

The Gender Equity Index

Gender equity is a complex, multifaceted concept and is difficult to measure. With the objective of making a contribution to the debate and to the consistent monitoring of women's situation, Social Watch has developed a Gender Equity Index (GEI). This index makes it possible to position and classify countries according to a selection of indicators relevant to gender inequity and based on internationally available and comparable information.

GEI classifies 154 countries and conclusively verifies that in no country do women enjoy the same opportunities as men, that high income levels are not necessary for the elimination of gender disparities and that although over the years some aspects of women's situation have improved their opportunities in economic and political areas are still clearly limited.

The three dimensions included in GEI* are: economic activity, empowerment and education. The index's range of values is from 0 to 100, with lower values indicating greater inequity and higher values greater equity.

Sweden, Finland, Rwanda and Norway occupy the highest positions in the 2007 GEI. These countries register the least inequality between women and men. This good performance has been achieved by the application of affirmative action policies, particularly for political quota legislation and labour market equity.

GEI presents information on 40 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, 36 in Europe, 28 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 18 in the Middle East and North Africa, 18 in East Asia and the Pacific, 6 in Central Asia, 5 in South Asia and 2 in North America. Together these countries represent more than 90% of the world's population.

GEI was created in 2004. Here we present trends during the 2004-2007 period as well as the latest available data on individual countries.

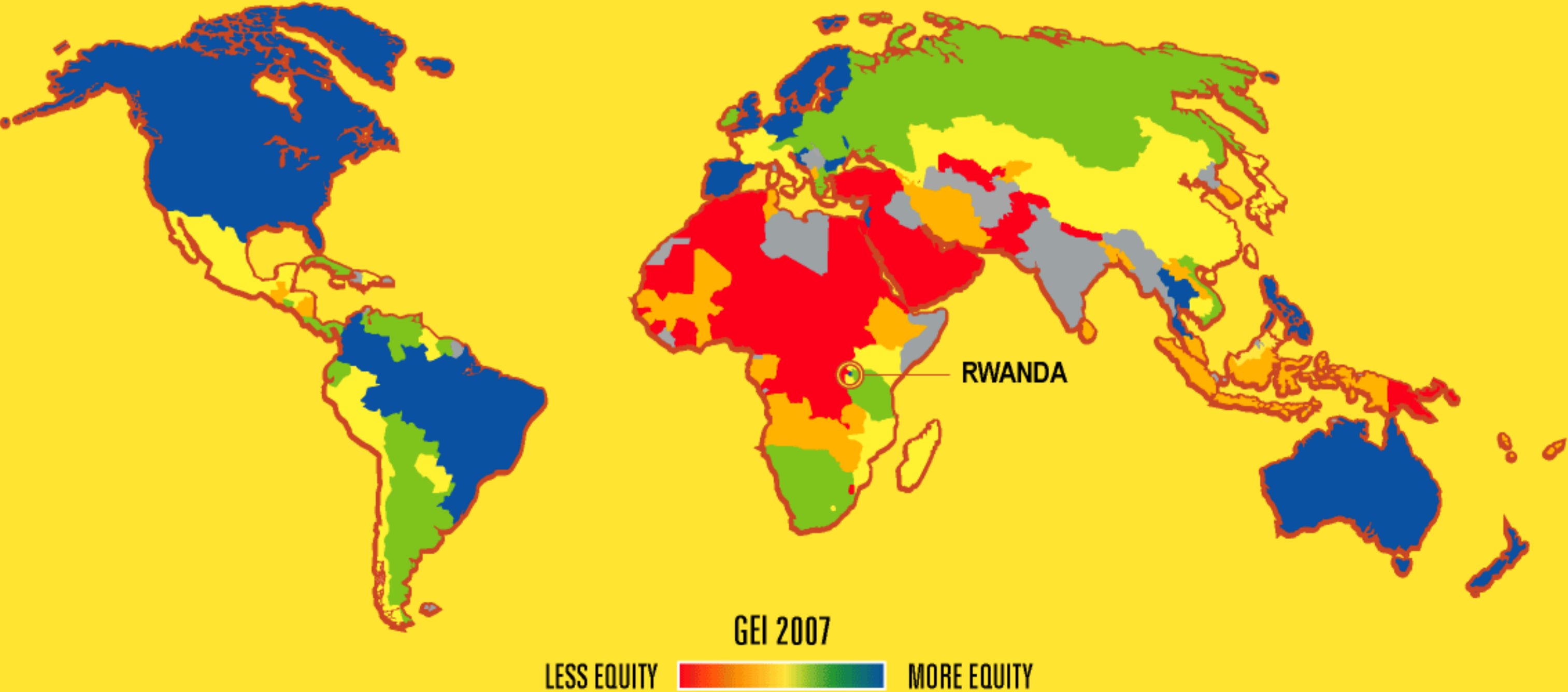
*More information about the methodology used to construct the GEI is available at: www.socialwatch.org



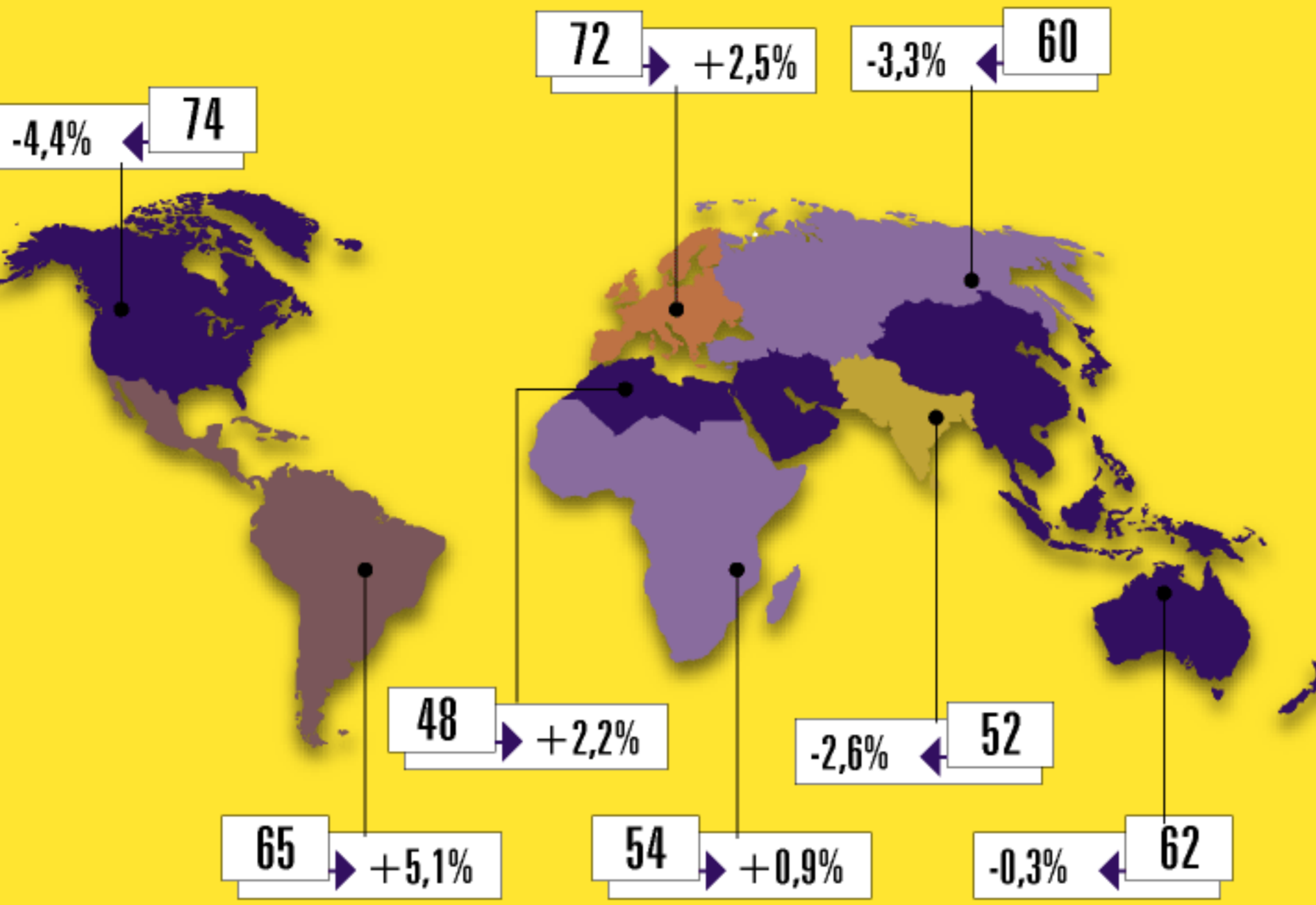
Gender Equity Index 2007

INEQUITY PERSISTS

The results of the 2007 Social Watch Gender Equity Index (GEI) clearly demonstrate that a country's level of wealth does not automatically determine its degree of equity. Rwanda, one of the world's least developed countries, ranks third on the list of GEI scores, after Sweden and Finland, thanks to intensive affirmative action efforts. In the meantime, a number of high-income countries rank far down on the list. The evolution of the GEI between 2004 and 2007 reveals a few global advances, but the general trend seen throughout the world is either very slow progress or no progress at all. The United States, a high-income country, is one of the 10 countries that have experienced the greatest regression. Obviously, the key to gender equity lies not in a country's economic power, but rather in its government's political will.



Average values and evolution by region



GEI performance by region has North America in first place (74), Europe second (72), Latin America and the Caribbean third (65) and East Asia and the Pacific fourth (62). The regions with the lowest GEI values are, in descending order, Central Asia (60), Sub-Saharan Africa (54), South Asia (52) and the Middle East and North Africa (48). We will see from the GEI trends that although North America has the highest GEI values it is the region that has most regressed in recent years.

Nearly insignificant progress

During the 2004-2007 period the general gender equity trend was for limited or non-existent progress.

Three regions registered progress: in first place, Latin America and the Caribbean, second Europe and third the Middle East and North Africa, but in all cases progress measured less than 6%.

East Asia and the Pacific along with Sub-Saharan Africa registered almost insignificant variations. Three regions suffered GEI regression: South Asia, Central Asia and North America. North America registered the most significant gender equity regression, basically because the United States fell by 7%.



To promote gender equity, there are key measures and areas of action:

LEGISLATION



Legislative reform is an effective strategy for the promotion of women and girls' autonomy and for safeguarding their rights. Mechanisms to prevent and respond to gender related violence are necessary. Governments should apply existing laws, promote new laws and address common law legislation that discriminates against women.

FINANCE AND BUDGET



The allocation of new resources to achieve gender equity. Equitable and effective investment is essential for the elimination of gender-based discrimination. More resources should be made available, they should be appropriately used and be integrated into government budgets and plans.

EDUCATION



Guaranteeing that men and women have the same educational opportunities is one of the most effective measures in the fight against gender-based discrimination. The educational curriculum should emphasize the importance of gender equality and pro-male prejudices in the classroom should be addressed.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICIES



Affirmative action policies are an effective way of guaranteeing progress towards gender equity. In particular, quotas enable women to overcome obstacles that hinder their participation in political life. Of the 20 countries in the world that have the most women in Parliament, 17 employ some type of quota system.

THE CASE OF RWANDA The power of affirmative action



Why does Rwanda occupy such a high GEI position? Its surprisingly good performance is related to the recent implementation of affirmative action policies involving legally binding regulations, sometimes of a constitutional nature, designed to promote change in social factors, including structural ones.

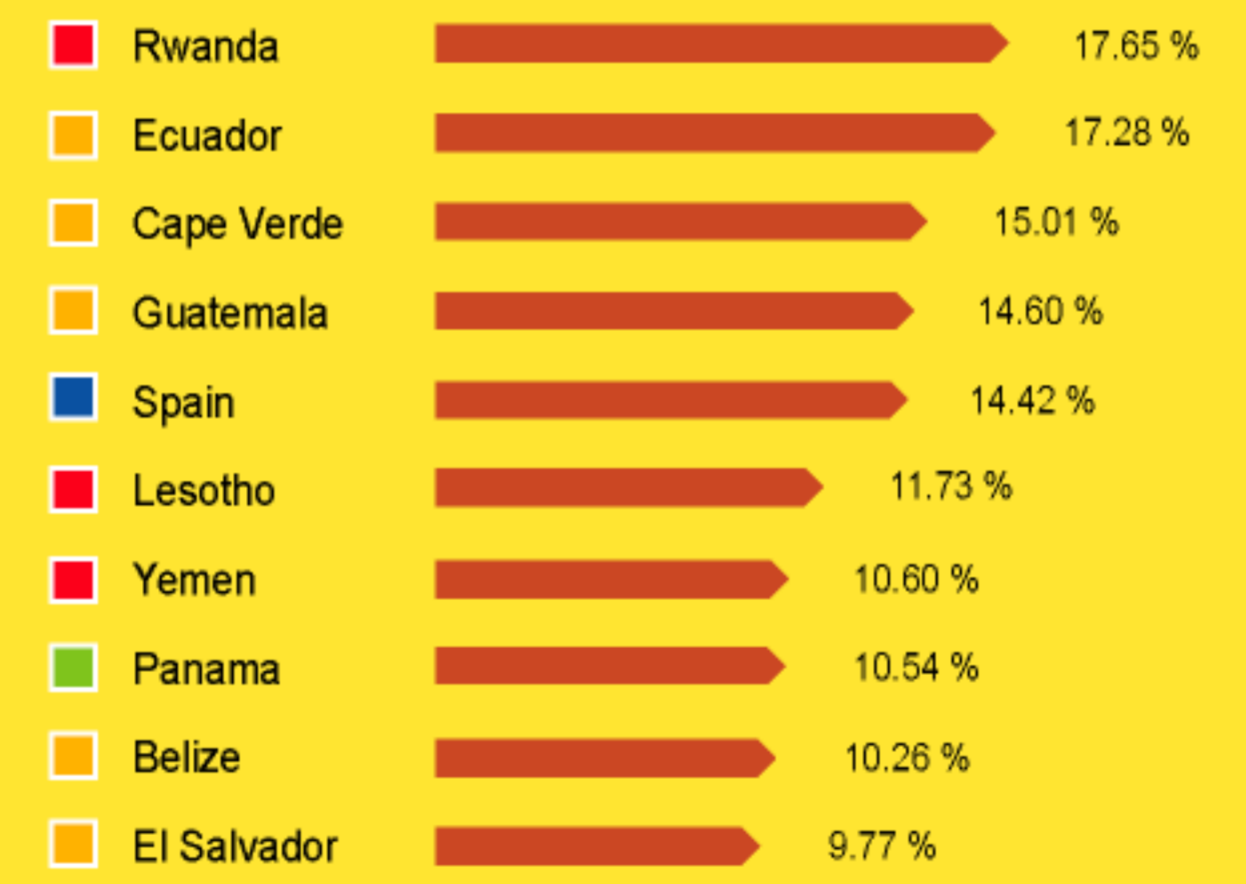
The following are examples of rapid changes that have taken place in this country over recent years:

- 30% of decision-making related positions were assigned to women;
- local funds and micro-credits were provided for production projects led by women;
- in 2003 Article 187 of the new Rwandan Constitution formalised equity promotion structures such as the National Council of Women;
- a Gender Issues Monitoring Office was created, to facilitate the participation of women in public life and to ensure that development initiatives are egalitarian in generating benefits for both sexes.

As a result of these changes many women entered public life as political leaders. In the Chamber of Deputies seats held by women increased to 48.8%. There was also a significant increase in the participation of women at ministerial and local government levels.

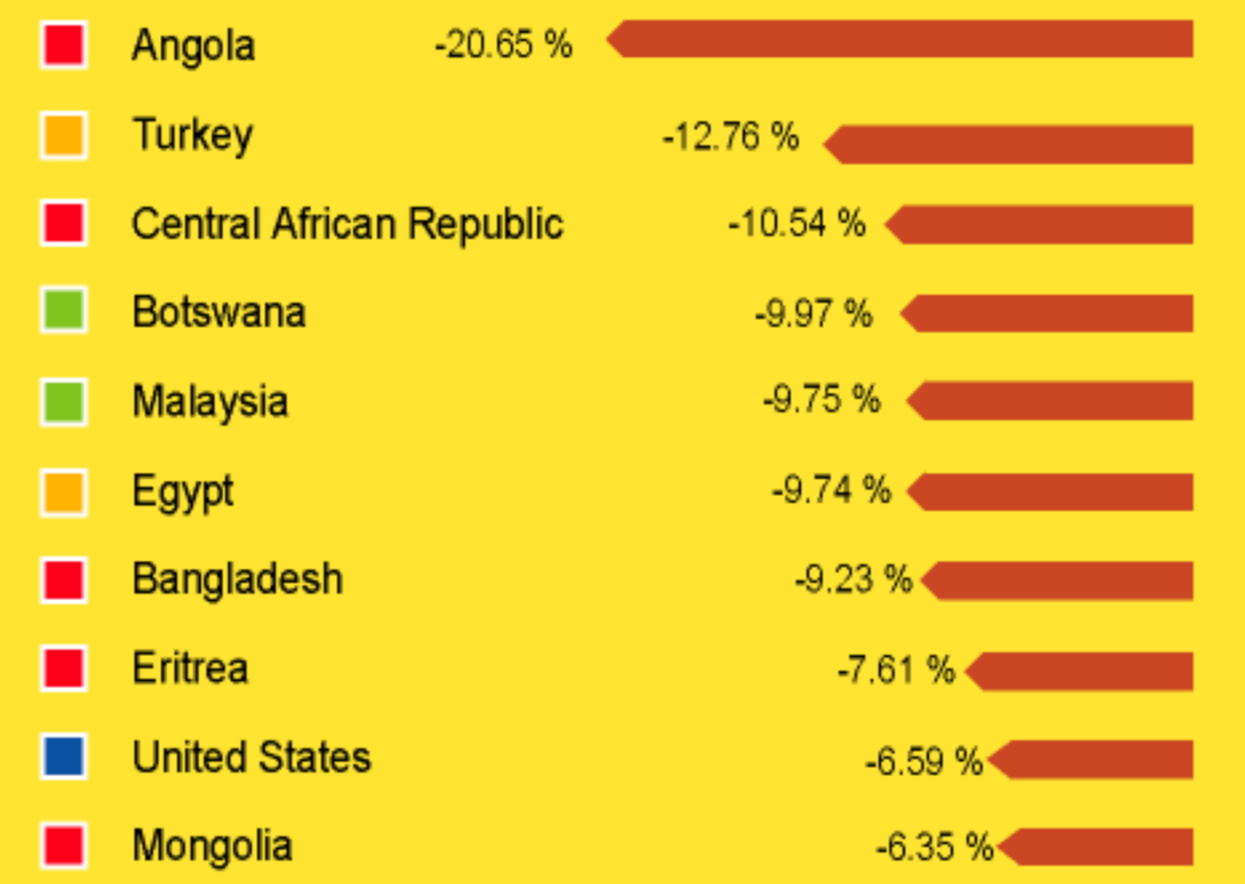
The most interesting conclusion to be made is that a high level of economic development is not necessary in order to implement effective gender inequity reduction measures.

The 10 countries with the greatest GEI progress



Measuring variation as a percentage, the countries that registered most progress during this period were: in first place Rwanda, followed by Ecuador, Cape Verde and Guatemala.

The 10 countries with the greatest GEI regression



The country that has most regressed during this period is Angola (21%) and Turkey (13%). Amongst the 10 countries that most regressed are ones with a low, low-middle, high-middle and high income, for example in the latter category the United States.



Income and equity are not directly related

Examining the variations in relation to income levels we find that low-income countries have not progressed. However, the differences between countries with high, middle and low-middle incomes are not significant, which confirms that the relation between a country's income and gender equity is not direct.

Gender based inequity is a phenomenon that transcends borders, cultures, religions, nations and income levels. The achievement of gender equity is a challenge for the entire modern world because although its manifestations are diverse, the gap between women and men persists in all countries.

In most societies inequalities manifest in the division of responsibilities between men and women, in access to and control of resources and in decision-making processes.

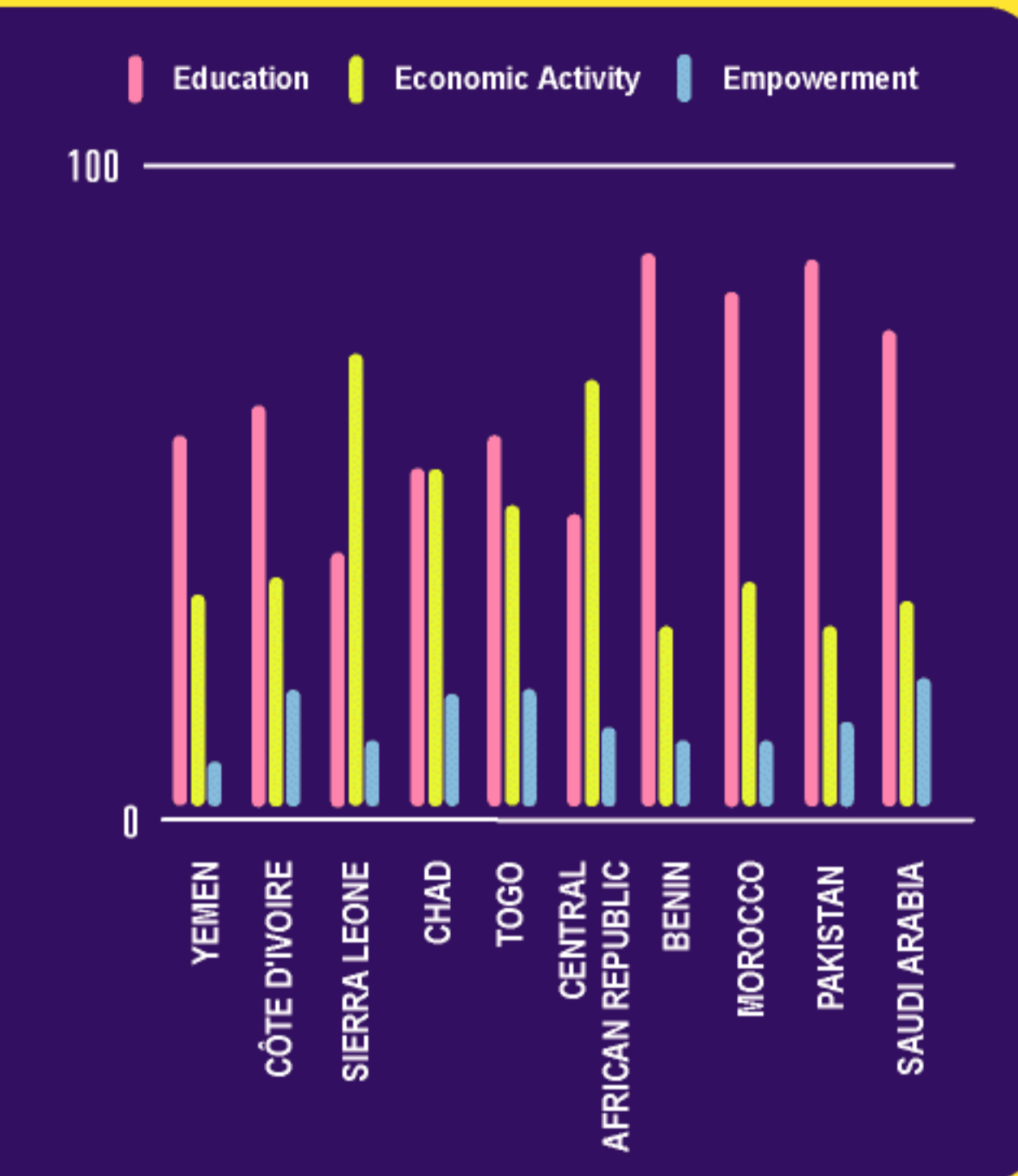
In addition to affecting the life of everyone on the planet and in particular that of women, who comprise at least half of the population, this gap influences countries' economic and social development.



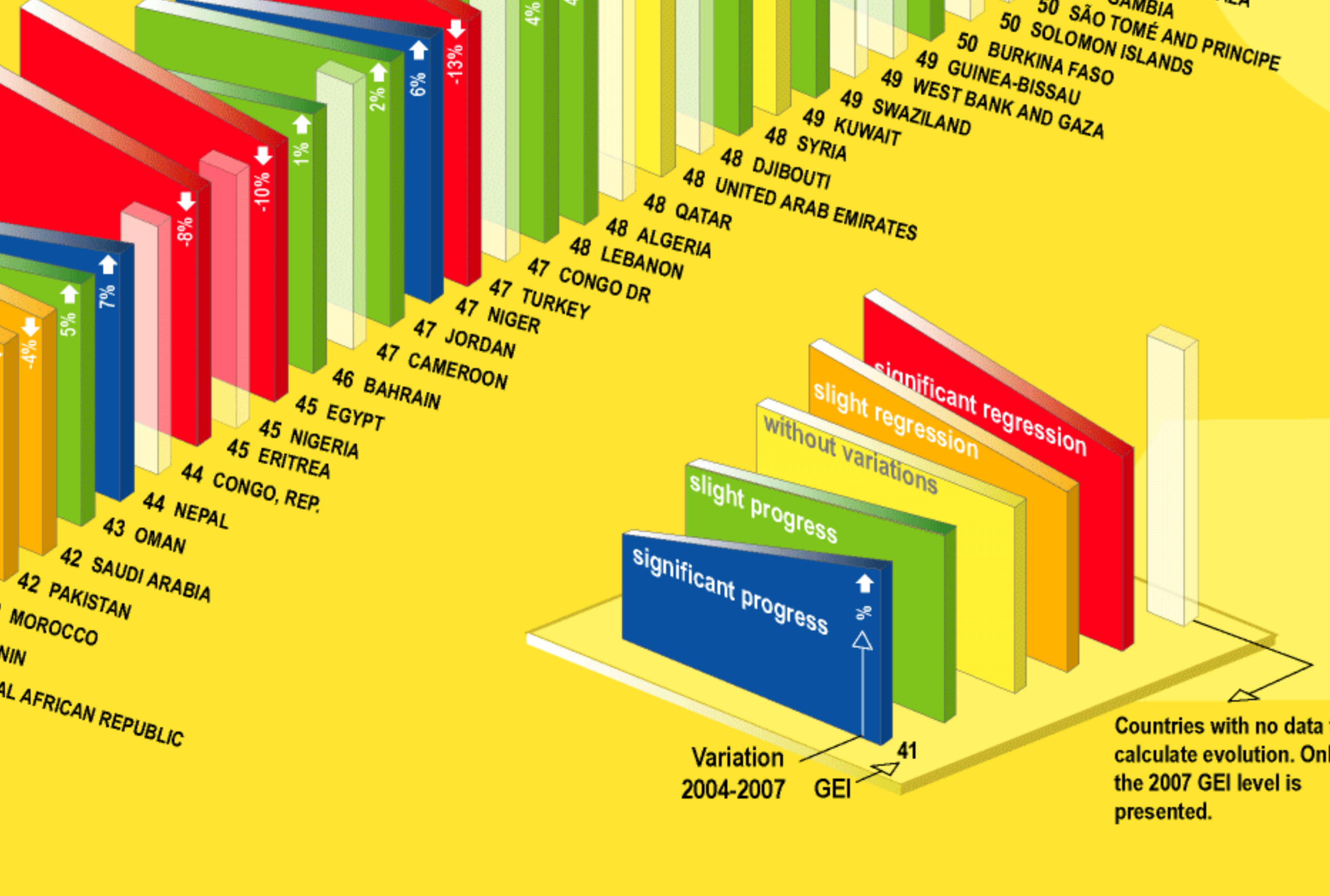
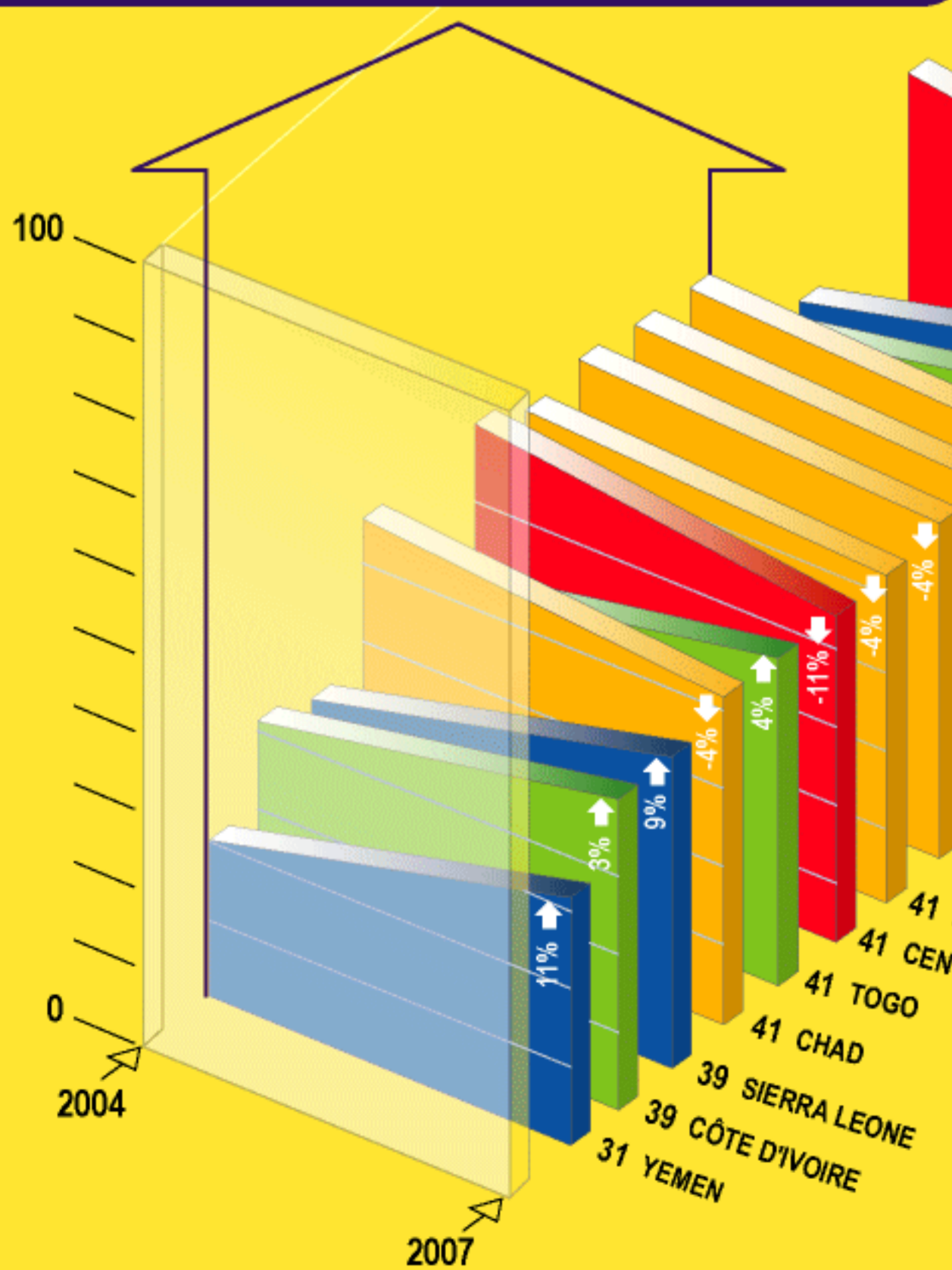
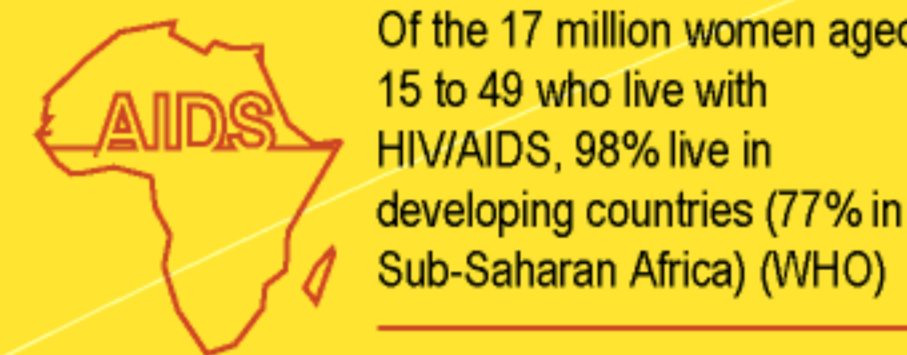
Gender Equity Index 2007: Progress and Regression

The 10 Worst

ANALYSIS OF 2007 GEI BY DIMENSION

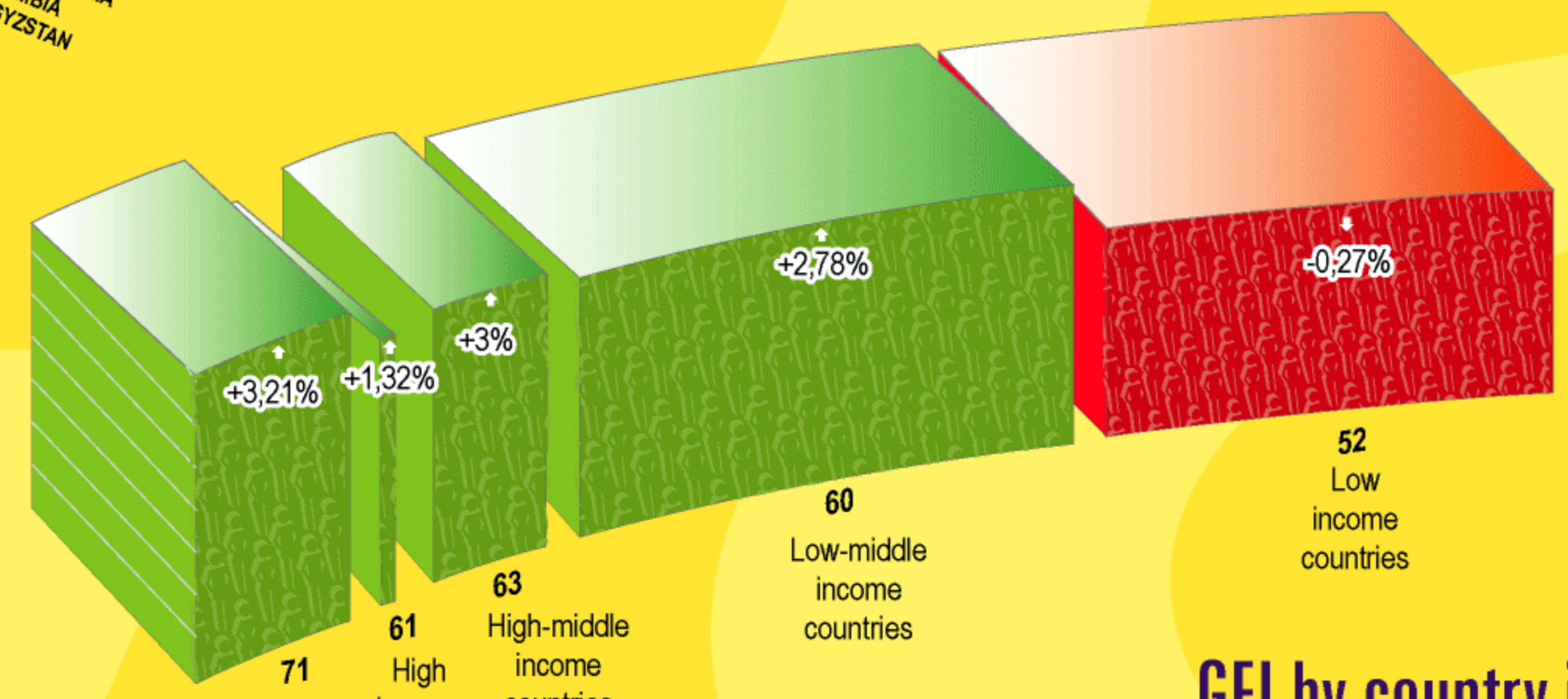


GEI values range from 31 (Yemen) to 89 (Sweden). A majority of countries with the worst performance in relation to gender inequality are from Sub-Saharan Africa. In the least equitable countries the most inequitable dimension is empowerment.



REFERENCES

The width of the prism represents the population of the group of countries in each category



GEI by country income levels

Medium-high income countries have higher average GEI values than high-income countries that do not belong to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This may indicate the survival of inequitable social structures in countries with significant economic growth, such as several Arab countries. This data suggests that the modification of inequitable situations does not fundamentally depend on economic development but rather on the transformation of cultural patterns and power distribution.

There are currently only 12 women who have been elected as Head of State or Government.

Women owned only 23% of companies in the European Union in 2004.

Nordic countries that have implemented affirmative action to eliminate gender inequalities occupy the upper GEI positions with higher equity levels. However, Rwanda is amongst the top 10 countries, which demonstrates that it is not necessary to achieve high levels of economic growth or industrialization in order to implement effective policies that generate more equity. Education and empowerment are key factors to be among the 10 best.



Amongst the 10 countries with the highest GEI values the dimension with the greatest equity is education, where (except for Rwanda) the values are at, or close to, 100 (perfect equity).

The Top 10

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