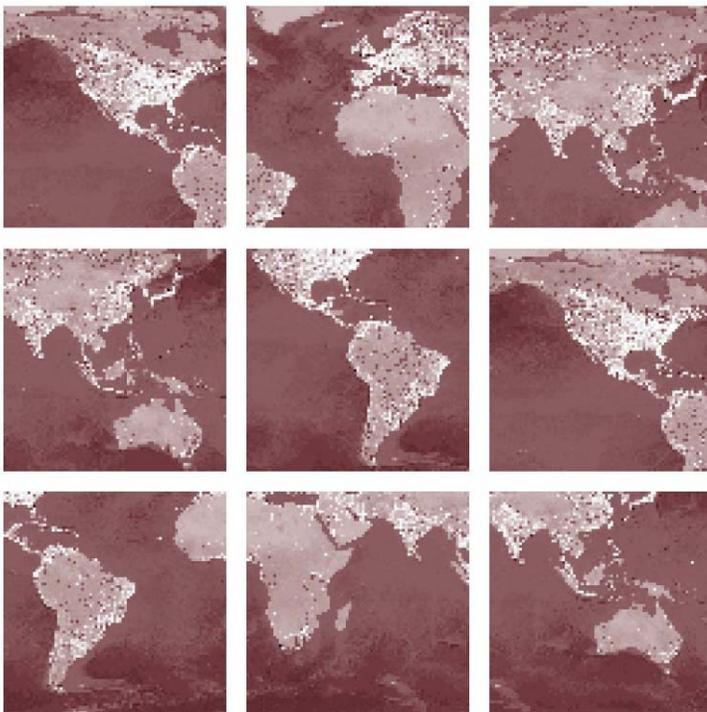


## CHAPTER TEN

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### WOMEN HOLD UP HALF THE SKY

May 2007





## WOMEN HOLD UP HALF THE SKY

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**We profile the status of women across the BRICs, where Indian women generally fare worst and Russian women best on a range of educational, health, labour and political indicators. We see scope for upside potential to our BRICs growth projections if innovative and sustained investments in health and education can be made.**

In developed and developing countries alike, the Chinese aphorism that ‘women hold up half the sky’ has long been more aspiration than fact. This is particularly true in terms of women’s access to education and healthcare, and their participation in the labour force and in political institutions. Thanks to global economic growth and evolving views of women’s roles over the past half-century, however, this has changed, and reality has moved closer to aspiration.

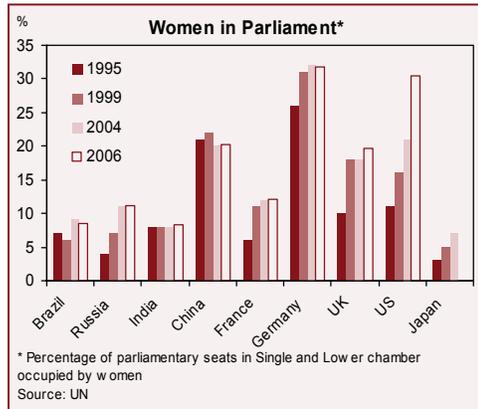
It is difficult—if not impossible—to generalise about the role and status of women in the BRICs, given the diversity of the countries and the many measures of women’s status and experiences. However, it seems clear that sustained investments in women’s health and education could be a source of upside potential to our long-term BRICs growth projections, which rest heavily on productivity gains and which assume unchanged levels of labour-force participation.

- This potential is clearest in **India**, which posts the worst relative performance on nearly every measure we evaluate. Indian women have the lowest labour-force participation rate, the lowest share of parliamentarians, the lowest life expectancy, the lowest literacy rate, the lowest level of enrolment in tertiary education, and the highest maternal mortality rate. Addressing these problems will require significant investment and innovative policies. If India can achieve this, we could see considerable upside to our current BRICs projections.
- At the other end of the scale is **Russia**, where women generally fare well in comparison not only to the other BRICs but also to the G6. Labour-force participation is in line with high-income countries, literacy is at virtually 100%, and women are strongly represented in tertiary education. The prevalence of HIV in Russia is the highest among the BRICs, but the share of women affected is the lowest. Parliamentary representation is low by G6 standards but still better than in India or Brazil. Overall, the scope for upside surprise arising from an improvement in women’s conditions is limited, although Russian women are significant contributors today.
- **Chinese** women largely score well against their BRICs peers, outstripping them in political representation and labour-force participation, but lagging in tertiary education. In health and literacy, Chinese women fare slightly worse than those in Brazil and Russia but better than those in India. Here too, investments in health and education could pay significant benefits.
- **Brazil** shows a mix of strengths and weaknesses, pointing to solid upside potential. Female literacy is high, as is access to tertiary education (where women are better represented than in the Eurozone). But maternal mortality is high, and among the BRICs, Brazil has the highest share of women affected by HIV and the highest obesity rate. Political participation is little better than in India.

**Sandra Lawson, David Heacock and Anna Stupnytska**

**May 16, 2007**

## Women Hold Up Half the Sky



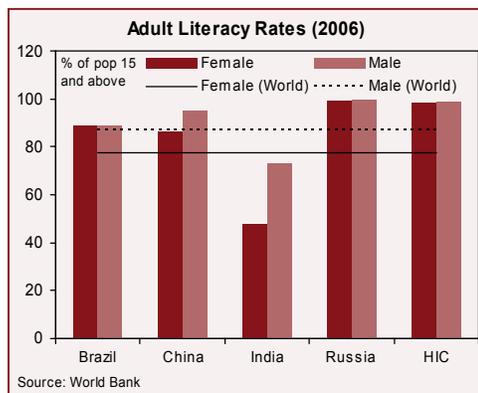
### Despite Gains, Women Remain Under-Represented

- Women's participation in formal political institutions has traditionally trailed men's around the world. This holds true for the BRICs. Over the past decade, the share of women in national parliaments has risen significantly in the G6, particularly in the US, but the improvement in the BRICs has been less dramatic.
- China scores best among the BRICs, with 20% of parliamentary seats held by women, nearly twice as many as in Russia. In India, despite the historical experience of a female prime minister, women today hold just 8% of parliamentary seats.



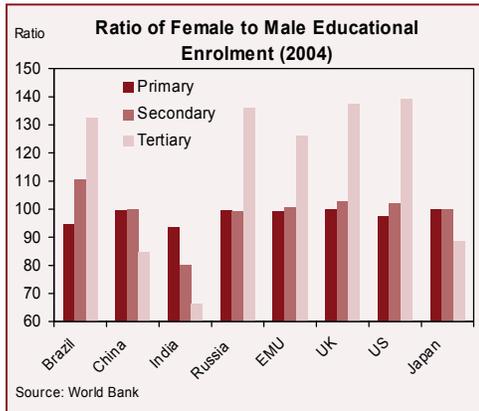
### China Has Highest Female Employment Rate

- Increasing women's participation in the labour force is recognised as a critical factor in stimulating growth and in addressing the problems of gender inequality, ageing populations and pension sustainability.
- The gap between male and female participation rates is smallest in Russia; in fact the gap is actually smaller than in any of the G6. China has the highest female participation rate among the BRICs—more than twice as high as India's. China's share has edged down by 2ppt since 2000, while female participation has improved in Brazil and Russia but stagnated at an extremely low level—just 36%—in India.



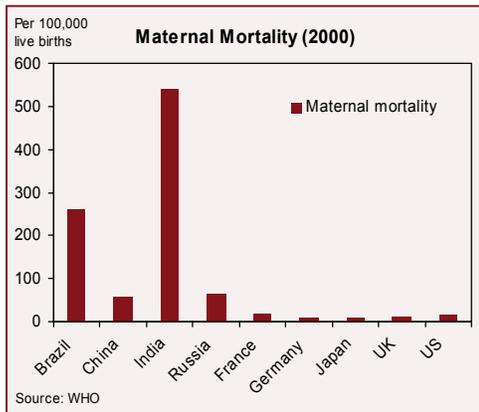
### India Fares Worst in Female Literacy ...

- BRICs score well in literacy, a fundamental building block of learning. In three countries, female literacy rates match (China) or exceed (Brazil and Russia) the global average for men. This is true even though the gap between men and women in China is relatively high (9ppt). Russia is the standout, with literacy rates for both men and women at nearly 100%, a touch higher than in the high-income countries.
- The exception is India. Male literacy, at 73%, trails the world average, but the rate for women is far worse—below 50%. However, both men and women have posted an improvement of around 12ppt since 1990.



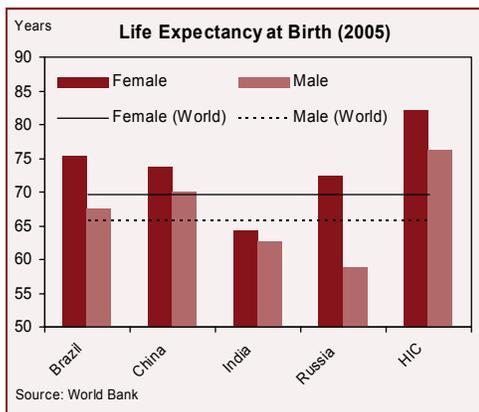
**... and Has Largest Scope for Gains in Women's Education**

- In developed countries, the level of men and women in both primary and secondary education is roughly at parity, while the number of women enrolled in tertiary schools greatly outnumbers men (with Japan the vivid exception).
- Among the BRICs, India is the clear laggard at every level of education. There are roughly nine women in primary school for every 10 men, eight in secondary school and seven in tertiary—compared with 13 in Brazil and 14 in Russia. China also lags the G6, even Japan, in tertiary education.



**India Faces Acute Problems of Mortality**

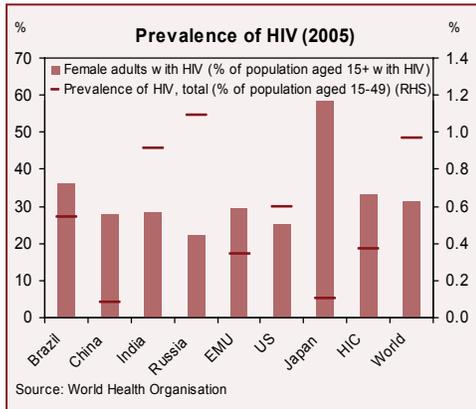
- Maternal and neonatal mortality remain among the most persistent health problems in the developing world. The UN's Millennium Development Goals call for maternal mortality to fall by 75% and for mortality for children under five to fall by two-thirds, both by 2015.
- These issues also pose a development challenge for the BRICs. India's per capita rates of maternal and neonatal deaths are remarkably high for a country without a recent history of war or ethnic strife, with 540 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. Brazil also scores poorly, with more than four times as many maternal deaths as China.



**Women Live Longer, Still With Room to Improve**

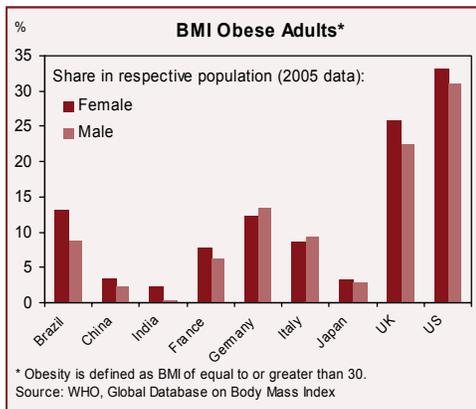
- As life expectancy increases, countries face a new set of challenges, including higher healthcare and retirement expenditures. These issues will be particularly important in the BRICs, where female life expectancy remains significantly higher than that for men.
- Russian women have fared better than men in the aftermath of the breakup of the Soviet Union: on average they now live 13 years longer than men. Life expectancies in India are below the world average for both women and men; for Indian women, life expectancy (64 years) is below even the global average for men.

## Women Hold Up Half the Sky



### Brazil Has Highest Share of HIV-Infected Women

- The WHO calculates that more than 40mn people worldwide live with HIV/AIDS, of whom nearly 8mn are in the BRICs. Without adequate prevention efforts, an additional 45mn people may become infected with HIV in low- and middle-income countries over the course of this decade.
- Among the BRICs, HIV prevalence is highest in Russia, though only 25% of the cases are among women. HIV hits women harder in the other BRICs, particularly in Brazil; women in China and India fare slightly better than the world average. Remarkably, nearly 60% of HIV cases in Japan are among women.



### Obesity Is More Prevalent Among Women

- Weight problems represent a rapidly growing threat to the health of populations in developing countries. According to the WHO, two-thirds of overweight and obese people now live in developing countries; by the end of the decade, there will be more obese people in the developing world than in the advanced economies.
- In Brazil and China, more men than women tend to be overweight (though the difference is much smaller than in the G6). But there are more obese women than obese men in most countries. In India, both statistics are still relatively low, as undernutrition remains a problem.