

The political economy of gender reform

Progress toward gender equality entails shifts toward a new equilibrium where women have access to more endowments, more economic opportunities, and more ways to exercise their agency—and where this new arrangement becomes the dominant order. Schooling for girls and women's suffrage are widely accepted in most countries today, but that once was not so. The changes were shaped by interactions between households, markets, formal institutions, and informal institutions. And each of these interactions affected markets, formal institutions, and informal institutions in a continuous feedback loop.

Chapter 7 discussed policy interventions to correct specific market failures, and institutional or normative constraints that underlie gender gaps. But whether these policies are put in place or not, and whether they will work or not, depends also on the political economy context. A successful policy in one country may not necessarily transfer to another. The context determines how the findings from one country are relevant or replicable in another.¹

So, policy design and implementation must be attuned to the societal actors and the policy environment. Successful interventions and lessons from one country must be adapted and attuned to the social circumstances of another. Following our conceptual framework, this chapter describes the role of societal actors and their interventions in:

- Informal institutions—through collective action
- Markets—through firm behavior

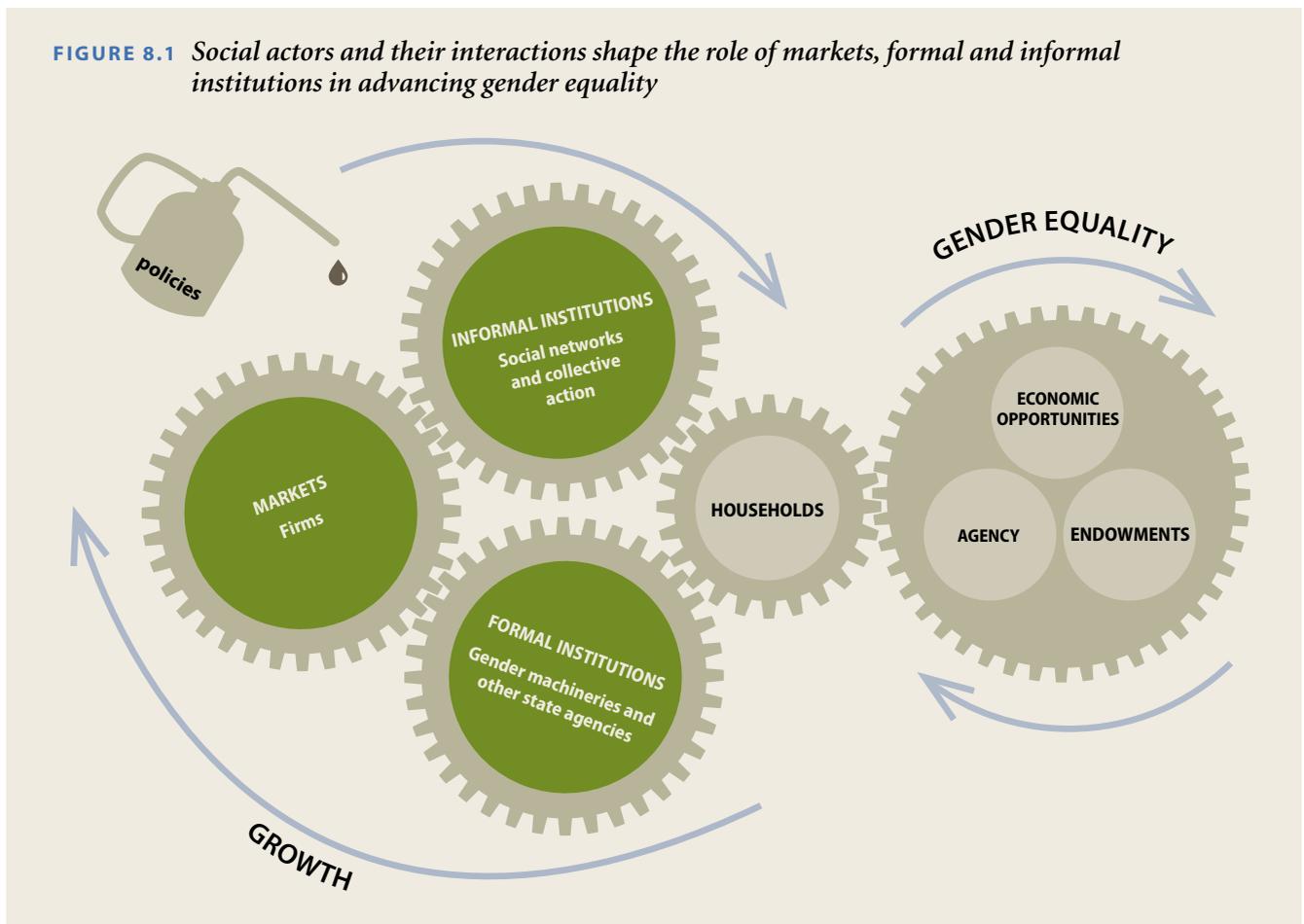
- Formal institutions—through state actions and structures that evaluate, advocate, design, implement, or enforce gender equality policies and laws (figure 8.1)

Collective action through social networks and civil society groups has been a formidable force in advancing gender equality. Policy reforms arise from a political process where state and nonstate societal actors vie to shape their environment. Their interests and spheres of influence determine the power dynamics that fashion policy reform in relation to the trade-offs and costs in the short and long term. Policies require trade-offs in allocating resources to competing priorities within given budget constraints and financial and political costs. For instance, improving maternal care and delivery in remote areas may conflict with expanding hospital services for the broader population. Opposition to any given reform may come from societal actors who do not want (or cannot afford) to bear the related costs or prefer a competing agenda.

Given multiple and diverging societal actors, coalitions are indispensable for building support and countering resistance from influential interest groups. After the demise of General Augusto Pinochet's regime, centrist and center-left governments in Chile failed for nearly 15 years to legalize divorce, despite large popular support. The Catholic Church was among the most vocal opponents of liberalizing family laws. Eighteen bills were rejected before Congress, with the support of a large coalition of political parties, approved a divorce law in 2004.

Markets too have a role to play: firms—big and small—have articulated a business case

FIGURE 8.1 Social actors and their interactions shape the role of markets, formal and informal institutions in advancing gender equality



Source: WDR 2012 team.

for gender equality. In a fast-changing global economy the demand for skills has swelled, so firms have sought to expand their talent pool. Diverse opinions may enrich decision making and stimulate ingenuity. And gender equality has become a desirable trait that customers and investors look for. Corporate social responsibility is an avenue for firms to enhance competitiveness by differentiating products and capturing the loyalty of women's growing market share.

Attracting and retaining female talent and customer loyalty requires an organizational shift. Corporate culture must accommodate the many demands of work and home for men and women. Career mentoring and advancement are also central in realizing the benefits of gender diversity. Much remains to be done in these domains. In the United States, for example, even though half of law school graduates are women and 90 percent of law firms have a diversity program, only 15 percent of partners

in law firms—those who hold an ownership interest—are women.²

Finally, state action is at the epicenter of gender-progressive policy making and implementation. The social contract determines the form, timing, and legitimacy of state regulation and intervention in markets, formal institutions, and social norms. In Scandinavian countries, the state explicitly pursues policies to strengthen women's position in society, in what might be called a "gender contract." In the Philippines, the 2009 "Magna Carta of Women" affirms the role of the state to "provide the necessary mechanisms to enforce and guarantee the realization of women's rights as well as adopt and undertake steps to include temporary special measures which encompass a wide variety of legislative, executive, administrative and other regulatory instruments, policies and practices aimed at accelerating the equal participation of women in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."³

BOX 8.1 *Georgia—Evolving gender roles in a new society*

Georgia's independence in 1991 led to a deep economic downturn. Households had to find novel ways to earn incomes. Adapting to the new political and economic realities proved transformative for gender roles.

Widespread closures of firms and industries after the dissolution of the Soviet Union left thousands in Georgia unemployed. Many women became breadwinners and sole providers for their households. They realized long before men that there was no return to secure state employment, and they proved more flexible in adjusting to occupational change. They often took jobs below their qualifications, opting to be unskilled workers in informal activities such as street vendors, running shuttle services to Turkey, sitting babies, or cleaning houses. Petty trade remains the largest arena of self-employment for women, who were ready to "downgrade" their work to provide for their families, while their husbands and other men remained at home and refused to take jobs that did not match their status and educational training.

Horizontal gender segregation of employment also contributed to women's greater economic independence. The "female sectors"—teachers, nurses, and doctors—remained largely unperturbed, while traditionally male occupations were less in demand. In 2007, women made up 89 percent of university academic staff and 69 percent of medical doctors.

The absence of jobs led many men and women to migrate. Their remittances reach 1 in 10 people in Georgia, and those from female migrants are on average \$40 higher than remittances from male migrants.

The rise of female involvement in formal and informal economic activities has been paired with a generational shift in values. Today, men have grown more involved in family life, child care, and domestic work. Anecdotal evidence suggests that more men are taking parental leave from work. These changes in gender roles and norms were fueled not by policy interventions but by a drastic deterioration in the economic environment that challenged the traditional distribution of labor.

Source: Sumbadze 2011.

Politicians and policy makers negotiate the design, approval, and implementation of state policies. "Gender machineries" are specialized state structures to deliver on specific gender equality goals. They can involve institutions that monitor the social conditions of men and women, generate knowledge, provide operational support for gender reforms, or ensure their enforcement. Other state structures—such as the justice system—are also critical as agents of social change.

Cutting across these actors, economic growth, technological development, globalization, natural disasters, and postconflict reconstruction all spur waves of policy change as households adapt to new realities (box 8.1). Social actors can seize these emerging windows of opportunities to catalyze and realize gains in gender equality.

The path of reform also matters. Governments often follow society's cues for reform. Policy change captures the collective aspirations and

will of social actors, opening new opportunities. When policy formulation and implementation follow cues from ongoing shifts in markets and social norms, convergence and alignment can fuel sustainable change. But such "incremental" reforms may not be enough to overcome the path dependence and institutional rigidities that result in persistent gender inequality. Bold government action with "transformative" reforms can alter social dynamics and move countries and societies to a more equitable equilibrium. In these circumstances, policy implementation and enforcement must follow through to produce sustainable behavioral changes.

Women and men are partners in realizing gender equality. Effective government action demands the building of broad-based coalitions with local, national, and international actors to advocate for and produce reform. It also demands adopting a cross-cutting gender lens to assess outcomes and implications, building sound institutional structures for implementation and enforcement, seizing windows of opportunity to engender change, and balancing the pace of change with the risk of backlash.

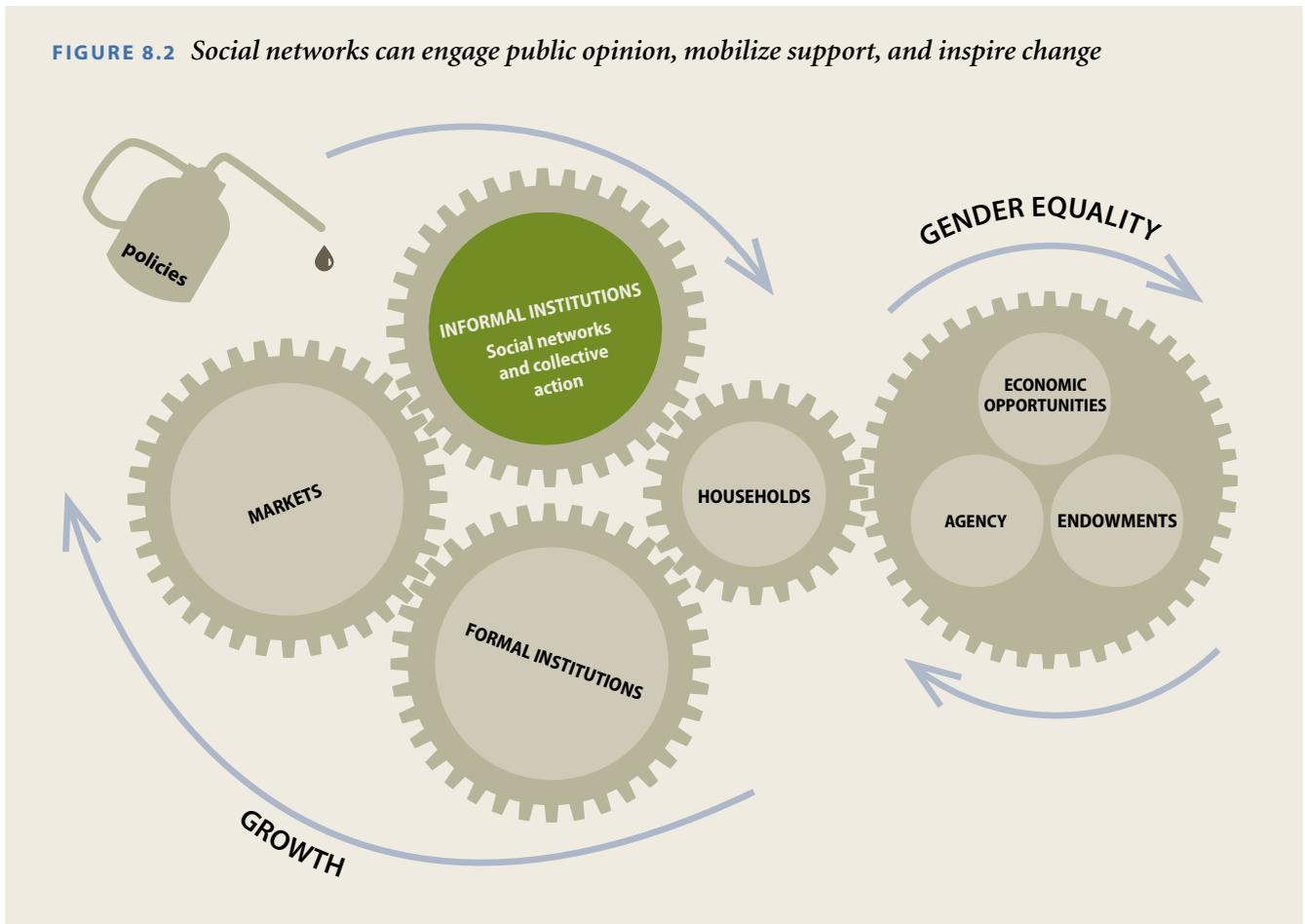
INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS—SOCIAL NETWORKS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Societal actors have a direct hand in shaping the policy and institutional environment—by advocating policies, designing interventions, and implementing programs. Individuals can influence government policy through voting and public opinion.

Individuals can also organize collectively into social networks and civil society groups to realize common political or social goals. Collective agency can shape community and individual outcomes. And social organizations and cooperatives can pool risks and investments in community driven-development, microfinance, child care, and other programs to realize bigger benefits. These social networks and organizations can also diffuse information, such as sharing knowledge on technological innovations to enhance agricultural productivity.⁴

Participation in social networks and groups can build capacity and serve as a springboard for collective action in other spheres, such as exercising political voice in local government. A social movement can grow as more supporters

FIGURE 8.2 Social networks can engage public opinion, mobilize support, and inspire change



Source: WDR 2012 team.

adopt its point of view. As coordination mechanisms, groups can inspire individuals to take action, transforming passive stakeholders into societal actors (figure 8.2).⁵ Women workers have been more willing to challenge their employers and the state through such organizations as the Self Employed Women's Association and Mahila Samakhya in India and Kormojibi Nari and Nijera Kori in Bangladesh.⁶

Collective action: In numbers there is power

Over the past 250 years, women's rights groups, political parties, trade unions, faith-based organizations, state-sponsored mass organizations, and civil society groups have all championed the cause of gender equality. Women's organizations have been central in standing against gender inequality and acting as a force for change in the international, national, and local arenas on matters such as reproductive rights, equal opportu-

nity labor legislation, and family law (box 8.2).⁷ Globalization and new communication technologies have created new opportunities to raise awareness, create networks, generate debate, and mobilize stakeholders against inequalities.

Reforms usually create winners and losers, so understanding the political realities and trade-offs that shape the incentives for key stakeholders in a program or policy is vital to building coalitions and securing consensus. Society's actors can drive policy reform, or they can block, neglect, or reverse it in accord with their interests and motives. Shaping their relative power are the resources they can allocate to defending (or resisting) policy positions and the importance, or salience, they attach to reform outcomes. Their visibility, legitimacy, constituencies, social standing, social networks, and ability to access information channels determine their spheres of influence and the efficacy of their actions within them.

BOX 8.2 *Feminism in perspective*

Women's movements have long been a driving force for social change. They have given voice to the cause of gender equality, creating a space for public debate and setting the stage for change and reform.

Women mobilize as political actors and social agents for a wide variety of causes—social, political, economic, environmental. For example, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina—mothers demanding the safe return of their children who disappeared during the military dictatorship—are organized around a nongender equality issue.

Feminism (and the women's movement associated with it) refers to groups organized around women's inequalities and disadvantages deriving from their gender. The feminist movement is a political movement concerned with changing social conditions. Awareness of disadvantage and rejection of the prevalent social order is a central pillar of its politics. The feminist movement is made up of several groups and strands with a common concern—women's position in society—but with different priorities, identities, and strategies for action. So as a movement, it does not contain a set of fixed common objectives, continuity, unity, and coordination—as some other social movements do.

Feminism as a social movement began in the early 1920s—the “first wave” in the United States and Europe—seeking to reform specific laws perceived as holding women in a subordinate position. Focusing on suffrage, the right to own property, and access to the justice system, it engaged women politically, won legal recognition of women, and challenged legal barriers to gender equality.

The second wave, radical feminism, recognized that legal equality was not enough to change women's subordination in society. Organized around the slogan, “the personal is political,” a new agenda aimed at transforming the social and economic status of women. Focal areas included control over women's own bodies—particularly reproduction—equal pay claims, and domestic vio-

lence. The emphasis on subordination and difference was articulated around “intersectionality” and the interrelations among sex, race, and class oppression.

The third wave, postfeminism, shifts attention from legal rights and group identity to emphasize (and act on) a new concept of equality that disregards all fundamental differences between men and women. Rejecting all possible factors that unite women as a class or a group, as well as all homogenizing definitions and generalizations, postfeminism focuses instead on cultural and individual rights.

Perspectives and points of public action have shifted over time, but the women's movement has solidified, nationally and internationally. The international, or global, women's movement can be derived from the national organizations that came together around the 1975 declaration of the Decade of Women by the United Nations and its four international conferences—Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), and Beijing (1995). These conferences were the first to bring together women from developed and developing countries, creating common interests and strategies for action the world over.

The number of women's international nongovernmental organizations (WINGOs) has swelled, with more than 300 new groups founded each year around the world. They espouse a broad variety of goals but share a commitment to advancing women's concerns in society. Their focus, priorities, and means of action have also shifted from one decade to another, building on past successes and responding to new social realities.

Two forces are at constant play: controversy and coalition. Coalition has given the movement strength in the international and national sphere when it has managed to bring women together around a common topic. Controversy—as the recognition of differences within the movement—gives the movement life.

Sources: Andreasen and others 1991; Antrobus 2004; Basu 1995; Hooks 2000; Marx Ferree and Hess 2000; Paxton and Hughes 2007; Whelehan 1995.

Political economy structures and dynamics can make the difference between a well-designed and sustainable intervention that mobilizes support and a failed initiative that alienates crucial constituencies. For instance, redistributing political power to women through parliamentary quotas may increase women's voice but be con-

sidered a threat by castes, ethnic minorities, or religious interest groups that stand to lose some of their limited influence (box 8.3).

Those who benefit from the status quo will likely resist changes that they perceive as diminishing their returns. They can increase the transaction costs for other stakeholders, making a re-

“ Ten years ago women were not involved; but women hold positions of authority now. People attend community meetings and women are very much involved. Ten years ago women were subject to men. Our level of development is enhanced by women's participation. ”

Adult woman, Liberia

form initiative less accessible or even regressive. When costs are perceived to be too high, potential losers may jeopardize the policy process or hinder its implementation. For instance, some men feel threatened by policy change, whether in their economic or social roles, so they may lash out and look for ways to return to “the old ways.” In India, the response by some men to legislation to protect women’s status and well-being has been to call for a return to a traditional equilibrium.⁸ The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 has been actively fought by organizations such as “Save Indian Family,” while the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1986 has been resisted by “Men against Dowry Act Misuse” organizations.⁹

Even so, political activism and social organization have gone hand in hand with important social gains. In the political sphere, constitutional reform has been a focal concern of women’s recent mobilization. Women’s organizations have sought to repeal any bias in civil and political rights (box 8.4). There is a positive and significant relationship between the global rise of the women’s international movement—measured by the number of women’s organizations and international treaties or conventions dedicated to women—and the achievement of milestones in women’s political participation in 151 countries. Examples include attaining female suffrage, electing the first female parliamentarian, and women progressively reaching 10, 20, and 30 percent of the seats in national legislatures.¹⁰

Collective action has drawn “private life” into the public arena, identifying and addressing gender bias in statutory, religious, or custom-

BOX 8.3 *Competing interests—Caste, ethnic, and religious politics and gender*

In India, a constitutional amendment to set aside 33 percent of parliamentary seats for women has been under discussion since 1996. Supported by many women’s groups, it has failed to pass. Why?

In India’s fragmented political landscape, small ethnic and caste-based parties in the states are central in building coalitions to constitute a government. Some of these parties oppose the proposed amendment on the grounds that lower-caste men will be displaced by upper-caste women. They contend that the current version of the reservation bill does not provide special allotments to lower-caste women (or possibly Muslim women) within the 33 percent quota. In turn, political parties and women’s organizations that support the existing legislation reject a “quota within quota” system. The politics of gender and the politics of caste in this arena have been gridlocked ever since.

In contrast, after the fall of Saddam Hussein the Iraqi Governing Council was constituted to ensure adequate representation from ethnic and religious groups—Shi’as, Sunnis, Kurds, Turkomans, and Assyrian Christians—leaving women’s political participation in the transitional government largely relegated in importance. U.S. officials emphasized that there were “no plans for [female] quotas.” When the Iraqi constitution was drafted, however, power-sharing notions among ethnic and religious groups had been abandoned and replaced by provisions on decentralization, federalism, and majoritarianism. The voices of women actors and women’s groups, by contrast, had grown louder in favor of female parliamentary quotas. Article 47 established an expectation of 25 percent female representation in the National Assembly. Later, the new electoral law established that one of the first three candidates on the ballot list must be a woman.

Sources: Krook and O’Brien 2010; Menon 2009; UNRISD 2005.

ary family law.¹¹ It has also reduced the hold of social norms blocking greater gender equality. During the debate in Cambodia leading to the 2005 Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims, the draft law was denounced for being antagonistic to Khmer cul-

BOX 8.4 *More women in public office—The Namibian Women’s Manifesto Network*

The Namibian Women’s Manifesto Network, launched in 1999 as a coalition of more than 30 groups, strives for greater women’s political representation. In the 50/50 campaign, the main objective has been to promote party candidate lists with 50 percent quotas for women, structured in “zebra” fashion, alternating men and women on the lists. The South West Africa People’s Organization (the majority political party) placed 28 percent of women candidates on the party list that year, and

female representation in the National Assembly jumped to 26 percent.

Today, Namibia ranks 42nd in the world for women representatives in parliament. Nineteen of 78 National Assembly members are women. The Network continues to promote gender parity in politics. Its regional and local facilitators hold workshops across the country. It has also promoted the appointment of gender focal points and gender budgeting approaches to planning.

Sources: Geisler 2004; Mensah-Williams 2010.

BOX 8.5 *Differences among women about their right to vote—The case of Switzerland*

Swiss women gained the right to vote in federal elections and to run for political office after a national referendum in 1971. Eleven women (5.5 percent) were even elected as members of parliament. But some women had been a major factor in blocking passage of those rights in an earlier referendum.

The Federation of Swiss Women against Women's Right to Vote, founded in 1959, opposed women's suffrage, arguing that women's duties lie in the household. German-speaking cantons abided by cultural perceptions of women's role in society as bound to *Kinder, Kirche, und Küche* (Children, Church, and Kitchen): Men operated in the public space, and women in the private sphere.

"Look what female suffrage has done to other countries: Everywhere the so-called equality of women has resulted in women losing their natural privileges and suffering through having to compete with men on their own ground. A woman's place is in the home, not in the political arena. To make political decisions, you must read newspapers, and a woman who does her housework and looks after her children has no time to read newspapers," said Gertrud Haldimann, the president of the federation.

The 1959 national referendum resulted in a resounding no. Sixty-seven percent of voters opposed women voting. In the canton of Appenzel Innerrhoden, an overwhelming 95 percent opposed the extension of the franchise.

Source: *The Spokesman-Review*, October 25, 1959, p. 12.

ture. Parliamentarians criticized it for "providing women with too many freedoms and rights, which will cause them to be so happy with their freedom that they do not respect ancient Cambodian customs. . . . A cake cannot be bigger than the cake pan."¹² The Cambodia Committee of Women, a coalition of 32 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), persistently lobbied the government and the Ministry of Women's Affairs to secure the legislation's passage.

Women are a heterogeneous group

Women differ not only in their endowments and access to opportunities but also in their values and ideology. They typically have differing definitions of sexuality, family, and desirable state intervention.¹³ The interests of some women may be directly opposed to the interests of other women. Women in Switzerland stood against universal suffrage (box 8.5). Women in the United States are divided on issues of abortion rights, maternity leave, and affirmative action policies.¹⁴ Some women fight to prohibit the use of the veil in France—others stand for their right to wear it. While female genital cutting has significant physical and psychological consequences, the beliefs and traditions around

it are so powerful that many African women are strong advocates for its continuance.¹⁵

Race, religion, sexuality, ethnicity, and class identity coexist with gender (or "intersect" with gender, where their interactions create specific effects). As a result, different groups of women differ in their needs, experiences, and perceptions of social, economic, and political reality; in turn, those differences influence their political preferences and interpretation of policy options. In Brazil and the United Kingdom, black women complained that gender equality advocacy was blind to their particular needs.¹⁶ Other groups have established their own identity groups and identity politics to make their specific claims heard (box 8.6).

When these intersections are not recognized or are rendered invisible, they can stand between effective cooperation and advocacy—and in the way of realizing common goals for women's well-being. The term "violence against women" emerged in the global arena in the 1970s, but it took more than two decades for the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the first international statement in this area, to become a reality in 1993. The UN World Conferences on Women in Mexico (1975) and Nairobi (1985) saw little progress in articulating an overarching framework to fight gender violence. Women's advocates actively disagreed over priorities and avenues for remediation. The global movement against gender-based violence reached a turning point only after it developed explicit norms to acknowledge differences and promote inclusiveness. Consensus on a framework for dealing with gender-based violence emerged through a commitment to incorporate marginalized groups and institute avenues to voice dissent.¹⁷

Men as allies toward gender equality

The transition toward a more egalitarian society has required the contribution and commitment of male actors. As heads of states and government ministers, as leaders of religious and faith-based institutions, as judges, as heads of armies, as employers and business managers, as village heads, and indeed as husbands and fathers, men have held and continue to hold significant power over many aspects of women's lives. Men's attitudes and behaviors are crucial in the debate and in the design of gender-related policies.¹⁸

BOX 8.6 *Domestic workers in Brazil*

The organization of women domestic workers in Brazil challenges universalizing notions of women. Domestic workers constitute 7 percent of the labor force, and black women make up 60 percent of all domestic workers. Domestic workers face differences in social class and race in relation to their predominantly middle- and upper-class white female employers, who benefit from low-cost domestic help.

Legal provisions for domestic workers include a minimum salary, paid leave, maternity or paternity leave, and a right to unemployment compensation. Yet 28 percent of domestic workers receive half the minimum salary, and 41 percent receive something between half and full minimum salary.

Supported by the National Federation of Domestic Workers (FENATRAD), founded in 1997, a proposal for constitutional reform is under discussion to improve enforcement of these rights as well

as to equalize domestic workers' rights with workers' rights in general, including family allowances, overtime payment, and accident insurance. The proposal has met significant resistance from employers: the Employers Union president in São Paulo state warned that the approval of domestic workers rights in the Federal Congress would make labor costs unsustainable.

In 2003, the government established a permanent table for negotiations with FENATRAD, leading to programs such as "Citizen Domestic Worker" to strengthen the voice of domestic workers. The program offers education and public awareness campaigns on such topics as violence against women, the eradication of domestic child labor, and the right to housing, health, work, and social security as well as tips on organizing trade unions for domestic workers in seven cities across Brazil.

Sources: Gonçalves 2010; Moreira Gomes and Martins Bertolin 2011.

The reforms of child custody and marital property laws in 19th-century England and the United States preceded the granting of women's political rights. These early expansions in women's rights were passed by all-male legislatures accountable only to all male voters.¹⁹ It happened because as development proceeded, rising capital accumulation, declining fertility, and growing demand for human capital gave fathers the incentives to accord rights to their daughters.²⁰

The extension of the franchise to women in the United States occurred eventually in great part from the vigorous advocacy of women's organizations. But in its early stages, the strength of the suffrage movement increased the likelihood of a suffrage bill's introduction, not its passage. For instance, Wyoming was the first state to enact universal suffrage in 1890 even though it lacked a strong organized suffrage movement. Early adoption in western states is partly explained by a rising number of educated professional and progressive middle-class men. Other contributing factors included intense political competi-

tion between Republicans and Democrats—and their desire to expand the universe of voters who might support their policies—as well as the enactment of suffrage in neighboring states.²¹

The UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 sought to "encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards gender equality"—in education, socializing children, child care and housework, sexual health, and violence against women. Men's organizations have rallied in support of gender equality. One example is the Rwanda Men's Resources Centre, an NGO founded in October 2006 to engage men and boys in the fight against gender-based violence. The MenEngage Alliance is a global network of NGOs and UN partners working to engage men and boys in efforts for greater gender equality. The alliance has more than 400 NGO members working in more than 70 countries, ranging from small programs to larger advocacy efforts. Most members work in collaboration or are associated with women's rights organizations.²²

A consensus is growing that it is necessary to work with both men and women to break harmful gender norms. As two researchers put it,

Gender roles are constructed and reconstructed—and must be questioned—by both men and women. Girls and women can contribute to traditional, harmful versions of manhood, just as boys and men can

“For a good future, men must change.”

Adult man, Peru

*contribute to traditional, restrictive versions of womanhood. True and lasting changes in gender norms will only be achieved when it is widely recognized that gender is relational, that it is short-sighted to seek to empower women without engaging men, and that is difficult if not impossible to change what manhood means without also engaging young women.*²³

Public policies that incorporate men and boys have been the exception. Sexual and reproductive health initiatives should consider that women’s knowledge and access to contraception is higher when men’s knowledge is also increased.²⁴ Microcredit programs cannot ignore how they challenge gender and household norms for men and women. A household survey in rural Bangladesh found that 78 percent of women said they had at some point been forced to cede money to their husbands, and 56 percent said that their husbands had forced them not to work outside the home.²⁵

Most policy initiatives that do call on men to support gender equality are small, often lacking a strategic vision for scaling up and encouraging broader social change. A notable exception is Scandinavia, where paternity leave provisions promote changes in gender norms and encourage men to partake in child care. Although re-

sponsibility for care still lies largely with women, the policies have had fairly high acceptance. In 2003, Swedish fathers took 18 percent of parental leave days.²⁶

In Brazil, Chile, Croatia, and Mexico, adult men overwhelmingly express that “men do not lose out when women’s rights are promoted” (an exception is India) (figure 8.3). Support for female quotas in executive positions, university enrollments, and public office also run relatively high. Even in India, where survey data suggest men are considerably less supportive of gender equality overall, the support for some specific policies is broadly based.²⁷

The inclusion of men can convey the idea that gender equality is a public good benefiting all. Using local data, research, and testimonials in mass media and advocacy campaigns can facilitate policy dialogue and frame gender equality—in relationships, in households, and in communities—as a public good for everyone. Engaging with youth can shape lasting social attitudes toward gender roles and gender justice.²⁸

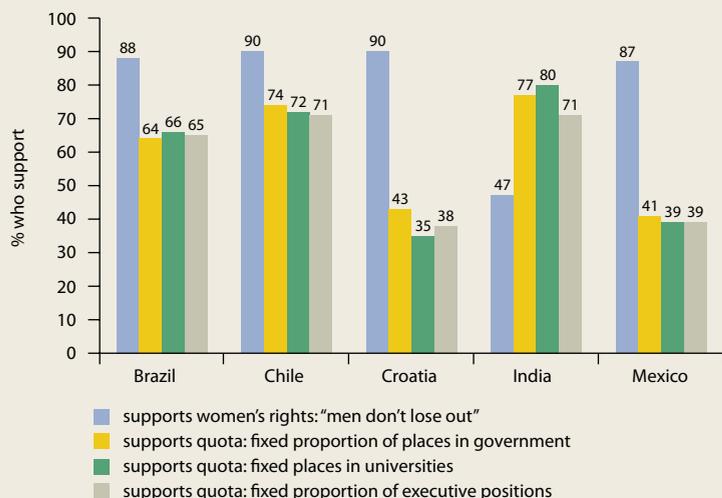
Broadening coalitions

Society’s actors can create political space for reform by building coalitions to increase the demand for change. Social mobilization and awareness-raising efforts can widen the platform of support and the range of policy options. Coalitions can change the net political returns of a given policy alternative.

The strength of supporting and opposing forces surrounding a divisive policy change depends on the national political context and the openness to international influences. In functioning democracies, politicians, civil society, women’s organizations, labor unions, and religious groups openly debate the merits or consequences of policy change. Naturally, the specific issue at hand matters. The range of supporting and opposing actors varies depending on whether the subject is gender-based violence, political quotas, labor laws relating to child care, or reproductive health. The fault lines are shaped by the intersection of gender with race, social class, or doctrinal beliefs.

Gender-based violence is generally the least polarizing of these issues—men and women from different economic or ideological backgrounds tend to regard domestic or gender-based violence as intrinsically wrong. But each domain has a different resonance for different

FIGURE 8.3 *Men around the world support women’s rights and policies*



Source: Barker and others 2011.

constituencies. Women and men in higher-income groups may be opposed to state or private subsidized maternity leave or child-care provisions because of higher taxes or higher costs of employing workers. Abortion legislation attracts opposition from conservative religious groups.

Which side will ultimately “win” depends on political alliances. Left-leaning governments in Sweden, supported by labor unions and women’s groups, championed maternity and child-care legislation in the 1970s. But existing power coalitions could not reform the family code in Mali to define marriage as a secular institution, raise the minimum age of marriage, and extend inheritance rights to women. Religious groups have continued to directly contest these efforts. Despite parliamentary approval in August 2009, President Amadou Toure recently announced that “after extensive consultations with the various state institutions, with civil society, with the religious community and the legal profession, I have taken this decision to send the family code for a second reading to ensure calm and a peaceful society, and to obtain the support and understanding of our fellow citizens.”²⁹

Whether a proposed policy reform aimed at gender equality is perceived as a benefit or a threat to the social order and political alliances is also determined by factors unique to each country. In Latin America, government alliances with religious groups have obstructed abortion legislation. Abortion may, therefore, be a doctrinal issue in Chile, but it raises no controversy in China, where it has been accepted in reinforcing the one-child policy.

Unleashing the power of information

Political support stems from information, interests, and perceptions. Transparency and strategic communication reduce information asymmetries, promote a more effective public debate, and enable the exploration of public policy issues from multiple perspectives.

Media exposure can engage stakeholders directly and influence their private beliefs. Popular culture and information campaigns can contribute to changes in social norms, values, or preferences (box 8.7). Consider how new media outreach across Latin America is taking on *machismo*. Reaccionaria Ecuador, a public awareness television campaign with support from several government agencies, calls into question traditional notions of masculinity and feminin-

BOX 8.7 How popular culture can change social attitudes

In the 18th and 19th centuries, those campaigning to end slavery knew that sustained success required bringing about widespread societal changes in how people, especially influential elites, understood the practice. Pioneering methods of public persuasion that remain commonplace today, the abolitionists invented campaign buttons, testimonials from recent “converts,” endorsements from sympathetic public figures and celebrities, mass-produced posters, and community drama.

The women’s movement subsequently adopted many of these tools as it undertook campaigns for suffrage, equal pay, and reproductive health rights, and against domestic violence. It recognized that mainstreaming feminist principles required changing how women and men everywhere understood these issues, which in turn required deploying modes of communication familiar to different social groups, whether poems, novels, and plays for elites or street theater and popular songs for everyday citizens.

An example is the work of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a poet in the Vice-Royalty of New Spain, now Mexico. The 17th-century writings of this Tenth Muse, as she was known, were widely read by elites (those who were literate and could afford books) not only in the Americas but also in Spain. Her work was published by the first printing press in New Spain. She provided lyrical accounts of the constraints on women’s freedoms and articulated the hypocrisy of prevalent societal values that held men and women to different standards: “Who sins more, she who sins for pay? Or he who pays for sin?”

Between the 1740s and 1760s, three famous novels by men about young women—Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Lisa* and Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* and *Pamela*—also embodied and promulgated a wholesale change in understanding gender relations. At that time, the novel was a new form of mass communication, transporting readers into new worlds of emotion and imagination, presenting alternative but visceral renderings of women’s experiences and responses to crushing social conventions.

The novels were best-sellers across Europe and eagerly translated. For mid-18th-century readers, it was a revelation that men could write movingly and sympathetically about the plight of vibrant young women who, through the binding powers of social norms, were trapped in loveless relationships and unable to pursue their desires, talents, and aspirations. Yet it was an even bigger revelation that these women then summoned the courage to defy expectations and laws, to leave unhappy circumstances, and to strike out on their own. Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* revisited this theme a century later, as did the novels of George Eliot and the Brontë sisters. Before gender policy changes could be articulated, campaigned for, and enacted, the very possibility of such changes first had to be revealed. Put more generally, changing what is thinkable often precedes changing what is sayable and then doable.

Sources: Hunt 2007; Hochschild 2005; Smith and Carroll 2000.

ity, linking *machismo* to a form of violence.³⁰ “I wash, iron, and cook . . . and so what?” contends a man looking straight into a television camera while tending to a toddler.

Media outreach can also serve broader educational purposes. The Soul City Institute in South Africa uses radio, television, and newspapers to disseminate information and promote reflection on pressing health and social issues. *Love Stories in a Time of HIV and AIDS* is a series

of 10 short films for television from 10 countries in southern Africa that challenges people to think differently about their sexual lives and to debate and discuss cultural and social norms that put them at risk. *Umtshatho (The Wedding)* is set in a village in the Eastern Cape in South Africa, where Nomandla discovers on the day of her traditional Xhosa wedding that her fiancée is cheating on her and that she needs to make some difficult choices.³¹ In Vietnam, the Population Media Center uses radio as a means to address stigma and discrimination. *Khat Vong Song* is a radio serial drama starring Suu and her eldest daughter Mo. Suu is verbally and physically abused by her husband Tuat, the head of a clan in his village. Having three daughters already, Tuat desperately wants a son.³²

Information also raises awareness, shapes public opinion, builds a constituency, and serves as a call to action. Gender inequality in education garnered the spotlight in the United States in a 1992 report, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, by the American Association of University Women. The report and its related media outreach articulated how schooling marginalized girls in science and mathematics. It described how teachers bestowed preferential attention to boys, while girls' grades and self-esteem floundered. Its impact on national policy and public opinion was swift and significant. The 1994 Gender Equity in Education Act in the United States identified girls as a disadvantaged group and set aside federal financing for a wide range of interventions meant to boost girls' self-confidence and participation in science, engineering, and mathematics—from science camps for girls to teacher training programs in classroom equality, and from gender-fair instructional materials to a new writing section to the Scholastic Achievement Test, a domain where girls excel, in part to increase scores on this high-stakes test.

The pendulum has now swung in the opposite direction in the United States. Many scholars have argued that schools are failing boys—particularly African-American boys. Boys have lower literacy, lower school grades, lower engagement in school, higher dropout from school, higher repetition rates, higher placement in special education, higher rates of suspensions and expulsions, and lower rates of postsecondary enrollment and graduation. So far, however, boys' educational underperfor-

mance has failed to elicit an equivalent federal response.³³

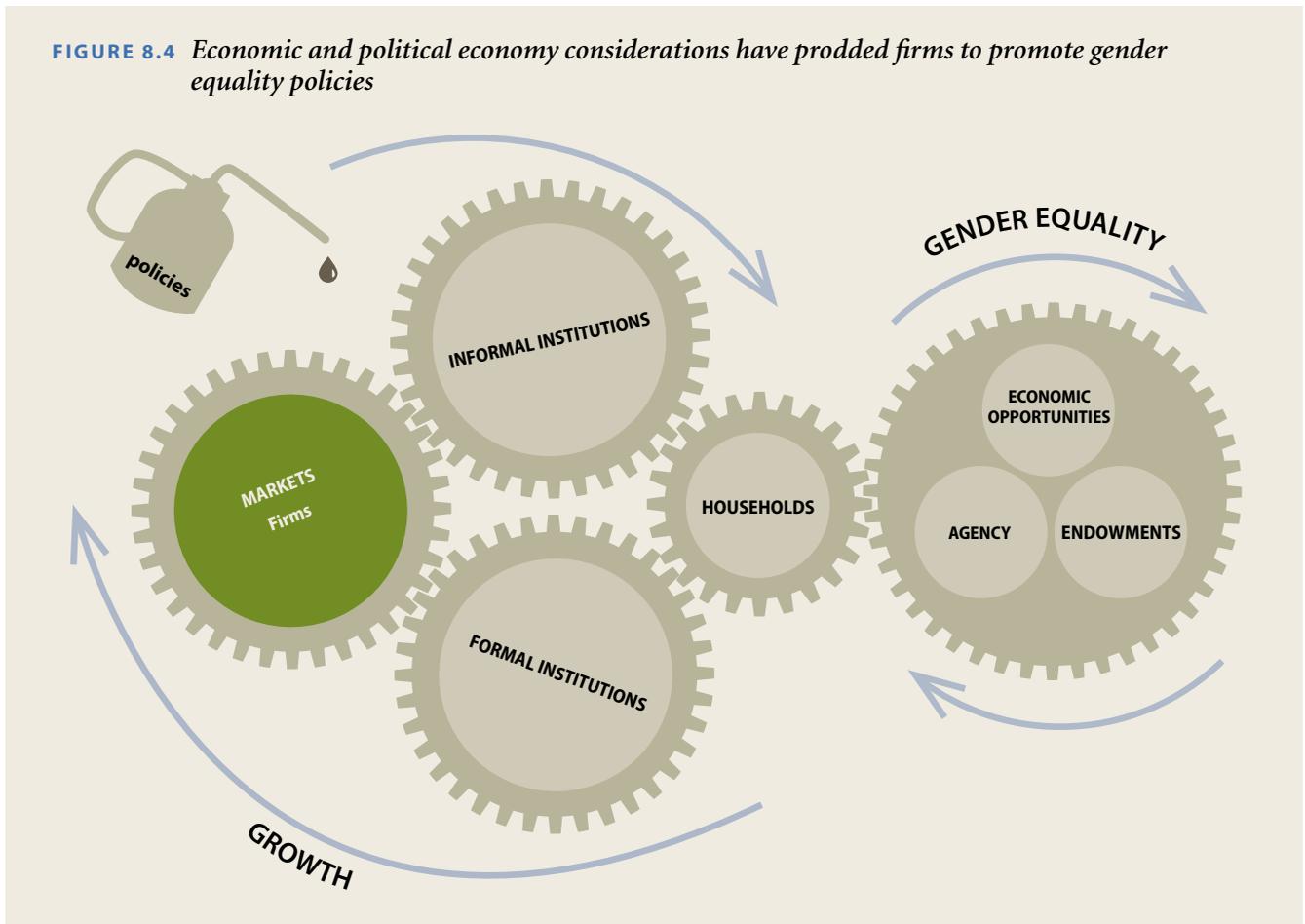
In the 21st century's communication revolution, social media—blogs and social networking sites like Facebook—have opened new and increasingly popular channels for social and political participation. Unlike other media channels, social media are two-way and interactive, so people can now collaborate and share information in fresh ways (chapter 6). Social networking websites have become platforms for awareness raising, social mobilization, political discussion, and fundraising. The opportunity to “invite” others to join discussion boards in social networking sites has heightened their potential for grassroots activism.³⁴ For example, HarrassMap is an Egyptian NGO that compiles information from individual women reporting cases of sexual assault using a web-based software mapping platform.³⁵

INCLUSIVE MARKETS

Before World War II, many firms in the United States were reluctant to hire women, especially in the defense industry. Necessity changed all that. An example is the Fairchild Aircraft plant in Hagerstown, Maryland, which employed 10,000 workers. The composition of its workforce jumped from 20 percent female at the beginning of the war to almost 70 percent in 1945. Overall, women held four of five defense jobs in Maryland.³⁶ In developing countries, formal wage employment usually is a much smaller fraction of total employment, but necessity can play a role here as well. In Nepal, war-related displacement of men as a result of the Maoist-led insurgency led to a large increase in women's labor force participation.³⁷

Today, workforce diversification is driven by different circumstances. The private sector's embrace of gender equality in the workplace responds to four emerging trends (figure 8.4). First, in an increasingly globalized economy, skills are in high demand (chapter 6). Tapping the full talent pool can reap significant economic rewards. Second, diversity is considered a pathway to better corporate decision making and innovation. Third, women represent a growing market, and there is a desire to attune products and cater services to their needs. Fourth, gender equality is a valued attribute in the market-

FIGURE 8.4 Economic and political economy considerations have prodded firms to promote gender equality policies



Source: WDR 2012 team.

place—for potential employees, for investors, and for customers.

Attracting and retaining talent

Public and private enterprises look to attract the best possible talent. Women make up half the population and, in a majority of countries, the majority of university graduates (chapter 1).

Although female labor force participation surged in past decades, it remains constrained (chapter 5). Women still do the majority of parenting around the world. And care responsibilities pose a significant burden to entering and staying in the labor market for many women—their aspirations stopped short not necessarily by a glass ceiling but rather a “maternal wall.”³⁸ So, women have concentrated in selected segments of the economy—such as teaching or public sector employment—that allow them to reconcile work and home responsibilities.

Women also tend to have higher job attrition and turnover rates than men.³⁹

Businesses have increasingly sought to attract, recruit, and retain female talent (box 8.8), for high staff turnover comes at a price. Some analysts suggest that staff replacement costs range between 0.25 to 2.0 times the salary of the departing individual (depending on whether all costs are recognized).⁴⁰ For instance, the costs of hiring and training a new nurse has been estimated at 1.3 times the salary of a departing nurse.⁴¹

Work-life balance schemes strive to accommodate the dual demands of jobs and parenting to encourage staff loyalty and retention. As chapter 7 discussed, part-time employment, extended family leave benefits, and subsidized child care have opened new job opportunities for working parents. The Sainsbury’s supermarket chain in the United Kingdom offers policies to en-

BOX 8.8 *Four good practices for greater gender diversity*

McKinsey and Company interviewed a dozen companies notable for increasing women's participation in their workforces, managements, and boardrooms. Four practices stand out in promoting gender diversity:

Create transparency through gender diversity, knowledge, and performance indicators. The main indicators included the proportion of women in the company's various business lines, at each level of management, and among new recruits; pay levels and attrition rates between men and women with similar functions; and the ratio of women promoted to women eligible for promotion. Monitoring these indicators should raise awareness about the magnitude of the gaps to be closed within the organization.

Implement measures to facilitate work-life balance. Two elements are important here. The first is workplace flexibility (telecommuting, part-time work, flexible hours). Flexibility is not a woman-only policy. It should be part of the general development of a company's business model, requiring the adaptation of organization and culture. The second is career flexibility and support during career breaks. That women tend to take career breaks needs to be taken into account to prevent any negative impacts on their career paths or pay. Companies that manage maternity leave best retain contact through this period, have one-on-one meetings before and after to ensure their employees are properly reintegrated, and keep a watch on pay raises and bonuses in the years following the return to ensure equal treatment.

Adapt the human resource management process. Companies must ensure that their recruitment, appraisal, and career management systems do not hold women back in their professional development. And to the extent possible, companies should offer personalized career paths to retain the best talent.

Help women master the dominant social codes and nurture their ambition. Coaching, network-building, and mentoring programs can be highly effective in raising women's awareness and enabling them to respond to male-centric corporate environments. Setting up women's networks within companies creates opportunities for broader professional exposure while also raising the profile of female leaders in the organization.

Source: McKinsey & Company Inc. 2007.

hance work-life balance, including part-time work, flexible contracts, job sharing, extended maternity leave and pay, paternity leave, parental leave, career breaks of up to five years for child care, and special leave of up to one year for personal development or care responsibilities.⁴²

Information technologies have enabled telecommuting or teleworking, making it easier for women and men to work from home (chapter 6). Telework is a core strategy for expanding female labor force participation in Malaysia's formal and informal sectors. The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment financed an "eHomemakers net-

work" in 2001 to promote online sales of home-produced merchandise.⁴³ T-Center is an Internet portal for teleworkers to offer their services and for employers to advertise online work opportunities. Sponsored by the National Information Technology Council in 2002, T-Center was designed to "empower women, youth and pensioners as an important economic factor in the family, community and the nation."⁴⁴

Employers have also looked to ease the reintegration of new mothers into the workplace. In its efforts to increase the number of female professors, Queen's University Belfast gives women returning from maternity leave a semester for research, rather than the typical teaching and administration workload.⁴⁵ Working mothers' pre- and postmaternity medical needs at Safaricom Ltd., a Kenya-based communications provider, are fully covered by insurance. Human resource policies at the company include three months of paid maternity leave. Work shifts are adjusted to accommodate breast-feeding mothers for up to seven months, and lactation rooms and child-care facilities are available onsite.⁴⁶

A representative survey of 1,001 companies in Germany found that family-friendly firms receive 31 percent more applications for staff openings and retained employees 14 percent longer than other firms. Staff members were also 22 percent more likely to return following parental leave, and their absence was 8 percent shorter.⁴⁷

But family-friendly work arrangements entail certain possible hazards. First, they can increase some costs of doing business for firms. Thus, on-site child-care requirements or generous maternity leave policies can reduce incentives to hire women. Second, such arrangements also can reinforce existing social norms for gender roles in productive and reproductive activities. Deloitte & Touche estimated that its flexible work arrangements saved \$13 million in reduced attrition in 1997. Yet, employees who exercised flexible work benefits were perceived as less dedicated or reliable, dampening their chances for career advancement and promotion. Male accountants equated commitment with long hours, assuming that those working flexibly were less committed.⁴⁸ Fathers who wish to take advantage of family-friendly benefits to be more active in child-care responsibilities can face even higher barriers than mothers, whose nurturing role is more culturally accepted.

Diversity for better decision making

Gender diversity practices have been espoused as a means to achieve greater organizational effectiveness. Indeed, staff diversity can spur creativity and innovation by enriching business decision making through multiple perspectives. Data from a national sample of for-profit business organizations in the United States found that gender diversity was associated with higher sales revenue, more customers, and greater profits.⁴⁹ But diversity has also been linked to more conflict and less cohesion. Diverse groups or business units do not necessarily function better or experience higher levels of satisfaction.⁵⁰

Similarly, international evidence on the effect of gender diversity in corporate boards, as measured by various indicators of firm performance, is mixed (chapter 5). Disparate results reflect different economic environments, regulatory structures, company types, and financial performance. Diversity may also affect different corporate board functions in unique ways, making it difficult to generalize about the links between board composition and overall firm performance.⁵¹ For 68 Spanish firms, the ratio of men to women on corporate boards has a significant effect on firm value,⁵² but for 443 Danish corporations, there was no relationship between female board representation and organizational performance.⁵³

The relationship between diversity and performance reflects the organizational culture. Changing that culture requires moving beyond “tokenism” and achieving a critical mass of staff diversity at different organizational levels. In some cases, as firms become more diverse, they must contend with entrenched organizational contexts that may be inhospitable to women. Managers and staff alike must value diversity. Avenues for communication and problem solving must be fluid so that dissent can give way to consensus building. Creating an enabling environment for high performance may require changing attitudes and eliminating behaviors that reflect both subtle and overt gender bias.

The Gender Equity Model Egypt (GEME) is a certification program to promote labor practices that foster gender equity and improve women’s equal access to jobs and opportunities in private firms. One GEME goal is to optimize human resources to increase organizational efficiency and competitiveness. The second is to promote positive interpersonal relationships in

the workplace to enable men and women with different skills, perspectives, and working styles to contribute to meeting organizational goals and employees’ professional needs. The third is to engender greater staff commitment and loyalty. And the fourth is to allow the public to associate a firm’s products and services with a commitment to gender equity in the workplace through a Gender Equity Seal. Firms use a self-diagnostic tool to analyze their policies and practices for gender equity and identify possible biases. Capacity-building opportunities include training in the practical importance of gender equity for firms, staff recruitment, training and career development, and in preventing sexual harassment. Audits, conducted by an independent agency, determine whether a firm has reached its established gender equity goals. Successful firms receive a Gender Equity Seal in recognition of their commitment to gender equity in human resource management.

Arafa Holding, a textile and apparel firm participating in GEME, offers incentives to women to retain them as valuable employees. Married women are at times exempted from working longer hours so they may satisfy family responsibilities. Housing is also provided for married couples working in the company. Company transportation is available free of charge to employees who live in distant areas. Special time allowance is given to mothers to visit their young children at day care.⁵⁴

Female Future, a gender equality initiative launched in March 2003 by the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises (Næringslivets Hovedorganisasjon, or NHO), is a national organization for employers and a leading business lobbyist. Its primary goal is to assist NHO members to identify female talent for leadership positions, thus bringing new perspectives to management. Firms identify potential candidates for executive and board posts and sign a binding agreement to increase gender diversity within two years. Female Future runs leadership and networking programs for prospective candidates for managerial positions. More than 1,000 women have participated in the program, and about 62 percent of them have advanced their careers. Austria, Japan, and Uganda have similar initiatives.⁵⁵

Women as customers and employees

Women, a growing market segment, make up a formidable share of shoppers in much of the

world—accounting for an estimated 83 percent of all consumer purchases in the United States and 70 percent in Europe.⁵⁶ Understanding and targeting this base can be critical for business success.

Many private firms have expanded their female workforce and managerial staff to create a more business-friendly environment for women customers. Best Buy is a \$12 billion consumer electronics company headquartered in the United States. “We’re not known for being a destination for women,” a spokesman attested. “We need to change that. And if we’re going to grow market share, we need to make sure that Best Buy is a great place for women to work.”⁵⁷ In recent years, the firm has hired additional women sales managers, lowered the turnover rate for female staff, and attracted more women customers.

Women have also made enormous strides in nurturing small and medium enterprises (SMEs), spurring local development and generating new employment opportunities. In East Asia, 35 percent of SMEs are women-owned—more than 500,000 in Indonesia alone. Women-owned businesses account for 48 percent of all micro, small, and medium enterprises in Kenya—producing around 20 percent of GDP. In Vietnam, the number of SMEs headed by women grew 43 percent annually between 2000 and 2004; in Morocco, 8 percent between 2000 and 2007.⁵⁸

Some private banks have begun to respond to women’s good credit and loan repayment records, easing traditional credit constraints (see box 7.5). Founded in 2000, the Global Banking Alliance for Women includes 25 members—including NBS Bank in Malawi, Access Bank in Nigeria, First National Bank of South Africa, and Selfina in Tanzania. Promoting financial services to women, its goal is to accelerate the growth of women in business, while supporting superior business outcomes for member financial institutions. Through a collaborative network for exchanging best practices and research, members provide access to capital, markets, education, and training to increase the likelihood of success for women’s businesses.⁵⁹

Gender equality to benefit the corporate image and the bottom line

Gender equality is now used in assessing whether an enterprise is committed to corporate social responsibility (while maximizing value for

shareholders). Gender equality can thus enhance the corporate image. And equal opportunity or family-friendly policies can boost a firm’s reputation, with benefits accruing in staff recruitment, media interest, public attention, and customer loyalty.

Financial incentives for gender sensitivity and diversity targets can be consequential. Some investment funds (CalPERS in the United States, Amazon in Europe) include gender equality among their investment criteria, and some rating agencies (Core Rating, Innovest, Vigeo) are developing tools to measure gender diversity.⁶⁰

Since 2001, Better Factories Cambodia uses national and international standards in monitoring and reporting on working conditions in more than 300 Cambodian garment factories (where the workforce is primarily female). Under a trade agreement, the United States gives Cambodia better access to U.S. markets in exchange for better working conditions in the garment sector. Participation, a condition for export licensing in Cambodia, represents a convergence of common interests of the garment industry, international buyers, and the expectation of American and Western European consumers for sweatshop-free products. Better Factories Cambodia is managed by the International Labor Organization and financed by the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Agency for International Development, Agence Française de Développement, the Garment Manufacturers’ Association in Cambodia, the Royal Government of Cambodia, and international buyers.⁶¹

Sri Lanka’s Apparel Association Forum, an umbrella group representing the \$3.5 billion garment industry, launched the “Garments without Guilt” program in 2006 to create “garments with conscience and care.”⁶² As in Cambodia, a media campaign has sought to portray Sri Lanka’s apparel factories—mainly employing women—as ethical businesses so that its products will stand out in a competitive international market. For example, MAS Holdings has established a state-of-art factory in Thulhiriya, brandishing the country’s social responsibility credentials.⁶³ But working conditions are varied. Some factories require six days a week with mandatory overtime and work on successive shifts without a break; some also fine workers for lateness, talking, or going on toilet breaks. These factories are more likely to be older, smaller, and not owned by companies incorporated in high-income countries.⁶⁴ There are thus limits to the effectiveness

of external standards when they are not socially embedded in the local milieu. And in a highly competitive commercial environment, the uncertainty of returns relative to the costs of compliance makes ethical concerns vulnerable.⁶⁵

Nonetheless, claims of corporate misbehavior, discrimination, or sexual harassment can diminish a company's attractiveness to consumers and investors. In July 2009, the Dell computer company agreed to pay \$9.1 million to settle a class-action suit claiming it had not given its female employees equal training, pay, or promotions.⁶⁶ In response, the firm has reviewed its diversity and inclusion practices, and formed a Global Diversity Council to review corporate policies, action plans, and progress.⁶⁷

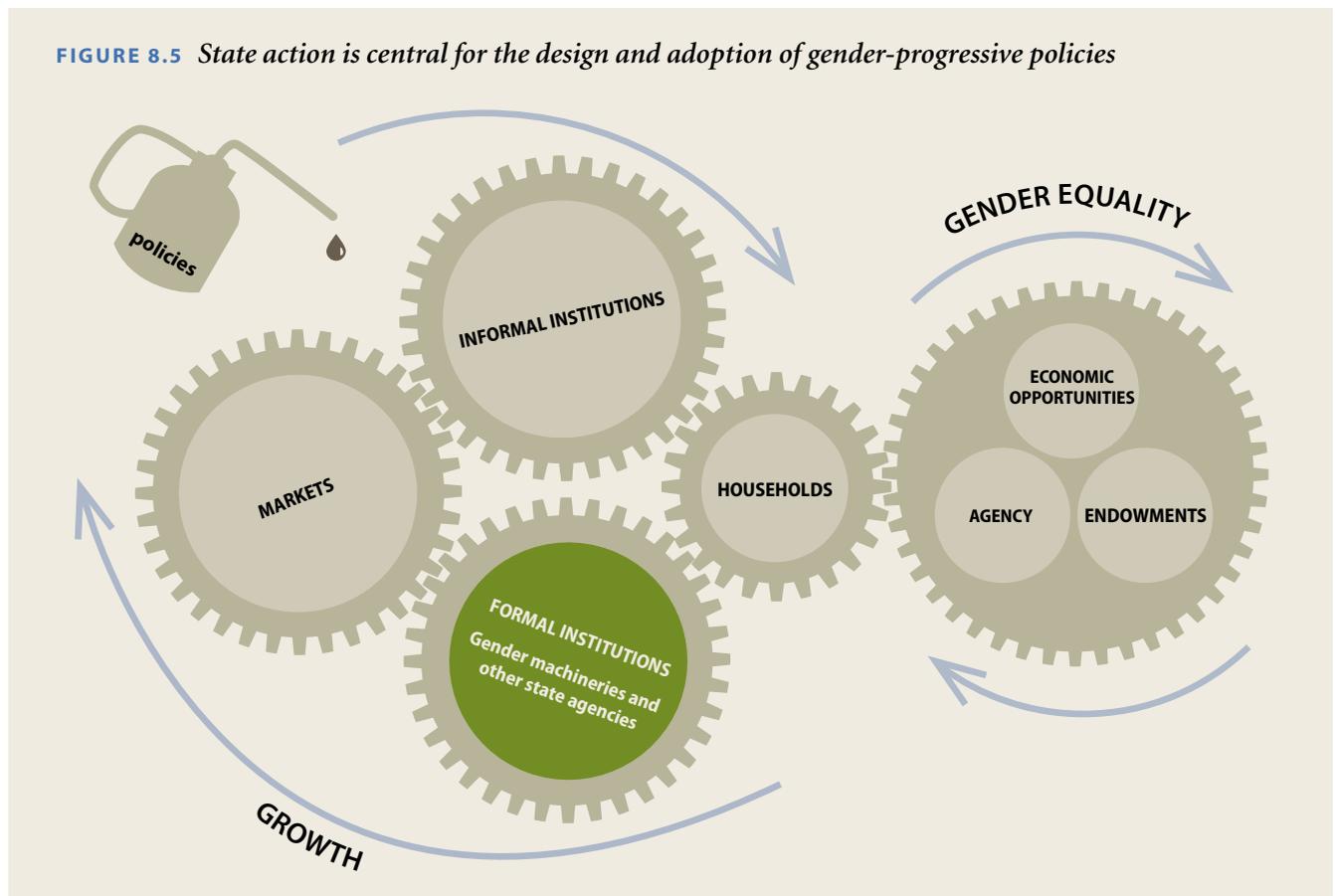
BRINGING GENDER INTO FORMAL INSTITUTIONS AND POLICIES

While collective action and social movements often catalyze state action, governments typically

initiate and promote policies that reduce or eliminate gender inequalities directly (figure 8.5).

A first step in bringing gender into the policy process is to understand the gender dimensions of policy design and enforcement. A gender lens should thus be a feature in all state agencies. Such a lens, for example, could reveal the existence of court procedures that restrict women's access to justice, or statistical data collection systems that do not allow for assessing the impact of government policies on men and women (chapter 9). Governments can also set up specialized agencies, often termed gender machineries, specifically to promote women's rights.

Advances in gender equality do not always require wholesale action. Gender-neutral interventions can become more strategic and effective when gender considerations are taken into account. For example, a land titling program in Peru increased joint ownership rates by including provisions to lift constraints women faced (box 8.9). It also increased mothers' participation in the labor market and decreased fertility.⁶⁸



BOX 8.9 *Land titling in Peru—Using a gender lens for a gender-neutral program*

The Peruvian government launched a Special Land Titling and Cadastre Project (PETT, in Spanish) in 1992 to increase land tenure security and enhance agricultural productivity and production. The project has been categorized as gender-neutral because it did not adopt any gender-specific regulations for implementation. The government's rationale was that no extra measures were needed because there was no overt discrimination against women.

But rural women suffer from higher illiteracy rates and are more likely to be monolingual than men. Women in consensual unions were also vulnerable to exclusion. A lack of identification papers was another problem, because proof of identification was necessary for land registration.

The NGO Red Nacional de la Mujer Rural, organized by the Peruvian Women's Center Flora Tristán, led a nationwide awareness campaign to support women's rights, reinforcing government efforts. In 1998, it lobbied PETT officials for clarification of the land rights of women in consensual unions, arguing that such women should be recognized as co-owners. The NGO drafted widely circulated administrative guidelines with a gender perspective. It also conducted gender-sensitivity training for PETT officials.

PETT improved the distribution of land ownership. Fifty-six percent of plots in male-headed households were jointly titled in 2004, up from 49 percent of households in a control group that had not received PETT titles. More remarkably, joint ownership rates jumped from 13 percent of households in 2000 to 43 percent in 2004.

Sources: Deere and León 2003; Orge Fuentes and Wiig 2009.

State structures promoting gender equality

In the past few decades, gender machineries—formal government structures that promote gender equality and improve the status and rights of women—have proliferated in response to demands from women's organizations and an international consensus for governmental leadership and more decisive action toward gender equality.⁶⁹ They provide gender-disaggregated policy analysis and support state institutions in designing and carrying out gender-sensitive policies. Assessing the implications of proposed policy actions for women *and* men can produce benefits for all, reducing disparities.

Gender machineries range from formal ministries to executive and parliamentary commissions, to advisory boards, to institutes, to ombuds offices. They may be established by formal statute, executive decree, or bureaucratic rules. New forms include gender “focal points” and “desk offices” in some Sub-Saharan African countries and the Offices of Plenipotentiary in Poland.

Gender machineries can have different missions. Some focus on specific gender equality policies, such as those outlined in the UN's

Beijing Platform of Action. Others work to insert gender perspectives into all areas of governing through “gender mainstreaming.” Their approaches include promoting policy adoption and implementation, conducting assessments, delivering services, raising awareness, and supporting NGOs.

No single organizational form has been consistently more successful than others, whether statutory, centralized, or generously funded. Some countries have a central executive commission, others a ministry or bureaucratic office. Some have all three, and still others, a range of single issue agencies—for labor, health, and education. Machineries can be more active in regional and local governments than at the central level.

But in some instances, gender machineries are more “modern” window dressing than authoritative channels for gender equality within the state. They can thus be weak institutions with few staff, threadbare resources, and limited leverage to influence policy decisions (box 8.10).

Six organizational features are critical to the success of state institutions for gender equality:⁷⁰

- Clarity of *mission* and an explicit understanding of expected functions are essential.
- *Organizational structure* must be aligned to expected functions. For example, the United States has espoused a model of multiple single-issue administrative offices to focus deeply on specific policy areas such as labor (the Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor) or health (the Maternal and Child Health Bureau in the Department of Health and Human Services).
- The statutory authority to *propose policy* and *proximity* to executive or central administration increase the likelihood of policy adoption.
- Resourceful *leadership* that is committed to gender equality goals and has political standing in relation to decision makers and potential allies.
- Discretion over financial *resources* is essential to perform (including budgets to support NGOs in areas not reached by policy decisions).
- *Strategic partnerships with civil society groups* can foster coordinated action and advocacy.

BOX 8.10 *Gender machineries in practice*

Finland. Since the 1970s, the Council for Equality between Men and Women in Finland, an executive commission of political nominees from different parties, has had few resources—and nothing more than a small staff, from five to eight employees. In the 1970s it was primarily symbolic, limited to debates on job training. In the 1980s it was relocated from the Prime Minister's office to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, more distant from central power but inside one of the main arenas for policy making on social issues. It also received statutory responsibility for proposing reforms on gender equality. Under its new configuration, the council registered more success in debates about prostitution, job training, and political representation. Under new leadership in 1995, it promoted parliamentary gender quotas. Its success stemmed from its statutory responsibility for gender issues, proposal powers, proximity to systems for social policy, assertive leadership, and allies in parliament.

Spain. The Institute for Women was established in 1983 as an administrative office in the Ministry of Culture and was later moved to the Ministry of Social Affairs. The institute has always had the power to recommend and enforce actions to deal with discrimination complaints as well as to design, promote and evaluate the four national gender equality plans implemented between 1988 and 2006. But it

was hampered in performing these roles by its lack of statutory authority for making policy proposals and its distance from centers of political power. To increase its effectiveness, it became part of the broader General Secretary of Equality Policies within the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in 2004 and in 2008 became part of the Ministry of Equality when that was created. The institute has been most successful in mainstreaming gender issues during the debate on abortion legislation in 1986, and more recently for laws against gender-based violence and the law on equality between men and women.

Chile. The National Service for Women, SERNAM, focuses on mainstreaming gender in sector ministries, with a limited mandate for project implementation. Its chair now has ministerial status and is a member of the Cabinet, a status that considerably improves its capacity to influence the intersectoral policy dialogue with line ministries. It also has an independent budget. But its human resource structure, with just 10 percent of its 270 total staff under permanent contracts, and its lack of specialized personnel constrain its organizational capacity. Reorganizations following changes in political administration have further debilitated the institution, leading to the discontinuation of important lines of work.

Sources: McBride and Mazur 2011; World Bank, IADB, and SERNAM 2007.

Additionally, these partnerships can increase legitimacy to speak on behalf of women's issues.

Gender progressiveness in the application of the law

The role of the judiciary is to make an authoritative determination on any persistent dispute in a manner that is impartial, final, and likely to be enforced. Courts of justice that operate with integrity can thus be powerful agents for social change when they work without gender bias or any other kind of prejudice.

Why is the judiciary important? Although only a small percentage of people directly use courts in any country, the judiciary's influence goes beyond those who come into direct contact with it. Courts that consistently and reliably enforce the law through their decisions will affect the future behavior of most citizens and institutions. In communities where courts issue consistent, predictable decisions, community members will normally seek to avoid behaviors that the courts are likely to punish or invalidate.

The judiciary itself can be a driver of gender-progressive change, or it can be a tool of the state in bringing about change. Country dynamics and specificities influence how and how much a court can contribute to change—the judiciary's relationship to other state structures, the legitimacy of court authority, the independence of the courts themselves, and the existence of explicit laws that recognize gender equality as an enforceable right all influence the scope of the judiciary for action.

Courts typically have the exclusive right to interpret the constitution and laws (box 8.11). For example, the Botswana High Court and Court of Appeals interpreted the country's constitution as prohibiting sex discrimination, even though such discrimination was not explicitly identified as being unconstitutional.⁷¹ Courts have also been instrumental in striking down legal provisions and state actions that discriminate on the basis of gender, such as unequal inheritance rights in Nepal.⁷² In Bahrain, a court case is pending that addresses the inability of women to transmit nationality to their children. Previous court action

BOX 8.11 *Courts and constitutional challenges in Uganda's divorce law*

In 2003, in the Constitutional Court of Uganda, the Uganda Association of Women Lawyers successfully challenged discriminatory divorce laws as unconstitutional. Under an 1857 version of an English Marriage Act—which still applied in Uganda but had long since been reformed in the United Kingdom—husbands were allowed to obtain a divorce on the grounds of adultery; yet a wife had to prove aggravated adultery (adultery plus another offense such as incest, bigamy, cruelty, or desertion) to obtain a divorce. The judge held that this different treatment reflected pre-20th-century English perceptions that a man was superior to a woman, which was impossible to reconcile with modern concepts of equality and nondiscrimination between the sexes as embedded in the 1995 Ugandan constitution.

Source: Uganda Association of Women Lawyers v Attorney General (Constitutional Petition No. 2 of 2003) UGCC1.

led the government to waive government fees for public services to children of Bahraini mothers married to foreign nationals.⁷³

In some countries, courts lay down directives and guidelines in the absence of laws. The Supreme Court in India, in addition to declaring sexual harassment unlawful under the constitution and international conventions, provided guidelines for observance at all workplaces and other institutions, public or private, applicable until legislation is passed by parliament.⁷⁴ In another case, it provided directions to improve various government schemes for maternal and infant mortality.⁷⁵

Special courts (such as family courts or courts for rape and sexual offenses) or specific regimes (family matters reserved to religious or customary courts) can influence outcomes and shape the content of rights. These alternative mechanisms, as well as gender units in the judiciary, can support a gender-responsive environment for the application of law. For example, as noted in chapter 4, even where women have access to justice, their ability to navigate the judicial system might be impaired by gender norms and sensitivities. Women subjected to sexual violence may be reticent to testify publicly, so allowing testimony in private chambers may facilitate more sexual assault cases to be prosecuted in court.

SEIZING WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITIES

Windows of opportunity for gender policy sometimes stem from unpredictable circum-

stances, such as a national disaster. Others arise from shifts in the political or economic landscape. And yet others emerge from the advocacy of transnational agencies and role modeling in the global arena.

Responding to local dislocations

An isolated event can be a catalyst to generate change. In Nicaragua in 1998, Hurricane Mitch created the conditions for a national dialogue on domestic violence. The NGO Puntos de Encuentro developed a campaign with the slogan, “Violence against women is a disaster that men can prevent,” building on the need for solidarity that Hurricane Mitch left in its wake.⁷⁶

Political transitions can provide the space for broader transformative reforms. General Franco's death in Spain in 1975 opened the door to a dramatic shift in the social landscape. During Franco's years, contraception was prohibited, and married women needed their husbands' permission to engage in economic opportunities, own property, or travel. Democracy allowed for a rapid transformation in the prevailing legal code to catch up with social expectations. The marital permit was abolished in 1975. Adultery laws and the ban on the sale of contraceptives were repealed in 1978. Divorce was legalized in 1981. Legalized abortion in specific cases—rape, malformed fetus, or to save the mother's life—followed in 1985; public opinion remained largely opposed to abortion on demand. There has since been a large decline in the gender gap in employment as women, particularly married women, entered the labor force.⁷⁷

Transitions can, however, risk a reversal. The collapse of the Iron Curtain meant that Eastern European women lost some of the gains in gender equality made under communism. In the 1980s, about 90 percent of women in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland were employed. Women enjoyed free health care, long maternity leave, and state-sponsored child care. They also benefited from parliamentary quotas that gave them some voice in the political system. But in the Russian Federation, female parliamentary representation dropped from 35 percent in 1987 to 10 percent in 1999, and in Slovakia, from 30 percent to 13 percent. Formal employment recruitment heavily preferred men. Half of the day-care centers in Lithuania and Poland closed between 1992 and 1994. And Bulgarian slogans to increase birth rates urged women to go “back to home and family.”⁷⁸ The

rise of capitalism and a new political order in Eastern Europe thus set women back on some aspects of endowments, agency, and economic opportunities.

Even without social, political, or economic change, shifts in the relative political power of various actors can open room for reform. In Morocco, after more than 10 years of efforts by women's groups, a new family code was endorsed by the king and unanimously adopted by parliament in 2004 in response to popular support.⁷⁹ The legislation raised the minimum age of marriage to 18 for women, controlled polygamy, allowed women to initiate divorce proceedings, enabled women to retain custody of children, and improved inheritance rights.⁸⁰

Riding on transnational efforts

Transnational networks have driven the diffusion of gender issues around the globe as has international role modeling (chapter 6). Reform-oriented policy makers are attuned to the successes and failures in nations near and afar. Policy shifts beyond a nation's borders can increase their receptivity and legitimacy at home, as the vertiginous speed and deep penetration of mass media and telecommunications facilitate the spread of new ideas.

Between 1930 and 1990, about 20 countries adopted quotas to increase female representation in political office. In the 1990s, gender quotas expanded to 50 more countries, and an additional 50 approved quota systems in the 2000s.⁸¹ In November 1997, the heads of governments of the Southern African Development Community adopted the Declaration on Gender and Development, committing to 30 percent representation of women in decision-making posts by 2005. In 2005, they boosted the goal for 2015 to 50 percent.⁸²

Much of the force of transnational networks emanates from international women's organizations, the United Nations, and international development and cooperation agencies. The Inter-American Commission of Women, established in 1928 as an official forum for debating and formulating gender equality policies in the Americas, was the first intergovernmental agency to ensure recognition of the human rights of women.

International NGOs and networks of women's groups can be allies in spurring and monitoring reform. Working locally, regionally, and nationally, with a strong field presence and

deep knowledge of local conditions, these organizations can assist governments in assessing gender-differentiated impacts of various policy responses and lobby for policy change in priority areas. International development partners have also been repositories of ideas for policy innovation to create lasting economic and social change. They are vocal advocates and sponsors of promising approaches to address gender inequality, offering tools for mainstreaming gender issues in specific sectors, and conducting training to increase awareness of gender and development (chapter 9).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other international treaties provide an umbrella framework delineating international norms for gender equality—an international code of conduct. CEDAW facilitates consultations, provides models of good practice, and stimulates cooperation on technical assistance. It has been a channel for gender reform in many countries (box 8.12), even if some do not always uphold their commitments. Oversight and regular monitoring by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women provide occasions for national governments to reflect on their record and draw

BOX 8.12 *Fiji: International norms as a driver of gender equality in family law*

Fiji's ratification of CEDAW and its constitutional commitment to adhere to the convention were critical for its adoption of a new egalitarian family law in 2003.

Principles of equal partnership and unpaid contributions to property had not been recognized, divorce was difficult to obtain, women could be excluded from the home, and postdivorce maintenance was limited and not reliably enforceable. Family law reform started in 1995, when Fiji acceded to the convention, but was stalled by a civilian uprising in 2000. When calm returned, reform was fiercely resisted. Imrana Jalal, the Family Law Reform Commissioner in the mid-1990s, credits the state's ratification of CEDAW and the 2002 CEDAW review as significant in overcoming opposition. Supporters were bolstered by the constitution then in force, which specifically prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender.

The new family law noted that several specific provisions meet CEDAW norms: financial and nonfinancial contributions taken into account in property division; presumption of equal contribution; and enforceable postmarital maintenance from either spouse, depending on the circumstances. In addition, the age of marriage was raised to 18 years for both men and women in 2009.

In its 2010 review, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women commended the state for adopting family laws in compliance with the convention but noted that inheritance practices remain a problem.

possible options for action from the committee’s recommendations.

The UN World Conferences on Women held in 1975, 1980, 1985, and 1995 also galvanized national and international support for improving the political, economic, and social status of women—as did the UN Population Conferences, particularly the 1994 conference in Cairo. These international conferences opened political space for national governments and societal actors to raise concerns, generate awareness, learn about cross-national experiences, generate momentum, and apply pressure to advance a gender equality agenda nationally.⁸³ Ratifications of women’s rights conventions, such as CEDAW, have been clustered around these major international human rights conferences (figure 8.6).⁸⁴

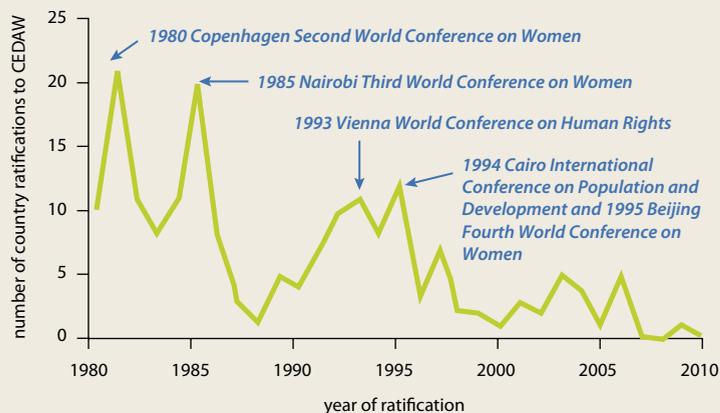
Synergies are strong between national governments, nonstate actors, and the international development community. First, CEDAW and the Millennium Development Goals offer a framework for mutual accountability, by delineating gender equity goals tied to specific targets and deadlines. Both have rallied national governments and international stakeholders to take time-bound actions to achieve precise objectives. Second, NGOs and international partners have been pivotal in the effectiveness of the international women’s rights regime, buttressing its mutual accountability framework. For instance, the monitoring and advocacy by Colombian local women’s groups under CEDAW

informed the expansion of reproductive health guarantees in the Colombian Constitution, adopted in 1990, and facilitated greater access to contraception.⁸⁵

Trade and economic cooperation agreements, through antidiscriminatory clauses and minimum standards, are another channel for widening gender reform. In September 1999, for example, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation ministers endorsed a Framework for the Integration of Women and established an Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Gender Integration to ensure its effective implementation.⁸⁶

Under many of these agreements, noncompliance may result in a reduction of economic benefits or the application of sanctions. Breaches of labor standards in a side agreement to the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation have led to transnational legal action and social mobilization. Female employees of a U.S.-owned vehicle parts plant based in Mexico filed a sexual harassment complaint with Mexican authorities. During the investigation, the parent company—American United Global—shut down the plant and fired the women. A sexual harassment suit was then filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, claiming severance pay owed to the women under Mexican law. With assistance from the California-based Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers, the United Auto Workers sought to enforce a clause in their contracts with Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors not to use parts made under unfair labor conditions. After eight months of legal wrangling and community activism, the case was settled out of court.⁸⁷

FIGURE 8.6 Progress toward increasing women’s rights is clustered around major international human rights conferences



Source: Byrnes and Freeman 2011.

PATHWAYS TO CHANGE

There is no single path to greater gender equality, for policy change is an adaptive and complex process. Progress in advanced and developing economies has come through different routes, and public action has varied. Governments have espoused a wide range of gender-equalizing policies through changes in family laws and property rights, antidiscrimination statutes in labor markets, and more targeted interventions. Some have subsidized girls’ education and women’s wage employment. Others have experimented with cash benefits for child care and parental work leave provisions for new fathers. The sequencing of reforms has also differed across countries, as have the pace and depth of their

impacts on gender outcomes and opportunities. Even in rich countries, the goal of gender equality remains a work in progress—even after many decades of campaigning and reform.

This range of experiences reflects an ongoing call to policy action, both nationally and globally. Leadership, civic activism, policy negotiation, and effective implementation management are essential to support and promote greater gender equality—especially in domains seemingly resistant to change, such as domestic violence.

Considered here are two possible pathways to policy reform, already introduced in chapter 7. Gender policies can be “incremental,” working within prevailing social norms or responding to emerging social demands and reflecting changes in the broader institutional and normative environment. Alternatively, government action can be “transformative” and strive to induce change in existing gender dynamics. In practice, incremental policies can become transformative in nature; while transformative policies can and often fail or achieve more modest results.

Incremental change—Responding to emerging social demands

Many policy reforms follow shifts in the existing economic and social environment. Social norms can be remarkably stable, and their longevity can further buttress their resilience. But social norms are not immutable. Shifts in attitudes can occur quite rapidly, literally reaching a tipping point when isolated or individual behavior garners critical mass appeal.⁸⁸

Policy change happens as a means to resolve internal tensions between markets and formal, and informal institutions. In other words, government action responds to emerging or established social demands. Indeed, bringing about such change—whether directly, through making explicit demands of governments, or indirectly, by seeking to alter broader societal understandings—is precisely the objective of most social movements and international campaigns (box 8.13).

Policy formulation and enactment are less likely to be contested or to encounter political resistance if a basis for consensus already exists. In 1906, *The Englishwoman’s Review* reported the extension of voting rights in Finland:

The miracle has happened . . . Our victory is in all cases great and the more so as the

*proposal has been adopted almost without opposition. The gratitude which we women feel is mingled with the knowledge that we are much less worthy of this great success than the women of England and America, who have struggled so long and so faithfully, with much more energy and perseverance than we.*⁸⁹

Similarly, granting voting rights to women in postcolonial Africa was little contested. Universal suffrage was enmeshed with the struggle for independence. A gendered concept of citizenship would have been widely repudiated because it was inconsistent with the prevailing belief in equal voice.

The Republic of Korea is the only Asian country that has reversed rising male-female sex ratios at birth. Despite rapid economic growth, greater female labor force participation, and better women’s education, a preference for sons persisted there through the mid-1990s. Earlier policy interventions reinforced Confucian traditions to channel resources toward rapid development. The 1990 reform of the Family Law upheld the male family headship, along with patrilineal inheritance. Children belonged to the father’s lineage after a divorce. But industrialization and urbanization fueled normative changes in society that quickly led to a turnaround in attitudes. Civil society began to pressure government to change laws upholding the marginalization of women in their domestic and public lives. In 2005, the Supreme Court ruled that women could remain members of their birth household after marriage—and that women and men have equal rights and responsibilities to care for their ancestors.⁹⁰ These changes in the value and status of daughters in turn progressively weakened the preference for sons.

When gender policy follows societal cues, an alignment between social expectations and policy design usually eases the convergence of policy’s intentions and outcomes. Several waves of policy reform in Tunisia increased social pressure and consensus to liberalize family law. Later reforms stood on the successes and perceived benefits of earlier efforts (box 8.14).

But gender reform can also inspire spirited resistance to sway public opinion. In Ireland in May 1995, when the vote to remove the constitutional ban on divorce through a national referendum was announced, 69 percent of the electorate said they would support it. Yet, by the

BOX 8.13 *Changing social norms from the bottom up*

Female foot binding, a painful and dangerous practice, lasted 1,000 years in China but ended in a single generation in the early 20th century. Female genital cutting can be traced to the 2nd century B.C. (to Red Sea tribes) but was abandoned within a single generation in parts of Senegal.

The persistence of such practices can be attributed to the beliefs held by members of an intermarrying group. Households comply with prevailing social norms because they do not want to be shunned by society or placed at a severe disadvantage in the marriage market. Another contributing factor is the general acceptance of the status quo as the only possible alternative. Interviews with women in Tanzania indicate that many had never thought that not being cut was an option. Similarly, “when first-contact foreigners asked Chinese why they bound their women’s feet, their response was astonishment that not everyone in the world engaged in the practice.” Because the conventions of foot binding and female genital cutting regulate access to marriage, noncomplying families are unlikely to reproduce. This makes it difficult for variation in the practice within the community to take root.

What explains the rapid abandonment of these practices after a long history of adherence?

Modernization appears to have had little to do with it. Instead what occurred was a grassroots social restructuring of beliefs. In China, a series of activist groups (the Anti-Foot Binding Society and the Natural Foot Society) emerged in the late 19th century. Their strategy involved pledging members of the community not to bind their daughters and not to let their sons marry bound women. These groups advertised the disadvantages of foot binding in Chinese cultural terms, promoted pledge associations, and subtly conveyed international disapproval of the custom. As public support to end the practice grew, a political ban was instituted in the early 20th century, cementing the earlier effort of mass mobilization and education.

Tostan, an NGO based in Senegal, espoused an analogous model in the 1990s to eradicate female genital cutting in parts of Senegal:

- *Education.* An innovative 30-month education program, known as the Community Empowerment Program, included modules on human rights, hygiene and health, literacy, and project management.
- *Public discussion.* These modules were then discussed in small group settings. In these meetings, women and men deliberated their aspirations for themselves, their families, and their community. Reflection on individual and societal needs led individuals to revise their beliefs about existing cultural practices.
- *Public declaration and organized diffusion.* Acting on their new established ideals, communities coordinated the abandonment of female genital cutting through public declaration or pledging and urging neighboring communities to do the same.

Initially, Tostan did not state whether female genital cutting was right or wrong. It was women’s decision to reject the practice. Women in Malicounda Bambara (population 3,000) mobilized to raise awareness among their fellow villagers about the harmful health effects of the practice. Then these women traveled to Ngerin Bambara to spread the word. Their efforts continued to grow, eventually leading to the Diabougou Declaration, in which 50 representatives of 8,000 villagers from 13 communities in the regions of Thies and Fatick publicly decided to abandon female genital cutting. A law passed in January 1999 made it a criminal act in Senegal punishable by a sentence of one to five years in prison.

These histories are similar, suggesting that community action led to widespread individual self-realization that then shifted the social norm.

Sources: Mackie and LeJeune 2009; U.S. Department of State 2001; <http://www.tostan.org>.

“Even though we have been told several times that female circumcision is bad (and I agree with them), there are still beliefs that it is good. That is why in a hidden manner, there are women who take their children for circumcision; or they do it themselves when a kid is still small.”

Adult woman, Tanzania

time of the vote in November, a concerted campaign against divorce had shrunk public support to 49 percent. The “yes” vote eventually won by a narrow 0.6 point margin.⁹¹

Policy intentions and actions also can have unintended spillovers that give rise to new social dynamics and processes of change. For example,

divorce laws protect the interests of different parties in a terminated marriage, specifying property splits, child custody, and entitled alimony. But divorce laws also influence the behavior of married couples by shifting bargaining positions between husbands and wives.

In Ireland, the legalization of divorce—and concomitant risk of marital dissolution—increased female labor force participation. The participation rate of nonreligious married women increased by around 10 percentage points (a 25 percent increase) relative to religious married women.⁹² The legalization of divorce also increased savings by married individuals.⁹³ And in Chile, divorce legislation increased school investments for children of married couples.⁹⁴

Gradually phasing in reforms can bring about change in ways that generate less resistance, and spillover effects may be better managed. Policy action can begin where popular social attitudes provide a foothold. A recent survey in Bangladesh suggests that two-thirds of household heads (mostly men) believe that daughters and sons should have similar rights to inherit property, despite existing legal provisions that daughters inherit half as much as sons.⁹⁵

Transformative change—Inducing greater gender equality

In some instances, governments propose social policy programs or agendas to induce a more gender-equalizing equilibrium. These efforts can be transformative in the sense that they precede a social consensus or challenge prevailing social norms. State policies can signal appropriate behavior, providing incentives for behavioral change and thus affecting the structure of rewards and costs. Such policies may come from an ambitious social policy vision and strong political will to reform. Or they may cover aspects that matter relatively little to most of the population.

Transformative change usually seeks to catalyze progress in “sticky” domains. Scandinavian states, for example, are at the forefront of pro-

BOX 8.14 *Tunisia—Women’s voice and women’s rights*

Since Tunisia won its independence in 1956, several reform waves have been enacted to promote equality between men and women. The Tunisian Code of Personal Status reformed laws on marriage (including imposing a ban on polygamy), divorce, custody, and, to some extent, inheritance. In the 1960s, further reforms introduced wage equality, mandatory schooling for boys and girls, and widely available contraception. These reforms could be labeled as top-down, imposed by a state that was trying to modernize at a fast pace.

Beginning in the 1970s and increasingly in the 1980s, a women’s movement developed, building on this first wave of progress. Women’s associations—such as the Club Taher al Haddad, the Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche et le Développement, and the National Union of Tunisian Women—emerged, and feminist discourse came to the forefront of public debates by highlighting women’s rights and issues.

In 1993, new legislation secured additional rights for women, such as nationality rights (for the first time a Tunisian woman could pass her nationality to a child born abroad, regardless of the nationality of the child’s father), and protections against domestic violence and workplace discrimination were adopted. In 1997, the government enacted new social policies to support low-income working women and divorced women and their children.

Sources: Balamount-Lutz 2011; Moghadam 2007.

viding public child care and granting generous parental leave. In 1995, Sweden reserved one month of paid parental leave for the father, a “daddy quota” that cannot be transferred to the mother (box 8.15) even though mothers spent

BOX 8.15 *Sweden—Encouraging an involved fatherhood*

When Olof Palme, the Swedish prime minister, made a speech in 1970 for a women’s organization in the United States, he surprised the audience by not speaking about women but about men. The title of his lecture was “The Emancipation of Man,” and Palme argued that only if both women and men share a dual role—at home and at work—can any substantial change take place. That is, men should be given the same rights and duties as women in their parental capacity.

The transformation of maternity leave into parental leave encourages Swedish men to take an active part in parenthood. This change took place in 1974 and meant that the leave following the birth of a child was no longer reserved for the mother but could also be used by the father. Over time, parental leave was extended from 6 months in 1974 to 16 months today.

The share of fathers taking parental leave grew slowly and in small numbers. Some argued that there should be an obligatory division of the entitlement between parents. A heated debate on parental “freedom to choose” ensued. Since then, numerous governmental and nongovernmental campaigns have encouraged fathers to use parental leave.

In 1995, a one-month “daddy quota” was adopted to encourage fathers to take parental leave and stimulate gender equality; that is, one month of the parental leave could no longer be transferred to the other parent. In 2002, the “daddy quota” was increased by another month.

Of the claimants to parental leave in 2007, fathers accounted for 44 percent. Around 49 percent of fathers of children born in 1993, before the introduction of the father’s months, did not use a single day of the parental leave allowance. Two years later, only 19 percent of fathers did not take parental leave; while the proportion that took 30 days or more increased from 33 percent to 53 percent.

There is still a way to go, though. In 2007, a mere 5 percent of fathers and mothers shared their parental allowance days equally (40–60 percent). In July 2008, a gender equality bonus was introduced as an incentive to share the parental allowance more equally. The parent with the lower income (usually the mother) receives a tax deduction of at most €300 for going back to work full-time while the other parent (usually the father) takes parental leave.

Source: Nyberg 2011.

much more time on caring for young children than did fathers.⁹⁶ Germany also recently introduced a similar nontransferable two-month parental leave allowance. The proportion of fathers taking up parental leave increased from 3.5 percent in 2006 to 16 percent in 2009. And more than a third of fathers take more than the two months of parental leave reserved for them.

The introduction of transformative change without enabling conditions, such as new legislation, can decouple policy intentions and outcomes, calling into question the sustainability of reform. Strong enforcement mechanisms may be required for behavioral change. The risk of reversal—especially if enforcement is relaxed—threatens this new equilibrium.

For example, the Marriage Law of 1950 in China sought to eliminate arranged marriages, authorize divorce, and establish rights for women to inherit property and have control of their children. Female cadres attached to the Women's Federation were charged with implementing these policies in villages and households. But the law met deep-seated resistance from men and older women, both standing to lose control over their young daughters and daughters-in-law.⁹⁷ Although the Marriage Law reduced the incidence of arranged marriages, increased the age of first marriage, and incorporated the option of divorce into family law, its enforcement tapered off when it began to threaten the family system and generate political disaffection.⁹⁸

Enforcing policy change is shaped by the capacity of the state machinery to follow through and by the extent to which the wider community accepts reforms. New laws may reflect prevailing traditions or social norms. But if they conflict with local attitudes or customs, they may be simply ignored or not widely disseminated. So, simply legislating policy change is not enough. Financing, implementation, public awareness campaigns, and enforcement all need to support the intended policy changes. In Norway, the government introduced voluntary quotas to increase female representation on corporate boards in 2003. After firms failed to take action, a mandatory quota was instituted. In 2006, Norway required that the boards of directors of public limited companies have at least 40 percent female members within two years. By 2009, the average female share on boards of directors among affected firms had almost tripled.⁹⁹ Success relied heavily on tough sanctions, including the forced dissolution of noncom-

pliant companies. However, some companies changed their legal status from public to private limited companies to avoid gender representation rules.¹⁰⁰

Transformative change can also open new dynamics in economic and social relationships. Governments can legislate new rights and enact new policies, some enforceable and others symbolic. In Brazil electoral list quotas for women have had limited impact.¹⁰¹ In Afghanistan, parliamentary seats reserved for women allowed more women to participate in politics.¹⁰² Female quotas have also induced political parties to invest in training a new generation of female political cadres—sooner rather than later. Women can bring new perspectives and new priorities to the policy realm. Indeed, female legislators in Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica initiate more legislation on women's, family and children's issues than their male counterparts.¹⁰³

It has been argued that when 5 percent of a society—*innovators*—accept a new idea, it becomes “embedded.” And that normally half of the population must be “aware” of the idea in order to reach the 5 percent who will adopt it. When 20 percent—*early adopters*—espouse it, the new idea becomes “unstoppable.” Transformative change comes from systematically locating innovators and early adopters.¹⁰⁴

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