



***Women's Empowerment: Countries Closing the Gender Gap  
The World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2008***

**The World Bank, Washington, D.C.**

**Friday, November 21, 2008, 12:00pm to 2:00pm**

**EVENT REPORT**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On Friday, November 21, 2008, at the World Bank's headquarters in Washington, DC, the Council of Women World Leaders at the Aspen Institute and the World Bank Group Gender Action Plan hosted a discussion titled *Women's Empowerment: Countries Closing the Gender Gap – The World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2008*. The report was presented by Saadia Zahidi, Head of the Women Leaders and Gender Parity Programme at the World Economic Forum and co-author of the report. The presenter was introduced by Amanda Ellis, Lead Specialist of the World Bank Group Gender Action Plan, and Laura Liswood, Secretary General of the Council of Women World Leaders. This event was part of the Council's ongoing *Madeleine K. Albright Women's Voices at the Aspen Institute Series* and was attended by more than 65 individuals working in the field of economics and gender equity, as well as academics and staff of organizations or businesses engaged in gender studies and policymaking.

In addition to introducing the Gender Gap index and explaining its four components of economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, political empowerment, and health and survival, Ms. Zahidi highlighted top ranking countries, global trends, and significant change in ranking over time. The presentation was followed by a lively discussion focusing on the lessons that can be learned from as well as the advantages and potential trade-offs of the Global Gender Gap Index.

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## ISSUE BACKGROUND

For the past three years, the Council of Women World Leaders has sponsored a series of roundtable discussions – named *The Madeleine K. Albright Women's Voices at the Aspen Institute Series*, in honor of the first female U.S. Secretary of State – focusing on the progress that women have achieved worldwide and the challenges that lie ahead in key areas of leadership. At each roundtable, internationally acclaimed experts discuss the progress toward equality for women and their challenges. The roundtables suggest future actions required for change to occur more rapidly in specific policy and issue arenas.

This presentation focused on the *Global Gender Gap Report 2008* by the World Economic Forum, which endeavors to assess the current size of the gender gap globally by measuring the extent to which women have achieved equity in four critical areas.

Presented by the Report's co-author Saadia Zahidi, Head of the World Economic Forum's Women Leaders and Gender Parity Programme, the discussion details the work of the World Economic Forum to assess the current size of the gender gap globally in 130 economies that cover over 92% of the world's population. The countries examined in the *Global Gender Gap Report 2008* include all current and candidate European Union countries, 20 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean, 20 countries from sub-Saharan Africa, and 10 countries from the Arab world.

The *Report* measures the size of the gender gap in four critical areas of inequality between men and women using mainly publicly available "hard data" indicators drawn from international organizations and some qualitative data from the Forum's own Executive Opinion Survey. The *Report* examines the following four areas:

- **Economic participation and opportunity** – salaries, participation levels and access to high-skilled employment
- **Educational attainment** – access to basic and higher level education
- **Political empowerment** – representation in decision-making structures
- **Health and survival** – life expectancy and sex ratio

The *Report's* country comparisons are meant to serve as a benchmark to identify existing strengths and weaknesses within each of the 130 countries examined and as a useful guide for policy, based on the experiences of countries that have had success in promoting gender equity. The study provides concrete measures of the gender inequity gap within the four categories identified, allowing for an unambiguous framework for policy-making in each of the countries in the future.

The Gender Gap Index assesses countries on how well they are dividing their resources and opportunities among their male and female populations, regardless of the overall levels of these resources and opportunities. By using this innovative methodology, the *Gender Gap Report* provides a comprehensible framework for comparing global gender gaps and serves as a catalyst for greater awareness and exchange between policymakers.

## SUMMARY OF DIALOGUE

Amanda Ellis, Lead Specialist of the World Bank Group Gender Action Plan, introduced the Council of Women World Leaders' Secretary General Laura Liswood, as well as the presenter and co-author of the *Global Gender Gap Report 2008*, head of the World Economic Forum's Women Leaders and Gender Parity Program, Saadia Zahidi.

The discussion was initiated by Ms. Liswood who emphasized the two main reasons why the gender gap has to be assessed and addressed by the global community: equity and efficacy. She introduced Saadia Zahidi and expressed enthusiasm for the successful cooperation on the presentation of the *Global Gender Gap Report* between the World Economic Forum, the World Bank, and the Council of Women World Leaders.

Saadia Zahidi opened her presentation with a general introduction, echoing Ms. Liswood's words, stating that "gender gaps are a matter of basic human rights" and equality, but that this is also "a matter of efficiency." Since women make up half of the human talent pool, inequality eventually translates into loss of human talent.

Ms. Zahidi highlighted the main findings from the 2008 report, including the observation that to this day "no country has achieved gender equality" by completely closing the gender gap. There are, however, measurable differences between countries. The report and its results present an opportunity for lower-ranking countries to learn from their more successful peers and from the challenges as well as "the opportunities" ahead of them.

The presentation moved forward with an overview and explanation of the Gender Gap Index and its composition. Four sub-indices in the areas of Health and Survival, Educational Attainment, Economic Participation and Opportunity, as well as Political Empowerment, are aggregated to form the composite indicator: the basis for the final country ranking. The index scale is between one, which represents complete equality, and zero, which represents full inequality. This type of scaling also allows for tracking the countries' development over time. For the ranking, parity is awarded maximum points in the category where equality is achieved. Ms. Zahidi stressed the fact that the Index measures *gaps* rather than *levels* so that countries with varying amount of resources can be compared. The index also uses outcome variables and not enabling factors, with the latter only being added in the detailed country profiles.

Ms. Zahidi introduced the highlights of the 2008 ranking – which encompassed a record number of 130 countries– noting that the Forum would like to include more countries, but for many, data is unavailable. In the 2008 ranking, Finland and Norway performed better than Sweden for the first time since the publication of the Report. The United States still ranks low compared to other developed countries. In the political empowerment area it scores below the world average. Ms. Zahidi pointed out that although there are large differences between countries, we ought to keep in mind that even Norway - the top ranking country - has only closed about 82 percent of the gender gap, whereas the last country in the ranking, Yemen, has closed only about 42 percent.

According to Ms. Zahidi, regional as well as income-level analyses are crucial for comparison, though she did highlight some of the global patterns in the 2008 Report: the average global gender

gap on health has been closed by 97 percent. As far as the global average for educational attainment is concerned, 95 percent of women receive education on par with men. More than 30 countries have completely closed the gap on health, and 24 countries have closed the gap on educational attainment. However, women's economic participation is still at 62 percent of men's and only 16 percent of the gender gap in the area of political empowerment has been closed worldwide.

Tracking changes over time – which is one of the main objectives of the Global Gender Gap Index, according to Ms. Zahidi – indicates that over the last three years every region has made progress. However, in 22 out of 115 countries, the gender gap has widened over this time period. Ninety-three individual countries have closed the gap in one or more of the four areas examined. For nearly 30 countries, complete data dating back to 2000 was available. According to Ms. Zahidi, there has been progress in all index areas for the 30 countries, with a few exceptions, such as Poland.

Ms. Zahidi closed her presentation with detailed information on country profiles, using top-ranked Norway and bottom-ranked Yemen as examples. In conclusion, she stressed the important and striking positive correlation between the Forum's Global Competitiveness Index and the Gender Gap Index, further emphasizing the notion of equality as efficiency. According to these results, equitable use of human talent is one of the best indicators for a country's competitiveness.

Following her presentation, Ms. Zahidi took questions from the audience. One participant was curious to know what complete equality, i.e. an index of 1, would mean in the area of political empowerment. Saadia Zahidi pointed out that given the outcome variables, a country would have to have equal representation (i.e. 50 percent) in all indicators such as seats in parliament, ministerial level and number of years served by a female head of state.

Another participant was concerned about the decision to only focus on the gap and to give relative outcomes rather than taking into account absolute levels, particularly with regards to the political message that is sent to countries such as Lesotho that rank quite high overall, but have discriminatory practices. Ms. Zahidi assured her that the authors of the report are very conscious of the trade-offs that have to be made when ranking countries and stressed the importance of the comparisons between countries in the same region and with similar income-levels, as presented in the detailed country profiles to accompany Report rankings.

Several audience members made suggestions on issues they would like to see addressed in the Gender Gap Report and Index. Although enabling factors are not directly taken into account, it would be interesting, one participant noted, to add information on whether a certain country has gender quotas as part of their political system. She added that it might also be interesting to investigate whether there is a correlation between the level of women's political participation and the extent to which a country is 'liked' by its people. Another participant was concerned that pregnancy as an indicator was not immediately visible in the calculations, but Ms. Zahidi indicated that this would be indirectly captured in the health and survival sub-index. A suggestion was made for using the index and ranking as factors in the decision to give foreign aid to countries. Ms. Zahidi pointed out that so far it has not been included as a decisive factor, but countries such as Denmark, Sweden, and Norway have asked for detailed information and might consider it.

One attendee wanted to call attention to the fact that all of the issues addressed by the report and the index are questions of human rights and suggested acknowledging the fact that Sweden and Norway top the list because they have the best human rights records. She also wanted to stress the importance of looking at the causes of inequality – such as patriarchy – and not only the symptoms by stating that when you look at symptoms you create solidarity, and when you look at causes you can create change. Ms. Zahidi responded to the suggestion by agreeing that women’s rights are human rights and that for the Forum the guiding question is how to raise awareness within their respective audiences. Thus the argument of competitiveness and efficiency is as important as the equality and human rights argument. The World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Parity Groups look at gender equality both as a matter of efficiency gained from tapping the talent pool that includes women and also as a human rights issue.

Following this exchange, another participant pointed out that neither of the two discussed arguments for equality, namely that the correlation between competitiveness and the human rights appeal might be compelling to some countries but not all. The participant wanted to know whether there was a third way of conveying the message. In response, Ms. Zahidi noted that the index could serve as a tool for “naming and shaming” on the global stage, although this is not the Index’s primary intent. Ms. Zahidi noted that there might be an indirect effect on a country such as Saudi Arabia that has slipped back in the ranking and is often mentioned as a negative example.

The discussion ended with closing remarks by Amanda Ellis, Lead Specialist of the World Bank Group Gender Action Plan.



On the Occasion of Global Enterprise Week

The Council of Women World Leaders  
and  
The World Bank Group Gender Action Plan

Present

***Women's Empowerment: Countries Closing the Gender Gap  
The World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2008***

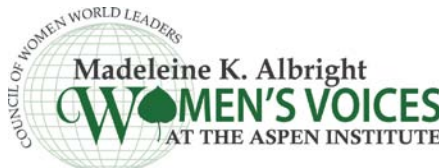
Presented by  
Saadia Zahidi  
The World Economic Forum

Friday, November 21, 2008 at 12:00pm  
The World Bank  
Washington, D.C.

**PROGRAM**

- 12:00pm – 12:30pm: Lunch and networking  
12:30pm – Amanda Ellis, Lead Specialist, World Bank Group Gender Action Plan, and Doing Business Gender Manager, The World Bank  
*Welcoming Remarks and Current Activities of the World Bank Group Gender Action Plan*  
12:40pm – Laura Liswood, Secretary General, Council of Women World Leaders  
*Welcome, Introductions*  
12:50pm – Saadia Zahidi, Director, Women Leaders Programme, World Economic Forum  
*Presentation of the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2008*  
1:20pm – Discussion  
2:00pm – Amanda Ellis, The World Bank  
*Closing Remarks*

This event is part of the ongoing  
*Madeleine K. Albright Women's Voices at the Aspen Institute Series*



## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Saadia Zahidi**

#### **Director, Women Leaders and Gender Parity Programme, World Economic Forum**

Saadia Zahidi is an Associate Director and Head of Constituents at the World Economic Forum. Her responsibilities include the engagement of women leaders, gender parity groups, religious leaders, NGOs and labor leaders with the World Economic Forum. The Women Leaders & Gender Parity Programme aims to create awareness and catalyze change by benchmarking and tracking the global gender gap, promoting dialogue among women leaders, and engaging leaders—women and men—to collectively address the challenges and opportunities involved in narrowing gender gaps. Zahidi was co-author of the Forum's reports *Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap* and the *Global Gender Gap Report 2006* and *2007*. Zahidi was previously an Economist with the Forum's Global Competitiveness Programme, where her responsibilities included economic analysis for *the Global Competitiveness Reports*, *Arab World Reports*, and other topical and regional studies. Zahidi holds a cum laude undergraduate degree in Economics from Smith College, Massachusetts, USA and a Master's in International Economics from the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. Her professional research interests include gender issues, corruption and financial crises.

### **Laura A. Liswood**

#### **Secretary General, Council of Women World Leaders; Senior Advisor, Goldman, Sachs & Co.**

In August 1996, Ms. Liswood co-founded the Council of Women World Leaders with President Vigdís Finnbogadóttir of Iceland, located at The Aspen Institute in Washington, DC. Ms. Liswood is the Secretary General of the Council, which is composed of women presidents, prime ministers, and heads of government. In 2001, Liswood was named Managing Director, Global Leadership and Diversity for Goldman Sachs. Working on issues of globalization and workforce diversity, she is now a Senior Advisor to the firm. From 1992 – 1996, as director of the Women's Leadership Project, Liswood interviewed 15 current and former women presidents and prime ministers, which is chronicled in her book and video documentary, *Women World Leaders*. Liswood's professional experience includes CEO/President of the American Society for Training and Development, executive-level consulting to Fortune 500 and international companies, executive positions at Rainier National Bank and Group W Cable, a subsidiary of Westinghouse Broadcasting and Cable. She received the Westinghouse Award of Excellence for her contribution to women and minorities in the work place. She is also the author of a book on service quality, *Serving Them Right*. Liswood has also held management positions in the airline industry, including general manager for the Pacific Northwest, for TWA, and was a consultant for the Boston Consulting Group. Liswood has contributed to leadership in the women's community for more than twenty years as a member of the International Women's Forum, Leadership America, and as commissioner of the City of Seattle Women's Commission. In 2000, the Secretary of Defense appointed her to a three-year term of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS). After the events of September 11, 2001, she became a reserve police officer for the Washington, DC Metropolitan Police Department. Liswood holds an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School and a B.A. from California State University, San Diego. She holds a J.D. degree from the University of California, Davis, School of Law, and is admitted to practice law in California and Massachusetts.

## **Amanda Ellis**

### **Lead Specialist, Gender and Development, World Bank Group**

Amanda Ellis currently manages the World Bank Group Gender Action Plan Private Sector Leaders Forum to promote women's economic empowerment, and the Doing Business Gender project. She previously founded the gender program, Gender Entrepreneurship Markets (GEM) at the International Finance Corporation. GEM assists IFC clients in developing countries, providing lines of credit for women SMEs through commercial banks and practical initiatives to assist women entrepreneurs with business and management training, and to access markets. Within two years gender inclusive projects at the IFC grew from only 2% to 23% of the advisory portfolio. Over \$40m was committed to financing women entrepreneurs in Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania through the first ever SME credit lines for women in Africa.

Prior to joining the World Bank, Amanda was Head of Women's Markets and National Manager for Women in Business at Westpac Banking Corporation, Australia where she and her team grew annual revenues by half a billion dollars in 3 years. An economist with specialization in international trade and development economics, Amanda previously worked for the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade for ten years, including roles at the OECD in Paris, NZ Consul to the French territories and manager of NZ aid programs in Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia.

Amanda is author of two best selling Random House titles, *Women's Business, Women's Wealth* (2002), and *Woman 2 Woman: New Zealand women share their experiences of career and business* (2004), and lead author of three World Bank titles in the Directions in Development Series on gender and growth in Africa.

Amanda serves on the Board of the East-West Center Association in Hawaii and the OECD international advisory panel on women's entrepreneurship. She is a founding member of the Global Banking Alliance for Women and a member of Zonta International

## **REGISTERED ATTENDEES**

Abu-Ali, Azhar  
The World Bank

Ahmed, Hanane  
The World Bank

Allen, Wynter  
Attorney  
The Office of General Counsel at  
International Brotherhood of Teamsters

AlMazrouei, Fatema Khamis  
Embassy of the UAE

Armbrister, Adria N.  
Specialist  
Gender and Diversity Unit  
Inter-American Development Bank

Apple, Martin A.  
President  
Council of Scientific Society Presidents

Babbit, Harriet C.  
Senior Vice President  
Hunt Alternatives

Barker, Sarah  
Communications & Development Coordinator  
Women's Foreign Policy Group

Bass, Josie A.  
President  
Alva Consortium

Blakeslee, Katharine  
Director, Office of Women in Development  
USAID

Bloom, Lakshmi  
Director  
Data for Decisions

Bradley Wages, Joan  
President  
National Women's History Museum

Brewer, Sarah E.  
Senior Evaluation Officer, Evaluation &  
Measurement Unit  
ABBTECH Staffing Services, Inc.  
(Contractor) - United States Department of  
State

Bristol, Joan

Buchanan, Gleibys  
Representative for the Advancement of  
Women  
Office of External Affairs  
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of  
the United States

Camara, Mahmoud  
Minister of Agriculture  
The Republic of Guinea

Capman, Amy  
Senior Director, Global Portfolio  
Harvard University, Kennedy School of  
Government

Carr, Kate  
President & CEO  
Cardinal Bank, DC

Casabonne, Ursula  
The World Bank

Cox, Claudette  
Cox & Associates

Croake, Katie  
Program Manager  
NDI - Middle East & North Africa

Dumitrasc, Alina  
Office Manager  
Council of Women World Leaders  
The Aspen Institute

Ellis, Amanda  
Lead Specialist, Gender and Development  
The World Bank

Florin Elbech, Pernille  
Senior Advisor, Public Diplomacy & Press  
Royal Danish Embassy

Fripp, Marga  
President  
Empowered Women International

Gantén, Anne  
Executive Director  
The Atlantic Partnership

Garzón de la Roza, Gisela  
Gender & Diversity Unit, SCL/GDI  
Inter-American Development Bank

Gay, Bonnie E.  
American University

Gerson, Elliot  
Executive Vice President of Policy and Public  
Programs  
The Aspen Institute

Gibbons, Maureen  
Intern  
Council of Women World Leaders  
The Aspen Institute

Grounds, Jessica  
President  
WUFPAC

Gunasekera, Yasoja  
Minister Counselor  
Embassy of Sri Lanka

Habinshuti, Antoinette  
Policy Assistant  
The Initiative for Inclusive Security

Haffert, Kristin  
Director - Women's Political Participation  
National Democratic Institute

Hartman, Mary  
Director  
Institute for Women's Leadership

Henderson, Judith  
Director  
J & J Henderson Consulting

Hostetler, Cynthia L.  
Vice President for Investment Funds  
Overseas Private Investment Corporation

Indu  
The World Bank

Ingber, Melissa  
Program Director  
Socrates Program  
The Aspen Institute

Iwanicka, Jolanta  
First Secretary - Economic Section  
Embassy of Poland

Jonna  
The World Bank

Koenig, Shulamith  
Founding President  
People's Movement for Human Rights  
Learning

Kulakzis, Sibel  
The World Bank

Le, Thuan  
The World Bank

Limbu, Mande  
Programs Director  
Gender Action

Liswood, Laura  
Secretary General  
Council of Women World Leaders  
The Aspen Institute

Lunde, Trine  
The World Bank

Maguire, Molly  
International Women's Democracy Center

McEwen, Lillian  
Judge  
Government of Washington DC

Mishra, Swati  
The World Bank

Morean-Phillip, Glenda  
Ambassador of the Republic of Trinidad and  
Tobago  
Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and  
Tobago

Moriarty, Lana  
The World Bank

Mueller, Claudia  
The World Bank

Neithammer, Carmen  
International Finance Corporation

Noguera, Julio  
Intern  
Council of Women World Leaders  
The Aspen Institute

Nyack, Ed  
Intern  
Council of Women World Leaders  
The Aspen Institute

O'Connor, Mary  
Director of Outreach  
Center for the Study of the Presidency

Odlum, Yasmin Solitahe  
Gender Specialist  
Inter-American Commission of Women  
(CIM) - OAS

Oestreich, Sandy  
Founder and President  
Equal Rights Alliance Inc.

Orlando, Beatriz  
The World Bank

Orlowitz, Sheri L.  
Shan Industries, LLC

Pollock, David  
Senior Fellow  
The Washington Institute of Near East Policy

Realuyo, Celina B.  
Assistant Professor of Counterterrorism  
National Defense University - School for  
National Security Executive Education

Reed, Rosemary E.  
Author

Rooke, Anna  
Programs Director  
Gender Action

Rose-Losada, Virginia  
Inter-American Development Bank

Settles, Dorothy

Stata, Mary  
Legislative Assistant for International Affairs  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Stevenson, Brita  
Program Manager  
Council of Women World Leaders  
The Aspen Institute

Stoeber, Kari  
Managing Director - Neglected Tropical  
Disease Control  
Sabin Vaccine Institute

Stone, Ann E. W.  
Senior Vice-President  
National Women's History Museum

Taubvurtzel, Luba  
Global Arts Network

Taylor, Julie  
Independent Consultant

Tirpak, Chris  
US Environmental Protection Agency

Turkovic, Bisera  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Tuzovic, Alida  
Records Technician  
Nutter McClennen & Fish, LLP

Vasquez, Elizabeth  
Quantum Leaps

Vickerstaff, Sarah  
Dean of the School of Social Policy,  
Sociology and Social Research  
University of Kent

Verveer, Melanne  
Chair of the Board  
Vital Voices Global Partnership

Willett Jackson, Sandra  
Co-Founder and Principal  
Strategies & Structures International

Wei Sum, June  
The World Bank

Wehling, Hannah  
Intern  
Council of Women World Leaders  
The Aspen Institute

Wyatt, Tanya  
Intern  
Council of Women World Leaders  
The Aspen Institute

Zinberg, Dorothy  
Lecturer in Public Policy  
John F. Kennedy School of Government  
Harvard University