA (Groupe Speciale Mobile Association) and the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women have shown that expanding women’s use of mobile telephony not only creates opportunities for entrepreneurs but can also open communication channels for women. In light of these developments the symposium **recommended** that emerging markets should:

- Leverage technology to address gender imbalances in the availability of information and to help women free themselves from isolation.
- Promote the incorporation of gender-specific features in mobile telephones and other portable devices such as security alarms and information about women’s legal rights and healthcare.

In the Community...

5. Empower women in the community

While many women in emerging markets spend a great deal of time in homes and workplaces they also spend significant time on commercial, child related and other activities in communities. Recognizing the potential importance of communities as incubators of positive change, the symposium **recommended** that governments and civil societies in emerging markets should support community education programmes, centres for community development and social activities that empower women and help bridge gender gaps.

In the Nation...

6. *Adopt gender equality as national goal*

The symposium **recommended** that emerging markets should adopt and operationalize gender equality as goals of national policy, follow the examples of countries (including several emerging markets) that have established government ministries or departments to manage and monitor progress towards gender equality, and work to achieve compliance with all pertinent international, multilateral and regional agreements.

7. *Develop alternative narratives on gender equality*

The existing narrative on gender equality is unfit for purpose. Recognizing that narratives, dialogues, social media and popular entertainment (including soap operas) are potentially powerful instruments of attitudinal change, the symposium **recommended** that alternative narratives focus on:

- The achievements of women's groups in mobilizing for change and re-orientating communities, including faith communities.
- The impact of communications (media, entertainment and telephony).
- Positive aspects of generational change (including relationships between men and women, and male expectations).
- Increased participation of women in tertiary education.
- "Open societies" as guarantors of equality for women including press freedom, unfettered media investigation of issues of gender equality, freedom to organize against gendered oppression and enablers of laws designed to achieve equality.

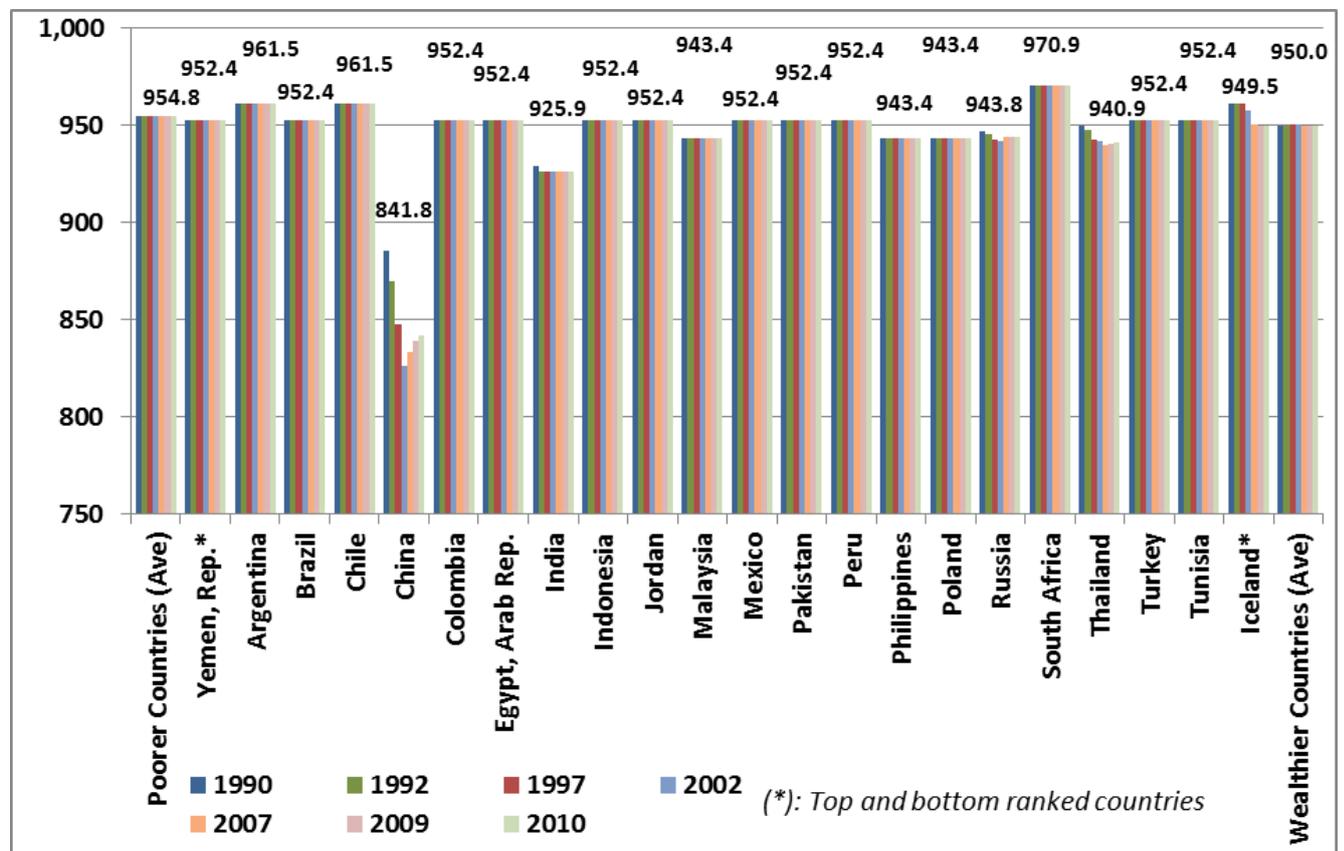
8. *Enable sexual sovereignty*

Recognizing that where women are able to work within safe and open parameters of civil societies, they have historically been effective proponents for their own uplift and their gains have benefitted society at large. Accordingly, the symposium **recommended** that emerging market governments should enable women to enjoy reproductive autonomy and sexual sovereignty by:

- Providing universal and unfettered access to reproductive and other healthcare services.
- Criminalizing neo-naticide, feticide, infanticide and the practise of disposing of female children as revealed by dramatically imbalanced gender ratios in some emerging markets (see Chart below).
- Developing education programmes for children and adults in collaboration with religious and other organizations to build understanding of gender equality and promote attitudinal and behavioural changes.
- Criminalizing trafficking and enforcing laws prohibiting the sexual and labour exploitation of women and men through domestic and international trafficking and slavery.
- Collaborating with countries that are sources of demand for trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation and slavery to strengthen controls and increase numbers of

convictions against traffickers.

Sex Ratios at Birth (females per 1,000 males)



Source: Emerging Markets Symposium 2012, Based on United Nations/World Bank data

9. Adopt quotas for women's leadership

Despite nominal commitments, many emerging markets have made halting progress towards increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions in government and business. No country is typical but in many emerging markets there is a disjunction between the fact there are more females than males in tertiary education and the fact that few women have risen to the top (e.g. in South Africa, women account for fewer than 5.0% of chief executives, 5.3% of company chairs and 15.8% of directorships). Some emerging markets with declining labour forces (e.g. in Eastern Europe) have "pipeline problems" getting qualified women to senior positions. Recognizing that quotas are blunt instruments that have been used to force changes in a wide variety of circumstances (e.g. in the composition of local councils in India and corporate boards in Norway), the symposium **recommended** that government and business in emerging markets use quotas to accelerate change to combat invisible and ingrained organizational prejudice.

10. Work “with the grain” of faith communities

Although some participants in the symposium were strongly in favour of purely secular approaches, the consensus view was that the separation of religious and secular authority is not a necessary condition of progress towards gender equality in emerging markets. Accordingly, the symposium **recommended** that governments and civil societies in emerging markets should assess the nature and extent of the commitment of religious groups to female empowerment and gender equality and consider how female empowerment can be promoted within them. This could mean challenging authority within faith communities but as far as possible the aim should be to work “with the grain” of religiosity rather than across or against it.

11. Protect women’s dignity in old age

The combined effects of rising female life expectancy, comparative female longevity, discontinuous female employment, the reality that females are invariably paid less than males for equal work and the fragmentation of families associated with urbanization mean many women in emerging markets face proportionately greater hardship than men at the end of life. Recognizing that universal healthcare and social security represent huge challenges for all governments; that these challenges are accentuated by economic and demographic conditions in emerging markets; and that demographic trends mean these challenges will grow, the symposium **recommended** that emerging market governments consider national strategies to address the specific needs of ageing female populations.

In the World...

12. Publicize failures to close gender gaps

While recognizing that data collection on corporate compliance with gender equality laws and directives has improved, the symposium **recommended** that emerging markets should:

- Address the need to collect, collate and publish better gender-specific poverty measurements and more reliable economic, social and political statistics (e.g. on violence against women and disaggregated gender specific pay information in the private sector).
- Develop and adopt “naming and shaming” devices to monitor compliance with laws and directives and improve corporate accountability

13. Loans and credits should incorporate gender conditionality

Recognizing that the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) including the World Bank and, among others, the African, Asian, European and Inter-American Development Banks, can influence the policies and practices of governments that receive or guarantee MDB loans and credits, the symposium **recommended** that MDBs should incorporate gender equality conditions in loan and credit agreements.

14. *Multilateral Development Goals and women's empowerment*

The international policy community is inclined to emphasize rights to health and education, while shying away from economic rights for women. The symposium agreed this bias should be corrected; that future global initiatives should ensure global, regional and national policies are consistent with the principle that women should play full parts in the world economy; and **recommended** that the Post-2015 Multilateral Development Goals (MDGs) include a robust commitment to economic gender equality.



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