Numbers & Needed Nuance

A Critical Analysis of the Gender Equity Index (GEI)

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The Gender Equity Index (GEI) measures the gap between women and men in education, the economy and political empowerment. Social Watch computes a value for the gender gap in each of the three areas in a scale from 0 (when for example no women is educated at all and all men are) to 100 (perfect equality). The GEI, in turn, is the simple average of the three dimensions. In Education, GEI looks at the gender gap in enrolment at all levels and in literacy; economic participation computes the gaps in income and employment and empowerment measures the gaps in highly qualified jobs, parliament and senior executive positions.
ABOUT US

“Social Watch is an international network of citizens’ organizations in the struggle to eradicate poverty and the causes of poverty, to end all forms of discrimination and racism, to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth and the realization of human rights. We are committed to peace, social, economic, environment and gender justice, and we emphasize the right of all people not to be poor.

Social Watch holds governments, the UN system and international organizations accountable for the fulfilment of national, regional and international commitments to eradicate poverty.

Social Watch will achieve its objectives through a comprehensive strategy of advocacy, awareness-building, monitoring, organizational development and networking. Social Watch promotes people-centred sustainable development.”
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Measuring Inequity: The 2012 Gender Equity Index

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**Education**

- Primary School Enrollment
- Secondary School Enrollment
- Tertiary Education Enrollment
- Adult Literacy Rate

**Economic Participation**

- Labor Force Gap
- Non-vulnerable employment
- Estimated income gap

**Women Empowerment**

- Seats in parliament
- Legislators, senior officials, and managers
- Professional and technical workers
- Women in ministerial positions
Social/gender Index lines of debate

- Modeling/statistics
- Qualitative
- Critical
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“Each of the indicators ... arguably suffers from urban, elite bias. For example, the economic component ... does not include agricultural or informal work (in which most women around the world labour) ... nor does it measure the unpaid labour of care work. Therefore, work-related aspects of empowerment are not measured for a broad part of the female population” (Gaye et al., 2010, p. 5).
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“South Africa, the country with the highest reported rate of rape anywhere in the world, ranked 16th of 135 countries on its 2012 measure (GGG). … At best, this produces cognitive dissonance, at worst it (re)inscribes the notion that addressing violence against women is not key to redressing gendered inequities and provides the South African government with ‘evidence’ of its gender equality success” (Liebowitz & Zwingel, 2014, p. 373).
Social/gender Index lines of debate

- Modeling/statistics
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“[M]any critical issues related to women’s empowerment ... escape quantification in the conventional sense” (Wieringa & Charmes, 2003, p. 434).

“[A] problematic characteristic of the measurement approach is that it relies on selected—easily quantifiable—information that promotes simplified visions of concepts being measured” (Liebowitz & Zwingel, 2014, p. 365).
Social/gender Index lines of debate

- Modeling/statistics
- Qualitative
- Critical
“[T]he selection of indicators is a ... value-laden process. It is not only a methodological procedure, but a political one too” (Giannone, 2014, p. 512).

“[G]overnance indicators establish a discursive field of state legitimacy and normalcy ... As a result, the responsibility of powerful states and international actors for a host of ... problems in many Third World countries is obscured” (Löwenheim, 2008, p. 255).
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- Methodology
- Social Watch and the GEI
- Literature review - social & gender indices, GEI
- Analysis - strengths
- Analysis - weaknesses
- Recommendations
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Recommendations for the GEI

1) updating the GEI and keeping it updated;
2) more methodological transparency;
3) provision of alternate models (dimensions, indicators, weightings) and rankings;
4) synthesizing GEI measurements with qualitative content and analytic aids.
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