

## **Country Rankings of Women's Status: An Alternative Index**

YASMEEN MOHIUDDIN

The purpose of the present paper is to formulate a composite index of the status of women and to rank both developed and developing countries on the basis of that index. This index is presented as an alternative or complement to the current status of women index, published by the Population Crisis Committee (PCC) and used by the World Bank and the United Nations, which focuses on indicators measuring health, education, employment, marriage and childbearing, and social equality. The paper argues that these indicators have a poverty-bias and measure women's status in terms of structural change rather than in terms of their welfare *vis-à-vis* men. The PCC index is also based on the implicit assumption that women's status in developing countries ought to be defined in a similar way as in developed countries, thus including primarily only those indicators which are more relevant for developed countries. To remedy these defects, the paper presents an alternative composite index, hereafter labelled the Alternative Composite (AC) index, based on many more indicators reflecting women's issues in both developed and developing countries. The results of the statistical analysis show that the ranking of countries based on the AC index is significantly different from the PCC index.

The paper is organised into four sections. Section 2 critically evaluates the PCC index of the status of women. Section 3 explains how the new status of women index is formulated and ranks countries on the basis of this index. Section 4 compares the two rankings and concludes with policy implications.

### **SECTION 2**

Despite the vast diversity between countries in terms of size, the level and rate of economic development, economic systems, religion/culture, political structure, etc., there is a striking similarity in the status accorded to women. Everywhere in the world, women are accorded a lower status than men. In the developed countries, women's

lower status is manifest in women's being paid considerably less than men in all occupational fields and industry categories, in their being largely confined to and concentrated in the least paying jobs in every sector, in their limited upward mobility, and in their greater family responsibilities due to divorce, abandonment, single motherhood, etc. In the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, women's lower status is reflected not only in their work being underpaid, under recognised, and under-renumerated, but also in their limited access to productive resources and support services such as health and education.

At the same time, however, women's status does vary from one part of the world to another. There are inter-regional and inter-country differences in the status of women in all status indicators such as health, education, employment, domestic life, political representation, and legal equality, and in the extent of the gender gap in these. A composite status of women index should include these sub-components of status in order to do meaningful country rankings of the status of women. The only index on the status of women is the PCC index (published by the Population Crisis Committee<sup>1</sup> and subsequently used in several World Bank and United Nations Reports).<sup>2</sup> In the PCC study of 99 countries representing 2.3 billion women (92 percent of the world's female population), 20 indicators measure women's well-being in five sectors: health, education, employment, marriage and childbearing, and social equality. In each area, three indicators compare women's status from country to country, for example, the percentage of girls in school, female mortality rate, etc. A fourth measures the relative size of the gender gap within countries, for example, the difference between male and female rates of literacy, life expectancies at birth, etc. The health indicators include female child mortality rates, female mortality rate in childbearing years, female life expectancy at birth, and gender gap in life expectancy. Education indicators include female enrolments at primary and secondary schools, percentage of women among secondary school teachers, female university enrolments, and gender gap in literacy rates. Employment indicators include female participation rate in paid employment, in self employment, in professions, and gender gap in paid employment. Marriage and childbearing indicators include total fertility rate, percentage of adolescent marriages, contraceptive prevalence and a gender gap variable of the ratio of widowed, divorced, or separated women to widowers and divorced or separated men. Finally, social equality indicators include equality in marriage and family reflected in divorce rights and in family law, economic equality reflected in right to own, manage and inherit real

<sup>1</sup>Population Briefing Paper No. 20, Population Crisis Committee, Washington D. C., June 1988.

<sup>2</sup>More recently, a gender-related development index and a gender empowerment measure have been formulated and published in United Nations (1995). The gender-related development index (GDI) measures achievements of men and women in the three dimensions of the HDI (human development index)—life expectancy, educational attainment, adjusted real income—after taking note of inequalities between women and men. The GDI is the HDI adjusted for gender inequality. The gender empowerment measure (GEM) focuses on three variables that reflect women's participation in political decision-making, their access to professional opportunities and their earning power.

property, and political and legal equality reflected in legal protection against sex discrimination and political rights such as representation in political offices. There are thus a total of 20 indicators in 5 sectors in the PCC index.

In the PCC index, original data for each of these 20 indicators are converted to 5 point scales, giving a maximum score for each sector of 20 and a maximum total score of 100. Table I gives the overall ranking of a select group of countries. There are seven rankings, ranging from Excellent (scores of 90 to 100) to Extremely Poor (scores of 39.5 or less). Table I shows that only seven countries had total scores of 80 or above, giving them a rank of Very Good; whereas 51 out of 99 countries fell into the three bottom categories: Poor, Very Poor, and Extremely Poor. Sweden, with 87, scored highest, Bangladesh, with 21.5, scored lowest. The countries with the 10 worst scores are Bangladesh, Mali, Afghanistan, North Yemen, Pakistan, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Malawi, and Senegal. Countries with the 10 best scores are Sweden, Finland, United States, East Germany, Norway, Canada, Denmark, Australia, Bulgaria, and Jamaica.

The most serious shortcoming of the PCC index is that it is heavily influenced by the extent of poverty or per capita income of a country, with the result that it almost invariably assigns a high rank to high income countries and a low rank to low income countries. This is because it does not distinguish between the absolute status of women and the relative status of women *vis-à-vis* men. An index of women's status should measure, as it does in the case of the U.S., for example, the status of women relative to men, and comparisons between countries should focus on women's status relative to men's in one country compared to another. It should not compare the absolute position of women in one country to their position in the other. Thus the comparison of female literacy rates in two countries would be a poorer measure of women's status relative to men's than a comparison of the gender gap in literacy because the former is more a reflection of the income level of the two countries rather than of women's status *per se*. In a poor country, literacy rates are low both for poor men and poor women; the gender gap measures the relatively greater disadvantage for women. Thus only gender gap variables are relevant in constructing an index measuring the status of women relative to men, and only such variables are included in the AC index.

The PCC index is also based on the implicit assumption that women's status in developing countries ought to be defined in a similar way as in developed countries. Thus, in the employment sector, the index overemphasises paid employment. But paid employment is not the major form of employment for women (or men) in developing countries, and as such is not a good measure of their labour force participation. The major form of economic activity for women in these countries is as unpaid family workers in the rural sector, or as self employed workers in the urban informal sector.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>In fact, the urban informal sector is estimated to employ about 50 percent of the urban labour force in Third World countries, and there is growing consensus that it is major source of urban employment for women partly because it is compatible with their double burdens as mothers and workers.

Table 1  
*Country Ranking of Women's Status by Old PCC Index*

Countries	Index	Countries	Index
<b>Very Good</b>		Peru	57.5
Sweden	87	Thailand	57.5
Finland	85	Dominican Rep.	57
United States	82.5	Paraguay	57
Germany, East	82	El Salvador	55.5
Norway	81.5	Brazil	54.5
Canada	80.5	Nicaragua	54.5
Denmark	80	Botswana	53
		South Africa	52.5
<b>Good</b>			
Australia	79.5	Turkey	52.5
Bulgaria	78	Honduras	52
Jamaica	77.5	Jordan	50
Belgium	77		
Czechoslovakia	77	<b>Very Poor</b>	
Hungary	77	Kuwait	49.5
USSR	77	Tunisia	49
New Zealand	76.5	Algeria	47.5
France	76	Bolivia	47
Germany, West	76	Iraq	47
Austria	75.5	Zimbabwe	47
Poland	75.5	Indonesia	46.5
Netherlands	75	Guatemala	46
United Kingdom	74.5	Lesotho	45.5
Barbados	74	Kenya	45
Italy	74	Mozambique	44.5
Switzerland	73	Haiti	43.5
Yugoslavia	72	India	43.5
Portugal	71.5	United Arab Emirates	43

*Continued—*

Table 1 — (Continued)

Israel	71	Zambia	42
Greece	70	Cameroon	40
Spain	70	Syria	40
Uruguay	70		
<b>Fair</b>		<b>Extremely Poor</b>	
Costa Rica	69.5	Tanzania	39.5
Hong Kong	69.5	Morocco	39
Cuba	69	Rwanda	38.5
Japan	68.5	Benin	38
Argentina	68	Egypt	38
Romania	68	Nepal	37
Trinidad & Tobago	68	Libya	36.5
Panama	67.5	Liberia	34
Taiwan	67	Senegal	33
Venezuela	67	Malawi	32
Singapore	66.5	Sudan	31.5
Ireland	66	Saudi Arabia	29.5
Philippines	64	Nigeria	29
Korea, South	62	Pakistan	28
Mexico	61.5	Yemen, North	26.5
Ecuador	61	Afghanistan	26
Colombia	60	Mali	26
Sri Lanka	60	Bangladesh	21.5
<b>Poor</b>			
Chile	59.5		
Guyana	59.5		
China	58.5		
Malaysia	58		

Source: Population Crisis Committee, 1988. Population Briefing Paper No. 20.  
Washington, D. C.

Several indicators within and between sectors in the PCC index reflect similar phenomenon, and are thus redundant. Worse still, they increase the weight on certain indicators. Thus female infant mortality, female life expectancy at birth, and gender gap in life expectancy at birth all measure more or less similar variables: the health gender gap variable should suffice. All together, there are seven indicators on health out of a total of 20, making the PCC index largely a health index which not surprisingly is highly correlated to poverty. Then again, in the employment sector, three variables measure women's participation in paid employment.

The PCC index also fails to incorporate some indicators which reflect women's high esteem in some Third World countries, particularly Muslim countries. These include the informal safety net in developing countries; the protection guarantee which ensures that women are not left alone to fend for themselves, the relatively lower rates of crimes against women, the over representation of women in the professions, the relatively lower percentage of women-headed households, etc. Conversely, the PCC index fails to incorporate some indicators which capture the plight to women workers in developed countries such as the gender wage gap and occupational segregation,<sup>4</sup> as well as the tremendous increase in women-headed households due to divorce, abandonment, single motherhood, and a general breakdown in the family system.

### SECTION 3<sup>5</sup>

To remedy these defects while still using the PCC index as the reference point, the paper presents an alternative composite (AC) index based on several indicators in eight sectors: health, schooling, adult education, labour force participation, conditions of employment, domestic life, political representation, and legal rights. To give equal weight to each sector, two indicators are used for each sector—both measuring gender gap<sup>6</sup> within a country in the relevant variable, making a total of sixteen indicators. For each indicator, the performance of individual countries is ranked on a scale of 1 to 100,

<sup>4</sup>In the U.S., for example, earnings of full-time women workers are only 68–70 percent of comparable male earnings. Or, women with three years of college earn less than men high school dropouts. In every single occupation, women earn less than men: the ratio of median weekly earnings for women and men in selected occupations in 1991 was 67.4 percent for general office supervisors; 92 percent for general office clerks; 65.7 percent for machine (non-precision) operators; 59.5 percent for sales occupations; 53.9 percent for physicians; 83.7 percent for cashiers; 85.2 percent for cooks; 90.1 percent for lab technicians; 87 percent for secondary teachers; and so on. (Source: *1993 Handbook on Women Workers: Trends and Issues*, U.S. Department of Labour, Women's Bureau, 1994). The poor performance of the U.S. in international comparisons of wage differentials by gender has also been reported in Blau and Khan, AER Papers and Proceedings, May 1992.

<sup>5</sup>All data presented here and subsequently are based on *The World's Women 1970–1990: Trends and Statistics*. Social Statistics and Indicators, Series K., No. 8. The United Nations, New York, 1991.

<sup>6</sup>The gender gap variable is a measure of the position of women relative to men. Accordingly, for some variables, it is a differential rate (such as life expectancies, economic activity, etc.); for others, it is a ratio of women over men (such as sex ratio, enrolment ratio, etc.); and for yet others, it is women's share of the total (such as labour force, seats in parliament, share of women-headed households in all households, etc.).

where 1 represents the worst performance by any country and 100 the best performance. The composite index for the country is then calculated by averaging the rankings, giving equal weight to each sector. These scores are divided into seven overall rankings, from Excellent to Extremely Poor. The following is a description of the indicators in different sectors:

### 1. The Health Sector

We have used two indicators to compare women's health status to men's within each country: the *gender gap in life expectancy* at birth (measured as female minus male life expectancy), and the *sex ratio* (measured as the number of women per 100 men).

### 2. The Schooling Sector

We have used *gender gap in primary school enrolments* (measured as the ratio of female to male enrolment at this level \* 100) and the *gender gap in secondary school enrolments* (measured as the ratio of female to male enrolment at this level \* 100) as measures of women's status as far as education in early years is concerned.

### 3. The Adult Education Sector

The two indicators used to compare adult women's education status to adult men's within each country are the *gender gap in adult illiteracy* (measured as the percentage of illiterate females in the 25 years and above age group minus the percentage of illiterate males in the same age group), and the *gender gap in university and college enrolments* (measured as the ratio of female to male enrolment at this level \* 100).

### 4. The Labour Participation Sector

The two indicators of women's labour force status used in this study are the *gender gap in the economic activity rate* (measured as the percentage of adult (15 years and over) women who are economically active minus the percentage of adult men who are economically active) and *women's share of the labour force* (measured as the percentage of the economically active population that is female). Higher values of both these indicators reflect higher status of women since work is associated with earning power, mobility, etc.

### 5. The Employment Conditions Sector

There are two characteristics of the labour market that lie at the root of women's economic disadvantage: wage gap whereby women are paid less than men in all industries and occupations for work that is recognisably equal, and occupational segregation whereby women are segregated into certain "female" occupations which are generally low-paying. We have used data on occupational segregation which is more

widely available as an indicator for employment conditions. The two indicators are *high-paying job ratio* (measured as the number of women per 100 men in the high-paying occupational category of administrative and managerial workers), and *low-paying job ratio* (measured as the number of women per 100 men in the low paying occupational category of clerical, sales, and service workers).

## 6. The Domestic Life Sector

We have used two indicators to compare women's household characteristics to men's within each country: the *ratio of women-headed households* (measured as a percentage of total households), and the *ratio of divorced women* (measured as percentage of 25–44 year old women who are currently divorced). Both these indicators reflect the economic burden on women since they have to fend for themselves, and possibly their children. A high ratio of these two variables is thus associated with a low status of women.

## 7. Public Life and Leadership

The two indicators used to compare women's relative to men's representation in government within each country are the *political participation of women* (measured as the percentage of parliamentary seats occupied by women), and *women decision-makers in government* (measured as percentage of decision-making positions held by women in all ministries including executive offices, economic, political and legal affairs, social affairs, and ministerial level).

## 8. The Legal Protection Sector

Over the last several decades, most countries have adopted laws or constitutional provisions to promote political and economic equality between men and women. They have included, for example, equal pay and fair employment protections, and expanded political rights. The two indicators of the governments commitment to equal political and economic rights are the *gender gap in the right to vote* (measured as the difference in years between men and women getting the right to vote),<sup>7</sup> and *commitment to legal protection against sex discrimination* (indicated by the country's signing/ratifying the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women). Accordingly, government commitment and political will to genuinely improve the status of women may be stronger in countries that are signatories.<sup>8</sup>

By incorporating 16 indicators in 8 sectors, the AC index, on the whole, captures both the positive and negative aspects of women's status in different regions of the

<sup>7</sup>This variable was also dropped from subsequent analysis partly because relevant data were not readily available, and partly because this indicator is more of historical significance and does not necessarily measure women's current status.

<sup>8</sup>It may be added, however, that signing of the convention by a country does not necessarily imply enforcement of laws against gender discrimination.



world. On the one hand, it reflects the advantage of women in health/education/labour force participation in all the developed countries, in political representation in Nordic and eastern European countries, in labour force participation in Africa, in the informal safety net of domestic life in most developing countries, and so on. On the other hand, the AC index also captures the plight of women in different regions—occupational segregation and break-up of family structures in the developed countries, the social hardship in developing countries, and so on.

A total of sixteen indicators in eight sectors are used to form a simple composite index.<sup>9</sup> For each indicator, the performance of individual countries is rated on a scale of 1 to 100, where 1 represents the worst performance by any country and 100 the best performance. Thus, for gender gap in life expectancy, the upper limit of 100 is assigned to 9.2 years (achieved by the USSR) and the lower limit of 1 is assigned to -1.2 years (found in Nepal). Within these limits, each country's gender gap in life expectancy figure is ranked from 1 to 100. For indicators where higher numbers represent lower status such as domestic life indicators, i.e., percentage of women-headed households or of divorced women, the upper limit of 100 is assigned to the country with the lowest number of women-headed households or of divorced women and the lower limit of 1 is assigned to the country with the highest number of women-headed households or of divorced women. Then each country's performance in each of the eight sectors is calculated by averaging its ranking for the two indicators within each sector. For cases where a country has only one ranking, the ranking for one indicator coincides with the ranking for that sector. Once a country's performance in eight sectors is ranked on the scale of 1 to 100, the composite index for the country is calculated by averaging the eight rankings, giving equal weight to each.

Although there are some problems in assigning equal weights to each indicator and each sector, and this approach is open to criticism, the alternatives are also open to criticism. The first alternative could be to use a regression equation where the indicators constitute the independent variables and something like the GNP or the HDI (human development index) is the dependent variable. The weights can then be derived based on the relative importance of the indicators in the regression equation. The problem with this method is that the choice of the dependent variable is not obvious, and we would not be able to see how the index relates to the GNP or the HDI because we used these to calculate the weights. The second alternative is to assign weights subjectively based on the opinion of a panel of experts. This methodology, reviewed by Milton Friedman, Douglas North, etc., is being followed in constructing a freedom index.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Alternatively, if we want to avoid placing different implicit weights on employment versus health, for instance, we could, given our data, use fifteen indicators in five sectors—3 in health (by adding one to the existing two), 3 in education, 3 in employment (by dropping one from our existing four), 3 in domestic life (by adding one to the existing two), and 3 in political and legal rights.

<sup>10</sup>See J. Gwartney *et al.* (1994) *Rating Global Economic Freedom*. The Fraser Institute.

Table 2 gives the overall ranking of the status of women for 112 countries studied. Consistent with the PCC index, we have used the same 7 rankings: Excellent (scores of 90–100), Very Good (scores of 80–89.5), Good (scores of 70–79.5), Fair (scores of 60–69.5), Poor (scores of 50–59.5), Very Poor (scores of 40–49.5), and Extremely Poor (scores of 39.5 or less). Table 2 shows that, according to our index, the AC index, no country has a ranking of Excellent or Very Good, and only 4 countries had a ranking of Good. A total of 22 countries had total scores of 60–70, giving them a rank of Fair; whereas the largest number of countries (44) fell into the category of Poor. The Very Poor category is assigned to 25 developing countries. The remaining 17 countries are ranked Extremely Poor. The USSR scored highest (78.6) and Yemen scored lowest (16.5). The countries with the 10 worst scores are Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Mauritania, Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan, Sudan, Iran, Bangladesh, and Papua New Guinea; and with the 10 best scores are USSR, Romania, Finland, Czechoslovakia and Poland, Sweden, East Germany, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, and Hungary.

#### SECTION 4

The rankings of countries and regions under our index, the AC index, differs from that of the PCC index. Consistent with our hypothesis earlier that women have a significantly lower status than men in all societies and that gender discrimination is universal, the AC index shows that no country has a ranking of Excellent or Very Good. Even the countries with the top and the lowest ten scores differ: common countries among the top ten being Sweden, Finland, East Germany, and Jamaica; and among the bottom 10 North Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, and Bangladesh, although the specific rank of these countries and the category differs between the two indices. Moreover, our index is more highly correlated with the PCC index for developing than for developed countries. Thus most of the developing countries fall into the three bottom categories of Extremely Poor, Very Poor, and Poor both by our index (103 out of 112) and the PCC index. But, in our index, 11 developed countries (Switzerland, Netherlands, Japan, United States, Australia, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Greece, Belgium, Austria, and Yugoslavia) also are ranked Poor as compared to none in the PCC index.

Generally speaking, the ranking of North American, western European, and to a certain extent even the Nordic countries is lower in the AC index than in the PCC index. This is because our index is more comprehensive for developed countries than the PCC index. We have considered three additional indicators of status that the PCC index does not: the employment conditions indicators reflected in the percentage of women in clerical rather than managerial jobs, the domestic life indicators reflected in the percentage of women headed households and of divorced women and the legal rights indicator, all of which reflect important aspects of women's status in general, and in developed countries in particular. Thus, our index would lower the rank of countries

Table 2  
AC Index

1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1	Countries	AC	AC	AC	PCC	PCC	AC	AC	PCC	PCC	AC	AC	AC	PCC	PCC
2		Index	Index	Index	Rank	Rank	Index	Index	Index	Rank	Rank	Index	Index	Rank	Rank
3															
4	V. GOOD				Argentina	58.1	34	34	35	1	Kuwait	48.7	74	65	9
5	GOOD				Belgium	57.9	35	35	11	-24	Singapore	48.6	75	41	-34
6					Greece	57.2	36	36	28	-8	Botswana	48.5	76	60	-16
7	USSR	78.6	1	14	Guyana	57.1	37	37	50	13	G'iemala	48.1	77	72	-5
8	Romania	74.4	2	36	Burundi	56.5	38	38			Ethiopia	47.8	78		
9	Finland	71.8	3	2	N. Zealand	56.1	39	39	15	-24	M'nnar	47.4	79		
10	C'slovakia	70.9	4	12	Cuba	55.8	40	33	33	-7	S. Africa	47.2	80	61	-19
11					U.K.	55.5	41	21	20	-20	Hondura	47.1	81	63	-18
12	FAIR				Rwanda	55.4	42	84	42	42	Malawi	46.5	82	91	9
13					Australia	55.3	43	8	-35	Malaysia	45.9	83	52	31	-31
14	Poland	69.1	5	19	Cameroon	55.1	44	80	36	6	Moz' Big	44.3	85	75	-14
15	Sweden	68.8	6	1	China	55.1	45	51	6			44.2	86		-10
16	E. Germany	67.4	7	4	Venezuela	55.0	46	40	-6	-6	Bahrain	44.2	86		
17	Trin. & Tob	67.4	8	37	Costa Rica	54.9	47	31	-16	-16	Libertia	43.8	87	89	2
18	Jamaica	67.2	9	10	Japan	54.9	48	34	-14	-14	Qatar	43.7	88		
19	Hungary	66.7	10	13	U.S.A.	54.9	49	3	-46	-46	Ecuador	43.3	89	46	-43
20	Norway	65.7	11	5	Cyprus	54.8	50				C. Ivoire	43.1	90		
21	Barbados	65.1	12	22	Haiti	54.7	51	76	25	25	Fiji	42.8	91		

*Continued—*

Table 2 — (Continued)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1 Countries	AC	AC	PCC	PCC			AC	AC	PCC	PCC		AC	AC	PCC	PCC
22 Bur. Faso	64.8	13				L'burg	54.6	52			Iraq	42.3	92	69	-23
23 Portugal	64.8	14	26	12		Ireland	54.5	53	42	-11	Mali	42.1	93	98	5
24 Iceland	64.5	15				Spain	54.4	54	29	-25	Zambia	41.8	94	79	-15
25 Tanzania	64.1	16	82	66		Hong Kong	54.2	55	32	-23	Syria	41.6	95	81	-14
26 Philippines	62.8	17	43	26		Senegal	54.1	56	90	34					
27 Italy	62.8	18	23	5		Mexico	54.1	57	45	-12	EX. POOR				
28 Bulgaria	62.8	19	9	-10		Panama	53.8	58	38	-20					
29 Denmark	62.4	20	7	-13		Netherland	53.4	59	20	-39	C. Afric. I	39.3	96		
30 Viet Nam	61.0	21				Israel	53.2	60	27	-33	Egypt	39.2	97	86	-11
31 Germany	60.9	22	17	-5		Mauritius	53.2	61			Comoros	38.8	98		
32 France	60.4	23	16	-7		Sri Lanka	52.8	62	48	-14	India	37.9	99	77	-22
33 Puert. Ric	60.3	24				Bolivia	52.1	63	68	5	U.A.E.	37.6	100	78	-22
34 Thailand	59.9	25	54	29		Indonesia	51.8	64	71	7	Jordan	36.4	101	64	-37
35 Canada	59.8	26	6	-20		S'zerland	51.7	65	24	-41	Morocco	35.4	102	83	-19
36						ElSalvado	50.8	66	57	-9	PN.G'ne	34.7	103		
37 POOR						Congo	50.3	67			Bang'des	34.6	104	99	-5
38						Tunisia	50.2	68	66	-2	Iran	33.3	105		
39 CapeVerd	59.4	27				Turkey	50.1	69	62	-7	Sudan	28.5	106	92	-14
40 Y'slavia	59.4	28	25	-3		Korea	49.8	70	44	-26	Pakistan	27.0	107	95	-12
41 Chile	59.2	29	49	20							Nepal	26.9	108	87	-21
42 Brazil	59.0	30	58	28		V. POOR					Afghanistan	25.8	109	97	-12
43 Uruguay	59.0	31	30	-1		Ghana	49.5	71			M'ritania	24.4	110		
44 M'gascar	58.7	32				Paraguay	49.0	72	56	-16	S. Arabia	23.3	111	93	-18
45 Austria	58.1	33	18	-15		Peru	48.9	73	53	-20	Yemen	16.5	112	96	-16

where women are over-represented in clerical, sales, and service jobs, and under-represented in administrative or managerial jobs, and where the percentage of women who have economic responsibility for their households is higher. Both of these conditions are found in most developed countries, the former due to occupational segregation and the latter due to breakdown of the traditional family structures.

On the whole, the USSR and the eastern European countries (the former socialist countries) rank higher on our than the PCC scale. There are two reasons for this: very high female labour force participation rates in these countries and women's representation in parliament increases rankings whereas the plight of women workers in these countries in terms of long working hours at work and home without help from husbands or modern appliances which would have decreased rankings is not captured because of non-availability of such data for most countries. Thus the USSR has the highest rank, topping the world in terms of percentage of parliamentary seats occupied by women, their advantage over men in life expectancy, and their proportion in the labour force.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, the sub-Saharan African countries rank higher on our than the PCC scale, often moving from Very Poor to Poor, partly because our index better reflects economic activity and these countries have very high female labour force participation rates and women's share of the labour force is high too. So, if a country in this region does very well on any other indicator, its rank is significantly increased. Thus Tanzania tops the world in economic activity rates (together with USSR), is second in women's share of the labour force, and fourth in representation of women in senior government positions. Accordingly, it ranks in the Extremely Poor category in the PCC scale which does not capture any of these aspects of women's status, but Fair in ours which does. However the plight of women workers in these countries in terms of long working hours at work and home without help from husbands or modern appliances which would have decreased rankings, or of under-recognition of their economic contribution leading to lack of access to productive resources like credit, inputs, extension services, training, etc. is not captured because of non-availability of such data for most countries.

Similarly, our rankings for North Africa, the Middle East, and Muslim countries of Asia, on the one hand, and Latin American countries, on the other, may be higher than the PCC index—in the former because of the low percentage of divorced women and of female-headed households in turn due to the informal safety net as well as the under-representation of women in clerical/sales/service jobs where sex seclusion cannot be ensured, and in the latter because of the low percentage of divorced women in turn due to the impact of the catholic religion. In the case of North Africa, the Middle East, and Muslim countries of Asia, the negative (positive) impact of the seclusion ethics

<sup>11</sup> At the same time, it needs to be pointed out that the USSR may not have ranked so high if more recent data were used because there are fears and reports of women's declining status with increasing marketisation of the economy.

resulting in women being underrepresented in the high-paying administrative and managerial jobs (low-paying sales/clerical/service jobs) is captured by our index, but the positive impact of the seclusion ethics resulting in these cultures in women being over-represented in professions is not captured by our index because of the non-availability of such data for all the countries being considered.<sup>12</sup> In the case of Pakistan, however, none of these effects have been captured because the common data source (the UN) shows that such data are not available, although Pakistan sources show that it is. If, in fact, we complement the current UN data on Pakistan with data on women's representation in different occupations (such as administrative, clerical, profession, etc.) from Pakistani sources, the ranking would significantly improve.<sup>13</sup>

The greatest difference in our rankings and the PCC ranks is for countries like the U.S., which ranks Poor in our index compared to Very Good in the PCC index. As mentioned earlier, this is because our index includes the percentage of woman-headed households and of divorced women as measures of the extent of economic burden on women. The U.S. has the fifth highest percentage of woman-headed households and the second highest of divorced women in the world. This together with poor performance (below its average score of 54.9) in women's secondary and university enrolments, their under-representation in administrative and managerial jobs, in seats in parliament (13th lowest rank), and in decision-making government positions (4th lowest rank) explains its overall low rank. None of these variables except school enrolments were included in the PCC index, and hence the high rating of the U.S. on the PCC scale.<sup>14</sup>

The paper gives only preliminary results. It would be interesting to see how the new (AC) and the old (PCC) index match with GNP per capita or with the HDI (human development index). Moreover, it would be useful to complement this study with data on differentials in time use by gender in order to capture the situation of women workers in eastern European countries and in sub-Saharan Africa, on representation of women in the professions to reflect the position of women in North Africa, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia, on domestic violence, etc. Data are available for many developed and some developing countries on all these variables. Perhaps a more exhaustive analysis of the status of women in those countries can be made as a next step. Moreover, a sensitive analysis can also be done to look at the effect of including/excluding certain indicators or sectors, or of assigning different weights to different indicators, on the relative rankings of different countries and regions.

<sup>12</sup> See Mohiuddin (1980) "Women in the Urban Labour Markets". *Pakistan Economist*, April.

<sup>13</sup> The same would be true if the UN data on labour force participation of women (based on official statistics) is corrected for underestimation in the light of micro-level surveys and village studies.

<sup>14</sup> It may be added that if we were using time-series data, the ranking of the U.S. could be higher than in the current AC index since the status of women has increased with time more in the U.S. than in many other countries

## REFERENCES

- Gwartney, James, W. Block, and R. Lawson (1992) Measuring Economic Freedom. In S. T. Easton and M. A. Walker (eds) *Rating Global Economic Freedom*. Vancouver: British Columbia. The Fraser Institute.
- Mohiuddin, Y. (1980) Women in the Urban Labour Markets. *Pakistan Economists*, April.
- Population Crisis Committee (1988) Population Briefing Paper No. 20. Washington, D.C.
- The United Nations (1991) *The World's Women 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics*. New York: Social Statistics and Indicators (Series K, No. 8).
- The United Nations (1995) *Human Development Repor*. New York.
- U.S. Department of Labour (1994) *1993 Handbook on Women Workers: Trends and Issues*. Women's Bureau. Washington, D. C.