



Economic Premise

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Investing in Gender Equality: Looking Ahead

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The financial crisis of 2008-09 has highlighted the need for greater attention to gender, both to address the vulnerability of countries to global shocks and to reach growth and poverty reduction goals. Investments in girls and women need to be scaled up substantially in response to this and other recent crises and, looking ahead, to alleviate demographic stresses and harness demographic opportunities for growth. This is the case because the fate of women and girls, especially in low-income countries and low-income households, is closely linked to the economic prospects of these countries and these households.

The Business Case for Gender Equality

Greater gender equality in the family, the market, and society, can help reduce poverty and promote growth—directly by boosting women’s participation in the labor force, and indirectly through the beneficial effects of women’s empowerment on child development outcomes (figure 1). Investments in gender equality can therefore help minimize the long-term negative consequences of crises on human outcomes and improve prospects for development in a post-crises world.

Impact of Food, Fuel, and Financial Crises

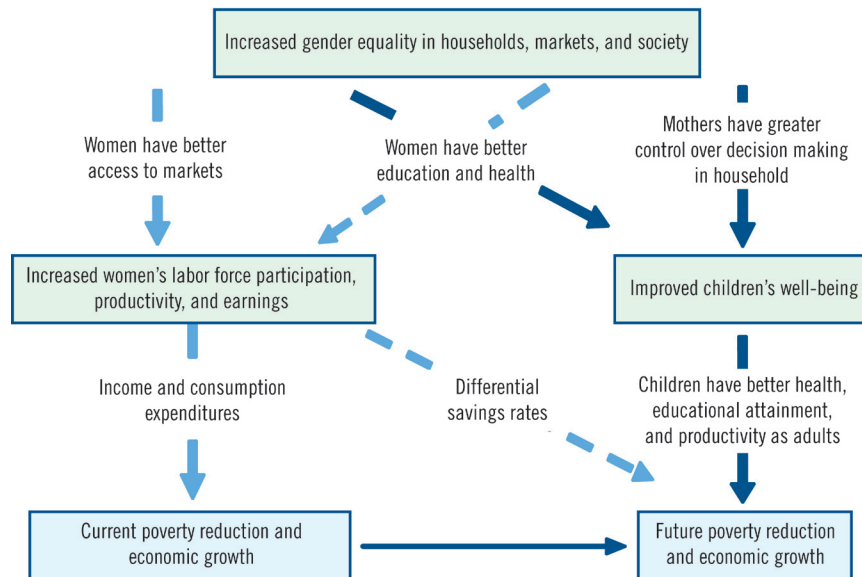
The impacts of the recent food, fuel, and financial crises have highlighted the vulnerability of developing countries to global shocks and the gender dimensions of these shocks, especially in relationship to the labor market, agricultural production, and human development outcomes.

In the *labor market*, where women’s participation is below that of men in virtually all developing countries and is concentrated in certain sectors, economywide shocks affect their labor force participation in specific ways. Evidence shows that during crises, particularly in vulnerable households where the main breadwinner has lost a job or faces reduced earnings, women will look for work to maintain household consumption

(Sabarwal, Sinha, and Buvinic 2009). At the same time, lower aggregate demand also affects the jobs and earnings of self-employed women in the informal sector. Similarly, female workers can be especially hurt by employment losses in export sectors directly affected by lagging global demand. Women often make up a large proportion of the workforce in export manufacturing (such as in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nicaragua, and the Philippines) and high-value agricultural exports (such as in Ecuador, Thailand, and Uganda).

The food and fuel crises and the opportunities brought about by the growing markets for tropical high-value produce have attracted renewed attention to *agriculture, food security and rural development*, and to the role of female farmers. In many low-income countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture is the most important sector as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) and employment, elevating the importance of broad-based growth in agricultural incomes for stimulating economic growth. In many of these countries, women have a large role in food production. Yet, women continue to have less access to land, fertilizers, seeds, credit, and extension services than men. Furthermore, women’s access to output markets and profitable cash crops and their control over household resources tend to be constrained, affecting productivity and efficiency in the agricultural sector (World Bank

Figure 1. Women's Earnings, Children's Well-being, and Aggregate Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth



Source: World Bank 2007.

2007). Providing women equitable access to economic opportunities and resources would make agriculture a more efficient vehicle for promoting shared economic growth, reducing poverty, and improving food security.

Crises also affect *human development outcomes*, especially the survival of infant girls. Friedman and Schady (2009) estimate that the growth slowdown in 2009 will result in 28,000 to 49,000 more deaths in sub-Saharan Africa, most of them infant girls. An analysis of 59 low-income countries estimates that a 1 percent drop in per capita GDP raises infant mortality by 0.27 deaths per 1,000 births for boys and 0.53 deaths per 1,000 births for girls—almost twice as high as for boys (Baird, Friedman, and Schady 2007). An analysis by Buvinic (2009) of the progress of countries toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) suggests that girls in poor households in countries with high child mortality or low female schooling are especially vulnerable to the effects of the global economic and food crises. The situation of young and infant girls is most precarious in countries, most in Africa, with high child mortality, low female schooling, and decelerating growth (figure 2).

Crisis-Response Priorities

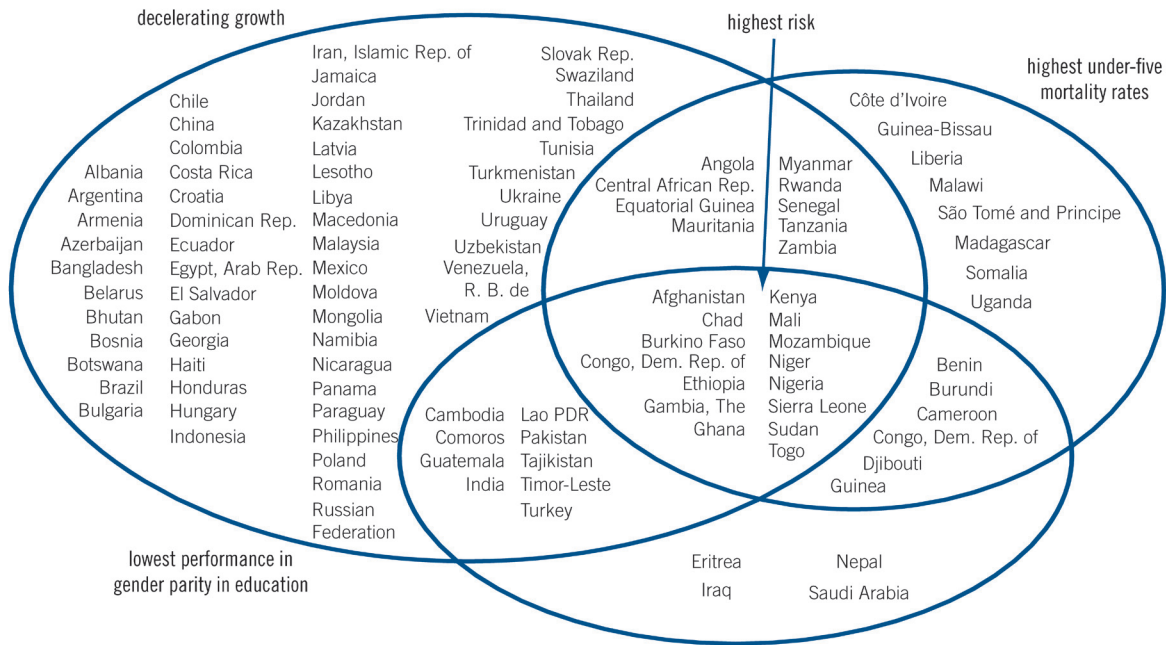
If left unaddressed, the gender-specific consequences of crises will contribute to current poverty and imperil future development. Table 1 includes summaries of promising policy responses that build on the role of women as economic agents and their preference for investing resources for the well-being of children. These policies can go a long way toward mitigating the negative effects of crises.

Harnessing Demographic Trends for Development in a Post-Crisis World

Over the longer term, demographic trends help countries prioritize gender mainstreaming in the sectors most likely to have the greatest impact on development effectiveness and poverty reduction. Demographic processes affect the share of the working-age population and the fiscal space (both in total fiscal resources and priorities) and therefore influence the prospects of countries for poverty reduction and economic growth. Demographic stresses caused by high fertility rates or high young adult mortality rates can be eased by investments in gender equality. And investments to expand women's ability to earn and control income can strengthen prospects for gains when demographic conditions improve (Buvinic, Das Gupta, and Casabonne 2009).

Trends in fertility and mortality rates are categorized in four demographic scenarios: *demographic explosion* (countries with high fertility and more than 40 percent of the population below age 20 and thus with high youth dependency ratios); *demographic transition* (countries where declining fertility has led to a high proportion of working-age adults relative to children and the elderly); *demographic implosion* (countries where the population is aging rapidly as a result of continuing low fertility and declining adult mortality); and *demographic hourglass* (countries where the prime working-age population has been reduced by premature adult mortality, either as a result of violent conflict or disease, such as HIV/AIDS). Table 2 lists countries by their demographic status

Figure 2. Impact of the Crises: Countries' Progress toward the Millennium Development Goals



Source: For growth, IMF (2009); for mortality rates and gender parity in education, World Bank (2009b).

Note: Countries with high infant mortality rates are those in the highest quartile of the distribution of under-5 mortality rates (per 1,000 live births) for 151 developing countries in 2007. Countries with low female schooling rates are those in the lowest quartile of the distribution of the ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary enrollment for 131 developing countries for the latest available data between 2004 and 2007.

Table 1. Priorities for Crisis-Response Activities

Impact area of crisis	Key issues	Priority investments
Labor markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women in the informal sector, particularly the self-employed, lose jobs or face a decline in earnings. • Men lose jobs or their earnings decline; women not previously in the labor force search for jobs to maintain household consumption. • Sectors that are large employers of women, such as export manufacturing, lay off workers or reduce salaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public works programs designed to reach women seeking jobs (offering appropriate work and facilities such as child care). • Cash transfer programs and other safety nets, maximizing the impact of cash transfer programs by channeling resources through mothers. • Access to credit and savings for women.
Human development outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families cut back on food consumed by mothers and children, likely increasing infant mortality. • Child labor increases. • Investments in children's (boys and girls) education decline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutritional supplementation and feeding programs for mothers and children. • Cash transfer programs and other safety nets, maximizing the impact of cash transfer programs by channeling resources through mothers.
Agricultural production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers, especially women farmers, face reduced access to inputs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fertilizer and seed distribution programs designed to ensure access for women farmers. • Better access to rural services, finance, training, and markets for women farmers.

Source: Authors' compilation.

Demographic Explosion Scenario

Out of the 134 countries for which there are complete data, 43 countries are in the demographic explosion stage, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa. The number of children and young people in these countries is at an all-time high: 450 million out of a

total population of 830 million are under age 20. The high adolescent fertility rate is a concern in these countries (figure 3, panel A). The rate declined only marginally during 1990–2006 (World Bank 2009a). Births to mothers aged 15–24 account for between 30 to 50 percent of all births in more than half of the countries in the explosion stage.

Table 2. Countries by Demographic Setting in 2010 and 2015

Region	Explosion 2010 Explosion 2015	Explosion 2010 Early transition 2015	Early transition 2010 Early transition 2015	Early transition 2010 Transition 2015	Transition 2010 Transition 2015	Transition 2010 Implosion 2015	Implosion 2010 Implosion 2015
Africa	Angola ^a	Congo	Botswana ^a	South Africa ^a	Mauritius		
	Benin	Eritrea	Burundia				
	Burkina Faso	São Tomé and	Cape Verde				
	Cameroon ^b	Principe	Comoros				
	Central African Republic ^b	Sudan	Djibouti				
	Chad	Swaziland	Gabon ^a				
	Côte d'Ivoire	Togo	Namibia ^a				
	Congo, Dem. Rep. of ^a	Zimbabwe ^b	Ghana				
	Ethiopia		Mauritania				
	Equatorial Guinea						
	Gambia, The						
	Guinea						
	Guinea-Bissau						
	Kenya						
	Lesotho ^b						
	Liberia ^a						
	Madagascar						
	Malawi ^b						
	Mali						
	Mozambique ^c						
	Niger						
	Nigeria						
	Rwanda ^a						
	Senegal						
Sierra Leone ^a							
Somalia							
Tanzania ^b							
Uganda ^b							
Zambia ^b							
East Asia and Pacific	Timor-Leste	Samoa	Cambodia	Fiji	China		
	Tonga		Lao PDR		Indonesia		
			Micronesia		Korea, Rep. of		
			Papua New Guinea		Malaysia		
			Philippines		Mongolia		
			Solomon Islands		Myanmar		
			Vanuatu		Thailand		
					Vietnam		
Europe and Central Asia			Tajikistan	Uzbekistan	Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bulgaria
					Armenia		Croatia
					Azerbaijan	Georgia	Romania
					Belarus	Poland	Ukraine
					Kazakhstan	Russian Federation	
					Kyrgyzstan	Serbia, Republic of	
					Macedonia		
					Moldova		
					Montenegro		
					Turkey		
				Turkmenistan			

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Table 2. Countries by Demographic Setting in 2010 and 2015 (continued)

Region	Explosion 2010 Explosion 2015	Explosion 2010 Early transition 2015	Early transition 2010 Early transition 2015	Early transition 2010 Transition 2015	Transition 2010 Transition 2015	Transition 2010 Implosion 2015	Implosion 2010 Implosion 2015
Latin America and Caribbean	Guatemala ^b		Belize Bolivia Haiti Honduras Nicaragua Paraguay	Dominican Republic Ecuador El Salvador	Argentina Brazil Chile Colombia Costa Rica Grenada Guyana Jamaica Mexico Panama Peru Saint Lucia Saint Vincent Suriname Trinidad and Tobago Uruguay Venezuela, R. B. de		
Middle East and North Africa	Yemen, Rep. of	Iraq ^b	Egypt, Arab Rep. of Jordan Syrian Arab Rep.		Algeria Iran Lebanon Libya Morocco Tunisia		
South Asia	Afghanistan ^a		Nepal ^a Pakistan	Bangladesh Bhutan India	Maldives Sri Lanka		

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from the United Nations Population.

Notes: Explosion: over 40 percent of population under the age of 20; early transition: over 40 percent under age 20, but with 45 percent or more aged 20–59; transition: over 50 percent aged 20–59; implosion: more than 20 percent over age 60.

a. Countries affected by high HIV/AIDS prevalence.

b. Countries affected by violent conflict.

c. Countries affected by both high HIV/AIDS prevalence and violent conflict.

Teenage mothers are more likely than older women to die of pregnancy-related complications, which are a major cause of death in high-fertility settings (Conde-Agudelo, Belizan, and Lammers 2005; WHO 2004). Pregnant women in demographic explosion countries face much higher maternal mortality risks than do their counterparts in other countries (see figure 3, panel B). An important reason is low access to prenatal care and to skilled health care providers during childbirth (figure 3, panel D). New estimates show that many countries have made significant headway in reducing maternal mortality in recent decades, indicating that the problem is not insurmountable. Nevertheless, the gap between rich and poor countries remains alarmingly high; for example, for every 100,000 live births in West Africa, 629 mothers die, compared to 7 mothers in Western Europe (Hogan and others 2010).

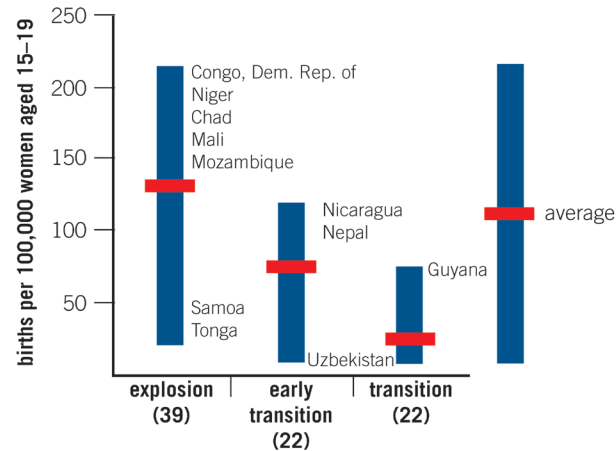
Low access to skilled health care providers, whether in the form of skilled attendance at birth or access to prenatal care ser-

vices, is an important reason underlying the high maternal mortality and the high risks associated with teenage pregnancy (figure 3, panel C). Young women are therefore an important group to reach with maternal health and family planning services and information.

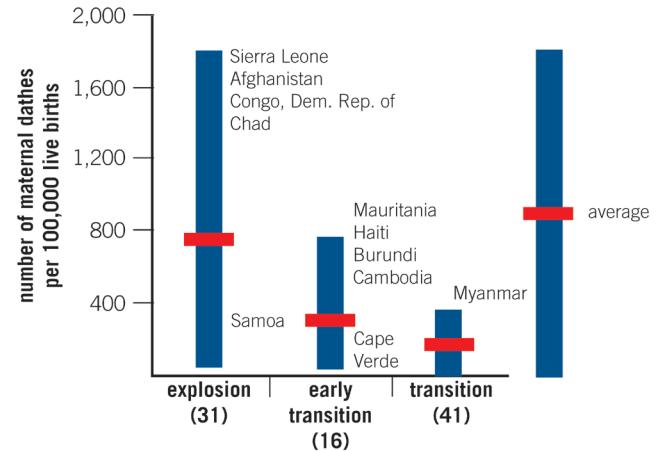
The large number of young people under age 20 presents a major challenge as countries struggle to provide education and employment opportunities during the current economic crisis. Reflecting the push for universal primary education, girls' enrollment rates in demographic explosion countries rose substantially, reducing the gap between girls' and boys' primary and secondary school enrollment by 10 percentage points during 1991–2006. Yet a large gap remains and primary school completion rates are lower for girls (50 percent) than for boys (63 percent; figure 4). Secondary school enrollment also remains very low in sub-Saharan Africa (24 percent of girls and 33 percent of boys).

Figure 3. Gender Gaps in Development Outcomes Vary by Countries' Demographic Stage

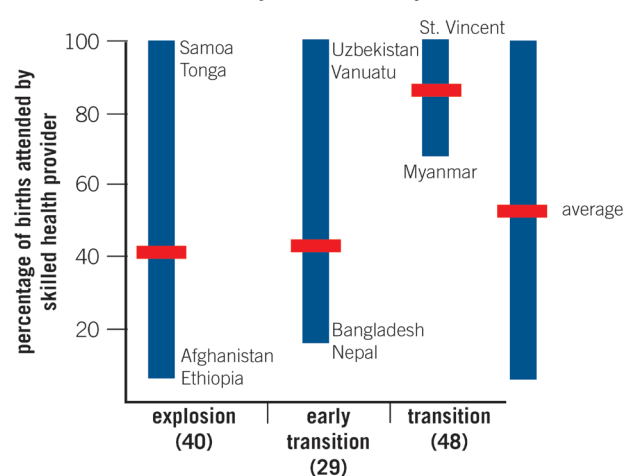
Panel A: Adolescent fertility rate, 2003–8



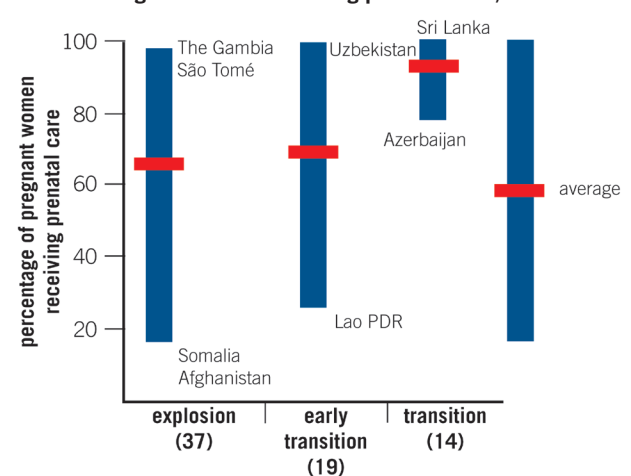
Panel B: Maternal mortality rate, 2003–8



Panel C: Births attended by skilled health provider, 2003–8



Panel D: Pregnant women receiving prenatal care, 2003–8



Source: World Bank 2008.

Note: Population-weighted averages, number of countries in parentheses.

By 2015, nine explosion countries will face improved demographic conditions and enter the demographic transition stage characterized by a youth bulge and greater opportunities for growth and poverty reduction. But at the same time, spikes in premature adult mortality caused by violent conflict or HIV/AIDS will exacerbate demographic stresses in nearly a third of the countries in demographic explosion.

Demographic Hourglass Scenario

Twenty-four countries in demographic transition and early transition face high levels of adult mortality, often predominantly of one gender, as a result of armed conflict or disease, such as HIV/AIDS. With economies depleted of working-age adults, these are the most demographically stressed countries.

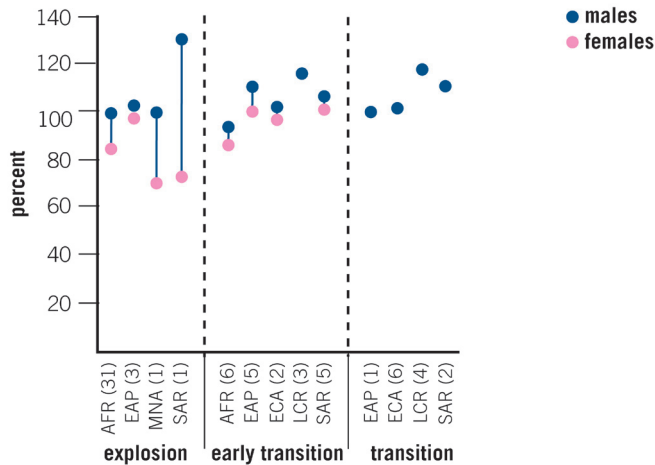
Nine low-income countries have an HIV/AIDS prevalence rate among adults of greater than 5 percent. By 2020, some of the most affected countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland,

and Zimbabwe) will have lost an estimated 35 percent or more of their working-age populations (ILO 2006). Moreover, many more women than men are affected, and at a younger age. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS estimates that three-quarters of Africans aged 15–24 who are HIV positive are women (UNAIDS 2008). On the other hand, wars tend to affect men, especially young men, more than women. Either way, populations are truncated. Conflict and high HIV/AIDS prevalence have a large negative impact on GDP growth through loss of labor productivity, because of illness and death, and increased health care expenditures that deplete savings and reduce capital accumulation and expenditures on education (Corrigan, Glomm, and Mendez 2005).

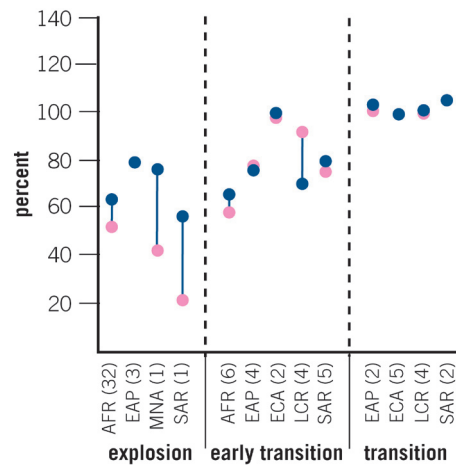
In post-conflict countries, additional challenges include reducing high levels of violence against women and demobilizing and rehabilitating ex-combatants. Rape and sexual abuse of women and girls have been pervasive in recent conflicts, either

Figure 4. Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary School Enrollment and Completion Rates for Girls and Boys, 2003–8

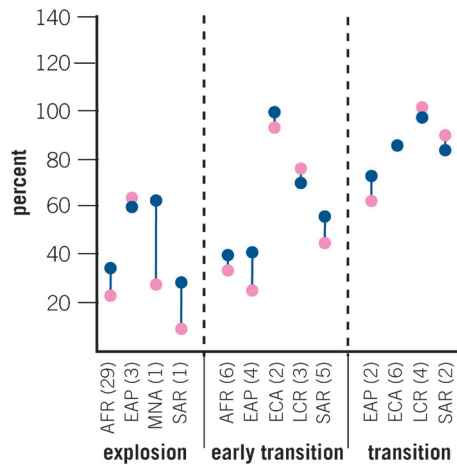
Panel A: Gross primary enrollment



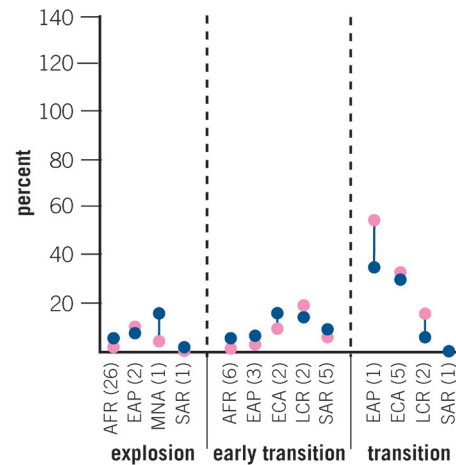
Panel B: Primary completion rates



Panel C: Gross secondary enrollment



Panel D: Gross tertiary enrollment



Source: World Bank 2008.

Note: Population-weighted averages; numbers of countries are in parentheses. AFR = Africa Region; EAP = East Asia and Pacific Region; ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LCR = Latin American and Caribbean Region; MNA = Middle East and North Africa Region; SAR = South Africa Region.

as a deliberate tactic of war or a crime of opportunity. Victim treatment programs are needed, but so are violence prevention initiatives including, in particular, promising situational prevention efforts that seek to reduce the opportunities for violence against women. An estimated 300,000 children under age 18 are fighting in wars or have recently been demobilized (World Bank 2006). Initiatives to reintegrate ex-combatants into society include a range of second-chance programs, including medical and psychosocial support.

Demographic Transition Scenario

Eighty-seven countries—65 percent of the countries for which there are complete data—are currently in the early or middle phases of a demographic transition, with large working-age populations relative to children and the elderly. By 2015, five countries will have moved into the implosion stage.

Although fertility rates are lower in countries experiencing a demographic transition, poor maternal health remains a concern. Among countries that have just entered this phase (early transition), use of maternal health services (skilled attendance at birth and prenatal care) remains low (see figure 3, panels C and D). Moreover, in some demographic transition countries, such as Bangladesh, India, and Nicaragua, births to young women still make up a large share of all births. Thus, a focus on the reproductive health of young women and adolescents remains a priority for this group of countries as well.

The window of opportunity for the high growth and poverty reduction—the demographic dividend—provided by a large and young workforce has opened for 37 low-income countries. But if this opportunity is to result in accelerated growth, governments need to invest in these new and future workers and

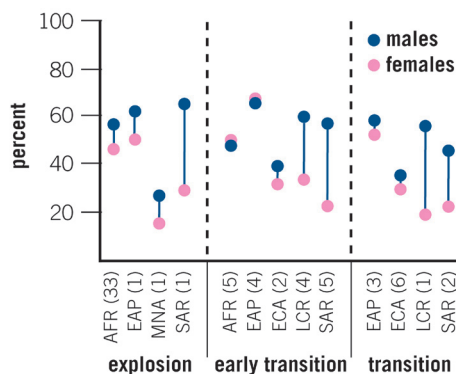
facilitate their participation in the labor force by increasing employment opportunities.

Gender inequality in schooling and employment can limit the potential for economic growth by reducing labor productivity. Currently, the biggest challenge for countries in demographic transition is to raise secondary enrollment and completion rates for both boys and girls, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia, where secondary enrollment rates are at 30–40 percent in countries in the early stage of transition. Tertiary enrollment is also extremely low in low-income countries, at less than 20 percent for countries in early transition.

The ratio of employment to population in demographic transition countries in South Asia is 24.4 percent for young women aged 15–24, which is less than half the ratio for young men (58.4 percent; figure 5). Facilitating the entry of young women into the labor force and increasing their employment opportunities are crucial steps for early transition countries to reap the full benefit of their investments in girls' education and to take advantage of the acceleration in growth offered by the demographic dividend. Investing in adolescent reproductive health to reduce early childbearing is another way to increase the number of women transitioning from school to work.

With fewer children than before, women are better placed to enter the labor market. However, with the exception of sub-Saharan African and East Asian countries, women's labor force participation in demographic transition countries is far below that of men (figure 6). This low participation rate emphasizes the need for designing labor market and other policies to encourage entrepreneurship (including expanding access to technology and finance) to help women invest in productive skills and allocate their time to self-employment and wage labor.

Figure 5. Ratios of Employment to Population by Gender for Ages 15–24



Source: World Bank 2008.
 Note: Population-weighted averages; numbers in parentheses are number of countries in each region. AFR = Africa Region; EAP = East Asia and Pacific Region; ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LCR = Latin American and Caribbean Region; MNA = Middle East and North Africa Region; SAR = South Africa Region.

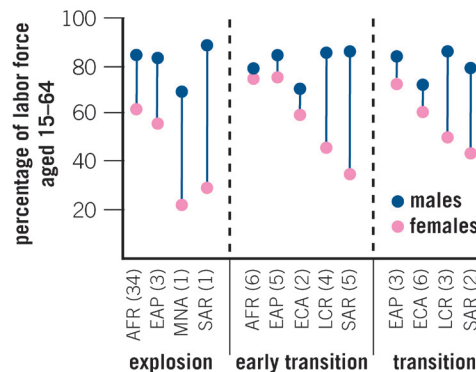
Because expansion of the formal sector to levels that can absorb a large share of women (and men) into the workforce in low-income countries is still far in the future, interventions need to target improving women's productivity in agriculture and in the informal sector, in both rural and urban areas.

Demographic Implosion Scenario

Currently, only four countries (all middle income) face the demographic implosion scenario. By 2015, another five countries, including two low-income countries, will also find themselves in this scenario. Looking even further ahead, population aging will become a major phenomenon and accelerate during the next 25 years.

Women comprise by far the greater number and proportion of older populations in these countries, especially in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The average life expectancy for women in Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Serbia, and Ukraine combined is 75 years, compared to 65 for men. The central issue of the aging population is increased poverty and vulnerability. These problems are more acute for women, not only because they tend to live longer than men, but because women tend to be disadvantaged in the patriarchal societies in which they live. The consequences of gender roles (men as "breadwinners," women as "housekeepers") become distinctly apparent in aging populations. In situations where pension schemes accrue mainly to employees, women who have not worked in the formal sector for most of their adult lives become even more heavily reliant on their husbands' status and pensions. Older women who are single, widowed, or divorced are especially vulnerable, receiving few or none of the entitlements received by men. There is also a future cohort of older men that may become vulnerable: in the few societies where the "culling" of infant girls will

Figure 6. Labor Force Participation Rate by Region and Demographic Stage, 2003–8



Source: World Bank 2008.
 Note: Population-weighted averages; numbers in parentheses are number of countries in each region.

result in sharp sex-ratio imbalances, and older, single men will be left to fend for themselves without the old-age protection traditionally afforded by the family (Ebenstein and Sharygin 2009).

Countries with rapidly aging populations face the challenge of designing affordable old-age support policies with expanded coverage to include these future cohorts. Gender-informed design and targeting should increase these policies' reach and affordability.

Conclusions: Post-Crisis Priorities

In the short run, investments in gender equality should focus on minimizing the negative impacts of the recent crises on development. In the long run, however, countries will need to step up investments that respond to their specific circumstances and address demographic stresses and opportunities. Table 3 defines priority investments in gender equality for the four different demographic scenarios. These are either proven to be effective (such as schooling and family planning) or are

showing promising early results (such as situational violence prevention).

While there are gender inequalities in all countries, they take different forms depending on the country's stage of demographic transition and help to define priority policy responses. Low-income, high-fertility, and hourglass countries in particular need to intensify gender integration in the social sectors to address "first generation" gender equality issues reflected in persisting gender gaps in basic human development outcomes. A priority area for intervention (which has suffered a decline in development assistance in recent years) is expanding access to quality reproductive health services, including services for adolescents. Late-transition and implosion countries, on the other hand, need to focus on "second generation" issues, such as old-age security, to design affordable old-age support policies with expanded coverage, especially for vulnerable widowed women and, in the few countries with large sex-ratio imbalances, aging protection for vulnerable single, older men with no family support.

Table 3. Long-Term Investment Priorities for Gender Equality

Scenarios	Key issues	Priority investments
Demographic explosion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower per capita resources for investment in human capital and growth. • Poorer health for women and children, and low lifetime earnings for women, greater household vulnerability to poverty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family planning programs to increase birth intervals, reduce teen pregnancies, and prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. • Basic reproductive health services, particularly those addressing the reproductive health needs of adolescents and young women and men. • Investments in schooling that increase education quality for all and reduce gender gaps in school enrollment and completion (both supply and demand considerations, such as conditional cash transfers). • Productivity-enhancing and income-earning policies, including those targeting women farmers.
Demographic transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for rapid economic growth. • Additional efforts needed to realize women's contribution to growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies that increase labor demand and create economic opportunities for women (active labor market programs such as skills training, labor-intermediation programs, trade policies, and facilitation of entrepreneurship and self-employment). • Basic reproductive health services, particularly those addressing the reproductive health needs of adolescents and young women and men. • Child care.
Countries moving toward implosion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strained public and private resources for support. • Added resource strains as a result of women living longer and having fewer economic resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety net and pension options for vulnerable elders, typically older women (but also older men, especially in countries with skewed gender ratios).
Hourglass (due to HIV/AIDS and conflict)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower potential for economic growth, households more vulnerable to poverty. • If men missing (due to war), female-headed households more vulnerable to poverty. If women missing (due to HIV/AIDS or abandonment or murder of infant girls), unmarried men deprived of familial support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family planning programs to reduce teen pregnancies and prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. • Investment in schooling, including accelerated learning programs and programs targeted to improve the school-to-work transition and skill deficits of poor young women. • Better access to entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities for women. • Antiretroviral therapy. • Interventions to reduce violence against women in post-conflict environments (including situational prevention) and demobilize and rehabilitate ex-combatants.

Source: Authors' compilation.

Empowering women economically emerges as a priority for all countries regardless of demographic scenario. Economic empowerment is a proven way to manage crises and respond to demographic stresses. The specific nature of the interventions will vary in response to the different development needs of countries. For example, in low-income countries, providing women with access to basic agricultural inputs and microfinance will continue to be fundamental to their economic empowerment, while in transition and late-transition countries, women's economic opportunities are linked to an increased focus on transferable skills for the modern labor market, access to commercial credit, the formalization of female entrepreneurship, and viable child care options.

In all sectors, but especially in the area of women's economic opportunities, there is a continued need to know what works best, and under which circumstances. At the same time, evidence-based experience and good practices are emerging in a range of countries. South–south dialogue should be intensified so that new and innovative responses to a changing world can be shared, and so that issues related to gender equality and development can become more broadly understood.

Note

1. The authors are grateful for the contribution of Ursula Casabonne to the analysis of demographic trends.

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