



International Women's Day

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Who Answers to Women?

This volume of *Progress of the World's Women* asks the question “Who answers to women?” at a pivotal moment. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed to in 2000 contain a commitment to achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment, including indicators and concrete targets related to girls’ education and to maternal mortality. The MDGs also monitor progress on women’s ability to engage in economic activity and public decision-making on an equal basis with men. Halfway to 2015, the year when the MDGs should be met by all countries, progress has been mixed. This volume of *Progress of the World's Women* demonstrates that the MDGs and other international commitments to women will only be met if gender-responsive accountability systems are put in place both nationally and internationally.

In too many countries, even where the constitution or laws prohibit it, women may

be denied equal pay; they may be sexually harassed at work, or dismissed if they become pregnant. Women who assert a claim to land may find that claim disputed by village elders or their own husbands. Women seeking care during childbirth may be pressed to pay bribes for a mid-wife’s attention. Women who have been victims of sexual violence might encounter judges more sympathetic to the perpetrators, and receive no redress for their suffering. When guarantees to protect women’s rights go unfulfilled, where can these women turn for redress? Who answers to women?

Women’s struggles to expose gender-based injustice and demand redress have changed how we think about accountability. The chapters in this volume examine how gender-responsive changes to accountability systems are enhancing women’s influence in politics and their access to public services, to economic opportunities, to justice, and finally to international assis-

tance for development and security. Acknowledging that different groups of women encounter distinct challenges in gaining access to their rights, *Progress 2008/2009* examines how women, including the most excluded women, are strengthening their capacity to identify accountability gaps and call for redress.

Making accountability work: authorisation, assessment and correction

Accountability is a core element of democratic politics and good governance, as detailed in Box 1A. In democratic states, accountability relationships help ensure that decision-makers adhere to publicly agreed standards, norms, and goals. This happens through two processes:

- power-holders ‘give an account’ of what they did with the public trust and national revenue;
- corrective action is taken, if necessary, through a process of ‘enforcement of remedy’ – for instance, by voting politicians out of office or setting up a judicial inquiry.¹

Accountability, in other words, involves *assessment* of the adequacy of performance, and the imposition of a *corrective action* or remedy in cases of performance failure.

Accountability from a gender perspective requires that the decisions of public actors can be assessed by women and men equally. But what are public actors to be held accountable for? This depends on what they are *authorised* to do. Women may engage in voting, party politics, public audits and judicial processes, without a view to assessing the impact of public decisions on women’s

BOX
1A

Good Governance – A Gender-Responsive Definition

Good governance is recognized as essential to poverty reduction efforts and respect for human rights, as well as conflict prevention, growth, and environmental protection. Definitions of ‘governance’ range from a restricted view focusing on sound management of the economy, to a more expansive view that embraces political liberalisation and problems of social inequality.ⁱ According to the expansive definition, good governance implies *democratic* governance, meaning an agenda for participation, human rights, and social justice.ⁱⁱ

Women ought to benefit as much as men from governance reforms that focus on reducing corruption and increasing opportunities to participate in public decision-making. But there is no such thing as gender-neutral governance reform. If governance reforms do not address the social relations that undermine women’s capacity to participate in public decisions, they run the risk of reproducing gender biases and patterns of exclusion in the management of public affairs.

Accountability systems that work for women contain two essential elements:

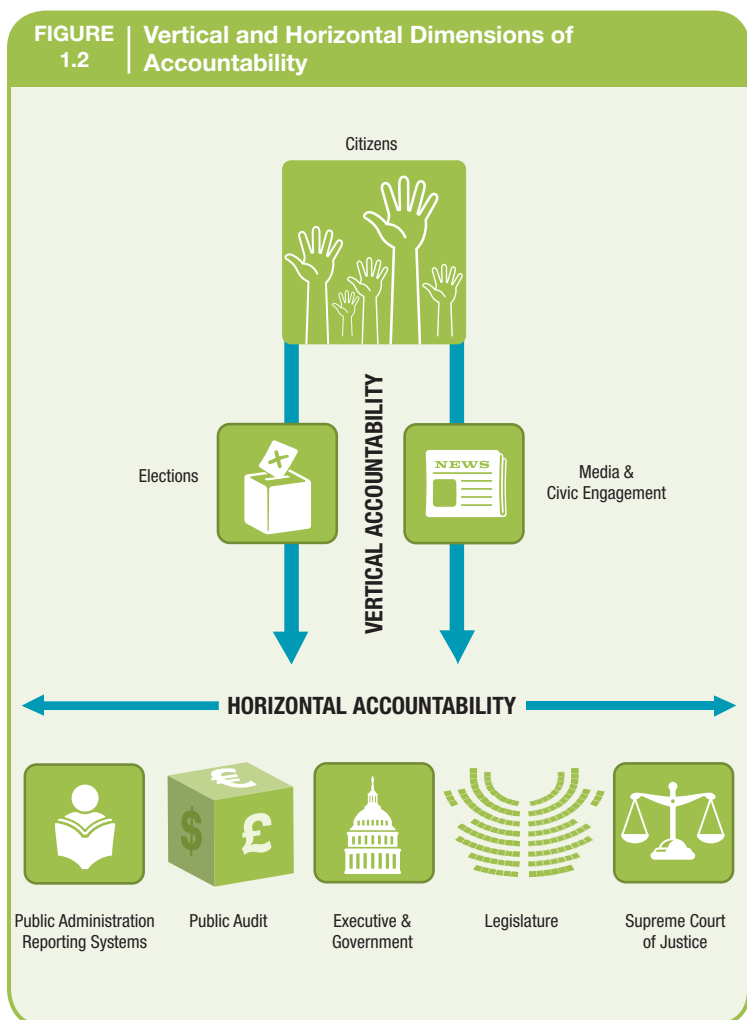
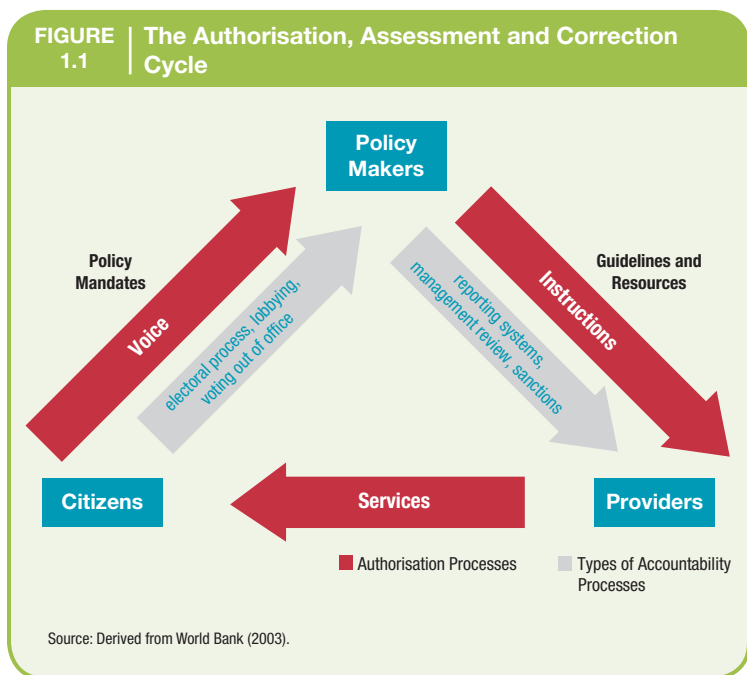
- *Women’s inclusion in oversight processes*
Gender-responsive accountability institutions must ensure that decision-makers answer to the women who are most affected by their decisions. This means that women must be entitled to ask for explanations and justifications – they must be legitimate participants in public debates, power-delegation processes, and performance assessments.
- *Advancing women’s human rights is a key standard against which the performance of officials is assessed*
Power holders must answer for their performance in advancing women’s rights. The standards of due diligence and probity in holding the public trust must include gender equality as a goal of public action.

rights. Gender-sensitive accountability systems require, therefore, not just women's participation, but also institutional reform to make gender equality one of the standards against which the performance of decision-makers is assessed.

Authorisation — assigning a mandate to representatives or to service providers — happens through a range of mechanisms. These include systems for debating interests and articulating these as public agendas, and then subjecting them to a public vote — in short, the political process. Elected representatives then authorise institutions such as the police, health services, education boards, road maintenance or sanitation authorities to implement these mandates. Policy implementers, in turn, must report back to elected decision-makers on results. Their performance is also reviewed via reporting systems within the public administration hierarchy. If performance is found inadequate or worse, service providers can — or should — be subjected to management sanctioning, including losing their jobs.² Figure 1.1 plots the basics of this authorisation, assessment and correction cycle.

The question “Who answers?” depends on who is asking and in what forum. Performance review and correction processes can take a ‘vertical’ or ‘horizontal’ form (Figure 1.2). The electoral cycle, for instance, is a ‘vertical’ accountability system, enabling citizens periodically to demand explanations from elected politicians.³ A ‘horizontal’ system, by contrast, involves various state institutions engaging in mutual scrutiny to correct for abuses of office. For example, judicial institutions review the constitutionality of executive decisions; the public audit function reviews probity in public spending; and ombudspersons or human rights commissions investigate citizen’s complaints.

One of the paradoxes of accountability relationships is that they put less powerful actors — individual citizens — in a position of demanding answers from more powerful actors. This is, in fact, the defining element of *democratic* accountability. Since accountability requires transparency, scru-



tiny of public actions, and the possibility of sanction for mistakes, accountability will be stronger in contexts in which there are mechanisms to enable political contestation and public debate.

Precisely because democratic accountability reverses traditional expectations about who can be held to account, important accountability mechanisms have been institutionalised (made routine) to ensure

that those who have the right to demand explanations (rights holders) can actually get them from those with a formal public duty to supply them (duty bearers). Most important among these mechanisms are the normative foundations for accountability – national constitutions, as well as global agreements on human rights such as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Traditional accountability systems have considerable social legitimacy and staying power, however, and because of this there have been a number of efforts to adapt them to contemporary expectations about democratic accountability. Box 1B shows how a traditional social compact system in Rwanda is being used to address gender-based violence.

Demand and supply of accountability: ‘Voice’ and ‘Choice’ reforms

Women’s efforts to remedy their situation when their rights are denied have ranged from ‘voice’-based approaches that emphasise collective action, representation of interests, and the ability to *demand* change, to ‘choice’-based approaches that promote changes in the *supply* of responsive public service or fair market practices.⁴ As Figure 1.3 shows, ‘voice’-based approaches seek to demonstrate the existence of a constituency demanding delivery on promises to women. ‘Voice’-based approaches seek to publicize accountability failures and to demand accountability processes such as judicial investigations or legislative enquiries into abuses of women’s rights.

‘Voice’-based approaches frequently begin in civil society, but a growing number of examples from countries across the world suggest that they are often taken up by states. Examples include consultative mechanisms in debating public policy (public dialogues on poverty-reduction strategies in aid-recipient countries, as shown in Chapter 6), user committees to preside over the management of public goods (for

FIGURE 1.3 | Strengthening ‘Voice’ for Better Accountability

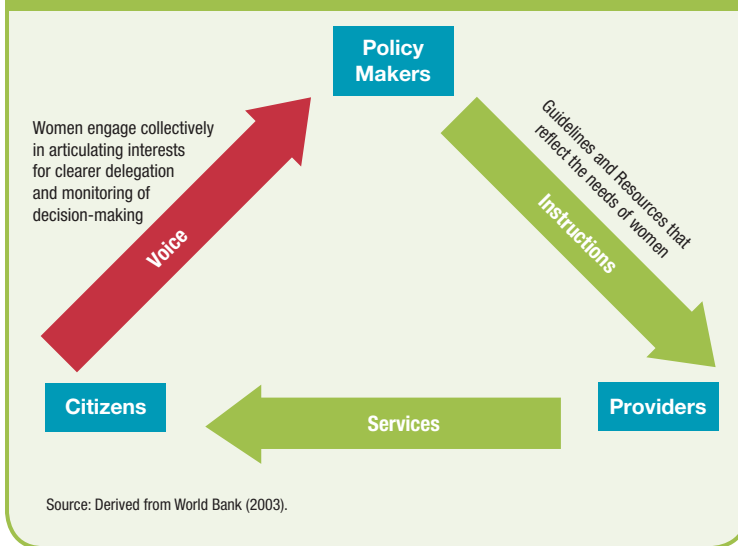
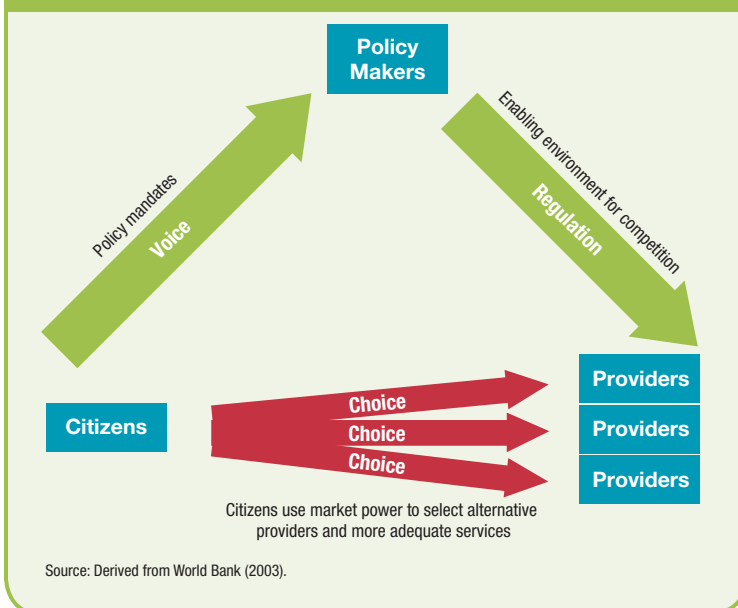


FIGURE 1.4 | Strengthening ‘Choice’ for Better Accountability



example, water or forest management committees in South Asia), or committees to perform a watchdog function over the distribution of public resources (such as vigilance committees scrutinising public spending in local councils in Bolivia, or oversight groups monitoring the sale of subsidised basic commodities in India, as shown in Chapter 3).

'Choice'-based approaches seek to apply a market-derived rationale to accountability processes. Here the stress is on the individual end-user of public or private services as the agent of accountability, using market tools (such as user fees) to motivate providers to improve delivery, as shown in Figure 1.4. Administrative complaint sys-

tems, women's or consumers' charters, and encouragement of competition between providers of services, are examples of such approaches intended to empower individuals to seek redress through pursuing complaints or switching to other providers.⁵ Cash transfer schemes are based on the choice model, enabling households to purchase health or education services from providers of their choice. Fear of loss of clients creates incentives for providers to improve accountability (see Chapter 3).

For 'voice' and 'choice' solutions to work, they must be linked to the social contexts in which women can organize and must take into account the specific challenges that

BOX
1B

Imihigo: Adapting a Traditional Accountability Mechanism to Improve Response to Gender-based Violence

Imihigo is a tradition that Rwanda has institutionalised as a means to enhance local government reform and stimulate development. It draws on a long-standing cultural practice in Rwanda whereby two parties publicly commit themselves to the achievement of a particular task. Failing to meet these public commitments leads to dishonor, not only for the individual party but for the community.

Following local governance reforms and the 2006 elections, Rwanda's Ministry for Local Administration (MINALOC) and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning consulted with district leaders on an action plan for better service to community members. This action plan included contracts holding the President of Rwanda and the district leaders accountable for the goals that had been decided. These contracts were called *Imihigo* in the tradition of this established cultural practice. Since 2006, *Imihigo* have been signed at the local government level with district, sector, cell, and *umudugudu* (village) officials (2007), as well as at the household level (2008), and will be signed at the individual level (planned for 2009).

The signed contract between the head of household and local leaders includes baseline data for the district, district development targets, performance indicators, and the budgetary allocation for the achievement of each target. *Imihigo* evaluations are carried out three times a year by a task force comprising the Prime Minister's Office, MINALOC and the President's Office. Each district presents its evaluation findings to the task force in the presence of stakeholders.

Obligations under *Imihigo* are reciprocal between signatories. District leaders, for example, are obligated to work with their constituents toward the achievement of national development priorities over the course of a year, and the President is committed to supporting districts with the requisite financial, technical and human resources to facilitate the achievement of these goals.

Recently, accountability for addressing gender-based violence (GBV) has been included in household surveys against which district leadership are to be evaluated. This signals a widespread commitment to prevent violence against women in an explicit form. As one District Mayor explained, "We included the fight against gender-based violence in our performance contracts because security organisations showed us important statistics about the problem of GBV in our area [...] *Imihigo* is a response to the problems in our community."ⁱ

Imihigo is both a rights-based planning tool, as well as a social contract between parties. As a MINALOC official recently summed up, "The overall aim of Community Dialogue is to increase the level of concern in community about the issues that affect them and to catalyze actions that improve their standards of living."ⁱⁱ

different groups of women face in asking for accountability. As this volume of *Progress* shows, women's frequent disadvantage in using accountability systems is based on their subordinate status in relation to men at home (husbands, fathers, brothers) or men as decision-makers and power-holders (traditional leaders, local council members, party leaders, judges, police), which constrains women's ability to assert or exercise their rights. This subordinate status is evident in data from household surveys that show that in many regions women have limited control over critical household decisions, such as those involving their own health care or large purchases, and face significant mobility constraints, as shown in Figure 1.5.

Women's limited decision-making power within the household means that their rela-

tionship to the public sphere or the market is often mediated by men. Their votes may not reflect their real preferences if they are voting according to their husbands' wishes. They may not be free to use household income to pay for services of their choice, especially if they are under pressure to prioritise the needs of men in the household. Whether exercising political 'voice' or market 'choice', gendered mediation means women sometimes seek accountability 'at one remove' from states and markets, as shown in Figure 1.6.

Accountability solutions that propose women use political 'voice' or market 'choice' must take this gendered mediation into account. Moving from 'voice' to influence requires institutional changes in the places where public decisions are implemented, from ministries of finance that de-

FIGURE 1.5 | Women's Control Over Decisions

Women with a final say over decisions, 1999-2005

MARRIED WOMEN	Own health care	Large purchases	Daily purchases	Visits to relatives	What food to cook
Sub-Saharan Africa	29	13	35	20	66
Middle East & North Africa	33	9	38	13	66
CEE/CIS	42	16	46	14	76
South Asia	19	10	26	13	73
East Asia & Pacific	63	17	73	23	79
Latin America & Caribbean	51	18	48	30	74
UNMARRIED WOMEN					
Sub-Saharan Africa	35	24	25	31	29
Middle East & North Africa	50	34	35	37	38
CEE/CIS	32	13	17	17	29
South Asia	62	56	61	63	66
East Asia & Pacific	72	37	44	51	53
Latin America & Caribbean	50	23	26	42	29

Women with no say over decisions

MARRIED WOMEN	Own health care	Large purchases	Daily purchases	Visits to relatives	What food to cook
Sub-Saharan Africa	51	59	43	43	22
Middle East & North Africa	25	42	34	27	9
CEE/CIS	10	18	16	12	9
South Asia	54	52	46	47	15
East Asia & Pacific	7	18	7	9	6
Latin America & Caribbean	15	27	16	14	9
UNMARRIED WOMEN					
Sub-Saharan Africa	58	67	65	58	60
Middle East & North Africa	40	50	52	43	37
CEE/CIS	47	68	66	58	48
South Asia	28	29	29	24	20
East Asia & Pacific	9	39	38	26	32
Latin America & Caribbean	31	55	65	32	48

Notes: This figure reflects the percentage of women who have the final say in making specific decisions by type of decision. Regional information for married/unmarried women in HH decision making was based on countries with available information from DHS STATcompiler and organized according to UNIFEM regional groupings.

Source: DHS database.

termine resource allocation, to those shaping public services, to the front-line of interaction between citizens and states in health clinics, schools, agricultural extension services, or business licensing bureaus. If women do not have security, power or resources as individuals or as an organised political interest, they cannot hold public or private institutions accountable. And if they cannot demand accountability as collective or individual actors, this experience mutes women's voice in determining collective goals. As a result, policy-makers and providers are under-informed about women's needs and preferences.

Women's engagement in accountability processes

This volume of *Progress* highlights innovative efforts that are emerging in every region to strengthen accountability for gender equality. Through gender-responsive budget analysis, women's groups, ministries of finance and parliamentarians are highlighting the differential impact of public spending on services for women and men. Through public audits of local government spending, corruption is exposed and better controls on spending at the local level are identified to enable women to benefit from public resources. Through citizens' report cards surveying the quality of urban public services, women and community groups are identifying poor performance and demanding improvements from municipal authorities in sanitation systems, street lighting, and public housing.

Mobilising for concrete measures to increase accountability has triggered efforts to improve public responsiveness to women's human rights. For example, in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Liberia, post-conflict restructuring of police services has involved concerted efforts to recruit more women and to train personnel in effective responses to gender-based violence (see Chapter 4).⁶ In the Philippines, local development councils have mandatory representation from civil-society organisations, to provide them with space to bring women's concerns into local decision-making.⁷ Women's efforts to

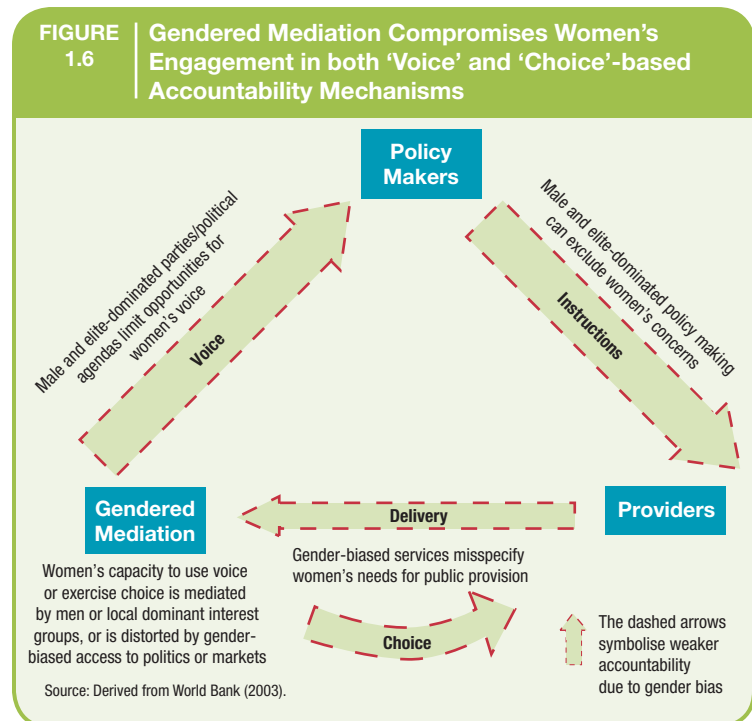
ensure that power holders answer to them for actions that affect women's rights are part of a global groundswell of citizen activism against impunity.

Women's activism is changing the way we understand accountability, demonstrating that women sometimes experience governance failures differently from men. An indication of this difference in perspective on accountability is reflected in data on women's and men's perceptions of corruption in public services. (see Panel: Gender Differences in Perceptions of Corruption). A small but statistically significant difference is recorded almost everywhere in the world: women perceive more corruption in public services than do men.

Accountability to women must be 'mission critical'

Simultaneous institutional reform at three levels – normative, procedural, and cultural – is needed to improve accountability for meeting gender equality goals.⁸

a. Normative: Sometimes the formal remit or mandate of an institution must be revised to ensure that the institutional actors answer



to women, and answer for the impact of their policies and actions on gender equality. National legislation, for instance, must be revised in line with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In the justice system, law-reform efforts have aimed to ensure that violations of women's rights, such as rape in marriage, are defined and prosecuted as crimes, thus becoming part of the remit of prosecutors and judges. New laws on domestic violence may be necessary for the police to investigate violence that occurs in the home (see Panel: Breaking the Walls of Silence: Accountability for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls).

b. Procedural: This level of reform includes at least three areas:

- *Changing incentives:* Changes in international and national frameworks and formal mandates cannot alter actual practices

until they are translated into incentives that motivate improved performance. Positive incentives include recognition, promotion, training and improved work conditions, all aimed at making it worthwhile to respond to the needs of women. More punitive incentives – such as disciplinary actions – can also drive change. Changes in everyday work practices may also be needed to prevent abuse of women and to ensure that their needs are addressed. If peacekeepers, for instance, are to prevent sexual violence in fragile post-conflict states, they need not only a direct mandate to drive better response, but also revised concepts of operations, standard operating procedures, and rules of engagement to specify appropriate actions.⁹

- *Performance measures and review:* Changed expectations about performance must be backed by changes in

PANEL | Gender Differences in Perceptions of Corruption

Do women and men perceive corruption differently? Data from Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer, which compiles public opinion surveys from approximately 54,000 individuals in 69 countries, suggests that there is a correlation between sex and people's perception of corruption, with women around the world reporting that they perceive higher levels of corruption than men do.ⁱ

What is notable is that these differences are statistically significant and consistent across most regions. The percentage of women perceiving higher levels of corruption than men is greater for Developed Regions, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) & the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Latin America & Caribbean and East Asia & Pacific. In sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the results are more mixed. In some cases in these regions, men perceive higher levels of corruption than do women.

The figures show the female-to-male ratio in perceptions of corruption, with green indicating a higher result for women, and red indicating a higher result for men.

Gendered perception differences are most significant in the area of service provision – notably for education, medical services, and utilities. Indeed, one of the more striking results is the ratio of women to men (1.3 to 1) in developed countries who perceive high levels of corruption in education.

In the case of political, judicial and security sector institutions, the difference between male and female perceptions of corruption is small but statistically significant, with women perceiving slightly higher levels of corruption than men, with the exception of sub-Saharan Africa.

Similarly, in the case of institutions related to the market, women seem to have higher perceptions of corruption in most regions and areas, with the exception of tax revenue in South Asia, customs in CEE/CIS, and tax, customs and media in sub-Saharan Africa.

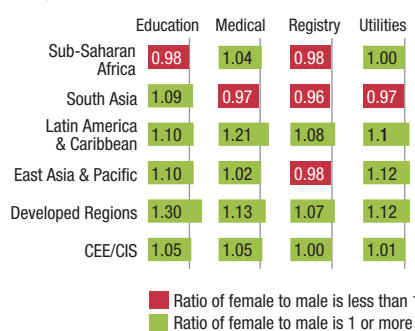
the ways performance is monitored and measured, so that actions that benefit women are recognized and rewarded. The combination of motivation and monitoring is at the core of many management reforms, but rarely has it been driven by the imperative of improved response to women. Women have found entry-points for bringing gender equality performance reviews into a number of contemporary institutional innovations to enable inclusive public oversight, such as participatory municipal budgeting in several Latin American countries, citizen participation in Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute, and community review of policing patterns in Chicago in the United States.¹⁰

- **Removing Barriers and Improving Access:** Public responsiveness to women often requires analysing and removing obstacles that women may face in accessing services, market opportunities,

or justice. Sometimes these obstacles are obvious, and involve compensating for the fact that some women may not have the time, money, education or mobility needed to exercise their rights or access services. In health systems, for example, developing mobile teams of public-health providers to work with low-income women in their homes helps overcome women's knowledge and mobility constraints. In post-conflict recovery, de-mining fields and water points – instead of just main roads – improves women's use of physical space.¹¹ In relation to elections, situating polling booths in markets overcomes the mobility and time constraints women face when they want to vote. In the 2006 Liberian elections, for instance, UNIFEM helped women's groups provide market women with transport to voter registration offices that were situated far from marketplaces.¹²

FIGURE A Gendered Perceptions of Corruption by Region: Service Provision Institutions

Respondents with high levels of perceived corruption, ratio female to male, 2005

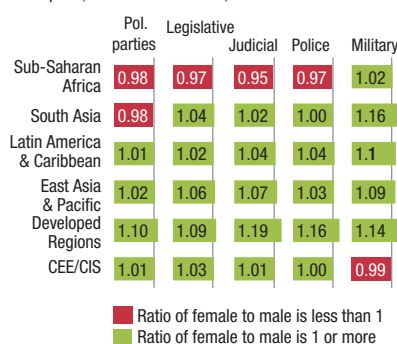


Notes: The percentages of men and women who perceived high levels of corruption was calculated considering respondents who ranked institutions as "very corrupt" and "extremely corrupt" (scores of 4 and 5 out of a range from 1 to 5), or who stated that corruption affects their lives to a large extent. The statistical significance of differences by sex was tested using a t-test of difference in means (applied to the difference in percentages). All the statistics at the country level are weighted using the sample weights provided in the original database; regional averages are weighted using population data for the year 2005 compiled by the UN Population Division.

Source: UNIFEM analysis of Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer database (2005).

FIGURE B Gendered Perceptions of Corruption by Region: Political, Judicial and Security Sector Institutions

Respondents with high levels of perceived corruption, ratio female to male, 2005

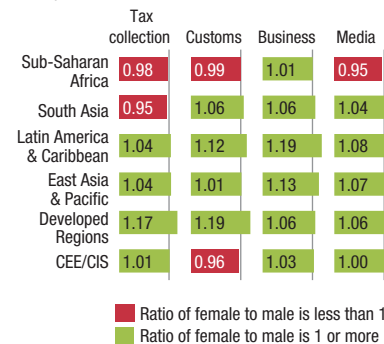


Notes: See notes in figure A

Source: UNIFEM analysis of Transparency International global corruption Barometer database (2005).

FIGURE C Gendered Perceptions of Corruption by Region: Market-Related Institutions

Respondents with high levels of perceived corruption, ratio female to male, 2005



Notes: See notes in figure A

Source: UNIFEM analysis of Transparency International global corruption Barometer database (2005).

Violence affects at least one in three women and girls in the world.ⁱ Violence against women (VAW) is rooted in unequal power relations between men and women, so efforts to end VAW must promote women's empowerment and gender equality. National governments are increasingly instituting legal reforms to put violence against women, once regarded as a private issue, firmly on the public agenda. Ending VAW is also at the top of the international peace, security, human rights and development agendas. In 2008, the United Nations Secretary-General launched the Unite to End Violence Against Women Campaign, which calls on governments, civil society, the private sector and the entire United Nations system to meet the challenge by 2015, the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).ⁱⁱ The Security Council, whose resolutions impose mandatory obligations on States with penalties for non-compliance, recently passed Resolution 1820 which recognizes that, when used as a tactic of war, sexual violence against civilians "may impede the restoration of international peace and security."ⁱⁱⁱ

States are obligated, under the due diligence standard, to respond as effectively as their capacity and resources allow to investigate, prosecute, provide remedies for and, importantly, prevent violence against women.^{iv} Building national accountability to address VAW requires simultaneous efforts at the levels of mandates, procedures, and deep culture in all of the institutions that prevent and prosecute violence and address the needs of survivors.

1. MANDATE REFORM

National legislation that prevents and penalizes all forms of violence against women and girls must be enacted. According to the *Secretary-General's In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence Against Women*, 89 countries had instituted by 2006 some form of legislative prohibition on domestic violence. In Liberia, one of the first laws passed following the election of President Johnson Sirleaf was a strong law criminalizing rape and making it a non-parole offence so suspects cannot return to communities to intimidate victims and witnesses.

National law must be harmonized with **international and regional human-rights instruments** and standards. General Recommendation 19 of the CEDAW Committee addresses violence against women and has been referred to by national courts, including the Indian Supreme Court, to secure women's rights. It is critical to monitor implementation of international and regional commitments and use relevant complaints mechanisms, such as the Inter-American Convention *Belém do Pará* or the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

Reliable data on VAW must be collected and made public. Information is central to informed policy and program development and monitoring. This includes population-based surveys on the multiple manifestations of violence against women and girls, their prevalence, causes, consequences, and the impact of interventions over the medium to longer-term; service-level data to assess sector performance (health, judicial and security); and surveys on attitudes and behaviours. The task of building data on VAW is made more challenging by the fact that VAW is one of the least reported crimes and, as shown in Figure 1.11, charges are pressed in only a fraction of cases.

2. PROCEDURAL CHANGES

National policy and funding frameworks must be developed. National Action Plans exclusively devoted to addressing violence against women serve as a valuable instrument for establishing the institutional, technical and financial resources required for a holistic, coordinated, multi-sectoral approach. These plans must aim to provide for a 'frontline' response from the police, medical and livelihood support services, in addition to legal services and long-term prevention. Cambodia was the first country to include targets on domestic violence and trafficking in its National MDG Plan 2005.^v Mozambique incorporated elements of the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women into the Poverty Reduction Strategy,^{vi} and South Africa addressed violence against women throughout its national HIV/AIDS strategy.^{vii}

Standard operating procedures and performance measures must be changed to translate laws and action plans into new practices. Presidential or ministerial decrees and protocols that assign roles and responsibilities to the ministries involved, and set minimal operating and performance standards, can support the implementation of laws and policies.

Resources must be earmarked to finance the wide range of actions to address VAW. Costs range from financing law enforcement reform and paying for health care, to ensuring free access (fee waivers, transportation) for poor women and girls. In August 2007, the President of Brazil announced US\$590 million to implement the new *Maria da Penha* Law on violence against women. The budgetary pledge is a leading example of a substantial allocation for implementation of legislation. The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, the

principal fund dedicated for this issue, received total contributions of \$10 million from its founding in 1996 to 2004, with that total climbing to a committed \$40 million for the period 2005-08. By comparison, the Global Fund on HIV and AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis has reached over \$10 billion since its establishment in 2002. A telling measure of accountability will be whether the Secretary-General's campaign target for the Trust Fund of reaching a minimum of US\$100 million per year by 2015 will be met.

Monitoring mechanisms must be inclusive at both national and local levels, to bring together the government, women's and other civil-society organizations, experts and researchers. For example, Afghanistan established an inter-ministerial commission on violence against women via Presidential decree, with UNIFEM support.

3. CULTURAL CHANGE

Empower women and girls, mobilise men and boys. Real and lasting change to end violence against women and girls needs to be grounded at the community level, where acts of abuse occur and where women should be able to demand their rights to justice, protection and support. Involving men and boys in actions to prevent and respond to violence against women is critical to finding a meaningful solution. A vibrant, well-informed civil society, armed with hard data, empowered with knowledge of their rights and governments' obligations, and equipped to demand accountability is a hallmark of sustained progress.

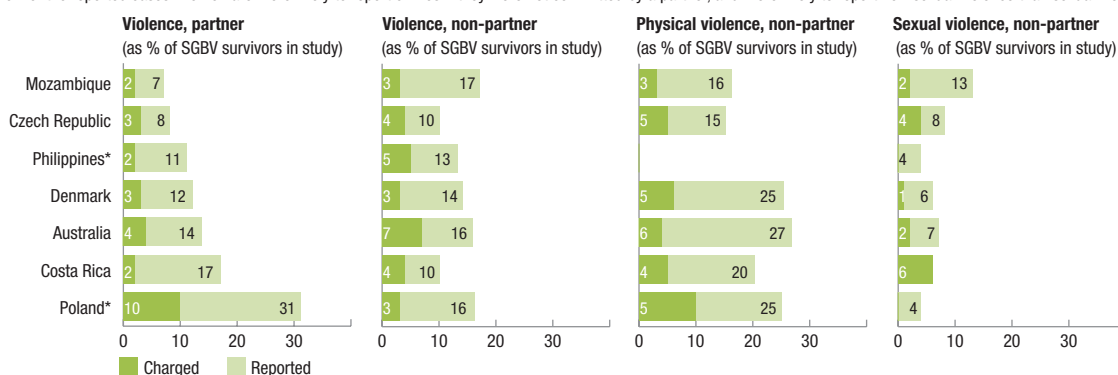
Launch and sustain campaigns. Spearheaded by women's movements, campaigns such as 16 Days of Activism have been instrumental in breaking the silence and raising awareness. UNIFEM crafted and forged the first United Nations Campaign on the issue in Latin America and the Caribbean in the late 1990s, and has continued such efforts, including its most recent global campaign, "Say No", which has garnered hundreds of thousands of signatures from individuals, partner organisations and governments.

As United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon summed up at the launch of the UNITE campaign, "Violence against women and girls makes its hideous imprint on every continent, country and culture. It is time to focus on the concrete actions that all of us can and must take to prevent and eliminate this scourge... It is time to break through the walls of silence, and make legal norms a reality in women's lives."^{viii}

FIGURE | Violence Against Women: Reporting and Charging Rates

A

A survey of women who experienced some form of violence indicates that in countries in this figure, no more than one third of cases of violence are reported, and charges are pressed in very few of the reported cases. Women are more likely to report crimes if they were not committed by a partner, and more likely to report non-sexual violence than sexual violence.



Notes: Percentages of the cases reported to the police and percentage with charges brought (convictions by the Criminal Justice System) were calculated as percentages of all victimised women. Information includes physical and sexual violence, perpetrated by partners and non-partners. The original source did not provide complete information for the Philippines. *No information on the percentage of charged cases was reported for Philippines and Poland.

Source: Johnson, H., Ollus, N., & Nevada, S. (2007).



UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman invites you to
Say NO to Violence against Women
www.saynotoviolence.org



c) *Culture and attitudes*: Accountability to women can require efforts to change gender-biased attitudes in public and private institutions. Cultural and attitudinal change has been a long-term project of gender equality advocates. One approach has been simply to bring more women into positions of authority in public and private institutions. Some of the accountability innovations discussed in this volume involve bringing those women who are most affected by public decision-making into the oversight systems for reviewing public actions. As members of user groups managing common property resources, or as members of Country Coordination Mechanisms for National HIV/AIDS Strategies, or as members of community water boards, women can pursue explanations for poor performance. In the process, they may foster long-term attitudinal change about women's rights amongst male colleagues and society in general.

These institutional changes at three levels – normative, procedural and cultural – are required to make women's rights and gender equality '*mission critical*'¹³ – in other words, essential to the effective functioning

of any institution. This means much more than demonstrating the functional necessity of women's participation in politics, conflict-resolution, poverty reduction, and growth. Rather, it is about changing basic understandings of the public interest so that women's rights and gender equality are at the centre of social compacts for the broader public good. Leaders and institutions should have no choice but to answer to women.

Progress 2008/2009:

Part I:

Who answers to women?

Part I of *Progress 2008/2009* explores efforts to improve accountability for advancing gender equality in the arenas of political participation, public services, labour markets and economic activity, the justice system, and finally, in international development and security institutions.

Chapter 2, 'Politics', highlights the substantial obstacles to women's effective political engagement. The chapter identifies ways in which women and their allies have

“Who is accountable for gender equality? We cannot assume that democracy and good governance will directly bring gender equality and empowerment to our countries. If women are not in the national leadership, their voices on economic, political and social issues will not be heard. In this sense, Spain can be proud of the progress made to date. Half of the apex decision-making body in Spain is composed of women, with key cabinet positions assigned to women. Gender equality and empowerment is becoming a reality in Spanish society. By allowing full participation and equitable representation in the decision-making process we are taking a first step in the right direction. The Gender Equity Law and the Integrated Protection against Gender-based Violence Law approved by the Spanish Congress allow us to introduce gender equality in all the other spheres of public and private life, by fighting gender discrimination and gender-based violence, allowing positive action measures in collective bargaining, encouraging reconciliation of work and family life, promoting equality plans and fostering good practices. Only by promoting the right policies, will we be able to answer this question. Who is accountable to women? Everyone in my government is.”

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero
Prime Minister of Spain

organised to change political mandates in order to include gender equality and how they have worked to hold elected officials to account for the impact of their actions on women's rights. Chapter 2 shows that the effort to increase the numbers of women in public office is not on its own a gender-sensitive accountability reform, although more women in public decision-making will help build public responsiveness to women's interests. Accountability to women involves developing broad-based coalitions for gender equality in which significant voting constituencies demand that politicians answer to women. Political parties and governing coalitions must incorporate gender equality in their legislative agendas. A major constraint is a lack of state administrative capacity to convert policies into results for women.

Chapter 3, 'Services', focuses on the impact of gender-specific accountability failures in public services. These result in a gender-biased distribution of public goods, in gendered stereotypes in service design, and in impunity for gender-specific abuses in service delivery, such as sexual harassment of women clients by public providers. Accountability improvements have been pursued through efforts to strengthen women's collective 'voice' in mandating more appropriate service design and resource allocation. Women are engaging more directly with service providers, from nurses and teachers to police officers to sanitation engineers, in order to indicate their preferences, provide feedback about the quality of provider performance, and engage in oversight processes. Chapter 3 reviews the merits of both 'voice'- and 'choice'-based routes to accountability, and finds that in both cases accountability systems in public services require institutional change, including new mandates, incentives, and gender-sensitive performance indicators that can be measured and monitored. Above all, participation by those women who are most affected by deficits in service provision is essential.

Chapter 4, 'Markets', turns to the challenging issue of accountability to women in

the private sector, with a particular focus on accountability for upholding women's labour rights. It asks who answers to the woman worker whose employer fires her if she has become pregnant, does not provide equal pay for equal work or denies her decent sanitary facilities? Economic globalisation – the rapid liberalisation of world finance and trade – combined with fiscal crises and other resource crunches in recent years, have encouraged the privatisation of many state functions, including public services. This can confuse lines of accountability for upholding labour standards, sometimes leaving this to *ad hoc* private sector efforts such as Corporate Social Responsibility. Women's collective action in both formal and informal sectors has yielded a number of labour rights protections. But Chapter 4 finds that much of the 'brain drain' from poor countries is female, as qualified women seek better conditions away from home – a development that may deplete the pool of women economic leaders in developing countries. Chapter 4 argues that governments must retain primary responsibility for backstopping accountability to women in the market.

Chapter 5, 'Justice', reviews achievements of women's rights movements in reforming formal and informal justice systems so that women can seek justice in the family, community and the market. Domestic judicial systems have often trailed behind international human rights agreements, with jurisprudence and law enforcement particularly lagging in the protection of women from physical and sexual violence. There have been significant legal advances both at the national level, such as the *Maria da Penha* Law on domestic violence in Brazil, and at the international level, such as the recognition of widespread and systematic rape in war as a crime against humanity. Chapter 5 shows how women have been able to use justice institutions to seek redress for violations of their rights.

Chapter 6, 'Aid and Security' explores the accountability of international organisations for supporting countries to advance gender equality and women's empower-

ment, particularly in the context of a changing architecture for Official Development Assistance and stronger commitments to women's rights in the peace and security sector, notably Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820. It asks why multilateral organisations such as the United Nations and the World Bank, which have prioritised results-based management and budgeting and have committed themselves to comprehensive gender equality policies and plans, remain unable to report on the financial resources devoted to gender equality. Chapter 6 calls for multilateral financial, development, and security institutions to demonstrate that they can meet the demanding standards that they set for partner countries, by instituting gender-responsive budgeting and reporting, by sharpening the incentives and performance measures to ensure that their own staff comply with gender equality commitments and by more effectively positioning their internal gender equality expertise.

The **Conclusion** articulates an agenda for gender-responsive accountability reform. It proposes key routes, technical as well as political, to strengthening the accountability of power-holders to women. It stresses the critical role of women's voice and collective action in driving change. And it outlines areas for future research to build understanding of the reforms that are most effective in enabling gender-responsive good governance.

Part II: MDGs & Gender

Part II of *Progress 2008/2009* contains a succinct review of each of the eight MDGs from a gender equality perspective. In 2008, governments around the world are raising the alarm at the lack of progress in keeping to the timetable of achieving the MDGs by 2015. While important gains have been made in reducing the number of people living on less than one dollar a day, improving primary and secondary school enrolment and combating HIV/AIDS, most of the other Goals are off-track. Regional divergence is widening, and the situation is particularly critical for sub-Saharan Africa. A reduction in maternal mortality rates, the one MDG

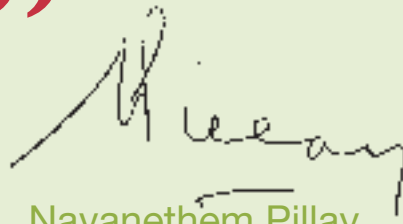
that has a devastating impact on women, is the Goal farthest from achievement.

Part II of *Progress 2008/2009* confirms that gender inequality is a major factor in holding back achievement of the MDGs. Gender inequality reduces the capacity of poor women to deploy their most abundant resource – their labour – to move out of poverty. This exacerbates unequal and inefficient allocation of resources within families and economies. Gender inequality exacerbates non-monetary aspects of poverty too: the lack of opportunities, voice and security, all of which make the poor more vulnerable to economic, environmental, or political shocks.

The consequences are most directly felt by women and girls: women are still outnumbered over 4 to 1 in legislatures around the world;¹⁴ the majority (over 60 per cent) of all family workers globally are women;¹⁵ women earn 17 per cent less than men;¹⁶ girls are more likely to be out of school than boys (representing 57 per cent of children out of school globally),¹⁷ and in sub-Saharan Africa three women are infected with HIV for every two men.¹⁸ In some parts of the world, risks of maternity-related death are extremely high: one out of every seven women will die of pregnancy-related causes in Niger; one out of eight in Sierra Leone.¹⁹

Discrimination on this scale after decades of national and international declarations and commitments to build gender equality is symptomatic of an accountability crisis. That maternal mortality rates are going down at a rate of just 0.4 per cent a year instead of the 5.5 per cent decrease needed to meet MDG 5, when the health system reforms needed to improve ante- and post-natal care are relatively low-cost and straightforward, reveals a gender bias that is not being captured or corrected for in health-care oversight systems. Similar accountability failures permit gender bias to flourish in schools, electoral processes, market institutions, and judicial systems. These accountability failures exacerbate several other forms of discrimination that are not captured in the MDG targets: pervasive violence against women, women's

“International human rights and humanitarian law concerning the conduct of war have for a long time failed women. Though rules limiting the conduct of hostilities have existed in various forms for as long as conflicts themselves, violence against and exploitation of women have been implicitly tolerated or, at worst, encouraged. The mass rapes of the Balkan wars and of Rwanda have changed this climate of impunity. The last fifteen years have seen a rapid growth in the international law relating to conflict, including the recognition of rape as a crime against humanity, a war crime and, in certain circumstances, an element of genocide. This has been an important breakthrough for women’s rights, and indeed, for building accountability systems for post-conflict societies. But efforts to end impunity by prosecuting perpetrators occur after the event; we must prevent rather than redress. The better way is to promote democratic governance, access to justice and human rights. We must recognize the critical link between the rule of law and poverty eradication, human rights and sustainable development. Durable peace cannot be built on injustice. Justice for women is at long last emerging from the shadow of history to take its rightful place at the heart of the international rule of law.”



Navanethem Pillay
High Commissioner of Human Rights

lack of control of productive property, notably land, and women’s extreme vulnerability during conflict. Reducing violence against women is a missing but important target for the MDGs, considering the deeply damaging impact on social cohesion, on women’s productivity, and on their political voice, of life in a climate of fear and pain.

The message of Part II of *Progress 2008/2009* joins with the overwhelming message of Part I: the key to ending gender discrimination and structural inequality is accountability. Women must be empowered to hold policy-makers answerable for their promises, and if they fail to deliver, to call for corrective action.

Progress of the World’s Women 2008/2009 asks ‘Who Answers to Women?’ to show that increasing accountability to gender equality and women’s empowerment is necessary and possible and that there are a growing number

of precedents on which to build. For market institutions, formal and informal institutions, or multilateral institutions to meet their obligations to women, it is critical that states set a high standard of accountability. *Progress* thus calls for intensified investments in and focus on building national capacity for accountability to women. The extent to which national governments are accessible and accountable to women is the cornerstone of meaningful progress toward gender equality and women’s empowerment.