

States Parties reaffirm their belief that discrimination against women is incompatible with human rights and dignity and with the welfare of the family and society; that it prevents women realising their social and economic potential and their participation on equal terms with men in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country, and is a serious obstacle to the full development of their personality and in their contribution to the social and economic development of their countries.

– Article VI, SAARC Social Charter, 2005

Regional Profile

Asia: Building on Progress

Over 70% (1.3 billion) of the total population of the 53-member association of Commonwealth nations and therefore about 70% of the Commonwealth's female population live in Commonwealth Asia. The populations of these countries vary from over 1 billion (India) to 276,000 (Maldives); these two countries contrast again, India as part of a sub-continent of the Asian land mass and Maldives as a string of 1,190 islands and atolls.

In the three South-East Asian member countries (Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Singapore), a negligible number of people live on less than US\$1 a day, while in other countries, over 30% do. For example, Singapore has made much progress in attaining the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through improved basic social provisions like housing, universal primary education, child mortality and maternal health. South-East Asia also experienced strong economic growth, though countries such as Malaysia suffered in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 1997/98 and governments responded by strengthening the safety net.

Since 1990, the South Asian region has experienced rapid GDP growth, averaging 5.5% a year, which has helped to reduce poverty – India by 5–10% since 1990, and most other countries registering significant reductions, except for Pakistan, where poverty has stagnated at around 33%. South Asia also lags in infrastructure. Across the region, in 2000, only 85% of people had access to water from an improved source and 37% to improved sanitation facilities¹. Many roads are not paved. National strategies to address these problems are important for the lives of all people, women and men, to be improved. Some of these strategies are outlined in the country reports which are summarised in this section.

Priority Concerns and Action

Asian countries responding to the 2003/04 Commonwealth survey of progress of the

Beijing Platform for Action priorities, emphasised poverty and economic empowerment of women as being of priority concern, along with health and education needs. Women's rights as human rights, better institutional mechanisms to promote and protect women's rights, and combating violence against women were also priorities.

Poverty Reduction and Attainment of MDGs

Based on indicators of social progress, South Asia has achieved success in some areas. For example, mortality in children under five years has decreased from 129 to 99 per 1,000 live births, especially in Bangladesh (144 to 77). School enrolment and completion rates have increased, and the gender balance in schools continues to improve. In India, for example, the Department of Education, with the help of the Panchayati Raj institutions, NGOs, volunteers and women's self-help organisations, is taking innovative measures to improve literacy in 45 districts where female literacy rates is below 30%.

At the same time, South Asian regional problems, such as child malnutrition, maternal mortality, and gender disparities in education, remain. Over half of all children under the age of five are malnourished and youth illiteracy is high – over 20% for males and 30% for females. While sustained growth would be necessary for poverty reduction, concomitant basic service delivery mechanisms would be essential for achieving progress in all other MDGs. At present, the region will fall short of the MDG poverty reduction target by 2015².

HIV/AIDS

There is an urgent need for a holistic, vigilant and effective HIV/AIDS Programme for the region because of the potential epidemic given the large population base. In South and South-East Asia, the number of people infected with

Participants at a Commonwealth Asian workshop on gender mainstreaming in 2001 discuss gender equality and development

HIV/AIDS population figures presently stands at over 8 million with a prevalence rate of 0.4%–0.8%. Some 330,000 – 590,000 deaths have been recorded.

Three South-East Asian countries have already had to contend with serious nationwide epidemics: Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand. Although they are not Commonwealth members, they have close business and tourist ties with their Commonwealth neighbours.

Asia has a higher total of HIV infections and annual AIDS deaths than any region except sub-Saharan Africa. The prevailing poverty, low education and other demographic dynamics combine to make conditions ripe for a pandemic to quickly spread. While Bangladesh and Pakistan have low HIV infection rates, their large populations (129 million and 152 million respectively) place them in the 'high vulnerability' category as poverty remains a major challenge. Infant mortality stands at 113/116 for male/female children per 1000 live births. India's life expectancy stands at 63 years, with a fertility rate of 3.1% and a literacy rate of 65% (75.85% for males, 54.16% for females). Thirty-five per cent of the population live below the poverty line.

Sri Lanka has a low prevalence of HIV but is also a highly vulnerable country especially with the continuing 20-year-old civil war and the instability it brings.

Political Empowerment

Women's participation in politics in Asia is still low although Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan have or have had female Heads of State or Government. Female parliamentary representation remains below 10% in most countries of the region.

India, however, has achieved success through affirmative action. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Indian Constitution have been the breakthrough in ensuring more women participate in political power structures. These Amendments provided for the reservation of 33% of elected seats for women in all local government authorities. There is also a one-third reservation for women to the posts of chairpersons of these local bodies. Women have come forward in



large numbers and have begun to assert themselves and take decisions.

Countries recording increases in women's representation in parliaments were Malaysia from 7% in 1999 to 9.1% by 2003, and Singapore from 6.5% to 16%. In other countries, decreases have been recorded – Bangladesh from 11.2% in 1999 to 2% by 2003, Sri Lanka by 4.9% to 4.4%. Brunei Darussalam still has no parliament.

Women and Peace-Building

Women's contribution to peace-building in the region is being encouraged and supported by multilateral and bilateral agencies, the Commonwealth Secretariat, governments and civil society. At least four member countries in the region are directly involved in peace-building and conflict resolution activities: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Strategic Resources for Capacity Building

Country experiences show that strategic targeting of financial resources can influence the ability of National Women's Machinery (NWMS) to implement programmes and gain access to additional funds, resources, and specialist assistance. Gender-responsive tools are powerful initiatives that can identify who gets what and how much, and can assist governments to maximise decisions

regarding budgetary expenditure and taxation measures. Analysis of India's national budgets of 2001/02 and 2002/03, for example, provided an objective analysis of the budgetary allocations to programmes that benefit women and in which sectors.

Constraints to gender mainstreaming include the lack of resources, inability to use ICTs and little access to user-friendly data, knowledge and information. This could be overcome through more effective dissemination of existing knowledge, materials and resources between governments, national and regional partners, training institutions, NGOs/CBOs, and international partners.

Regional Platforms for Equality

A review of the laws of the countries in the region shows that while some progress has been made, governments still face many challenges. The areas in which most progress has been made are those of constitutional guarantees to safeguard the human rights of citizens and prevent discrimination against women. All Commonwealth Asian countries have such guarantees.

In many cases, however, the supporting laws and mechanisms are still lacking, and where laws have been enacted, enforcement is still a challenge. A few countries have adopted specific human rights and gender equality

Box 24.1: Milestones in Gender-responsive Budgeting and Gender Analysis

As part of the Commonwealth gender-responsive budget initiative, Sri Lanka has undertaken a gender analysis of its 1996 Public Expenditure. The findings were as follows:

- Women constituted 34% of the labour force, having moved away from traditional activities into export-based activities in the garment and apparel industries which have facilitated economic growth and global market integration;
- Rural and urban female workers made up 26.5% of all workers in the informal sector, agriculture and self-employment, but had a low participation in decision-making processes, and benefited less from extension services, training and agricultural credit and revolving funds for export agriculture;
- Women had a low participation rate at policy level and in the management of programmes, except for the health sector;

Women made up 22% of employment in the Public Services, yet over 90% of the highest paid posts and 75% of managerial posts were held by men.

As a result, Sri Lanka's Ministry of Finance made a commitment that the Six-Year National Plan would be more gender-sensitive and reflect the needs of women and men, with more equitable delivery systems, increased participation of women in policy formulation and management of programmes, and gender-aware planning mechanisms. Corrective measures were identified for the education, agricultural and industrial sectors.

Initiatives taken by India have also raised awareness among policy-makers, planners and administrators of the need to ensure that the funds and benefits from other development sectors do not bypass women. India's committed and systematic approach to mainstreaming gender has resulted in the following:

- The National Policy for Empowerment of Women requires all Central and State Ministries to draw up time-bound plans to translate the policy into a set of practical actions. Gender Development Indices and evaluation mechanisms will be developed and gender auditing undertaken. Sex-disaggregated data will be collated by all primary collecting agencies, research/academic and financial institutions;
- Under the Women's Component Plan, at least 30% of the social sector financial allocations of the National Five-Year Plan is targeted to activities that will benefit women. The three-year gender budget programme which started in 2001 will enable the results to be evaluated;
- The Tenth National Development Plan reinforces commitment to gender-responsive budgeting in order to establish a gender-differential impact and translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments. This action links up the two complementary processes of the Women's Component Plan and Gender-responsive Budgeting to provide an efficiency factor in all women-related general development programmes.

instruments but many of these standards are not being effectively applied for the benefit of women, partly because some countries have not yet incorporated them into domestic law.

Ratification of international and regional instruments and enactment of domestic legislation are only the first steps towards the realisation of women's human rights. Besides being state parties to the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and Social and Economic and Cultural Rights, national governments in the region have put into place practical measures to ensure that women fully enjoy their human rights on the same basis as men.

A number of laws have been revised and significant progress has been recorded. Women's access to justice has been strengthened. The Commonwealth's Asian member countries have all ratified CEDAW, with the exception of Brunei Darussalam, and Bangladesh was among the first countries to sign its Optional Protocol. Even though India still has some reservations to CEDAW, it has passed over 22 laws during the last two years dealing with gender equality and women's rights issues.

At the regional level, the ASEAN Declaration for the Advancement of Women was signed on 5 July 1988 in Bangkok. The Declaration aims principally to promote the status of women and enable them to achieve their fullest potential. The implementation of the Declaration is monitored at the ASEAN Heads of Government Meeting, which is the highest decision-making body in ASEAN.

Member countries' progress reports on the implementation of the Beijing PFA are submitted to the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) on a regular basis. These reports are disseminated to all member countries during annual ACW meetings to promote the exchange of best practice.

The progress reports are also submitted regularly to regional and international bodies concerned with gender equality, for example, to the meetings of the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs and Commonwealth Heads of Government, and to the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Division for

the Advancement of Women.

The ACW initiates and implements regional development projects to advance the status of women. Currently, pending and on-going projects cover a wide range of issues, such as gender mainstreaming and gender-awareness training, violence against women, capacity building in ICTs, poverty reduction, livelihood management and trafficking of women.

ACW works closely with the ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisations (ACWO). As a confederation of national women organisations in the region, ACWO also plays an important role in implementing the plans and commitments adopted and approved by the ACW.

ASEAN member countries have

adopted another Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in 2003. The issue of violence against women, including trafficking of women and girls, remains one of the key concerns for South-East Asia. ASEAN has also endorsed the *Declaration for the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region*.

The South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) Social Charter was signed by SAARC Heads of State at their summit in January 2004. The Charter's Article VI speaks to the need for commitment and promotion of the status of women in the region.

Box 24.2: Women's Rights as Human Rights

India has a National Commission for Women, set up by an Act of Parliament, which acts as a watchdog and advocate for women's rights under the Constitution and other laws. In addition, a National Council, to be chaired by the Prime Minister, has been set up to oversee the implementation of the human rights agenda as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Commonwealth PoA.

Malaysia has declared that widows will continue to receive pensions even if they re-marry which was not the case under the 1980 Pensions Act. Malaysia has also amended the Employment Act to provide for flexible working hours and put into place a Code of Practice on the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in 1999. It is investigating the possibility of setting up a Family Court to resolve the present practice of multiple courts to settle matters involving matrimonial or property rights.

Singapore has made extensive amendments to its Women's Charter since 1996, including widening the scope of family violence beyond physical violence or threats; empowering the Court to issue Personal Protection Orders (PPOs) on the principle of 'balance of probabilities' rather than 'beyond reasonable doubt'; and setting up a Family Court. By 1997, there was a clear increase in the number of PPOs applied for and issued. A new enactment of the Criminal Procedure Act in January 1999 enabled evidence to be given through live-video or television link involving witnesses under 16 years of age for certain criminal offences, such as rape. In 1998, the Penal Code was amended to include a section on Enhanced Penalties for Offences against Domestic Maids after reports of employer abuse.

Combating the Exploitation of Women and Children

SAARC has a special technical committee on women and children though the girl-child issue varies in importance for countries in the region. The SAARC Regional Workshop on the Status of the Girl-Child was hosted by Sri Lanka in April 2003. It reinforced the need for a stronger role for national and local government in the production and delivery of adequate and affordable social services for women as a whole and women in poverty, especially in such areas as health, education, child and elderly care, as well as access to water and sanitation.

The SAARC workshop recommended the:

- Extension and expansion of educational programmes to include girls and women of all ages who have been excluded from education during their childhood and adolescence – this being recognition that adult literacy, non-formal education, awareness-building and skills training are some of the ways to empower poor women and enable them to participate in the labour market;
- Analysis of the impact of economic liberalisation on women living in poverty, based on region-specific data and information disaggregated by sex and age;
- Development of educational and training policies and programmes to enhance the capabilities of girls and women through formal and non-formal education – these policies and programmes to aim at breaking the gender-stereotyped provision of knowledge and skills, and promote images of women and girls in positions of power, value, prestige and public presence;
- Identification and strengthening of training and re-training, as well as vocational education in non-traditional areas to expand women's employment opportunities with empowering implications, and promote vocational training in sectors with growth potential, especially for young women.

Bangladesh and India have Plans of

Action to combat trafficking and the commercial and sexual exploitation of women and children that are consistent with the broader *SAARC Convention on Prevention of Trafficking of Women and Children in Prostitution and the SAARC Decade of the Girl-Child 1991–2000 for Survival, Protection and Development of the Girl-Child*.

Country Reports

The following pages present summaries of reports submitted by Commonwealth Asian countries on the progress of women and gender equality.

Women working in weaving in Brunei Darussalam



End Notes

1 The situation in individual countries can vary significantly. In Maldives, for example, 100% of people have access to water from an improved source and 56% to improved sanitation.

2 The MDG target is to halve the proportion of people whose income is less than US\$1 a day.

Bangladesh

COUNTRY REPORT (Summary)

Gender Profile

	1990	1995	2000
POPULATION*			
Total population (000)	110,00	120,100	131,100
Female population (% of total)	48.2	48.3	49.6
LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION			
Female labour force (% of total)	42	42	42
Female unemployment (% of female labour force)	1.9	2.3	3.3
EDUCATION			
Adult illiteracy rate (% of people aged 15+)			
Female	76.3	73.1	69.8
Male	55.7	53.2	50.6
Net primary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	60	88	
Male	68	87	
Net secondary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	12		24
Male	24		42
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	1	2	4
Male	7	9	8
HEALTH			
Life expectancy at birth (years)			
Female	55	59	62
Male	55	58	61
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)			
	96	75	54
Prevalence of HIV (% of people aged 15–24)			
Female	–	–	0
Male	–	–	0

Source: World Bank database of Gender Statistics

.. Figures not available.

This report has been compiled from Bangladesh's 2003 fifth periodic CEDAW report

Priority Concerns

The major goals of the Bangladesh National Policy for the Advancement of Women are to:

1. Establish equality between men and women in all spheres
2. Eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls
3. Establish women's human rights
4. Develop women as a human resource
5. Recognise women's contribution in social and economic spheres

Followed by: 6. Eliminate poverty among women; 7. Establish equality between men and women in administration, politics, education, games, sports and all other socio-economic spheres; 8. Eliminate all forms of oppression against women and girls; 9. Ensure empowerment of women in politics, administration and the economy; 10. Develop appropriate technology for women; 11. Ensure adequate health and nutrition for women; 12. Provide housing and shelter for women; 13. Create positive images of women in the media; and 14. Adopt special measures for women's equality in especially disadvantaged situations.

A Decade of Action

Bangladesh acceded to CEDAW in 1984 and to its Optional Protocol in 2000. It submitted combined third and fourth periodic reports on CEDAW in 1997, and a fifth periodic report in 2003. The country is ranked at 110 in the Gender-related Development Index in the *UNDP Human Development Report 2004*. The National Women's Machinery (NWM) is the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs.

Following the Beijing conference in 1995, the Government of Bangladesh adopted a National Policy for the Advancement of Women (1997) and then developed a National Action Plan (1998) through a consultative process which included civil society. The Beijing Platform for Action's 12 critical areas are at the core of this plan.

Violence Against Women

Violence against women is increasing despite efforts to curb it. The following



are the most prevalent types of violence against women in the country:

- Acid-throwing;
- Rape and murder;
- Trafficking; and
- Torture to get a dowry and financial help from wives or their relatives.

Throwing acid on women – usually young women and, increasingly, wives for failing to meet the demands of dowry – is a recent phenomenon. In 2002, Parliament passed two laws, the Acid Crime Prevention Act and Acid Control Act, restricting the import and sale of acid in open markets. Under the Acid Offences Act 2002 the death penalty is fixed as a maximum penalty for acid throwing offences that result in death.

Awareness campaigns on the evils and effects of acid throwing have been carried out, victims are given medical, financial and legal assistance as well as rehabilitation, and special tribunals will be formed to ensure speedy disposal of acid-throwing cases. There has been some decline in these offences since the stiffer laws were introduced.

The trafficking of women and children, and its related violence, is also increasing with women and children being forced into bonded labour and prostitution. Regional gangs, whose networks spread over the whole of South Asia and beyond are sometimes involved. The Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 provides deterrent punishments for offences ranging from cruelty, injury, rape or death.

Assistance for victims of rape and other forms of violence include one-stop crisis centres providing medical, legal and police assistance; DNA testing for rape victims; shelters for oppressed women, special tribunal courts at district levels; and units at national and district levels which can take action against offenders and offer legal advice to victims. Shelters not only provide refuges but also skills training to encourage women to be more self-reliant.

CSOs are especially involved in raising awareness of violence against women and in community mobilisation against it. Traffic Watch Bangladesh Northern Region is a network of 25 NGOs committed to addressing the issue of trafficking.

Women in Power and Decision-making

Since 1991, both the Prime Minister and the leader of the Opposition have been women and increasing numbers of women cast their votes and stand for political office.

Until recently, 30 seats in Parliament were reserved for women who were elected by those Members of Parliament (MPs) who had been elected by the people. In addition, women could contest any of the 300 general parliamentary seats. Thus, in the 1996 general election, women won direct election to 7 seats and with the 30 reserved seats made up 12.3% of MPs. The provision for reserved seats for women, however, expired in 2001. In the general election that year, women won direct elections to 6 seats and with no reserved seats made up only 2% of MPs.

The governing party and Opposition have committed themselves to reinstating, and possibly increasing, the reserved seats. A Bill to re-introduce the reserved seats and raise the number to 45 is now being examined by a Parliamentary Standing Committee.

Women are entering politics at the lower levels of government in increasing numbers. One of the most important decisions was to reserve 3 seats for women to be directly elected in each Union Parishad¹, Zila Parishad and municipality. The number of reserved seats for city corporations depends on population size.

Steps have also been taken to ensure that elected women play a role in decision-making. Among these are:

- Increasing the number of Union Parishad Standing Committees from 7–12 to ensure that women members participate;
- Expanding the number of Union Parishad Project Implementation Committees and mandating that a quarter of these committees be chaired by women;
- Making provisions that 3 women Union Parishad members be nominated to Upazila Co-ordination Committees; and
- Creating social welfare committees at every female ward and assigning the position of chairperson to the women members.

Table 25.1: Number of Seats Reserved for Women in Local Government, Bangladesh

Rural and Local Government Tiers	Number of Seats Reserved for Women
Union Parishad	4,479 Union Parishads x 3 = 13,537
Zila Parishads	64 Zila Parishads x 3 = 192
Pourashava (municipality)	183 municipalities x 3 = 549
City Corporations (4)	
Dhaka	30
Chittagong	10
Khulna	10
Rajshahi	10

Unfortunately, in many Union Parishad Standing Committees, women members have not been assigned with specific responsibilities. In most cases, women members are expected to be looking after education, family planning and health care issues.

Women's progress in politics is also held back by a lack of appropriate and adequate organisational arrangements in political parties for women's participation, a low inclusion of women, especially in decision-making hierarchies, and lack of political training.

A quota system has been introduced for public sector positions, with 10% of recruitment to gazetted posts and 15% to non-gazetted posts reserved for women. Women may also compete with men for posts outside the quota. Special initiatives have been taken to appoint women in senior levels of administration, such as to Deputy Secretary and Joint Secretary posts.

Although more women are entering public service, they still make up only 10% of all employees. Utilisation of the job quota has varied from 37% to 100% from year to year, depending on civil service exam results.

Many women, however, are employed outside the reserved quota for women. Nearly two-thirds of the women in the professional and technical cadre were employed on merit or through other quotas (tribal, district, etc.).

Education and Training of Women

Primary education is free and compulsory under the National Policy on Education 2000. Education for girls is a top priority and literacy and enrolment rates are improving – female literacy (age 7+) rose from 31.4% in 1996 to 42.5% in 1998 and the girls' drop-out rate at primary level decreased.

The enrolment of girls in secondary school has also risen between 1995 and 2000 (12%–44% of the age group) following the launch of the Female Secondary School Assistance Project in 1993. Its objectives are to increase enrolment of girls in secondary schools, give such support that would assist them to pass School Secondary Certificate or

equivalent exams, increase the number of teachers in the schools taking part in this project, raise the proportion of women teachers, and promote a community environment supportive of girls' education.

In spite of the increase in enrolment, drop-out rates remain high in secondary schools – in 1999, 52.1% of girls dropped out. To tackle this problem, the Government has made girls' education free up to Grade 12 and gives a cash allowance to all enrolled girls up to this grade. The girls' drop-out rate has been gradually decreasing.

As an incentive, the Government gives poor families a stipend of Tk100 and Tk125 a month for keeping in school one and more than one child (girl or boy) respectively.

There is a provision to reserve 60% of all vacancies for primary school teachers for women – this has already raised the percentage of women teachers at this level from about 21% in 1991 to 37.86% in 2001.

More girls are also being encouraged to take up science, technical and vocational subjects. The male to female ratio in medical education is 60:40. About 12% of students at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology are women, 6.3% in the Bangladesh Agricultural University and 7.33% in the two campuses

of the University of Science and Technology.

Different ministries offer women training in livestock, fisheries and other agro-based industries. Training in co-operative management, social awareness raising, formal and non-formal education and adult literacy classes are also offered to women.

Non-formal education programmes include a country-wide programme for adolescent girls and boys and women between the ages of 14–45 which was launched by the Department of Non-formal Education in the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education.

National Women's Machinery

The Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs is the NWM and its implementing agencies are the National Council for Women's Development, Women's Development Implementation and Evaluation Committee and the *Upazila* and District Women in Development Co-ordination Committee. The NWM is headed by the Ministry's Secretary and its agency within the Ministry is the Department of Women's Affairs.

A Women in Development (WID) focal points mechanism has been set up to enable inter-ministerial co-ordination to

Women queue outside a health centre



A National Council for Women's Development oversees women- and children-related activities

ensure gender mainstreaming in projects and programmes of sectoral ministries. To increase collaboration, a WID focal points network headed by the Ministry's Joint Secretary has been set up. Constituting sub-WID focal points in all the implementing governmental agencies has further strengthened the mechanism.

In addition, a separate WID focal point committee has been set up in the Planning Commission/Ministry of Planning to incorporate gender mainstreaming issues in the National planning process.

The National Council for Women's Development, set up in 1995, is the highest policy making body which monitors and oversees women- and children-related activities in various sectors. The council is chaired by the Prime Minister and has 48 members, including 10 representatives from civil society. The NWM acts as its secretariat.

The Women's Development Implementation and Evaluation Committee was set up in 1998 to monitor the progress of the National Action Policy and other WID-related activities. It is chaired by the Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs.

The *Upazila* and District WID Co-ordinating Committees have been set up to ensure co-ordination between policy and implementation at these levels. District and *Upazila* level officers and representatives from civil society are committee members.

There is also a Parliamentary Standing Committee which examines relating to women and gender equality. It is headed by the Prime Minister.

Partnerships

CSOs are involved in policy-making, monitoring and co-ordination at all levels from the National Council for Women's Development to the *Upazila* and District WID Co-ordinating Committees.



End Note

1 Two distinct types of local government prevail in Bangladesh – one for rural and another for urban areas. Local government in rural areas has a four-tier system: (a) Gram Parishad, (b) Union Parishad, (c) *Upazila* Parishad and (d) Zila Parishad.

The urban local government institutions are: (a) Pourashava (municipalities) and (b) City (or municipal) Corporations.

Brunei Darussalam

COUNTRY REPORT (Summary)

Gender Profile 1990 1995 2000

	1990	1995	2000
POPULATION*			
Total population (000)	256	338	351
Female population (% of total)	47.1	47.2	47.3
LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION			
Female labour force (% of total)	32	34	36
Female unemployment (% of female labour force)	--	--	--
EDUCATION			
Adult illiteracy rate (% of people aged 15+)			
Female	20.6	15.5	11.9
Male	9	6.9	5.4
Net primary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	90	93	--
Male	92	93	--
Net secondary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	75	71	--
Male	67	64	--
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	4	9	16
Male	4	6	8
HEALTH			
Life expectancy at birth (years)			
Female	76	78	79
Male	72	73	74
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)			
	10	8	6
Prevalence of HIV (% of people aged 15-24)			
Female	--	--	--
Male	--	--	--

Source: World Bank database of Gender Statistics

* World Bank Atlas 1991 (for 1990 figures), 1997 (1995) and 2003 (2002)

Priority Concerns

Among the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the Government of Brunei Darussalam has identified the following, in order of priority, for national action:

1. Women and Poverty/Women and Health/Violence Against Women/The Girl-child
2. Education and Training of Women
3. Women and the Economy.

A Decade of Action

Brunei Darussalam has not yet ratified CEDAW and has no designated national women's machinery or specific policy on gender issues. However, women's concerns have been incorporated into all development programmes, including the 8th National Development Plan. Women have equal opportunities in all sectors.

Women and Health

Life expectancy has improved for both women (79 years) and men (74 years) and the infant mortality rate is low. All citizens, regardless of sex or age are provided with free medical care. A nominal registration fee of Br\$1 is charged to adults only. Pre- and post-natal medical care for women is also free, and seminars, workshops and other awareness programmes on breast cancer, breast-feeding, HIV/AIDS and a healthy lifestyle are conducted by women's NGOs and government agencies.

Education and Training of Women

Literacy levels are high and continue to improve. Enrolment for primary and secondary education is also high for both boys and girls. In tertiary institutions, females sometimes represent 80% of those enrolled. Scholarships are given on merit. The number of female scholarship holders in University Brunei Darussalam and in universities abroad far outweighs that of males.

The 8th National Development Plan has set aside funds for the development of ICTs as proficiency in ICTs will further empower women and men economically, and underpin development programmes.

The education and training of women is given high priority in Brunei Darussalam

Girls and boys are being introduced to computers in primary school. Students in higher institutions of learning, and staff in government and non-government sectors are encouraged to become proficient. The Brunei Information Technology Council, with members from various government agencies, advocates development in this field.

Violence Against Women

Since the establishment of a Domestic Violence Unit in the police force in 1999, there has been a marked increase in reported cases – about 104 in 2001 compared to 57 in 1997. Issues of violence against women and children have been on top of the agenda of a National Committee on Social Issues which was set up in 2000. This committee comprises representatives from the Government and from NGOs who are appointed by the Head of State. The Community Development Department (CDD) in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports is the committee's national secretariat.

Married women are protected against ill-treatment and discrimination under Islamic family law. Non-Muslim women are similarly protected under the Married Women's Order 1999. These laws cover matters concerning divorce, maintenance and custody of children.

The CDD has set up special rehabilitation homes for women and children who need protection and the CDD Director has been legally designated as Protector of these homes.

Women and Poverty

Due to its extensive resources of oil and gas, and its small population, Brunei Darussalam is one of the world's richer countries – its GDP per capita in 2001 was US\$12,840. Female poverty is therefore not a serious problem especially as the Government, through the CDD, pays a monthly welfare assistance allowance to individuals and families who are less fortunate than others. About 85% of the recipients are widows and divorcees. In addition, the CDD is planning to establish skills training programmes for female recipients of the monthly assistance



allowance to enable them to find employment and be self-sufficient financially. Citizens over 60 receive payments through an Old Age Pension scheme introduced in 1954.

Women in Power and Decision-making

The number of women in decision-making levels is low though in recent years, a female ambassador and judge have been appointed. There are several female directors in the Public Service.

National Women's Machinery

There is no National Women's Machinery in Brunei Darussalam. A government department exclusively devoted to women's and gender issues has not yet been established and there is therefore no specific budget for gender issues. Issues pertaining to women, children and the elderly are the responsibility of the Community Development Department of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports.

Partnerships

Non-government partners sit with government representatives on the National Committee on Social Issues

which addresses, among other things, violence against women and children.

Concerns for the Future

Focus will be put on advancing women in the economy, women in decision-making and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women.

India

COUNTRY REPORT (Summary)

Gender Profile	1990	1995	2000
POPULATION			
Total population (000)	849,500	932,200	1,015,900
Female population (% of total)	48.3	48.4	48.4
LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION			
Female labour force (% of total)	31	32	32.4
Female unemployment (% of female labour force)	..	17.7	20.3
EDUCATION			
Adult illiteracy rate (% of people aged 15+)			
Female	64.1	59.4	54.6
Male	38.1	34.8	31.6
Net primary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	..	..	76
Male	..	..	91
Net secondary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	..	..	..
Male	..	..	..
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	4	5	9
Male	8	8	12
HEALTH			
Life expectancy at birth (years)			
Female	59	62	64
Male	59	61	62
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)			
	84	74	68
Prevalence of HIV (% of people aged 15–24)			
Female	..	..	0.6
Male	..	..	0.4

Source: World Bank database of Gender Statistics
.. Figures not available

Priority Concerns

Among the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the Government of India has identified the following, in order of priority, for national action:

1. Education and Training of Women
 2. Women and Health
 3. The Girl-child
 4. Women and Poverty
 5. Women and the Economy
- Followed by: 6. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women; 7. Human Rights of Women; 8. Violence Against Women; 9. Women in Power and Decision-making; 10. Women and Armed Conflict; 11. Women in the Media; 12. Women and the Environment.

A Decade of Action

India ratified CEDAW in 1993 and its National Women's Machinery (NWM) is the Department of Women and Child Development (WCD) in the Ministry of Human Resource Development. According to the 2001 census, there are 495.75 million women in India, representing 48.3% of the population, and the NWM takes a life-cycle approach to the development of women, with specific attention to the different phases of life.

India is ranked 103 on the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) in the *UNDP Human Development Report 2004*.

Education and Training of Women

Free and compulsory education is a fundamental right for all children in the 6–14-year age group. Specially targeted programmes, such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) which was launched in 2000 by the Ministry of Education, aim at reaching all women and girls and is perceived to help the goal of Education for Women's Equality. The SSA is working towards bridging the gender gap at primary level by 2007 and at elementary level by 2010. Special provisions for girls include free textbooks

A special programme aims at raising the level of female literacy in 45 districts where the literacy rate among females is below 30%. The District Primary

India has adopted a multi-pronged strategy in its approach to attaining gender equality



Education Programme has already recorded significant results through a mixture of methods including removing gender bias and stereotypes in textbooks and curricula, creating a more gender-sensitive education system and appointing gender-sensitive teachers, appointing more women teachers at primary level (at least 90%), reducing drop-out rates and introducing special incentives to retain female students. The Mahila Samakhya Programme focuses specially on socially excluded and landless women; education enables them to raise questions, critically analyse problems and seek answers.

Life-long learning through correspondence courses, distance learning and self-study programmes is encouraged, and the girl-child living below the poverty line is especially targeted with financial support until completion of secondary education. Women are encouraged to enrol for vocational training and the network of such training centres is extending into all districts and sub-districts. The Department of Education also focuses on the emerging trades with high employment potential for women, such as electronics, computer applications, bio-engineering, bio-technology, food processing, fabric designing, communications and media.

The Ministry of Education has drawn up plans to provide free education for girls up to college level.

Women and Health

Women's multiple roles as mothers, income-earners, decision-makers and carers, among other things, have made health a priority issue throughout their lives. Some of the Ministry of Health's programmes focus on maternal health, and basic reproductive and child health care; their aim: to reduce maternal and infant mortality. Steps have been taken to improve the access and utilisation of services at the Primary Health Centre level, especially to poor rural or urban women, and also to check the declining sex ratio of females to males.

Since 1997, the ministry's Family Welfare Programme has involved the

community and community leaders, such as village heads and self-help groups of women in planning and strategising. The Reproductive and Child Health Programme aims at the reduction of maternal and infant mortality, and greater gender awareness in health care. Better facilities, drugs and treatments are included under this programme, as well as community-based initiatives.

The National Population Policy 2000 envisages an integrated and comprehensive package of reproductive and child health services by the Government, the voluntary sector and industry working in partnership. The long-term objective is to attain a stable population growth by 2045. Legislation has also been introduced to address the problem of female foeticide by preventing the misuse of medical technologies and pre-natal diagnostic techniques. Sterner penalties for conduct of illegal abortions are also proposed.

The WCD has an integrated Child Development Services programme which aims at the holistic development of children below six years, and at pregnant and lactating mothers. Combating malnutrition in children and mothers is one of the major components of the programme. Supplementary nutrition is given to pregnant and lactating mothers. UNDP figures suggest that about 24% of the population is undernourished.

The prevalence of HIV infection is relatively low in India – 0.79% of the population between 15 and 49 years, but in a country of over 1 billion people, this comes to 8 million adults, 1.5 million of whom are females. There is, moreover, some concern that in the vulnerable 15–24 age group, prevalence of infection among females is nudging ahead than that for males.

Special programmes have been

launched to check the problem of parent-to-child transmission of the disease and other sexually transmitted infections. These are aimed at vulnerable groups, including women, in both rural and urban slums. In addition, Phase II of the National AIDS Control Programme of 1999, looks at the gender dimension of the disease and takes a holistic approach from communication on change in sexual behaviour to treatment. The disease is beginning to be considered more as a development problem than just a public health issue.

The Girl-child

Gender equality and a better life for women begins with the girl-child. India is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and a National Plan of Action was drawn up. The juvenile sex ratio is the most sensitive indicator of the status of the girl-child in society and legislation on female foeticide and infanticide has been made tougher.

Various programmes focus on the health and nutrition, immunisation and educational needs of the girl-child. For the girl-child in especially difficult circumstances – such as working and street children, children with HIV/AIDS, those with disabilities or who are destitute – their problems are addressed in various sectoral programmes which integrate girl-child issues.

Women and Poverty/Women and the Economy

UNDP figures (1990–2001) indicate that 34.7% of the population live on less than US\$1 a day. Poverty reduction programmes are closely linked with improvements in the social development sectors. These efforts to improve income

Box 27.1: Holistic Framework for HIV/AIDS in India

The second phase of India's National AIDS Control Programme, launched in 1999, specifically focuses on strengthening the capacity of the Central and State Governments to respond to HIV/AIDS in a holistic manner, while taking into account the gender dimensions of the disease. Targeted interventions include behaviour change communication, counselling, providing health care support, and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases.

National AIDS Prevention and Control, and National Blood policies were approved on the basis that AIDS is a developmental problem and not just a public health issue. Other proactive actions taken by India included scaling up the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV programme; and implementing a Family Health Awareness Campaign to address the management of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS through awareness-raising among the vulnerable groups, including women, and residents of rural and urban slums.

are closely linked with access to quality education and health facilities, especially for women.

Ongoing poverty alleviation programmes have been strengthened to address specifically the needs and problems of women. A 'group approach' is proving more successful and therefore steps have been taken to mobilise women into self-help groups (SHGs) and through necessary support services to enhance their joint capabilities.

Training-cum-employment generation programmes have also been expanded to create more employment-generation opportunities and to cover as many women as possible who are living below the poverty line. As a step forward, the micro-credit programme of the government-funded Rashtriya Mahila Kosh is closely linked with the SHGs for financing various employment-cum-income generating activities. Other schemes include training to improve the knowledge and skills of poor women with no assets in traditional sectors such as agriculture, animal husbandry and handicrafts.

Women from traditional sectors get increased opportunities for employment as the traditional sector has now been linked to the global market. While outsourcing and sub-contracting have created new opportunities for home-based work, women often have to work for long hours, earn well below the minimum wage and have no safety nets. Increasingly, many jobs traditionally performed by women are now mechanised. The abuse of technology, such as the Internet for trafficking, has claimed victims in India too.

Ensuring that the impact of globalisation on women's lives is beneficial is an underlying theme of the WCD and is one of its biggest challenges.

Violence Against Women/ Human Rights of Women

India is a signatory to CEDAW with one

reservation (concerning compulsory arbitration by the International Court of Justice), and two declamatory statements (on marriage and family relations, and on compulsory registration of marriage). A task force reviewed women-specific and related legislation and suggested reviews.

Different ministries have moved to amend legislation and to strengthen women's access to justice. For example, all-women police stations have been set up in 14 States to facilitate the reporting of crimes against women, and special answering facilities in police stations have been created to handle reports on gender-based violence. Voluntary Action Bureaus and Family Counselling Centres also operate in police stations and Family Courts set up to adjudicate family disputes. The National Commission of Women (NCW) looks into specific complaints of atrocities, harassment, denial of rights and exploitation of women, and takes remedial action to restore women's legitimate rights. Amendments to the Penal Code have been made to impose greater penalties on offenders and recommendations have been made for overhauling the country's rape laws.

Table 27.1: Crimes Against Women, India (2002)

Type of crime	Relative incidence (%)
Torture	32.4
Molestation	23.3
Kidnapping & abduction	10.6
Rape	11.7
Sexual harassment	7.8
Dowry death	4.9
Immoral traffic	6.7
Dowry Prohibition Act	2.0
Others	0.5

Source: National Crime Records Bureau, 2002

Crimes against women made up 7.2% of all crimes committed under the Penal Code.

In accordance with directions from the Supreme Court, a Code of Conduct was formulated by the NCW. Accordingly a Complaints Committee has been set up in every organisation, whether private or government, for investigating complaints of sexual harassment in the work place.

Programmes have been established to provide for women and girls who are victims of trafficking.

Women in Power and Decision-making

Amendments to the Indian Constitution in 1993 provide for the reservation of a third of elected seats for women in both rural and urban local bodies. There is also a one-third reservation for women in posts as chairpersons of these bodies. Thus, of 475 district Panchayats (the district-level local governments), 158 are chaired by women. In addition, nearly one-third of mayors of municipalities are women.

The number of women representatives in parliament is also increasing – 73 in both the upper and lower houses of Parliament in 2001. A strong affirmative action strategy has been adopted. The 8th Constitution Amendment Bill, seeking to extend the one-third reservation of seats for women in all Assemblies up to the National Parliament, has been tabled though not adopted at the time of reporting.

The number of women in the central Council of Ministers continues to be low, but with a marginal increase of 0.8% between 1985 and 2001. Of these, 1 is of Cabinet rank and 5 are Ministers of State. The WCD believes these trends point to the need for affirmative action if women's concerns are to gain political prominence.

Representation of women in decision-making levels of the premier services, the Indian Administrative Service and Indian Police Service, which stood at only 5.4% in 1987, increased to 7.6% in 2000.

Women's organisations are now working in a variety of fields, including income-generation, business, ICTs, politics, health and education

Gender-responsive Budgeting

India has adopted a comprehensive approach to gender-responsive budgeting and intends that action is not restricted to a post-audit of public accounts but is a continuous spiral that aims at mainstreaming gender issues into all aspects of public life. The purview of gender audits extends to all policies, programmes, public expenditure, and outcomes and benefits.

Gender analyses of the Union Budgets of 2001/02 and 2002/03 show an increase of over 3% in the budgetary allocation to 'women-specific' schemes, and that the increase for schemes identified as 'pro-women' increased by 7%.

National Women's Machinery

The NWM, the Department of Women and Child Development (WCD), was set up in 1985 as part of the Ministry of Human Resource Development. In addition to formulating plans, policies and programmes, it enacts and amends legislation affecting women and children, and co-ordinates the efforts of both government and NGOs.

The WCD has four autonomous organisations working under its aegis: The



for women in the informal sector for entrepreneurial activities; and the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB), which is an umbrella body for networking with state social welfare boards and voluntary organisations. All are mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and are fully funded by the Government.

One Parliamentary Standing Committee scrutinises the WCD's demands for grants. A Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women examines the reports of the NCW and reports on the Government's measure for improving the status and conditions of women.

Other ministries and government departments look after specific issues related to women and children, such as for health, education and employment. The WCD has overall responsibility for co-ordinating their activities and Women's Cells in the ministries and departments

empower women economically.

The budget allocation for the WCD is 2001/02 was Rs.1,703.79 crore (revised estimate, approximately £241.8 million), for 2002/03 Rs. 2,138.41 crore (revised estimate, £303.5 million), and for 2003/04 Rs. 3,240.32 crore (£460 million).

Partnerships

Voluntary organisations implement many of the WCD's schemes, especially for literacy, support services, micro-credit for women, employment and income generation, gender sensitisation, organising women into self-help groups, and combating violence and other atrocities against women and girls. The CSWB supports a country-wide network working at grassroots level and other co-operative partnerships illustrate how government-NGO co-operation can result in better opportunities for women.

India works with a number of international organisations on gender-related programmes.

Concerns for the Future

Indian women have moved from being recipients of welfare to the targets of basic needs programmes, to actors in the development process. The three main current and future priority areas are:

- Education and training: Education has been recognised as the prerequisite for improvement in women's status;
- Women and health/nutrition: Women's health is a public health priority throughout the life cycle, from birth through old age; and
- The girl-child: Prioritising the needs of the girl-child as deserving of special attention is a principal guiding state action.

Chart 27.1: Organisational Structure of India's NWM



National Commission for Women (NCW), which supports WCD in protecting women's rights and privileges; the National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development, which undertakes research and training related to women; the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, which has forward and backward linkages

have developed strong links with the WCD. Most State Governments have departments at state level which look exclusively at issues concerning women and children. Many have set up Women's Development Corporations which help women access benefits of different schemes designed for them, and

Malaysia

COUNTRY REPORT (Summary)

Gender Profile	1990	1995	2000
POPULATION*			
Total population (000)	18,200	20,600	23,300
Female population (% of total)	49.3	49.3	49.4
LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION			
Female labour force (% of total)*	..	43.5	46.4
Female unemployment (% of female labour force)	..	..	..
EDUCATION			
Adult illiteracy rate (% of people aged 15+)			
Female	25.6	20.8	16.6
Male	13.1	10.7	8.6
Net primary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	..	100	97
Male	..	100	97
Net secondary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	..	..	73
Male	..	..	66
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	7	10	27
Male	8	14	25
HEALTH			
Life expectancy at birth (years)			
Female	73	74	75
Male	68	69	70
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)			
	16	11	8
Prevalence of HIV (% of people aged 15–24)			
Female	..	..	0.1
Male	..	..	0.6

Source: World Bank database of Gender Statistics

* Government of Malaysia statistics with a 2001 figure in the 2000 column

.. Figures not available

Priority Concerns

Among the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the Malaysian Government has identified the following, in order of priority, for national action:

1. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women
 2. Violence Against Women
 3. Human Rights of Women
 4. Women and Poverty
 5. Women and Health
- Followed by: 6. Education and Training of Women; 7. Women and the Economy; 8. Women in Power and Decision-making; 9. Women in the Media; 10. The Girl-child; 11. Women and the Environment; 12. Women and Armed Conflict.

A Decade of Action

Malaysia ratified CEDAW in 1995. Since 2001 it has elevated its National Women's Machinery (NWM) to the level of a ministry (the Ministry of Women and Family Development) to ensure effective implementation and co-ordination of programmes for women and families. The country is ranked at 52 in the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) in the *UNDP Human Development Report 2004*.

Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

The Ministry of Women and Family Development has responsibility for incorporating gender perspectives into development. To do this, it has established several inter-ministerial working committees to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the National Women's Policy, National Plan of Action, as well as the Beijing Platform for Action, Commonwealth PoA and various international instruments.

In addressing specific issues, the ministry established several technical working groups, chaired by the minister, on legislation, and on women and ICTs, among other subjects. Women's Development Offices have been established at state level, and the National Council on Women and Family set up at state, parliamentary and district levels. The council has a co-ordinating

*Trina and Sonya: future leaders?
Educating and protecting the girl-child is a
priority for many Commonwealth countries*



role between federal and state governments.

Women are able to obtain assistance from the Rumah Nur (women's services centres) set up in all state capitals and in some districts. Rumah Nur are referral and one-stop centres for information on services and programmes such as counselling, legal literacy and information on entrepreneurship.

Violence Against Women

The Domestic Violence Act was passed in 1994 and implemented in 1996. To ensure effectiveness, awareness-raising campaigns and training of enforcement officers have been conducted. In 2002, the Women Against Violence (WAVE) campaign was launched and as of July 2003, 1,700 women and men were registered as volunteers and trained. The Act itself is being reviewed to examine the difficulties in obtaining Interim Protection Orders for spouses, the power of judges, the need for counselling and the lack of understanding of the provisions of the Act.

and this position does not change on marriage. The Government is looking at the possibility of setting up Family Courts to handle matters involving matrimonial or property conflicts which give rise to complex cases that have to be heard in multiple courts.

Since independence in 1957, women have played prominent roles in political and public life. The percentage of women MPs in the lower house has risen from 7% in 1995 to 9.1% in 2000, and that of

gravitate towards traditional 'women's' occupations (e.g., teaching, nursing, secretarial) but the pattern is slowly changing as women are being encouraged into other fields, such as science, technology and management.

Paid maternity leave is granted to every female employee in the public and private sectors, with paid paternity leave of up to 7 days granted to males in the public sector. Women also have the option to be assessed separately for tax.

Table 28.1: Reported Cases by Type of Crime, Malaysia

Crime Type	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Domestic Violence	5,726	6,041	3,806	3,468	3,107	2,755
Incest	247	317	275	213	246	306
Molest	1,311	1,318	1,316	1,234	1,363	1,472
Rape	1,323	1,489	1,469	1,217	1,386	1,431

Source: Royal Malaysian Police

In 1999, the Ministry of Human Resources issued a Code of Practice on the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace. This contained guidelines to employers on the establishment and implementation of in-house preventive and redress mechanisms on sexual harassment.

Women in Power and Decision-making/Human Rights of Women

The rights of women as citizens to participate in the political and public life of the nation are guaranteed under the Federal Constitution. Generally, women have the same rights as men to own, acquire, manage and dispose of property,

women in the various State Assemblies from 4% to 6% in the same period. The Government's Nur Bestari programme aims at building women's leadership skills and motivation.

Women and the Economy

The labour laws do not discriminate against women and some provisions apply exclusively to women. Women have equal opportunities to undergo vocational training and re-training, including apprenticeship and the female labour force participation has increased. Flexible working hours are provided under the Employment Act.

There is a tendency for women to

Women and Health

The health services recognise that women have different health needs because of biological, demographic and socio-economic circumstances. Under the Family Health Programme, 1996, women's health was looked at from two perspectives: family health, comprising maternal and child health, immunisation, family planning, early cancer detection and nutrition; and diseases affecting women with the emphasis on the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

A programme for pregnant mothers who have HIV has been introduced at all antenatal clinics. In the vulnerable 15–24 age group, the prevalence of HIV infection

is six times that for males. In 2001, the infection rate for people between 15 and 49 years was 0.35%.

Both public and private hospitals are being made conscious of the need to be women- and elderly-friendly as life expectancy, especially for women, increases.

Education and Training of Women

The New Economic Policy of 1970 stipulated equal access to educational opportunities for boys and girls. Girls' access to education has improved through the building of more schools, notably girls-only primary and secondary schools, and similar residential schools in the rural areas. For lower income groups, financial aid is given in the form of junior scholarships and bursaries, a textbook loan scheme, free uniforms and subsidised transport to schools irrespective of sex. Figures for gross enrolment for tertiary education show a higher percentage of females.

Women and Poverty

Efforts by the Government and NGOs to reduce the incidence of poverty among women include the provision of micro-credit facilities to about 22,850 women through Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia for small businesses and training single mothers. In view of the rising number of female-headed households from 15.1% in 1997 to 16.1% in 1999 and the parallel rise in poverty among them, efforts are being made to ensure women in female-headed households have the capacity to care for their families. Approaches to dealing with female poverty within the Muslim community have also been explored with the Islamic Development Bank.

Other Concerns

In implementing gender mainstreaming strategies, the Government focuses on encouraging each government department, NGOs and the private sector to be concerned about and work together for gender equality. A pilot project on gender-responsive budget analysis was agreed on in 2002 involving the ministries

Box 28.1: Economic Crisis and Macroeconomic Policy

Malaysia reported that during the East Asia financial crisis of 1998, a total of 36,284 women workers were retrenched from January to December that year, the majority being from clerical and production levels. Data also suggested that the percentage of semi-skilled and skilled workers laid off was higher for women than men in the same category.

Compared to men, women faced greater difficulties in getting jobs during the economic slowdown and in some cases only 4% of vacancies were reserved for women. A study revealed that out of 245 employers, only 9% asked for women candidates. Women were only wanted being recruited as sales agents or in administration or teaching, whereas men were recruited in all sectors. Employers were also less likely to recruit women where extensive training investment was required.

It was found that during this period, women were cutting back on their intake of nutritional and high-protein foods, in particular milk products, beef, fish and vegetables. Thus, women as care-givers for the family were doubly affected in their incomes and quality of life.

Around this period, Malaysia introduced a series of programmes targeting single mothers, including the provision of facilities such as child care, and assistance in education and health. These arose out of the increase in the number of female-headed households, from 15.1% in 1997 to 16.1% in 1999, which was accompanied by a rise in the incidence of poverty in this group.

of education, health, rural development and human resource.

National Women's Machinery

The NWM began as the Women's Affairs Division, later upgraded to the Women's Affairs Department, in the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development. In 1999, the department was transferred to the Prime Minister's Department. Recognising the need to further enhance the effectiveness of the national machinery, the Ministry of Women and Family Development was established in 2001. This ministry is now the NWM.

The staff of the Department of Women's Development in the ministry has grown from 15 in 1995 to 101 by August 2003 and the budget for the department during that period has risen from RM3,459,300 to RM99,050,700 (about £15 million at April 2004 exchange rates). The NWM is headed by the Secretary-General of the ministry. The ministry is assisted by a National Advisory Council on Women which was set up in June 1976 as a co-ordinating,

consultative and advisory body. This council comprises 29 people from various fields, such as politics, the professions, academia, NGOs and the government, and are appointed by the ministry. The ministry has also established the National Council for Women and Family and set up several technical working committees.

The ministry set up an inter-ministerial committee and consultative committee to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the National Women's Policy and National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women, as well as the Beijing Platform for Action, Commonwealth PoA and other international instruments.

Among the NWM's achievements are amendments to legislation and regulations allowing widows to retain their pensions on remarriage, easier provisions for stay for foreign spouses and low-cost housing priority for single mothers. A Family First: Bring Your Heart Home campaign (2002) to strengthen family life, a 'smart start' package for newlyweds and a WAVE campaign (2003), were launched.

The construction of a sex-

disaggregated database is one of the key initiatives of the ministry's long-term developmental strategies. This will provide the ministry with information for planning, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of programmes and projects.

Partnerships

The Ministry of Women and Family Development has formed 'smart partnerships' with NGOs to implement programmes for women, and funds have been disbursed to NGOs in order to do so. The ministry has worked closely with civil society and NGOs on programmes such as WAVE, the Nur Bestari training series aimed at building women's leadership skills and motivation, and another programme called Nur Bikerz, launched to provide business opportunities to women, especially single mothers.

The ministry also works with international organisations – for example, with the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNIFEM on an Asian regional workshop on gender-based violence in 2002.

Concerns for the Future

The Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001–2005) outlines plans to provide women with skills and knowledge for their twin responsibilities of family and career. The top two priorities among the eight strategic thrusts for women's advancement are:

- Providing more education and training for women, including to meet the demands of the knowledge-based economy, pursue non-traditional fields of study (e.g. engineering), and have access to re-training opportunities and to improve ICT skills; and
- Promoting legislation on women's rights as human rights by reviewing existing laws and regulations to eliminate provisions that discriminate or have adverse effects on women.

Asia Regional Workshop on Strengthening Partnerships for Eliminating Gender-based Violence, hosted by the Government of Malaysia in 2002



Maldives

COUNTRY REPORT (Summary)

Gender Profile

	1990	1995	2000
POPULATION*			
Total population (000)	218	253	276
Female population (% of total)	48.7	48.7	49.3
LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION			
Female labour force (% of total)	42	43	43
Female unemployment (% of female labour force)	..	..	..
EDUCATION			
Adult illiteracy rate (% of people aged 15+)			
Female	5.4	4.3	3.2
Male	5	3.9	3
Net primary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	..	..	99
Male	..	..	99
Net secondary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	..	..	33
Male	..	..	29
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	..	..	..
Male	..	..	..
HEALTH			
Life expectancy at birth (years)			
Female	61	66	70
Male	62	65	67
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)			
	80	67	59
Prevalence of HIV (% of people aged 15–24)			
Female	..	..	0.5
Male	..	..	0.3

Source: World Bank database of Gender Statistics

* World Bank Atlas 1991 (for 1990 figures), 1997 (1995) and 2002 (2000)

.. Figures not available.

Priority Concerns

Among the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the Maldives Government has identified the following, in order of priority, for national action:

1. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women
2. Education and Training of Women
3. Women and Health
4. Violence Against Women
5. The Girl-child

Followed by: 6. Women in Poverty/Women in the Economy; 7. Women in Power and Decision-making; 8. Women in the Media; 9. Human Rights of Women; 10. Women and the Environment; and 11. Women and Armed Conflict.

A Decade of Action

Maldives consists of 1,190 islands, of which 199 are inhabited. A quarter of the population is classified as urban and live in the capital, Malé. All laws are based on *sharia* law. Maldives ratified CEDAW in 1993 and its National Women's Machinery (NWM) is the Gender and Development Section of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Security. The National Development Plan has a separate section on gender.

Institutional Mechanisms

The NWM is the lead agency in advocating and mainstreaming gender issues and promoting the participation of women in all spheres of society. A Gender Management System (GMS), based on the Commonwealth model, was put in place in 2001 to facilitate gender mainstreaming and a Gender Equality Council, headed by the President, was established that year. Work continues on strengthening the GMS through capacity building and advocacy.

The sixth National Development Plan reaffirms gender mainstreaming as a priority and cross-cutting issue. The first-ever codified Family Law came into effect on 1 July 2001, which spells out the many rights available to women under *sharia* law, such as pre-nuptial agreements and the rights of women in cases of divorce and polygamy.

Education and Training of Women

There is no gender discrimination in the provision of education, and literacy among women and men is high. Barriers to women, however, persist, such as lack of schools close to where girls live. There is a greater emphasis now on selecting equal numbers of females and males for higher education opportunities, but there are no universities in Maldives and females are often disadvantaged by being unable to go abroad in pursuit of higher education.

There are no quotas for females for scholarships, and no preference for females in drop-out schemes. In addition, vocational training tends to offer traditionally male subjects. However, the Island Development Committees facilitate and provide technical training for island women to increase their opportunities for income generation.

Women and Health

Various programmes are being conducted to address women's health issues, malnourishment and deficiency diseases, reproductive health issues and the importance of breastfeeding. Population education has also become part of the school curriculum. The geographical make-up of the country and small island populations make it difficult to establish health care facilities, especially specialist health care, on every island. The policy of relocating populations to larger islands may improve the situation.

The incidence of HIV/AIDS is low (11 cases among locals since 1991). There is a high level of knowledge about the disease and how it is transmitted; this information is also included in the school curriculum. The risk factors, however, are high: the high rate of divorce (59% of marriages) and remarriage, a large youth population, increasing drug abuse, and large numbers of men working away from their homes for long periods. A new HIV/AIDS policy is therefore under consideration.

The Girl-child

Opportunities for and problems in



education of the girl-child have been outlined in the education section (*above*). For the girl-child facing physical, psychological or sexual abuse and neglect, or whose rights have been compromised, the Unit for the Rights of Children has been specially set up within the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Security. Child Protection Workers, who work with vulnerable children, are based on all inhabited islands. Work needs to be done, however, to establish legal systems and structures to deal with and support victims of abuse.

Violence Against Women/Human Rights of Women

In 1997 all laws were appraised for gender bias and there are no laws that discriminate against women although some socio-cultural factors may restrict the ability of females to use available resources. Females can administer property and are equal before the courts, except where *sharia* law restricts the weight of their testimony.

There are no specific laws dealing with gender-based violence, and women have been reluctant to report assaults because of the social stigma, the lack of an enabling environment or support system and the view that domestic violence is a private matter (*see National Women's Machinery section, below*).

Women enjoy full political rights except that they cannot contest the presidency. Few female candidates stand for election; in 2001, 5 of 50 members of the *majlis* were female (2 elected and 3 nominated). The Government is encouraging more females to come

forward. Since 2000, one-third of members of Atoll Development Committees must be female, and women have a small representation on Island Development Committees.

Women and the Economy

Women's employment continues to conform to traditional stereotypes. This is partly due to cultural resistance to women seeking jobs on other islands. The traditional responsibility for rural women is to look after children, the home and island-based agriculture, while men are often away fishing for a living or are employed elsewhere.

Women do work in the agriculture and fish processing sector though the latter is now declining as industrial methods are introduced. Where women undertake agricultural marketing and selling, the facilities are often inadequate.

National Women's Machinery

In 1979, a Preparatory Committee for the International Decade was established under the then National Planning Agency. This was renamed the National Women's Committee in 1981 and renamed again in 1986 as the National Women's Council. In 1989, it was re-formed as the Department of Women's Affairs, which was elevated as the Ministry of Youth, Women's Affairs and Sports in 1993. In 1996, it was renamed the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare, and in 1998 the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Security. The NWM is the Gender and Development Section within the ministry.

With Maldives transiting from an empowerment and integration approach to a gender equality and mainstreaming approach, gender issues should not be the sole responsibility of the ministry. The NWM assists in the analysis and incorporation of gender issues in policies, plans and development projects that will be implemented by other ministries.

A Gender Equality Council was established in December 2001, on the lines of the Commonwealth Gender Management System model. It is headed by the President. Gender Focal Points have been appointed in all sectors though they require further training and capacity building if they are to be effective.

problem has been aired in the media and discussed elsewhere. Training has been given to police and medical officers, officials from the family court, Ministry of Justice, NGOs, community activists and staff of the NWM itself. The outcome is an action plan for a multi-sectoral support system to assist victims. The plan also drives ongoing work on this issue.

Discussions are under way to draw up specific legislation on violence against women and a draft is expected to be ready by the end of 2004.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Security works closely with all other ministries, and is currently sensitising the media on gender issues. Generally it is

awareness about gender issues, and women's reproductive health and family issues, especially in Malé.

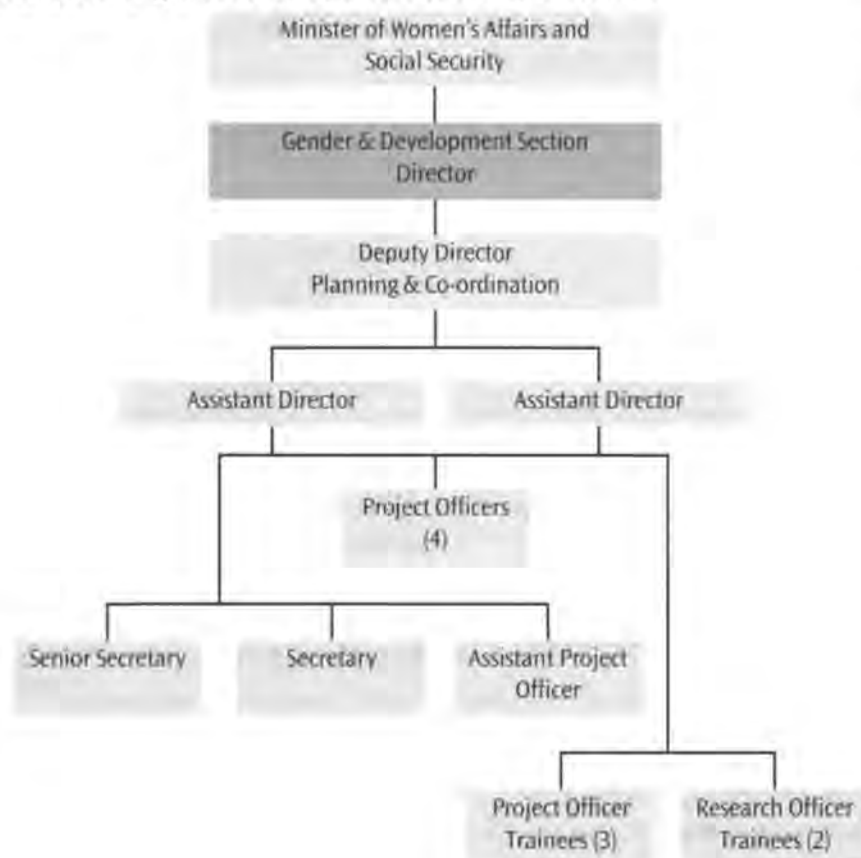
Among the international organisations, the Commonwealth Secretariat has provided technical assistance in setting up a GMS.

Concerns for the Future

Maldives hopes to introduce legislation that specifically deals with violence against women. There is no such legislation at present. Meanwhile, awareness programmes on such violence have been launched.

More work is needed to create clarity on key concepts and principles regarding women's rights in order to properly implement CEDAW. At present there is inadequate information on the convention, men's traditional patriarchal role still dominates, and there are widely held cultural assumptions on women's roles, often mistakenly assumed to be religious beliefs.

Chart 29.1: Organisational Structure of the Maldives NWM



The NWM has been able to put the issues of domestic violence and the wider violence against women on the public agenda. Traditionally, victims have been reluctant to report violence and sexual abuse because of the social stigma and the lack of an enabling environment. Since 2001 and 2002, however, the

hampered by inadequate sex-disaggregated data on which to base planning and monitoring.

Partnerships

NGOs have been established in Maldives only fairly recently. Already, however, they have contributed significantly to creating

Pakistan

COUNTRY REPORT (Summary)

Gender Profile	1990	1995	2000
POPULATION*			
Total population (000)	108,00	122,400	138,100
Female population (% of total)	47.7	48.5	48.2
LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION			
Female labour force (% of total)	24	26	29
Female unemployment (% of female labour force)	0.9	13.7	17.3
EDUCATION			
Adult illiteracy rate (% of people aged 15+)			
Female	79.9	76.2	72.1
Male	50.7	46.5	42.6
Gross primary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	39	48	62
Male	82	89	84
Gross secondary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	12	..	24
Male	24	..	42
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	2	3	..
Male	4	4	..
HEALTH			
Life expectancy at birth (years)			
Female	60	62	64
Male	58	60	62
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)			
	96	90	81
Prevalence of HIV (% of people aged 15–24)			
Female	..	..	0
Male	..	..	0.1

Source: World Bank database of Gender Statistics

.. Figures not available.

Priority Concerns

Among the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the Government of Pakistan has identified the following, in order of priority, for national action:

1. Women in Power and Decision-making
 2. Education and Training of Women
 3. Violence Against Women
 4. Women and Health
 5. Women in Poverty
- Followed by: 6. Women and the Economy; 7. Human Rights of Women; 8. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women; 9. Women in the Media; 10. Women and the Environment; 11. The Girl-child; 12. Women and Armed Conflict.

A Decade of Action

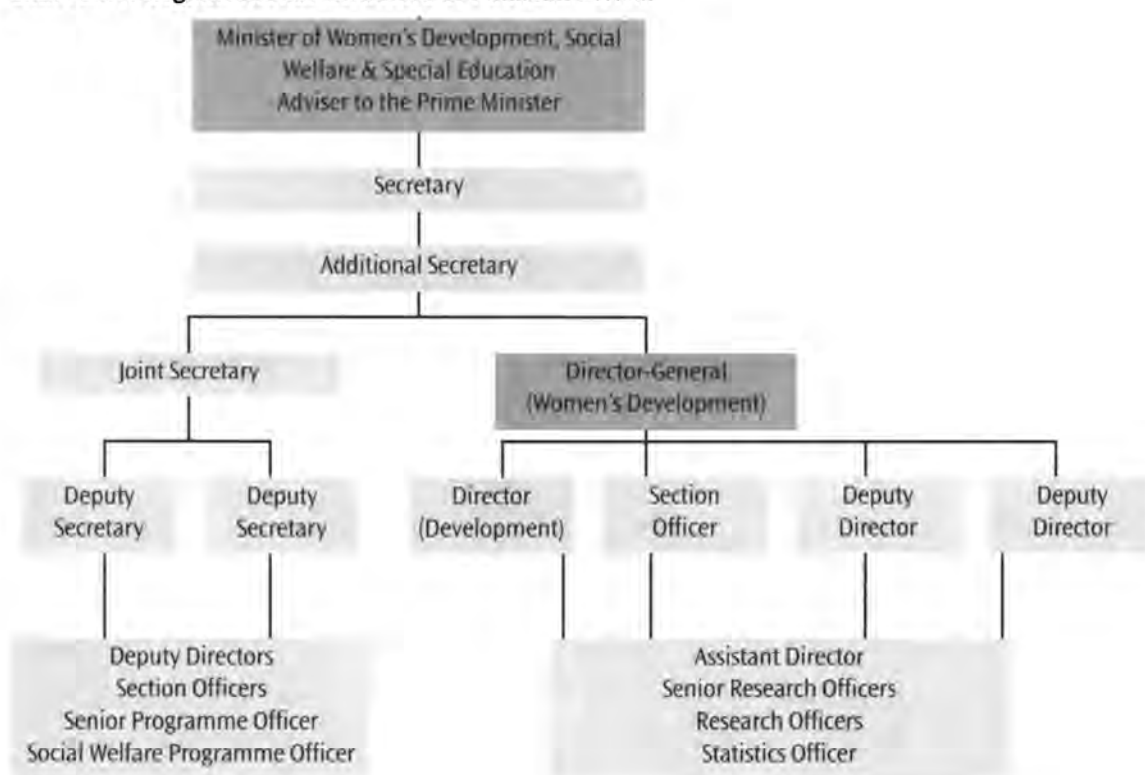
The National Women's Machinery (NWM) of Pakistan is the Ministry of Women's Development, Social Welfare and Special Education. Pakistan acceded to CEDAW in 1996. At time of reporting, it has yet to submit a national report on CEDAW. The country is ranked at 120 in the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) in the *UNDP Human Development Report 2004*.

Low social indicators underline the need for the prioritisation of the areas of Women in Power and Decision-making, Violence Against Women, Education and Training of Women, and Women and health. The following reflect progress in these areas:

- Formulation of the first-ever National Policy on Development and Empowerment of Women;
- The 33% quota for women's representation in local bodies – over 35,000 women councillors have been elected;
- The Women's Political Participation project (see Box 30.1, page 121);
- The school nutritional project Tawana Pakistan (see *National Women's Machinery, below*);
- The Women's Health Project; and
- Education sector reforms.

A permanent National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) was established in 2000. Its objectives are the emancipation of women, gender equality and elimination of all forms of

Chart 30.1: Organisational Structure of Pakistan's NWM



discrimination against women. In partnership with civil society and the Government, it promotes initiatives for the empowerment of women to enable them to realise their full potential alongside men.

The NCSW comprises 20 members. At the time of reporting, it is headed by a former High Court judge who is a woman. It is funded entirely by the Government of Pakistan.

The Commission has reviewed the Haddood Ordinance, Qisas and Diyat Ordinance (religious regulations based on Islamic beliefs), the Citizenship Act and other legal reforms. It has also reviewed and analysed employment patterns of women in the public sector.

The NWM reports that the non-availability of sex-disaggregated statistics and data, and insufficient gender sensitisation of most of the government machinery have been constraints in the implementation of the Beijing PFA.

National Women's Machinery

The head of the NWM is the ministry's Secretary and the Women's Development Wing is headed by a Director-General. The head of the ministry is an Adviser to the Prime Minister on women's development, social welfare and special education.

The first major government institution on women's issues was established in 1979 when a Women's Division was set up

as part of the Cabinet Secretariat. In 1989 this was elevated to a full Ministry of Women and Development. In 1993, the youth affairs portfolio was added to this ministry and in 1996 removed. In 1997, with the addition of two new portfolios, the Ministry of Women's Development, Social Welfare and Special Education emerged.

In 1993, the staffing strength of the Women's Development Wing was reduced from 180 to 154 posts. In 1996, this was further reduced to 102 posts, and between 1999 and 2003 to 77 posts. Amid the downsizing, the Women's Rights Wing, Research Wing and Monitoring and Evaluation Wing were removed from the NWM's structure.

Financial Resources

The budget allocation for the Women's Development Wing has been erratic but has increased substantially over the years.

The Ministry's allocation for 2004/05 is 0.56% of the national budget.

About Rs 385 million (US\$6.58 million) have been allocated for a Gender Reform Action Plan which aims to structurally 'genderise' the entire federal and provincial government machinery.

Key Achievements

The first-ever National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women was drawn up by the NWM after consulting CSOs and other key stakeholders, and launched in 2002 by the President. It encompasses areas such as education, health, law and access to justice, violence against women, family and community, poverty, access to credit, remunerated work, the rural economy and informal sector, sustainable development, and power and decision-making.

A large project, Tawana Pakistan, was

Table 30.1: Budget Allocations, Pakistan Women's Development Wing

Year	Budget Allocations		Total (Rs million)
	Public Sector (Rs million)	NGO Sector (Rs million)	
1980-81	40,000	0	40,000
1990-91	144,000	67,200	211,200
1995-96	8,000	38,000	125,000
2000-01	30,502	16,237	46,739
2004-05	501,512	38,488	540,000

Women are becoming better educated and contributing to the economy

launched in October 2002 to raise nutrition levels in young girls. Under the project, for a complete food cycle of two years, a meal a day and food supplements are supplied to over half a million girls (age 5–12) in low-income communities in 29 high-poverty districts, two of which are in the northern areas.

Crisis centres for women in distress have also been set up, with free legal aid, medical relief and counselling services. A 24-hour separate reporting centre where abused women can lodge reports has also been set up on an experimental basis.

A watershed for political empowerment of women came with the Devolution Plan of 2001. Under the Local Government Ordinance of that year, one-third of representation at all tiers of local government had to be reserved for women. At the time of reporting, 35,963 seats were occupied by women.

Collaboration

The NWM works closely with all relevant ministries and government agencies. For example, it worked with the Ministry of Finance to ensure mainstreaming of gender issues in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), and with the Planning and Development Division on gender issues in the Public Sector Development Programme and the 10th Five Year Plan (2004–2008).

It has worked with the ministries of Law and Justice and the Interior to amend or repeal laws that discriminate against women and to develop a code of ethics for gender equality in the work place.

Partnerships

The NWM funds a number of CSO projects, such as skills development for women, the provision of safe drinking water, and supports facilities for working women and educational institutions, and for mother and child health programmes.

Representatives of CSOs are also invited to various conferences, seminars and workshops on women's issues. The NWM's leading partners are Aurat Foundation (Women's Political School), Pakistan Federation of Business and Professional Women (working women's hostel and day care centre), Behbood



Box 30.1: School for Politics

Pakistan's Devolution Plan, 2001, proved to be a watershed for the political empowerment of women in Pakistan. Under the Local Government Ordinance of that year, at least one-third of positions at all levels of local government were to be filled by women. This resulted in the emergence of 35,963 women councillors.

Following that, the Women's Political Participation Project (W3P) was launched to help develop the ability of these councillors to participate in decision-making processes.

W3P faced enormous challenges: Women councillors were spread thinly throughout the country and most were non-literate. Many had hardly ever left their homes or made decisions for themselves; for the most part, they lived in conservative communities, and had diverse ethnic and class origins. Most were in politics for the first time.

The response was to develop a 'mentoring and nurturing' method. Selected women councillors from the districts were made lead mentors who then passed what they had learnt to *tehsil* (sub-district) councillors. These, in turn, shared what they had learnt with the greater number of women councillors at a lower level. In this way, a resource pool of about 500 lead mentors had multiplied its reach more than 50 times over.

W3P formally ended in December 2003, having covered about 80% (27,000) of elected women councillors. Aside from the resource pool of lead mentors and 50 research analysts, W3P also produced:

- A training kit with six editions of the six-module curriculum, a pictorial guide, training charts, monitoring and evaluation material, Local Government Ordinance books, and guidebooks for councillors;
- Documentary training films and CDs;
- A complete data profile of women councillors;
- 100 case studies;
- 21 community newsletters;
- A Women's Interactive Network and E-dialogue Forum; and
- 200 women councillors trained in information communications technologies.

To ensure that W3P gains are consolidated, a long-term, second-generation initiative is being planned. The Women's Political School is the first step in institutionalising the process of motivating, enabling and empowering women to seek public office at all levels so that their issues and concerns will be raised and addressed through public policy.

Pakistan's NWM concludes: 'Enhancing women's political participation does not only span the life of the project. It encompasses the entire life situation of women generally characterised by exclusion from decision-making. Structural and attitudinal barriers must be addressed to ensure women's full, equal and informed participation in economic, social and political decision-making at all levels of governance.'

Association (working women's hostel), Bunyad (micro-credit programme for rural women), Shirkat Gah (synthesis of reports of women commissions and committees) and Rozan (gender sensitisation training).

The NWM has also consulted other CSOs on the formulation of the national policy on development and empowerment of women, and the National Plan of Action for Women. The ministry believes that this process could be greatly streamlined if the CSOs formed a representative body at national level.

The NWM works with assistance from international organisations, such as the regional SAARC, UN agencies and the Commonwealth Secretariat in a number of relevant areas.

Concerns for the Future

Structural adjustment programmes and the globalisation of the economy have had a negative impact on women in Pakistan. Traditional customs and taboos have also constrained women from having equal access to opportunities and from exercising their rights in the family as well as society.

The Government of Pakistan will therefore concentrate on the following three areas in the near future: improving the status of women in poverty and in the economy, and combating violence against women.

These issues are addressed in the PRSP,

annual development programmes and in the 10th Five-Year Plan, under preparation at the time of reporting. A National Fund for Rural Women, with seed money of Rs 100 million (about US\$1.7 million), has been established to launch programmes and projects aimed at the economic empowerment of women in rural areas.

Singapore

COUNTRY REPORT (Summary)

Gender Profile	1990	1995	2000
POPULATION*			
Total population (000)	2,722	2,987	4,018
Female population (% of total)	49.7	49.6	48.7
LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION			
Female labour force (% of total)	39	39	39
Female unemployment (% of female labour force)	1.3	2.8	5.1
EDUCATION			
Adult illiteracy rate (% of people aged 15+)			
Female	16.8	14	11.7
Male	5.6	4.6	3.8
Net primary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	..	93	..
Male	..	92	..
Net secondary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	..	..	..
Male	..	..	..
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	15	31	..
Male	22	37	..
HEALTH			
Life expectancy at birth (years)			
Female	77	79	80
Male	72	74	76
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)			
	7	4	4
Prevalence of HIV (% of people aged 15–24)			
Female	–	–	0.2
Male	–	–	0.2

Source: World Bank database of Gender Statistics

* World Bank Atlas 1991 (for 1990 figures), 1997 (1995) and 2003 (2002)
.. Figures not available

Priority Concerns

The Singapore Government has identified all the critical areas of concern outlined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action as of equal priority (except for Women and Armed Conflict which is not applicable). It has said, however, that education and health lay the foundation for the substantive advancement of the status of women.

A Decade of Action

The guiding principles that shape Singapore's policies on gender equality are meritocracy based on equal opportunity, people's development, treating women as part of the mainstream and not a special interest group, and strengthening the family. At the heart of it, the primary means to achieve true advancement is to ensure that women have equal and universal access to education.

Singapore acceded to CEDAW in 1995. It is ranked at 28 in the Gender-related Development Index in the *UNDP Human Report 2004*.

Education and Training of Women

Ready access to quality education has been a key strategy in advancing the status of women. By 2002, the literacy rate among females over 15 was 90.6%. Six years of primary school education is compulsory; females made up 52.5% of the intake in polytechnics and universities in 2001/02; the wage gap closed from 16% in 1992 to 8.3% in 2002 for professionals, and from 39% to 24.6% for technical and crafts persons.

The 2002 level of women principals in primary (70%), secondary (58%) and junior colleges (67%) is high. More females are also entering traditionally male domains. In 1997/98, 1 in 4 first-year engineering students were female; this improved to 1 in 3 in 2001/02.

Singapore's Masterplan for IT in Education has also produced results. All schools are equipped with computers. In 2001, more females were taking up science (67%) and computing subjects (32%) in universities. Home ownership of computers is high and one survey

Ready access to quality education is key to advancing the status of women

reported that 47.1% of Internet home users were female.

Skills training and lifelong learning are emphasised. The Government has doubled the Lifelong Learning Fund from S\$500 million to S\$1 billion since April. The National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) runs a Skills Redevelopment Programme at highly subsidised rates for members. In 2002, 47% of the trainees were women.

Women and the Economy

In May 2002, Singapore ratified the ILO Convention 100 on Equal Remuneration. A few months later, government, labour and employers reaffirmed their commitment to equal pay for equal work and a Code of Responsible Employment Practices was issued. The proportion of women in the professional, administrative, technical and management positions has risen from 31.3% in 1992 to 37.6% in 2002.

With better education and employment opportunities, in 2002, the female wage on average reached 72% of the male wage. Among young professionals and managers in the 25–29 age group, women earned respectively 2% and 9.5% less than their male counterparts, compared to the overall difference of 8.3% and 15.9% in those categories for all ages. For young sales and service workers aged 25–29, women earned 4.2% more than men.

Technical assistance schemes for small and medium enterprises are accessible to both genders. The Government budget is non-discriminatory and is equally accessible to both genders. Some measures, however, specifically benefit women, such as maternity and childcare-related benefits. In the 2002 financial year, S\$59.2 million was disbursed as childcare subsidies and S\$23.5 million as Third Child Paid Maternity Leave. S\$72 million was disbursed as the Baby Bonus.

Women and Poverty

The Government works closely with the community and private sector to help lower-income families by encouraging re-training and skills upgrading. Special



attention is paid to the children from these families. Programmes include schemes to provide monthly allowances to meet day-to-day expenses, meeting rent and maintenance charges of those living in public flats, childcare services, pre-school education and education subsidies.

Lower income families also have access to affordable medical care. Medifund is a special scheme to help the poor meet medical costs.

Violence Against Women

Singapore is working towards a violence-free environment for families. The endemic form of family violence is spousal abuse, comprising 79% of the Personal Protection Orders (PPOs) issued by the Subordinate Courts in 2002. On average, 64% of PPO applicants were wives and 9% husbands. About 6% were ex-spouses.

Through the Many Helping Hands approach, community partners such as the police, social service agencies, crisis shelters and hospitals meet regularly to improve operational procedures and provide co-ordinated assistance to families and to victims of violence.

The Women's Desk, which is the National Women's Machinery (NWM) located in the Ministry of Community Development and Sports, works with other agencies and the media to educate the public on the issues. It has a website which explains different forms of abuse and how victims and perpetrators can obtain help; a play on violence during dates was also shown to secondary schoolchildren to teach them how to deal with it. A new initiative in 2003 was a pilot

project on combating abuse of the elderly.

Training continues for professionals who handle family violence cases. The courts have also established a Family Transformation and Protection Unit as a one-stop centre to manage family violence cases.

Women and Health

The health and quality of life of women has improved. Maternal and infant mortality rates have fallen, and female life expectancy has reached 80.6 years. This and other statistics have implications for the ageing population. A wide range of services are thus implemented to help families and the elderly remain active in the community.

HIV/AIDS prevalence is very low – approximately 0.2% of the 15–49 year age group in 2001. The main gender issues arise from the mode of transmission which is through heterosexual contact with commercial sex workers. Males account for 88% of those infected, women 12% with 62% of them married. The National AIDS Education Programme targets high-risk behaviour, protection through safe sex or abstinence and the benefits of early detection. All antenatal women are advised to get screened for infection.

Women in Power and Decision-making

Women occupy important leadership positions in various capacities. They make up over 30% of corporate managers, 62% of the higher ranks of Division I and above in the civil service, 45% of Subordinate Court judges and 23% of

Supreme Court judges. More women are participating in management committees of grassroots organisations. Singapore women play a significant role in the media; a woman heads the main broadcaster's radio network and main TV service.

National Women's Machinery

The Women's Desk in the Ministry of Community Development and Sports is the National Women's Machinery (NWM). It was set up in May 2002 and given an operational budget. The Desk is headed by the Director for Family Policy who reports to the Co-ordinating Director for the Family Development Division.

Women's issues cut across all government ministries and the public sector and are dealt with through the Inter-Ministry Committee on CEDAW, set up in 1996, and at policy levels across government. The Women's Desk provides secretariat support to this committee.

The Ministry of Community Development and Sports' Strategic Planning and Research Division compiles relevant statistics to track women's progress and involvement.

Partnerships

The NWM works closely with the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO), the National Trade Union Congress Women's Committee and the People's Association's Women's Integration Network Council to promote the status and well-being of women. Together they represent more than 90% of the women's groups in Singapore. It works with the SCWO to raise awareness of CEDAW. The Women's Desk will continue to work with women's groups on the re-skilling of women, work-life balance and financial literacy.

Singapore plays an active part in APEC Ministerial Meetings on Women and the ASEAN Committee on Women.

Chart 31.1; Structure of Singapore's NWM within the Ministry of Community Development and Sports



Concerns for the Future

Singapore considers finding a work-life balance is important for the next few years because human capital is one of its few natural resources. To maximise that human capital, people are seen as whole individuals who function best when their work and personal responsibilities are in harmony. The Work-Life Unit in the Ministry of Community Development and Sports, set up in 2000, aims to foster a work-life friendly culture in organisations. The strategy is overseen by a committee drawn from government, labour and employer representatives.

Sri Lanka

COUNTRY REPORT (Summary)

Gender Profile	1990	1995	2000
POPULATION			
Total population (000)	16,300	17,300	18,500
Female population (% of total)	48	48.3	50.5
LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION			
Female labour force (% of total)	34	36	37
Female unemployment (% of female labour force)	23.5	19.7	11.3
EDUCATION			
Adult illiteracy rate (% of people aged 15+)			
Female	15.3	13.1	11.0
Male	7.1	6.3	5.6
Net primary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	--	--	--
Male	--	--	--
Net secondary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	--	--	--
Male	--	--	--
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio (% of age group)			
Female	4	4	--
Male	6	6	--
HEALTH			
Life expectancy at birth (years)			
Female	73	74	75
Male	68	69	71
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)			
	22	19	17
Prevalence of HIV (% of people aged 15–24)			
Female	--	--	0.1
Male	--	--	0

Source: World Bank database on Gender Statistics
 -- Figures not available

Priority Concerns

Among the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the Government of Sri Lanka has identified the following, in order of priority, for national action:

1. Violence Against Women
2. Human Rights of Women
3. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women
4. Women and Poverty
5. Women and Health.

Decades of civil strife, political instability and the resultant drain on the economy have had a severe impact on the implementation of the Beijing PFA and have exacerbated the incidence of violence in society. This has led to the determination of the areas of priority concern.

A Decade of Action

Sri Lanka's efforts in promoting gender equality have been characterised by many achievements, particularly in respect of high social indicators. However, the benefits of these achievements have been offset by continued civil strife, militarisation and political instability. The resultant drain on the economy and the increase in the incidence of violence in society have therefore determined the choice of areas of priority concern in the post-Beijing period.

Sri Lanka acceded to CEDAW in 1981 and to its Optional Protocol in 2003. It is ranked at 73 in the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) in the *UNDP Human Development Report 2004*. The National Women's Machinery (NWM) is the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Violence Against Women

Curbing violence, particularly violence against women, has been a top priority. The revised Penal Code provisions of 1995, giving wider coverage to acts of violence against women and children, have motivated law enforcement personnel and civil society leaders to act. Thirty-four special Women's and Children's Desks have been set up in main police stations and the Police Women's Bureau, a co-ordinating body in Colombo

Sri Lanka was one of the first Commonwealth countries to undertake a gender-responsive budgeting exercise

with a 24-hour hotline service, has been strengthened.

From 1998 onwards, handbooks and information materials have been produced and disseminated by the Women's Bureau and the National Committee on Women (NCW) to create greater understanding of the application of the Penal Code provisions on violence against women. Free drop-in counselling centres have been set up under a government initiative to provide redress for women victims of violence. Awareness-raising through public discussions on women's human rights have been conducted in local languages, using the Sri Lanka Women's Charter as a tool. Counselling services are also publicised. A research study on domestic violence has been commissioned and a Domestic Violence Bill drafted.

Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of women

At the time of reporting, 45 Gender Focal Points have been appointed and their roles and functions upgraded. Gender mainstreaming concepts are being discussed and efforts are being made to incorporate gender perspectives in the national budgeting, planning and monitoring processes, with positive interventions from the ministries concerned.

Additional initiatives to reinforce gender mainstreaming include the introduction of a Gender Module in the Distance Education Project for Public Servants and the preparation and dissemination of a National Sex-disaggregated Data Handbook.

A proposed Women's Act will include a National Commission on Women to replace the National Committee on Women, and an advisory body, the Women's Council. In 2003, a National Steering Committee on Gender Equity was set up to monitor the priority action area for combating gender discrimination under the poverty reduction policy, Regaining Sri Lanka.

Women and Poverty

The National Poverty Alleviation Scheme,



Samurdhi, has been operating since 1995 and targets families living in poverty which constitute approximately 40% of the population. The 2002 Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP) includes a programme to combat gender discrimination and a set of action priorities to deal with gender gaps. A special Steering Committee on Gender Equality was set up in January 2003 for follow-up action under the leadership of the NWM. The Women's Bureau continues to provide micro-credit to the poorest women for income-generating activities. A self-help savings and credit scheme, Vanitha Shakti, was launched on a pilot basis and has been found to be viable and suitable for replication.

Some of the constraints affecting the realisation of the Beijing PFA include the impact of poverty and prevailing free market trends on women, given the limited protection guaranteed them. There is a lack of gender expertise to cover the technical aspects related to gender mainstreaming and a dearth of high quality gender trainers.

Women and Health

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is low in Sri Lanka compared to other South Asian countries. However, returning migrant workers and the faster increase in the number of infected women is a cause for concern. The Health Ministry HIV/AIDS Prevention Project targets both women

and men. The Reproductive Health Promotion Project of the Women's Bureau, funded by UNFPA, specifically addresses gender concerns and reaches out to low-income groups throughout the country.

Women in Power and Decision-Making

A woman is Head of State of Sri Lanka. The rights of women to participate equally in power and decision-making, however, continue to be debated at all levels. Temporary special measures, such as quota systems, are not yet popularly accepted and are major barriers to be overcome.

Women and the Economy

The 2002/2003 gender budgeting dialogues, spearheaded by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, with technical support from UNIFEM, have resulted in budget pledges for the women's budget and for 10% reservations in all development projects and programmes.

Unemployment has pushed more women into migrant labour, both within and outside Sri Lanka. The social costs of their vulnerability to physical and sexual exploitation are not reflected or considered under market-controlled macroeconomic conditions. The application of gender-responsive budget principles and techniques should

There is an increase in the number of widows and female-headed households



therefore be useful in reviewing macroeconomic policy.

National Women's Machinery

The National Women's Machinery (NWM) is the Ministry of Women's Affairs, one of 32 Cabinet-level ministries. The National Committee of Women (NCW) and the Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka are under its umbrella.

A Gender Complaints Centre was added to the NCW in 1999 to enhance its capacity to receive and deal with complaints on gender discrimination as part of its mandate according to the Women's Charter of 1993. Gender mainstreaming is a new initiative under the Ministry and a

10% budget allocation for the integration of gender concerns into the action programmes of other Ministries and line agencies was made for 2004. Gender Focal Points are being technically strengthened to enable them to act as catalysts for action within their own agencies.

Partnerships

Sri Lanka continues to work in close partnership with SAARC countries. The Regional Workshop on the Status of the Girl-child was hosted, with SAARC support, by Sri Lanka in April 2003. The Social Charter was signed by SAARC Heads of State at the 12th SAARC Summit in January 2004. Article VI is on the Promotion of the Status of Women.

The efforts of UNIFEM/SARO (New

Delhi) in fostering and co-ordinating partnerships in such areas as sharing country experiences of gender-responsive budgets, and biennial review meetings on gender equality with government and non-government participation have been valuable.

The NWM continues to work with NGOs and civil society to ensure technical and resource support, maintain linkages with specific gender interest groups and share research and information.

Concerns for the Future

The efforts of the NWM, particularly in gender mainstreaming, require greater and sustained policy and technical input and support.

There is a need to put in place adequate mechanisms and resources to address the effects of long-term armed conflict, the resultant internally displaced families, and the increase in the number of widows and female-headed households.

Barriers to allowing women the right to participate equally in power and in decision-making processes need to be overcome.

Chart 32.1: Organisational Chart for Ministry of Women's Affairs, Sri Lanka



* SAS = Senior Assistant Secretary