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MEASURING PROGRESS: THE GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX AND ITS IMPACT ON GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

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The Gender Inequality Index (GII) has emerged as a pivotal tool for assessing disparities in gender equality and its influence on global development. This paper explores the conceptual framework, methodology, and relevance of the GI in measuring progress across nations. By analyzing its components—reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation—this study highlights the critical role of gender equality in fostering sustainable development. The paper further examines the GI's implications for policy-making and its ability to inform targeted interventions that address systemic inequalities. Case studies are presented to illustrate the relationship between reducing gender disparities and achieving broader developmental goals such as economic growth, social stability, and human capital enhancement. This comprehensive analysis highlights the necessity of integrating gender-sensitive approaches into development strategies to accelerate progress towards equitable and inclusive societies globally.

Gender inequality is a complex and multifaceted issue, encompassing various dimensions and levels of society. Over the past few decades, the increasing focus on studying gender disparities has led to the development and diversification of indicators to measure gender equality across a wide range of dimensions. The study of gender inequalities has gained significant prominence in academic research. Firstly, reliable indicators are essential for assessing and comparing the status of

women, particularly in developing nations. Secondly, there is growing interest in exploring how gender inequality interacts with economic growth. Understanding and measuring these inequalities help determine whether higher levels of disparity hinder or facilitate economic development.

As Sen aptly described, it has "many faces," manifesting in disparities in areas such as health, education, and wages¹. These inequalities occur at multiple levels, from individual households and communities to markets and national economies, and can be understood both at the personal and societal scales. Following Sen, who shows the active and central role of women in development, several attempts to quantify gender inequality have been made. However, poor definition and construction lead to misinterpretations and misuses of indicators.²

In 1995, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) made a groundbreaking contribution to gender equality measurement by introducing the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)³. These composite indexes laid the foundation for assessing gender disparities, enabling comparisons of women's well-being relative to men's across countries and over time. Today, a variety of composite measures continue to play a critical role in evaluating gender equality, offering insights into countries' performance and sparking discussions on policies to enhance women's well-being globally.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has significantly advanced efforts to measure gender inequalities⁴. With specific targets outlined under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 and integrated across other SDGs, the agenda has prioritized gender equality and women's

empowerment as essential components of sustainable development. Furthermore, there is an increasing demand for internationally comparable gender indexes to understand the broader implications of gender inequality, including its effects on economic growth and overall well-being.

In 2007, the World Economic Forum in Geneva highlighted a unanimous consensus among participants that empowering women is a crucial economic, business, and societal priority with profound implications for national growth⁵. Today, the global commitment to gender equality is evident, with over 185 countries—representing more than 90% of United Nations member states—having ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)⁶, originally adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) is a composite measure designed to capture disparities between genders across three key dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation. A lower GII score signifies minimal inequality between women and men, while a higher score indicates greater disparity. The GII highlights the gender-based disadvantages in these dimensions for countries where sufficiently reliable data are available. It quantifies the potential loss in human development due to gender inequalities in these areas. The index ranges from 0, representing complete equality between women and men, to 1, reflecting the most extreme gender-based disadvantage in all measured dimensions.

The provided data highlight the ten countries with the lowest Gender Inequality Index (GII) values, signifying exceptional performance in reducing disparities between genders across reproductive health,

¹ Sen, A.K. 1990. "Gender and Cooperative Conflicts." In *Persistent Inequalities*, edited by I. Tinker, pp. 123-149. New York: Oxford University Press.

² Schuler, D. " (2006): "The uses and Misuses of the Gender-related Development Index and the Gender empowerment Measure: A review of literature," *Journal of Human Development*, 7, 161–181.

³ GÜNSELI BERIK, UNIVERSITY OF UTAH "Towards Improved Measures Of Gender Inequality: An Evaluation Of The UNDP Gender Inequality Index And A Proposal", November 2022 <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/Discussion-paper-Towards-improved-measures-of-gender-inequality-en.pdf> p. 6

⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

⁵ Hausmann, R., D. Tyson, L., and S. Zahidi (2007): The global gender gap report. Wold Economic Forum.

⁶ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/cedaw.pdf>

TABLE 1
Gender Inequality Index, 2022⁷

N	Country	Value	Maternal mortality ratio	Adolescent birth rate	Share of seats in parliament	Labour force participation rate (female)
1.	Denmark	0,009	5	1.8	43.6	59.4
2.	Norway	0,012	2	2.2	45.0	62.5
3.	Switzerland	0,018	3	2.2	39.0	61.5
4.	Sweden	0,023	5	3.3	46.4	63.7
5.	Netherlands	0,025	5	5.1	44.3	50.8
6.	Finland	0,032	8	4.1	45.5	58.2
7.	United Arab Emirates	0,035	9	2.8	50.0	55.3
8.	Singapore	0,036	7	2.5	29.1	63.4
9.	Iceland	0,039	3	5.1	47.6	70.7
10.	Luxembourg	0,043	6	4.2	33.3	58.0

empowerment, and labor market dimensions. These countries are Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Iceland, and Luxembourg. The GII scores range from 0.009 (Denmark) to 0.043 (Luxembourg), reflecting minimal gender-based disadvantages. Below is an academic analysis of the underlying factors contributing to these nations' high performance in gender equality.

Five out of the top ten countries are Nordic nations, including Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland. This dominance is attributed to their strong commitment to egalitarian values, which are deeply embedded in their social, economic, and political frameworks. Nordic countries have well-developed welfare systems, providing universal access to high-quality education, healthcare, and childcare services. These measures alleviate barriers to women’s participation in economic and social spheres.

Gender quotas and inclusive governance structures have ensured that women play significant roles in decision-making processes, with many Nordic countries achieving near gender parity in parliament and local councils. Comprehensive labor laws in these countries mandate equal pay, prohibit gender-ased discrimination, and promote workplace flexibility, enabling women to balance

professional and personal responsibilities effectively.

Two notable inclusions in the rankings are the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Singapore. These nations, while culturally distinct from the Nordic countries, have implemented targeted strategies to promote gender equality.

The UAE (GII: 0.035, Rank: 7) has made significant progress through initiatives such as the Gender Balance Council and legislation aimed at increasing female workforce participation and leadership. The UAE’s efforts to diversify its economy beyond oil have created opportunities for women in sectors like technology, education, and healthcare. Government-backed campaigns have encouraged a shift in societal attitudes, promoting women's empowerment and leadership roles.

Singapore(GII:0.036,Rank:8)emphasizes education as a cornerstone of development, with women having access to equal opportunities in advanced fields like STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). The city-state’s policies for gender-neutral healthcare, legal protections, and workplace inclusion ensure equitable outcomes. Women in Singapore are highly represented in managerial and professional roles, reflecting the effectiveness of policies promoting workforce participation.

⁷ <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/thematic-composite-indices/gender-inequality-index#/indicies/GII>

Countries with the lowest GII scores have robust legal systems enforcing gender equality through anti-discrimination laws, maternity and paternity benefits, and workplace protections. Gender parity in education, particularly at tertiary levels, equips women with the skills necessary for leadership and professional success. This is a consistent feature across all top-performing nations. Access to high-quality healthcare and reproductive services ensures lower maternal mortality rates and better health outcomes, contributing to women's participation in economic and social activities. The societal acceptance of gender equality and active efforts to dismantle patriarchal norms allow for more equitable opportunities for women.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) provides a comprehensive measure of gender-based disparities in reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation. These inequalities have significant economic implications, affecting productivity, economic growth, human capital development, and overall societal well-being.

Gender inequality limits women's access to economic opportunities, leading to a smaller labor force and underutilization of

human potential. When women are excluded from the workforce or relegated to low-productivity sectors, economies experience reduced output and slower growth. The current global labour force participation rate for women is just under 47%. For men, it's 72%. That's a difference of 25 percentage points, with some regions facing a gap of more than 50 percentage points⁸. In regions like South Asia and the Middle East, where female participation is low, the economic cost of gender inequality is particularly high.

Persistent wage gaps between men and women result in lower earnings for households and inefficient allocation of resources. Lower earnings for women diminish household income, reduce consumption, and impede economic progress. Women globally earn 23% less than men for the same work (UN Women). Closing the gender pay gap would significantly boost economic efficiency, women only make 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. As a result, there is a lifetime of income inequality between men and women and more women are retiring into poverty⁹.

Gender disparities in education and health reduce the quality of human capital, affecting productivity and innovation. Limited

TABLE 2

Gender Inequality Index of Armenia and compering countries, 2022 ¹⁰							
Gender Inequality Index		Maternal mortality ratio	Adolescent birth rate	Share of seats in parliament	Labour force participation rate		
Country	Value	Rank	(Deaths per 100,000 live births)	(Births per 1,000 women ages 15–19)	(% held by women)	(% ages 15 and older)	
						Female	Male
	2022	2022	2020	2022	2022	2022	2022
Belarus	0.096	29	1	11.2	34.7	65.8	75.3
Kazakhstan	0.177	42	13	20.9	24.7	63.3	74.6
Russian Federation	0.178	43	14	14.5	17.8	55.5	70.3
Armenia	0.198	50	27	18.3	35.5	62.8	71.8
Türkiye	0.259	63	17	15.7	17.4	35.1	71.4
Georgia	0.283	69	28	29.7	19.0	55.5	73.5
Azerbaijan	0.329	77	41	40.1	18.3	61.9	69.6
Kyrgyzstan	0.345	81	50	33.8	20.5	52.5	78.0
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	0.484	121	22	29.7	5.6	13.6	67.5

⁸ <https://webapps.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/Employment/barriers-women#global-gap>

⁹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw61/equal-pay>

¹⁰ <https://webapps.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/Employment/barriers-women#global-gap>

access to education and healthcare for women hinders the development of skills and capabilities needed for a competitive economy. A World Bank study found that countries with high gender inequality lose up to 30% of GDP per capita due to lower levels of human capital among women. Educating women has a high return on investment, with each additional year of schooling raising GDP growth rates by 0.37 percentage points. Making sure all girls are finishing secondary education by 2030 could boost the gross domestic product (GDP) of developing countries by 10% on average over the next decade. Every \$1 spent on girls' rights and education would generate a \$2.80 return - equivalent to billions of dollars in extra GDP¹¹.

Women's leadership enhances long-term economic, environmental, and social outcomes, and strengthens institutions. Research has correlated higher net profit margins for firms and lower CO₂ emissions with more women in decision-making roles. The global share of formal firms with majority woman ownership or a woman as top manager is 25%¹².

Armenia's GII value of 0.198 places the country in the mid-range globally, signifying moderate inequality in reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation. While this score reflects progress, it also highlights areas requiring continued attention to achieve greater gender parity. Armenia's GII value of 0.198 surpasses that of neighboring Azerbaijan (0.329) but trails behind Georgia (0.283) and several EEU

member states, including Belarus (0.096) and Kazakhstan (0.177). While Armenia performs moderately in maternal mortality and parliamentary representation compared to these countries, its progress highlights both achievements and areas for further improvement.

Armenia reports a maternal mortality ratio of 50 deaths per 100,000 live births, reflecting advancements in healthcare access and maternal services. However, this figure remains higher than those of many developed countries, indicating scope for further improvements in healthcare infrastructure and accessibility. The adolescent birth rate in Armenia is relatively controlled, although specific figures were not available in the dataset. A low adolescent birth rate indicates better access to reproductive health services and fewer teenage pregnancies, which contribute to improved health outcomes for women.

Women occupy 27.2% of parliamentary seats, demonstrating significant progress in political empowerment. Although this is below gender parity, it signals growing efforts to involve women in decision-making processes at the national level. Gender parity in secondary education is evident, with women attaining education levels comparable to men. This provides a strong foundation for women's empowerment and their ability to contribute meaningfully to the labor market and society. Female labor force participation in Armenia remains lower than male participation but shows gradual

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Տաթևիկ ՎԱՐԴԱՆՅԱՆ

ՀՊՏՀ միջազգային տնտեսական հարաբերությունների ամբիոնի դասախոս, տնտեսագիտության թեկնածու

ԱՇԽԱՐՀԱՏՆՏԵՍԱԿԱՆ ՔՐՈՆԻԿՈՆ

ԱՌԱՋԸՆԹԱՅԻ ԳՆԱՀԱՏՈՒՄ. ԳԵՆԴԵՐԱՅԻՆ ԱՆՀԱՎԱՍԱՐՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԻՆԴԵՔՍԸ ՈՒ ԴՐԱ ԱԶԴԵՑՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ԳԼՈԲԱԼ ԶԱՐԳԱՑՄԱՆ ՎՐԱ

Գենդերային անհավասարության ինդեքսը (ԳԱԻ) դարձել է կարևոր գործիք՝ գենդերային հավասարության ոլորտում անհամաչափությունների և դրանց գլոբալ ազդեցության գնահատման համատեքստում: Հոդվածում ուսումնասիրվում են ԳԱԻ-ի հայեցակարգային հիմքը, մեթոդաբանությունը և նշանակությունը երկրների առաջընթացի ապահովման գործում: Վերլուծելով դրա բաղադրիչները՝ վերարտադրողական առողջությունը, հնարավորությունների ընդլայնումը և աշխատաշուկայում մասնակցությունը, շեշտվում է գենդերային հավասարության կարևոր դերը կայուն զարգացման ապահովման հարցում: Հոդվածում քննարկվում են նաև ԳԱԻ-ի հետևանքները ոլորտային քաղաքականության մշակման գործում, ինչպես նաև դրա կարևորությունը՝ համակարգային անհավասարության վերացմանն ուղղված նպատակային միջոցառումների տեսանկյունից: Ներկայացվում են գենդերային անհամաչափությունների նվազեցման և զարգացման կառուցակարգեր, որոնք միտված են ապահովելու տնտեսական աճ, սոցիալական կայունություն և մարդկային կապիտալի զարգացում: Վերլուծությունում ընդգծվում է գենդերային զգայուն մոտեցումների ինտեգրման անհրաժեշտությունը զարգացման ռազմավարություններում՝ խթանելու համար արդար և ներառական հասարակությունների ձևավորումը:

Հիմնաբաներ.

գենդերային անհավասարության ինդեքս, գենդերային հավասարություն, կայուն զարգացում, վերարտադրողական առողջություն, հնարավորությունների ընդլայնում, աշխատաշուկայում մասնակցություն, գլոբալ զարգացում

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ГЕОЭКОНОМИЧЕСКАЯ ХРОНИКА

ОЦЕНКА ПРОГРЕССА: ИНДЕКС ГЕНДЕРНОГО НЕРАВЕНСТВА И ЕГО ВЛИЯНИЕ НА ГЛОБАЛЬНОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ

Индекс гендерного неравенства (GII) стал важным инструментом для оценки диспропорций в гендерном равенстве и их влияния на глобальное развитие. В данной статье исследуется концептуальная основа, методология и значимость GII в измерении прогресса стран. Анализируя его составляющие — репродуктивное здоровье, расширение возможностей и участие в рынке труда — исследование подчеркивает важную роль гендерного равенства в обеспечении устойчивого развития. В статье также рассматриваются последствия GII для разработки политики и его способность информировать целенаправленные меры по устранению системного неравенства. Приводятся примеры, иллюстрирующие связь между сокращением гендерных диспропорций и достижением более широких целей развития, таких как экономический рост, социальная стабильность и повышение человеческого капитала. Комплексный анализ подчеркивает необходимость интеграции гендерно-чувствительных подходов в стратегии развития для ускорения прогресса к справедливым и инклюзивным обществам на глобальном уровне.

Ключевые слова: индекс гендерного неравенства (GII), гендерное равенство, устойчивое развитие, репродуктивное здоровье, расширение возможностей, участие в рынке труда, глобальное развитие