

Power and Privileges: Gender Discrimination and Poverty

Interim Studies







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Foreword

This book contains interim studies to the report "Power and Privileges: On Gender Discrimination and Poverty", commissioned by the Swedish Government and presented in early 2004.

The studies provide more in-depth reading to the main report on areas of special interest. These concern the ways we define and assess female vs male poverty and deprivation, and how such assessments are influencing efforts to reduce poverty and ill-health. At the heart of the studies are questions of power and privileges and societal costs of gender-based discrimination.

Stockholm, February 2004.

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"Gender based discrimination as a cause of poverty"

The texts are also available in Swedish. Both versions can be found at www.ud.se

Ecce homo:
A gender reading of
"Voices of the poor"

by Gerd Johnsson-Latham

Content

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1. Introduction

This paper has been written within a project, commissioned by the Swedish Government, labelled “Gender based discrimination as a cause of poverty”, undertaken by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The objective of the project at large is to review knowledge accumulated so far in the area of female poverty and to make use of this knowledge to render work with both gender equality and poverty eradication more effective.

The paper has been presented inter alia at the ABCDE World Bank Conference on Development Economics in Oslo, on 25 June, 2002.

The purpose of the paper is to address two questions:

- 1 What do we learn about female poverty from the World Bank study “Voices of the poor”?
- 2 How can knowledge about female poverty be reflected in a more coherent manner in poverty reduction strategies?

The paper builds primarily on a gender-reading of the World Bank’s “Voices of the poor” which is a major and very important source for assessments of poverty world wide. The paper seeks to focus both on women and on gender – to describe how socially constructed roles are decisive for de facto rights and opportunities of poor persons, particularly women.

The purpose of the study is not primarily to see to what extent “Voices of the poor” contains or excludes observations on gender but rather to point at a model for a gender-reading of documents related to poverty. Hopefully, this could be applied for a number of other studies and strategies on poverty eradication in order to make gender and gender based power more visible – and thereby improving means for eradicating poverty.

2. What do we know in general about female poverty? ¹

It is often stated that in all regions of the globe, women and girls make up the majority of the poor, both in economic and non-economic terms. In spite of this basis characteristic of poverty, gender relations and gender-based discrimination have seldom been at the forefront in discourses on poverty reduction.

Nor – in spite of numerous studies on poverty, inter alia by the World Bank – have any comprehensive efforts yet been taken to more accurately assess the extent and magnitude of female poverty. The most common estimation is that 70% of all poor are women – but that assessment is often challenged – thought it might not be inaccurate to assume that some 70% (or roughly two thirds) of all poor are females; both women and girls. However, the issue here is more to indicate our lack of knowledge than to discuss educated guesses.

Even if women constitute a large majority of the poor, it may not be correct to speak about “the feminisation of poverty”. The concept seems to indicate a trend of women becoming poor to a larger extent than men. This may be true in some regions – but possibly not at an aggregate, global level. In fact, there is evidence that more and more (major) bread-winners are women who enter the paid labour market – as they tend to accept practically any jobs and wages to support their families. Instead many poor uneducated men now lose their jobs. Evidently, these tendencies put a good deal of strain on existing power relationships at the family level since men’s demands for superiority vis-à-vis their wives and children are no longer connected with a role as main providers for their families. The trends also needs to be reflected in the design of poverty strategies which still tend to treat men as prime agents of change.

There is also considerable uncertainty about the causes and depth of female poverty. However, it is widely acknowledged that poverty is related to gender based discrimination in terms of women’s lack of access to resources such as land, credits, decision making and reproductive and sexual health and rights. And we know that women often are excluded from participatory processes and partnerships, and thus unable to state their needs, to take part in decisions on how to use limited resources, and to ensure broad ownership of poverty reduction strategies. But few efforts are made to aggregate data to get a more complete picture of female poverty and well-being/ill-being.

In so doing it would be essential to broaden the often primarily economically oriented discussions on poverty to also consider other neglected factors that are decisive for the well- or ill-being of individuals:

- a) wide-spread male violence against women, primarily in the household

¹ This subject matter is dealt with more in-depth in the study “Understanding female and male poverty and deprivation ” by the same author.

- b) long working days for poor women, who at an average- contrary to men – have no or only few hours of daily leisure time.

Descriptions and analysis of poverty often aim at defining causes for poverty. In so doing, they often point at asymmetrical power-structures at the global, national and village level. Less attention tend to be given to uneven division of/access to resources at household level – in spite of the fact that the World Bank has demonstrated that inequalities between women and men are more pronounced the poorer the family is.

Another reason behind poverty among women and girls is, as pointed out by the World Bank and others, that gender “neutral” planning tend to favour men rather than women, and that interventions may actually have adverse effects for women or fail at large because they miss taking gender into account. (One example may be donor support to train men to maintain tube wells – while many of these men, once they have received the training, actually migrated into towns to own an income using their new competence – leaving both their unattended families and the tubewells behind.)

3. “Voices of the poor” as an overview of poverty among women and men

One of the more extensive studies of global poverty heretofore is the World Bank study “Voices of the poor”, based on interviews with 60 000 poor people in 50 countries in South and East, primarily to inform the “World development Report “ which in 2000/2001 focussed on poverty. The report basically brings up the content in the interviews, but in order to give an overview to the extremely extensive material it also contains introductions made by the editors, and it also contains a limited number of recommendations for action.

“Voices of the poor” is very welcome as a sign of the Banks increased attention to poverty and to participatory approaches. The gender reading of this report in this paper demonstrates how “Voices of the poor” provides very valuable information both on poverty at large and on female poverty, demonstrated in numerous quotations from the interviews made. However, a gender reading also demonstrates what, surprisingly enough, gender-bases differences is not high-lighted in the report in spite of the numerous interviews made and the participatory approach applied in the report.

The gender reading also demonstrate that despite the fact that the report presents a great deal of evidence for disparities between female and male poverty, the aggregations very seldom contain gender specific information. *So what was attained in the survey in terms of Voices of the poor is actually partly lost when the administrators and the researchers aggregate the data and summarise conclusions and recommendations.* To visualise this, it could be said that the rich information about female as compared to male poverty could be regarded as the broad base in a triangle, where the top – with summaries and recommendations – demonstrate how gender tend to be evaporate at the top.

The report thus actually refers to a number of factors that globally tend to be decisive for (female) poverty:

- ★ disparities between women and men are of a structural nature and based on unequal access to resources such as land, capital, income, health care, education, etc.
- ★ gender gaps and images of superiority and inferiority tend to be reproduced in unequal power structures at all levels, within the family, in institutions such as local authorities, in legislation, banks, etc.
- ★ women's networks are often strong and concentrated on social relations in regard to child care, labour etc. But: men's networks and their social capital are often stronger – as they focus on decision making regarding the use of available economic resources.
- ★ households headed by women, where both the mother and children have incomes, enjoy better welfare than those headed by men, when men spend most of the income on themselves and/or exercise domestic violence.
- ★ poor men, specially those who lose their jobs and have difficulties in supporting themselves and their families tend to abuse alcohol and drugs. This abuse is common particularly in eastern Europe and several parts of Africa where it has radically shortened the life span of men.
- ★ many women point out that they are excluded by men from decision making at almost all levels, also in community based organisations.
- ★ all poor people complain of condescending attitudes by officials – but poor, badly dressed women are particularly vulnerable and are often degraded by officials, bank-staff, health personnel etc.
- ★ many women are regarded (and regard themselves) as second class objects, without rights, particularly when they are “bought” via bride purchase.
- ★ among youth who seeks to move out of poverty through crime, the trend is that girls sell their own bodies whereas boys act violently towards others through robbery, physical assault and murder.
- ★ men define poverty in terms of lack of respect and self-esteem – while no women even seem to have regarded themselves entitled to make such demands.

4. What gender issues are not taken up in “Voices of the poor”?

In “Voices of the poor”, in spite of the ambitious participatory approach and the fact that a number of interviews have been carried out – often without the presence of men – there are surprisingly no evidence that any of the 60 000 interviews brought up the following – often non-economic – aspects of female well-being:

- ★ the severe health problems evident by the fact that 500 000 poor women die every year of complications in connection with pregnancy and birth, due to lack of access to reproductive health and services – an issue always taken up in the UN by numerous delegations from the South. (The figure of deaths are of course likely to indicate

only the top of an iceberg as hundreds of thousands of females continue to live on, in spite of severe injuries and poor reproductive health.) Nor does the report mention any observations on female genital mutilation (which affects 130 million girls and women globally) nor to any links some poor women would presumably have stressed between access to reproductive health and welfare among families.

- ★ that women for social and economic reasons often lack opportunities to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS – even if men often cause the disease to spread.
- ★ the fact that men suffer from severe health problems, due to abuse of alcohol and drugs, is not discussed in a broader context indicating that the problems may partly be a price paid by individual men who in vain try to live up to constructed roles of male superiority and responsibilities as breadwinners within families.
- ★ women, often the main producers of the food at household-level, often eat after all other family members, least and last; and are thus most vulnerable to hunger.
- ★ women are prevented from taking part in decisions on the use of economic resources (including what may be labelled “public goods”), and are thus unable to influence decisions on resources for education, health, water, electricity etc,
- ★ discussions on privatisation do not mention that many women lose jobs and social services, and are unable to use opportunities offered by privatisation as they lack capital and collaterals. Nor are indications given on effects on nutrition at the household level when shifts to market-orientation and export crops are encouraged.
- ★ no comments are made on the difficulties of women to earn an income –though income is often considered a prerequisite to rise out of poverty.
- ★ the report advocates “gender harmony” though it seems uncertain if any of the interviews have referred to this concept, which is frequently used by for instance the Vatican and the Sudan in the UN, to stress the role of women as mothers and wives – while these actors seldom indicate male domestic violence as a problem for gender “harmony” and female dignity.
- ★ religion and traditions are pointed out by many poor people as crucial for giving people a sense of belonging. However, there is no indication that religion can be perceived both as a source of strength for women and a set of values confirming male superiority and female subordination, thus constructing limits for individuals of both sexes.

The report “Voices of the poor” provides aggregate overviews where poverty is defined by the following characteristics:

- ★ hunger
- ★ disease (including HIV/Aids and alcoholism)
- ★ lack of income, land and other property
- ★ violence, insecurity, isolation (physical, psychological, social)
- ★ exclusion vis-à-vis decision-making functions
- ★ lack of infrastructure in terms of water and communications

The definitions chosen may be considered broad but are actually marred by a serious problem since they do not provide information actually presented in “Voices of the poor” on how women seldom have an income, lack property rights, feel insecurity being economically dependent on men etc. This leads us to the second question of this paper:

5. How can knowledge about female poverty be considered in a more coherent manner in poverty reduction strategies?

Gender neutral (or “blind”) descriptions of poverty would need to be complemented with gender specific observations – as those actually provided in “Voices of the poor”. Thus, the descriptions could be amended with a gender specific column, as to the right below.

Expression of poverty	How women and men are affected
hunger	women eat least and last in many regions
disease (incl. HIV, alcoholism)	women’s reproductive health is neglected, while men’s care cost more
	men’s own actions increase risks
lack of income	few poor women have an income
no land/property	few women own/control land/assets
	property is taken from widows
violence, insecurity	most poor women are victims though
	many young men and/or men involved in crime
	also suffer from male violence
exclusion from decision-making	women excluded because of their sex
lack of water, electricity, roads	increase women’s workloads

The table above could serve as a point of departure for deepening current (but not always active) work on indicators on women’s and men’s poverty.

“Voices of the poor” proposes a strategy for poverty reduction by boosting the resources of the poor. However, the recommendations contained in the report are gender “neutral” /blind as they do not take into consideration gender inequalities – as reflected to the left below. However, a visible gender dimension can easily be added by a right hand column:

From poverty to resources:	Women/men
From isolation – to resources:	Eliminate discrimination re land etc
From sickness to health:	Special attention to women’s health, including reproductive health
	Action to combat root causes to male alcoholism
From fear to security:	Combat violence against women and ensure land right for women
From corruption to rule of law:	Legal education, support to women’s groups, equal rights

6. Gender in the OECD/DAC Guidelines on Poverty Reduction.

A gender reading of the OECD/DAC Guidelines on Poverty Reduction demonstrates that these poverty reduction guidelines contain a clear gender perspective. The guidelines note that reducing gender inequalities is key to all dimensions of poverty and they stress that pro poor growth requires equitable participation of women and men. They state that gender discrimination is an important cause of poverty and that female poverty is more prevalent and more severe than male poverty and acknowledges that gender inequality is a major cause of female and overall poverty.

However, the guidelines could have deepened the gender analysis by discussing to what extent key concepts in the development dialogue, such as partnership, participation, stakeholders and ownership do – or do not – encompass women and men on equal terms. The guidelines would also have benefited from an analysis of the validity of definitions of “country-led” planning and “national ownership” (in for instance poverty reduction strategies) *if women are excluded from participation.* The guidelines could have been more explicit about who are likely to benefit from interventions by pointing to the need of defining target groups for interventions, to help ensure that women’s concerns and gender-goals are met. Gender-budgeting could have been mentioned as a tool for tracing money, other resources and target groups. Furthermore, the deliberations on institutional aspects as key to achievement should have given more attention to gender.

7. Conclusions

Even if the focus in data-collection, analysis and strategies on poverty have changed over the years, and often challenged power-structures, asymmetrical relations at household level still tends to be neglected, as men, not women, have been regarded as vehicles for growth.

The rich evidence presented in “Voices of the poor” provides for another discourse, with focus on gender-based discrimination and the need for legal and institutional action to combat such discrimination, in order to benefit poverty eradication efforts at large.

Particularly in a world where an increasing number of women are main providers for their families it is crucial that poor women care recognised to be vehicles for development and growth, instead of being deferred to as “vulnerable” and victims. If women are vulnerable, it is because they have been *made vulnerable* for centuries – and not because they are intrinsically vulnerable. *When given equal opportunities and when not discriminated against, women will be able to help themselves and their communities to rise out of poverty.*

Evidently, more studies are needed to obtain a clearer picture of the depth and magnitude of female poverty – which appears to be heavily underestimated, particularly when a broad range of issues are considered, including bodily integrity and freedom from violence. With increasing knowledge of female poverty we will also obtain

a more adequate – and probably more sombre – picture of global poverty. But in spite of our lack of knowledge – we do already have valuable data, such as those provided in “Voices of the poor”, to already at this stage more actively address gender based discrimination as a cause of female poverty, and a cause of poverty at large.

This implies challenging notions which dominate current thinking – which is required in order to honour the commitments made to the Millennium Development Targets – which stress issues such as reduction of maternal mortality, infant mortality and increasing the level of girls education. These goals and poverty eradication strategies at large are unlikely to be met unless attitudes of male superiority and female subordination are changed and the equal value of all human beings is acknowledged in poverty eradication efforts.

8. Major references

Voices of the poor: “Can anyone hear us?”, “Crying out for change”, “From many lands”, ed. Deepa Narayan, World Bank and Oxford University Press, New York 2000
“Engendering Development”, Policy Research Report on Gender and Development, World Bank, Washington, 2000.
OECD/DAC: Guidelines on Poverty Reduction, OECD, Paris 2001.

Understanding female and male poverty and deprivation

by Gerd Johnsson-Latham

1. Context and purpose
2. Summary
3. Background and purpose
4. Definitions of poverty: Theory and practice
5. Two schools of thought: poverty and gender and development
6. What we know about female poverty
7. The Platform of Action from Beijing 1995 as a yardstick
8. Defining causes to poverty – decisive for understanding the scope and magnitude of poverty
9. Lack of gender-perspectives in current poverty strategies
10. Summary, conclusions and suggestions
11. Reference Literature

1. Context and purpose

This study is part of an overall project commissioned by the Swedish Government on gender-based discrimination as a cause of poverty. The main purpose is to demonstrate both possibilities and constraints in current definitions of poverty in addressing female and male poverty. The study is also to be seen as a follow-up to the Swedish Government Bill 2002/03:122 on Global Development, which states that:

- ★ "In accordance with the Government's policy on gender equality, systematic use should be made of various methods and assessments models for identifying and combating gender-based discrimination and for promoting gender mainstreaming" and
- ★ "Gender based discrimination must be brought out into the open and combated. Females must be seen as agents of change and ... gender impact analysis can be helpful".

The findings and recommendations in the report could contribute to amending or reconsidering current poverty reduction strategies, country programming, budget support etc to better address the needs of both women and men. It should also be seen as a tool to address root causes to a number of problems such as trafficking, the spread of HIV/AIDS, violence against women – problems which all relate to lack of respect for human rights of women and girls.

Hopefully, the study can influence both thinking on Swedish development co-operation and the overall on-going discussions on how poverty should be defined and understood. Thus, the text can serve as a "global good" which can be helpful to several partners in the development dialogue, to address global challenges – such as gender discrimination and poverty.

2. Summary

In spite of the suggestion that the majority of the poor are women there are neither firm data to confirm this – nor the suggestions that there is trend of "feminisation of poverty". This is due to the fact that few efforts have been made to estimate the scope and magnitude of female poverty. Furthermore, neither poverty indicators nor poverty analysis at large tend to investigate causes to female poverty. Instead discussions on poverty have been perceived as "gender-neutral", mostly dealing with "sexless averages". And whereas sophisticated instruments such as statistical models have been developed to investigate some aspects of poverty, other areas have remained unexplored.

An important source for information on female poverty or rather deprivation of women in a broader sense – which also includes elements such as lack of rights and of voice – has been developed within the gender and development discourse ("GAD"). In recent years, efforts have been made to define poverty as multidimensional. This has opened up new prospects for bringing in elements from GAD to increase transpa-

rency and bring about a more accurate picture of overall poverty. For instance, a better understanding of women's reproductive roles could make assessments of poverty/ill-being more complete – and thus help address the needs of poor people.

Multidimensional definitions of poverty provide for a discourse, which acknowledges that well-being is not only a question of material assets. Multidimensional definitions thus demonstrate the limitations of current poverty strategies and help us address broad issues like gender-based asymmetrical distribution, both in terms of access to resources and voice. They also point to the need of addressing both economic aspects of poverty and other crucial aspects of well being such as (self-) respect, dignity, empowerment, voice, belonging and participation – and awareness of the right not to be discriminated against.

Several steps have already been taken by a number of actors to bring the discourses on poverty and gender and development closer together. As discussed in this paper, there are several prospects for further deepening the dialogue between the two schools of thought. This would imply increased attention in the traditional poverty discourse – both in headquarters and at field-level – to issues such as empowerment, reproductive and sexual rights and land rights of women. Bringing legal and normative issues into the poverty discourse would demonstrate how discriminatory laws and norms hinder economic and over-all development, both for women and society at large. A stronger focus on norms and laws would also provide transparency and visibility by demonstrating the economic and political price paid –notably by poor women – for maintaining asymmetrical gender structures in society.

Increased transparency in this regard would improve the options for focussing on female poverty in the overall development discourse and not primarily as a concern of GAD which compared to the World Bank and other major development institutions is endowed with very limited resources in terms of funding and personnel.

The road-map for action provided in the Platform for Action adopted at the UN conference on 1995 and GAD are crucial instruments which could amend and improve the overall poverty-agenda and help the international community and nations attain the over-all Millennium Development Goal: to reduce poverty by half in 2015.

3. Background and purpose

The aim of this study is to discuss possibilities and constraints in current definitions of poverty – and deprivation in a broader sense – in addressing female and male poverty, and thereby to add to overall aid-effectiveness.

The aim of this paper was originally to put forward all available evidence for the claim that the majority of the world's poor are women, and to thereby strengthen the case for more gender-aware poverty-reduction strategies.

Nevertheless, at an early stage, it became evident that there are no data to confirm suggestions that women constitute the bulk of the world's poor. And there is even less

proof for specific figures, such as the claim that 70% of all poor are women made in the Platform of Action from Beijing 1995. The World Bank in “Engendering Development” points out this problem.

However, it must be stressed that there is no indication that women do not represent the majority of the poor, nor that the figure could be as high as the suggested 70%.

The reason for lacunae in data appears to be the lack of attention to women in poverty analysis worldwide. This has been evident in large institutions such as the World Bank, which over the years otherwise has presented a staggering number of studies on poverty. It has also been the case in most UN poverty analysis where the poor still tend to appear as sex-less averages.

Likewise, in the gender and development discourse (GAD), poverty has not really been in focus; rather the focus is on the broader notion “deprivation of women” or “the status of women”. These definitions include aspects of ill-being/well-being which tend to affect women much more than men: domestic violence, lack of legal rights, lack of voice and the limited possibility to influence decision-making and agenda-setting. Such aspects of *deprivation have generally been given little attention in traditional poverty strategies – as men much less than poor women have had these additional hurdles to reducing economic poverty.*

However, the value of integrating poverty and gender and development has been increasingly acknowledged both within UN agencies such as the UNFPA and UNIFEM, among bilateral development agencies and in the research communities in the North and the South. Thus, today, more coherent efforts are made to better understand poverty by applying a gender perspective.

In order to assess what is known about female poverty – and female deprivation in broader terms – I will study the two main sources of knowledge; poverty at large and gender and development. I will see how these two traditions can help us better understand female poverty.

My overall assumption is that when both discourses are considered, there will be a better understanding of female poverty and of poverty at large, in terms of magnitude, depth and causes. And we – implying all partners in development co-operation – will be better equipped to formulate strategies to reduce poverty.

A promising feature in this context is that, whereas poverty and gender and development (GAD) for long have been somewhat separate discourses, the tendency to define poverty as multidimensional brings it closer to GAD, which always has focused on voice, participation and legal and structural reforms needed for advancing the status of women.

The paper recognises efforts made to bring in perspectives from GAD into overall poverty analysis, but also points at further efforts needed to better understand and combat the different faces of poverty.

Before going into discussions on definitions it should be stressed that a frequently used

concept in this paper is “discourse”, for example, the “poverty discourse” or the “gender and development discourse”. The concept “discourse” is here to be understood as a certain manner of speaking of and understanding the world. In general, a discourse can be described as a construction of the world, which excludes other ways of seeing it. A discourse sets out certain kinds of actions as legitimate, denying authority to other kinds of actions. This means that a certain discourse makes certain representations of the world and, in treating problems, sees certain ranges of actions as possible solutions while excluding others.

It should also be noted that the concept “gender and development” (GAD) refers to the broad agenda outlined in CEDAW, the Beijing PFA documents and other development co-operation documents – an agenda which also strongly influences the work of human rights organisations, women’s NGOs and academia. “GAD” is by no means to be understood as one school of thought, but as a multitude of views that aim at adding or transforming a primarily monetary discussion on poverty.

4. Definitions of Poverty: Theory and Practice

As stated in the study “The Conceptualisation of Poverty” (Sida; Peck and Tobisson 1997), no single definition of poverty has gained general acceptance – in spite of the strong focus on poverty in development discourse:

“Poverty is relative and complex. It has different faces in different parts of the world and on different societal levels. Perceptions of poverty are strongly linked to political and moral values.... We need to understand from whose perspective poverty is discussed.”

Peck and Tobisson stress that today, poverty is defined less in purely economic terms and more as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. There is also a shift in focus from resources and economics to social and political dimensions and a more holistic view on poverty. Furthermore, poverty is discussed in broader terms of deprivation, capacity and empowerment. Today, the asymmetrical distribution of resources is highlighted, not only at the global, national and village level, but also within the household.

As confirmed, e.g., by Peck and Tobison, there are no clear cut-definitions of poverty. Thus, there is no fixed set of data neither to measure poverty at large – nor to identify differences regarding female vs male poverty. Discussions on poverty can cover expressions of poverty (lack of assets etc), capabilities (education, participation etc) or causes (discriminatory laws and customs etc).

The above gives an indication of the difficulties in estimating a figure for global poverty and the share of women among the poorest.

In “Perspectives on Poverty”, Sida stresses “that the essence of poverty is not lack of material resources but also lack of power and choice”. In the same document, Sida points to the fact that “poverty is manifested in many ways; hunger, ill-health, denial of dignity etc”. Furthermore, the document makes clear that Sida regards poverty as part of development, which aims at freedom, well being and dignity. Sida stresses that

key to this is empowerment, because “the root causes of poverty can often be traced to unequal power structures”.

The same thoughts guide the new Swedish Bill to Parliament on Global Development: “Poverty has many dimensions....Malnutrition, lack of health care, unemployment, child labour and hazardous work conditions for starvation wages are the lot of many people. In addition, abuse of power, violations of rights, violence and sexual abuse within and outside the family add to their lack of safety and overall insecurity.” The Bill also stresses that “the pursuit of equitable and sustainable development must be based on a rights perspective on development. *This means that poor people are not regarded as recipients of aid, but as individuals and actors with the power, capacity and the will to create development.*”

Such perceptions of poverty concur with the OECD/DAC guidelines on poverty reduction, which define poverty as deprivation, lack of capabilities to seize opportunities, and lack of assets:

“Gender inequality concerns all dimensions of poverty, because poverty is not gender-neutral. Cultures often involve deep-rooted prejudices and discrimination against women. Processes causing poverty affect men and women in different ways and degrees. Female poverty is more prevalent and typically more severe than male poverty. Women and girls in poor households get less than their fair share of private consumption and public services. They suffer violence by men on a large scale....Gender-related “time poverty” refers to the lack of time for all the tasks imposed on women, for rest and for economic, social and political activities. It is an important additional burden which in many societies is due to structural gender inequality – a disparity which has different meanings for women and men...Gender inequality is therefore a major cause of female and overall poverty.”(p. 40).

Evidently, the multidimensional aspects of poverty have moved the concept closer to what may be called deprivation, both in physical and in social terms. This implies that the concept and discourse on “poverty” has become less metrical and less measurable – but possibly more accurate.

The large World Bank study, “Voices of the poor”, confirmed the attention to non-measurable aspects of poverty. It followed the approach of the UN World Conferences in the 1990s to focus on individuals rather than the state and aggregate poverty. (See MFA-study on World conferences 1990–96) It also underlines subjective experiences of poverty as a useful means for better understanding the different expressions of poverty.

“Voices of the poor” also indicated what we may call “collective subjective” experiences of poverty, that is an experience felt by many individuals who share certain experiences. For instance, as demonstrated by the study, when invited to describe the most abhorrent form of poverty, poor *men* indicated lack of respect and self-esteem. However, the study contains no signs that women even have regarded themselves en-

titled to make demands for respect and self-esteem. Instead, poor women stated that the worst form of poverty was the inability to feed their children.

It should be noted that “Voices of the poor” also helped “humanise” the poverty discourse by focussing on persons rather than on statistics, as the quotations in the study demonstrated that poor women and men basically have the same longings and aspirations as richer persons: family and friends, health, care and love, for themselves and their children. This “humanisation” of the poverty discourse brings it closer to the GAD discourse, which always has built on the assumption that “the helpers” in richer countries and poor women may not have fundamentally different agendas and needs.

5. Two schools of thought: poverty and gender and development

a) During the last decades, the overall poverty discourse has primarily focussed on monetary, measurable aspects of deprivation, particularly at field-level and in predominant poverty documents such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Here, aggregate poverty measures are often based on the US\$1 a day poverty line, indicating averages in terms of purchasing power. The strength of such assessments is primarily the ability to compare large groups over time, within and between countries.

Traditional data on poverty focus is a on fairly complex mathematical models, for instance, Gini-coefficients or Lorenz-curves to assess average inequalities in societies. The assessments may appear to be exact in terms of describing inequalities. However, a shortcoming is the *focus on sexless averages – and the lack of attention to investigations on to what extent and why poor women tend to be worse off than men*. This, of course, is linked to the fact that poverty analysis, particularly at field-level, rarely inquire about root causes of inequalities, such as gender-based discrimination nor do they tend to seek to analyse power structures, including gender-relations to see how they influence and may cause and perpetuate poverty.

Actually, in spite of a strong focus on poverty in development co-operation, few efforts have been made to define who the poor are – a tendency which could explain many of the problems with existing poverty reduction efforts. As pointed out by Nauckhoff in the study, “Poverty without Poor”, poverty is “generally described in macroeconomic terms, in terms of percentages, covering only some aspects (of poverty). Defined in such a way poverty does not describe different problems facing different categories of poor people nor important causes of poverty.” Thus, it also avoids discussions on possibly conflicting interests among groups.

In poverty discourses, gender is often perceived as an add on. However, between the lines, a quite common gender pattern features, with men considered as agents of change and women as vulnerable groups (along with others who would need the protection of men), and who’s “needs” or specific “interests” should be considered.

Very rarely poverty analysis discuss to what extent “the needs or the interests of men” are met, nor does it seek to define “the interests” of an overall category label-

led “men”. A reason may be that “men’s interests” seems to imply “the interests of everybody” whereas the interests of women are literally supposed to indicate the “interests” of women – even while women are (main) providers of food, health-care etc for all family members.

Subsequently, most poverty analysis and strategies fail to acknowledge the multiple roles of women, which tend to be stressed in the GAD-discourse.

Gender features primarily in the areas of health and education – but more seldom in employment, access to credits, land, training etc. And poverty analysis is often void of discussions on structural issues such as legal and informal gender-based discrimination or gender-based violence, Nor do they assess the value of women’s reproductive work (as pointed out by UNDP, de Vylder and others).

- b) Discussions on gender and development (GAD) rarely emphasise monetary aspects of poverty, even if economic aspects are regarded as important features of female deprivation. However, GAD points to the fact that what might appear to be purely monetary aspects of poverty (for instance, men having more income than women) is often a constructed (man-made) outcome of legal systems, norms, customs and gender stereotypes. Thus, GAD stresses that voice, participation and empowerment are crucial for combating material poverty – and for addressing a broad range of ill-being/well-being, such as domestic violence, respect, participation in decision-making, reproductive and sexual rights, freedom of movement, the right to custody over one’s children, empowerment at large. GAD also addresses methods to depict how power structures operate.

Comprehensive GAD agendas are provided in the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and in the Political Declaration and the Platform of Action (PFA) from the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995. These documents are the result of extensive political negotiations and CEDAW is legally binding for all the 189 states that have ratified the convention. The Beijing texts are politically and morally binding – and particularly the PFA constitutes a major point of reference – or “road map” – for both bilateral and multilateral development co-operation.

6. What we know about female poverty

There are surprisingly few in-depth assessments of the scope of female poverty and deprivation, their magnitude and depth.

However, as stressed by Kabeer (2003), women’s disadvantage in respect of poverty is related to entitlements and capabilities (education, skills, access to land and property and so on), their heavier burdens of reproductive labour and the low evaluation of this labour, limited representation in political life and discrimination and disadvantages at the workplace.

A major document on the conditions of women worldwide is the UN publication, “The Worlds Women: Trends and Statistics”, published every second year. While the focus is not on poverty, the publication is a crucial source for information on multidimensional poverty. The book contains valuable data and analysis on women in a number of areas:

- ★ demography
- ★ housing conditions
- ★ marriages and dissolution of unions
- ★ parenthood
- ★ health
- ★ education
- ★ work in the informal and formal sector
- ★ maternity leave
- ★ economic activity
- ★ human rights
- ★ political decision-making.

For many years, Sweden has called for a revised outlook of the publication, so that it could also provide statistics and other data on men to help illustrate and discuss gender differences.

Other major sources for understanding the multidimensional aspects of poverty of women are documents from a number of UN agencies and funds, such as annual reports and other studies provided by UN agencies and funds such as UNIFEM, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNHCR as well as FAO, WFP, IFAD and UNCTAD. In spite of its increasing age, the UNDP Human Development Report from 1995 remains a valuable document for overall data on female poverty.

The World Bank has recently contributed substantially to the understanding of both female and male poverty with “Voices of the poor” (see more below) and with the study, “Engendering Development” (2001). In the latter, the bank concludes that there are no studies that could prove that the majority of the poor are women, nor studies to confirm – or exactly define – a “feminisation of poverty”.

BRIDGE, an information centre at IDS, the Institute for Development Studies in Sussex, aims at being a bridge between development and gender studies, and provides valuable data on female poverty, available on the World Wide Web. BRIDGE has to that end presented several publications, including “Gender and Development: Facts and Figures”. The focus is not specifically on poverty but on broader aspects of deprivation, with data on maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, nutrition, access to resources, education, human rights, and participation in conflict resolution and in governance. Like many more recent studies on poor women, the publication also includes a chapter on globalisation, notably on how poor women are affected by changes in employment in a global economy.

Sida has contributed extensively to data on poor women, particularly at the country level, in a succession of “Country Gender Profiles” covering the bulk of main bilateral partner countries (many of them dating back to 1995 or earlier).

The OECD-DAC gender group has also been helpful over many years by providing valuable analysis and data on female poverty and gender and development, for example, the “Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development Co-operation” (1998).

A common feature of “The Worlds Women” and “Engendering Development” is that poverty of women is not indicated primarily in economic terms. Rather, the documents aim at assessing broader aspects of ill being and deprivation.

The literature on female poverty demonstrates that the difficulty in data on female poverty derives from a lack of clear-cut numbers on poverty at large.

Documents assessing female poverty only partly focus on measurable data on poverty and deprivation, which can be compared and captured in statistics. In terms of measurable data, a selection is often made, for instance, in the form of indexes that cover aspects of deprivation, which can be quantified, for instance, number of school years attended or percentage of female parliamentarians. However, such quantified methods fail to assess qualitative aspects of development, for instance, the content and gender stereotyping in education or the lack of overall voice of women in agenda-setting.

Poverty indexes and GAD thus provide data, but they may appear to be chosen somewhat at random. Nevertheless, they can still be helpful in terms of providing measurable data in a number of areas to define female poverty.

A look at the data actually selected will point to the fact that there are political choices behind what is included and what is excluded. Thus, we can find data that refer to:

- ★ income – but not women’s access to land and other assets
- ★ health – often quantified in maternal or child mortality or longevity but not in terms of access to reproductive health
- ★ education – mostly indicated in number of school years for girls but not in terms of content and efforts to provide legal literacy to women to help them move out of poverty.

It is also interesting to note that as demonstrated below, there appear to be only two indicators which do not suggest that women are poorer than men: the average (sexless) income indicator and the longevity indicator.

All other indicators seem to point to the fact that the majority of the poor are women. Thus, it appears as if the current strong focus on average income hides the extent and depth of female vs male poverty.

Indicator: Likelihood that the indicator if segregated by sex will point to women as a majority of poor and deprived people

income (averages in families)	no
longevity	no
health (maternal and child mortality etc)	yes
education and training	yes
access to land,credit	yes
access to decision making	yes
legal rights in families (custody etc)	yes
risks re violence	yes
(self)-respect, dignity	yes

In recent years, broad aspects of deprivation have been brought into the poverty discourse to better capture multi-dimensional aspects of poverty. These elements have long been included in the discourse on gender and development, and are paramount in the agreed texts in the 1995 Platform of Action from Beijing. They include, inter alia:

- ★ empowerment
- ★ risks
- ★ opportunities
- ★ security.

Given the difficulties in assessing such aspects of poverty and deprivation, most poverty indicators today still refer to what we could call “the first generation” of indicators, that is, those that are measurable and related to economic deprivation, rather than aspects of empowerment, risks etc.

In 2000 and later in 2002, the World Bank made commendable efforts to develop new types of indicators to address deprivation in a broader sense and multidimensional aspects of poverty. However, with the present strong focus on measurable data in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), efforts to capture power-related dimensions of poverty appear to almost have come to a halt.

7. Assessing the scope and magnitude of deprivation: poverty indicators under the magnifying glass

So: given the shortcomings above: What tend to decide our understanding of poverty? What data do we have on female vs male poverty? Do current indicators help us assess the scope of female vs male poverty? Are current data on income, health, etc the most relevant ones to help us understand and define poverty? What types of data and which indicators do we need to understand broader aspects of deprivation for women and men?

How are definitions of causes of poverty decisive for the way we assess the scope of poverty?

To what extent have traditional poverty assessments and GAD contributed to our understanding of female poverty and poverty at large?

Income poverty and allocations within households: One commonly used indicator defines a poor person as someone with an income below US\$1 per day. The one-dollar-a-day poverty line translates US\$1 to the local currency using purchasing-power-parity (PPP) exchange rates. Thus, it can easily be used for comparing poverty levels over time and between countries.

The income indicator is the only poverty measurement with an internationally accepted (constructed) “cut off” line to separate between poor and non-poor. It is only through such a measurable monetary indicator that global estimations can be made of the number of poor people globally, which have been defined as some 1,2 billion.

No other indicator, to define “health” or “education” has as yet been constructed or accepted to draw a line between poor and non-poor. In 2003 however, a UNICEF study “Child Poverty in the Developing World”, did present suggestions on how to use indicators such as access to sanitation, water, food, health, education, shelter and information to present an aggregate of factors to define poverty.¹

The indicator “income” has been criticised for only measuring material well being and for omitting empowerment aspects. It has also been criticised for being arbitrary, as a person with US\$1.01 is not defined as poor whereas one with an income of US\$0.99 is. In spite of its limitations, the income approach is still by far the most frequently used method for measuring poverty, basically because of a relative abundance of data and because of its simplicity. Thus, the income indicators are still dominant for poverty in crucial poverty documents such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP’s – see Kabeer, De Vylder and others)

A weakness of per capita estimations at large is that they are based on assumptions that resources are divided equally within households, which have been seen as units for the pooling of income and meeting the welfare needs of all members. Limited attention has been given to uneven division of and access to resources within the household– though the World Bank and a number of researchers like Amartya Sen have demonstrated that inequalities between women and men are more pronounced the poorer the family is.² Systematic inequalities within households are related to age, life cycle status, birth order, relationship to household head and other factors. However, the most pervasive are related to gender and as demonstrated by Kabeer and others women may suffer from poverty while their husbands do not.

Another limitation of the focus on income is that it disregards women’s unpaid work. In the Human Development Report 1995, UNDP refers to extensive time-use-studies

1 By David Gordon, Shailen Nandy, Chistina Pantazis, Simon Pemberton and Peter Townsend.

2 See for instance Sen in “Development as Freedom”.

world-wide demonstrating that unpaid work represents the bulk of women's work – some 2/3rds of it – whereas unpaid work for men constitute only a limited portion – 1/4th of their working time. It is estimated that if unpaid work were included in official economic statistics, it would increase global GDP by almost 40%. This is similar to an assessment made in Sweden, by Professor Anita Nyberg for a special governmental enquiry on women's power in 1996–98.

A figure which demonstrates the value of women's unpaid work is the estimate that 75% of all health services among poor people globally are provided through unpaid work in the household, primarily by women. Such work is an often unnoticed and unrecorded aspect of conditions for women, which according to Palmer should be labelled women's "reproductive tax" (see de Vylder).

Given the tendency not to fully estimate women's contribution to the economy, UN World Statistics, produced by the UN Department for Economic and Social affairs, along with other statistics, heavily under-estimate women's contribution to development. Time-use studies of unpaid work in economics show that women in all countries at an average work more hours per week than men. However, unpaid work remains unrecorded in general statistics, so data normally labelled "women's economic activity" give the incorrect picture that women, at an average, perform only some 40-50% of men's work, though the inverse figures would appear to be true in many if not most societies.

Studies in many parts of the world demonstrate that men do not always contribute their entire wage to cover household needs. Though this might or might not be a general feature, several studies indicate that many poor men spend a large share of their income for personal consumption (see Kabeer, Chant and others). Studies in Latin America and other regions indicate that the share men withhold can be as high as 30-50%. Again, this may (or may not) be exceptional, but is nevertheless a matter of concern for strategies primarily looking at men as "vehicles for change" to promote development for all.³ Several studies also suggest that women and men tend to have different preferences in terms of consumption and investments, both within families and as regards the use of public funds. As indicated by Sen, Kabeer and others, uneven structures of power within families tend to imply that male preferences are given stronger weight. This may explain the lack of attention – both in households and among current development partners – to reproductive health, labour-saving techniques, which could help women, prepare food and collect water etc.

Income poverty is more often discussed in relation to female- than to male-headed households (FHH). There is a tendency to suggest that members of FHH are poorer than others, and even to use FHHs as a proxy for poverty. In fact, most FHHs are not poor (see Chant and others).

3 Chant (see reference literature).

Several studies indicate that many FHHs are among the poorest in some parts of the world, notably when measured in terms of average per capita income. However, GAD documents often stress that, even when averages of income per capita are higher in male-headed household as compared to FHH, other dimensions of ill being or well-being may more than compensate low income for members of FHH. For instance, the absence of domestic violence may make up for low income. *Thus, poor women who have a choice can make a trade-off between violence, fear and material benefits – compared to self-respect, voice, and the right to decision-making.* They may find that they and their children can enjoy a better standard of living if they live on their own instead of in a MHH, even at the expense of lower material benefits. This is a clear indication that well being does not necessarily equals assets or income (Chant).

In a region like the Caribbean with high numbers of FHH, female well being is a case in point, as the region scores high in terms of women's education, health, political representation and reproductive and sexual rights. A major reason is, of course, that here, women do not become social and economic outcasts – as in many other societies – if they chose to live outside male-headed households (Kabeer).

As stressed by several researchers, the tendency to disregard female poverty in male-headed households and to stigmatise FHHs as poor can be seen as a political choice, and as part of a neo-conservative agenda which seeks to portray male-headed households as superior to FHHs. This approach runs contrary to the politically agreed texts from Beijing in 1995 where, in the end, an agreement was reached to refer to various forms of families, and not (as suggested by the Vatican and many Muslims countries) to indicate the family – supposedly male-headed – to be the norm.

Judging from poverty analysis, notably within the international development banks, it appear as if the liberal forces who dominated Beijing and the GAD discourse have not made similar advances in the poverty discourse where there is a tendency to equalise FHHs with poverty.

Even if women presently constitute a large majority of the poor, it may not be correct to speak about “the feminisation of poverty”. The concept seems to indicate a trend of women becoming poor to a larger extent than men do. This may be true in some regions, but possibly not at an aggregate, global level. In fact, there is evidence that more and more (major) breadwinners are women who enter the paid labour market, as women tend to accept practically any jobs and wages to support their families. On the other hand, many poor uneducated men now lose their jobs. Evidently, this puts a good deal of strain on existing power relationships at the family level since men's demands for superiority vis-à-vis their wives and children are no longer connected with a role as main providers for their families. These new realities ought to be reflected in the design of poverty strategies, which still tend to treat men as prime agents of change (see Castells and “Voices of the poor”).

Efforts are also needed to address the increasing numbers of child-headed households, notably in areas where HIV/AIDS has taken a heavy toll. Again, it is important to

note the different needs, risks etc in these families when the “head” is a boy or a girl.

Poverty indexes acknowledging poverty as multidimensional

In addition to individual indicators, poverty indexes are used to depict poverty. The indexes can be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the many dimensions and manifestations of poverty. Thus, indexes aim at capturing a multitude of indicators and measurements to help define the complex matter we call “poverty”.

The choice in selecting indicators to set up an index reflects both (political) values, and practicalities in terms of what can more easily be measured. It is essential to be aware of these assumptions, as indexes may often seem to be neutral – supposedly because they can be dealt with mathematically.

One common poverty/deprivation index is the human development index (HDI). The index was constructed by the UNDP and is often referred to in the UN system. The HDI builds on three basic components selected to give a fair indication of the level of poverty: health, education and income. Health is measured by life expectancy, education by a combination of adult literacy and mean years of schooling and income by PPP per capita GDP (UNDP).

In 1997, UNDP sought to introduce a Human Poverty Index, with the aim of estimating the broader concept of deprivation, by assessing longevity, knowledge and decent standards of living. However, the focus on mortality, literacy, and access to health services and safe water and prevalence of malnourished children indicates that this index also basically relates to material aspects of poverty rather than to voice and empowerment.

The UNDP and UNIFEM have developed specific indexes with the aim of assessing the extent of female poverty and female power. The Gender Development Index, GDI, aims at measuring women’s share of men’s income, life expectancy and higher education. As demonstrated in several editions of the UNDP Human Development Reports, the GDI is lower than the HDI for all countries. This illustrates the fact that there is no country where women get an equal share of resources and voice compared to men. UNIFEM has also in the publication “Targets and Indicators” (2000) stressed the need to capture the diversity and complexity of poor women’s living condition, in order to assess progress made in terms of political commitments to gender equality and poverty eradication.

UNDP and UNIFEM have also jointly launched the Gender Empowerment Measurement, which seeks to assess women’s participation in decision-making. The GEM measures women’s position vs. men’s in terms of seats in parliament, managerial and professional’s positions and earned income. While such figures are valuable, they tend to give only a glimpse of the broad problems of participation, voice and access to resources.

Within UNIFEM there have been informal discussions on the possibility of creating another index to measure ill being/well being of women: a gender violence index. The methodological difficulties are acknowledged to be considerable, but so is the value of having an index, which could increase awareness of male violence in the household,

often labelled domestic violence, thereby increasing the pressure on governments and others to take action against violence.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can be seen as a complex index that includes a number of elements to assess multidimensional poverty. They emerged in early 2000 as a dominant definer of poverty. The main reason may be the renewed political consensus on combating poverty, and a commitment to halve poverty by 2015. In substance, though, the goals have been criticised in terms of content and clarity, and for deviating from the Beijing PFA as well as from the window of opportunity provided in the *World Bank's World Development Report on Poverty in 2000/01* where the bank stressed the dimensions of rights and power as key to poverty reduction.

The MDGs have also been accused for downplaying gender equality, which was given priority in all UN World Conferences in the 1990s. It is also surprising that gender was given very limited attention in the MDGs, as the empowerment aspect of gender was much more prominent in the Declaration from the Millennium Assembly in the UN in 2000. (see Subramanian)

However, the vague references to gender in the MDGs follows the pattern from the political texts adopted at recent conferences in the 2000s, such as Doha (trade), Monterrey (development financing) and Johannesburg (sustainable development), where gender is brought up marginally, as pointed out by UNIFEM and others.

A case in point is the fact that reproductive and sexual rights are not included in the MDGs, nor are high profile issues such as land rights and equal inheritance from the Beijing PFA. All in all, the MDGs fail to reflect the broad agenda on gender equality set out in Beijing in the Platform of Action 1995. It has been acknowledged by UNDP that an agreement on the MDGs could only be reached by an acceptance of the demand of the U.S. (at that time Clinton) administration – and the demand of other governments – to exclude reproductive and sexual rights from the agenda. *Thus, the agreement on the MDGs was reached at the expense of vital dimensions of GAD and the Beijing agenda.*

Of the 48 economic and social indicators defined by UNDP to assess progress on the MDGs, only 3 refer explicitly to gender. And out of the 8 main goals, one refers to external mortality and one to gender equality. The target for the latter goal, however, narrowly focuses on girls' education. These goals could be compared with the Beijing PFA, which also encompasses reproductive health and health during the life cycle – and qualitative aspects of education such as life-long education, functional education for all women, legal literacy, revisions of existing educational material to remove gender stereotypes, etc.

Thus, the PFA and GAD challenge girls' education as the "silver bullet" in the quest for gender equality and instead point to the need to look into existing power structures rather than defining the problem as a deficiency in girls (See Subramanian).

Both the World Bank and the research community have suggested a much broader perspective on gender equality in the goals. Also, the OECD-DAC poverty reduction strategy stresses the MDGs, but emphasises also the empowerment dimensions of poverty.

The World Development Report (WDR) 2000/01 opened up a broader discourse on how to define poverty; well being and empowerment, to better meet the needs of the poor. New types of definitions and indicators were suggested, defining a broader, more socio-economic outlook to address empowerment and less quantifiable but nevertheless valuable data on living conditions among poor people.

Efforts have sincere been made by the Bank to further explore new broad measurements to capture the multidimensional dimensions of poverty, including complex issues such as empowerment, opportunity, security and risk.

The World Bank has also, through the large global study “Voices of the poor”, demonstrated that assessments of poverty can be made by collecting subjective assessments from the poor of what poverty is and what it implies for poor people.

“Voices of the poor” describes poverty in aggregate overviews according to the following characteristics:

- ★ hunger
- ★ disease (including HIV/AIDS and alcoholism)
- ★ lack of income, land and other property
- ★ violence, insecurity, isolation (physical, psychological, social)
- ★ exclusion vis-à-vis decision-making functions
- ★ lack of infrastructure in terms of water and communications

While this might be considered as a general description of poverty, it does not reflect the gender aspects of poverty.

A more accurate description of poverty would need to include gender specific observations, as described below:

Expression of poverty

How women and men are affected

hunger	women eat least and last in many regions
disease (incl. HIV, alcoholism)	women’s reproductive health is neglected, while men’s care cost more. Men’s own actions increase risks
lack of income	few poor women have an income
no land/property	few women own/control land/assets; property is taken from widows
violence, insecurity	most poor women are victims though many young men and/or men involved in crime also suffer
exclusion from decision-making	women excluded because of their sex
lack of water, electricity, roads	increases women’s workloads

7. The Platform for Action as a yardstick

The Platform for Action from the UN Fourth World Conference on Women as a benchmark for assessing multidimensional aspects of poverty

The Platform of Action from Beijing in 1995 is so far (2003) the most far-reaching political agreement in defining female poverty and deprivation. It is also an agenda for action in support of gender equality, with texts on a wide range of economic, social, political and cultural aspects of development, definitions of female poverty, indications of causes for female deprivation and suggestions for strategies to combat poverty, deprivation and discrimination world-wide.

In the PFA, countries agreed (after lengthy negotiations) to define twelve critical areas of concern as decisive for women's well being. The areas are poverty (mentioned as the first area), education, health (with strong emphasis on reproductive health and rights), violence (notably domestic violence), conflicts (e.g., rape), economics, decision-making, national mechanisms for enhancing equality, human rights, environment, media (stereotyping) and the girl child. All areas encompass clear recommendations of action to be taken primarily by governments, both to combat gender-based-discrimination and to promote gender-equality.

The measures suggested are often related to non-economic issues such as legal reforms and law enforcement (in term of rights to land, inheritance and reproductive rights and services). Generally, removing legal gender-based discrimination is considered to have a major impact on women's well being as compared to economic provisions.

Since Beijing 1995, the PFA has been a key point of reference in the global gender discourse. However, for political reasons particularly due to opposition to reproductive health and rights, the Beijing agenda seems to be fading, as it is overshadowed by open resistance from the present U.S. administration and others, and by the strong focus on the MDGs and PRSP's, where gender features again, as prior to Beijing, have become marginalized.

Thus, while the critical areas of concern (and the texts adopted at "Beijing +5" in 2000) still remain a yard-stick for measuring progress as regards poor women's status, until now only limited efforts have been made to use them as a point of departure to establish indicators to assess progress in the areas.

However, each of the "Critical Areas of Concern" in the PFA (poverty, education, health, violence, etc) could be used to establish indicators on poverty and deprivation of women vs. men.

For example, education as defined in PFA would suggest attention to a broad range of issues such as non-discriminatory education as a means to empowerment, the obstacles to girls' education in terms of early pregnancies and marriages, inadequate and gender-biased teaching and training material, sexual harassment, improved quality of education, human rights education and legal literacy, support to gender studies, non-formal education, provision of resources etc.

Similarly, “health” is defined by the Beijing PFA in much broader terms than in most statistics on women’s health, stressing women’s physical and mental health throughout the life cycle, the need to look into national health systems, which tend to perpetuate gender stereotypes and fail to consider socio-economic disparities and to disregard violence and reproductive and sexual services. In the much-debated para 96, the Beijing PFA stresses that the human rights of women include the right to have control over and decide freely on matters related to their sexuality. HIV/AIDS is given strong attention and so are female genital mutilation and the need to support health care for girls, adolescents and elderly women.

The Swedish Central Board of Statistics (SCB) has sought to define indicators related to the goals set out on the Beijing PFA in “Engendering Statistics”. The book notes that data should be collected with the view to addressing problems and political goals:

“By looking at problems and goals in society it is possible to identify statistics and indicators necessary to plan, promote and monitor change. The next step involves reviewing national sources to assess the availability of needed statistics and their quality in terms of definitions and concepts, methods of measurement and coverage. A review of available data will show existing data gaps and identify the needs for the improvement of gender statistics in various fields.”

Also, the Commonwealth has provided an ambitious publication program to provide tools to facilitate the implementation of the PFA. To that end, “Using Gender-sensitive Indicators” was published in 1999. The booklet suggests that a number of areas be selected, stemming from the definitions in the twelve areas of concern in the PFA. Whereas the indicators derived from the PFA basically are very valuable on important matters such as access to land, *it should be noted that reproductive and sexual rights and services – a cornerstone both in Beijing and in the population conference in Cairo in 1994 – are not included.*

8. Defining causes of poverty – decisive for defining the scope and magnitude of female poverty

As discussed earlier in this paper, the way poverty is defined is deeply related to how the causes to poverty are defined. *Defining causes is partly a political choice.* It is also a political choice *not* to consider gender.

As pointed out by Kabeer along with others, a number of non-economic causes of poverty, notably man-made laws and norms within families and in societies, often limit opportunities for women to move out of poverty.

The World Bank and other have also acknowledged that gender-based discrimination in terms of women’s lack of access to resources such as land, credits, decision making and reproductive and sexual health and rights are causes of female and overall poverty (“Engendering Development”).

In a “geography of gender”, Kabeer (2002) illustrates how family structures, closely linked to and reflecting other rules and laws in societies, actually very strongly limit the options of individuals to be agents of change:

“Gender is a key organising principle in the distribution of labour, property and other valued resources in society. Unequal gender relationships are sustained and legitimised through ideas of difference and inequality that express widely held beliefs and values about the “nature” of masculinity and femininity. Such forms of power do not have to be actively exercised to be effective. They also operate silently and implicitly through compliance with male authority both in the home and outside it. For example, if the senior male in the household or lineage has the main responsibility for member’s welfare, he usually also has privileged access to its resources. Women, and junior men, accept his authority partly in recognition of his greater responsibilities and partly because they have limited bargaining power.

The most marked forms of gender inequality...are associated with regimes of extreme forms of patriarchy. ...Kinship structures in these regions are predominantly patrilineal: descent is traced and property transmitted through the male members....

Gender relations, like all social relations embody ideas, values and identities, allocate labour between different tasks, activities and domains; determine the distribution of resources; and assign authority, agency and decision-making power... Society’s institutional framework – its rules, norms, beliefs and practices – means that individuals and social groups not only start from different places, but also have different opportunities to improve their situation in the course of their lives.

Given its importance in the overall governance of society, the state can play a critical role in maintaining, reinforcing or countering inequalities in other domains.”

Institutional rules and norms, formal as well as informal govern human behaviour – at all levels of society: at the state level, in the market, in civil society and community level and in kinship relations. Gender roles in the family also affect roles in other arenas – and vice versa. These rules govern production, reproduction and distribution. They are man-made (as pointed out by the World Bank in WDR 2000/2001) – which means that they can be altered.

In addition to formal laws, also norms and customs, including gender stereotypes, give different group’s unequal starting points and limit the prospects for a free choice. Gender-based asymmetrical entitlements given at birth are decisive for the access of individuals to resources, voice and respect (Kabeer, Chant and others).

Norms within families and clans, and perceptions of male superiority and female subordination are expressed at various levels of society and are interlinked at micro, meso, and macro levels (Kabeer and others). These norms rule women’s and men’s land tenure, income/labour market restrictions, powerlessness, reproductive and sexual rights, the vulnerability of widows/widowers, disabled women/disabled men etc. Such norms also give entitlements to – or deny – empowerment, voice, self-esteem, autonomy and participation.

Belonging to a preferred sex may also often imply the perceived right to exercise violence, both within and outside the household. Violence and freedom from violence are some of the most fundamental aspects of deprivation. As pointed out by the UN

Rapporteur on Violence Against Women in an ECOSOC report 2002 called “Cultural Practices in the Family that are Violent towards Women”, violence is exercised by individuals, but often rooted in norms and practices which are harmful (and sometimes deadly) to women. *Violence in the household and structural violence sanctioned by societies is important impediments to the empowerment for women.*

An often-neglected gender dimension of poverty is the tremendous development cost of male violence, not during war but in times of peace. A major cause of death among women is HIV infections after having been raped by an infected man. In addition, millions of women are victims of male violence in the household and 500,000 women and teenage girls die every year during childbirth, even though their lives could have been saved if they had not been denied access to health services and abortions. (Lindahl)

Violence against women and girls is a major obstacle to development. The abortions of female foetuses, genital mutilation, trafficking, sexual slavery etc run contrary to all efforts to protect and promote respect and dignity of human beings. Violent men are very expensive for societies, in terms of prisons, police, health care, loss of income and productivity, pain, fear and erosion of social capital. Estimates indicate that such costs for societies can be between 3–8% of countries’ GDP (see de Vylder).

The WDR 2000/01, a basically economic document, indicates that eliminating legal discrimination is key to the empowerment of women, as the WDR notes that gender equality “is of such pervasive significance that it deserves extra emphasis compared to other inequalities”.

To this end, CEDAW (the Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women) can be a useful point of departure or bench-mark for defining indicators to combat legal discrimination against women: in terms of land rights, legal protection against domestic violence, access to assets and inheritance, freedom of movement, reproductive and sexual rights, right to custody of children and the right to equal pay.

9. Lack of gender perspective in poverty reduction strategies

Strategies to combat poverty often lack considerations on how women’s options to move out of poverty are limited by perceptions of female subordination, women’s reproductive work, laws and gender stereotypes.

Strategies are often designed to address economic aspects of poverty – which tend to better cover the needs of poor men – as compared to the needs of poor women who, in addition to economic poverty, also face other hurdles in terms of gender-based discrimination regarding access to land, credit, training, employment, reproductive needs and participation in decision-making.

Poverty strategies often address economics but basically neglect gender-based discrimination while assuming that both women and men can benefit on equal terms from economic policies. However, several studies demonstrate that, for instance, support to cash-crop production and privatisation may not benefit women who in many regions,

together with children and the elderly, primarily are consumers of food and thus pay the price for higher incomes to cash-crop-producers who tend to be men (see White, de Vylder, Kabeer).

Furthermore, women who lack capital and collateral tend to be unable to fully profit from privatisation as compared to men. Consequently, poverty reduction efforts that fail to acknowledge gender based-discrimination as a cause of poverty appear unlikely to meet the needs of poor people.

If gender is mentioned in poverty reduction strategies, “gender” mostly equals “women” – who contrary to men tend to be defined as sexual beings, and in relation to others (wives, mothers, etc).

Most strategies build on the perception that women are vulnerable – often along with all other groups in society apart from men. The remedy to this is what often is labelled “special support”, but rarely equal rights, which could help women, get access to resources and voice on the same terms as men.

This emphasis on special support is primarily due to the failure, both in descriptive and prescriptive texts on poverty, to acknowledge the extent to which women contribute to economies and development. The main reason for this is, as pointed out by Chant, de Vylder and many others, that most of the work of poor women is not paid for, nor reflected in statistics nor in budget-planning. It is taken for granted, as a necessity for the survival of children, elderly people and adult women and men. It remains unrecognised that women provide the bulk of welfare in all societies in terms of food, health and shelter etc. This would need to be considered more in discussions on poverty, not least in view of the impressive World Bank study, “Voices of the poor”, which clearly states that most poor people get limited help from institutions – and primarily have to rely on their own efforts.

As pointed out by Nauckhoff even the Zambian NGO community, when given the opportunity to comment on the PRSP, did not basically challenge the general supposedly gender neutral discourse of the PRSP, nor its focus on the market, measurable aspects of poverty rather than attention to power-hierarchies, the rich, empowerment, gender etc. The NGO text did thus *not* provide an alternative way of addressing poverty. However, the NGO community was more emphatic than the Government in stressing gender and other “cross-cutting” issues.

Gender could also add to the discussions suggested by Hernando de Soto in “The Mystery of Capital” on alternative ways of assessing resources and assets in economies in order to also bring in estimations of unpaid work and women’s contribution to economies. It would thus appear fruitful to seek to link de Soto’s theories with studies from GAD on women’s contribution to economies and to studies of Elson, Budlender and others within the GAD discourse. ⁴

4 See for instance “Gender budget initiatives”, published by UNIFEM 2003.

However, as stressed by Stefan de Vylder, PRSP's should be guided by the following observations:

- ★ There is a need to take gender aspects into account in the design of economic reform programmes in order to enhance the poverty reduction impact of such programmes.
- ★ A consistent poverty reduction strategy needs to tackle prevailing gender biases within each sector – agriculture, forestry, transport and communications, industrial development, etc.
- ★ Increase in cash crop production at the expense of subsistence food production changes the intra-household terms of trade in favour of the man.
- ★ In a comprehensive and coherent poverty reduction strategy, it is imperative to design development policies, which give priority to projects, which economise on the use of women's time; poor women, in particular, are almost always busy, and time is a severe constraint. Examples could include investments in village water supplies (which save time spent fetching water), fuel-efficient stoves, reforestation which reduces the time spent on collecting fuel-wood, and small-scale rural electrification projects based on solar energy or biomass.”

The need to stress gender in poverty reduction efforts is made very clear in the new Swedish Bill to Parliament on global development, which points out that women and girls should be guaranteed the same rights as men and boys and that the participation and interests of females should be assured in all policy areas. Gender-based discrimination is recognised as a cause of poverty and a major obstacle to equitable and sustainable development. The Bill also states that the notion that women and children are subordinate to men and can be abused and exploited with impunity must be combated and must influence the setting of priorities and the choice of measures in development policy.

10. Summary, conclusions and suggestions:

1. The way we define the scope and magnitude of poverty, and its causes, depends on whose perspective we take. The perspective has fundamental political implications for the strategies chosen to address poverty. And the perspective is decisive for how we select areas of research and to what subject matters resources are allocated in terms of funds and personnel. It is also crucial for selecting partners in agenda-setting and decision-making regarding prioritise.

To include – or not to include – gender in analysis and strategies is a political choice.

By being gender-blind, most development agencies tend to maintain many existing unequal power structures and resource-allocations, thus perpetuating inequalities. It is a political decision to bear that cost – or act to avoid it.

2. Both the poverty discourse and GAD have contributed considerably to our understanding of female poverty and both are main sources for understanding and addressing female poverty.

It is important that the poverty discourse, and knowledge-based institutions like the World Bank and others, incorporate major elements of the GAD discourse and takes on board perspectives from the UN Beijing PFA agenda, with a view to further develop indicators and strategies which address power relations and means to empower poor women and men, through economic as well as legal and other means.

3. From the road maps provided in the Beijing-PFA and CEDAW, and the GAD discourse at large, it would be possible to amend existing models and strategies for poverty analysis. Thus, while looking into how women suffer from gender-based-discrimination in addition to poverty, we can see how addressing issues such as law and customs can facilitate addressing the needs of poor women, and thus poverty and deprivation at large.

4. While recognising the growing focus on and consensus at the theoretical level on the multidimensional aspects of poverty, which stress empowerment and voice, the multidimensional aspects of poverty should also be reflected in major documents on poverty at the country level and in measurements and indicators used to assess the scope and magnitude of poverty.

It is thus important to broaden definitions of poverty in major documents such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP's). Also, the Millennium Development Targets (MDTs) with their focus on measurable aspects and manifestations of poverty need to be engendered, as pointed out in World Bank studies and within the research community.

5. Gender often implies attention to women – whereas men remain invisible as men, as men often are seen as the norm, and representatives of everybody – even in cases when men's interests and access to resources and power are given primacy. For men, gender is often perceived as an unnecessary “add on” because men – even if they are poor – rarely face gender-based discriminatory laws or stereotypes as additional hurdles to their efforts to move out of poverty.
6. Today, we know quite a lot about some aspects of inequality and the scope of poverty, particularly in terms of measurable data. However, our knowledge as regards power-related dimensions of poverty, such as voice and participation, is much more rudimentary. The indicators most commonly used – the income indicator – give no

evidence of any gender biases, because most of the indicators are constructed in a manner that does not permit them to look for gender biases.

Given the need to focus on broader aspects of deprivation and ill-being/well-being, it would appear essential for Sweden and other actors to develop a new generation of indicators which could encompass both economic, measurable aspects of poverty and legal and informal dimensions of deprivation, related to power, empowerment, risks, opportunities etc.

Possibly, the following type of indicators could be established to assess female and male deprivation, to also cover aspects of voice, resources and respect:

- I Income levels (nb: with figures which should portray asymmetrical distribution of resources in families, and seek to assess the value of women's unpaid work)
- II Maternal mortality
- III Access to reproductive health and services
- IV Education: including functional literacy, legal literacy
- V Legal rights to land and other resources and rights to inheritance
- VI Prevalence of violence, both structural violence (mutilation, female infanticide, property cleansing etc) and domestic violence
- VII Access to credit and other financial services
- VIII (Self-) respect, voice, dignity, ability to benefit from social networks
- IX Time: leisure time and time to be able to participate in decision-making
- X Equal sharing of unpaid work

The elements above could possibly also help set up a model for a "quality control" of what should be allowed to be labelled "gender mainstreamed".

Hopefully, such indicators could also be used to, as a complement to the MDT's – and to assess progress in terms of reducing also female poverty by half by 2015.

7. A major impediment for understanding poverty the strong focus on measurable data which disregards all the unpaid work performed principally by women in poor household, where they often appear to act as major providers of welfare. To acknowledge women's contribution may challenge both existing power structures and challenge conventional wisdom in terms of who may be vehicles for change. To involve poor women in decision-making may give room for development strategies to the benefit of improving labour-saving techniques in poor households and providing for allocations for such purposes in state budgets and in economic reforms. That may imply that many existing patriarchal structures may no longer have the exclusive or principal influence over the millions of dollars which yearly are provide world-wide in development co-operation. *To involve women in decision-making is thus not primarily a question of pro forma equal representation in decision-making – but to establish a basis for control over major economic assets and agenda setting.*

8. As discussed in this paper, what we tend to define as economic issues (such as income and consumption) are influenced both by economic factors (salaries etc) and by non-economic factors (legal rights, status within families and clans etc). Thus, strategies to combat female poverty and deprivation must ensure formal rights access to land, income, education, free movement, reproductive services etc – and informal rights: respect – regardless of sex, freedom from violence and threats of violence etc.
9. Even if there are lacunas in terms of understanding female poverty, there is a multitude of data available – and this should be acknowledged fully, to better influence poverty reduction strategies and efforts aimed at addressing both female and male deprivation.
10. More studies would also be required to obtain a clearer picture of the depth and magnitude of female poverty:
 - ★ with focus on broad dimensions of deprivation rather than economic poverty to better assess ill-being of poor women and men. Hence, the Beijing PFA could serve as a benchmark and help amend and ameliorate the existing poverty discourse, by adding the perspective of the GAD discourse.
 - ★ deepening analysis of poverty and female poverty by linking the analysis of scope to an analysis of factors causing poverty and deprivation.
 - ★ study and analyse femal vs. male “interests and needs” in development.
 - ★ revisiting our understanding of aid effectiveness by asking “effective for whom”?
 - ★ amending the design of poverty reduction strategies so that they acknowledge both women and men as subjects who can be vehicles for change to enhance development.
 - ★ reviewing existing legislation and actual implementation of the laws in order to highlight remaining barriers to women’s equal rights in all areas
 - ★ initiating gender analyses of state budgets, local government budgets and allocation of foreign aid funds.
 - ★ developing institutional capacity for coherent work on engendering development.

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Poverty without poor

by Eva Nauckhoff

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Executive Summary

PRSPs – Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers - are meant to have a decisive influence both on national policies and on the design of international development co-operation. They are also part of a discourse, which means that they make a certain representation of the world and in treating problems - in this case poverty - see certain ranges of actions as possible, while excluding others. From this follows that representations of target groups and descriptions of people – or lack of description – set the norm and will influence what is considered to be relevant or unimportant, possible or impossible and what kinds of analysis will be undertaken. The Civil Society response in Zambia, the Swedish Country Analysis and to some extent also the Swedish Country Strategy may be seen as part of the same development discourse, sharing some general patterns. Here, they are compared to the PRSPs for Zambia and Bangladesh.

One common pattern in the PRSPs is that poor people, 73% of the population in Zambia and 50% in Bangladesh, are described in an anonymous manner such as “the poor” or “vulnerable people”. Another that target groups and gender are visible in overviews, but seldom in chapters on sectors. There is no systematic approach in describing either gender, categories or groups of people. If description and analysis of target groups are absent, it is hard to believe that programs and interventions will be properly targeted as poor groups and their specific problems will be invisible.

Reviews made so far show that in regard to the integration of gender the pattern is the same in all PRSPs. Most probably this applies also to target groups. Women are generally described as a homogeneous category, seldom with other characteristics than their gender. They are seen as “the same”. Men are practically invisible. Children are present in some sections but with little differentiation. Information is also lacking on issues that would contribute to our understanding of poverty such as the informal sectors of the economy and inequalities within and between different categories of households. Generally, there are no descriptions of how levels of wide-spread poverty vary between men and women, different age groups, manner of employment, socioeconomic or ethnic group, or of how the situation varies for poor people in different parts of the country. Difference and variation as well as hierarchies and relations of power between and within groups become invisible.

The Civil Society response in Zambia has more descriptions of poor women and men than the PRSP for Zambia and so has the Swedish Country Analysis. In the Country Analysis more attention is paid to gender aspects and to age groups than in the PRSP, but there are few references to diversity in terms of socio-economic or ethnic group or to differences between categories of men and women in different parts of the country. In chapters on sectors and on macroeconomics, categories of people are about as absent as in the PRSP and the Civil Society response. Generally, this means that analyses of target groups and gender considerations are reflected in the sections on education and health, but not in other sectors. The Swedish Country Strategy is the

document with the least descriptions of people. The more differentiated accounts of poverty and of the situation on poor people in the other documents do not seem to have influenced this text.

While PRSPs open possibilities for pooling national and international resources, there is at the same time a risk of standardising support programmes and analysis. The common patterns need to be examined and discussed. While omissions may be a consequence of gaps of knowledge, the cause may also be that a certain discourse on development has been traded down perhaps through routine, perhaps also agreed upon in negotiations. Gaps of knowledge may result from the way poverty is described in texts on development co-operation and will thus interact with the style and manner of a discourse. One may perpetuate the other, making large groups of people and important causes of poverty invisible. If gaps of knowledge were to be more clearly identified, more analyses would probably be undertaken. The results of new knowledge would then be reflected in texts and policies and programming would probably change, making interventions more effective.

Even though capacity is limited, NGOs and research networks in the countries concerned do have a context-specific knowledge that should be explored in order to arrive at a better differentiation in describing target groups.

1. Introduction

In texts on development co-operation, target groups do not seem to be represented. This applies to texts on different levels: policy papers, guidelines and interventions. Poverty is described mostly in macroeconomic terms or in terms of percentages, covering only some aspects. Defined in such a way, poverty does not describe different problems facing different categories of poor people nor important causes of poverty. It does not say anything about relations of power within or between groups, even though these are essential in order to understand the positions of different categories of people in regard to control, or lack of control, over assets and resources. Without such a perspective, discrimination of groups or categories of people, which contributes to poverty, may become invisible. It may also be difficult to see how questions of human rights are to be addressed in a context-specific manner. If attention is directed only at "the poor" or "vulnerable groups", structural relations between groups disappear. In sum, as long as descriptions of people and target groups are the exception rather than the rule, there will be major flaws in our understanding of the causes and definitions of poverty.

It might be argued that a first and fundamental step in differentiating target groups for assistance has been attention first to the situation of poor women and later to gender. Gender in development is still mostly taken to signify women, however, and not structural relations between women and men. That further steps need to be taken has been shown by ample research during the last decade or two. People cannot be described only by using the two categories of men and women, even if these are necessary.

Obviously, men and women are not the same all over the world. Difference and variation in terms such as age, socio-economic and ethnic group and geographical location have to be introduced in order to make groups and categories fully visible and their situation comprehensible. As long as target groups for assistance are not represented and analysed in a differentiated manner, women (and children), which are often the only category mentioned in texts on development co-operation will continue to be seen as a kind of anomaly.

This study will explore the descriptions of target groups in four different texts; two of Zambian and two of Swedish origin. It will also make a short comparison between the PRSPs for Zambia and Bangladesh.

2. The purpose of the study

Within the framework of the project "Discrimination of women as a cause to poverty", I have been asked to make an analysis of how people and target groups are described in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) for Zambia. As the PRSP is to guide both national policy and international development co-operation during the period 2002-2004, it is a norm-setting document of quite some range and therefore an interesting object of study.

The purpose of this study is thus to examine the descriptions, or lack of descriptions, of target groups in the PRSP in order to provide a basis for discussion of alternative ways of describing and defining target groups and of issues emerging out of such an analysis. Hopefully, this will also raise some issues of relevance to the continued PRS-process in Zambia.

The study will focus on the various identities presented in the PRSP and on a few concepts, which are of importance to the way people are being described, among them households, the informal market, the concept of poverty and how it is measured. In the analysis I will use text analysis and discourse theory. Also, I will use relevant research on categories and identities such as gender, ethnicity, class, age and geographical location in order to discuss definitions of target groups. In addition, I will make a short comparison with a paper produced by civil society in Zambia and with the Swedish Country Analysis and Country Strategy for Zambia, which were both produced after the PRSP. I will also compare it with the Interim PRSP for Bangladesh in order to widen the perspective.

Gender is a category of major importance in defining target groups in development co-operation and indeed, in studying society at large. Also, equality between women and men is one of the goals of Swedish development co-operation today. Gender will therefore be one of the main categories discussed in the analyses, but not the only one. The presence or absence of target groups as such will be the backdrop against which the whole study is set. The assumption is quite simply that different target groups need at least some description based on underlying analysis in order to be made visible and

to be instrumental in the design of interventions. This applies not least to norm-setting policy documents such as PRSPs.

What will be addressed here are the contents of the PRSPs rather than the process of drawing up and implementing these strategies. Interesting questions in this context with a bearing also on contents are for instance: To what extent has the PRS-process been integrated with the equivalent national process? Who is responsible and how were consultations organised? How will they be organised in the future? An interesting account of this process from a gender point of view is found in a newly published study by Bridge¹.

Here, I will examine the PRSP per se and not the studies and documents it has been based upon. As the PRSP in itself is a normative document, it is precisely the contents of the text as such, which are of interest.

3. Methodology

The investigation will be conducted in four steps:

1. The first one will be a short description of the PRSP as an instrument in international development co-operation, contrasted to what it is seen to be from the point of view of discourse theory.
2. The second step will be to summarise and analyse the descriptions, or lack of descriptions, in the text of different categories of people, poor women and men, girls and boys and of agents or actors.
3. The third step will be to discuss issues emerging out of the analysis.
4. Short comparisons of similarities and difference with a “Civil Society Poverty Reduction paper” will be made and with the Swedish Country Strategy and the Country Analysis of Zambia. They will be compared between each other and also looked at as parts of a larger discourse on development co-operation. To widen the perspective a short comparison with the PRSP for Bangladesh will be made.

4. The PRSP as strategy and discourse in development co-operation

The PRSP Initiative was launched by the Bretton Woods Institutions in 1999. Low-income countries wishing to apply for financial aid or debt relief under the HIPC-Initiative² were then required to draw up poverty reduction programs or PRSPs. Three innovations were provided for compared to earlier structural adjustment programs. First, poverty reduction was a goal and not structural adjustment in itself, that is, the focus was on ends and no longer only on means. Secondly, a participatory process was introduced in defining and implementing the PRSP. Third, this approach was expected

¹ Bell, Emma: Gender and PRSPs with experiences from Tanzania, Bolivia, Viet Nam and Mozambique. Bridge (March 2003), Institute of Development Studies.

² Heavily Indebted Poor Countries

to lead to better coherence between donors.

A PRSP is a national strategy for poverty reduction. Such a strategy is to grow out of a participatory process involving a number of actors, which apart from the national government involves civil society, the private sector and donors. It is to be an instrument whereby both national policy and the programs and interventions of international development assistance are co-ordinated. The contents and wording of a PRSP are thus meant to have a decisive influence both on national policies and on the design of international development co-operation.

A PRSP can also be viewed in the light of discourse theory. The concept of discourse means that language used in different social fields is structured in different patterns, which we follow when we make statements. In the literature on discourse theory, discourse is defined as a “certain manner of speaking of and understanding the world”. In general, a discourse can be described as a construction of the world, which excludes other ways of seeing it. A discourse sets out certain kinds of actions as legitimate, denying authority to other kinds of actions. This means that a certain discourse makes certain representations of the world and, in treating problems, sees certain ranges of actions as possible solutions while excluding others. As any discourse will have social consequences, the contents, elements and exclusions in discourses such as a PRSP are interesting to examine³.

As other central policy documents of its kind, PRSPs have a normative function. Such documents will have a decisive influence on other, similar documents and on decision-making at different levels of development co-operation. The influence of a PRSP is probably even stronger than usual, considering its scope, which is hoped to be both national and international. Its representation of target groups and its description of people – or lack of description - is going to influence whatever will be considered relevant or unimportant, possible or impossible, what kinds of analysis will be undertaken, included or left aside or, in short, what will be made visible and invisible.

5. The content and proposals of the PRSP⁴:

According to a Joint Staff Assessment of the IMF and the World Bank of April 2002, the Zambia PRSP focuses on policies

1. to promote growth and diversification in production and exports
2. to improve delivery of social services
3. to incorporate cross-cutting policies for hiv/aids, gender and the environment

³ Winther Jorgensen, Marianne & Phillips, Louise: Diskursanalys som teori och metod, (Lund 2000)

⁴ Zambia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Lusaka, March 2002. References to pages from this document will be made in the running text.

In the Assessment, it is added that further work will be needed to refine the targets and indicators chosen, to specify priorities and sequencing within sectors and to translate broad estimated expenditures into annual expenditure plans⁵.

In addition to the Executive Summary there are 17 chapters in the PRSP, which have been divided into three or four parts: Part one contains a general overview. Part two and three contain broadly framed strategies for reducing poverty. Part four relates to the implementation and monitoring of the PRSP:

Out of these 17 chapters, the majority has almost no, or very few, descriptions of people. This applies to the 8 chapters on macroeconomics, agriculture, industry, tourism, mining, water and sanitation, energy and transport, communications and roads. Neither do the 3 chapters on implementation and monitoring in part four have any such descriptions. Altogether, only 5 chapters do.

5.1 Summary of part one: executive summary, overview and background

In the Executive Summary of the PRSP, poverty in the Zambian context is defined “as lack of access to income, employment opportunities, normal internal entitlements for the citizens to such things as freely determined consumption of goods and services, shelter and other basic needs of life”. According to the Summary, poverty is said to be “multi-dimensional” and rural poverty “largely attributed to poorly functioning markets for agricultural output and to low agricultural productivity”. (p.11).

Focus is stated to be on economic growth, particularly in the agricultural sector, and on social sector activities. But: “broad based classifications of the poor does limit opportunities for better targeting (---) and better tools for the identification of the extremely poor or destitute people (---) have to be developed during the course of PRSP implementation”. (p.12-15)

The chapter on the macroeconomic situation in Zambia does not specifically mention any target groups. References are simply made to “poverty” without any further description. The macroeconomic description seems to be based on data on the formal economy, not taking the large informal economy into account. Only in a later chapter does the informal economy explicitly get a short description, where it is said to be “the most dynamic part in terms of employment generation and currently absorbs more than 70 percent of the Zambian labour force”. (p. 44) Formal employment is said not to have “exceeded 20% of the total labour force in a long time”, going down to 11% in 1999. (p.17-20)

In the chapter on the poverty profile, the concept and measurement of poverty are discussed. Both the income measure (less than 1 dollar a day) and the human

⁵ Zambia: Poverty Reduction Strategy paper and Joint IDA-IMF Staff Assessment of the PRSP. IDA/Sec M2002-0253, (May 2002)

poverty index (life expectancy, illiteracy, access to health services and safe water) are very low in Zambia. Zambia has the highest level of income poverty in the SADC-region and the fourth largest level of human poverty. Poverty as defined by the Government of Zambia is “the amount of monthly income required to purchase basic food to meet the minimum caloric requirement for a family of six”. Using this measure, 73% of the population fell below the poverty line in 1997. Regarding the incidence of poverty, different types of households are compared and female-headed households found to be poorer than male-headed ones. (p.21-26)

The main barriers against moving out of poverty are said to be lack of economic growth, “increased income inequality, the persistence of discrimination against women and the girl child (and) insufficient investment in economic and social infrastructure”. The level of inequality in Zambian society is stated to be high. One of the reasons “inequality tends to beget more inequality” is said to be the unequal access to credit and tangible assets.

5.2. Summary of part two and three: sectors

The next part of the PRSP mainly concerns sectors. As already mentioned, only a few of the chapters have any descriptions of target groups. Particularly remarkable is the lack of target groups, let alone poor people, in the chapter on agriculture in view of the importance of this sector for the economy at large, for poor people specifically, for its role in poverty reduction and as a sector receiving large amounts of international assistance. It might be added here that in a World Bank report, taking stock of how gender considerations have been treated in the PRSPs, it is stated that “(a) serious oversight in several African PRSPs is the role that gender in equality plays in constraining agricultural growth and rural poverty reduction”⁶.

Target groups here are generally described as “the poor” or “poor people”. Rural people get a somewhat closer presentation: close to 97% of farmer in Zambia have no title to the land they are cultivating. “(C)onsidering that small-holders account for about 60 percent of agricultural output, this restriction has had an adverse effect on land productivity and indeed on any serious poverty reduction strategy for the rural poor”. (p. 44) In rural Zambia, “close to 100 percent of land is under traditional authority”, which makes productivity suffer. (p. 51)

In the chapter on education, the categories described are children, youth and teachers, along with data on gender relations and gender gaps in school attendance and literacy. Other groups such as “women”, “orphans”, “the differently abled” and “the vulnerable” are mentioned but no more. The age of children and young people is

⁶ Gender in the PRSPs. A Stocktaking. World Bank Poverty and Economic Management Network. Gender and development Group. (April 2002), p.8

treated in relation to primary, secondary and tertiary schooling. Gender disparities exist “between men and women at all levels with regard to enrolment figures, progression rates, ratios among teachers/lecturers and learning achievement”. Existing and future interventions take these disparities into account. (p.77-82)

When it comes to health, with the exception of a section on hiv/aids integrated into a chapter on “cross-cutting issues”, the only two categories described are children and women. Short mention is made of refugees, children and adolescents. Target groups are generally referred to as “the poor” or as “vulnerable groups”. Differences in the situation of men and women are mentioned when it comes to “care-giving resources, including food” and “nutritional issues”, but no explanation of these differences are given. (p.83-90)

Chapter 14 on cross-cutting issues covers hiv/aids, gender and environment. The sections on hiv/aids and gender are the most detailed in the PRSP in defining different target groups for assistance. In describing the alarmingly high rate of hiv-prevalence in Zambia, now reaching 20%, information on the epidemic is given in terms of percentages and age groups and in relation to categories of women and men, young boys, young women and children. The disproportionate effects on women, as compared to men, are described as well as some of the consequences of the pandemic, among them the large numbers of orphans and street children. High-risk groups are enumerated, belonging to the categories youths, sex workers, military personnel and prisoners. Support programmes are described, taking these groups into consideration. (p.109-113)

The section on gender states that “(i)ssues of gender play a very important role in developing a sustainable strategy for poverty reduction”. Numerous policy measures and strategies are proposed of an ambitious, even lofty, character. They contain no further information on which groups will be targeted. Therefore, they are not in any sense operative or give clear-cut descriptions of which problems are to be tackled. Most of the measures are addressed exclusively to the situation of women, while a few are broad and abstractly formulated strategies as, for instance, the elimination of “gender imbalances in access to, and opportunities for, financial resources”. Other examples are land rights, which should be provided “on an equitable basis for women”. (p.113-116) Such proposals seem far from reality, especially in view of other parts of the PRSP, which contain no mention either of gender or of such proposals. Indeed, most of the chapters on sectors do not even discuss cross-cutting issues. Some of them mention the word gender or hiv/aids, but no more.

5.3 General observations on the text of the PRSP and its contents

Altogether, the picture of poor men, women and children in Zambia that emerges from the PRSP is of an anonymous mass of people, comprising 73% of the population. Very few distinct target groups are mentioned. Very little is said about differences in class,

income level or levels of poverty, about age, ethnic groups or about different groups of poor men and women, even though access to and control of resources are inextricably linked to the positioning of people in such respects. Women are present in the text as a broad and homogeneous category, mostly in connection with references to gender but having no other characteristics. Men are practically invisible. Groups of better-off or rich people are not mentioned while the problem of inequality is. There is some, but not much, differentiation of target groups in 5 chapters of the PRSP, out of 17. But mostly “poor people” are described as “the poor”, “rural poor” or “vulnerable groups” without further characteristics. There is little differentiation into categories or groups of people or any descriptions, for instance, of how levels of widespread poverty varies between men and women, different age groups, manner of employment, socio-economic or ethnic groups in Zambia. Thus, difference, variation, hierarchies and relations of power become invisible. Among the chapters on sectors, target groups are only visible in the education and health sectors, but not in any systematic or very differentiated manner. The same applies (as one of the consequences) to gender.

In comments made on the gender considerations in the health sectors of PRSPs, the World Bank has reported that integration was better than in other sectors. The reason was partly, however, that any discussion of reproductive health was considered to have incorporated gender, even though most discussion mentioned women and ignored the problems of men⁷. Gender analysis in the education sector was relatively good according to the same World Bank report. In other sectors, coverage was low. A report on Tanzania’s PRSP recommends that analysis of factors that contribute to non-enrolment, poor performance, dropouts of boys and girls and child labour should be included as well as indications on whether education served to challenge notions of inequality rather than entrench them⁸.

The manner in which nouns are used to describe processes and actions adds to the anonymity of the poor in the text and make actors, subjects, their acts and the consequences of their acts disappear from the text. This can be illustrated with the continuous references to “poverty” (but no poor) in the document and also with examples such as “rural areas contribute to the generation of resources needed to finance their access to amenities” (p.50). Or: “until such time when there will have been sufficient social transformation to raise agricultural productivity”. (p. 51) or “little progress has been made in market development for land”(p.58)⁹. People and actors are made invisible. Agency, resources and power relations disappear from the context.

⁷ Gender in the PRSPs etc, p.8-9

⁸ Recommendations for integrating gender into the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) and related processes. Ministry of Community Development, Women Affairs and Children (MCDWAC), Tanzania

⁹ my italics

This “technical style” is not uncommon in policy documents and this PRSP does not stand alone. On the contrary, it belongs to a manner of writing and of formulating policy and interventions, which is frequent in discourses on development co-operation. But such descriptions, or the lack of them, do at the same time set the norm for subsequent considerations, decisions and policy texts. They convey a certain picture of reality, in this case poverty, which will exclude others. There is a risk of a standardising effect, filtering-out of poor target groups from the PRS process, which may have consequences for development planning.

6. The PRSP of Bangladesh; a comparison with Zambia's PRSP

Using the same criteria in reviewing the PRSP for Bangladesh, a similar pattern emerges regarding its National Strategy for Economic Growth, Poverty Reduction and Social Development, which is an equivalent to an Interim PRSP¹⁰. Groups or categories of people are present in parts of the overview, while target groups and gender aspects are either missing or receiving little attention when dealing with sectors and macro-economics. However, judging from the chapter containing the overview, there seems to be a much greater wealth of data concerning groups or categories of people than in Zambia. These have not been brought out at the sector level or in the macroeconomic considerations, however.

The paper on Bangladesh contains 7 chapters. Mostly, people are described as “the poor”, sometimes adding “women”. The chapter on the consultation process has no information about which “poor” have been consulted. Basically the same applies to the chapter on “The Poverty Reduction Strategy”. This has short summaries on sectors and a section on gender, where the phrase “the poor, including (or: especially) women” is often repeated, together with lengthier accounts in appendices at the end of the document. Chapters 6 and 7 have no information on target groups at all, with the exception of a statement in the chapter on monitoring and evaluation:

“ The efforts will be to move towards disaggregated targets to facilitate the formulation of specific programs, projects and detailed costing and its financing by the time the full-blown strategy is designed. These sectorally disaggregated targets will be set not only by social and regional distinctions, but also made sensitive, as far as possible, to the emerging gender dimensions.”¹¹

Chapter 2 is the interesting chapter in this PRSP. It reviews the poverty situation, stating that it is “critical to recognise the heterogeneity of voices and perspectives expressed in

¹⁰ Bangladesh. A National Strategy for Economic Growth, Poverty Reduction and Social Development. Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (December 2002)

¹¹ *ibid.* p.71

economic as well as socio-cultural terms such as class, gender, caste, ethnicity, and community.” The incidence of poverty measured by consumption expenditure is stated to have declined from 58,8 percent in 1991/92 to 49,8 percent in 2000, but with rising trends of inequality. Here, regional variations between different categories of poor people (the landless, elderly poor, disabled people, the shelter-less, child-headed households, female headed households, female destitutes, marginalised ethnic groups, female and male workers, etc) are described. In a section on “human poverty”, which comprises data on deprivation in health, education and nutrition, groups and categories are also described. This is done, for instance, in terms of female and male mortality and morbidity with geographical and socio-economic variations and with children in terms of gender and age groups. The same variation and diversity is present with regard to malnutrition.¹²

Here, differentiation is brought out to a degree which is absent elsewhere in the paper and also in the documents on Zambia. It would have been interesting to have these observations integrated into the later section on “Fostering Human Development of the Poor” in chapter 5 and in the appendix on health sector development, all describing the same sector. The sections would have been more operational, bringing out the problems in their context. As it is, they mostly refer to “the poor” or “the poorest” as target groups, which is surprising in view of the rich differentiation presented earlier. It should be added that at the end of the appendix on health, the importance of differentiated data in subsequent programming of support to the health sector is underlined.

The section on gender in chapter 5 is a typical add-on of the same style as in the PRSP for Zambia. Gender signifies “women” and does not include men. Considerations are made on an abstract, non-operational level and proposals have not been mainstreamed into the sector level.

In the Executive Summary of the PRSP for Bangladesh, there is a “Development Vision”, which targets different groups of people in relation to education, mortality, nutrition and “social violence”. Disaggregated information to back these goals seems to be available, but this is absent from the more operational parts of the PRSP. Knowledge gaps are mentioned but in no prominent way. While the description and definition of poor people (including gender aspects), or the lack of them, by and large is the same in both PRSPs, the omissions, or gaps of knowledge, may be different. Similarities between the two concern the lack of systematic differentiation, giving intermittent definitions of target groups in the overviews but not in subsequent sections on sectors.

In a newly published handbook for policy makers, Naila Kabeer describes an overlap between PRSPs and the World Bank Poverty Assessments, which is not confined only to gender. She writes:

“(w)hile the PRSPs have been presented as independently produced and ‘natio-

12 *ibid.* p.7-15

nally-owned', questions have been raised as to the extent to which this is indeed the case. There is a concern that countries are reluctant to consider approaches other than those advocated by the Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) because they know the limits to the kind of policies that the international financial institutions are prepared to accept. (---) PRSPs from very different countries use similar vocabulary, form and content and come to similar conclusions."¹³

7. The Civil Society Poverty Reduction Paper – an input to the PRS process in Zambia

In 2001, civil society organisations in Zambia, now "come of age" to quote one of their representatives, produced a paper with some support from the UNDP. This was done as part of a project named "The Civil Society for Poverty Reduction" (CSPR), the objective being to make "certain that the voices of Zambians are heard and responded to". The CSPR is to be part of a process of long term development planning and of monitoring the PRS. With its 250 pages, the CSPR is even more voluminous than the PRSPs' 200 pages and should, it is stressed in the foreword "in no way be viewed as a parallel PRSP" but rather as "a direct contribution".¹⁴

The CSPR paper provides more descriptions of target groups, variation and difference than the PRSP in chapters containing an overview, but not throughout the text. Gender, for instance, is not mainstreamed into all parts of the document but only made more visible in some. The chapter on macroeconomics shows a similar lack of discussion as in the PRSP on issues such as the informal sector of the economy and gender disparities. Chapters on sectors show approximately the same lack of target group descriptions with the exception of the mining sector.

In a chapter dealing with employment and sustainable livelihoods, the poverty situation, employment and the informal economy are discussed. The conclusions are, *inter alia*, that employment opportunities in the informal sector (such as piecework on farms, food for work, petty trading) do not necessarily contribute to poverty reduction, unless they translate into sustainable livelihoods. It also points to wide gender gaps both in the formal and in the informal sector (the widest, by far, in the formal sector). 78% of the people defined as employed were in the informal sector and 74% of the women so employed were engaged in petty trading. Reasons for women not being able to take up

¹³ Kabeer, Naila: Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals. A Handbook for Policy Makers and Other Stakeholders. The Commonwealth Secretariat (2003)

¹⁴ Poverty Reduction Paper for Zambia. A Civil Society Perspective. (Lusaka, June 2001), p 26-45. The information described was confirmed in a series of interviews with NGOs in Lusaka in March 2003, among others with various representatives for NGOCC, which include a number of womens'organisations and the Catholic Centre for Justice

more remunerative work are mentioned: Women usually lack the initial capital required for other forms of informal sector activities, such as manufacturing. Start up capital has to be provided by husbands or male relatives. Women are also tied to the home by their gender roles and more women than men have to do unpaid family work.¹⁵

The CSPR paper criticises the definition of poverty used by the Zambian Government, measured as the cost of acquiring basic food items, because it excludes other basic needs. Among other things, this leads to a view of poverty with a higher prevalence in rural areas than in the urban, “although in both areas levels of poverty vary among socio-economic groups”.¹⁶

In the CSPR there is a chapter on gender, which contains more information than the PRSP. An account of gender is given by sector, but as already mentioned it is not mainstreamed through-out the paper. In the agricultural sector women are “responsible for about 70% of the unpaid labour on small-scale farms and provide substantially more labour than men throughout the agricultural sector”. Only “14% of the women have ever received a loan, and only 33% of the females use ox-drawn plows to cultivate their land” while others rely on hand hoes.¹⁷ According to the text, an evident marginalisation of women is going on, who at the same time bear the principal responsibility for subsistence agriculture and for ensuring food for the household. In addition, one of the critical challenges for women in Zambia is the dual system of formal and customary law, where the latter “varies with tribe, but tends to be generally discriminatory against women.” Customary law allows polygamy, “bride prices and other practices that entrench the perception of women as legal minors.” Moreover, under customary law, “women cannot access land or capital without being ‘accompanied’ by male relatives or their husband.” Gender violence is mentioned as a serious problem in Zambia. Reports on child abuse, incest and property grabbing from widows are increasing, also as a consequence of deaths in the hiv/aids epidemic.¹⁸

Such observations have a definite bearing particularly on the agricultural sector. In the chapter on agriculture, however, categories of farmers are mentioned (small-scale farmers, emergent farmers, commercial farmers) but they are not differentiated either by gender, levels of income/poverty or ethnic groups. Much more is not said in this respect than in the PRSP, with the exception of a comment on the tenure system in Zambia. “(I)n Zambia, like in most African countries, women carry out the main

¹⁵ *ibid.* pp. 37

¹⁶ *ibid.* s. 47

¹⁷ *ibid.* p.56-64. Cattle are supposed to be a resource controlled by men; the needs of women are not made a priority, see also Mvududu, Sally & McFadden, Patricia: *Reconceptualising the Family in a changing Southern African Environment. Woman and Law in Southern Africa* Research Trust, (Harare 2001), pp. 76 etc

¹⁸ *Poverty Reduction Paper for Zambia.* etc, pp. 56-64

agricultural activities. Due to gender bias in owning land under the customary system, farmers are still generally perceived as 'male' by policy-makers, development planners and agricultural service providers. For this reason, women find it more difficult than men to gain access to valuable resources such as credit and agricultural inputs (---) which would enhance their production capacity."¹⁹

The PRSP and the CSPR in Zambia - a comparison

In the PRSP and the CSPR-paper only the overviews have accounts of target groups. Target groups are more visible in the CSRP-paper than in the PRSP, but mainstreamed in neither. The same applies to gender.

Three themes are more visible in the CSPR paper than in the PRSP. These are issues of land rights, gender disparities and gender discrimination by the legal system, which all are relevant to the poverty situation. In the CRSP-paper, these issues are mainly described in terms of gender, often meaning "women" in general. Generally, neither in the PRSP nor in the CSPR, are men described as a gender or as a category. There are few traces of any underlying analyses of variations in terms of age, ethnic and socio-economic groups or geographical location in either paper, even though such categories are present in some instances.

Chapters on health and education in the CSPR-paper do not generally contain more information on target groups than the PRSP. It is interesting to note, however, that a richer description is made of the mining sector. The CSPR-paper describes the problems of mass unemployment, the displacements of miners and their dependents after privatisation of the mines, the degradation of social conditions and the situation of women and men in small-scale mining. This makes the major problems easier to grasp and to follow up by relevant action. The same applies to the section on hiv/aids in the PRSP, which is the only part that contains more information on target groups than the CSPR. Compared to other sections and sectors, these two examples could be said to be "best practices" in this respect.

8. Futher comparisons: the Swedish Country Analysis and Country Strategy for Zambia

The following comparisons will be made in order to illustrate linkages and differences with regard to the Zambian PRSP and the CSPR-paper. The Swedish Country Analysis for Zambia was written in 2002 and the Country Strategy is still a draft to be adopted during the spring of 2003. Both were thus produced after the PRSP and the CSPR.

The Country Analysis²⁰

The Swedish Country Analysis has a wider perspective than the PRSP. It contains ac-

¹⁹ *ibid.* p. 74

counts of recent history in Zambia, political perspectives and sections on the human rights situation, democratic development, civil and political rights, etc, where the PRSP and the CSRSP have little to say. The Country Analysis adds dimensions to the picture, which may be easier to draw from the outside than from the inside, and include the general power structures in the country. The Country Analysis is also much shorter than the PRSP: 30 pages, compared to around 200.

Looking at definitions of target groups, similarities emerge. In the general sections of the Country Analysis, which contain overviews of different aspects of Zambian society, target groups are discussed in approximately the same terms as in the overviews in the PRSP and the CSRSP-paper. In the Country Analysis, however, more attention is paid to gender aspects and to children, especially if seen in relation to its shorter format. This means that categories mostly of women but also of children and youth, sometimes also men, are described in contexts such as human rights, safe water, formal employment and malnutrition. There is no section on gender but instead on women's human rights and on the rights of the child. Women, men and children are mentioned in terms of age but not in terms of socio-economic or ethnic group. Nor is there much to be read about differences in geographical location, with the exception of the broad categories of rural and urban poor and references to a rapid urbanisation of poverty, which includes squatters. Also, poor people's weak access to real assets, the problems of customary law and "unsupportive" tenure systems are described, leading to a lowered productivity of labour and land. In the remaining sectors, which include agriculture, and in the section concerning macroeconomics, however, categories of people are about as invisible as in the PRSP and the CSRSP-paper. This means that analyses of target groups and gender considerations are reflected in the social sectors, on education and health, but not in the others. An exception is a short section on employment, which concerns the informal sector.

While giving a wider and more multifaceted picture of developments in Zambia, the pattern of differentiation is more or less the same as in the PRSP and the CSRSP. Variations and target groups are described in the overview but not in the subsequent chapters on sectors, with some exceptions notably in the social sectors. That this is the case may be regarded as the evident outcome of existing knowledge gaps. According to the Ministry of Finance in Lusaka and to others interviewed in Lusaka in March 2003, there is no lack of statistical data, however. The information is said to be there. What is lacking is capacity and also directives to make further analysis. Gaps of knowledge have thus to be identified and discussed, which as a matter of fact is already done, in a general way, in the PRSP. In the Country Analysis, these gaps are not brought out in

²⁰ Country Analysis - Zambia, Sida/Ministry for Foreign Affairs/ Swedish Embassy (November 2002)

the text, while the lack of capacity and weak institutions of the Zambian administration and society at large are recognised as a major problem in development.

The Swedish Country Strategy²¹

This document, which is still a draft, has the fewest descriptions of target groups of the four papers reviewed in this study. The text as a whole is not descriptive. It is rather a list of decisions to be made on the direction and aspects of future development co-operation with Zambia. Substantial background knowledge is required in order to understand it. Here, reference is generally made to "the poor", to "the rural" and "the urban poor" and characteristics such as gender and age are mentioned in passing and in a few places only. The more differentiated accounts of poverty in the general part of the Country Analysis have not influenced this text.

9. Diversity and difference: gender, age, geographical location, socio-economic groups and ethnicity in the PRSP.

Some theoretical considerations

Discussions on gender equality often come to focus only on women. Just as in the PRSP, "men" disappear from the text with the result of making structural relations between women and men invisible. To "add" the category of women to a text will not help; it must be integrated into the analysis. As has been shown by numerous studies on the subject, the contents of knowledge as such will be transformed and perspectives will change when diversity is introduced or the periphery moved towards to the centre. According to poststructural and postcolonial theories, Western knowledge, and language itself, is built upon opposites of a hierarchical nature. This can be illustrated by such examples as metropolis-colony, centre-periphery, man-woman, adult-child, white-black, where one category is taken to be more significant, real or valuable than the other. The dominant category will function almost as if it were the only kind, because it occupies the defining centre of power. Some "men" become Man, others being relegated to deviant or weaker sub-categories. The definition of one category always depends upon the other, which makes the meaning of each locked by the other. This dichotomization makes it difficult to think in terms of variety and difference and easily leads to faulty generalisations. The dominant category ascribes characteristics, seen as inferior, to the subcategories. For instance, irrationality, weakness or vulnerability is more easily ascribed to women than men, to children rather than adults and to subordinated socio-economic groups rather than to powerful ones. The meaning of vulnerability and weakness may in their turn be determined differently by particular groups of people depending upon their location, the time period in which they are living and their social

²¹ Draft Country Strategy for Zambia 2003-2007, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

position. Thus, when describing categories, defined by structures and dichotomies of this nature, relations of power are also mapped out, which are important in order to understand both poverty and the positions of people in regard to access to and control of resources.²² Such categories interact differently with each other over both time and space and need to be defined in a context-specific manner.

Gender

A review of 19 Interim PRSPs (I-PRSPs) and 10 full PRSPs - including Zambia - conducted by the World Bank in 2002, showed that "little attention was paid to gender issues in any of the documents that were reviewed". This reflected "a failure to address gender issues even with simple approaches." In a review on the initiative of the UNICEF Regional Office in Abidjan of the PRSPs of 12 countries in West and Central Africa, consultants arrived at a similar conclusion. Unlike CCA/UNDAF-strategies²³, these PRSPs did not in any systematic way make references to gender. This was particularly true of the sections on macroeconomic policies and poverty profiles. With few exceptions, gender was equated with women and there was little gender analyses. The report also states that the problem encountered in nearly all PRSPs suggested that general references to cross cutting issues in guidelines and policy documents were "too weak to give the required attention and priority to gender as a fundamental development issue".²⁴

Approximately the same is true for the PRSP for Zambia. While the existence of different experiences of poverty between women and men are mentioned, and while women are said to be more vulnerable than men as a result of socially and culturally ascribed gender roles, the text does not elaborate much on the subject. As mentioned earlier, a large part of the section on gender is devoted to an enumeration of general policy measures, but with no specific action or time frame. Some space is, however, given to the incidence of poverty by gender of the household head, stating that female headed households are more likely to be extremely poor than male headed households, and that 77% of female headed households are poor as compared to 72% in male headed ones. This is said to be a confirmation "that poverty affects women and men differently, hence the terminology 'feminisation of poverty'". (p.113) However, "there is

²² See e.g. Minnich, Elisabeth Kammarch: *Transforming Knowledge*, (Philadelphia 1990), passim, and also the *Introductions to Castle, Gregory: Postcolonial Discourses. An Anthology*. (Oxford 2001) and Eriksson, Catharina, Eriksson Baaz, Maria och Thörn, Håkan (red): *Globaliseringens kulturer* (Falun 1999)

²³ United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) were preceded by the Common Country Assessment (CCA)

²⁴ UNICEF: *The Gender Perspective in the CCA/UNDAF and PRSP Processes and Priorities in the West and Central Africa. An Assessment Report* (Abidjan, April 2002), p.14

still absence of in-depth analysis and adequate resources (---) Lack of gender specific targeting in poverty reduction programmes influences women and men's lives and opportunities. Programmes may be male biased by design, but could well be male biased by omission of a gender-differentiated assessment of the programmes. This could be related to the lack of gender disaggregated data required for such assessment and to the lack of recognition of women's roles and skills in the poverty alleviation programmes". (p.114)

Not only women's roles and skills but also "difference" would need analysis. In the PRSP, "poor people" are set in a single, large category, sometimes adding "women" but more seldom "men". "Women" are described as a homogeneous group, just as "men"; that is, in so far as "men" are described at all, except as those human beings included into the wide and undifferentiated category of "small-scale farmers" or "rural people". Basically the two categories of men and women are each represented as "the same". In the section on gender in the PRSP, for instance, (all) "women" are characterised as being more vulnerable and also likely to be poorer than (all) "men".

Men and women are obviously not two, homogeneous categories where everyone is the same on each part of the divide. Gender, race, ethnicity, class, occupation and geographical location all determine identities and relations between groups and individuals. Quoting Naila Kabeer, "deprivation and insecurity will be diversely constituted across a population along axes of gender, caste and other forms of social inequity. Equally, they will differentiate the experience of poverty – and wealth – in terms of claims and entitlements which women and men mobilise, the goals they prioritise and the forms of agency they can exercise in negotiating meaning and challenging distribution. Gender justice becomes an integral component of social justice."²⁵

While on the subject of diversity and difference, a few observations will be made here on subjects raised in the PRSP. They concern the feminisation of poverty, female and male headed households and the discrimination against women by the legal system and all touch upon the question of diversity and the need for context-specific analysis.

Generally speaking, there is still little clarity about the meaning of "feminisation of poverty" or whether such a trend can be empirically verified. Also in this respect difference needs to be introduced, for instance in terms of socio-economic group and geographical location. Inequalities of deprivation in male-headed households also need to be explored. The concept of "feminisation of poverty" has been taken to mean either the relation between female headed and male-headed households or between women and men as individuals. It does not address the differences mentioned above or the question of intra-household resources, where there may be an unequal distribution of

²⁵ Kabeer, Naila: Tactics and Trade-Offs. Revisiting the Links Between Gender and Poverty in IDS-Bulletin, Volume 28, No.3, (July 1997), s.1-13

resources between household members. Female-headed households are a heterogeneous category, which include women from different groups, for instance, women with means (e.g. remittances from migrant husbands). Female headship may also have positive aspects (e.g. income flexibility, freedom or less physical abuse).

The variations in the correlation between female headship and poverty within and between countries indicate the need for context-specific research.²⁶ The PRSP for Tanzania, for instance, distinguishes between income and non-income measures of poverty and discusses both differences between households and within households. It notes that female-headed households are somewhat less likely to be poor in terms of consumption (45% compared to 49%) but are poorer in terms of vulnerability, lack of assets and limited schooling.²⁷ According to Rahmya Subrahmanian “gender-aware poverty reduction entails not just counting how many women are income-poor relative to men, but taking account of the multidimensionality of poverty and the embeddedness of poverty in gender relations.”²⁸

Differences in these respects are also likely to be linked to discrimination of women by the legal system and to the different local manifestations of customary law. According to a study published by *Woman and Law in Southern Africa*, customary law, sometimes in conflict with formal or statutory law, regulates marriage, inheritance, laws on property and land rights in discriminatory terms against women.²⁹ This also differs according to ethnic and socio-economic groups. This is probably one of the causes of the different experiences of poverty for men and women.³⁰

Finally, as statistics show that women supply about 70% of labour in food processing, 50% in animal husbandry and 60% in marketing in Southern Africa, a discussion would be relevant not only of the vulnerability, but also of the agency and resources of different groups of women – and men – in Zambia.

Age groups – children and youth

The need for mainstreaming gender concerns and gender analysis is widely mentioned in guidelines and decisions on development co-operation.³¹ But target groups need to be more differentiated than only in terms of gender in order to describe problems to be addressed in different sectors and interventions.

²⁶ Briefing Paper on the ‘Feminisation of Poverty. Bridge report no.59. IDS. April 2001

²⁷ Gender in the PRSPs. A Stocktaking. etc, p. 11

²⁸ Subrahmanian, Ramia: Gender Equality and the Millenium Development Goals: Is the Glass Half Empty of Half-Full? Manuscript, IDS, (2002)

²⁹ Mvududu, Sally&McFadden, Patricia: Reconceptualising the Family etc., *passim* ibid. p.39, citing a World Bank report from 1995

³¹ See, e. g. Sidas Policy and Action Programme for Promoting Equality between Women and men in Partner Countries. Sida. (Stockholm 1997)

Children are an important category in development co-operation, which tend to be more or less invisible as a target group. Boys and girls disappear into such concepts as “family”, “house-holds” or “women and children”, where one category rarely gets separated from the other. Adolescents are equally invisible, disappearing into the larger group of “children”. To give a few figures of the picture world-wide, more than half of the worlds six billion people are children, one billion of these being adolescents. Teenage girls give birth to 15 million babies each year and many die from pregnancy related causes. More than 70 million children in the world between the ages of 10 to 14 are working and the number of children and youth, who live with or have been orphaned by hiv/aids is large.

There is therefore cause for the identification of age groups in order to design support programmes. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has also led to the adoption of guidelines in Swedish development co-operation, differentiated analyses of the target groups are to be undertaken. The rights and needs of girls, boys, young women and men are to be taken into account in a wider socio-economic setting.³²

In the PRSPs, such target group analyses would be needed in order to identify different groups of children and young people. Generally speaking, these groups are not mentioned in the text except for a short statement on growing child poverty in Zambia and some information in the chapters on education and health. There is not much differentiation, however. Differences between the situation of children and youth in different rural districts and in the cities are probably just as relevant as the socio-economic situation of boys and girls (orphans, street children, working children and children with or without families) in this respect.

Geographical location, income and poverty levels, ethnicity and socio-economic groups

In the PRSP, some difference is made between urban and rural areas and between different levels of poverty, but only in terms of poverty lines and percentages and not in terms of categories or groups of people. Income or poverty levels are described only as lying above or below the 73% of the population of poor or extremely poor people without further differentiation.

9.1 Gaps of knowledge

In several places the PRSP:s for Zambia and Bangladesh reiterates that important gaps

³² Nauckhoff, Eva: Making the Invisible Visible. Gender Perspective and Target Groups in Development Assistance to Young People. Centrum för kvinnoforskning, Stockholms universitet (VT 2002), B-paper, Andersson- Brolin, Lillemor & Radetzky, Caroline: Young People in the Programmes of DESO. Sida (Stockholm 2002)

of knowledge exist in order to effectively target the poor. There is mention of difference between the single categories of men and women and between different rural areas (not people), but there seems to be no underlying analysis of target groups. Information that would help to bridge such gaps of knowledge and bring out significant problems, causes of poverty, relations of power between and within groups and positions in regard to control of resources could be:

- ★ Differentiation of socio-economic groups (or levels of poverty) in rural areas and between rural areas. The same differentiation with regard to urban areas. Differences between men and women. Reasons why poverty differs.
- ★ Comparisons of different categories and groups between different rural and urban areas
- ★ Occupations in the informal sectors of the economy. Differences in this respect between rural and urban areas and between socio-economic groups. Also, differences between women and men. Reasons why poverty differs.
- ★ Differences between ethnic groups in different parts of the country. Differences between men and women in these groups. Reasons why poverty differs.
- ★ Differences between age groups, between children and youth, children with and without family, between boys and girls, young men and women. Differences in the situation of children and youth in urban and rural areas, in different socio-economic and ethnic groups.

10. Some key concepts in describing target groups: economic growth, the formal and informal economy, gender disparities and the concept of households

To get a differentiated picture of poor target groups, analysis is also needed on some other issues.

In the PRSP for Zambia, it is unclear if and to what extent the large informal sector of the Zambian economy is captured in the underlying analysis. Numbers and percentages in rural areas are related to numbers in urban areas, and numbers of employed in the formal sector (only 11 % of the population) are related to the unemployed or the employed in the informal sector although the sector itself is not described. Economic growth seems to be based on the performance of the market economy only. The market economy is emphasised at the expense of the informal economy, which incorporates large sectors outside the market, including household and subsistence agriculture. A major part of working men and, particularly, working women in the informal sector (responsible for about 70% of the unpaid labour on small-scale farms according to the CSPR), disappear into a 'black hole' in the economy. Their contribution to the functioning of the economy is not analysed, becomes undervalued, and needs to be sufficiently captured by statistics. Also, analysis of those intricate and interdependent relationships and between what is being defined as the formal and the informal sectors of the economy needs to be made. Taking an example from agriculture, growing crops

for the market and for own-consumption are intimately bound up and structured by the complex and changing gender relations of a society. Also, an analysis of labour in the informal sector, of who performs it and of the sexual division of labour would be needed, as such work is differently valued and remunerated in accordance with the gender of the workforce performing it.³³ In the absence of such analysis, the large groups of men and women not included in the statistics and money-metric measures of the market will stay invisible, both as agents and as target groups for assistance.

The concept of households, upon which some of the information is based in the PRSP, have already been discussed in relation to female and male headship. In statistical surveys and in macro-economics, households have often been treated as a basic and unchanging unit, assuming that resources are evenly distributed among family members. There is, however, a growing literature on inequalities within households. One contribution has been the recognition of labour time as a key resource at the disposal of households. Allocation of household labour has to be negotiated between multiple uses: market production, home production and leisure, and may have a number of different outcomes. For instance, this may mean that an increase in female wages leads to children being withdrawn from school to do unpaid household or agricultural work. Family labour is different from other factors of production in that it has a gender, age and status. Households are also constituted historically in the context of changing economic and social transformation and such transformations will be reflected in household relations. Households in Southern Asia will differ between regions and from those in, for instance, the Southern African context.³⁴ In order to capture diversity and difference, households and intra-household relations have to be viewed in a more context-specific perspective.

11. Summary and conclusions

1. PRSPs are meant to have a decisive influence both on national policies and on the design of international development co-operation. They are also part of a discourse, which means that they make a certain representation of the world and in treating problems - in this case poverty - see certain ranges of actions as possible solutions, while excluding others. From this follows that the representation of target groups and the description of people – or lack of description – sets the norm and will influ-

³³ Recommendations for integrating gender into the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) and related processes. Ministry of Community Development, Women Affairs and Children (MCDWAC), Tanzania (no date) and Mama, Amina: Women's Studies and Studies of Women in Africa during the 1990's. Internet version of a Codesria Green Book (1996), s.28

³⁴ Kabeer, Naila: Reversed Realities, Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought (London 1994, 2001), 101-135

ence whatever will be considered relevant or unimportant, possible or impossible and what kinds of analysis will be undertaken in the future.

The Civil Society response, the Swedish Country Analysis and to some extent also the Swedish Country Strategy may be seen as part of the same development discourse, sharing some general patterns.

2. One general pattern common to the two PRSPs and the three other documents reviewed here is that poor men, women and children are generally described as an anonymous mass of people. In defining poverty, the PRSPs both basically measure poverty in quantitative terms, in terms of income or expenditure. Poor people, around 73 per cent of the population in Zambia and 50 per cent in Bangladesh, are often described just as “the poor”, “the rural poor” or “vulnerable people”. Large parts of the texts have almost no, or very few, descriptions of target groups pointing at an underlying analysis.
3. Another general pattern is that target groups are described in overviews at the beginning of the documents, but seldom in chapters on sectors. Target groups are intermittently defined in overviews but with no systematic approach either to gender, to categories or groups of people. Information is also lacking on issues, which would contribute to our understanding of poverty, such as the informal sectors of the economy and inequalities within and between different categories of households. If target group descriptions and analyses are absent, it is hard to believe that programs and interventions will be properly targeted as poor groups and their specific problems will be invisible in the programming process.
4. Reviews by the World Bank and by others show that the pattern with regard to the integration of gender in general is the same in all PRSPs reviewed so far (approximately 30). Most probably the same applies to target groups. In the two PRSPs studied here, women are generally described as a homogeneous category, seldom with other characteristics than their gender. They are seen as “the same”. Men are practically invisible as a category. Children are present in some sections but with little differentiation. Generally, there are no descriptions of how levels of wide-spread poverty vary between men and women, different age groups, manner of employment, socio-economic or ethnic group, or of how the situation varies for poor people in different parts of the country. Difference and variation as well as hierarchies and relations of power between and within groups become invisible as well as positions of different categories of people with regard to control over assets and resources.
5. The Civil Society response in Zambia has more descriptions of poor women and men than the PRSP for Zambia and so has the Swedish Country Analysis. The des-

criptions are found in the overviews but seldom in the subsequent sections on sectors. As in the PRSP, there is no differentiation in, for instance, the large agricultural sector, although agriculture in one way or the other is the livelihood of the majority of Zambians. Issues of land rights, gender disparities and gender discrimination in the legal system, which are all highly relevant to the poverty situation, are more vividly brought into focus in the Civil Society response than in the PRSP for Zambia. In the Civil Society response, target groups are mainly described in terms of gender, often signifying women in general. There is little analysis of age, ethnic or socio-economic groups or geographical location.

The Swedish Country Analysis of Zambia has a wider perspective with more facets than the PRSP. More attention is paid to gender aspects and to age groups in terms of children and youth than in the PRSP, but there are few references to diversity in terms of socio-economic or ethnic group or to differences between categories of men and women in different parts of the country. In the chapters on sectors and on macroeconomics, categories of people are about as absent as in the PRSP and the Civil Society response. Generally, this means that analyses of target groups and gender considerations are reflected in the sections on education and health, but not in other sectors. There is no systematic differentiation of groups in the texts. Target groups are described intermittently and with few characteristics (gender for instance, but nothing else).

The Swedish Country Strategy is the document with the least descriptions of target groups. The text is not descriptive, rather a list of decisions concerning future development co-operation. A detailed acquaintance with the programme is required in order to understand its implications. The more differentiated accounts of poverty and of the situation of poor people in the general part of the Country Analysis (and of the PRSP and the CRSP) do not seem to have influenced this text.

6. That target groups are more visible in overviews than in chapters on sectors may be seen as an outcome of knowledge gaps. Such gaps are acknowledged in both PRSPs, but specifications are not very detailed. According to representatives from the Ministry of Finance in Lusaka, however, there is no lack of statistical data. What is lacking is capacity and so far also directives to make further analysis.³⁵
7. While PRSPs open possibilities for pooling national and international resources, there is at the same time a risk of a standardisation of support programmes and analysis, which follow a common pattern. This pattern, which needs to be examined and discussed, is traded down through a certain discourse on development, through routine and perhaps also agreed upon in negotiations.

³⁵ Representatives in Dacca have not been interviewed

The lack of differentiation and the invisibility of poor people may be a consequence of gaps of knowledge. At the same time this gap may be a result of the way poverty is described in the texts on development co-operation. Gaps of knowledge will thus interact with the style and manner of a discourse. One may perpetuate the other, making large groups of people and important causes of poverty invisible. If gaps of knowledge were to be more clearly identified, analyses would more probably be undertaken. The progress would be monitored and evaluated. The results of new knowledge would then be reflected in texts and policies of the nature reviewed here. Programming would probably change in the process and targeting made more effective.

8. There are alternative ways of describing target groups. Moves in this direction can be found in both the Civil Society response and in the Swedish Country Analysis. Some cases of "best practice" are to be found in the sectors on hiv/aids in the PRSP for Zambia, in the description of what is called "human poverty" in the PRSP for Bangladesh, and on the mining sector in the CSPR-paper. Even though capacity is limited, NGOs and research networks in the countries concerned do have a context-specific knowledge that should be explored in order to arrive at a better differentiation in the description of target groups.

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Male roles and male cultures as an obstacle to development?

by Gerd Johnsson-Latham

This study focuses on forms of masculinities and examines the question of whether these constitute an obstacle to development and poverty alleviation.¹

Gender perspectives and gender equality often involve a focus on the conditions of women. However, it is also important to throw light on men, their self-interests and the way in which men set their stamp on social structures and access to privileges.

History and the situation in various communities today bear witness to many different types of male roles and male cultures – some of which promote the development of other groups while others prevent it. Men have often been assigned positive roles and qualities reinforcing the image of men as the main actors, through their drive, enterprise, curiosity and courage – while attention has rarely been paid to women in this respect because of the existing social division of roles.

Men and masculinities have often been seen as synonymous to driving forces for progress and development. In recent decades, focus on the darker sides of maleness has also been put to the forefront. Thus, increasing attention and research is being devoted to the way in which male roles and male cultures may obstruct development. Here, discussions have concerned uneven distribution of privileges and power, violence against women and the high societal cost of resorting to violence as a means for solving conflicts. Furthermore, considerable research has aimed at making visible hidden agendas and an “epistemology” or a way of thinking and constructing knowledge that favours men – though not *all* men, but those in power. Some researchers label this “dominant or hegemonic masculinities”, and point to the fact that this *enables men in power to consider alternative ways of thinking as “special interests”, compared to their own, which is “the norm”*. Such hegemonic structures also tend to regard other points of views as based upon lack of knowledge – instead of acknowledging them as valid alternatives, based on interests of *other* groups.

More recently, the gains men can obtain from less traditional power-based and violent male roles have received attention. Suggestions have for instance been made that *a less violent (or “macho”) life style among men can have the effect of considerably increased average life expectancy for men* – in addition to considerable savings in terms of lives, less suffering and less economic costs for both individual victims and societies at large.

This study seeks to describe the issues of men, masculinities, power and privileges currently under discussion. In so doing, it will particularly point at the problem of the

1 The study was written in response to a request to the author of the study to participate in a panel at the book-fair in Gothenburg in September 2003. The task was to speak about masculinities as a possible threat to development, and to do so based on experiences from the project on gender based discrimination as a cause to poverty.

way in which some male roles and male culture often lead to certain *men taking over – or taking space - at the expense of other groups*, and the often hidden self-interests of these men which still far too seldom is properly analysed.

Roles that are socially constructed lead to different rights, powers – and opportunities

It is important to see that the socially constructed division of roles between men and women throughout the world generally assigns to men more power and opportunity to exercise power – sometimes with the aid of violence – to maintain certain privileges in relation to women. Unequal distribution of power is an obstacle to development – but also something that can be changed.

The issue of "the role of males as an obstacle to development" also leads to a discussion of what development is and who it is that decides the agenda and defines development. It is important to understand that a number of possible alternative development models exist and to *clarify the criteria to be used to define development: people's needs or the interests of strong power groups*.

In the early 1990s the Swedish historian Yvonne Hirdman wrote in the Study of Power and Democracy in Sweden of the "male primate" or male interpretative privilege in determining people's thought and action. Equally, the action plan from the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995, pointed to an asymmetrical distribution of power, based on perceptions – among both women and men – of men's predominance and women's subordination.

It is important – bearing in mind, inter alia, the ideas expressed on power in Sweden's new development bill – to focus on these perceptions when they conflict with the fundamental premises of the new Swedish policy for global development, the ideals of the Age of Enlightenment and modern civilisation's concepts of the equal value of all people and respect for the integrity and dignity of each individual.

It is essential to show how these perceptions can present a threat to democratic principles and to work towards creating conditions for the welfare of all, where the basis of development is need, rather than power, strength (and in the worst case, greed). It is also important to throw light on the interests that lie behind definitions of what "development" is.

Post-colonial researchers and gender analysts from the South such as the African Gender Institute at the University of Cape town has contributed substantially to our understanding of male power structures - in military and civilian hierarchies - based on obedience, access to privileges, rewards, punishments, and how the structures relate to development.

Many researchers as well as women's organisations also draw attention to one of the reasons for women's subordination and the discrimination of women, which is that ultimately; male dominance is based on the threat of violence, or the use of violence. This applies to all levels of life, in families, at the work place, in decision-making forums, in the administration of justice, etc.

Several researchers in men's studies have shown how power and violence are important means of preserving privileges – for the elite, which primarily consists of men.

Thus, as Dr Anders Milton, the President of the Swedish Red Cross, writes in an article in Dagens Nyheter on 8 October 2003, what is required is new thinking in our whole approach to work on preventing HIV/AIDS, for example, in order *to strengthen the position of women and to abolish male cultural practices that mean men's right to sex being paid for by the life and health of girls and women – and indeed by the welfare of entire nations*. Anders Milton discusses the important underlying problem: that many privileges are tied to gender.

One or two examples show how men in general enjoy a whole range of "rights" that women – particularly poor women – lack. Of course, women in different societies may enjoy rights that are denied to women in other cultures and countries. And practically everywhere there are opportunities for women to enjoy the privileges primarily possessed by the male elite, even at a high level. A condition for this, however, is often that they must accept the conditions of the male elite and cannot openly question the existing normative framework.

However, through more women participating in politics, the business sector and cultural life, it is possible to create rules of one's own and to break down the structures that are linked with male dominance. A vivid example of this is Anna Lindh, who openly combined ideological essence and commitment with active parenthood in the course of her political career, and who represented an exercise of power that was never linked with arrogance towards others, irrespective of social position.

Male rights – and their costs for women and girls

Gender-related privileges and perceptions of "rights" for boys and men often entail costs for girls and women – and may be a matter of life or death.

Some examples:

- ★ boys and men are permitted (as the Secretary-General of the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU) Katarina Lindahl points out) free sexuality and unprotected sex: condoms, for example, are often considered "unmanly". Societies in which power often protects those who have privileges have limited sanction systems to prevent men from forcing young girls or women to have sex with them – and many societies seldom apply strictly those sanctions that do exist to take measures against and penalise sexual abuse, the sex trade, etc.

The price of men's sexual privileges is paid by women suffering from, for example, HIV and premature death. It is a fact that the single, most common cause of death for women and girls is HIV as a result of coerced sex. Other prices paid by girls and women are unwanted pregnancies (which can ruin the opportunities of teenage girls to study and choose a career), sexual abuse and gross trafficking

in women, which often means sexual slavery (shown, for example, in the film "Lilja 4-ever"). An additional major price to pay for perceptions on dominance and subordination is that it is the victim, and not the perpetrator, who feels shame and a lack of self-respect and human dignity.

Another type of cost borne by women for men's privileges is related to economics. The World Bank has shown that it is precisely in poor families that the differences between men and women are most pronounced. As Amartya Sen and other economists have shown, the family is seldom the unit in which resources are distributed equally that economists often assume. Instead, perceptions of male dominance result in girls and women receiving a considerably smaller portion of what should be the family's collective resources. Studies in both Latin America and Asia, for example, show that the majority of poor men keep between one-third and one-half of their incomes for their own use (Chant).

While men all over the world generally own land and other economic resources, women in many societies are denied equivalent rights through traditions and the legal system. Social structures often reinforce this asymmetry, in that conditions for bank loans, networks between men, legislation and other mechanisms build further on norms that see men as the primary economic actors and that favour men.

The costs are borne by women, both in the sense that they lack resources, and by being forced to remain dependent on men – husbands, fathers, brothers, etc. – which reinforces perceptions of their subordination.

Women's lack of financial resources has a high price economically and a price in terms of less welfare for everyone (as de Vylder and others show) since investments responding to market (money) demands are seen as more important than the things needed by poor people in terms of food, health care, education, etc.

In other respects too, there is reason to draw attention to the fact that in societies in which the strongest enjoy interpretative privilege, the weakest people have most difficulty, such as poor widows and disabled women who live without the respect often given to widowers and disabled men (described, *inter alia*, in "Voices of the poor").

A third example of the negative consequences of the principle of male predominance involves democracy. Since even men living in poverty are allowed a share of male privileges, those who are otherwise powerless in relation to more powerful men are nevertheless able to exercise power in their own domains: in their families, clans, village communities – and perhaps also as "partners" in development assistance dialogues.

The costs are again borne by women: they are often excluded from male-dominated decision-making bodies. Nor do they have time to take part, since they work throughout their waking hours – unlike poor men who, despite other hardships, have significant welfare advantages compared with poor women, through the mere fact that they often have more free time. The "Voices of the poor", a major interview

study, shows that particularly younger and middle-aged women have difficulty in making their voices heard. As this and other studies confirm, even if women are able to express themselves, they are seldom listened to by men – so they have a “Voice – but no Voice”.

Different types of male superiority

There are several different types of male dominance and patriarchies. One way of describing this is to divide patriarchies into three categories:

1. *The extreme*, where the lives of girls and women are violated:
Groups and communities where girl foetuses are aborted, where girls and women are murdered in the name of male honour, where women’s genitals are mutilated and where men’s violence against women is seen as a right, etc.
2. *The “traditional”* which defines women’s role as mother and wife and prohibits women from working, forbids their reproductive rights (i.e., the right to abortion, sexual counselling, birth control, etc) and where a “dual” system of rights exists, in which female chastity is upheld – but not men’s.
3. *The sophisticated patriarchy* in which the norms of men become the norms of everyone.

These societies often appear relatively gender-equal but contain a number of elements indicating the contrary: measures are not taken against sexual violence and harassment, men generally have higher wages and higher positions, the preferences of men dominate, etc. Women are defined as problems and in need of special support measures, while men’s privileges are taken for granted. Limited notice is taken of male violence – and despite the fact that the costs of such violence are striking, no attention is given to the matter in public debate: in the USA, the costs of police action, imprisonment, medical care, loss of income and production, etc, as a result of male violence is approximately 3 per cent of GDP. In South American societies it can amount to as much as 8 per cent of GDP. This can be compared with the enormous resources invested by economists in seeking to raise GDP growth by a couple of per cent per year (see de Vylder).

Male interpretative privilege and alternative types of epistemology

Male interpretative privilege can be described as a male tradition of what knowledge and competence is. It is typified, for example, by books about “philosophy” – in which 20 male philosophers are discussed, and books on 20th century diplomacy – in which men write about other men. This view of knowledge and competence often marginalises the knowledge and activities of women to a peripheral position where “women’s issues” are discussed. Thus, a feminist critique of a civilisation is considered a “women’s issue” – but when someone writes about civilisations it is considered a general social issue.

The same mechanisms lead to women being regarded as "admitted by quota" while men are felt to be natural candidates for posts on various company boards, since they can more easily be accepted as "one of the team" among other men. And despite the equivocalities and scandals occurring in business boardrooms, men's definitions of "competence" are not queried.

Another result of the male interpretative privilege is that in cases of rape, the honour of women, i.e., of the victims, is often questioned, not that of men, even when men are the perpetrators.

Men are considered to represent the whole of society, and everyone in it. This is why analyses of economics and development are often only about men – without any notice being taken of the absence of women. Women's invisibility and "otherness" is a fundamental aspect of the problem with male interpretative privilege – and a significant obstacle to a development that would benefit the majority of people and particularly poor groups (see Kabeer and Nauckhoff).

The fact that male interpretative privilege defines development as material consumption leads to issues and areas prioritised by women not being put on the established (primarily by men) development agenda. Instead, the interests of women – but never those of men – are perceived as an "add on".

So: what can be done??

The most important things to be done to achieve development that benefits more people regardless of sex include:

- ★ holding discussions in men's groups and elsewhere on how the exercise of power through violence in the family can be replaced – in the same way as conflicts between countries – by peaceful co-existence that is not based on violence but on mutual respect and good relations. Such an approach would also have the effect of bringing down to the family level the work being undertaken to prevent violent solutions of conflicts between countries and groups that is otherwise central to UN and world community endeavours.
- ★ make visible the costs of male violence, for individuals as well as for societies, and discuss to what extent that cost is acceptable.
- ★ strengthening regulatory frameworks and the rule of law to prevent certain men, through sheer strength, power and violence, or threat of violence, from taking over at the expense of other people in a manner that contravenes fundamental principles of democracy and the equal value of all people.
- ★ supporting groups of men (and women) who are working to prevent male violence against women and male violence against other men.
- ★ supporting legal systems that prevent discrimination of women with regard to dignity, respect, opportunities to express themselves and access to resources.
- ★ supporting women's organisations, human rights groups, etc., that are working to

strengthen the legal and other rights of women.

- ★ involving girls and women in the design of the development agenda so that it can include questions of sexual violence and abuse, reproductive rights, functional education, ways in which (unpaid) work at home can be facilitated by investment in technology, etc.
- ★ working on a broad front with gender equality to reduce the scope of strong groups to preserve their power under the threat of violence, in the family or in society as a whole, via, inter alia, the police system, legislation/implementation and gender-stereotyped education.

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Gender equality and poverty reduction strategies

by Stefan de Vylder

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Introduction

The paper has been commissioned by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs as an input to the work carried out within the Ministry's project "Gender based discrimination as a Cause of Poverty".

The main purpose of the paper is to analyse to what extent economic reform programmes, and in particular Poverty Reduction Strategies elaborated with the support from the World Bank, take issues of gender equality, and women's and men's different access to resources and opportunities, into account in their analyses and policy proposals. The report shall also discuss how various forms of discrimination based on gender can be expected to reduce overall economic development as well as the effectiveness of the economic policies proposed.

Three specific Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers – from Bolivia, Vietnam and Zambia – have been selected for a more detailed assessment of the treatment of gender issues.

The paper begins with a brief overview of various constraints in the form of discrimination of women, followed by a discussion of macroeconomics and gender and of the shift in emphasis from "women in development" to "gender and development" within the donor community. The second chapter is a critical assessment of how gender issues have been treated in the three Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers under review. In a concluding chapter, the report summarises main lessons from the preceding analysis and presents a number of proposals as regards specific steps that could be taken in order to improve the gender sensitivity, and thereby the effectiveness, of poverty reduction strategies.

Chapter 1. Gender equality, economic policies and mainstreaming gender

The dual links between poverty reduction and gender equality have been increasingly recognised in recent years. Thus, gender awareness and gender equality can be seen both as ends in themselves and as means to reach the development goals of poverty reduction and human development. Broadly speaking, the former approach looks at gender equality from a human rights perspective, while the latter is predominant among economists who tend to stress the negative aspects of discrimination on more instrumental grounds, using efficiency rather than human rights arguments.

There should be no contradiction between these two approaches. To eliminate discrimination based on gender is not only a matter of equity, human rights and equal opportunities for women and men. It is also good economics. Numerous studies from many different countries clearly demonstrate that economic growth and human development is best achieved when women and men alike are free to make their choices without any kind of discriminatory treatment.

As the purpose of this report is to discuss gender and poverty reduction, the main emphasis is “instrumental”. This does not, of course, make the human rights arguments for gender equality less important.

The present chapter begins with a brief review of gender constraints in the form of discrimination of women, and how such constraints may affect overall economic development. This introductory section is followed by a discussion of macroeconomics and gender, and of the need to take gender aspects into account in the design of economic reform programmes in order to enhance the poverty reduction impact of such programmes. The final section of the chapter is a discussion of the treatment of gender and poverty in influential international declarations and documents, exemplified by the DAC Guidelines on poverty reduction.

1.1 Gender constraints: a brief overview

A discussion about discrimination of women may conveniently start with discrimination of girls. Discriminatory access to education by gender is evident throughout the developing world, and the gap increases at higher levels of education (see, for example, the statistics provided in various issues of UNDP’s Human Development Report). Whilst the gender gap in school enrolment has narrowed over the last few decades, the rate of progress has slowed in the 1990s (see Wach and Reeves, 2000, pp. 22 ff.). Also, the demand for educated women on the labour market is characterised by discrimination and severe restrictions to entry, in particular into well-paid positions.

This situation is not only unacceptable from the point of view of equity. It is also bad for development. As evidenced in a number of studies, *educating girls appears to have even higher benefits for society as a whole than educating boys. Apart from the value of education in itself, a number of different objectives – such as improved child nutrition, decreased incidence of disease and lower population growth – tend to be*

achieved more easily when women are educated.

A recent study, based on cross-country evidence from a large number of countries, concludes that if developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa had done more to promote gender-balanced educational growth, their annual economic growth rates could have been up to 0.9 percentage points higher (Klasen, 2002).

Educational discrimination is but one example. There are also important legal and regulatory barriers to women's access to productive resources: women's right to own land is not always acknowledged - legally or de facto - and women account for a very small percentage of all bank loans in the world. In many countries, cash income from the sale of cash crops automatically accrues to the man, even if the woman is actually doing most or all of the actual work.

Among other examples, taken from various issues of UNDP's Human Development Report, could be mentioned that

- ★ while over 300 million women worldwide are estimated to be running "micro-enterprises", less than two per cent of these have access to credit from formal credit sources;
- ★ of women's total working time, only around one-fourth is paid. For men, two-thirds of their working time is paid;
- ★ only six per cent of cabinet members in the world are women, and the share of women in top managerial positions in large enterprises is even smaller.

1.2 Economic theory: gender-blind rather than gender-neutral

Conventional economic theory hardly ever makes any reference to discrimination based on gender, and is predominantly gender-blind even at the household level.

Virtually all economic textbooks take the "household" as the appropriate unit for family decisions. The household is assumed to be one, homogenous entity with one single utility function. However, there is plenty of diversity in household structure and composition, and even in nuclear families – composed according to the conventional Western norm, i.e. with one wife, one husband, and children - there are conflicts of interests. Indeed, as pointed out by several authors (see, for example, Palmer (1991) or Moser (1993)) a household can be regarded as an internal market where services, money and commodities are being exchanged. *The "terms of trade" within families largely reflect the spousal bargaining strength, which often leads to unfavourable terms of exchange for women.*

Discrimination usually begins at home. For example, women often eat last, and girl children tend to be discriminated against in the allocation of food as well as in the purchases of new clothes, toys, etc. The unequal power relations within the family between the genders compound the difficulty in achieving gender equality with the help of public interventions. Women have frequently endorsed a gender-based critique of the

market, as well as of the state. But they have also repeatedly denounced the male bias of institutions like the family, or the local community.

The gender bias in the family is reflected in the fact that most (unpaid) work for the reproduction of the family is carried out by women (in the South as well as in the North). *Women first have to pay their "reproductive tax", as Palmer coins it, before they can enter the paid labour market.* One effect of this "tax" is that it "...channels part of women's labor to where market forces would not direct it, and presents a serious limitation of women's capability to engage in gainful work and entrepreneurship...and restricts them to activities which are compatible with their home schedule" (Palmer 1991, cited in Working Group on Gender and Economics, 1995, p. 7).

Moreover, in most parts of the world, women provide most of the voluntary community work, thereby building the basis of many communities' social capital.

If the entire economy is viewed through the lense of gender, we distinguish three spheres of activities: the "productive sphere" (which is registered in national accounts and whose development is regularly used as the yardstick for assessing economic progress), the household or reproductive sphere, and the social, or voluntary community, sphere. In the latter two sectors, which are "*needs-oriented*" rather than "*market-oriented*", *women account for the lion's part of (unpaid) work*, and improvements or deteriorations in these sectors are not accounted for in conventional economic statistics.

Environmental protection is also an underestimated activity in economic statistics and here, too, women play an exceedingly important role. As an illustration of a wide variety of gender constraints, the following example from Kenya could serve to highlight both restricted access to resources and the key role played by women - in Kenya and elsewhere - in environmental protection:

"In Kenya, women are the principal managers of natural resources. Their activities are crucial to family and community survival. On the agricultural side, they produce 60-70 per cent of food, they tend livestock, they make substantial contributions to cash crop production, and they undertake most food processing and marketing. They manage the environment not only through their agricultural activities, but also by planting trees and carrying out other environmental conservation measures like terracing and fodder planting. Ironically, however, most traditions do not allow women to plant trees or any other "permanent" crops like tea and coffee. This traditional rule appears to stem from the belief that structural changes on land can only be made on own land. When they plant trees, as many of them do now, those trees do not belong to them but to the person (man) who holds the title deed to the land. A further irony is that income accruing from cash crops on which women spend considerable energy and time, often at the expense of food crops, goes to their male spouses. *The spouses rarely consult their wives on financial matters. Yet women are still expected to put food on the table....Because they have no rights to any tangible resource, nor can they initiate*

decisions on important activities, women cannot access any form of credit to improve their lot.”(see Ruth Oniang, 1994, p. 36).

In a strategy towards gender equality, a necessary but far from sufficient step is the *elimination of all legal barriers to women’s control over productive resources, along with improved education and training*. Also, both formal and informal barriers to entry on the labour market have to be addressed, although this is – as witnessed also in developed countries – a very slow process.

It is important not to limit the analysis of constraints to access to credit, inputs, etc. For example, studies on women entrepreneurs (see Woestman, 1994, p. 13) trying to enter the export trade market in Ghana, Kenya and Jamaica have shown exclusion from a number of important arenas such as business networks, informal referral networks and business-social organisations where market information is exchanged. Clearly, such *informal barriers – common also in the industrialised world – limit the supply response to economic reforms, and reduce the potential growth of income and employment for society as a whole*.

Since most business women are small-scale or micro entrepreneurs, improvements in the interface between the formal and informal sectors of the economy are also essential. Policies aimed at facilitating the growth of the informal sector through training, access to credit, elimination of bureaucratic restrictions, and others, can serve to enhance the opportunities of women in particular.

The multiple roles and responsibilities of women as both caretakers and wage earners also have to be recognised and addressed. Women need improved child care as well as increased provisions for flexible work. In particular, in a comprehensive and coherent poverty reduction strategy, it is imperative to design development policies which give priority to projects which economise on the use of women’s time; poor women, in particular, are almost always busy, and time is a severe constraint. Examples could include investments in village water supplies (which save time spent fetching water), fuel-efficient stoves, reforestation which reduces the time spent on collecting fuelwood, and small-scale rural electrification projects based on solar energy or biomass.

Many of these small-scale projects are associated with positive externalities – such as environmental protection – as well as with synergy effects. For example, investments in water and sanitation increase the rate of return on investments in education (as children are healthier) and facilitate the preparation of nutritious food by the parents (read: mothers).

In most countries, state budgets contain no provision for investments of this kind, which are usually neglected by both the public and the private sector. Given the positive externalities associated with such investments, there is a strong case for public interventions and subsidies.

In the three poverty reduction strategy papers that will be discussed in the next chapter, there is no recognition of any of the above-mentioned aspects of women’s

workload, or any references to the need to develop activities related to women's unpaid activities in areas such as water, sanitation, energy, etc.

It should also be stressed that while most discussions on gender tend to focus on the role of women, *men can also suffer, in many different ways, from prevailing social constructions of masculinity*. Stereotyped male "macho" role models prevent many men from certain kinds of "female" educational careers, and men who in another social context would have preferred to work as, for example, nurses, or taking care of small children in day-care centres, accept conventional male occupations because of prevailing attitudes. Numerous fathers are also, for similar reasons, constrained in their care-taking role vis-a-vis their own children.

When attitudes of this kind prevail men suffer, too, from socially imposed restrictions. And from a narrow economic perspective, the failure of a society to reap the benefits of each individual's personal inclinations and comparative advantages implies a welfare loss. While it is generally acknowledged that women are denied equal access to occupations where their contributions to economic development and poverty reduction would be increased, the same may also be true for many men.

To put it in very simple terms: both family welfare and economic growth could be higher if the share of female engineers and business managers went up while the proportion of female child-care workers went down.

1.3 Macroeconomics, economic reform programmes and gender

Decisions about overall development strategies and macroeconomic policies are not gender-neutral. While it is not always easy to trace the impacts of certain policies in a gender perspective – especially since there is in all countries, and in particular in developing countries, a severe shortage of gender-disaggregated statistics as well as of empirical studies based on reliable data – policy measures typically included in a structural adjustment programme may serve as an example.¹

Changes in relative prices, to begin with, normally aim at improving prices of tradables versus non-tradables. While this may or may not increase employment opportunities for women, the division of labour and control over incomes within the family have to be assessed. For example, in countries where income from cash crops is normally controlled by the man (when there is one – a large number of farms in developing countries are run by widows or abandoned women or by wives of absent migrant workers), an increase in cash crop production at the expense of subsistence

1 Although the concept of structural adjustment has fallen out of use, the basic thrust of the programmes – such as macrostabilisation, deregulation and trade liberalisation – remains on the agenda, to varying degrees. The purpose of the discussion that follows is neither to endorse, nor to criticise, such policies – only to make the gender dimension visible in economic policy-making.

food production changes the intra-household terms of trade in favour of the man.

It is also a striking fact that in many countries where women constitute the overwhelming majority of all farmers, a large majority of all agricultural extension workers are men.

There are frequently pronounced gender differences within the livestock sector as well. For example, it is common for men to be responsible for cattle, while women take care of smaller animals such as goats, poultry, ducks, etc. which are normally raised for the family's own consumption or for sale on the local market. In general, *small animals tend to receive much less attention than male-dominated cattle in public agricultural policies* – extension services, veterinary services, research, and others² – and as economic reform programmes tend to pay increased attention to tradables in general and to exports in particular, this male bias can easily be reinforced while small animals, vital for family subsistence, nutrition and poverty reduction, continue to be neglected.

A consistent poverty reduction strategy needs to tackle prevailing gender biases within each sector – agriculture, forestry, transport and communications, industrial development, etc.

Retrenchment of public sector employees affects both men and women, as does the increase in urban un- and underemployment that often accompanies a structural adjustment programme. Although men tend to be more directly affected, as they constitute a majority of the labour force in the formal sector of the economy, the entire family is likely to suffer from the loss of income. One consequence, observed in many African countries, of a reduction in urban employment opportunities is that many men return to their rural communities. While this may be seen as a valuable contribution to the labour input on the farm, many women actually complain not only about the loss of income from remittances from the husband, but also because they get one more mouth to feed.

The rise in food prices which many economic reform programmes have as one of their objectives gives improved incentives to surplus farmers, and should normally be welcomed. However, in large parts of the developing world, a majority of rural families, and especially the poorest households, are net buyers of food, and it is normally the women who have the major responsibility for acquiring food for the family. And when men control the sales of agricultural products, the effects of price increases may be different for men as producers/beneficiaries versus women as consumers/losers.

Somewhat schematically, one could say that men are mainly affected by economic reform programmes in their roles as workers and producers, while women are affected as consumers and in their other, multiple roles and tasks: the work of caring for children, gathering fuel and water, preparing meals, keeping the house clean, nursing the sick, managing the household and other tasks which are predominantly carried out by women also in the industrialised countries.

2 For examples from Namibia, see Stark & de Vylder (1998).

The decline in public expenditures on social sector services, witnessed in many adjusting countries, directly affects the family, in particular women and children. Often, the need to pay school fees for the children, and to cover other family expenditures when user charges have been introduced or raised, obliges the woman/mother to seek paid employment. While improved integration of women in the labour market should in no way be seen as harmful in itself - quite the contrary - the fact that women are often “pushed” rather than “pulled” into poorly paid occupations to cover additional costs for health and education cannot by itself be seen as part of an empowerment strategy.

Women’s time constraints are often accentuated when new tasks are added to the old ones. In examining changing gender roles in agriculture in the wake of adjustment policies, Lado (1992) observes

“Although women have taken over some of the tasks that were traditionally outside their domain, most men are reported unwilling or unable to share women’s work. Whenever someone has to assume something, it is the women who automatically assume men’s roles and not vice versa.” (quoted in Haddad et.al., 1995, p. 886).

In general, economic reform programmes – whether in the old form of structural adjustment or in their newer and slightly modified versions – imply a change in relative “prices” between paid and unpaid work, in favour of the former. The invisible work done by women is not counted, and the reproductive and caretaking burdens normally shouldered by women are devalued, compared with production for the market. As a consequence, the intra-household terms of trade are likely to deteriorate for the woman, whose time burden may also increase.

The point to stress in this context is that *macroeconomic policies are far from gender-neutral*. If the *initial conditions for women and men are unequal – in terms of access to resources, possibilities to reallocate their working time, etc. – as is virtually always the case, a supposedly gender-neutral adjustment programme is likely to have an inherent bias against women*. If the goal of gender equity is to be achieved, a gender perspective has to be present when, and not only after, macroeconomic policies are being designed.

Economic reform programmes which do not consider the different roles and constraints based on gender that exist in all societies tend to be less efficient even from a very narrow economic perspective. For example, *gender inequality greatly hampers a positive supply response in agriculture when female farmers are denied equal access to modern inputs, credit, extension services, etc.* The same is true as regards potential beneficial effects on production and employment of trade liberalization and support to small and medium-sized enterprises: without discrimination based on gender, a far better response to an improved economic environment for productive activities can be expected. The various “hidden” forms of discrimination indicated earlier – such as lack of access to male-dominated business networks and contacts – may be at least as important as the more visible constraints.

A few examples of how improved gender equality may enhance economic and social development are given in Box 1 on the following page:

Box 1. Efficiency Argument for Gender-Aware Economic Analysis

- ★ Research on agricultural productivity in Africa shows that reducing gender inequality could significantly increase agricultural yields. For instance, giving women farmers in Kenya the same level of agricultural inputs and education as men farmers could increase yields by women farmers by more than 20 %.
- ★ Research on economic growth and education shows that failing to invest in women's education lowers GNP. Everything else being equal, countries in which the ratio of female-to-male enrolment in primary or secondary education is less than 0.75 can expect levels of GNP that are roughly 25 percent lower than countries in which there is less gender disparity in education.
- ★ Reductions in gender inequality improve the well-being and productivity of the next generation – boys as well as girls. The probability of children being enrolled in school increases with their mother's educational level, and extra income going to mothers has a more positive impact on household investment in nutrition, health and education than extra income going to fathers.
- ★ Research on gender inequality in the labour market shows that eliminating gender discrimination in job opportunities and pay could increase not only women's income, but also national income. For instance, if gender inequality in the labour market in Latin America were to be eliminated, not only could women's wages rise by about 50 percent, but national output could rise by five per cent as a result of more efficient allocation of labour.
- ★ *Women's time burdens* are an important constraint on growth and development – women are an over-utilised, not an under-utilised resource. The benefits of reducing this constraint could be considerable. *For instance, a study in Tanzania shows that reducing such constraints in a community of smallholder coffee and banana growers could increase household cash income by 10 percent, labour productivity by 15 percent, and capital productivity by 44 percent.*
- ★ A number of microcredit programmes in Southeast Asia and elsewhere have shown that these programmes – whose borrowers are mainly poor women – have managed to reduce family poverty substantially, and to empower women.

Source: Elson/Evers/Gideon, 1997, and various World Bank publications.

1.4 Gender and foreign aid: from “women in development” to mainstreaming gender

Somewhat schematically, one could say that the early discussion on women in development (WID) focused on women not primarily as agents of change but rather as a vulnerable or even “marginalised” group, for whom women-specific projects were designed. Often, it was assumed that women’s needs and concerns were primarily related to social welfare or to sectors such as health, nutrition and education. Projects in other areas were tacitly assumed to be gender-neutral.

The WID focus also included income-generating activities through which women were expected to improve their own lives as well as those of their children and families. In actual practice, the WID approach tended to treat women as an exclusive and excluded group which required separate programmes or programme components, often funded entirely by the donors and administered by a “women’s programme officer” at the respective aid agencies.. Rather than improving women’s relative position, many WID activities actually contributed to a continued marginalisation of women.

The shift that has taken place in the past decades from WID to Gender And Development (GAD) has challenged the old view, arguing that a gender lens needs to be applied to every aspect of development work, regardless of the field, sector or focus. While social sector programmes remain important to women - and to men and children – this is also true for credit policies, trade policies and monetary or exchange rate policies.

This shift also implies that men and women should be seen as subjects, not objects or “targets” for outside interventions. While it is true that women were and are subject to discrimination – and many women are, in addition, victims of sexual abuse and physical violence – the “victim image” implicit in the WID approach was not conducive to a view of women as fully capable of participating on equal terms in economic and social affairs.

In the new GAD framework, gender – understood as the roles and responsibilities assigned to women and men in a social rather than biological context - rather than women is used as an analytic category to understand how economic, political, social and cultural systems affect women and men in different ways. The major differences between the WID and the GAD approach have been summarised in the following way:

“The GAD approach signals three important departures from WID. First, it identifies the unequal power relations between women and men. Second, it *reexamines all social, political and economic structures and development policies from the perspective of gender differentials*. And third, *it recognizes that achieving gender equality and equity will demand “transformative change”...in gender relations from household to global politics and policy and within all mediating institutions, such as governments, the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organization (WTO).*” (Riley 2001, p. 1).

After this introduction, we will now turn our attention to the treatment of gender and of mainstreaming gender in an important policy document: the “OECD/DAC Guidelines

on Poverty Reduction”, which represent an authoritative interpretation of the views of the donor community.

1.5 The DAC/OECD Guidelines

The new DAC guidelines on poverty reduction (OECD 2001) can be seen as a further confirmation of the shift in emphasis from “women in development” to “gender mainstreaming” indicated earlier.

A few quotations from the Guidelines may serve to illustrate how gender is treated. To begin with, while gender refers to women as well as to men, every analysis of gender relations must have as a point of departure the continued existence of discrimination against girls and women in many different ways:

“Gender inequality concerns all dimensions of poverty, because poverty is not gender-neutral. Cultures often involve deep-rooted prejudices and discrimination against women. Processes causing poverty affect men and women in different ways and degrees. Female poverty is more prevalent and typically more severe than male poverty. Women and girls in poor households get less than their fair share of private consumption and public services. They suffer violence by men on a large scale....Gender-related “time poverty” refers to the lack of time for all the tasks imposed on women, for rest and for economic, social and political activities. It is an important additional burden which in many societies is due to structural gender inequality – a disparity which has different meanings for women and men.” (p. 40).

The Guidelines thus emphasise the many different, and multidimensional, aspects of poverty related to gender inequality (in incomes, assets, “voice” and influence, time for social and political activities and for rest and leisure etc.). But they also indicate how discrimination based on gender is an obstacle to poverty reduction:

“Women play a crucial role in the livelihoods and basic human capabilities of poor households. By providing for their children, they reduce the risk of poverty in the next generation. But women in general have less access than men to assets that provide security and opportunity. Such constraints on women’s productive potential reduce household incomes and aggregate economic growth. Gender inequality is therefore a major cause of female and overall poverty.” (p. 40).

In the Guidelines, gender inequality is thus regarded as a major cause of poverty and a major impediment to development. Mainstreaming gender implies making gender roles visible in all areas, and to reduce gender inequality “means improving women’s access to employment, credit and other productive resources, enabling women to earn income”. The Guidelines also stress that “effective anti-poverty strategies need to consider existing gender relations, paying particular attention to women’s time poverty caused by the double burden of paid work and their unpaid care activities. Governments need to recognise gender exclusion when shaping legal, institutional and policy frameworks, for instance in allocations of public expenditure...Careful

monitoring and evaluation would give greater insight into the effectiveness of ‘gender budgets’” (p. 49).

The Guidelines thus explicitly acknowledge the need to mainstream gender even in areas which are traditionally gender-blind, such as national budgets. Still, the Guidelines are rather vague precisely in these areas, and also when it comes to translating gender-awareness into operational guidelines. They also remain silent on a number of key issues, not least in areas such as donor conditionality and the implications for gender issues of “national ownership”, institutional reforms that need to be addressed, the role of women’s organisations, empowerment strategies, and others. As will be further discussed in the next part of this study, in which three different Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers are being scrutinised from a gender perspective, the treatment of gender in the DAC Guidelines nevertheless appears as quite elaborate when compared with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers under review.

Chapter 2. Case Studies: PRSPs of Bolivia, Vietnam and Zambia

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how gender has been treated in three poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs): Bolivia, Vietnam and Zambia. Given the dominant role of the World Bank in the strategy behind the PRSPs, the chapter begins with a presentation of the Bank’s own recommendations regarding gender mainstreaming.

2.1 The World Bank on gender mainstreaming in PRSPs

In a key policy document, “Integrating Gender into the World Bank’s Work: A Strategy for Action” (World Bank 2002a), the Bank outlines a process through which it intends to work with partner countries. The cornerstones of the strategy are to prepare, for each country in which the Bank has an active lending programme, periodic Country Gender Assessments analysing the gender dimensions of development across all sectors and identifying the gender-responsive actions that are important for poverty reduction and economic growth. The document presents *a scheme for the integration of gender dimensions into the Bank’s analytical work and lending programmes* and stresses the need to develop appropriate criteria and statistical tools to measure and monitor achievements in the area of gender equality. The analysis of gender constraints covers virtually all economic and social sectors as well as political and administrative institutions.

In a policy document specifically addressing the need to integrate gender into the PRSP process (World Bank 2002 b), chapter 10), the Banks advances the analysis further, and discusses how four different dimensions of gender and poverty should be diagnosed in every PRSP:

★ *Opportunities indicators* which reveal gender differences in access to productive

3 Some of these lacunae are highlighted in Johnsson-Latham (2003).

resources and opportunities;

- ★ *Capabilities indicators* which identify current gender gaps and monitor changes in basic welfare indicators for women and men over time;
- ★ *Security indicators* which identify vulnerability to economic shocks, natural disaster, and violence;
- ★ *Empowerment indicators* which measure gender differences in participation and access to decision-making in the political process as well as in the community and the household.

The document discusses at length how data collection should be organised in order to make the diagnosis, how the data should be analysed, and the appropriate policy responses and priority actions that follow from the analysis.

The integration of gender analysis into poverty strategies is recommended to proceed in nine different steps by

- ★ ensuring that gender is addressed across the four dimensions of poverty (opportunities, capabilities, security and empowerment);
- ★ for each of these dimensions, documenting the experiences of poverty;
- ★ undertaking gender analysis of the data gathered and integrating findings into the country's poverty diagnosis;
- ★ defining the policy implications of gender analysis in the country;
- ★ identifying priorities for the PRS;
- ★ integrating gender-responsive priorities into the policy responses and priority actions in the PRS;
- ★ integrating a gender dimension into the outcome monitoring system;
- ★ integrating a gender dimension into the PRS evaluation strategy and using gender monitoring and impact evaluation results;
- ★ building institutional capacity for gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation.

These two documents, and numerous others, reveal the high emphasis that the World Bank today gives to gender mainstreaming in its analytical as well as operational work related to poverty reduction. The progress in this respect is striking, compared with the situation ten or even five years ago.

2.2 The PRS process and gender in practice: evidence from three PRSPs

General observations

There are a very large number of references to gender and to the need for increased gender equality in the three documents under review. A simple word-count of words and expressions related to gender, and to men and women, would give the following result:

Table 1. Number of gender-related words in three PRSPs.

Word/Country	Bolivia	Vietnam	Zambia
Gender	44	32	81
Woman/women/female	65	110	155
Man/men/male	8	7	56
Girl(s), girl child	3	11	18
Boy(s)	1	0	2
Mother(s)	11	3	5
Father(s)	0	0	0
Wife/wives	0	4	1
Husband(s)	0	5	1
Total	132	172	319

Note: Words have been counted only when used to indicate gender differences or similarities. Words appearing in expressions such as “mother tongue” are therefore not included.

A few observations can be made. To begin with, the words woman/women/female are far more common than man/men/male in all reports. This simply mirrors the fact that virtually all discussions about gender concentrate on the situation of women. In a similar way, girls, or the girl child, are mentioned far more often than boys⁴.

Mothers appear in all reports, and rather frequently in one (Bolivia), but fathers are conspicuously absent. The reports do not question the role assigned to women in household work and child care; only one report (Vietnam) suggests that men could contribute a little more in this area.

As regards the consultative process with civil society and other stakeholders, rather few consultations with women’s groups or organisations appear to have been made⁵.

No report contains a time-use analysis based on gender differences. The women’s/ mothers’ role in the family is sometimes mentioned, as indicated above, and one report

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- 4 The surprisingly high number of times that men are mentioned in the Zambia report is explained by the fact that this report very often uses expressions such as “enhance women’s and men’s participation in employment and income-generating activities”, “promote and strengthen women’s and men’s...” etc. It may also be observed that the Zambian report as a whole contains more pages and words than the two others.
 - 5 One report, Vietnam, does, however, mention two workshops related to the situation of women, and the report on Bolivia makes a brief reference to “consultation with rural women in La Paz” in the long list of organisations and people participating in a national dialogue on the allocation of debt forgiveness resources under the HIPC initiative .

(Vietnam) makes a brief reference to women's heavy household work, but no attempts are made to analyse how women's double or triple time burdens should be taken into account in the design of poverty reduction strategies. Even in sectors such as water and energy, where it is well known that women assume a major responsibility in most developing countries, there is an almost complete lack of discussion about the need to ease the time spent on typically female activities like cooking food and collecting water and firewood (the Vietnam report does, however, mention that women spend much time collecting water).

While references to discrimination based on gender are frequent, no report tries to go beyond common phrases in order to present an analysis of the intra-household distribution of power, responsibilities and income. No report discusses the need to assess how economic reforms may change the gender-related division of labour and "terms of trade" between the spouses. The analysis of good governance, and of public institutions at different levels, is also "gender-blind", although scattered remarks about the underrepresentation of women in political decision-making bodies are made on a couple of occasions. One report (Vietnam) also stresses that legal reforms to enhance gender equality are needed, but acknowledges that poor implementation of already existing laws is an even bigger problem.

Even the poverty diagnoses are astonishingly gender-blind. Rather few gender-disaggregated data on poverty are presented. Occasionally, female heads of households, or "elderly persons and women facing domestic violence" (Bolivia) are singled out as groups particularly affected by poverty and vulnerability, but there is very little analysis, and no figures on trends in male and female poverty over time.

As for mainstreaming, gender is treated as a cross-cutting issue, often together with other cross-cutting issues like environment and ethnicity. However, a very large proportion of all words and expressions related to gender is found in the small sections (2–5 pages in each report) which are explicitly devoted to gender. Genuine mainstreaming is quite limited; many key chapters in all three reports are void of any reference to gender.

The gender dimension is also absent in the discussions about economic reforms and macroeconomic policies. One report (Vietnam) makes a comment about the need to provide special protection to female workers who are retrenched from state-owned enterprises, but liberalization and privatization policies, trade policies, monetary policies etc. are consistently being treated a gender-neutral, i.e. gender dimensions are simply neglected.

All reports contain some discussion about various forms of discrimination of women. There is also, on several occasions, a tendency to lump together women with other supposedly weak and vulnerable minority groups. Phrases like the following (presumably formulated by men) reflect this attitude

★ "...it is necessary to turn attention to vulnerable groups like elderly, women, disabled and ethnic minority people" (Vietnam)

- ★ “...those categories of people that are most vulnerable (women, children, disabled, retrenched workers, and small-scale peasant farmers)” (Zambia)
- ★ “...particularly women, disabled persons, and other disadvantaged groups” (Zambia)

By and large, however, the authors of the PRSPs have avoided the old trap of seeing women as problems, or as victims only; women are frequently treated as subjects, not objects, and at least part of the empowerment agenda has come through, compared with the attitudes that prevailed in the WID tradition.

Mainstreaming gender in PRSPs: a quantitative assessment

To facilitate a quantitative assessment of the treatment of gender from a mainstreaming perspective, and a comparison between the three reports, I have looked at some of the major chapters in order to see to what extent the gender dimension is present. The criteria used, and the grades given, are indicated below:

Table 2. Assessment criteria for the treatment of gender

Assessment criteria	Mark (1–5)
No (or meaningless) reference to gender*	1
Brief reference to gender	2
Some discussion	3
More elaborate discussion/analysis	4
Thorough and satisfactory analysis	5

* “Meaningless reference” is, for example, when a report talks about the need to “improve living conditions for all women and men”.

The issues and sectors chosen are those which appear in all three PRSPs, and the results are summarised in Table 3 on the following page.

Table 3. Summary assessment of the treatment of gender issues in major issues and sectors regularly covered in PRSPs.

Issue/sector and country	Bolivia	Vietnam	Zambia	Average score
Poverty diagnosis	3	3	3	3.0
Agriculture, land rights, rural development	2	3	3	2.7
Industry and enterprise development	1	2	1	1.3
Banking, access to credit	2	3	2	2.3
Labour market, employment, informal sector and microenterprises	3	4	2	3.0
Transport and communications	1	1	2	1.3
Energy	1	2	1	1.3
Water and sanitation	2	3	3	2.7
Health and nutrition	4	3	4	3.7
Education	3	4	3	3.3
Macroeconomic policies, including trade policies	1	1	1	1.0
Liberalization/privatization policies	1	2	1	1.3
Governance/institutions/legal reforms	2	4	3	3.0
Summary assessment/ average score	2.0	2.7	2.2	

The figures above should, of course, be taken with great caution, as the judgements passed contain a large subjective element. In addition, there is a pronounced discrepancy in the ways the three reports have been edited and designed, which makes comparisons difficult. For example, the Zambia report is much longer than the other two, and it conveys the impression of having been written by expatriates with a perfect command of the English language as well of current fashions within the donor community. The Vietnam report, on the other hand, gives the impression of having been written entirely by Vietnamese policy-makers; it contains a number of grammatical errors, it does not use all the right words and expressions found in World Bank manuals, etc. Perhaps for this reason, the Vietnam report is actually more convincing than the other two; domestic “ownership”, to use a phrase currently in vogue, appears more solid. The Bolivia report occupies an intermediate position in this respect.

As the table above shows, the marks given are rather low. Even a very generous reading of the documents reveals that the analysis is either absent or highly unsatis-

factory, and the policy actions suggested are often exceedingly vague (“improve conditions for women”, etc.). Also, criteria for monitoring progress towards gender equality tend to be poorly developed⁶.

With respect to the issues and areas where the three papers include more than scattered references to gender, the pattern is rather clear. Gender issues are given most attention within health, nutrition and education - i.e. the sectors where women are conventionally perceived to have a special interest. The other extreme is trade and macroeconomic policies, where the gender dimension is entirely absent. No report contains even a brief reference to the fact that changes in relative prices – between, say, export crops and food crops for the family’s own consumption, and between tradables and non-tradables, and between the “productive” versus the “reproductive” spheres – as a result of economic reforms may have important implications for the distribution of income, and control over productive assets, between the genders. Nor do they discuss how macropolicies may affect time use patterns for women and men.

The conclusion is that the reports are of limited use for an analysis of the impact of economic reforms on gender equality. While a number of good suggestions are being forwarded as regards the need to improve the situation of women in areas such as access to credit, education and health, the links between overall policies and gender equality are never made explicit.

Thus, while the reports repeatedly use phrases such as “gender mainstreaming”, “gender equality as a cross-cutting issue”, etc., they largely fail to live up to these commitments. Even in areas such as water, energy and transportation, where a considerable number of gender-aware analyses have been made in recent years, the reports make no attempts to structure the discussion in a way that could facilitate a discussion about the roles of women and men in areas such as water and fuel collection, cooking, washing, sanitation, etc. When rural electrification is discussed, no mention is made of the gender-based differences in the use of electricity. Emphasis tends to be put on expanding the use of electricity in the “productive” sphere of the economy, which is tacitly assumed to be gender-neutral even in areas which are in fact heavily male-dominated (*the Zambia report, for example, talks about reducing the cost of electricity to the copper mines, but makes no reference to the use of electricity for cooking in order to ease women’s time constraint and health hazards*).

6 Several of the key conclusions also point in the same direction as the ones drawn by Aidoo et.al. (2002), whose study of the gender perspective in PR-SPs in West and Central Africa includes a larger number of case studies.

Chapter 3. Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 Main lessons from the PRSP review

Although it is dangerous to generalise from the limited number of PRSPs that have been discussed in this paper, a few lessons from our small exercise might be drawn.

The first conclusion is that gender issues are given much more attention today than just a few years ago. For example, in key documents that used to be prepared in connection with structural adjustment programmes in the past – such as the so-called “policy framework papers” – gender was simply not a topic that was considered. In this respect, great progress has been made.

The second conclusion is that gender mainstreaming is a difficult process, in part because of the novelty of the exercise. There is no reason to doubt the good intentions behind the three reports that have been discussed – still, it must be concluded that the discussions and analyses presented in the reports are weak and stereotyped. By and large, the authors of the reports appear to know what to say – i.e. to pay lip service to “gender mainstreaming” and to say what is being expected in terms of key phrases – but not what to do or how to do it.

In areas that have traditionally been gender-blind, such as macroeconomic policies, the PRSPs are also, by and large, gender-blind. In these and many other areas, *the major problem is not the fact that the reports fail to provide clearcut answers – it is rather that they do not even raise relevant questions.*

The reports also mirror the underlying paucity of data and empirical studies. Much of the statistics that should be relevant in the context of gender mainstreaming appears to be unavailable. The presentation of data is best in sectors where all countries keep good gender-disaggregated records, such as education. In others areas such as credit, land rights, intra-household power relations and developments within the informal sector, the lack of analysis may simply reflect a lack of reliable data and case studies. Still, much more could probably be done if the reports dared to rely more on partial field studies based on surveys related to, for example, informal sector income and employment, men’s and women’s time use, household expenditure patterns and the extent to which women and men benefit from various public services.

One reason for these lacunae in the treatment of gender is likely to be the emphasis put in the PRS process on the productive sphere of the economy, whose development is consistently seen as the solution to poverty reduction and where growth of income and employment can be measured most easily. *This emphasis on the productive sector and on the growth of marketed goods and services overshadows the importance of the reproductive and social spheres, where women dominate in terms of time spent and services provided.* The criteria suggested for monitoring progress are not capable of registering a deterioration in these latter sectors. An increase in female paid labour outside the household would thus be interpreted as an improvement even if this were

to signify less time spent by women in activities such as cooking nutritious food and giving intellectual and emotional stimulation to their children. In a similar way, a larger involvement of men in these and other household and child-rearing tasks might be a great but completely unregistered step forward in terms of gender equality and family well-being.

It may also be observed that gender issues in all reports tend to be equated with women's issues, and that women, in turn, are often assigned to the category of vulnerable groups requiring special attention⁷. There is, accordingly, hardly any discussion about men; their roles, needs and responsibilities. Men are mentioned only in connection with meaningless phrases ("improve conditions for all women and men", and similar expressions). The fact that the word "father" is not even mentioned once in the three reports is just one expression of this lack of attention to the fact that men, too, should have a role to play outside the formal labour market. *Nor is there any discussion about men's vulnerability, and frequent recourse to stereotyped coping mechanisms (crime and violence, drugs, alcohol, etc.) in times of crisis.*

A genuinely gender-sensitive poverty analysis would also need to pay attention to men in difficult circumstances, such as men who have lost their jobs and are long-term unemployed, young men without education who appear unable to enter the labour market and who end up choosing a criminal career, demobilised soldiers, men with hazardous and exploitative occupations, or men who live far away from their families as migrant workers.

Female-headed households are sometimes singled out as a particularly vulnerable group, although various studies show that these households are not always overrepresented in poverty statistics. Perhaps men who have lost their wives may be even more vulnerable, together with their children?

The various "gendered" analyses of state budgets – and which try to answer questions like "Who benefit from public services and subsidies? Is it men or women who get jobs in the public sector? Which items are most relevant for women and men, respectively?" – that have been made in recent years have not left any marks on the PRSPs under review. No attempt has been made in the PRSPs to analyse state budgets from a gendered perspective, although occasional references are made to budget items specifically earmarked for "women" (and which normally comprise an exceedingly small amount of money)⁸.

3.2 The way forward: integrating gender analysis with poverty reduction

Mainstreaming gender in poverty reduction strategies is not an easy process. Still, it

7 This point is also stressed in the review of PRSPs in West and Central Africa referred to earlier (Aidoo et al., 2002).

8 See, for example, Budlender et al. (1998), Elson (1997a) or Adelståhl (1998).

is important not to complicate things too much (as is done, for example, in the rather pedantic manuals and guidelines produced by the World Bank referred to earlier), or to let the donor community's requirements take over the domestic policy agenda. Ambitions must be allowed to vary, and much of the analysis can only be made when relevant data and studies are available, which may take time. Still, the following steps could probably be taken in every country that has a genuine interest in enriching the gender dimensions of poverty reduction strategies:

1. *Increase the share of women who actually participate in the formulation of the strategies.* Although the names and sexes of the different authors of the PRSPs are not revealed, I am convinced that men, and primarily male economists, have dominated among the authors of the three PRSPs discussed in this paper.
2. Improve consultations with women's groups and organisations in the national dialogues about poverty reduction. While all PRS processes should be based on national consultations with civil society, groups such as the business community, churches, indigenous organisations and anonymous NGOs are frequently mentioned, while others, including women's organisations (as well as trade unions) appear to be rather absent among stakeholders who have been consulted.
3. Improve gender-disaggregated data collection of relevance for an understanding of the gender dimensions of poverty. Encourage field studies which can fill knowledge gaps in a number of areas, including time use studies, intra-household power relations, household structure and incidence of poverty and prevalence of differentiated treatment of boys and girls (such as access to food, education, health care, leisure and domestic work load).
4. Do not treat gender mainstreaming as a "women's issue" only. Make men, and their different roles and responsibilities, visible.
5. Carry out surveys which capture non-economic dimensions of female poverty and vulnerability (and, when relevant, of male poverty and vulnerability as well) such as physical insecurity, stress and fatigue, sexual abuse, male violence against women, lack of influence in community and social affairs, and others.
6. Stimulate academic work and empirical studies of the links between gender equality and poverty reduction.
7. Review existing legislation as well as actual implementation of the laws in order to highlight remaining barriers to women's equal rights in all areas (land rights, inheritance, family law, commercial law and legal practices, rights to travel and do business without the husband's permission, criminal law, including legislation concerning sexual abuse and harassment, and other legal areas that might be relevant). Review, with similar objectives, traditional law which may co-exist with modern legislation as well as social and cultural norms which are in conflict with the law.

8. Carry out studies which analyse the effects of economic reform programmes from a gender perspective. How are relative prices (between paid and unpaid work, between cash crops and subsistence production, between export products and others, etc.) affected, and what are the implications for gender equality? Are there any formal or informal constraints in terms of women's access to productive resources which reduce a positive supply response to improved incentives such as price deregulation or trade liberalization? Are there informal barriers to women's entry into certain occupations, or to women's participation in business networks? What are the consequences when privatization and liberalization policies affect social services such as health and education as well as basic infrastructural services (water, transportation, energy, and others)? Are the reforms gender-neutral, or do the reforms imply that men and women are affected in different ways in terms of time use, costs of and access to such services? While all these and similar questions cannot be adequately answered at present, they can at least be raised and discussed in the PRS process.
9. Initiate gender analyses of state budgets and, when relevant, of local government budgets as well as of the allocation of foreign aid funds.
10. Develop institutional capacity within relevant institutions and agencies for gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation of the impact of public policies on gender equality.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EURODAD	European Network on Debt and Development
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WID	Women in Development
WIDE	Women in Development Europe
WTO	World Trade Organization

Health strategies and gender as reflected in selected donors' annual reports and policy documents

by Katarina Lindahl

Content

Introduction

Gender aspects and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights,
(SRHR) in annual reports and policy documents

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Introduction

The aim of this report is to describe and analyse the extent to which operative measures in the health field address and integrate gender aspects. The report discusses how gender and power issues affect both the way health programmes are designed and their effectiveness. In particular, it examines the implications of including a sexual and reproductive health (SRH) dimension, including HIV/AIDS and violence, in health promotion activities. The study is based on annual reports and policy documents from the WHO, UNICEF, the UNFPA, Sida and the World Bank, and also on an extensive study of the relevant literature. Based on the accounts found in annual reports and policy documents, the report concludes that gender mainstreaming is seldom practised. *Issues relating to the power gap between the sexes are largely absent from the documents studied, as are analyses of the consequences this may have.*

Most of the reports contain both data about the different situations of women and men and data about the youth situation in this field. As a rule, however, the gender differences are described somewhat sporadically and the information is seldom integrated in such a way as to affect the design and implementation of health programmes. Often, the gender perspective seems to have been added as an afterthought. Also, it tends to be confined to an observation that women are worst off. Men and measures targeting men are scarcely discussed at all. It is clear from the reports that gender neutral strategies which fail to take into account the differing social and economic roles of women and men risk being less effective and also risk missing crucial aspects both of prevention and of care and treatment. This is further apparent from analyses of how violence against women affects their chances of controlling their health situation.

In addition, *there appears to be a growing tendency in health programmes to neglect sexual and reproductive health.* Instead, there is greater focus on what are termed broad health issues or lifestyle issues, like malnourishment, alcohol, tobacco, traffic accidents and drugs. But in these areas, too, the gender perspective is passed over. The HIV/AIDS issue, on the other hand, is well integrated into most reports. This is an advantage, of course, but there is a danger that it may strengthen the *tendency to view HIV/AIDS as separate from other SRH matters.* There is also insufficient analysis of how gender impacts on HIV work. Such a failing makes controversial issues concerning things like women's subordinate sexual status or the abortion issue even less visible and more difficult to tackle.

The report also contains recommendations concerning how gender aspects could be integrated and urges that the SRH and violence aspects be properly addressed in health programmes.

Gender aspects and SRHR in annual reports and policy documents

The fight against poverty and starvation is a key concern for many aid donors. This applies to national authorities and UN bodies alike. A basic examination of the annual

reports and strategies of Sida, the WHO, UNICEF and the UNFPA shows that while they all discuss HIV/AIDS in relation to poverty the documents lack both an integrated gender perspective and a broad SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) perspective. *More controversial subjects such as abortion are largely ignored in the reports.*

All the documents lack a consistently integrated gender perspective. Often, there are no accounts of the implications of asymmetric power relations between the sexes and between adults and the young. *Very little is said about how adult males should be helped to understand that they are not automatically entitled to sexual contact with young women.* There are no strategies on how to develop joint responsibility for a sexual relationship, despite the fact that Sida has often expressed a desire to work with such issues. This might, of course, be a component in programmes despite the fact that it is not referred to in the annual reports. But nor is it a visible element in health policy. Sexuality is rarely described as something all individuals have the right to decide for themselves, and very little is said in the reports about the kind of sexuality that is voluntary and eagerly awaited. Young men's and young women's transition to adulthood is also about sexual desire and yearning. In the case of unprotected sex, the risk of STI (sexually transmitted infections) and unwanted pregnancy is just as great whether the intercourse is voluntary or involuntary. *To be successful, HIV prevention work must also address the gender aspects of sexuality. These aspects are often neglected in the international debate and in aid policies and reports.*

All the organisations have an array of skills, materials and programmes relating to SRHR. The WHO, for instance, has supported important abortion work, while Sida has long viewed SRHR issues as an integral part of its policy programme. It is surprising, therefore, that such areas are relatively ignored in annual reports and policy documents. When the organisations present their range of activities, the emphasis is on other issues. It is difficult to say whether this reflects a belief that SRHR issues are less important or whether the organisations deliberately avoid dwelling on such issues because they know them to be controversial.

The WHO's World Health Report 2001 focuses on mental health. The report links poverty to a wide range of factors, but not to SRHR and violence, nor to HIV/AIDS. The report notes a growing interest in the study of gender differences both in the rate of mental disorders and in causes and patterns of behaviour. The gender disparities in this area are chiefly attributed to genetic and biological factors. But psychological and social factors also impact significantly on the gender gap. According to the report, mental problems derive from the violence to which women are exposed. Between 16 and 50 per cent of women in the world have been exposed to domestic violence at some time during their lives. One woman in five is subjected to sexual violence. The most common psychological effects are deep anxiety and depression. Women are more likely than men to suffer from several symptoms of ill-health, both physical and

psychological, according to the WHO report. Globally, men's problems as opposed to women's are related to drug abuse and 'antisocial personality disorder'.

The WHO's World Health Report 2002 discusses how health risks may be reduced by focusing on social, cultural and economic factors that help shape individuals' understanding of these risks. The health hazards of tobacco are cited as one example. HIV/AIDS and unsafe sex are identified as risk factors associated with poverty. The report contains a general description of demographic realities without going into any detail concerning gender or individuals.

HIV is described as a grave threat to health, and the report outlines a number of strategies for avoiding infection and halting the spread of the disease. None of these, however, discuss the subordinate position of women in sexual relations. *Women in prostitution are mentioned as a vulnerable group, but the report avoids any reference to the problem of male demand. Nor does it mention poverty as a possible reason why women sell sex.*

A number of strategies for risk reduction are described in the WHO report, including the importance of reducing inequality in society. The gender perspective and gender equality, however, are not mentioned in this context. The report's strategies and analyses are mainly pitched at the macro level and the gender information that is available from the statistics is used sparingly, to put it mildly. The reader is left with the *impression that gender is an area that does not belong to the structural level but is principally a matter for the individual level.*

State of the World's Children 2002 (Unicef): Unicef has incorporated sex education into its programmes, principally in Africa, where it is called life education or life skills. The programme is said to be working well and does not seek to avoid controversial issues such as gender roles or sexuality. The importance of empowering women is emphasised. Sexuality is also discussed, including the obstacles that prevent men from using condoms. The report stresses that governments need to accept that young people have rights, one of them being the right to relevant and credible information. Concerns such as unwanted pregnancy and teenage abortions are not mentioned.

State of the World's Children 2003 (Unicef) focuses on child participation, and examines various areas of community life in which children play a part. The right of children, especially girls, to education is emphasised, along with the importance of empowering girls in their families and in their communities. Although violence, HIV/AIDS and sexual exploitation are present in the report, the gender perspective is mainly confined to the observation that girls are worst off and that they are in greater need of help than boys. A few projects specifically target girls and deal with controversial issues, but an overall gender perspective is lacking. Who has sex with the girls so that they contract HIV?

What chances do boys have of breaking with traditional male roles? What responsibility do adult leaders have for identifying gender issues?

Unicef's annual report for 2002 discusses programmes that join with women and men in seeking to develop strategies for stopping violence against women and girls. Violence in this context includes FGM (female genital mutilation), child marriages and other harmful traditions. The reports lacks a gender perspective, apart from the usual observation that girls are most vulnerable. One of the effects of this approach is that the situation and needs of boys are not addressed.

The UNFPA report, State of the World Population 2001, focuses on environmental issues. It begins with a discussion of population and fertility trends and notes the importance of ensuring the right of all to education and health, including reproductive health. The clinical counselling provided today is too limited in scale, the report says. It argues that the fight against poverty is a key task. It also stresses the importance of ICPD (International Conference on Population and Development) implementation and other measures aimed at reducing infant mortality and upholding the right of individuals to make their own decisions concerning sexuality and reproduction. *Gender equality is presented as a key concept in the fight to reduce poverty and protect the environment.* The report underlines the importance both of women and men working together in this area and of women becoming actively involved in health and environmental issues. It notes that the unplanned growth of urban areas and the cultivation of marginal farmland boosts the number of people in city environments who lack reproductive health services. Consequently, the risk of maternal mortality and unwanted pregnancy increases.

While urban life means greater opportunities for women in terms of education, employment and marriage, it also means a greater risk of sexual violence, abuse and exploitation. In the case of poor women, it means less arduous effort to obtain fuel, food and water, but also means them forfeiting control of quality and quantity. *Urban women also have a better chance of deciding when they want children and how many.* One reason is that urban life also affects power relations between the sexes. Women who move or flee from their homes risk being subjected to exploitation, violence and abuse. The reports shows that there is a correlation between better reproductive health and a good environment. The section on resource needs and technological assistance stresses the need to integrate SRHR resources.

The UNFPA report, State of the World Population 2002, suggests how efforts to combat poverty in the world might best be pursued. The UN's adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) marked the first time since Cairo that reproductive health issues had been dealt with without reference to the ICPD. The UNFPA report begins

with an analysis of the MDGs and notes that these cannot be achieved unless party states fulfil their commitments under the ICPD. Questions relating to family planning, teenagers, maternal mortality, sex education and HIV prevention are discussed and the report notes the need to adopt a gender perspective in these areas. It also touches on issues that, while sensitive, are crucial to the fight against poverty and to the promotion of good health and gender equality. Consequently, HIV is a central theme. The report examines the most important concerns in the field of sexual and reproductive health. While it seeks to adopt a gender perspective throughout, the problem here, as in many other reports, is that it has difficulty viewing relations between women and men in a proper light. There is a tendency to describe women simply as the most vulnerable group, as victims. This perspective often results in men becoming invisible both as agents of change and as a group in need of assistance. The male role becomes both blurred and negative.

The UNFPA report shows that women and men have different levels of access to power in various walks of life. *Women in poor families lack power over decision-making and over resource use. Gender inequalities deny women access to sexual and reproductive health. This happens, for instance, when social and judicial institutions deny women such human rights as the equal right of inheritance, and access to and control of land and other important economic resources.* These are power imbalances between the sexes that have severe consequences not only for the women themselves but also for their families and for society as a whole.

Unsafe pregnancies lead to maternal deaths and entail severe consequences for both the community and the family. This can and must be avoided. Good maternity care is needed and unwanted pregnancies must be prevented. To this end, good contraceptive methods are required. In sub-Saharan Africa, the level of contraceptive use is only 10 per cent and research shows that the rich use contraceptive aids five times as often as the poor. The vulnerability of the young becomes evident when the report discusses teenage mothers and their problems. It notes that many health problems are due to early marriages. The UNFPA also states that a crucial weapon in the struggle against HIV/AIDS is the empowerment of women. Today, women comprise half of all HIV sufferers, and in sub-Saharan Africa as much as 58 per cent.

Effective strategies against HIV combine treatment, education and prevention. Such efforts must proceed from conditions in the local community and not be linked exclusively to health clinics.

Sida's annual report for 2002: During the year, Sida stepped up its efforts to combat trafficking in Eastern Europe and Africa. The report presents a project in Tanzania involving the publication of a newspaper targeting young people and discussing sexual matters. Sida has also supported efforts to combat FGM (female genital mutilation) via development assistance to NGOs. The inter-agency Network for Gender Equality has

received support. In the area of democratic governance, the report notes that Sida has supported processes encouraging accountability, participation and transparency and aiming to ensure the equal rights and worth of all women and men.

Sida has been working for a number of years to shift the focus of vertical programmes to a broader and more integrated form of support for its sectoral programmes. According to the report, this has been successful. But one result appears to be that SRHR and gender equality are no longer priority issues. The principal task facing Sida is to create sectoral aid that does not lose sight of sensitive issues. As in its predecessor in 2001, the report is genderless and lacks any analysis of the importance of SRHR for either men or women. *Poverty, too, is genderless in the report. Questions relating to power and gender in relation to sexuality are not discussed.* Nor does Sida's action programme discuss how the programme against unsafe abortions is to be applied and developed further. Two projects dealing with sexuality are being undertaken in Russia, both by NGOs. One concerns youth sexuality and one is directed more specifically at men.

Health is Wealth. Sida's Health Policy 2002: In 1997, Sida adopted a special policy for SRHR. It focused on a wide range of issues and dealt specifically with abortion, but also encompassed areas like HIV/AIDS, maternity mortality and FGM.

In 2002, Sida chose to broaden the range of issues and base its programmes on a public health perspective. According to Sida, this does not mean downgrading the status of SRHR issues. The organisation stresses the importance of a gender perspective that also includes measures targeting men – something that is not, however, reflected in the policy document. *Health is Wealth* discusses health in terms of economic, social, cultural and environmental factors. It emphasises that gender inequality is due to living and working conditions and to lifestyle factors such as smoking, alcohol abuse and unhealthy food habits.

The strategy discusses what it calls the major threats to public health. These are environmental problems, illicit drugs, tobacco and alcohol abuse, which lead to things like domestic violence, traffic injuries and malnourishment. The fact that issues relating to gender, to the situation of women or to sexual and reproductive health are not included among the most serious public health risks comes as a major surprise. *Violence is only discussed in relation to men's abuse of alcohol.* The gender dimension is mentioned in connection with health service matters, where the report also observes that vulnerable groups such as adolescents and the disabled must be given access to services. According to the policy document, an important task for the health sector, besides the provision of sexual and reproductive health services, is to speak out on behalf of and to uphold SRHR. A little further on, the document emphasises the importance of building up national health systems and giving HIV prevention top priority.

Sida's objective is to support countries, in a partnership relation, in their bid to achieve better health by improving the economic, social, cultural and environmental deter-

minants of health. It also seeks to strengthen the role of the health sector in influencing the health-related policies and health outcomes of other sectors. The aim is to establish sustainable and effective health systems with universal access to and coverage of health services of acceptable quality, emphasising social equity and gender equality.

The policy describes imbalances in the health field as being closely linked to people's living conditions, working conditions and lifestyle factors such as smoking, alcohol abuse and unhealthy food habits. The policy document states that access to health services is a matter of social equity and gender equality, and the aim is to eliminate economic barriers and support vulnerable groups such as adolescents and people with disabilities. An integrated approach promoting the development of all parts of the health system is essential to sustainability. Integrated child health services are of particular importance for reducing infant mortality. A key issue for the health sector, says Sida, is to provide healthcare advocating and protecting people's SRHR, especially the rights of young people.

The rights perspective informing the document is an HR perspective that does not address issues directly linked to power and gender. Maternal survival is described as an important area, as well as the need for a fundamental improvement in gender equality.

The report fails to note that unsafe abortions are among the five principal causes of maternal mortality. Abortions are to be found in all societies, legal or otherwise. But legal abortions ensure the safety of young and poor women and of those who are unable to pay for a safe abortion.

Leadership and governance, and research and development relating to what are termed global public goods (not financed by national governments), are also dealt with in the document. It calls for HIV/AIDS work to be given high priority and to be undertaken in all sectors. A global approach is considered relevant and necessary in many sectors.

According to Sida, health improvement strategies are required that focus on both women and men and on their reciprocal relations. A key function in aid programmes is emphasis on health, reproduction and gender equality. The imbalance between family planning activities and other reproductive health services, especially those targeting young people, must be addressed.

The new Sida policy lacks an integrated approach to gender. The overall impression is that it adopts a macro perspective throughout and analyses health issues structurally. Sexual and reproductive health rights are referred to here and there in the document, but such references do not appear to reflect an integrated approach. It is difficult to see how SRHR enters into the picture as a whole. Importantly, however, the HIV/AIDS perspective is present throughout. A similar approach could well be adopted to issues relating to power, violence and the like. *Gender and power issues are not problematised in the document.*

Sweden has for many years sought to establish a clear policy profile emphasising the importance of SRHR issues in development cooperation. This has occurred both at the

political level and at the programme and project level. Sweden's SRHR advocacy has been an important element of policy and has been of value to people working with these issues in adverse conditions. There is a clear risk that Sweden, having worked to develop SRHR and gender, may now be thought to be in the process of abandoning such an approach. Concern is being expressed in many quarters at the prospect of a realignment of priorities in favour of other public health issues such as alcohol, tobacco and traffic injuries. *In the event of a shift to such broad 'lifestyle issues', there is a risk that SRHR will disappear from the agenda unless it is specifically identified as a vital concern.*

Gender equality has been a development assistance objective for only six years, and much remains to be done before integration is achieved. The issue needs to be reflected in policy documents. In its appropriations directions for 2003, *Sida has been instructed by the Government to evaluate its aid programmes from an SRHR perspective.* This evaluation will make for interesting reading as it is likely to show the extent to which such a perspective has been mainstreamed into programmes even if integration is not visible in annual reports and policy documents. The relatively poor visibility of gender and SRHR issues in policy documents is particularly unfortunate at a time when such matters are under strong attack from fundamentalist religious and political forces, both in the UN and in everyday life. Under George Bush, the US administration has abandoned most of the concerns in the SRHR field that the country fought for in the ICPD. Instead, the US is now pursuing policies – often in concert with fundamentalist governments – that directly threaten the right to an all-round sex education, contraceptive aids and safe abortions and pregnancies. *In the current global climate, Sweden must honour the commitments it made in the 1990s, defend them and seek to develop and implement them. It is a matter of translating policy into action.*

The price of neglecting gender aspects

Stephen Lewis, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's special envoy on HIV/AIDS in Africa, has the following to say in an interview reported by Human Rights Watch, HRW: "In a pretty fundamental way the biggest challenge is gender. It is to get the entire continent (Africa) to understand that women are truly the most vulnerable in this pandemic, that until there is a much greater degree of gender equality women will always constitute the greatest number of new infections and there is such a degree of cultural oppression that has to be overcome before we really manage to deal with the pandemic. You simply cannot have millions of women effectively sexually subjugated, forced into sex which is risky without condoms, without the capacity to say no, without the right to negotiate sexual relationships. It's just an impossible situation for women and there has rarely been a disease which is so rooted in the inequality of the sexes. Therefore, *gender is at the heart of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and until governments and the world understand that it will be very difficult to overcome it.*"

Gender is a factor that determines the quality and availability of care, treatment,

information and support in the health sector. This naturally applies to health programmes relating to HIV/AIDS, including sexual and reproductive health. Here, women are subordinate in relation to men, and cultural tradition helps to enhance the risk of HIV infection for women. Women are economically and socially dependent on men and therefore often lack control of their sexuality and reproduction. One result is that married women are most at risk of HIV infection in societies where male promiscuity is socially and culturally condoned.

HIV/AIDS cannot be stopped without the adoption of a gender perspective. When expectations and desires are governed by men's sexuality, the health risks for women increase. There are biological factors facilitating the transmission of HIV infection from a man to a woman. But sociocultural norms concerning masculinity and femininity, in combination with asymmetric power relations between the sexes, are decisive factors in the spread of HIV/AIDS. In sub-Saharan Africa, women constitute a majority of the 28 million people currently infected by HIV/AIDS.

Men are expected to take responsibility for productive activities outside the home and women for reproduction and for domestic production. This means that women *in most countries have less access to productive resources and thus to the capital such resources engender. This imbalance also affects the balance of power in sexual relations. Men's desires and satisfaction are deemed to take precedence, even if they involve hazardous acts and practices.*

Preconceptions about sexuality are at the root of our gender power system; some of them constitute a direct threat to human life and must therefore be challenged. One such preconception is that sexual desire in women is shameful. Throughout the world, this type of outlook is being confronted by committed people both in local communities and at the policy level. In some areas, it is still held that a woman's place is to marry and have children while a man has natural sexual urges that must be satisfied.

All societies have differing norms for femininity and masculinity. These are crucial when it comes to mainstreaming a gender perspective into development cooperation programmes. In most cultures, femininity is thought to be characterised by subservience, passivity and dependence. Virginity, caring, motherhood, high moral standing and obedience are key words for the ideal woman.

In many societies, female virginity is all-important both for the family and for the woman herself. This insistence on virginity makes it difficult for young women to raise the question of contraception.

The sexuality of young women is exploited when they attend school, when they sell or buy goods at the market, when they apply for jobs, and when they move from one country to another or from rural areas to urban areas. Female virginity and fidelity are highly rated and jealously guarded. At the same time, for millions of women and girls sexuality is the only currency they are expected to use as payment in order to gain access to the necessities of life.

In some parts of the world, people cherish the notion that the best way to protect girls is to withhold information, knowledge and access to contraceptive aids from them. But young men, too, are affected by the view that abstinence and deficient knowledge are a means of averting illness and pregnancy.

Preconceptions about masculinity and femininity are a factor in the spread of HIV/AIDS. Male sexual and reproductive health is important for both men and women, as male behaviour is often risky. *Manliness is often equated with the kind of strength associated with courage and various kinds of risky behaviour.* Men are supposed to be potent and strong, to be capable of having intercourse several times in a row and to have a number of sexual relationships. Condoms are seldom considered an attribute of manliness.

Condoms are the only contraceptive aid that protects sexual partners against the HIV virus. They are also the only contraceptive aids available to men.

Violence and abuse limit people's opportunities in life and threaten their health

Violence is one way of maintaining a grip on power. The unequal balance of power that exists between the sexes is expressed in violence against women and is an important factor in the spread of HIV.

Violence follows women throughout their lives. They are exposed to violence in the family, in the home and in the local community. For married women, the greatest risk is from domestic violence inflicted by their husband or by family members. Economic independence is no guarantee against violence but it offers women the chance of withdrawing from a violent relationship.

During wars and conflicts, violence against women increases, both on the part of enemy soldiers and on the part of 'home troops'. Rape is a weapon in war, often aimed indirectly at the menfolk. The intention is to humiliate them by raping 'their' women.

Violence against girls is practised in different ways. Every year, some two million girls risk being genitally mutilated. Besides the suffering this practice involves, FMG also makes them more susceptible to HIV infection. Para 112 of the Platform for Action adopted at the Beijing Conference of 1995 states: "Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms." The document contains a number of objectives that need to be met in order to reduce violence against women.

Violence has a high price. The obvious question of what price we should put on violence is discussed far too little. Gender-related violence is costly both in terms of human suffering and in actual money terms. Violence is an important factor in the spread of HIV. *Studies and experience show that many women refrain from discussing safe sex for fear of being beaten.* They feel they have little chance of being heard and choose therefore both to avoid raising the question of condoms and to avoid saying no to unsafe sex.

Violence against women also increases the danger of HIV transmission to unborn children. The psychological consequences of violence or the fear of violence are serious as well. *Battered women are more liable to commit suicide.* Reports show that the risk of depression and anxiety is six times higher for women who have been exposed to violence than for women who have not been beaten. Children who have seen their mothers being beaten suffer extensively, even if they are not beaten themselves.

The WHO estimates that on a global scale violence against women is as common a cause of death and disability as cancer for women of reproductive age. Violence is a more common cause of ill-health than traffic accidents and malaria combined. The World Health Assembly (WHA) agreed in 1996 that violence is a public health issue. WHA Resolution 49.25 calls for international conferences to discuss issues relating to violence against women and girls and to examine the consequences of such violence.

The cost to society of violence against women is considerable. Besides causing injury to women and violating their rights, violence damages a woman's chances of properly performing her tasks in the community and in the family.

The World Bank estimates that traumas caused by sexual and/or gender-related violence account for five per cent of the overall burden of ill-health and disease in the case of women of reproductive age in developing countries. Health costs increase as a result of the physical injuries and mental problems that women suffer. Examples of other direct costs to society include costs for police and law courts, for medical and psychological treatment, and for social measures, such as the protection of children.

As a result of poverty and asymmetric power relations, sexuality is often associated with some type of economic remuneration. A 'carpet interview' is a term denoting the practice whereby male employers expect female job applicants to have sex with them in order to be given the job. When economies weaken, people are more inclined to move away to find seasonal employment or temporary jobs in town. Both women and men leave their villages to earn money elsewhere. Men engaged in seasonal work far from home often have unprotected sex when they are away. When they return home, there is a risk that they will infect their wives with HIV or some other sexually transmitted disease. Many women in domestic employment are expected to grant sexual favours to the men in the household. The vulnerability that is caused by poverty increases the risk of HIV infection, for both women and men.

For women in developing countries as a whole, poor reproductive health is responsible for a fifth of the disease-related burden, while in Africa the proportion is 40 per cent. Women's burden of work is considerably heavier than that of men (World Bank 1989). The distribution of labour and domestic responsibilities also affects women's sexual and reproductive health. In addition, women may refrain from seeking care for fear of inadequate professional secrecy and discriminatory treatment at the clinic. Good standards along with efforts to ensure that people are received at clinics with due respect and consideration are a vital aspect of preventive work in this field. The conscious

application of a gender perspective would enable women who refrain from seeking care so as to avoid male health workers to visit clinics as well.

It is the women who take responsibility for children and the sick and it is they who wait longest before seeking treatment themselves. In many societies, boys are taught that men should rely on their own resources and not show their feelings or seek assistance. As a result, many men do not ask for help when they need it, whatever the physical or mental pressure they may be under. Instead, the ideal of a 'real man' encourages risk-taking and denial (YMEP project in Tanzania and Zambia, 2003).

In general, men have fewer sexual and reproductive health problems than women, but the traditional masculinity norm makes it difficult for them to deal with serious illnesses, such as HIV/AIDS. This is further aggravated by the stigma attached to the disease. While HIV is increasing among women, at the global level male HIV carriers are still in a majority. Also, men use alcohol and illicit drugs to a greater extent than women, and are more inclined to practise unsafe sex.

Often, HIV/AIDS information is to be found only in family planning clinics, which may make it harder for men to obtain guidance on both HIV and other issues relating to sexual and reproductive health.

Half of all those infected with HIV are aged 15–24. Those who would like to seek help are often too shy or too afraid to do so. They know there is a strong likelihood that they will be rebuffed and censured by clinic staff when they say they have had sexual relations.

Healthcare costs are high for all poor people. But the patient's gender is also a factor. Usually, a family with little money will spend it primarily on care for the males. In Pakistan, for instance, low income families seek healthcare for boys more often than for girls, and the care provided to boys is of better quality.

Women play a key part in all societies. It is they who pass on the art of keeping house, cooking, gardening, tending animals and taking care of the elderly to the younger members of the household. The bulk of women's work is unpaid but nevertheless crucial to the survival of the family. In many societies, men and women have strictly segregated roles both in the home and in the community. As a rule, they are insufficiently skilled to perform one another's duties.

Women's ability to decide over their own lives and prevent both HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies is contingent upon their power in the community and in the family. Those who are economically dependent on their partners have difficulty making demands in relation to sexuality. Their chances of withdrawing from a relationship are restricted by their limited ability to support themselves and their children. The only way to survive may be to sell their sexuality.

Both the 1994 ICPD in Cairo and the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing adopted forward-looking action programmes. Decisions were taken at these meetings that shifted the focus from general population policy objectives to individual rights.

They also gave national governments, international players and NGOs the means to develop aid programmes based on an integrated view of human needs.

Reproductive health is defined in Section 7.2 of the Cairo document as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. The absence of illness or weakness, then, is not enough in itself. This state of well-being must embrace all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. Reproductive health implies that people are able to have a satisfactory, safe sexual life, have the opportunity to reproduce themselves (have children) and have the freedom to decide if, when, with whom and how often they do so. Section 7.3 of the Cairo document reiterates the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children. They are also entitled to the information and means they need to arrive at such decisions. Reproductive health also includes the right of all to make reproduction decisions free of discrimination, coercion and violence, as laid down in the human rights convention.

The Beijing document discusses rights in para 96 and establishes the following:

The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences.

To achieve this, of course, people must have control over their own finances and be in a position to decide on matters affecting their own situations in life. The erosion of rights in the SRHR field clearly generates considerable costs to society and severely impedes the fight against poverty, an area in which the active participation of women is essential. Health is a fundamental issue in the fight against poverty, and SRHR is a crucial field.

Women die when giving birth. Every year, 190 million women become pregnant against their will. Despite this, 40 per cent of women of reproductive age do not use contraceptive aids. In sub-Saharan Africa, the corresponding figure is 85 per cent. Every minute of every year, a woman dies in childbirth. Of the total, 99 per cent are from poor countries.

Maternal mortality is the theme of one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and expert knowledge is available on how the rate can be significantly reduced. The basic aim is for women to assume power over their own fertility. Action is needed at individual level, including knowledge dissemination and contraceptive aids, and countries also need pro-abortion laws, investment in education, and adequate medical and health care.

Children who give birth to children face difficult lives. *Every year, 15 million teenage*

girls give birth around the world; many of them are married. In many communities, they are required to become pregnant and have children, otherwise they risk being exposed to violence or being banished by their families. *Women who have their first child after the age of 20 are better placed to acquire both an education and broader experience of life prior to becoming a mother.* This can strengthen their resolve to negotiate on things like safe sex. Teenage wives have very little chance of persuading their husbands – who are often much older – to use condoms if the man is opposed to the idea. Their lack of power in sexual life means that they have a greater chance of contracting HIV.

Some 120–150 million women who would welcome contraceptive aids lack access to them. There are studies showing that 25–30 per cent of all maternal mortality could be prevented if those wanting such aids were given them. The right to contraception is often called into question in the case of young, unmarried women, but also in the case of married women. Many married women are not in a position to take their own decisions on contraception.

Abortion is a right and an aspect of the struggle against pregnancy-related mortality. Abortion is a controversial issue with a strong political charge. It also affects both health and human rights. In most countries around the world, abortion is legal in one way or another. In many cases, the law only allows abortions in the event of rape or incest or where the mother or the foetus is in danger. Even in countries where laws are more attuned to the needs of women, it is sometimes difficult to obtain an abortion. There are numerous obstacles to abortion of a more or less manifest nature.

Despite the fact that at least half a million women a year (WHO statistics) die from pregnancy-related causes, surprisingly little is heard about the abortion issue. At least 78,000 women die in the aftermath of an unsafe, usually illegal abortion. Women who die as a result of unsafe and illegal abortions do not die of a disease or as the result of an accident. *They die because they are denied both control over their own lives and access to the medical expertise available.* Safe, legal abortions can largely eradicate abortion mortality. In Sweden, not a single woman has died as a result of an abortion since legal abortions became generally available in 1975.

Legal abortions are more than simply a health issue. They also signify that women have power over their childbirth and their sexuality. In many societies, this is seen as a threat to the prevailing gender power structure in which the sexuality of women – wives, daughters and sisters – tends to be strictly controlled.

Young people are denied the help and support to which they are entitled. The silence that currently surrounds sexuality enhances the risk of unwanted pregnancies and besides reinforcing the stigma associated with such pregnancies increases the risk of STI/HIV infection for both women and men. In places where the ‘virginity culture’ is strong, young people frequently resort to anal sex in order to ‘preserve chastity’, often without the use of a condom as their sexual cohabitation has to be kept secret. This naturally increases the risk of HIV transmission. The virginity ideal exists, not

least in urban areas, alongside new and more open sexual standards among young people. Experience shows that when sexuality is guilt-ridden and young people dare not ask adults for guidance, the result is not abstinence but a higher rate of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. *Consequently, young people's right to knowledge and contraception is not just a right but also a way of reducing mortality due to both unsafe abortions and HIV/AIDS.*

All prevention work targets young women and men and the message is that they must change their behaviour. Young women are the group with the least power. They are expected to learn to say no to sex. But as a rule they have little chance of taking such decisions on their own and having them respected. Girls and young women are exposed to sexual molestation by teachers in schools and in further training. It is the girl herself who is expected to take the consequences, which often involve dropping out of school. Regardless of whether a young woman chooses to have sex voluntarily or it is forced upon her, she may be risking her life through a dangerous abortion or by having unprotected sexual intercourse. The choice is not hers but is made by the community that censures and stigmatises her.

Taking steps to empower young women and boost their confidence is a more effective method than simply urging them to say no. The preventive message should target adult males and embrace such issues as gender equality.

A strategy for effective development

People's health is closely linked to the power at their disposal. Power is a crucial factor in social development and poverty reduction. People who lack the power to negotiate on safe sex are not in a position to say no to sexual intercourse. As a result, they are more likely to suffer an unwanted pregnancy or to contract HIV, for example. Focusing on both SRHR (sexual and reproductive health and rights) and gender is essential if development initiatives are to have the desired effect for all individuals, irrespective of their sex or age. Gender must be integrated into each and every poverty reduction and health programme if we are to achieve the goal of a better life for all.

Outdated attitudes and stereotype perceptions of masculinity and femininity must be challenged and dismantled. We must seek to change perceptions that act as a direct obstacle to good prevention and threaten both male and female health. Introducing a gender perspective means more than just specifying the number of women and men in a set of statistics, or writing that women are worst off or that it is important to find ways of reaching men. What is needed are conclusions as to the form gender aspects take and the extent to which they influence each programme in the health field and in other aid sectors. If firewood has to be brought from far away, women may run a greater risk of sexual abuse during the journey. When an ailing woman is too weak to perform her domestic chores, she may choose to pull up the saplings that have been planted to bind the family's soil rather than walk far afield to collect wood. How do such

realities affect the planning of energy and environment programmes?

Maintaining a gender perspective means genuinely integrating a new approach, one that takes as its starting point the asymmetric balance of power between women and men and that does not refer simply to poor people or young people but also specifies their gender. Both a gender perspective and a willingness to discuss the consequences of what it reveals are needed in all programmes. This does not automatically mean different courses of action for women and men. Rather, it involves decisions that also take gender information into account when setting action priorities. Where women and men have different needs, different approaches may be needed to satisfy them.

Applying a gender perspective means establishing new points of departure. HIV/AIDS prevention scenarios often describe an aggressive male sexuality and female victims of male aggression. Proceeding instead from a discussion of preconceptions concerning masculinity and femininity – examining them and breaking them down – could help both men and women develop a new outlook. Perceptions of ‘manliness’ can be changed, and new, more constructive ideals can be developed that contribute both to gender equality and to better health. When young men in Tanzania were asked to define a ‘real man’, the result was a highly traditional male image replete with risk behaviour. They then discussed whether such an ideal was possible or even desirable. Many found it liberating to conclude that they did not need to live up to such an image and that they could influence their own lifestyles. This approach, offering possible alternatives, yielded results in the form of fewer unwanted pregnancies and fewer sexually transmitted diseases among the young participants.

When women alone are supplied with a certain type of information, this can do more harm than good. As a rule, programmes concerning HIV transmission to infants, for example, target only women, although usually the original infection was caused by the man having had unprotected sex with several partners. *Programmes that only focus on women may contribute negatively to the stigmatisation of women and deny men the opportunity to take responsibility for their actions.* This may undermine efforts to get men to accept a shared responsibility for parenthood. When men do not have access to the same information as women, and feel left out, they may be more liable, for instance, to oppose an abortion. Directing information at women only also reinforces the attitude that it is they who are the disease carriers, which may expose them to violence when they ‘arrive home with HIV’.

The introduction of a gender perspective can help to alleviate negative reactions and thus improve the health of women, children and men alike. As an alternative to accusation, this is a constructive way of effecting change that encourages the man to contribute his share. The important thing is to consider male needs as well, and to find ways of fulfilling them in parallel with women’s needs.

Giving women control over their own sexuality and reproduction is not just a matter of changing attitudes, which is why economic aspects must also be discussed. *Poverty*

must be combated in the knowledge that women are poorer than men and that their financial situations restrict their chances of acquiring good health. But men, too, are poor, and for this reason lack such things as education and information and access to the healthcare they need.

The prevention of HIV/AIDS and promotion of good SRH must deal with issues like sexuality and how it relates to male and female norms. *Structural initiatives are required that empower women and girls.* For individuals in the community, the first and most fundamental source of power is access to information, education, and practical knowledge of such things as bodily functions, sexuality, disease and reproduction, and freedom from both violence and fear of violence. Such information is a basic right, and, when based on the different situations of women and men, can help bring about change and prevent HIV/AIDS.

No less important is changing women's financial situations and ensuring that they have the right to inherit, to take loans, to own land and to get equal pay for equal work. Social capital is another important aspect of power. Women must have the opportunity to take part in political activities on the same terms as men and to improve their circumstances by doing so.

Violence against women is an area with a decisive impact on the prevention of health risks and poverty. At the individual level, women must be protected, but the issue must also be brought into the political and public spheres.

Democratic influence and the possibility of exercising one's rights are further elements of personal power, not least in relation to sexuality. A woman who has to constantly worry about unwanted pregnancies cannot properly express her democratic will. She may be in constant fear of the consequences of repeatedly rejecting her husband or she may be deeply worried because she dares not turn him down. She goes in fear of what an unwanted pregnancy might do to her health, her economy and her zest for life, whether she views abortion as an alternative or gives birth to an unwanted child. How is she supposed to take an interest in the political issues of the day? The number of women MPs the country has, how industrial or agricultural policy is being conducted or who takes defence decisions are matters that tend to be obscured by women's day-to-day anxiety at not being able to control their childbearing or to protect themselves against infection.

In Sweden, the number of women in paid employment grew in the 1960s. The contraceptive pill arrived at about the same time, along with a more open outlook on female sexuality. More and more women were able to support themselves, as a result of which they were better placed to control their own sexuality and fertility. There is still much to be done in this respect, not least as regards violence against women in Sweden. *But experience in this country shows that women's participation and democratic opportunities increased when they became less dependent on men for their upkeep and no longer had to worry so much about becoming pregnant.* The experiences of

women in Sweden were and are not unique. All over the world, women's lack of control over their own sexuality and fertility limits their opportunities.

In a brochure entitled Health Nutrition and Population and the Millennium Development Goals, the World Bank notes that educating girls and giving them equal rights is essential as it increases their productivity and helps reduce poverty. But the document also links the objective of reducing maternal mortality to the right to reproductive health. The World Bank writes that education enhances prospects for shared responsibility in the home, which in turn reduces fertility and improves the health of mothers and children. Education is one of the MDGs and a tremendously important one.

Education, along with gender mainstreaming, is often presented by the World Bank and others as crucial to the solution of many of the world's problems, such as high fertility rates, unwanted pregnancies and abortions, and to the prevention of STI, including HIV/AIDS. Often, such observations do not proceed from an individual rights perspective. *In analyses that are so strongly education-centred, sensitive issues such as personal power and rights tend to drown in midstream.* There are those, however, who hesitate to describe education as a universal panacea.

If we are to improve conditions in the SRHR field, we must focus on rights. A good education does not automatically bring about changes in attitude or gender equality. SRHR issues are controversial ones. An integrated gender equality and rights perspective makes clear that SRHR cannot be separated from human rights.

The UNFPA argues that investment in gender equality, health and education is of decisive importance. This kind of social investment attacks poverty directly and gives individuals, especially women, greater control over their lives. *When poor people have a genuine choice, they have fewer children than their parents had. When this happens, it opens up the prospect of economic development at the macro level.* More people of productive age become available to look after the elderly, and relatively fewer people, both young and old, require care.

HIV has an adverse effect on economic development in the worst afflicted countries. During the 1990s, per capita growth in Africa fell by 0.8 per cent and estimates show that the decline may amount to 1–2 per cent in the years ahead. If such a trend were maintained over the next two decades, these economies would be between 20 and 40 per cent smaller than they would otherwise have been.

More women than men live in poverty, and the gap has widened over the past decade, particularly in the developing countries. Women need access to and control over land and other resources, they need the right to employment and income and they need the opportunity to take part in politics and social development in their communities.

Awareness of the importance of a gender perspective has been present since the 1990s, but such a perspective has seldom been integrated into programmes. Despite numerous declarations and conference decisions, we have not seen the kind of vigorous political leadership that is prepared to take these issues seriously at national

and international level. Better data, the development of guidance documents, and evaluations of programmes with and without a gender perspective are all needed. *Persuading decision-makers to view gender not as a supplementary or side issue but as a key component of health and prevention work is a major challenge.* If gender is to be successfully mainstreamed into development cooperation, resources must be made available for the purpose of coordinating programmes so as to achieve the goals of alleviating poverty, of ensuring effective HIV prevention, treatment and support, and of strengthening rights in relation to sexuality and reproduction. A gender perspective is needed that informs all activities of institutions and government ministries in both North and South.

If this does not happen, health promotion work will suffer. Health programmes have long suffered from the absence of a gender perspective and this has clearly contributed to a situation in which the possibilities for checking HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions have been severely curtailed. This has had a serious impact on individuals, families and societies. *When gender is ignored, there is a danger that health programmes will be less effective and sometimes even harmful.*

There is no single way of tackling gender issues and no single approach that brings guaranteed results. But certain areas require common action – programmes must deal with both individual rights and vulnerability while at the same time adopting a structural approach.

Having programmes that are gender-conscious is not enough. If real change is to be achieved, they must be combined with programmes aiming at empowerment and gender equity.

Development assistance is needed that directly reduces costs for poor women and men and enables them to influence programmes and projects that affect them, even if they are young. To this end, a broad-based approach is needed as well as the involvement of different sections of society, primarily the local community. National governments and NGOs are crucial players in this work, but so are religious leaders and the private business community both large and small.

An explicit willingness to eradicate poverty must be followed by programmes that directly address and reach poor women and men. In this work, an integrated approach is paramount.

A list of action required

- ★ Consistent efforts to apply a gender analysis to all policy documents, programmes and projects.
- ★ Training in the discussion of sexuality and abortion.
- ★ *Viewing gender as a power relations issue affecting both women and men.* Both need support and knowledge and both are required for the purpose of effecting change and ending destructive behaviour.

- ★ Anti-violence training in schools.
- ★ Measures to help victims of violence.
- ★ The development of local ways and means of discussing sexuality.
- ★ Emphasis on studies that enhance knowledge about teenage abortions and their consequences, etc.
- ★ The gathering of gender disaggregated data.
- ★ Cooperation and support for NGOs, both in policy and implementation programmes, especially on controversial issues.
- ★ Mobilisation of politicians at all levels in both North and South in support of the purposeful and consistent integration of issues relating to SRHR and young people into aid policies and priorities.
- ★ Actively seek global recommendations stating that access to contraceptive aids must be assured if HIV and deaths in pregnancy are to be reduced.
- ★ Action to ensure global access to SRHR and education as well as the empowerment of women, goals that have their own intrinsic value but which are also a precondition for reducing poverty.
- ★ Continue to actively pursue SRHR efforts in the UN and to press for the implementation of decisions taken in Beijing and Cairo.
- ★ Introduce tougher laws and preventive measures to combat violence.
- ★ Investment in health sector systems, where maternity care is an important component.
- ★ Action to ensure that young people are given a genuine say in the planning and implementation of projects and initiatives.

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