Groundbreaking New Data on Status of Women in Middle East

By Layla Moughari

In June, IWPR staff presented key findings from a national survey of the political, economic, social and legal status of women in Morocco, part of the larger Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa (SWMENA) project. Study Director Jane Henrici and Senior Research Associate Jeffrey Hayes joined International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) staff in Rabat to present “topic briefs” to a group of government agency and parliament representatives, advisors and NGO participants. The workshop was exceptionally well-received by participants and the event received both international and domestic press, including coverage from The Atlantic Monthly.

Survey results indicate that there is a gender gap in voter participation in Morocco. Women’s participation in Morocco’s municipal elections in June 2009 was lower than men’s, with less than 45 percent of the women surveyed reporting having cast a vote compared with 57 percent of men. The majority of Moroccan women (54 percent) did not participate in the June 2009 municipal elections. The survey also found relatively high support for the system of gender quotas that is currently in effect in Parliament, with 7 in 10 women and 6 in 10 men favoring the gender quota system. Over a third of men are opposed to the system of gender quotas compared with only 17 percent of women. The survey, however, indicated that knowledge of gender quotas remains significantly low among ordinary Moroccan citizens at large. (Cont’d on p. 3)

IWPR President Heidi Hartmann Receives Women’s Rights Award from the American Federation of Teachers

By Jocelyn Fischer

On July 11th in Seattle, IWPR President Heidi Hartmann was honored with the annual Women’s Rights Award from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The Women’s Rights Award is given to a woman whose work, vision, and leadership have greatly contributed to the advancement of women’s leadership and education. Dr. Hartmann was awarded this honor because of her achievements in the study of equal pay and women’s economic security, as well as in the effective communication of her research to policymakers and the public in pursuit of women’s economic justice and well-being.

The award was presented to Dr. Hartmann at AFT’s Women’s Rights Breakfast, where she also gave the event’s keynote address on women’s economic security in the labor market and in retirement. In a thank you note to Dr. Hartmann, Foster J. Stringer, Director of AFT’s Human Rights and Community Relations Department, wrote, “Your remarks at the Women’s Rights Breakfast on July 11 clearly demonstrated the creative vision and leadership that characterize our Women’s Rights Awardees.” The Women’s Rights Award is especially significant because the AFT, an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), represents a significant segment of the labor force. The AFT has 1.5 million members and represents pre-K through 12th-grade teachers, higher education faculty and professional staff, the civil service, and nurses and other health care professional staff.
What to do about the deficit and the debt? These issues are swirling about Washington this fall as three commissions, including a bipartisan commission appointed by President Obama, are releasing their reports and seeking the attention of both policymakers and the public.

The large annual deficits the federal government has been running since 2001 result from tax cuts for the wealthy, the waging of two wars, and the recession, which resulted in massive job loss and lost revenues to governments at all levels. The best cure for the short-term deficit would be restoring jobs and economic growth—the federal government should increase its borrowing in the short term in order to stimulate the economy further and generate more jobs. This course and strong economic growth will reduce the deficit faster, and with fewer ill effects, than any other course of action.

But there is still a looming long-term problem, in which expected expenditures will outpace expected future revenues according to Congressional Budget Office projections. Chief among the reasons for long-term growth in expenditures is the high and rising cost of health care in the United States. Relative to other countries we pay twice as much per capita but have worse health outcomes. By including several provisions to contain costs, the recently enacted health care reform clearly increases. The revenue enhancer most popular is the payroll tax (currently set at $106,800). Decreasing the cap on the amount of wages subject to the payroll tax (currently set at $106,800) is projected to reduce the deficit faster, and with fewer ill effects, than any other course of action.

To prepare for the retirement of the baby boom, the Social Security system has accumulated a surplus of $2.6 trillion (in 2010) in its Trust Fund, which is expected to grow to $4.2 trillion by 2025. Through 2037 Social Security is projected to be able to pay all benefits in full. At that time, the Trust Fund is expected to be exhausted, if no changes are made in Social Security, and benefits would have to be reduced to about 75 to 78 percent of current law benefits. This long term funding gap in Social Security should be addressed in order to ensure that benefits can continue to be paid in full.

Yet the commissions are recommending cuts in benefits rather than sufficient revenue increases. The revenue enhancer most popular is a payroll tax (currently set at $106,800). Depending on how this proposal is implemented, enough funds can be generated to increase, not decrease, benefits.

Social Security should be off the table when the budget deficit is being discussed. A serious conversation about the long-term budget situation is needed, but it should be one that prioritizes getting our economy back on track and making the investments we need to maintain our productivity in the long run.
IWPR Presents Findings on the Status of Women in Morocco

(Cont’d from p. 1)

Women showed much higher support than men for the Family Law (Moudawana) which provides a set of guarantees and assurances to women (85 percent of women versus 59 percent of men support the law). Most men who oppose the Moudawana believe the law negatively impacts them, exaggerates the spouse’s demands, and opposes their religious beliefs. The top two reasons women gave for their dissatisfaction with the law involve their disappointment with the practice and enforcement of the Family Law and the feeling that its slow implementation does not do enough for the rights of women.

Women in Morocco have much lower educational attainment than men, with 48 percent of women, and 23 percent of men, having received no formal education. Women are also much less likely than men to participate in the paid labor force, with 69 percent of men and 10 percent of women reporting having worked for pay in the previous week.

Although women are more likely than men in Morocco to report receiving medical care, access to medical care varies tremendously by education and income levels, with only 16 percent of low-income women having access to a formal health care provider.

Restricted movement, defined as a limited ability to leave one’s house without permission, remains an issue for a substantial portion of women in Morocco. Thirty percent of women report living under conditions of restricted movement. Restricted movement is greater for young women (44 percent of 18-24 year olds) than older women (18 percent of those aged 55 and older), as well as for women who do not work for pay (31 percent) compared with women who do work for pay (15 percent). Although relatively fewer women work for pay (10 percent) than men (69 percent), the wages paid to women and men are virtually the same.

Men are more than three times as likely as women to believe that it is acceptable for a woman to be beaten by her husband (30 percent of men and 9 percent of women), and more than one-third of men and women feel that domestic violence is at least sometimes justified when a wife “is disobedient or did not follow [her husband’s] orders” or “if she went out without telling her husband.”

At the end of the Rabat workshop, participants issued numerous recommendations that included the creation of targeted public awareness campaigns to inform women about new or existing laws, urging women’s advocacy NGOs to use media as a tool to reach out to women; and combating illiteracy by working to make education more inclusive and accessible to women. Additional recommendations will be included in the comprehensive country report to be issued in 2011.

The SWMENA project seeks to propel the efforts of local nonprofits working to improve the standing of women in the Middle East and North African region. The project has collected scientific survey data in Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen to identify and address the areas of greatest need for women.

Please find these briefs and all other SWMENA related items on IWPR’s website: http://www.iwpr.org/Democracy/Research_democracy.htm#SWMENA.

IWPR Finds Public Assistance Not Reaching Poor Women during the Recession

By Allison Helmuth

Analysis of 2008 American Community Survey data from the U.S. Census Bureau reveals that 15.5 million women live in poverty, but the number receiving public assistance is much smaller. Further, the distribution of supports varies a great deal depending on the region and the state, so that poor women in some parts of the country are much less likely to get help than in others. Those state-by-state data on the percent of poor women receiving health coverage, nutritional support (Food Stamps now called SNAP), and cash assistance was released in IWPR’s recent Briefing Paper, “Women and Poverty during the Great Recession.”

The largest observed gap in assistance relates to the cash assistance program (TANF): 88 percent of impoverished women with dependent children are going without this support. Health insurance coverage (mostly Medicaid) and food stamps reach more women in poverty than TANF; but still leave many uncovered. Nationwide, nearly one-third of women in poverty are without either public or private health insurance and 62 percent of poor women do not receive food stamps. The variation across the states is much greater in health insurance than in nutritional support.

“Especially during an economic downturn, the social safety net needs to be stronger to help prevent families in poverty from sinking even further,” states Dr. Jane Henrici, IWPR Study Director. “During these hard economic times, public assistance programs should support poor women and their families, but too many are not receiving any kind of help at all.”
Work/Family Policies and their Impact on Women’s Employment and Business Success

By Ariane Hegewisch

As part of its “Doing Business: Gender” program, the World Bank commissioned IWPR’s Ariane Hegewisch and Janet Gornick from the City University of New York (CUNY) to review research of work family policies, to identify best practice designs and draw out possible lessons for developing countries. Most countries in the world provide some form of work family supports including paid maternity leave (the United States now is one of only four countries in the world where women lack this right) assistance with child care, and the increasingly common option of flexible work arrangements. The designs of such policies vary substantially between countries, providing the opportunity to examine the effects of different policy designs on women’s economic prospects and on businesses. The results of such comparisons are of increasing interest to policymakers in high-income countries; as populations age, societies can ill afford to lose the skills and labor of women who are pushed out of the labor force because of care giving responsibilities.

The policy lessons for high-income countries are fairly well-established and show the beneficial impacts of leave, childcare support, and access to workplace flexibility both for women, who benefit from greater labor force attachment, and the economy, which benefits from a greater pool of experienced (and tax-paying) workers. Based on the experiences of high-income countries, the beneficial impact may disappear or become adverse when leave is too long, when mandates result in substantial costs for employers, or when workplace flexibility means fewer rights for part-time workers rather than more manageable working hours for all employees. The question is whether, and how, these results translate to lower income countries with substantial informal labor markets, underdeveloped social insurance and taxation systems, and substantial labor surplus rather than labor shortages. Perhaps the most prominent finding of this research review is the lack of policy attention — and research evaluation — given to the impact of work family supports for women, in spite of the fact that gender equality is now recognized as an important policy goal for development. IWPR and CUNY are working with the World Bank on next steps.

At the 90th Anniversary Celebration of the Women’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Lenora Cole (center—IWPR Board Chair, and Head of the U.S. DOL Women’s Bureau in the Reagan administration) is congratulated by IWPR alumnnae Inasema Garza (previous IWPR board member and herself a former Women’s Bureau Director in the Clinton Administration) and Avis Jones-DeWeever, President, National Council for Negro Women, and IWPR Affiliated Researcher.

IWPR Executive Director and Vice President, Barbara Gault, presents findings at the October launch of the 2010 Portrait of Women and Girls in the Washington Metropolitan Area Report.
Separate and Not Equal? Gender Segregation in the Labor Market and the Gender Wage Gap

By Jeffrey Hayes, PhD

A new briefing paper on the gender segregation of occupations shows that, after a steady trend towards a more even distribution of men and women across occupations during the 1970s and 1980s, there has been no further progress since the mid 1990s. Segregation is typically lower for workers with at least four years of college and higher for workers with lower levels of education. Until the late 1990s segregation fell faster for highly educated workers than for other workers.

Trends in Occupational Segregation by Gender & Educational Attainment, 1972-2009

Source: IWPR compilations are based on the Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS-CPS, Minnesota Population Center). Occupations are classified according to the 1990 Census occupational classification. The analysis is restricted to the civilian labor force and to the adult civilian population, aged 25 to 64, as it is reasonable to expect that persons in this age group have largely completed their schooling and have not yet retired.

Archiving Project Reveals Evolution of IWPR

By Aliza Leventhal

In January, IWPR began work on an archiving project to sort through and organize documents from the Institute’s 23-year history. Over the last 4 months, the project reviewed over 300 boxes and sent approximately 75 to the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at Harvard University. The contents of these boxes range in age from before IWPR’s inception in 1987 to the present. Some boxes contained old Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) data, doodles on napkins, and even a tongue-in-cheek ode to our well-known Status of Women in the States project produced for an IWPR holiday party: “The Status of Women in the North Pole.”

Occupational segregation matters because these patterns reflect barriers to entry to occupations and artificially restrict the movement of the most qualified and motivated people into occupations that would suit them best, exacerbate skill shortages, and reduce economic growth. Occupational segregation also matters because our analysis shows that there is a systematic link between the share of women working in an occupation and median weekly earnings for full-time work. The higher the share of women in an occupation, the lower median earnings at each of three broad skill levels identified in the analysis.

Median Weekly Earnings in Occupations by Skill Level and Gender Composition, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male-dominated occupations (25 percent or less female)</th>
<th>Mixed occupations (25.1 to 74.9 percent female)</th>
<th>Female-dominated occupations (75 percent or more female)</th>
<th>Female/Male Earnings Ratio = (3)/(1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-skilled Occupations</td>
<td>$553</td>
<td>$435</td>
<td>$408</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-skilled Occupations</td>
<td>$752</td>
<td>$735</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-skilled Occupations</td>
<td>$1,424</td>
<td>$1,160</td>
<td>$953</td>
<td>66.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Data refer to full-time workers aged 16 and older. Earnings data represent weighted averages of median weekly earnings in occupations; data are made available by the BLS only for occupations with an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers. Source: IWPR compilation of Bureau of Labor Statistics data.
IWPR General and Project Support

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Gifts of tribute

As of August 2010

- In Honor of Johanna Justin-Jinich
- In Honor of Rebecca Crum from her daughter Elisabeth
- In Honor of Sandra S. Tangri from Martha Mednick

IWPR’s work is also supported by our individual and organizational members and donors.
Women Still Especially Vulnerable, Five Years After Katrina

By Caroline Dobuzinskis and Jocelyn Fischer

Three new IWPR fact sheets, focusing on race, housing issues, and the impact of disasters on women, reflect the diverse range of data that IWPR has been collecting and analyzing since Hurricane Katrina hit. Immediately after the 2005 disaster struck, IWPR began conducting research along the Gulf Coast to determine the storm’s effect on the lives of women, and assess how post-disaster conditions for women and families might be improved.

The first factsheet, “Women in New Orleans: Race, Poverty, and Hurricane Katrina,” shows that fewer women and girls, especially African American women and girls, now live in the metropolitan area after Hurricane Katrina. U.S. Census data reveal also that rates of poverty among girls and women have decreased in the metropolitan area, especially among African American women. This suggests that particularly vulnerable women have not been able to return.

IWPR’s second fact sheet, “Mounting Losses: Women and Public Housing after Hurricane Katrina,” discusses housing policy and the redevelopment of New Orleans’ “Big Four” public housing units. Affordable housing is important for low-income women and their families, but in New Orleans the old public housing apartments have been nearly all removed. Many new mixed-income units remain under construction and do not provide the units lost. For example, in the redesign of one complex, 1,550 public housing units that existed prior to Katrina are to be replaced with 740 units of mixed-income housing.

The third fact sheet examines how women often suffer disproportionally in the wake of disasters. The fact sheet describes some of the factors that lead to this result: women are more likely to be living in poverty, may have increased childcare responsibilities, and may encounter violence.

A new IWPR report, based on a four-year project with more than 200 ethnographic interviews conducted in Baton Rouge, Houston, and New Orleans with women who were residents of New Orleans public housing at the time of Hurricane Katrina, will be released in 2011. IWPR’s earlier reports released in 2005, 2006, and 2008 can be found at IWPR’s website, www.iwpr.org.

Board Member Spotlight: Holly Fechner

By Jennifer Clark

From her college thesis on Mary Wollstonecraft to her current pro bono legal work in addressing the needs of women, IWPR board member Holly Fechner has dedicated her academic and professional pursuits to help ensure that women’s issues are front and center. As the co-chair of IWPR’s Communications and Marketing Committee, Holly helps encourage discussion about how IWPR can expand its outreach and visibility to policymakers and wider audiences. “IWPR has always been a first-rate think tank,” she says, “but not everyone knows that.” Often the only woman in the room during meetings, she uses these experiences to inform her role on IWPR’s Board, bringing passion and expertise to ensure that women have access to equal opportunities.

Currently an attorney at Covington & Burling, Holly’s familiarity with IWPR’s research traces back to the beginning of her career in public policy. After law school and a graduate program in women’s studies, Holly worked on the Family and Medical Leave Act the year before it was signed into law, which eventually landed her on Capitol Hill as an advisor to the late Senator Edward Kennedy.

It was during her time on Senator Kennedy’s staff that she became what she calls “a professional consumer of IWPR’s work.” She spent eight years with the Senator, advising him on policies related to the economy, health care, and education. She worked closely with IWPR on paid sick days and equal pay legislation. Once Holly transitioned from public service to private practice in 2007, she was asked to join IWPR’s Board of Directors and contribute the wealth of her career experience to advising IWPR on how its research can reach different audiences that have a stake in improving public policies affecting women. She gladly accepted the invitation to join. For her, “It was a natural extension of my many years of policy work on women’s issues.”

During her tenure as co-chair, the Communications and Marketing Committee has tackled strategic questions about how best to expand IWPR’s reach and has provided invaluable guidance on the forthcoming redesign of IWPR’s website. Holly describes IWPR’s role as “the preeminent think tank on women’s issues.”

IT supports trusted research on women by becoming a member of IWPR today! The Institute’s Membership program provides crucial support for expanding the reach of IWPR’s work, building links among policymakers, advocates, researchers, and others concerned with policy issues that affect women, as well as providing an information network that allows members to receive the latest IWPR research findings. Benefits vary by membership level and include IWPR’s newsletter, free research reports and publications, discounts for IWPR conferences, access to IWPR’s Research News Reporter Online, and more! To learn more about membership, please contact Jennifer Clark at clark@iwpr.org or 202.785.5100.
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