

# Searching for new pathways towards achieving gender equity

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# Searching for new pathways towards achieving gender equity: beyond Boserup and ‘Women’s role in economic development’<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Ester Boserup’s book *Women’s role in economic development* marked an important step in understanding the position of women in developing economies. Her book, along with the work of feminists writing at the same time, marked the start of a range of activities, such as projects focused on women, that aimed at removing the economic exclusion of women. These activities were named *Women in Development*. These activities came to be seen as too narrowly focused on women and the focus started shifting towards *Gender and Development* and then to gender mainstreaming in 1995. In this paper first discusses the activities that were promoted by WID, GAD and gender mainstreaming following Boserup’s book. The paper also focuses on the foundations of gender planning tools and on conceptual issues that are integral to understanding of gender issues today. The paper aims to provide some answers to questions being asked and suggests ways forward. In particular it advocates that more attention be given to gender analysis and its analytical frameworks and to the meaning of gender equity and empowerment in analyses in which gender is not an isolated category and investments in women are not justified solely on economic grounds.

**Keywords:** women, gender, agriculture, gender mainstreaming, women in development, gender analysis, World Conferences on Women.

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## Introduction

It is 40 years since Ester Boserup published her book *Woman's role in economic development* (Boserup, 1970). The book marked an important step in understanding the position of women in developing economies and the way in which their position was being impacted by – what was referred to at the time as – world capitalism. Boserup was the first to point out that economic growth, and especially the spread of capitalism in the developing world, had not necessarily benefited women and men equally. She used empirical work from Africa, Asia and Latin America to support her conclusions that women were being left behind, as subsistence producers using ‘primitive techniques’ in the agricultural sector; as low paid workers in non-farm and urban sectors and as unpaid workers in rural areas, contributing to farm productivity following the outmigration of men.

Boserup’s observations reflected the concerns of her contemporaries: the economic processes of capital accumulation, population growth and land alienation, set in motion just before the colonial period, and of postcolonialism and the enthusiasm for development planning. In this context, and evident in Boserup’s own work, universalising development models, which describe modernisation pathways and stages, were popular at the time and seen as tools to guide action. Boserup’s own variant of modernisation theory is based on technological determinism in rural and urban settings and situated within an apparent and inevitable shift from rural through transitional to urban stages; and linked with these stages are male, semi-male and female towns (Beneria and Sen, 1981). Contradictions in data from specific, often anthropological, studies are viewed by Boserup as evidence of ongoing change. Like some of her contemporaries, Boserup based her work on rather rigid typological constructions of cultural evolution. At the same time, feminists such as June Nash, Helen Safa and Eleanor Leacock, amongst others, were concerned with the so-called ‘march of progress’: the spread of world capitalism and consequent increasing inequalities, dependencies and the widening gap between core and peripheral regions and rich and poor classes<sup>2</sup>. All of these changes were becoming apparent in the 1960s. The search for equality was rooted in planning, and Boserup’s work on women’s role in economic development provided the momentum for the attention to women within this context.

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<sup>2</sup> June Nash, Helen Safa and Eleanor Leacock, anthropologists and members of the feminist movement, were all concerned with the linkages between economic and social change in different cultural contexts in the Americas.

Boserup's book, along with the work of feminists writing at the same time, heralded in a wide range of activities: conferences, a framework of international agreements, set-up of women's machineries and bureaux, statistical data collection, design of development planning aids and implementation of projects focused on women. All the activities aimed at addressing the economic exclusion of women and were named *Women in Development* (WID). At the same time, feminists continued to analyse women's position in societies, which had undergone dramatic changes, and questioned the productionist underpinnings of development activity for resolving a fundamental problem that they called 'women's subordination' (Pearson *et al.*, 1981). Their critique of WID includes the focus on women as a single isolated category led to a declared shift in focus from WID to *Gender and Development* (GAD) and the adoption of gender mainstreaming in 1995, which was seen as a radical process at the time.

To this day the term gender lies at the centre of discussions about what has been achieved after four decades of work; about the value of key gender planning tools; about the role of men in accounting for less than expected achievements; about how to reinvigorate gender mainstreaming processes initiated 15 years ago and, related to this, about where gender fits into threats to agricultural production from HIV/AIDS and climate change. This paper provides some answers to questions being asked and suggests ways forward. In the process of doing this, the paper emphasizes the need for more attention to be given to gender analysis and its analytical frameworks and to the meaning of gender equity and empowerment in analyses in which gender is no longer an isolated category and investments in women are not justified solely on economic grounds. The paper is based on the understanding that addressing gender means to achieve transformative social change. The fact that gender has remained on the development agendas, despite resistance from numerous groups, is to the credit of the many people who continue to be inspired by Ester Boserup's book. Since its publication in 1970, significant shifts in the understanding of gender issues have been made, even though these may not always be evident in development practice.

The paper is based on documented sources. All the issues have been and remain the subject of a wide body of literature, both academic and practical. Only a small selection of this material is referenced in the paper. The paper is not a comprehensive report, nor does it point to a clear linear process for reaching some agreed change. Its aim is rather to present information to assist in making decisions about adopting a transformative agenda for achieving gender equity (Eyben and Napier-Moore, 2009). The paper is divided into two sections. The point of departure is the flurry of activity that began immediately after the publication of Boserup's

book in 1970. The first part of the paper covers the range of WID, GAD and gender mainstreaming activities from this point to the present, pinpointing key assumptions and debates.

The second part of the paper focuses on the foundations of gender planning tools and on conceptual issues that are integral to the understanding of gender issues today. The meanings of a number of these issues – including gender equity – have been described as “fuzzy”, either because they are indeed very complex or because fuzziness serves the interest of those seeking to push forward a social transformation agenda in a ‘hostile policy environment’ (Eyben and Napier-Moore, 2009). In this part specific, if brief, reference is made to the *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*, published jointly by World Bank, FAO and IFAD (WB, FAO and IFAD, 2009). While this sourcebook is intended as a guideline for practitioners, such as project managers, it also presents an overview of current thinking about women in natural resource management and visions for the future, that is, where work remains to be done. We particularly look at land tenure issues, because land tenure is viewed by many analysts as determining the ability of women to engage as full partners in agricultural development. The second part of the paper also addresses: concerns related to a renewed call to adopt a gender relational analysis that involves ‘bringing men in’; relations between men and women in different institutional contexts; data gaps and the need to contextualise our data analyses.

The conclusion returns to the practical concern of many agencies of where gender fits into the understanding of challenges to agricultural production, specifically from HIV/AIDS and climate change. These concerns point to the critical issue that has been central to the strategy of gender mainstreaming, since it was adopted at the 1995 Beijing conference: how to counter the “slow progress in equalizing power in gender relations” (which led to the shift from WID to GAD) “and the persistent political marginalization of women’s views on the development process, especially at the level of development planning in institutions such as state bureaucracies and development organizations from multilaterals to NGOs” (Goetz, 1997, pp. 2–3).

## **Women in development: The WID-GAD process from 1970 to the present. What has worked? What has not worked?<sup>3</sup>**

The WID movement had already started before 1970 through the work of a number of female anthropologists, whose findings formed the basis of women's advocacy work, seeking gender justice in the US (Tinker, 1990). WID policies had also been promoted from within development agencies, and by critics from outside development institutions, since the early 1970s. These policies had been prompted by Boserup's observations that women were excluded from new social and economic opportunities resulting from development efforts, or reflected observations that women were being involved in development processes that denied them their independent, sometimes referred to as customary, rights, roles and access to resources (Rogers, 1980). It was the findings from Sub-Saharan Africa – Boserup's *female farming systems* – that were used to challenge the welfare approach to women's needs and to highlight women's customary role in the rural economy. The need for policy support of these productive roles was articulated within WID in efficiency terms; the costs of investing in women's productivity being justified in terms of economic and social gains and in terms of justice for women, who had been relegated to a subsistence and lower status role (Jaquette, 1990). This was the intellectual underpinning for WID and, as will be seen, the convergence of equity and efficiency arguments had a lasting impact on how development planners think about women.

Regarding the role of the United Nations (UN), from 1945 to 1975 it had concerned itself with codifying women's legal and civil rights as well as with collecting statistics on women. *World Conferences on Women* were the second stage of activities in the struggle for women's equality. By the time of the first conference in 1975 in Mexico City, coinciding with International Women's Year, WID events had already gained considerable momentum, and WID policies were given a high profile. According to UN websites, this first conference took place under difficult conditions, with participants' opinions being divided by world politics and economic realities of the time. The success of the conference is measured in terms of attendance, the development of action plans and the launching of institutions to further support the struggle for women's equality.

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<sup>3</sup> This section is based substantially on Pearson *et al.*, 1981, Razavi and Miller, 1995, Goetz, 1997; Eyben and Napier-Moore, 2009 and Skard, 2009.

The meeting engaged a diverse set of actors: government and non-governmental (NGO) development agencies, academics and women's advocates. A parallel forum, held at the same time, drew 4 000 NGO participants. This was seen as a positive move, ensuring greater international collaboration on women's issues. At the same time, it placed NGOs centrally within existing development efforts, as demonstrated by their increased representation at succeeding conferences (15,000 in Nairobi in 1985 and an estimated 30,000 in Beijing in 1995).

The main focus of the Mexico conference was on women as a neglected, or invisible, resource for development and on the adoption of a *World Plan of Action* promoting their equal participation in development. Minimum targets were set and discussed at the second World Conference on Women in Copenhagen. The Mexico conference urged the UN General Assembly to mark a new era in global efforts to promote the advancement of women by launching the decade from 1976 to 1985 as the *United Nations Decade for Women*, which it did five months later. The conference also resulted in specific actions to address the WID demand for social justice and equity for women: the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) that together provided the institutional framework for research, training and operational activities in the area of women and development. The conference also called for new legislation to promote women's rights. One of the most comprehensive of these was the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which, amongst other things, recognised women's rights to receive training, education, extension services and credit. CEDAW provided the normative environment within which advocates could voice their demands. Whereas in the early 1970s women had been seen as passive recipients of support and assistance, the emphasis from 1975 onwards was on national governments developing strategies to give women equal access to educational and employment opportunities; political representation and participation; and physical and social welfare.

After 1975, the adoption of efficiency arguments, as justification for paying more attention to women, led to further efforts to include women's productive and reproductive contributions in gross national product and labour statistics as well as to studies that tried to demonstrate productivity advantages of investing in women. Razavi and Miller (1995) marked the year 1977 as a watershed in the evolution of thinking on feminism and development, when a group of feminist thinkers formed the Subordination of Women Workshop and sought ways to

conceptualize the link between gender and the economy in a less deterministic way. In the introduction to a report on the work of this group (Pearson *et al.*, 1981), the editors raised concerns about the current conceptualization of women in development literature: the predominance of descriptive studies within which gender relations are presented as unchangeable and fixed; its equivocal identification and analysis of women's subordination using standard terms of patriarchy, exploitation and oppression; and its identification of women as an isolated and uniform category. While reserving concepts of patriarchy and exploitation for specific forms that gender relations might take, they preferred the term subordination and the social relations of gender to represent the common elements that appeared to be present in the relations between women and men.<sup>4</sup>

The second World Conference on Women in Copenhagen in 1980 was devoted to reviewing mid-decade progress in implementing action plans and addressing obstacles to meeting targets. While it was agreed that a lot of progress had been made, it was acknowledged that laws and conventions do not automatically result in women being able to secure declared rights. A number of constraints were identified, including women's lack of ownership of property – a theme that persists to this day –; women's lack of inheritance rights and the lack of male involvement and support for change, along with insufficient political will. The conference concluded that women had become more visible, but they continued to be ignored in main policy documents and projects. A number of examples of this were noted: In the International Labour Organization's recommendations on land reform (in Colombia, Sri Lanka and Philippines) redistributions were made at the household level (Palmer 1977). Dey's report on a rice irrigation project in the Gambia that demonstrated the complexity of intra-household relations in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa remains a classic of this project behaviour to this day (Dey, 1982).

By the end of the *United Nations Decade for Women* in 1985, the third World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi, took place under the banner of 'Equality, Development and Peace' to which everyone was committed. From the beginning the UN regarded this as a more hopeful setting. Owing to the large increase in NGO representation at the NGO forum, the conference was described by many as marking the 'birth of global feminism'. At the time of the Nairobi conference, 127 UN member states had some form of national machinery dealing

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<sup>4</sup> Selections of the papers presented at the 1978 International Conference on *The Continuing Subordination of Women in the Development Process* held at the Institute of Development Studies were published in the volume *Of Marriage and the Market* (Young *et al.*, 1981).

with policies, research and programmes aimed at women's advancement and participation in development. In spite of this achievement, data gathered by the UN confirmed what had already been revealed in 1980; only a minority of women benefited from all the action. There were other concerns: WID advocacy had been selective, focusing on women's productive contributions but with donors meeting demands for productive employment for women with small-scale income generating activities and thus helping poor women increase their contribution to meeting family needs. The women's agenda was incorporated into new anti-poverty strategies, focusing on the poorest and often female-headed households. As Buvinic (1983) recorded, this was a much less threatening agenda that was not about redistribution. Nevertheless, women's labour burdens had increased.

The realization of failure to achieve any substantial equity targets called for the adoption of a new approach. The resulting *Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women*, that declared all issues to be women's issues, was adopted by consensus by the 157 participating governments. Responsibilities for women's issues were to be integrated into all institutional offices and programmes, and focal points on women's issues were to be appointed in all sectors where they did not already exist. This agreement to mainstream equity issues in all aspects of organizations, rather than pursuing them through WID bureaux or WID projects, marked the Nairobi Conference as a major turning point in achieving equality for women.

While the efforts of the previous two decades, starting with the Mexico conference in 1975, had helped improve some women's conditions and access to resources, they had not changed the basic structure of inequality in the relationship between men and women. Decisions that affected all people's lives were still being made mostly by men. Ways had to be sought to empower women, so that they could bring their own priorities and values as equal partners in decision-making processes at all levels. As Goetz (1997) narrates, WID had certainly been successful in bringing women into projects and in providing women with resources, but it had not influenced women's social and economic power relative to men's. In her introduction to the edited volume *Getting Institutions Right for Women in Development*, Goetz (1997) also presents a WID critique of the marginalisation of women's views on development objectives and the means to achieve them, by development institutions themselves: the institutional location of policy efforts determines policy outcomes. In her volume, Goetz (1997) draws together a range of examples of how development institutions use women instrumentally to

achieve their own objectives, rather than contributing to women's capacities to control their life choices.

It was such critiques that eventually led to the shift from WID to GAD. Moving from WID to GAD was the challenge to be met by the fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. Participants at this meeting recognized the need to shift the focus from women to gender relations. It was acknowledged that the entire structure of society, and all relations between men and women within it, had to be re-evaluated. This was an even more challenging agenda than the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, adopted by the previous conference in 1985. Widely referred to as gender mainstreaming, this entails the reworking of structures of decision-making and institutional cultures, such that gender is recognized as central rather than peripheral and that it needs to be rescued from the ranks of an optional extra on a social development checklist. The 1990s culminated in the adoption of the *Millennium Declaration* in 2000. The eight millennium development goals provided the framework for implementing the *Millennium Declaration*, with gender indicated separately in one goal – to promote gender equality and empower women .

The change from WID to GAD represented a strong reaffirmation that women's rights were human rights and that gender equality was an issue of universal concern, benefiting all. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) adopted at the Beijing conference established gender mainstreaming as a key strategy for addressing gender inequalities. UN technical bodies are responsible for implementing the BPfA, and within the UN system gender mainstreaming is defined as:

“a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.” (FAO, 2003, p. 6)

In endorsing the BPfA, the UN General Assembly called upon all States, the UN system and other international organizations, as well as NGOs and the private sector, to take action to implement its recommendations. Within UN member states, national machineries, which had been established to promote the status of women, were assigned a new function as the central policy coordination unit to mainstream a gender perspective throughout all institutions and

programmes. Within the UN system, the Secretary-General designated a senior official to serve as his special adviser on gender issues, whose role was to ensure system-wide implementation of gender perspectives in all aspects of work. The United Nations was also assigned a key role in the monitoring of the Platform.

Meanwhile, the failure of state institutions to mainstream gender and transform their organizational culture has been linked to their bureaucratic and hierarchical set-up. Some argue that this failure was predictable and even inevitable (Razavi, 1997), while others suggest that evaluations of mainstreaming need to take a more structured approach to the analysis and break down the term mainstreaming into its various components of policy reform, administrative reform, analytical and conceptual strengthening and political advocacy (Subrahmanian, 2004). Del Rosario (1997) reports on the mainstreaming experience of the Philippines, where the official strategies for mainstreaming gender issues have long been instituted by national machineries, focal points and working groups. The author uses experiences in the labour and employment sector to demonstrate how these 'state masculinities' work. She argues that inconsistencies within the structures for gender mainstreaming in the Philippines provide space for manoeuvring and planning for change within the bureaucratic system. Del Rosario (1997) elaborates further that there are issues of adequate budgets, a lack of sensitivity towards gender and an insufficiently disaggregated database, all of which make it hard to plan or to evaluate policy impacts. However, the author reasons that the low provision of financial and human resource reflects the low priority given to gender mainstreaming. In terms of lack of commitment, she notes different reactions of senior male officials to reports of their own and of their client's lack of gender sensitivity: Concerning the sensitivity of clients, they are committed to providing gender training that they themselves fail to attend. Del Rosario (1997) argues that database problems stem from unwillingness on the part of senior officers to recognize that men's and women's experience of development is different. Yet, the author notes that these officers can be swayed by middle rank officers with knowledge. Del Rosario (1997) concludes that, in spite of all the constraints, "the barrier of state masculinism is not impenetrable" (Del Rosario, 1997, p. 87).

On a final note, it is interesting to ask whether everyone involved in the 1995 conference realized precisely what had been agreed. As Goetz (1997) details: While WID approaches are based on a politics of access, the GAD approach "recognises the importance of redistributing power in social relations, and directly challenging male privilege (...) such policies have characteristics which tend to create resistance and opposition" (Goetz, 1997, pp. 3–6). Since

1995, there have been a lot of projects focusing on women and limited support for GAD from many groups, including from some feminists, who argue that women's needs have yet to be met and 'bringing men in' will refocus activities on men. There are, nevertheless, commitments being made to achieving gender equity and different initiatives are taken for achieving this, e.g. frameworks, guidelines and toolkits.

However, since the 1990s, development policies continue to emphasise poverty reduction – including women – and efficiency arguments as ways of providing incentives to those not committed to GAD and equity, yet. Both arguments dramatically undermine the focus on gender. As has been so aptly described by many, gender policies aiming at transformative change may be reduced to closing gaps between women and men, e.g. in education and health, in order to address female poverty. Some feminist authors argue, though, that there is a broad consensus that women are the poorest of the poor, and gender interests might best be served by being mainstreamed into poverty reduction policies and practices.

## **Gender analysis: Frameworks, conceptual issues and involvement of men**

Guidelines, frameworks and toolkits have been part of planning processes throughout the period under review, and programmes and projects might use an existing framework or modify one to suit their own planning purposes. Apart from demonstrating the underlying policy assumptions, the frameworks also indicate the different ways in which gender analysis is being used and how gender and gender equity is understood. Razavi and Miller (1995) examine the theoretical underpinnings and policy implications of two frameworks for gender analysis: the gender roles, or Harvard, framework and the social relations framework. Both will be briefly discussed below.

The gender roles framework is linked to literature on gender and efficiency at the national level. It was intended to be a guide to targeting projects and their resources. The framework can deliver this, but it says nothing directly about the processes of change that might occur; about equity or empowerment. Yet organisations often read something about these processes into the data. In gender roles analysis households are understood as systems of resource allocation. Gender equity is defined in terms of workloads and the access to and control over resources by individual household members. Women's productive contributions provide the rationale for allocating resources to them. Gender equity and economic efficiency are

synergistic, and gender analysis is a diagnostic tool for planners to overcome inefficient resource allocations (Overholt *et al.*, 1985; Feldstein and Poats, 1989). The framework offers a non-confrontational approach to planning: It presents economic arguments for delivering resources to women and identifies which resources are needed to enable women in the household to be as productive as men. It is assumed that access translates unproblematically into control. As a strategy this ignores power relations and the fact that powerful others can subvert resources directed at women.

The social relations framework is based less on economic principles in its conceptualisation of gender. It is linked to literature on women's empowerment and policy implication of the approach. Social relations analysis and gender role analysis share their focus on gender disaggregated assessments of roles, access to and control over resources. However, they diverge in the degree to which the analysis extends beyond production to include the range of relations through which needs are met, and the rights and obligations, norms and values that sustain life as well as the degree to which weight is given to other social relations of class, age and ethnicity.

Social relations analysis moves beyond the binary category women / men and focuses on the relationships between men and women in different institutional settings; moving beyond the household to markets, state agencies and others, all of which are possible sites of women's subordination. Nevertheless, women –and men – are seen as agents of development, rather than simply victims, and the analysis includes both individual and collective agency. The central problem under investigation in social relations analysis is not to facilitate women's integration into development *per se*, but rather the identification of the social structures, processes and relations that give rise to women's disadvantaged position, and to address these. Social relations analysis considers the subordination of women agenda, introduced in the late 1970s by Young *et al.* (1981), and is not about the reallocation of economic resources, even if this might be an outcome of addressing women's disadvantaged position. As Razavi and Miller (1995) note, there are no efficiency arguments in social relations analysis as a method of operationalizing gender. Instead, the approach demands a significant understanding of gender relations, and there are no quick fixes for achieving gender equality.

A number of feminists raised questions on the conceptions of equity or fairness in gender roles analysis, but also in other types of analysis. Analysing individual roles and resource access and control within households has to be done with a view of local expectations of men

and women as well as within the specific matrix of social relations within which the individuals are involved. For example, amongst many ethnic groups in Sub-Saharan Africa both men women (before and after marriage) are expected to earn an independent income, in order to fulfil their separate obligations. This is not the case in much of South Asia. This norm has influenced development thinking around gender relations in Sub-Saharan Africa, but also about sharing and cooperation within marriage.

This is in contrast to the almost standard presentation of conflictual intrahousehold relationships. Authors such as Whitehead, Jackson, Rao and Kabeer, along with others, have long argued for a shift towards such an understanding, and to discuss equity within such an understanding. In the context of gender role analysis, individuals may undertake different activities, but these form part of a system of cooperation and exchange that is potentially – and only potentially – conflictual. As Whitehead (1990) states, the concept of unitary households, with unity of interests amongst its members, is not useful but neither is total separation. Regarding gender roles analysis, the author argues further that one might interpret the fact that women work harder – or longer hours – than men as reflecting women acting in their own interests to improve their own well-being or that of others. Work intensity, however, can be explained by a complexity of factors associated with other kinds of investment in the social relations under which the work is being performed.

Similarly, the assessment of resource distribution must also include the allocation of responsibilities between household members. For example, in some areas of sub-Saharan Africa, especially in West Africa, some women farm independently, but women are often seen as having only limited control over outputs from this independent farming. However Guyer (1988) states that output produced by women must be seen as both a source for their own wealth accumulation as well as a buffer for fluctuations in men's incomes, which are central to household survival. Responsibilities may also extend beyond the household, to wider families, kin groups and even lineages; especially in the case of men but also in the case of women. Fulfilling wider responsibilities has implications for male status, especially where men are household heads and senior members of their kin groups. It also has implications for the household status, and women, or wives, may see this as beneficial for themselves (Jackson 2000).

Whitehead and Kabeer (2001) provide another study on the logic of apparent gender inequity in farming: They argue that “gendering the land question involves a critical consideration of

shared as well as separate interests, labour, and wellbeing in relation to a range of kinds of cultivation and ownership of land. They note that shared interests and shared consumption of collectively own-produced food are clearly central to rural women's lives in farming households" (Whitehead and Kabeer, 2001, p. 6). And in response to research findings on the sub-optimal use of agricultural resources by men and women, they also argue that this "might make sense when evaluated as the management of complex family relations with positive spin-offs in the enterprise as a whole" (p. 10), from which women benefit as members, particularly in relation to food consumption (Jackson, 2003). Jackson (2003) pursues this further: "The reason why women (and men?) are able to grow higher value crops on their fields is precisely because other jointly cultivated fields produce staples, that is, separate / independent production by women (and men?) is enabled by joint production, and the boundary between the shared and the separate should not be overdrawn" (Jackson, 2003, p. 457). The author concludes that "backgrounding shared interests can underestimate the extent to which women have rational commitments to household arrangements which appear gender inequitable" (Jackson, 2003, p. 467).

With respect to land rights for women, Walker (2003), with reference to South Africa, argues that "the focus on individual rights for poor women needs to be tempered by a deeper appreciation of the importance of household membership in poor women's lives (...) While a minority [of women] were interested in the idea of independent rights in land, delinked from that of their husbands or families, few saw this as the solution to their problems. They were more interested in mechanisms for securing, even extending, their rights within their households, including through such mechanisms as joint title and individual copies of title deeds." (Walker, 2003, p. 46)

Jackson (1999), in connection with concerns about the context within which perceptions of equity are embedded, also raises questions about the timeframe within which gender divisions of labour need to be considered to arrive at a better understanding of equity. As she remarks, the concept of gender labour divisions is a static one, and whether or not labour distributions are considered to be fair, depends how these fit within a timeframe of wider gender relations. Jackson (1999) asks: Should we be expecting equality to look like symmetry with both women and men sharing the same type of work, or can we look for gendered reciprocity over a life cycle and possibly even involving a variety of items exchanged. Reciprocities beyond work exchanges can affect expectations about the fairness of the distribution of work as well

as the distributions of other resources and can be linked with wider conjugal, or other, relations.

There are also methodological issues that have been raised around time-use studies. Whitehead (1999), Jackson (1999) and Jackson and Palmer-Jones (1999) expressed concerns about the way these data can be misread. Time-use studies embody value judgements about what constitutes work and about how researchers and planners categorise this. They all suggest that when using these tools, greater attention must be paid to how different tasks are understood, the level of effort required for different tasks and the context in which work is done. As Whitehead (2000) argued the way time use is calculated at present overstates the case for women and supports the discourses of the inactive or 'lazy' man in Africa, or – as described by Jackson (2000) – results in what appear to be “time famines for women and time feasts for men” (Jackson, 2000, p.10).

## **Involving men: men and masculinities**

As we saw in the first section of this paper, already by the late 1970s, planning for women in isolation was under fire because the relational nature of their subordination had been left out, even though men were always involved, both conceptually and practically, in gender and development planning. Recently the picture of all men as villains and women as permanent victims, vulnerable to the oppression of men, is being questioned. There is a general call for changing the way in which gender has been operationalized within development, by involving men. Chant (1999) suggests that the rising interest in men in the GAD process reflects the fact that the field of gender and development is now nearly three decades old, and that the need to place greater emphasis on gender relations in GAD – even if this has yet to be operationalized – has become more acceptable. Even though there is opposition to such a move, it seems inevitable, if further progress is to be made. The key question being asked is how can men practically be involved, especially when there is a shortage of information on the practical experiences of working with men on gender. This section reflects on this question, but it first considers some material on how conventional male identities are changing.

Jackson (2000) in her edited collection of papers on *Labour, Masculinities and Development* suggests that there is some evidence that the conventional identity of men, as having hegemonic power, is shifting. In a review of the evidence the author observes that senior men in a number of African societies experienced a steady erosion of power, based on the labour

of both junior males and females, as a result of labour migration, changing marriage laws and commoditisation. Authors such as Cleaver, Chant, Sweetman, Cornwall, and many others referenced in the same volume, agree that ongoing changes in the economy, social structures and household composition are resulting in 'crises of masculinity' in many parts of the world. The talk is on 'men in crisis', 'troubled masculinities' and 'men at risk', particularly in Latin America and South and Southern Africa; with young males, who have low levels on income, being singled out as especially vulnerable to insecurity and marginalisation (Barker 1997; Cornwall, 1998, p. 46). Evidence for this trend includes: low educational attainment of boys; economic change resulting in the loss of men's assured role as breadwinner and provider to the family; increased entry of women into the labour force, a higher share of female-headed households and the incidence of anti-social behaviour and violence committed by men. These changes are important to both men and women.

Although some gender advocates are reluctant to question what is now almost gender orthodoxy, a more realistic picture of women in relation to men is required. Questioning the altruism of women and selfishness of men<sup>5</sup>, Jackson (2000) argues that it is now time to interpret altruism from a male perspective. This entails considering the importance of the men demonstrating generosity, rather than – for example – spending money on liquor, and even conceiving that there may be benefits to others from a successful gender performance by men. Equally, not all men use their income for themselves; some is transferred to women for collective consumption (Carsten, 1989, p. 132). With respect to the need for men to demonstrate generosity, Jackson (2000) argues that money management in some societies is a key to successful achievement of adult manliness, but beset with contradictory messages, as are the messages about men in general. Men are often presented as constraints on women's activities and at the same time as useful, since their power enables women to engage with others in activities they might not be in a position to undertake alone.

It also needs to be clarified that not all men are powerful and have control over others. While existing gender analysis implies that male identities offer all men privileged access to employment, to the labour of women and younger men in their households for farm work and to power, related to the control of income; the expression of male authority in controlling female labour in farm households is extremely variable (Jackson (2000)). Even though the

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<sup>5</sup> The GAD literature places emphasis on a picture of men as selfish, spending money on themselves rather than on others. This is opposed to the picture of women, who are universally presented as altruistic, always denying themselves and spending money on others rather than themselves.

percentage of women who are poor or lack access to resources is higher than that of men, there are a large number of men, especially landless men, in many parts of the world who are poor and do not own any assets and who strive continuously to secure the livelihoods of themselves and their families.

A number of authors note that stating these realities is not to seek sympathy for men, but rather to learn more about how men deal with these realities, the impact on expectations of men and the ability of men to act as full members of society. In relation to reported ‘backlash’ in circumstances where women are making gains, the question needs to be asked as to whether or not these backlashes stem in large part from men's general anxiety about the fragility of their livelihoods and status. Certainly in some cases, backlash, or violence against women, is triggered by pressures on the natural resource base; not as a result of women achieving some advantage over men, but rather as a result of both women and men finding themselves in competition where previously, before more powerful outsiders appeared, they were working together (World Bank, FAO and IFAD, 2009). At the same time, there is also evidence that in some circumstances men may support women in their call for more resources. Rao (2008), writing of Santal women and men in Dumka District, Jharkhand, India, observes that while in general *Good Women do not Inherit Land* (the title of her book), in some instances, men may support women’s land rights. These are likely to be men secure in their own authority. Rao (2008) also notes that customary institutions, at least in this location, even though entirely male dominated, have generally supported women’s land claims.

Although there is a lack of documented experience of working with men on gender and therefore few clear guidelines on ways forward, what little information there is makes it very clear that there is no need for a comparative set of literature on men, or about men, as has been the case historically on women. As expressed in a symposium report on ‘*Politicising masculinities: Beyond the personal*’ by Esplen and Greig (2008), “masculine privilege [and dominant forms of masculinity] remains unproblematised in mainstream development with ‘men as problem and women as victims discourse continuing to hold sway: Work ‘on men and masculinities in development has not engaged with core equity issues – equal pay etc., representation in politics, domestic work etc. – to change the institutions that sustain inequitable gender and sex orders” (Esplen and Greig, 2008, pp. 3-4).

Yet, the potential benefits of involving men are many. Acting as if men are irrelevant can impose demands on women that are impossible to fulfil. As has already been argued in this

paper, women rarely operate as autonomous individuals in their communities, daily lives and even in projects designed for women. In addition, as noted above, in practice it is entirely possible for men to be allies who support women's demands for additional resources. Levy (1992) and Porter, Smyth and Sweetman, (1999) argue that it is necessary to make men more responsible for change. Reflecting on the fact that activities around women have produced a weak, marginalised and often underfunded sector, the authors observe that encouraging men to invest time and energy in changing the gender status quo is likely to be a critical factor in the quest for gender equity. In addition, there are challenges such as the negative labelling of men, which fixes them in oppositional sexed categories; the obstacles caused by male hostility to 'women only' projects and the importance of addressing the male side of joint responsibilities such as sexual health or family nutrition (Cornwall and White, 2000).

## **Conclusions: The future of mainstreaming**

The *United Nations Decade for Women* and the WID movement undoubtedly marked gender and development as an arena for women and women's rights, but it is now time to place a discussion of men and masculinities at the heart of gender analysis, along with power relations among men and women, as already argued in the late 70s.

Although one might agree that planning for change in women's lives entails changes for men, with structural shifts in male-female power relations being “a necessary precondition for any development process with long-term sustainability” (Rathgeber, 1995, p. 212), the shift from WID to GAD has not been easy; and some would argue that it has not yet happened. In terms of mainstreaming a GAD approach, gender has yet to be dealt with operationally. In terms of an approach to gender analysis, gender relation approaches are there. These respond to the numerous problems indicated, with a rather narrowly framed and static gender roles analysis, but they are not widely adopted; and their use depends on an understanding of gender. In spite of the understanding that this is not the case for gender roles approaches, it is a lack of understanding gender and of how gender works that makes the gender roles approach a weak analytical tool, even if it is readily understandable and easy to implement. A relational approach to gender analysis – one that takes into account the multiple identities of men and women and their specific wider social, political and economic environment – along with a more critical assessment of the value of data generated, will result in more sophisticated analyses than many of those undertaken at present using a gender roles framework. The first steps have already been taken towards operationalizing the integration of men into gender analysis. An approach and action plans are now needed to move ahead.

Without such moves it is unlikely that the shift from WID to GAD will achieve anything other than more of the same. Although there has been much resistance from men and women to implementing the shift from WID to GAD, there are huge potential gains from integrating a relational approach into the analysis of gender in GAD and from involving men. The challenge is to engage everyone in this process.

The achievements of early gender analysis are many, even if they have not always been adopted in development practice. These achievements are detailed by Jackson (2000): It enabled the deconstruction of core assumptions around the meaning of terms like household, household head and breadwinner. Households have been shown not to be unitary institutions.

Rather they are characterised by separate and joint production, consumption and interests. Intrahousehold inequality has become recognised as common and complex. Boundaries between households were shown to be permeable, and relations of individuals within them are dynamic and contested. It has also been shown that the assumption that senior males are breadwinners was an ethnocentric perception, since women clearly make a major contribution to household livelihoods. Yet, we still need more interrogation of standard paradigms about male and female behaviour such as men operating as individuals, doing what they want, whereas women do not exercise such choices and levels of villainy and virtue. In order to do this, men need to be fully integrated into the analyses.

Van Steveren (2008), in an analysis of nine country poverty reduction strategy programmes (PRSP) existing in 2004, provides a clear lesson of the challenge: There was an increase in gender awareness in four of the nine PRSP, but none had a gender chapter or annex on gender. Only one PRSP included women's voices, and gender was incorporated as a variable in the poverty analysis. Most PRSP lacked monitoring and evaluation indicators, target dates and budget allocations. When women are included, they are presented as weak and vulnerable categories rather than as economic agents who are constrained in their roles as producers, investors or consumers.

In the *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook* it is concluded that if gender issues are not given priority – when determining project goals or at implementation and monitoring level – and if there is no acknowledgement that gender analysis must be a relational analysis, it is difficult to conceive how gender mainstreaming, as a social transformation project, can be achieved. In relation to achieving gender equity, all the modules of the sourcebook repeat the same story of patriarchal systems being the major constraint on women's access to the necessary assets, if they are to enter the mainstream, and on any benefits arising. Yet there is little attention given to addressing the privileged position of men, to needed shifts in social structure or even to deconstructing any problems, beyond say closing asset gaps. Skard (2009) refers to these mainstreaming issues 'gender malestreaming'.

No-one is suggesting that these are straightforward issues that can be addressed by some bureaucratic procedure or technical adjustment (Skard, 2009), but everyone is in agreement that it is essential, if we are to move the analysis of gender beyond women's work and accepted gender paradigms. Equally, this does not mean that women are not frequently in vulnerable positions and that their practical needs should not be addressed directly. However,

to meet medium to long-term commitments to women, concerns certainly need to move beyond economic efficiency and production targets to ensure that women do not continue to fall behind, 40 years after Esther Boserup raised the alarm. Advocating low cost solutions is problematic, because it suggests that the bias against women's involvement, for example in access to new technologies, can be achieved cheaply, even quickly. Avoiding a possible backlash by men, e.g. crowding-out women from activities that become profitable, by limiting policy/practice to solutions that strengthen women in their existing roles, which may be defined by gender inequalities and may not reflect women's individual choices, is risky: It "runs the risk of entrenching existing inequalities" and "engrain[ing] low status, low return work as women's work" (Locke, 1999, pp. 278–280). Women's present roles are already poorly serviced. Any change that contributes to increasing the value of women's work – in the eyes of women themselves as well as in the eyes of others – will make a substantial contribution to addressing gender inequalities and has to be seen as the way forward to achieving wider changes.

In terms of commitment to integrating gender that is referred to frequently throughout the *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*, this can be interpreted in a number of ways. Reference has already been made to the need to be convinced of the value of assessing change through a gender lens. Certainly it must mean ensuring that sufficient resources are available, and for long enough, to provide the environment within which the kind of desired social changes might be achieved. In terms of promoting the achievement of gender equity, it means understanding what equity might or might not look like and taking a more analytical approach to data analysis. In order to do this, as is also noted throughout the *Sourcebook*, when planning programmes:

- \* there need to be clear objectives that are about social norms and institutions that create the context within which behaviour needs to be assessed.
- \* it may mean employment/income protection for women working in both formal and informal sectors, and; expertise and credit to support women's organisations seeking access to new markets as full partners.
- \* it also means to undertake interventions with knowledge from gender analysis, which incorporates women and men, and an understanding of gender relations in changing resource situations.

Gender-sensitive indicators of sustainable development require project or programme activities in the agricultural sector to be set within the context of domestic production as a whole, if they are focused on households, and the use of both quantitative and qualitative indicators to get more than indicators that can only assess project inputs, e.g. more women attending meetings organized by the project. Gender sensitivity can only be assessed in terms of an ongoing state of affairs and therefore again only makes sense as a concept and in practice, in specific contexts: The indicators for organizations that have already gone far in their gender mainstreaming will differ from those for organizations where little progress has been made.

More generally, in relation to indicators, it cannot be assumed that by focusing on women, agricultural and rural development interventions will result in desired outcomes for them. Everything we know about the organisation of society, and including gender relations, should lead us to question this assumption. This has implications for how we think about social change, what research on gender will look like and how this will be assessed. Does this mean that there is no point in targeting women? On the contrary, targeting for meeting specific practical gender needs appears to be feasible and efficient, and it works. In general, these are not needs and interests where gender constraints prevail. If targeting was done well, that is, if researchers were very clear about the resources involved and the benefits to be expected, we might already expect to see substantial improvements in well-being for rural women and their families.

Without a radical overhaul of current approaches to GAD, the prospect of extending GAD to focus more directly on working with men remains fraught with difficulties. Without a broader recognition of structural relations of power, within which we all become who we are, there is a real danger that efforts to involve men will fail to effectively confront and transform inequitable relations. To do so will require more than making space within GAD for male participation. Rather, it requires to refocus concern on positions and relations of power that produce and sustain inequity; seeking through this a way of moving beyond static frameworks and stereotypes towards genuine transformatory practice.

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