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About Plan

Plan is a global children's charity. We work with children in the world's poorest countries to help them build a better future. A future you would want for all children, your family and friends.

For over 70 years we've been taking action and standing up for every child's right to fulfil their potential:

- Giving children a healthy start in life, including access to safe drinking water
- Securing the education of girls and boys
- Working with communities to prepare for and survive disasters
- Inspiring children to take a lead in decisions that affect their lives
- Enabling families to earn a living and plan for their children's future.

We do what's needed, where it's needed most. We do what you would do.

As part of reaching out to those who need it most Plan's Because I am a Girl Campaign works to improve the lives of girls and young women who too often find themselves ignored, particularly when poverty means families have to make hard choices. The State of the World's Girls Report has been published annually since 2007 to support this campaign.

www.plan-international.org/girls

About the RCS

The Royal Commonwealth Society is the oldest and largest civil society organisation devoted to the Commonwealth. Founded in 1868, it conducts a range of events and activities aimed at promoting international understanding. Its educational, youth and cultural programmes include one of the world's oldest and largest schools essay competitions, and an innovative international youth leadership programme. Headquartered at the Commonwealth Club in London, the RCS has some 4,000 members in the UK and a presence in over 40 Commonwealth countries through a network of branches and Commonwealth societies. The RCS is a registered charity in England & Wales (226748).

www.thercs.org



Because You're a Girl

Growing up in the Commonwealth



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY
AT THE COMMONWEALTH CLUB



A Commonwealth Blessing for Girls

Here are the gifts we wish and the wishes
we gift to new girls born, Antigua to Zambia,
breathed blessings at cradles, from Canada
to Trinidad, sent out by song, poetry, prayer
to Bangladesh, Gambia, Jamaica, Kiribati, Tuvalu,
to fall as rain on good crops or fill a cup
with water, a toast to each bright daughter-
health; the soul-wealth learning brings;
friendship's dancing rings in Cameroon, Guyana,
New Zealand, Pakistan; equality, a girl half
of the whole of the harmed world, healer; the joy of choice;
a boy-loud voice; her life a loved light in Britain,
India, Malaysia; lastly we wish she gives
back in return to us her blessings, her unique gifts.

by Carol Ann Duffy CBE

This poem was commissioned for the 2011 Commonwealth
Day Observance.



PLAN

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About this report

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The authors welcome comments on this research. Please see reverse for contact details.



BENNO NEELEMAN

Introduction

In 2011, the Commonwealth is focusing on the theme 'Women as Agents of Change'. This means that throughout the year Commonwealth organisations will be exploring the importance of investing in women and girls as a means to accelerate social, economic and political progress. This year is also the centenary of International Women's Day, marking a hundred years of international effort to promote equality between women and men.

To mark the Commonwealth's theme – and indeed to stimulate debate and discussion about gender equality – we are asking a very straightforward question in this report: where is it best to be born a girl in the Commonwealth? We want to use this question to explore how well the 54 countries are doing when it comes to promoting girls and women as agents of change. We want to examine what effect gender has in our 21st century world, and how this effect plays out across Commonwealth member states. With this

report, we present a country by country snapshot of what it means to grow up a girl in the Commonwealth today, looking at the barriers and opportunities girls face at each stage of life.

The Commonwealth's 54 member states encapsulate the full extent of the world's diversity. They stretch across every continent on earth and boast a population of more than 2 billion people. All countries have voluntarily committed to membership of the Commonwealth and, in so doing, have signed up to a set of agreed values and principles, including the promotion of human rights, good governance and sustainable development. Every Commonwealth country, for example, has signed up to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and all but two, Nauru and Tonga, are signatories to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).¹ This shared values-base makes the Commonwealth a readymade – if underutilised – framework for the promotion of gender equality around the world.

Women and girls make up over half of the Commonwealth's 2 billion people. The fortunes of this international association are inextricably linked with theirs and none of its goals can be achieved without taking them into account. In recognition of this fact, the inter-governmental Commonwealth Secretariat delivers a range of programmes which promote the importance of women in democracy, peace and conflict, in human rights and law, in poverty eradication, economic empowerment and in HIV/AIDs.

However, a mid-term review of progress towards the Commonwealth's Action Plan on Gender Equality, undertaken in 2010, highlights the scale of the challenge which remains. Across the association's member states, women and men have unequal access to services and resources, including education; poverty continues to affect women more severely than men; high maternal mortality rates persist; the number of conflicts – and their impact on women and girls – is increasing; discriminatory laws and harmful traditional practices are prevalent; and women continue to be under-represented at decision-making and leadership levels.²

There are several existing indicators from which we may deduce Commonwealth countries' progress towards gender equality, such as the Gender Inequality Index, published in November 2010 as part of UNDP's Human Development Report.³ Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals also helps to provide an overview of the state of women's rights around the globe.

Our report is different in several ways. First, we focus specifically on the 54 members of the Commonwealth, drawing together existing data to create a ready reference for anyone interested in the 2011 theme. Secondly, having waded through the various datasets out there, we have chosen eight indicators, based on a life-cycle approach, which we believe relate to promoting women as agents of change. Some of these indicators are well-known, while others (such as those relating to Commonwealth Scholarships or to the Commonwealth Games) may be less familiar. We hope that all of them will enable us to track the opportunities – or lack thereof – available at each stage of a girl's life as she grows from child to woman and to highlight the specific issues which influence

INVESTING IN GIRLS

Investing in girls and young women is not only the 'right' thing to do, it is also a smart move with real and far-reaching benefits. Young women who are economically empowered in decent, secure work or successful small businesses, and who enjoy equal rights to property and land ownership, are better equipped to create a solid future for themselves, their families and communities. We know from extensive research that mothers of all ages are more likely to spend their income on the welfare of the household, thereby creating the conditions for the next generation to move out of poverty.⁵ An economically independent young woman has more power in the home to make decisions that affect the health and education of all family members.⁶ In times of crisis, such as the death of a breadwinner or the decline of an economy, the economic capacity of a young woman is often what keeps the family afloat.⁷ There is evidence from the Middle East and North Africa to show that, if women's labour force participation had increased at the same rate as education during the 1990s, the average household income would have been higher by 25 per cent.⁸

Educated girls have better opportunities to earn higher wages and to participate in community life and decision making. They tend to marry later and to have fewer, healthier children who are more likely to go to school themselves.⁹

By making sure that women and girls have life-changing opportunities from education to healthcare, as well as safeguarding their rights and protection, we can go a long way towards creating a fairer and more prosperous world.

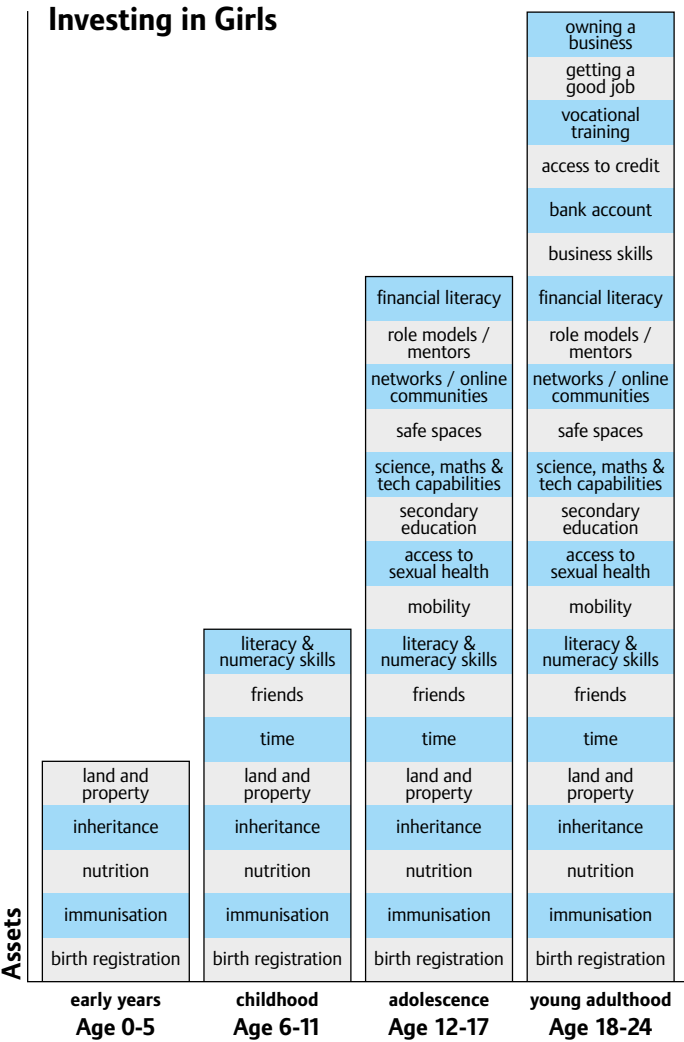
this development. Our report is not intended to be exhaustive, it is deliberately limited in scope, but we do seek to provide a unique and, we hope, useful insight into gender equality in the Commonwealth.

As a girl journeys from childhood to adulthood, just because she is a girl, she will come across many obstacles she will need to overcome. Unless she is equipped to leap over these hurdles – or unless they are removed – their cumulative effect can severely reduce a girl’s chances of ever fulfilling her potential. A girl may not survive her first five years; she may not get the education she needs; and, as she reaches puberty, early pregnancy may impact on both her health and educational opportunities, blocking her progress towards a healthy, happy and productive adulthood. We have selected indicators which, as they relate to each stage of a girl’s life, reflect these different hurdles.

The process of equipping and empowering women to become agents of change must begin at the beginning. The Investing in Girls diagram⁴ lays out some of the fundamental building blocks, or assets, a girl will need from the earliest years of her life and as she grows into young adulthood.

Our Report Cards raise numerous important questions. Are opportunities for girls and women always dependent on the relative poverty or wealth of their country of birth? Are there common institutional blocks to female empowerment that could be recognised and removed? Is legislation one of the most powerful means of promoting gender equality or are its effects largely tokenistic? With this report, we do not claim to offer comprehensive answers to these questions, though we hope that our data reveals the extent of the challenges which remain in this area, as well as the remarkable pockets of progress. Our aim is rather to stimulate discussion.

Equality is, at its core, a question of fundamental human rights. But we know



also that girls and women empowered to contribute to their local and national economies can help to lift societies out of poverty. Putting women and girls equal-first isn't just 'right'; it's also smart. We believe that if Commonwealth leaders are serious about achieving their stated aims, they must do more to put women and girls at the heart of their agendas.

"In the past there was a belief that men should lead and women should only follow behind. But that is changing. I believe that anything a boy can do a girl can do, sometimes even better."

Awa, African Movement of Working Children

Mind the Gap: Measuring Gender Equality

"Stop depending on others and believe in yourselves. Take a stand – since that is the only way your lives will ever improve and move forward."
Sumera, 20, Pakistan¹⁰

"Because I am a girl every man in the corporate world puts a glass ceiling over my head. But because I am a girl I have the power to shatter it."
Priya, 15, Canada¹¹

When we talk about gender equality we mean that women and men, girls and boys, enjoy the same status in society. This does not mean that men and women are the same, but rather that their similarities and differences are recognised and that their characteristics, qualities and aspirations are equally valued. Measuring gender equality is in essence an analysis of power – who has it, who doesn't, and how to distribute it more equally.

Since gender often prevents women and girls from gaining equal access to resources, assets and opportunities, the concept of gender equality recognises that different treatment of women and girls may sometimes be required in order to achieve equal results. In this way, gender equality is concerned with arriving at equal outcomes rather than giving identical treatment.¹²

Equality can only be won when women and girls are equipped to claim it for themselves; when they are made aware of unequal power relations; when they are able to think and act on their own behalf, exercise choice, speak out with strong voices and have their views taken into account. Only then can they take the first step to overcoming inequality in their home, workplace and community and to gaining control over their lives.

Measuring gender equality is an inherently difficult task. Even indicators that seek to capture one aspect of a girl's or woman's life can hide huge variation or be based on a limited sample. Drawing together several indicators to get a more rounded

picture presents an even greater challenge. Replicating this across 54 very different countries, and within 54 very different social, economic and political contexts, presents manifold challenges. Yet this is exactly what we have done in this report.

Methodology: Drawing up the Report Cards
We have chosen eight indicators that we believe offer an invaluable snapshot of the progress being made by girls and women across the Commonwealth and of the remaining challenges which must concern us all. For each indicator we have prepared a 'Report Card' that explores how well those Commonwealth countries, for which we have data, are doing.





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All of our indicators either highlight processes which facilitate the empowerment of women and girls and improve the equality of their outcomes – such as access to education and healthcare – or they point to gaps in equality of outcomes as evidenced, for example, by levels of political participation or pay.

There is one obvious and large problem with trying to identify the best place to be born a girl in the Commonwealth: how to take account of the huge disparities in economic development across the association's 54 member states. One solution would simply be to compare how well girls and women in one country are doing relative to other countries, but this would almost certainly favour the richest countries and may hide disparities between males and females in each country. Another answer would be to compare the disparities between males and females in each country with the corresponding disparities in other countries, but this could lead our results, rather perversely, to state that the "best" place to be born a girl happens to be a desperately poor country, but one in which males and females are equally poor.

In this report, we try to address these tensions by presenting data on both

absolute and relative measures of gender equality. In some of our Report Cards, for example on life expectancy and on pay gaps, it will be clear that development disparities have a large impact on the life of girls and women. However, in each of our indicators (except for the early pregnancy Report Card for obvious reasons), we also present comparisons between males and females in each country, thereby highlighting any gender disparities. We hope that this allows us to offer a snapshot of where in the Commonwealth girls and women are given the best chances in life and why.

The quality of data in this area is notoriously bad, and the prevalence of so many small states in the Commonwealth makes this particularly acute for us. We were therefore forced to rule out some very interesting indicators because of a lack of data across the association. Even so, we have missing data in the indicators we did settle upon, and, where this is the case, we have indicated this with '..' in the relevant part of the tables below. Unfortunately, we have not been able to include Nauru and Tuvalu in our comparisons because of a lack of sufficient data. We have also excluded Fiji due to its current suspension from the Commonwealth.

MAKING THE GRADE

In each table, we have compared how well each Commonwealth country (for which we have data) is doing relative to other Commonwealth countries (again for which we have data). We do this by finding the average value (mean) for the Commonwealth and seeing how far away from this value each member state is. We judge the distance from the average by using a measure of variability called 'standard deviation'.

We assign a grade of "A" if the country is well above average (more than half a standard deviation above the mean), a grade of "C" if the country is below average (more than half a standard deviation below the mean), and a grade of "B" if the country is average (between half a standard deviation above and half a standard deviation below the mean). The value of the mean and the thresholds for each grade are listed at the bottom of each table. Where possible, we have used actual values for calculating our grades, even if rounded values are shown. A more detailed explanation of how we have compiled the final table is given in that section.

All of our data are sourced from existing data sources and using the latest year available. These data sources are often compiled by multilateral agencies using official data from member states. Each source is listed at the bottom of the tables below, with fuller reference details given in the footnotes.

Growing up a Girl: The Commonwealth Report Cards

Report Card 1: Life Expectancy

Being born a girl means that, notwithstanding whatever else life might hold in store for you, you are likely to live longer than your male peers. It is the one area in which women have an inbuilt biological advantage from birth, and, as you would expect, our table shows that all over the Commonwealth women live longer than men (with the exception of Swaziland).

The grades we have allocated in this Report Card relate solely to the gap between male and female life expectancy and are not a comment on mortality rates generally, though of course, we recognise that this issue cannot be analysed by looking at the differences between women and men alone. In some countries, the gender gap is small, but overall life expectancy remains desperately low, reflecting the effects of persistent poverty or conflict.

In other countries women’s natural advantage is stamped out before it can even come into play by a form of discrimination – female foeticide – that occurs before birth. Precise figures are hard to come by and are hotly disputed but preference for a son is so marked in some countries that millions of girls go “missing” due to sex selection while still in the womb. In India, for example, the government has been campaigning against sex selective abortions, but a recent national survey of 1.1 million households came to the conclusion that “based on conservative estimates, the practice accounts for about 0.5 million missing female births yearly”.¹³ Equality or the lack of it starts with family and community values. Women may live longer but for some, as soon as their gender is detected, there is no life expectancy at all.

Across the Commonwealth, women live on average 3.75 years longer than men. There are countries in various regions of the Commonwealth where women’s life expectancy relative to men is much worse

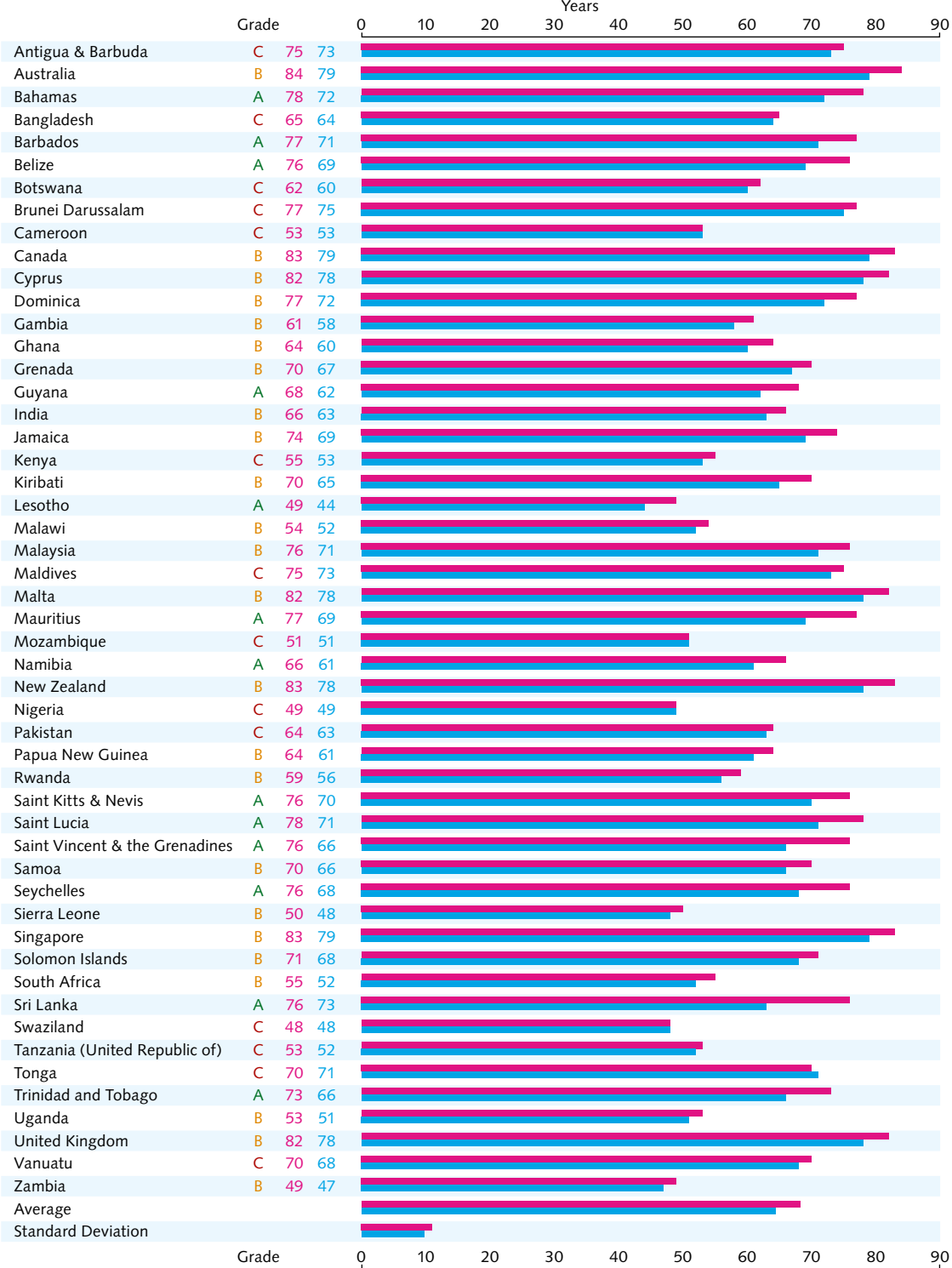
than average, for example in Swaziland, Zambia and Pakistan.

In Swaziland and Botswana women suffer on two counts, with very low life expectancy both in absolute terms and in relation to men. In these two countries there is a very high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and in Swaziland the rate for women is almost four times as high as that for men.

On the other hand, in some developing Commonwealth countries women do better in relative and absolute terms, especially it seems in some island member states, such as Dominica, Sri Lanka and Seychelles.



Report Card 1: Life expectancy at birth



Notes: Data used are 2008 estimates. The mean female to male ratio is 1.058. A is above 1.079, C is below 1.038, and B is in between.
Source: World Health Organisation, Global Health Observatory Database, <http://apps.who.int/ghodata/> [Accessed 20 February 2011]

Girls Boys

Report Card 2: Sheer Survival

“Parents must bring up their girls as an asset not a liability. They must give her equal rights, opportunities and privileges as the male child.”

Girl, 17, India¹⁴

The first five years of a child's life irreversibly impact their health and development. As families make difficult choices during hard economic times, girls are often fed last and least but malnutrition at an early age can lead to delayed growth, stunting, anaemia and cognitive disorders. Its effects can follow girls and young women for the rest of their lives.

The Commonwealth countries below are scored by the levels of underweight girls who are under the age of 5 compared to the levels of underweight boys.

Sadly, girls in India and Bangladesh fare particularly badly, both when compared to girls in the rest of the Commonwealth and when compared to boys in their respective countries. In this region infant mortality rates for girls under five are higher than that of boys despite the fact that, when all things are equal, girls have an inbuilt biological advantage.¹⁵ In some countries it is clear

that this innate biological advantage has been overridden by cultural and behavioural factors.¹⁶ The preference for sons means that girls are seen as a burden – they are fed less and are less likely to receive adequate healthcare. Thankfully, there has been progress over time as the proportion of underweight girls has fallen in these countries.¹⁷

Despite this, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan continue to record strikingly high proportions of underweight girls compared to other Commonwealth countries when an overall poverty index is taken into account. The Multidimensional Poverty Index, prepared for UNDP's 2010 Human Development Report, ranks India at 79, Pakistan at 75 and Bangladesh at 82, all well above Sierra Leone, for example, which is the lowest ranked Commonwealth country at 103.¹⁸

In Sub-Saharan Africa, there are some more positive stories, especially in countries like Mozambique, Kenya and Cameroon, where the proportion of underweight girls is relatively low given development standards, but also as much as a quarter lower than boy counterparts.



Report Card 2: Proportion of under-5 year olds that are underweight



Notes: Data are for latest year available. The mean female to male ratio is 0.940. A is above 1.008, C is below 0.871, and B is in between. Source: UNICEF ChildInfo Statistical Tables, http://www.childinfo.org/statistical_tables.html [Accessed 21 February 2011]

Girls Boys

Report Card 3: Education for life

"I would really like to go to school one day and be like the other girls in their school uniforms. I know if I go to school, one day I will be able to help my family as I will get a good job that pays well."

Sofia, 13, Tanzania¹⁹

The importance of education lies in its multiplier effect and its benefits grow in proportion to the level of education which girls complete. Higher levels of education raise the likelihood that young women will engage in formal paid employment, thereby increasing their future income earning potential.²⁰ Just one extra year of secondary schooling for adolescent girls has been shown to lead to an increase of between 10 and 20 per cent in future earnings. And the increase of female secondary students by one percentage point boosts a country's annual per capita income growth by 0.3 percentage points on average, according to a study in 100 countries by the World Bank.²¹ Indeed, education for girls is the "best development investment in terms of

human capital formation, social justice and economic return".²²

Aside from the economic effects, education is credited as one of the most important factors in delaying girls' marriage and the age at which they have their first child.²³ School is about more than literacy and numeracy: it is about making friends, learning to negotiate life outside the family, and boosting self-confidence.

It is estimated that girls need at least 10 years of school in order to emerge into the world of work as successful economic participants.²⁴ The countries that are failing to provide this are not only depriving these girls of a basic human right; they are also losing out on an important national economic asset.

One of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals is equal numbers of boys and girls, young men and young women, in primary and secondary education. There has been some progress here but



QUALITY EDUCATION

The number of years girls spend in school tells us little about the quality of education that they receive while they are there. What they are actually learning and retaining, and the overall quality of the experience, are much more complex questions. There is some interesting data about literacy rates reflected in the chart below.

Country	Youth Literacy* %	GPI**	Country	Youth Literacy* %	GPI**
Sierra Leone	54	0.68	Tanzania	78	0.97
Papua New Guinea	64	1.04	Malawi	83	0.98
Pakistan	69	0.74	Uganda	86	0.95
India	82	0.89	Zambia	75	0.82
Botswana	94	1.03	Nigeria	87	0.96
South Africa	95	1.02	Sri Lanka	97	1.01
Swaziland	94	1.05	Malta	98	1.02
Namibia	93	1.04	Cyprus	100	1.00
Ghana	78	0.95	Brunei Darussalam	100	1.00
Rwanda	78	0.98	Trinidad and Tobago	100	1.00

*Youth literacy = literacy among 15-24 year olds. **Gender Parity Index. Data source: UNESCO GMR 2010

The very low literacy rate in Sierra Leone where girls do stay in school for more than 10 years, and boys for nearly 13, indicates clearly that this in itself does not guarantee an adequate education. The same can be said for Rwanda, where the amount of time spent in school has also produced disappointing literacy rates. However, Nigeria, where girls spend well under the recommended 10 years in school, has a higher literacy rate, 87 per cent, than might be expected and according to the gender parity index there is little difference between boys and girls. Pakistan, where as we have seen the girls spend the least time in school, has not surprisingly one of the lowest literacy rates. In India girls get just below the recommended 10 years but overall literacy rates remain at 82 per cent and girls do less well than boys. In Sri Lanka, where girls spend over 12 years, literacy rates for young people are high with girls doing marginally better than boys.

What seems clear, given the lack of any consistent correlation between the number of years spent in school and literacy rates, is that we need to measure educational success by more than just years in the classroom. The increase in the numbers of girls spending more time at school, though a measure of success, is not in itself a guarantee of getting an education.

not enough and the goal itself could go further. In some countries, access to tertiary education will largely define young women's ability to progress in the labour market and to contribute to the economic and social development of the country they live in.

Because of the important multiplier effect of education, we have chosen to focus our scoring in this Report Card on the number of years girls can expect to spend in school. We have calculated the total number of years of schooling which a girl of a certain age can expect to receive in the future (assuming that the probability of her being enrolled in school at any particular age is equal to the current enrolment ratio for that age). We have also added a comparison with boys' education with some interesting results.

"We are very poor and live with our maternal grandmother. My maternal grandmother considers [education] wastage of money and suggests to my father that I should work at home. After all I will have to wash and cook, no matter how much I am educated. She advises my father to invest in the education of my brother who will support the family. One month had gone after passing the grade-8 examination, and I would cry for further education... I cannot express how happy I was, when I came to know that a High School for girls was opened in our village. It gave me a new energy. I shared it with my father that I will take admission in the school. I had saved some money and bought books and stationery from this

money. It was Wednesday when I walked into the school for studying in grade-9 class. I was too much happy to see that my dream to get higher education had come true. Now I have passed 9th grade examination and I am in grade-10."

Attiya, Girl, Pakistan²⁵

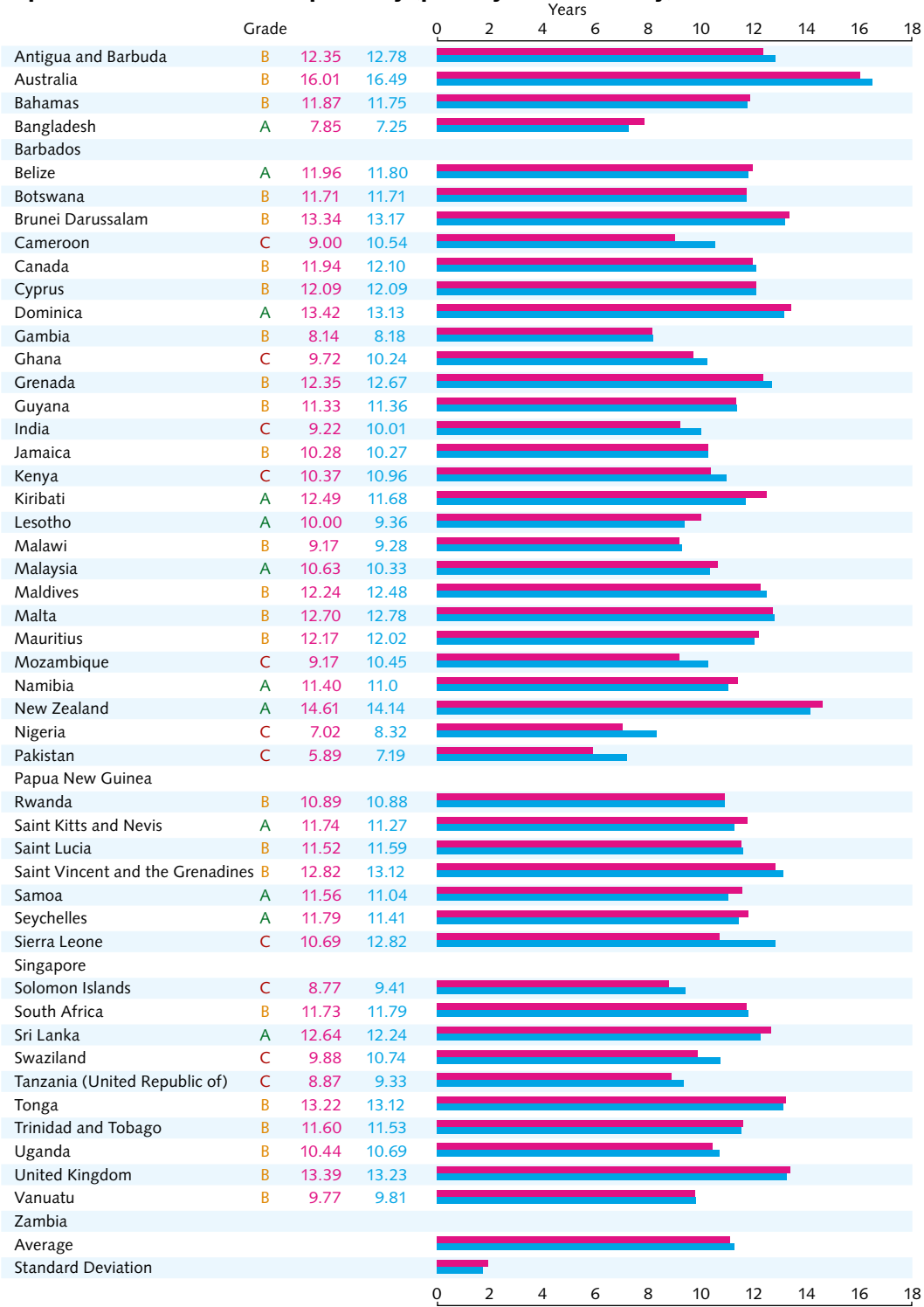
In this Report Card, Australia comes out a winner, with girls and young women able to expect 16.01 years of schooling. However, unlike in New Zealand and the UK, girls in Australia are expected to stay at school for about a half year less than boys. At the other end of the table, Pakistan and Nigeria fare worst, with girls expecting only around 6 and 7 years of schooling respectively. This leaves girls in these countries with the least

access to education compared to the rest of the Commonwealth, but also with about one-fifth less schooling compared to boys in their countries. Sierra Leone, Mozambique and Cameroon also fare badly in the relative picture between boys and girls. However, despite being able to expect among the fewest number of years in school, girls in Bangladesh (7.85 years) do relatively well compared to boys (7.25 years).

This Report Card shows us that there has in many countries been good progress in girls' education and many need only a little more investment to reach the all-important 10 year mark enabling them to realise all of the benefits, for both girls and their countries, that this would bring.²⁶



Report Card 3: School life expectancy (primary and secondary)



Notes: Data refer to average years of expected schooling in primary and secondary school. Data used are for latest year available, generally 2008. The mean female to male ratio is 0.983. A is above 1.013, C is below 0.953, and B is in between.
Source: UNESCO Statistics database, Table 8, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/> [Accessed 20 February 2011]

Girls Boys

Report Card 4: Early Pregnancy

“Reproductive health and sexuality is not discussed adequately at school and not even at home. Certain behaviours of male members of our community lead our (girls’) lives into risk situations. But such things are always kept at a low level and are not able to be reported due to cultural constraints.”

Champi, 15, Sri Lanka²⁷

Early pregnancy is the main cause of death for young women aged 15-19 worldwide.²⁸ Girls under the age of 15 are five times as likely to die due to pregnancy-related complications as those in their twenties. Early pregnancy has been linked to obstetric fistula in a number of studies which prove that young women’s pelvises are insufficiently developed to meet the challenges of pregnancy and childbirth.²⁹

- Early pregnancy impacts on our ability to reach at least two of the Millennium Development Goals:
- The aim of MDG 4 is to reduce infant mortality. We know that an infant’s risk of dying in his or her first year of life is 60 per cent higher when the mother is under age 18 than when the mother is 18 or older.
 - MDG 5 is concerned with reducing maternal mortality and targets are proving very hard to reach. One of the key factors at play here is the number of younger women who die in pregnancy or child birth.³⁰

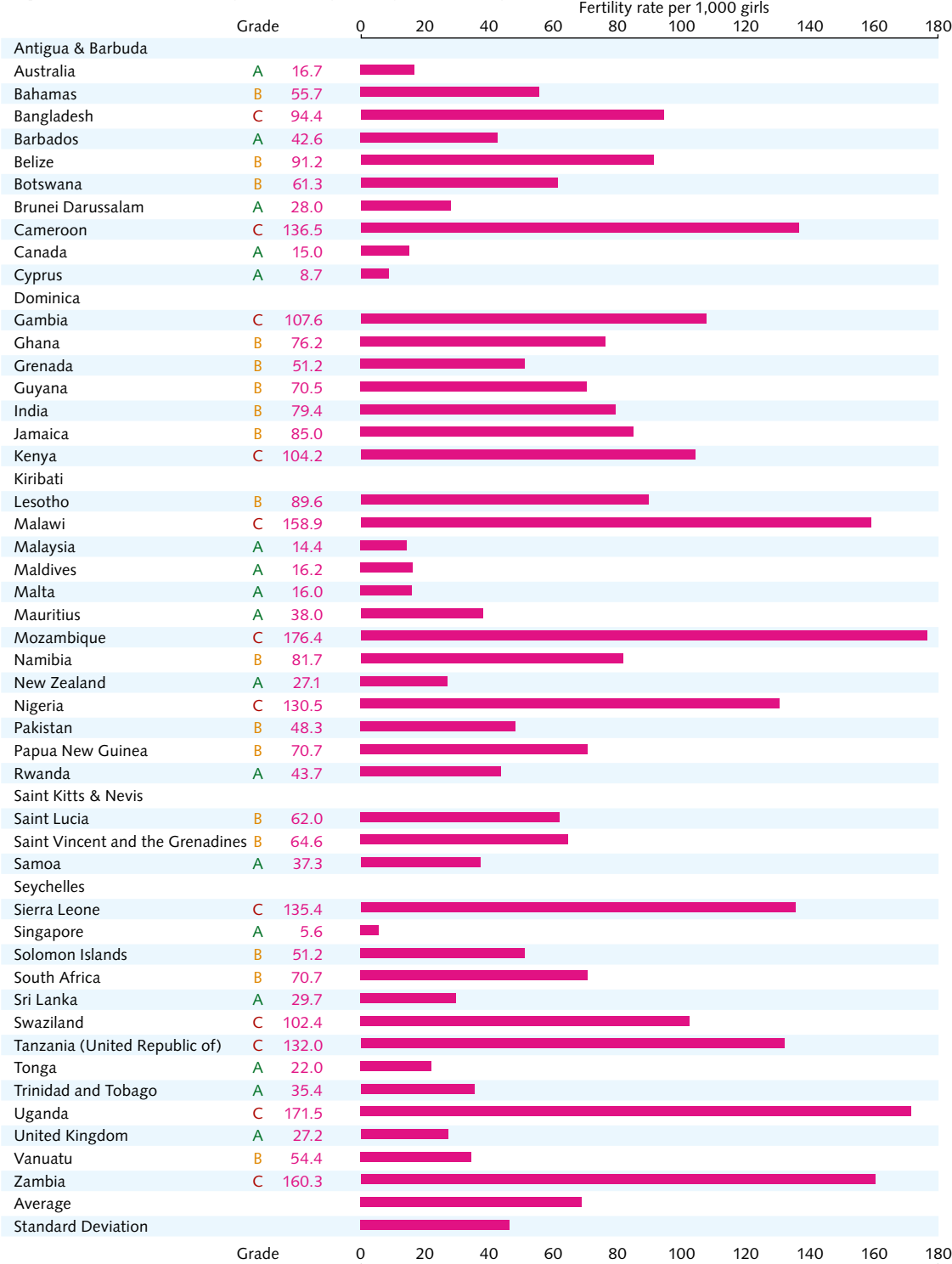


Girls who give birth while still in their teens are not only more vulnerable to maternal mortality and morbidity, but have limited capacity to enter the paid labour force, to access resources or to earn an independent income later on.³¹

Early pregnancy is entirely preventable and, if avoided, can greatly increase the quality of life of millions of girls. More investments must be made to ensure adolescent girls have access to healthcare and knowledge of their reproductive rights. The practice of early marriage, even when laws exist to ban it, is prevalent in many countries and is a key factor in girls giving birth too young. More than 100 million girls under the age of 18, some as young as 12, are expected to marry over the next decade.³²

All over Africa, our figures show that an unacceptable number of young women get pregnant too early. There is one notable exception in Rwanda which is doing comparatively well. The question remains why there is such a contrast between Rwanda and Uganda, Mozambique and Zambia, to name but three, where numbers of early pregnancies remain so high. Similarly, the UK and New Zealand have fertility rates almost double those of Canada, despite having similar levels of socio-economic development.

Report Card 4: Fertility rate of girls aged 15-19 years



Notes: The mean female to male ratio is 69.505. A is above 92.835, C is below 46.174 and B is in between.
Source: UN Population Division, World Population Prospect (2008 Revision), <http://esa.un.org Temporal extent2000-2005>
[accessed via www.girlsdiscovered.org, 30 December 2010]

Report Card 5: Studying Hard

"I would like to complete primary, secondary and even university college. After that I will be the head and I will be going to school with a car. I will build my house very well... I will make my school the best in the area. After I am rich, I will make my community move up by bringing piped water in the other schools and the community. I will also try to prepare the roads with tarmac... because people in our community get many problems of taking crops and produce to the market."

Zephania, Kenya³³

In an increasingly globalised job market, one of the most important keys to success is tertiary education. Recognising the value of education both for the individual and for a country's economic development, many Commonwealth countries allocate funds to help young people through university or to give

them access to professional development opportunities. One of the primary ways they do this is through the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP). This international programme, under which member governments offer scholarships and fellowships to citizens of other Commonwealth countries, celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2009.

Since 1959, over 26,000 individuals, originating from every Commonwealth country, have benefited from awards; of these, the overwhelming majority have returned to their home countries, and large numbers have reached the top of their respective professions. The scheme represents one of the most substantial and practical examples of Commonwealth collaboration today and there is increasingly strong evidence of its development impact.



Report Card 5: Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships taken up in the academic years 2006/7, 2007/8 and 2008/9



Notes: No grade assigned to countries with fewer than 4 total recipients. The mean female to male ratio is 1.269. A is above 1.740, C is below 0.789 and B is in between.
Source: 'Report on the activities of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan 2006-2009', http://www.csfp-online.org/CSFP_report_2009.pdf

Scholarships are allocated largely for postgraduate training at Masters or Doctorate level, with a small number of undergraduate awards. Fellowships involve training for mid-career professionals in academia and elsewhere. There have been calls, notably from Uganda, for more positive action to attract women candidates. At present, though there is some evidence that a higher proportion of female applicants are allocated awards than men, the number of women applying to – and being nominated for – the scheme (compared to men) remains low.³⁴ Commonwealth Scholarships are hosted in several Commonwealth countries. Their selection methods vary. In some cases, applicants are nominated by governments and universities in their home countries, in others they apply directly to institutions in their host country. Some will take up their awards very soon after leaving formal education, in other cases after some years in employment.

By comparing the female to male ratio of Commonwealth scholarships and fellowships taken up in the academic years between 2006 and 2009, the indicator below gives us some insight into how well different countries are doing in developing the talents of their young people. Are girls getting equal access to the scholarships on offer? How does this correlate with our other indicators and with the wealth or poverty of the countries concerned?

Out of the total 2,651 scholarships funded between 2006 and 2009, 44 per cent were allocated to young women. In the more developed countries – Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK – scholarships awarded to young women outnumber those to young men, reflecting perhaps the academic progress that young women have made in these countries in recent years.

Girls outnumber boys by a large margin in Dominica, the Seychelles, St. Lucia and in Trinidad and Tobago. All these countries also scored fairly well in the previous Report Card, exceeding the recommended 10 years in school. Pakistan scores poorly in the previous education indicator but is doing better here – 49 per cent of the

97 scholarships awarded went to young women.

Several countries come in at under 30 per cent. In Bangladesh, for example, only 26 per cent of the 162 scholarships and fellowships received were awarded to women. This also correlates partially with the low score on the previous indicator, the amount of time girls can expect to spend in school. However both girls and boys spend under 8 years in school in Bangladesh, with boys spending in fact slightly less time than girls, so there is a marked change at this tertiary stage.

Although Mozambique, another low scorer on the previous Report Card, does well here with 63 per cent of scholarships going to girls, the overall number of scholarships, at 8, is low. The two countries, Bangladesh and Sierra Leone, with the lowest percentage of girls gaining scholarships are also among the poorer countries in the Commonwealth, but so too is Zambia, and here, out of a total of 110 scholarships, 47 per cent go to girls.



CHRIS ISON

Report Card 6: Political Participation

"It is very important to develop leadership skills in women as they are the very foundation that society is built on. Increasingly, girls and young women study, work and run a home at the same time. If they are successful leaders in their chosen area, their society will be successful as well."

Ruchira, Sri Lanka, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts³⁵

In 2010, a mid-term review of progress towards the Commonwealth's Plan of Action for Gender Equality found that Parliaments across the Commonwealth continue to be male bastions and the goal of increasing female participation in political bodies and in representational politics is far from being achieved. Major challenges include persistent gender stereotypes, conflict for women between family and work demands, the masculine culture of politics, the absence of an enabling political environment, inadequate funding to support female candidates, lack of special measures and quotas and a dearth of training for political participation.³⁶

The stated aim of the intergovernmental Commonwealth is to have women constitute at least 30 per cent of representatives involved in peace negotiation and education, conflict management, and democratic processes.³⁷ But, as our Report Card shows, this is far from being the case.

All over the world, women and girls are too often the silent witnesses to decisions made in their name. With some rare exceptions, women remain a minority among decision-makers in politics, the boardroom and in the media. As a result, institutions, policies and practices are often quite literally, 'man made', largely reflecting the interests and experiences of only half the population.³⁸

Women have traditionally been discouraged and even banned from participating in political processes, a form of discrimination which prevents them from influencing the laws and policies that dictate their everyday lives. The public sphere has been a male

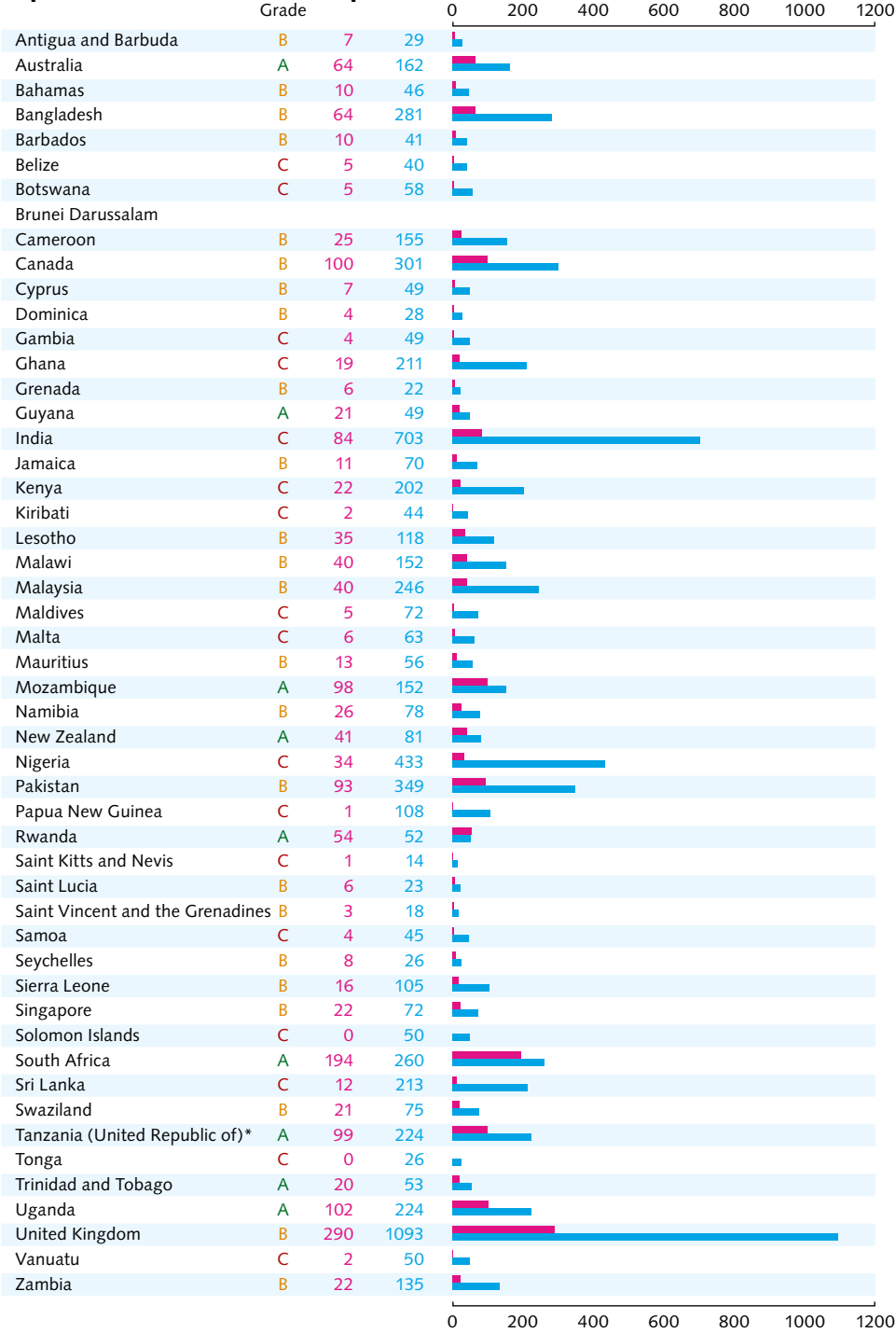
preserve only entered by women within the last 100 years. Yet the importance of women's political participation cannot be overstated. Research has shown that women's participation in governance processes leads to stability, prosperity and a more equal distribution of resources.³⁹

There are some interesting results here. Rwanda and South Africa top the Commonwealth table and are in fact first and third respectively in the world. Rwanda's constitution stipulates that women must hold 30 per cent of the seats in Parliament and, in fact, they now hold more than 50 per cent of the seats in the Rwandan House of Representatives. This means they boast a far higher proportion of female politicians than, say, the UK. Similarly, Uganda ranks higher in the table than both Canada and Australia.

It would seem that, despite generations of campaigning by women's groups, the Commonwealth's northern countries are lagging far behind in this particular field. Legislation has been the key to change in both Rwanda and Uganda, demonstrating that political will can have a far greater impact on gender inequality than levels of wealth.

That said, the extent to which this influx of female parliamentarians will translate to improvements in the lives of women and girls in the countries they help to govern remains to be seen, as does the number of women who will achieve the highest political office. There is little evidence, as yet, that women in positions of power create opportunities and change for other women.

Report Card 6: Political Participation (as at 31 December 2010)



Notes: Where a parliament has two chambers, the seats in both have been totalled. These figures refer to the situation at 31 December 2010, except for Tanzania, which are for pre-October 2010 elections. Brunei Darussalam does not have an elected legislature. The mean female to male ratio is 0.236. A is above 0.335, C is below 0.136, and B is in between.

Source: 'Women in national parliaments' statistical archive, Inter-Parliamentary Union, [Accessed 20 February 2011]. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif-arc.htm>

Female Male

Report Card 7: A Sporting Chance

“Education has made me who I am today – it was because I went to school that I was chosen to train as an archer. Now I compete internationally, I travel the world.”

Laxmirani, Girl 17, India⁴⁰

The history of women’s participation in sport is marked by division and discrimination, as well as by remarkable accomplishments by female athletes and important advances for gender equality. Sport and physical activity were first specifically recognised as a human right in the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport⁴¹, adopted in 1978 by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The Convention on the Rights of the Child⁴² adopted in 1989, also supports the notion of sport and physical education as a human right.⁴³

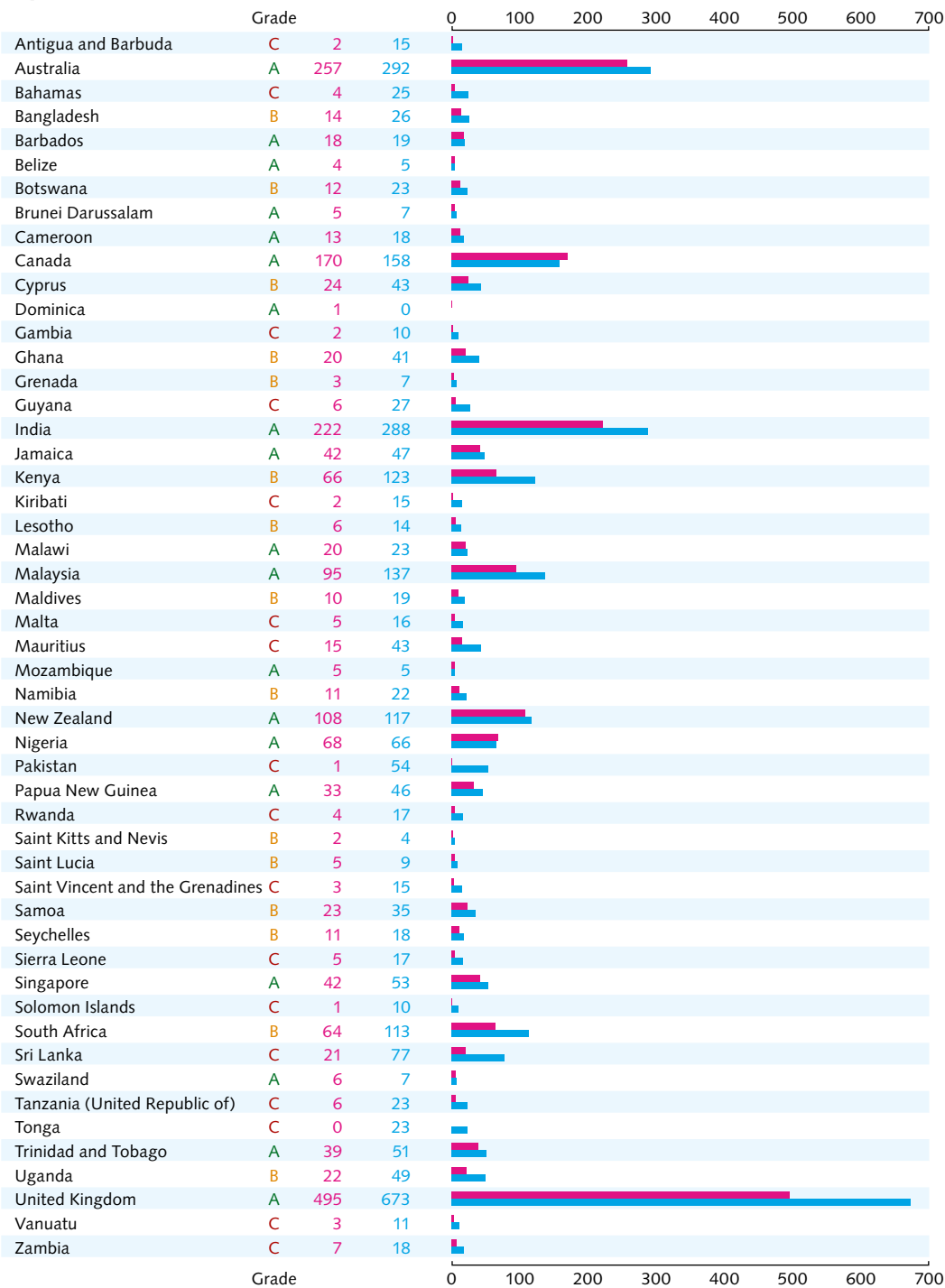
Yet for many years, women were – and in many places still are – perceived as being too

weak for sport. Physical activity was believed to be harmful to women’s health, particularly reproductive health. Today, of course, the health benefits – both physical and mental – of participation in physical activity and sport for both girls and women are well established (though this is not to say that they are universally accepted).

Beyond the physical benefits, sport can provide women and girls with an important alternative avenue for participation in the social and cultural life of their communities; it can expand their interpersonal networks; and offer new opportunities for the development of essential life skills, including communication, leadership, teamwork and negotiation.⁴⁴ As such, sport can act as a powerful tool for social empowerment, for challenging attitudes towards women’s capabilities, and for helping to dispel gender stereotypes.



Report Card 7: Athletes and Medals at the Delhi Commonwealth Games



Notes: The female to male ratio combines the number of female athletes and medals and compares it to the total number of male athletes and medals. The mean female to male ratio is 0.541. A is above 0.685, C is below 0.398, B is in between.

Source: XIX Commonwealth Games, Competition Information <http://results.csgdelhi2010.org/en/Participant.mcv/List> [accessed: 20 February 2011]

Female Male

The social benefits of participation in sport are thought to be especially important for girls, given that they, particularly in adolescence, have fewer opportunities than boys for social interaction outside the home. For many girls and young women, time is at a premium. Around the world, girls undertake all sorts of work in the home, including basic housekeeping duties, caring for siblings, for the sick and the elderly, helping with food preparation, hauling water or gathering wood for fuel. In India, for example, almost half of girls of school-going age are engaged in household work.⁴⁵

The fact that girls spend more time than boys doing unpaid domestic work⁴⁶ has significant penalties in terms of their ability to grasp whatever opportunities are on offer. Globally, girls spend anywhere between 33 and 85 per cent more time per day on this work than boys.⁴⁷ This statistic often goes unnoticed: at first glance, boys make up around 54 per cent of the child labour force, but this is because girls' work in the household is uncounted.⁴⁸

It is important also to recognise that complex cultural factors may be at work. Sport is often viewed as a male domain, particularly the sort of sport which dominates our television screens and generates huge national emotion. Girls may be encouraged to exercise to keep trim, but few sports boast widely recognisable female role models at international level. There are exceptions of course, particularly in individual sports such as swimming and tennis, but in many parts of the world it is football, rugby and cricket, played by men in teams, which dominate.

Growing up with the pressure of domestic chores, the responsibilities of early marriage or the dominance of male sporting prowess makes a girl's chances of achieving her dreams in this field, or even dreaming them at all, very slim. This context renders the achievements of female athletes all the more spectacular.

Women in Canada, Australia and Nigeria emerge victorious in the medals count,

whereas India and Pakistan perform less well. Is it culturally and socially less acceptable for women to be "sporty" in South Asia? Or are these differences predominantly dictated by how much countries invest in girls' and women's sport?

Even in countries where female participation in sports is widely promoted, the value placed on women's sport is often lower, resulting in inadequate resources and unequal wages and prizes. In the media, women's sport is not only marginalised but also presented in a different style that reflects and can reinforce gender stereotypes. There is much work to be done in determining the extent to which this variety of factors influences women's and girls' participation in sports, yet it is important that countries recognise the power of sport as a tool for the empowerment of women and girls.

Report Card 8: The Pay Gap

There is much to be celebrated in the lives of girls all over the world. In the developed world, one of the biggest causes for celebration is the opening up of educational opportunities never dreamt of by previous generations. In the UK, for example, young women now form the majority of students in the fields of medicine and law.⁴⁹ The belief that there should be no barriers in the way of girls' achievements is now far more widely shared than ever before. But the reality continues to be an uneven and incomplete realisation of girls' and women's rights.

For example, in the developed world the opening up of opportunities in education has not been matched by achievements in the labour market. While young women may be entering the labour market in ever larger numbers, they soon hit obstacles. Women are concentrated in low-paid and undervalued sectors; they are often

WHAT'S THE SCORE?

It is important to note that, in this Report Card, we are scoring countries based on the gap between women and men's wages, rather than the levels of their earning power. This allows us to compare the disparity in income between men and women in each Commonwealth country, rather than how much a woman earns in one country compared to another. For instance, in this Report Card we are interested in the fact that the pay gap between men and women in Australia is 27 per cent (or roughly US\$10,000), whereas the pay gap between men and women in Bangladesh is 54 per cent (or roughly US\$845). We also adjust income levels in each country according to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), a common way of taking into account how many goods and services can be bought locally for a given income level.

the nation's carers, cleaners, caterers and cashiers. And it continues to be mothers – as opposed to fathers – who pay the price of



trying to juggle work and family life. As a result, women continue to be paid less than men in all manner of jobs. We are educating a generation of girls on the promise that they will enter a world without barriers. Yet there is much work still to be done. Poverty in the developed world, just as in the developing world, has a female face.⁵⁰

There seems to be no obvious relationship between the relative size of a gender pay gap and the levels of socio-economic development. Some of the smallest pay gaps occur in some of the poorest countries of the Commonwealth, for example Kenya, Mozambique, Malawi and Rwanda top the list. On the other hand, Australia and New Zealand also have relatively small gaps. At the other extreme, in countries like Swaziland, India and Pakistan, women earn only a third of what men earn on average. In Singapore and Brunei Darussalam, two of the countries where men earn the most in the Commonwealth, women still only earn around half of their male counterparts.

Of our eight indicators this is where evidence of inequality is at its most stark. Men continue to earn more money, regardless it

seems of educational attainment, political participation and equal opportunities legislation. Even in the best-performing Commonwealth countries, women only earn around four-fifths of male incomes on average. This imbalance in earning capacity both reflects and perpetuates the imbalance of power and the lack of real equality between men and women, boys and girls, in the family and society at large.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

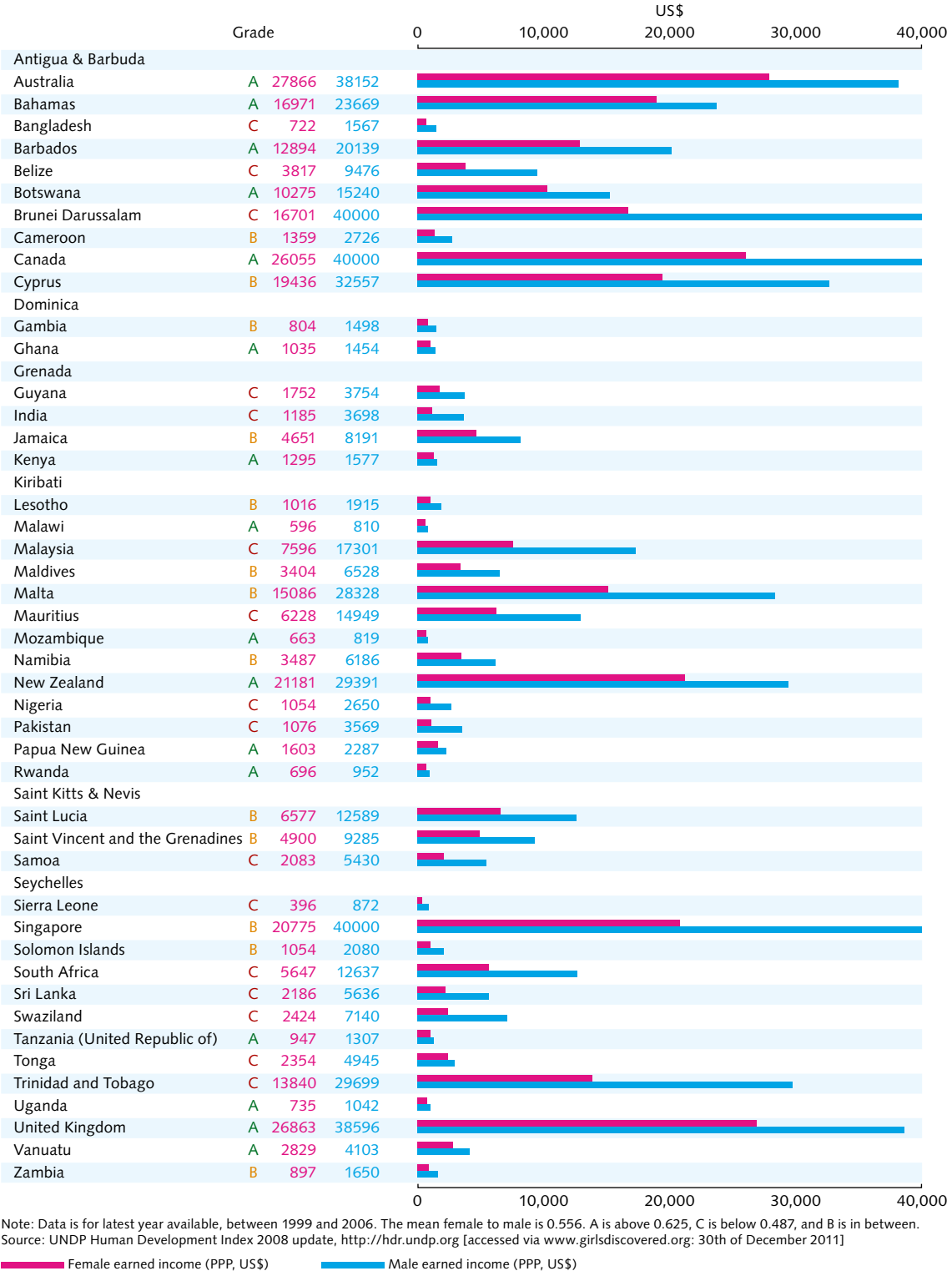
The ability to borrow money is crucial to economic development. In many countries, institutional barriers mean that small-scale savings and loans schemes, known as microfinance, rather than traditional bank loans, are enabling women in particular to access the finance they need.

One of the most positive contributions of microfinance to women's livelihoods is the creation of support groups and networks. Savings groups, an integral part of many microfinance services, can have a significant impact on young women as they can deliver start-up capital, help with household expenditure and provide social support. Research also suggests that access to microfinance has strengthened women's bargaining power within the household, improved their self-worth and may lead to a decline in domestic violence.⁵¹ Whether young women want to engage in waged employment or build their own enterprise, access to finance is vital in order to build a sustainable livelihood.

However, banks and other financial institutions are often reluctant to lend to young people and funds are rarely lent for the purpose of starting a business. In Asia, married women are considered less of a risk, leaving out many younger, unmarried women who may be in even greater need. The result is that many young people, especially girls, are effectively barred from obtaining the funds which could see them out of poverty and on the road to economic independence.

We found information on women's access to bank loans for 28 Commonwealth countries and in only eight of them do women enjoy full and equal access.⁵² Even in the increasingly dominant economies of India and South Africa, women are not empowered in this important aspect of their lives. A fair distribution of economic power is essential if there is to be real equality between men and women. Evidence suggests that women put more of their money back into their families – which means better-fed and educated children able to progress as individuals and contribute to a more productive society.⁵³

Report Card 8: Gender Pay Gap



The Final Commonwealth Report Card

The results shown in this final Report Card are startling in many ways. Most importantly, they show that poverty is not necessarily the most important factor that determines gender inequality. For example, Mozambique, Rwanda and Malawi all score very highly on our criteria, despite their poverty. These three countries have rankings in our Report Card more than 30 places higher than their rankings in terms of income. Of the six poorest countries in the Commonwealth in terms of income per capita, only Sierra Leone, still recovering from years of civil war, remains on the bottom. Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Malawi and Mozambique are all ranked much higher because, despite their poverty, they have achieved a fair degree of gender equality in areas like elected representation or sporting success. Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, ranked 10th and 8th respectively on income per capita, also do very well, ranking 2nd and 3rd in our Report Card, ahead of much richer countries.

On the other hand, the Commonwealth’s richest country, Brunei Darussalam, only manages a rank of 23rd. Other countries that do worse than their relative income ranking include the small Caribbean states of Antigua and Barbuda, and Saint Kitts and Nevis, but also countries as geographically diverse as Belize, Botswana and Malta.

Perhaps most worryingly, however, is how much gender disparity exists even amongst the top-ranked countries. Take New Zealand for example. Despite getting an ‘A’ for gender pay gap, women in New Zealand still earn only 72 per cent of the male average, and there are twice as many men in New Zealand’s Parliament as there are women; far from the ideal. It is clear from our research that there is considerable room for improvement all round when even our top two do not emerge with a complete set of ‘A’ grades.

METHODOLOGY

While the preceding eight Report Cards give us insights into eight aspects of gender equality that we think are important, we also think it is useful to assemble a composite measure of how well Commonwealth countries are promoting girls and women as agents of change. To do this we have had to make some considered assumptions. In the previous Report Cards, we have looked at how well each country (where data are available) is doing compared to the Commonwealth average on each indicator. In this final Report Card, we look at how each country is doing across all of the indicators we have data for. We treat each indicator as being of equal value and have created a very simple scoring system to generate the final average (e.g. A = 3, B= 2, and C= 1). This allows us to generate a final ranking taking into account as many of the eight indicators on which we have data. For example, a country with a score of 2.50 has performed above average on our indicators and is doing better than a country with a score of 1.50.

In this Report Card, we are primarily looking at the differences between males and females (with the exception of early pregnancy). However, in order to show how countries are faring in the ‘gender gap’ compared to developmental differences, we have also included the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita for each country (again adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity and denominated in US dollars for 2008). This should allow for visual reference on how well off citizens of each country are. It also allows us to compare how well a country is doing on our ranking to how relatively well off it is in economic terms. The final column in the table compares a country’s ranking in our Report Card with its ranking on income per capita. If the figure is positive, it means that the country is doing better on our gender criteria than in its income ranking amongst Commonwealth countries (e.g. Rwanda is much higher in our ranking than if it were ranked according to income per capita). If the figure is negative, the country is doing relatively worse in our rankings compared to its income ranking.

Final Report Card

Rank	Country	Life	under-weight	school	fertility	scholar-ship	politics	sport	pay	gender gap	GNI per cap. (PPP US\$ 2008)	GNI rank	GNI rank minus Gender Gap rank
1	New Zealand	B		A	A	B	A	A	A	2.71	25,438	6	5
2	Barbados	A			A	B	B	A	A	2.67	21,673	10	8
3	Trinidad and Tobago	A	A	B	A	A	A	A	C	2.63	24,233	8	5
4	Dominica	B		A		A	B	A		2.60	8,549	20	16
4	Seychelles	A		A		A	B	B		2.60	19,128	12	8
6	Australia	B		B	A	B	A	A	A	2.57	38,692	3	-3
6	Canada	B		B	A	A	B	A	A	2.57	38,668	4	-2
8	Singapore	B	A		A	B	B	A	B	2.43	48,893	2	-6
8	United Kingdom	B		B	A	B	B	A	A	2.43	35,087	5	-3
10	Rwanda	B	B	B	A		A	C	A	2.29	1,190	48	38
10	Saint Lucia	A		B	B	A	B	B	B	2.29	8,652	19	9
12	Jamaica	B	B	B	B	A	B	A	B	2.25	7,207	23	11
12	Malaysia	B	B	A	A	B	B	A	C	2.25	13,927	15	3
12	Namibia	A	B	A	B	B	B	B	B	2.25	6,323	24	12
12	Saint Kitts and Nevis	A		A			C	B		2.25	14,196	14	2
16	Cyprus	B		B	A		B	B	B	2.17	21,962	9	-7
17	Bahamas	A		B	B	B	B	C	A	2.14	25,201	7	-10
17	Mauritius	A		B	A	A	B	C	C	2.14	13,344	16	-1
17	Papua New Guinea	B	B		B	B	C	A	A	2.14	2,227	36	19
17	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	A		B	B	A	B	C	B	2.14	8,535	21	4
21	Mozambique	C	A	C	C	B	A	A	A	2.13	854	50	29
21	South Africa	B	A	B	B	B	A	B	C	2.13	9,812	18	-3
23	Belize	A	C	A	B	B	C	A	C	2.00	5,693	25	2
23	Brunei Darussalam	C		B	A			A	C	2.00	49,915	1	-22
23	Grenada	B		B	B		B	B		2.00	7,998	22	-1
23	Guyana	A	B	B	B	B	A	C	C	2.00	3,302	34	11
23	Lesotho	A	C	A	B	C	B	B	B	2.00	2,021	40	17
23	Malawi	B	B	B	C	C	B	A	A	2.00	911	49	26
23	Samoa	B		A	A		C	B	C	2.00	4,126	29	6
23	Uganda	B	B	B	C	C	A	B	A	2.00	1,224	47	24
31	Maldives	C	B	B	A	B	C	B	B	1.88	5,408	26	-5
31	Sri Lanka	A	C	A	A	B	C	C	C	1.88	4,886	28	-3
33	Malta	B		B	A	B	C	C	B	1.86	21,004	11	-22
33	Vanuatu	C	A	B	B		C	C	A	1.86	3,908	31	-2
33	Zambia	B	A		C	B	B	C	B	1.86	1,359	44	11
36	Botswana	C	B	B	B	C	C	B	A	1.75	13,204	17	-19
36	Cameroon	C	A	C	C	C	B	A	B	1.75	2,197	37	1
36	Ghana	B	B	C	B	C	C	B	A	1.75	1,385	43	7
36	Kiribati	B		A			C	C		1.75	3,715	32	-4
36	Swaziland	C	A	C	C	B	B	A	C	1.75	5,132	27	-9
41	India	B	C	C	B	B	C	A	C	1.63	3,337	33	-8
41	Kenya	C	A	C	C	C	C	B	A	1.63	1,628	41	0
41	Tanzania	C	B	C	C	C	A	C	A	1.63	1,344	46	5
44	Antigua and Barbuda	C		B		B	B	C		1.60	19,117	13	-31
45	Bangladesh	C	C	A	C	C	B	B	C	1.50	1,587	42	-3
45	Gambia	B	B	B	C	C	C	C	B	1.50	1,358	45	0
45	Pakistan	C	B	C	B	B	B	C	C	1.50	2,678	35	-10
45	Solomon Islands	B		C	B		C	C	B	1.50	2,172	38	-7
45	Tonga	C		B	A		C	C	C	1.50	4,038	30	-15
50	Nigeria	C	B	C	C	C	C	A	C	1.38	2,156	39	-11
50	Sierra Leone	B	B	C	C	C	B	C	C	1.38	809	51	1

Conclusion

"I have learned one thing: if you are educated, there are many choices in front of you. You do not have to follow, you can create your own road – then others will follow you."

Tehseen, 24, India⁵⁴

The indicators we have chosen take us from the cradle to the grave, or very nearly. Of course, we know that a complex interplay of factors circumscribe the opportunities available to girls and women (and boys and men) at every stage of their lives. These include the wealth of the country they are born into, the status of their family, the educational achievements of their parents, whether or not they are disabled, their physical appearance and sexual orientation. If a girl is born into a poor household with uneducated parents in a country which is itself poor and unstable, then the odds are clearly stacked against her and, as our Report Cards show, to a greater extent than for a boy born into the same context. Enabling these most marginalised of young

women to achieve their potential and to become active healthy citizens is the measure of a civilised and caring society.

Some countries have made remarkable progress in certain areas, but nowhere in the Commonwealth can we claim to have reached real equality between men and women, or boys and girls. Importantly, our results indicate that poverty is not always the impediment to progress. Discrimination against women is, according to our indicators, found throughout the Commonwealth, and the determination to end this should be held in common also.

We hope that, by publishing these findings, we can begin a meaningful debate around the Commonwealth's theme for 2011. Women can only be 'agents of change' when they are genuinely empowered, valued as equal citizens and equipped to play a full part in the nations and communities – the Commonwealth – of which they are members.



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