

## Introduction

Women and gender equality are critical to global efforts to achieve sustainable development and poverty reduction. Educating and empowering women economically has an impact on the health and wealth of households, and increasing their participation in the labour market could help to drive economic growth around the world. In addition to fulfilling women's human rights, there is also an economic case for promoting gender equality.

Typically, the position of women in society tends to be defined in terms of *outcomes* – how many women are in education, for instance, or in parliament. But we should also look at women's standing from the perspective of *what's driving these outcomes*: What are important social institutions – in other words, long-lasting codes of conduct, norms, traditions, and informal and formal laws – that determine gender outcomes in education, health, political representation and labour markets. This is the idea at the heart of *The Atlas of Gender and Development*, which provides detailed information on the deep determinants of gender equality in 124 developing and transition countries.

This *Atlas* is based on a composite measure of gender equality, the Social Institutions and Development Index (SIGI), jointly developed by the University of Göttingen and the OECD Development Centre. SIGI was launched on International Women's Day in 2009 and covers 124 non-OECD countries.\* The SIGI provides an innovative way of measuring key social institutions related to gender discrimination in all spheres of life. It uses variables from the OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-Data Base) to measure gender inequality in five areas (Morrison and Jutting, 2005; Jutting et al., 2008):

- **Family code** measures the factors which influence the decision-making power of women in the household with respect to early marriage, polygamy, parental authority, and inheritance.
- **Physical integrity** comprises different indicators on violence against women and the existence of female genital mutilation.
- **Son preference** reflects the economic valuation of women, based on the variable “missing women”, which measures gender bias in mortality due to sex-selective abortions or insufficient care given to baby girls.
- **Civil liberties** measures women's freedom of social participation through freedom of movement and freedom of dress.
- **Ownership rights** cover women's rights and *de facto* access to several types of property. It includes three variables: women's access to land, to property and to credit.

\* The *Atlas* does not cover OECD countries because the selected variables in the SIGI are in general more relevant for non-OECD countries. This does not mean that social institutions are not of relevance in OECD countries – in fact the current SIGI variables are indeed of relevance in a few OECD countries – but research has not yet come up with measurable and relevant variables that would allow a fair assessment of OECD countries. A simple inclusion based on current variables would lead to a very positive scoring of most countries, sending a wrong signal. Additional research will be required to develop appropriate measures.

## How to use this Atlas

Following the introduction, the *Atlas* presents a short set of analytical notes showing how the factors captured by the SIGI shape development outcomes and presenting the methodology behind the SIGI.

The bulk of the *Atlas* features detailed notes on 124 developing and transition countries, broken down into six regions: East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Due to lack of available data, only 102 of those countries are ranked by the SIGI.

Each regional section is preceded by an overview highlighting issues of particular regional concern, such as son preference or ownership rights. While documenting specific regional problems is useful for prioritizing policy interventions, it is important to understand that there is a great deal of heterogeneity within regions that may be obscured by quick generalizations. The overviews present a short assessment of the general regional situation, key features of positive development, important challenges and an example of one particularly pressing issue.

In the country notes, more specific information is presented, including the country's SIGI score (where available), detailed information about social institutions of concern, as well as select indicators of gender inequality and other general demographic information. All the data presented in the country notes are the latest available values drawn from the OECD Gender Institutions and Development Database (OECD-GID), which is freely accessible online.

## On the Internet

The complete SIGI ranking itself, as well as the data underlying its various sub-indices, are available in their entirety on the Internet. The values of the social institution variables for all countries included in the *Atlas* can be found online at the following two sites:

- Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) website: [www.genderindex.org](http://www.genderindex.org).
- OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB): [www.oecd.org/dev/gender/gid](http://www.oecd.org/dev/gender/gid).

Additionally, a wide range of OECD Development Centre resources connected to issues of gender equality and development are also available online:

- Gender and development issues at the Development Centre: [www.oecd.org/dev/gender](http://www.oecd.org/dev/gender).
- Wikigender, a project initiated by the Development Centre to facilitate the exchange and improve the knowledge on gender-related issues around the world: [www.wikigender.org](http://www.wikigender.org).