

**Population and Human Resources
Department
The World Bank
December 1988
WPS 129**

Women in Development

Defining the Issues

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Changing many apparently gender-neutral public policies will make women a more productive part of the economy — and allow them a more equitable share of its benefits — in some not-so-obvious ways.

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Women in Development

Evidence is increasing that one-dimensional policies, such as family planning and supplemental feeding programs, have little chance on their own of achieving the desired objectives — that what is called for is a maternal and child health policy, including family planning, integrated into public policy and linked to education.

While family planning is probably more cost-effective in reducing fertility than programs for child mortality or increasing education, family planning programs are often more effective when child mortality rates are lower and levels of education are higher. In the long term, the most cost-effective approach to reducing fertility is probably to integrate family planning with efforts to improve maternal-child health and education. On the other hand, if the aim is increasing income per capita, educational policies dominate family planning measures, despite large cost differentials.

Similarly, where the aim of public health provision is to reduce mortality and improve nutrition, there is a strong consensus that inte-

gration and coordination of maternal-child health services, especially with educational and literacy policy, is essential and cost-effective. Improving women's ability to work and earn outside the home improves their economic position and power (and probably expenditures on children) — although if their nutritional status is already marginal, working harder to produce more may be a mixed blessing. We must ask: how much extra income do they bring to the household, and to what extent do they maintain control over the income they earn? Also, if mothers and children enjoy more income and autonomy through mothers' employment outside the home, but suffer from the conditions of the work itself, or from lack of adequate childcare alternatives, public policy could alleviate these difficulties — for example, through raising the productivity of women's labor (better access to credit, extension, and markets) and through relaxing the constraints on women's welfare (giving them more schooling, which will give them access to better jobs, more money, and more control over it, as well as enable them to take better care of their children).

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Women in Development: Defining the Issues

1. Introduction

Issues can be defined by problems, by the processes which generate them, or by the interventions which solve them. Each of these bases for classification has some value, and this paper provides a sketch of all three. When women's issues are problem-oriented they fall into two distinct groups: women can be viewed as a disadvantaged target group, or as an under-utilised resource. On several important criteria of wellbeing women seem to be disadvantaged. They have worse health, lower literacy and lower consumption. These dimensions of material disadvantage are compounded by low status. Having lower status than men, women's sphere of autonomy may be more restricted by the constraints imposed by social conventions and even by the legal framework. The resources owned or controlled by women, both labor and other endowments, appear to be under-utilised. The returns to women's labor are known to be lower than those on male labor even controlling for acquired characteristics such as education. It is probable that the same phenomenon applies to the land and capital controlled by women in peasant agriculture. These two problems are associated with rather different solutions. If the problem is female disadvantage then solutions include redistributions from men and exclude those efficiency gains which accrue only to men. Alternatively, if the problem is resource under-utilisation, the

converse applies. It is surely excessively restrictive to define women's issues so as to exclude either one of these solutions. It is reasonable to regard as a women's issue both the possibility that inter-gender redistributions can reduce inequality, and that better utilisation of female labor would raise male living standards.

The encompassing definition of women's issues might, therefore, be based upon these two problems. The more detailed structure of issues would then follow fairly naturally. Equity issues would divide into intra-household and inter-household. Women's disadvantage will give rise to inter-household inequality because households differ in their gender endowments. They would also divide into inequalities due to differential ownership of assets and differential returns upon endowments, the latter indicating inefficiency. Efficiency issues would divide into the allocation of each of the factors of production, and access to technology. This structure is developed somewhat in Section 3. An alternative basis for classification, by government intervention, is discussed in Section 4. The treatment is brief because such a classification is straightforward. The possible incidence of government policy instruments on the welfare of women is considered, but only as a pointer to possible avenues for further inquiry. However, the emphasis of the paper is on a further alternative approach, namely, to define women's issues in terms of the processes which generate the two sets of problems.

Were there a single process which generated both problems such a solution would be obviously superior. Unfortunately, the

world is more complex: we distinguish four processes which interact to give rise to the two problems. The process-oriented approach to the definition of women's issues cannot then claim superior neatness over the problem-oriented approach; rather, the case for it is superior understanding.

The most obvious process whereby women are distinguished is their role in reproduction, which clearly gives rise to some material disadvantage. However, three other processes generate not only material disadvantage but also resource under-utilisation. The four processes are paired; two operate within the household and two operate through female participation in the wider society. Within the household, in addition to the burden of reproduction, there is an asymmetry of rights and obligations. At the societal level the processes are discrimination and the influence of role models. Section 2 discusses these four processes and their interactions.

2. Four Processes and their Interactions

2.1 Discrimination Outside the Household

2.1.1 Labor Market

Most of the literature on discrimination focuses on the labor market. The most commonly deployed technique, the earnings function, is well-suited to show one type of discrimination, namely differentially low pay for the same characteristics. However, this is perhaps the less important aspect of labor

market gender discrimination. The more important is differentially poor access. Evidence on this requires logistic techniques and sampling frames based upon households rather than employers. One such study, for rural Tanzania, found extreme discrimination in ~~in~~ access to non-farm wage employment, which was the highest return activity. Access was determined largely by education, age and gender: A 36 year old man with secondary education had a three-in-four chance of such employment whereas a women of the same age and education had half of that chance. With completed primary education she had only a quarter of the chance, and with partial primary or less she had only one-fifth of the chance, (Collier, Radwan, and Wangwe, (1986) Table 4.7). This declension suggests that discrimination may apply differentially at different levels of education. Thus general expansion of the education system may reduce the aggregate incidence of discrimination even if the educational expansion is not targetted to women.

Since the rural non-agricultural labor market commonly contains a large public sector, discrimination is the outcome of government recruitment policies. In turn, this may reflect the use of public sector employment as part of a patronage system rather than its being a competitive entry based upon job-related characteristics. Women may because of their low status in society be badly represented in the lobby for patronage.

In urban areas, the labor market is probably the main arena of discrimination. However, in rural areas, non-agricultural wage employment can usually only be available to a minority of women

because it is only available to a minority of men. Rather, it is the savings, credit and financial markets where discrimination is more important because these constrain the earning capacities of women in agricultural self-employment.

2.1.2 Savings and Credit:

Women are severely disadvantaged in the credit market: they usually do not own marketable land rights and hence have no collateral, and if subordinates in the household may have no capacity to establish reputations for credit-worthiness as independent agents. Formal credit programs are usually channeled to household heads, and are commonly based on non-food crops in which men tend to specialise. It is very hard to see how these obstacles in the credit market can be overcome, except in the case of female-headed households. For this group, who have the capacity to build reputations, formal credit programs could be monitored to see whether discrimination is occurring. Where it is, it should be a relatively simple matter for a public credit program to be redirected to them as a target group.

However, where women are in male-headed households, which is the majority, the alternative is probably to rely upon the savings market. The latter suffers none of the problems intrinsic to the credit market: dependents can hold individual rights to financial assets. Once such assets are accumulated they fulfil the same functions as a credit line, namely liquidity and the capacity to finance lumpy investments. It is notable that whereas

men predominate as borrowers in both the formal and informal rural credit market, women predominate in the informal savings market, (both as savers and even as lenders in many cases). A particularly interesting manifestation of this is the savings club. In this arrangement a group of women agree to make regular payments into a common fund, the whole sum being distributed on each occasion to the members of the group in turn, the sequence being determined by lot. This offers two advantages over individual savings: first, it enables any scale economies in expenditure to be reaped earlier, and secondly, the social pressure to make contributions enforces saving behaviour against both temporary lapses on the part of the saver and pressure on the woman from other claimants upon assets. The latter may be particularly difficult to resist because of the dependent status of the woman. To bring out the implications, public interventions in rural financial markets have overwhelmingly been on credit rather than the savings side of the market. Yet we have suggested that the former is intrinsically male-biased, whereas the latter is far more likely to be gender neutral. Since the savings market can serve as a substitute for credit, it is therefore likely to be female-biased. The neglect of the rural savings market by public programs would be less important were the informal savings market in a position to provide an adequate service. However, this is often not the case. First, due to problems of the high co-variance of withdrawals, informal savings institutions rarely develop (hence money lenders are far more common than deposit takers). Secondly, because of foreign exchange and interest rate

controls, formal deposit-taking institutions are not in a position to offer a secure and positive real return upon assets to depositors despite such returns being available on the world financial market. Thirdly, if as we have suggested, contractual savings schemes (which both compel saving and limit the capacity to make withdrawals) would be popular, this requires a degree of contractual enforcement and continuity more suited to formal than informal agencies. The design of rural formal savings schemes attractive to women is a priority because it contributes on several different fronts. Savings can finance long term investment in the sectors in which women specialise, thereby rectifying a current mis-allocation of capital and possibly increasing the overall savings rate. They also provide a cushion for temporary negative shocks and a means of profiting in a sustained way from positive ones. Finally, when women command assets their status and bargaining position is improved, and financial assets being new they are not bound by the conventions which often restrict the major real assets, land and livestock, to male ownership.

2.2 Role Models:

In rural Africa formal wage employment, non-food crops and improved livestock are generally innovations of this century. The economy is in disequilibrium in the sense that the rates of return to factors differ systematically between activities. Typically, food production is at the bottom of this hierarchy and

formal wage employment and new technique agricultural investments are at the top. Women are a minority towards the top of the hierarchy and a majority at the bottom. Economic change in rural Africa is to a considerable extent a process of taking up these disequilibrium opportunities by switching into the higher return activities.

Women are at a disadvantage in this process: Bevan et al. (1986) establish that controlling for a wide range of other characteristics, female-headed households are radically less likely to adopt tree crops and improved livestock. Although this is partly due to discrimination, it appears also to be because of the enormous power of role models.

Bevan et al. demonstrated that a "copying effect" is decisive in the entry into new, high return activities. The peasant population has access to a very restricted stream of trustworthy information, chiefly its own social network. This network is defined by family and spatial proximity. If this social network is indeed the chief determinant of economic innovation then the very fact that women are under-represented in high-return activities creates a powerful role model for its perpetuation. The externalities which the copying effect constitute, provide a case for temporary positive discrimination to establish a countervailing role model.

The copying effect works both on states and on decisions. That is, in deciding to enter a new activity people are influenced both by the number of other people already in the activity and by the number of other people who have recently

decided to enter it. Bevan et al. find that the copying effect is much more pronounced for decisions than for states: that is, the decisions currently being made are much more influential than past decisions. Hence, encouraging one woman to enter a high-return activity may have the same inducement to other women to follow as that provided to men by two men who are already in the activity. This is hopeful because it suggests that although role models are important, their inertial properties can be overcome.

Since gender is only one of the dimensions on which actors identify themselves, and hence appropriate role models, the copying effect can be enhanced by concentrating change among similar women (for example, geographically proximate, young, educated women).

2.3 Asymmetric Rights and Obligations

To some extent the household can be viewed as a set of implicit contracts which generate reciprocal rights and obligations. Typically, women incur obligations to grow food crops for subsistence, to gather fuel and water, to cook, and to rear children. In return, the man will provide land, and will meet the cash needs of the household. This allocation is commonly unequal - women work much harder than men. This is clearly the case in much of rural Africa as measured by hours of work. It may also be inefficient, labor and land being imperfectly allocated between activities. Returns to factors are generally radically

higher in non-food activities, consistent with the hypothesis that women work excessively upon food crops because they cannot secure the land for, or would forfeit part of the income from non-food activities. Specialisation is not confined to food versus non-food crops. For example, in Kenya tea picking tends to be women's work. The adoption of tea was found to be significantly effected by the gender composition of the household labour endowment: the more female labor, the more likely was the household to adopt the crop. Conversely in coffee, which tends to be a man's crop, adoption was encouraged only by additional male labor. A constant set of asymmetric rights and obligations may give rise to variable material circumstances. First, there may be asymmetric vulnerability - at times of crisis women may suffer relative to men. For example, work by Vaughan on famine in Malawi shows that men took the opportunity to out-migrate, leaving women with a collapse in subsistence production and a reduced command over cash to purchase food in the market. Women may be especially vulnerable to unanticipated rapid changes associated with slumps and rapid structural adjustment. If so this is worrying since the burden of adjustment costs should not, on equity grounds, be borne by an initially disadvantaged group. Further, since women spend disproportionately upon children, an adjustment that involves short term costs and long term gains, (as most do), may inflict upon a cohort of children an inter-temporal redistribution of consumption which is undesirable (because low but temporary levels of consumption in children may give rise to permanent effects). Secondly, changes in circumstances may make a

given set of rights and obligations increasingly unequal or increasingly inefficient. For example, the emphasis upon technical progress and extension in non-food activities relative to food increases the returns to male labor relative to female labor, and factor allocations become less appropriate because of the restrictions upon substitution possibilities. As the returns to non-food activities rise, female labor and land constrained to food production represent an increasing misallocation.

However, this very specialisation by function makes it relatively easy to target programs for women, (much easier than for poor households). For example, rural water, fuel and health services are all pro-women. Water fetching is an arduous and time consuming activity undertaken almost exclusively by women. Piped water is in effect the supply of leisure to women. Wood gathering for fuel is also a time-consuming female activity. The growing scarcity of such wood reflects the absence of private property rights which, if they are to be created, would most sensibly be vested in women. Reforestation programs have generally been targeted at men. The pricing of firewood substitutes such as kerosene is also, therefore, a women's issue.

2.4 The Burden of Reproduction

The consequences of reproduction for female opportunities are well understood and so our discussion is brief. The physiological asymmetry of reproduction gives rise to various disadvantages. Because there is a phase in mid-life during which

the woman's time is committed, certain activities are precluded. Skills decumulate, and long term contracts such as are common in the labor market are terminated. The physical demands of child bearing and breast feeding cause deterioration in health. Recent studies show that female health relative to male health goes through a trough during the child rearing years. This is not only a bad in itself but rebounds upon income earning opportunities, not merely in the number of days lost but, probably more importantly, in the uncertain discontinuities in the availability of labor time. Women become confined to a range of activities in which child-minding is feasible and in which such discontinuities are relatively unimportant.

2.5 Inter-Linkages between Processes

2.5.1 The Overall Structure of Causation

The four processes discussed above each give rise to material disadvantages. In turn, material disadvantage gives rise to low status. Status is a difficult concept to analyse: it may be generated by the weighted average of lagged perceptions of a number of dimensions of material disadvantage. However, it is clearly more than just a summation of material disadvantage: poor material circumstances may be disliked because they are humiliating as well as uncomfortable. Hence, if low status is the outcome of material disadvantage, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Low status, in turn, sustains and enhances the

asymmetry of rights and obligations, discrimination, and the power of female role models. Hence, through status the processes of disadvantage feed back on each other. The proposed causal structure is set out in Figure 1. The burden of reproduction directly causes material disadvantage to women but does not itself constitute resource misallocation. The three other processes cause both material disadvantage and resource misallocation. The totality of material disadvantage leads to low status which accentuates these three processes.

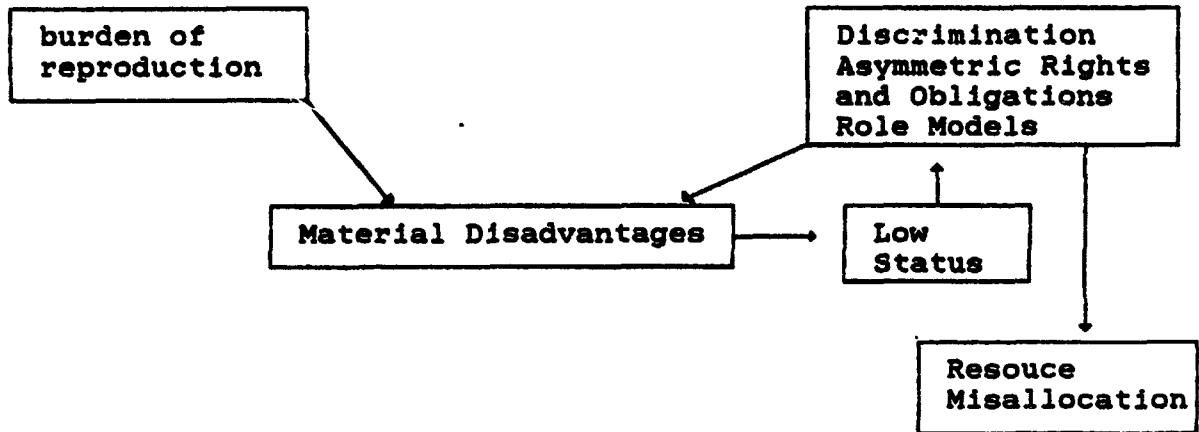


Figure 1: The Structure of Causation

2.5.2 Discrimination Accentuates Intra-Household Asymmetries

By lowering women's earning power outside the household, discrimination weakens the bargaining position within the household. Hence, the effects of discrimination on material disadvantage are reinforced.

2.5.3 Constraints in Financial Markets Worsen the The Burden of Reproduction

A major aspect of reproduction is that it gives rise to a temporary and largely expected phase in which the woman's capacity to earn is reduced whereas her requirements for expenditure are increased. Such a temporary and expected phase is ideally suited for participation in financial markets: consumption can be transferred into this phase from other periods when its value is lower. Thus, women more than men are natural users of financial markets. The disadvantageous aspects of reproduction are therefore powerfully reinforced by women's exclusion from the credit market and the present limitations of financial asset markets discussed above.

2.5.4 Low Status Reinforces the Power of Female Role Models

We have suggested that in deciding upon their actions, actors shape their behaviour to some extent upon agents who are

role models. The model is the more potent the more similar is the agent perceived to be by the actor¹.

The lower is the status of women, the more different they seem from men. Hence, the more likely it is that women will identify themselves by their gender rather than by other potentially differentiating characteristics. This then enhances the power of the female role model relative to other role models. High-return opportunities can be taken up by men copying other men, without this inducing copying behaviour among women.

2.5.5 Low Status Reinforces Asymmetric Rights and Obligations

Low status of women is not the only reason for asymmetries in rights and obligations. However, the restricted autonomy implied by low status clearly contributes to restricted rights to assets, and to the lack of control over cash incomes.

2.5.6 Low Status Reinforces Discrimination

Low status both encourages and makes feasible discrimination. It encourages discrimination because high status agents seek to protect their group position. It makes discrimination feasible because the low self-perception of the low status group induces acquiescence to arrangements which might otherwise be resisted as unfair.

¹The most similar agent is the actor herself, which gives rise to habits and inertia.

3. Equity and Efficiency Problems

We now consider the classification of women's issues according to problems rather than processes. As noted in Section 1, this divides naturally into questions of equity and questions of efficiency.

3.1. Inter-household Equity

Households differ in their gender endowment. This can be expected to generate differences in assets, labor, and access to public services. The consequences of gender differences may be more or less pronounced when the head of the household is a female: the household may be entirely excluded from male oriented public services such as extension; on the other hand, the extra autonomy may relax constraints on the deployment of female labor time. Because females commonly have inferior claims on assets and more restricted labor opportunities, households with a large relative endowment of females will tend to be relatively poor. Inter-household inequality has been decomposed into many components. Potentially, it should be straightforward to quantify the share of overall inter-household inequality which is due to differences between households in the proportions of males and females. This can also be disaggregated into the effects of gender in different household roles (head, adult...).

The essence of this aspect of gender-induced inequality is that its incidence is only loosely gender-related. That is, in households with atypically many females all members suffer, including males, whereas in households with few females all gain, including females. The incidence of this gender-induced inequality is of course gender-skewed, there will be a disproportionate number of women among the poor. However, the gender-skew might be quite modest. For example, if the gender of the household head has a decisive impact upon household income, but household size is quite large, then gender-induced inequality may give rise to considerable inequality among men and among women but only small differences between men and women.

3.2 Intra-household Equity and Efficiency

Even more than when the household is the unit of observation, consumption is a more appropriate indicator of living standards than income, because transfer payments are likely to be proportionately far larger within the household than between households. Consumption should include leisure.²

So defined, two mechanisms of intra-household inequality should be distinguished, both related to asymmetric rights and

²Note that the inclusion of leisure poses a valuation problem since the shadow price of women's time will typically be lower than that of a man. This, however, is a standard index number problem: the comparison of male to female consumption bundles can be done at either male prices or female prices (but not male prices for men and female prices for women).

obligations. Women might have relatively low consumption either because they have relatively low incomes, or because they are net providers of transfer payments. Women might have relatively low incomes either because they have relatively few assets or because they earn systematically lower returns upon assets. In the former case, income inequality is directly tracable to asset ownership inequality and has no direct counterpart in inefficiency. Pure redistribution is required. However, indirectly, there may be an efficiency aspect because, other than for assets in fixed supply, the fact that women own little of an asset, being a symptom of exclusion from the process of its accumulation, may reduce the aggregate rate of its accumulation. The three major real productive assets in rural areas are land, tree crops and livestock. Land rights vary from culture to culture. However, there is plenty of evidence that Bank-promoted land registration programmes have tended to transfer informal but enforcable land rights held by females to legal titles held by males. The slow trend to marketability of land rights creates the possibility that women lose user rights without compensation when land is sold, the man receiving the cash. Tree crops and livestock are overwhelmingly male assets with the exception of smallstock. Tree crops require secure ownership of the land and confidence in the capacity to retain the cash receipts of sales. Yet cash payments are commonly made through crediting an account in a marketing cooperative society. Typically, this account will be registered in the name of the household head. Thus, the centralised nature of tree crop marketing may make women less sure of being the

recipients of payment. The cash activities in which women do tend to specialise; beer brewing, vegetables, poultry, eggs and grains, are all sold in decentralised markets in exchange for cash, and involve a multiplicity of small sales which it is harder for a husband to control. Large livestock may require land rights. Improved livestock, which is where the returns are high, involve indivisibilities and hence large lumpy investments. Hence, the failings in financial markets discussed above may account for the near absence of women's ownership.

Returns on asset ownership may be lower for women either because they are deployed in lower return activities or because women have access to a less favourable production function or because women make decisions which are less economically efficient. The first, we have already suggested is clearly important, and probably stems from the conjunction of high returns being associated with newer activities and low status, less autonomous individuals being less able to make the changes needed to enter these new activities. The second and third may result from restricted access to agricultural information, general education, or farm inputs. Extension services are commonly gender biased both indirectly, as a result of targetting on particular crops, and directly,, partly because the extension workers themselves are male. Education is also commonly biased against women: a lower proportion of women are functionally literate. The current consensus on the contribution of education to agricultural income is that it is useful precisely in a "modernising" environment, (Lockheed et al (1980)). That is, when

new opportunities are spreading, so the peasant economy is in disequilibrium, it is the educated who adapt most rapidly. Women may also have only limited access to farm inputs. Where these are allocated through a non-market system they are generally scarce, and patronage and power networks may displace them to the back of the queue. In conditions of market allocation they may lack the control of cash for timely purchases if cash is handled chiefly by men.

Transfers are substantial within families. In rural Kenya, for example, they supplement income by around a tenth for the rural household as a whole. Remittances come from family members who have migrated away from the household. Overwhelmingly, the senders are male, because they are the ones with cash incomes. There is probably a tendency for cash remittances to be controlled by the household head, thereby being male biased. The other major source into the household of unearned receipts is public services. Of these, education and extension are disproportionately male, (though not intrinsically so), health and water disproportionately female.

4. Policy Interventions

The final organising principle for women's issues is based upon solutions to problems, rather than the problems themselves or the processes which generate them. Government interventions are categorised into four groups.

4.1 Macroeconomic Policy Instruments

Taken together, the exchange rate, the budget deficit and commercial policies determine two internal relative prices: that of non-tradables to tradables, and that of exportables to importables. To some extent, at least in Africa, women are concentrated in the non-tradables sector and men in the two tradable sectors. The export sector is frequently dominated by cash crops from which women are excluded, and the import substitute sector, manufacturing, uses wage labor which is predominantly male. Female labor specialises in trading and food production, the latter often being quasi-non-tradable. The increase in the relative price of tradable goods, which is part of structural adjustment programs, can therefore be expected to redistribute income away from women unless compensated.

4.2 The Composition and Level of Government Expenditure

4.2.1 Delivery of Services

As discussed above, some services are intrinsically gender-biased, and others are de facto so biased. Rural water programs in effect increase the supply of female leisure (which may then be used for productive purposes). Extension services, as presently operated, directly benefit mainly males. Health services disproportionately benefit women with young children because this group has disproportionately high morbidity.

Education happens, entirely avoidably, to be skewed in favor of males, but female education may be more beneficial than male, because of its greater contribution to child welfare and its gearing effects on female status. Further, whereas the return on post-primary education for males appears to be low in rural areas (see Lockheed et al. (1980)), for females the returns to education appear to hold up. Hence, the current gender bias in education is even more bizarre when education is disaggregated into its various levels.

4.2.2 Public Employment

Typically, public employment has been part of government patronage. Employees, at least at low skill levels, may have enjoyed rents either in the form of higher pay or lower effort than private employment. These rents imply both that the distribution of public jobs is an equity issue, and that the current process of distribution is likely to involve lobbying and patronage. Bevan et al. (1986) show that in both Kenya and Tanzania access to such employment was powerfully aided by the membership of kinship networks. Because of the low status of women, and their current under-representation in public employment, women may be less able to benefit from these networks. However, the gender composition of recruitment for unskilled public employment should be an easily controlled variable.

4.2.3 Subsidies

To the extent that men control cash in their own interests, cash expenditures will benefit disproportionately males. Generalised subsidies, which merely lowered the price level, would thus be gender-biased. Subsidies are, however, additionally targeted on certain goods, particularly food. Food subsidies directly benefit net purchasers of food, namely urban households. In much of Africa the urban population is still disproportionately male, so that this involves a gender bias. Indirectly, some of the subsidy may accrue to sellers, who are disproportionately women.

4.3 The Composition and Level of Government Revenue

To the extent that males make net cash transfers to females, income taxes fall directly on males whereas expenditure taxes fall on females. The use of generalised sales taxes to restore budget balance may therefore have some gender bias. Further, male and female expenditure patterns are quite distinct, and so the incidence of particular sales taxes can be highly gender-specific. Existing budget survey data for many countries makes a quantification of tax incidence straightforward, (except for general equilibrium effects).

4.4 Market Regulation

4.4.1 Labor Market Regulation

The most significant form of labor market intervention is probably minimum wage legislation. This both creates rents for wage employees and changes the wage structure: the net effects on women seem ambiguous a priori. The creation of labor market rents, we have suggested, may disadvantage women because access to jobs then becomes in part a function of lobbying, patronage and kinship networks, processes in which low status is a handicap. The wage structure responds to minimum wage legislation by a reduction in the seniority premium: entry wages are increased relative to those at more senior levels (see Collier and Knight (1986)). Since women have much less seniority than men, this effect of the minimum wage redistributes in favor of women. Currently, in real terms minimum wages are falling, and this can be expected gradually to change the wage structure against women.

4.4.2 Financial Market Regulation

The importance of financial market deregulation for women has already been discussed above. Because women lack the autonomy to build up reputations for creditworthiness, they are intrinsically at a disadvantage in the credit market and so must rely on savings as a substitute. Because of the anticipated

dissaving phase intrinsic to the reproductive role, women have a greater need than men for liquid financial assets. The high covariance of withdrawals has inhibited the development of informal rural savings institutions, and public encouragement of institution-building may therefore be desirable.

4.4.3 Price Controls

In some countries consumer goods are scarce because prices are held below market-clearing levels by price controls. One consequence of shortages is that those responsible for expenditure must divert labor time into searching and queueing. It is possible that this has a gender-bias.

5. Conclusion

Because women are half the world, every government decision, and every economic process ^a affects women. The definition of what constitutes a women's issue must be more restrictive than this. Three approaches have been suggested. On one, policies were seen as women's issues to the extent that they ³ affected women differentially. We suggested that this might indeed apply to a wide range of policies. On a second, we distinguished problems into equity-based and efficiency based. The third, and most emphasised classification, was in terms of gender-specific processes. Four such processes were distinguished, together with their interactions. Women's issues then become a matter of understanding how these processes can be alleviated.

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