

WHY GENDER JUSTICE IN WEALTH CREATION? RATIONALE

Adapted from Mayoux and Reemer 2012 'Growing the Diamond Forest' GALs manual

In 1979 the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN General Assembly, and by 2010 it had been ratified by 186 out of 193 countries. CEDAW states that women, like men, have a human right to freedom from violence and freedom of movement, equal rights in decision-making, equal rights to own property, freedom of thought and association, the right to work, rest and leisure and the right to an adequate standard of living for health and education. Most national governments have gender policies, strategies and legislation based on some variant of CEDAW. Most development agencies have an official commitment to gender equality as part of their mandate. Many have position papers on gender and the key importance of women's empowerment in economic growth and/or poverty reduction. Many have manuals for gender mainstreaming.

However, despite these official commitments, 'gender' is often seen as a 'women's issue' - an additional 'problem' on top of all the other competing objectives and priorities in economic development interventions (environment, HIV/AIDS etc.). Changing gender inequalities is generally seen as a very long term and conflictual process, inevitably setting men against women. Gender analysis is the weakest point in most livelihood, market and value chain analyses, and largely ignored in most 'mainstream' manuals and capacity building. This is the case even in interventions which claim to be 'ethical' such as cooperative development, Fair Trade and organic farming.

Most gender and livelihoods interventions currently focus on technical or business training or micro-finance for women. Although these aim to empower women, definitions of 'empowerment' become reduced to increases in confidence and/or small increases in income. They often result in overburdening women with little change in the underlying inequalities which cause not only women's poverty and disempowerment but that of children, and also men. Women now have to cope not only with 'traditional roles', but also with new productive and community roles, continually battling discrimination and disadvantage at all levels. Men often feel excluded and threatened, and this increases resistance and may increase gender-based violence. In many contexts men's sense of alienation from the household leads to a reduction in existing economic contributions to the family as they are now unsure of their role – putting yet further burden on women.

Gender inequalities in power and resources have implications for economic efficiency at all levels. This is not only an issue for women themselves, but for children and men in their households, other actors in the value chain and the national economy.

Gender inequalities are key causes of household poverty – reducing resources available to women and putting pressures on men to act in ways which are harmful to themselves and their households. In many contexts women are seen as the main people responsible for provisioning for children and their households. Increasing women's incomes is a crucial element in poverty reduction for the whole household and may have a greater contribution to household wellbeing than increasing men's incomes. This is particularly the case in regions and households with high levels of polygamy and/or marital instability and/or where levels of male alcoholism and/or drug addiction are high. Participatory research in Uganda found that 70% of 495 men from coffee-producing families participating openly admitted to taking all the money from coffee, and even stealing their wife's money, wasting much of this on drink and other women. In some households men's expenditure on alcohol in one month is equal to the costs of the school fees for a term. In Ethiopian weaving households it was calculated that merely the men reducing their expenditure on alcohol for two months would have been

sufficient to buy a smokeless stove to improve the health of the whole family, as well as improve the quality of the cloth and increase incomes.

Reproductive or unpaid household work normally performed by women and girls is essential to wellbeing and livelihoods of men as well as women. However women's lack of resources and power and lack of support from men mean that these essential activities are performed with very labour intensive technology, reducing the time of women for income earning or education. Low incomes earned by women are moreover an important factor in the perpetuation of child labour. Girls in particular have to take over many of women's household responsibilities in care of siblings and housework. Both boys and girls may be sent out to work to supplement their parents' income. But this income is often used in hiding or controlled by fathers who decide how to use it. Lack of proper decision-making at household level is not only inefficient but also perpetuates poverty to the next generation.

Gender inequalities are key causes of inefficiency in enterprises at different levels of many value chains. These gender-based inefficiencies are not only in poor households, but also in the better-off households of entrepreneurs where there may be an even higher pressure on both women and men to replicate social norms. This affects the efficiency of household livelihoods for entrepreneurs in enterprises at governing ends of the chain. In the case of coffee trader households in Uganda, for example, men's luxury expenditure and lack of consultation between women and men seriously undermined the ability of households to save and hence for the traders to get out of debt relations with larger traders move up to higher levels of investment and income.

Many activities where women are concentrated are critical to understanding and addressing market inefficiencies and the 'weakest links' within value chains, and the most critical areas for upgrading quality and growth¹. Women's activities – homeworking, 'putting out' and temporary work and food production, as well as caring roles – are often less visible and overlooked in economic analysis and development. Although in some value chains exploitation of gender inequalities to give low wages to women may appear to have short-term benefits, it also has significant costs in terms of high levels of labour turnover and uncertainty necessitating high levels of expenditure on training and recruitment.

These gender inequalities within households and value chains magnify to have significant implications for wealth creation at national level. When over half the population is not able to work efficiently through cultural and ideological/political constraints, this inevitably undermines economic growth.² Extensive research by the World Bank, IFPRI and others shows that gender inequalities are a key constraint on economic growth and a key cause of poverty not only for women themselves, but also their families and communities³. A World

¹ For a clear example of this from the Uganda coffee industry see Mayoux, L., Baluku, P., Reemer, T. (2011). 'Balanced Trees Grow Richer Beans': Community-led Action Learning for Gender Justice in Uganda Coffee Value Chains.

² See for example Klasen, S. (2002). In search of the Holy Grail: How to Achieve Pro-poor growth? Munich, University of Munich, Department of Economics. World Bank. (2006). "Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan (Fiscal Years 2007-10)."

³ See for example evidence and references in Meinzen-Dick, R., L. Brown, R., et al. (1997). "Gender, Property Rights, and Natural Resources." World Development 25(8): 1303-15., Blackden, M. and C. Bhanu (1999). Gender, Growth and poverty Reduction. Washington DC, World Bank Technical Paper No 428, DFID (2000). "Poverty Elimination and Empowerment of Women: Target Strategy Paper." Retrieved Nov 2011, from <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/tspgender.pdf>. Quisumbing, A. R. and B. McClafferty (2006). Using Gender Research in Development, IFPRI. World Bank. (2006). "Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan (Fiscal Years 2007-10)."

Bank study estimated that providing women producers and entrepreneurs in agricultural and manufacturing value chains in Burkina Faso, Kenya and Tanzania with the same inputs and education as men could increase their output and incomes by 10-20 per cent.

The benefits of a women's empowerment/gender justice focus further up the value chain are also potentially considerable. Where women are empowered and organised, they are more able to produce quality goods on demand and manage their livelihoods to increase flexibility to market demand. In Uganda, Kampala coffee traders are now seeking to deal directly with the women's groups. Women flower and textile exporters in Kenya report that they want their women workers to be happy and better trained so there is less absenteeism and they have fewer problems in recruitment. In the Bangladesh textile industry, enterprises that cannot retain a satisfied female workforce have high training costs through high worker dropout. Although there will always be some conflict of interest between traders and producers, employers and employees, ethical behaviour and developing good relationships and trust are now established parts of 'win-win' supply chain development. The productivity benefits for countries of addressing gender inequalities and building on the synergies between women and men have been demonstrated in a number of countries (Quisumbing and Pandolfelli 2009).

BOX 1: Self-interest case for gender justice in wealth creation

For individuals

- Women have an equal human right to equal opportunities, treatment and freedom from discrimination guaranteed under the UN Convention CEDAW
- Gender stereotypes and norms of masculine behaviour prevent men as well as women from achieving their full human potential.
- Women, and also many men, want change

For households

- Gender inequality in property rights, division of labour and decision-making leads to inefficient use of resources in the household
- Excessive luxury expenditure by men on e.g. alcohol and 'other women' limits resources for investment and wellbeing
- Lack of resources for investment and time for women

For enterprises

- Poor quality supply wastes time and incomes
- Women are an important potential market
- Gender inequality leads to female and male absenteeism and labour turnover
- Gender inequality undermines relationships throughout the enterprise
- Diversity of management team leads to better decision-making

National wealth creation case

- Women are half the population and significant contributors to the national economy and tax payment
- Women's empowerment is one of the Millennium Development Goals
- Most governments and most development agencies have a gender policy or gender action plan
- Gender inequality is a proven constraint on economic growth
- Female poverty is also a cause of child and household poverty and hence a significant burden on welfare budgets