

5. Gender concepts

5.1. Gender concepts

Gender

A social cultural and personal construct, not a biological construct; separate from the sex-based categories of male/female. A view through which to assess other social organizing principles with influence on the status of men and women-class/caste, race, age, religion, location/city/country side; not used in isolation.

Gender Relations

Refers to social relations between men and women. Major issues are power and hierarchy. How these relations are formed and supported by family, culture, state and market is an important consideration.

Sexual/gender Division of Labor

"Who does what work?" is an entry point to understanding gender as a social construct.

Activities

Productive/economic/"outside"

Household/reproductive/"inside "

Community

Gender Roles and Responsibilities

Gender roles and responsibilities are extensions of the division of labor, the key issue is the concept of "gender" (the social, not biological concept) and how different roles and responsibilities are assigned to men and women.

The intersection of these gender roles and responsibilities with a development project's goals and activities is the focal point of a gender analysis.

Persistent Female-Male Gaps

Even though women's employment levels, occupational representation and education, etc. have improved compared to their levels in the past, there have been little or no changes in their relative positions vis-a-vis men. Women still lag significantly behind men in all areas. Empowerment opportunities for women have not been on the same terms and conditions as for men; and education and training have not successfully broken down sex segregation in occupations. Women are concentrated in a few economic sectors and, relative to men, occupy the low status, low paying jobs with generally poor working conditions, little prospects of occupational mobility, and increasing incidence of sexual harassment.

In Japan, women account for only 8 per cent of total administrative and managerial positions (1991); in the Republic of Korea for 4 per cent (1991); in Malaysia for 11.5 per cent (1988); in

Singapore for 15.7 per cent (1991); in Thailand for 12.5 per cent (1980). Gender wage differentials remain significant. In 1991, the average wage of women workers in manufacturing relative to the wage earned by males was 69.5 per cent in Hong Kong; 42.9 per cent in Japan;

50.8 per cent in Republic of Korea; 55.7 per cent in Singapore; and 87.8 per cent in Sri Lanka.

Women also work longer hours than men. In many countries hit by the economic ravages of the 1980s, women, especially very poor women, are now working 60-90 hours a week just to try to maintain their meagre living standards of a decade ago.

What can be done about these Gender gaps? Redefinitions of gender roles/sharing.

Examples of success in Asia and Europe:

- Most indigenous communities in countries of Asia
- China, Vietnam
- Norway, Sweden

Why has this process of redefining gender roles been successful? How has it affected these societies?

Example of Improved cookstoves: Why was it considered a welfare policy measure?

- Provided relief from drudgery but reinforced domesticity of women.
- The opportunity cost of women's labor-examples of India and China (see pages 70-71).

We must understand reasons for the greater acceptability of improved cookstoves. How will the "saved" labor time be used? Do women and planners have similar ideas about this?

- Wood energy crisis affects poor, rural women more than it does the men of these communities.
- With regard to labor and work, or the cultural division of labor within the household, labor and energy involved in childcare is not regarded as work, but as "service",

"service" performed by a woman for her family.

Wood Energy-Specific Gender Analysis Tools

- Gender analysis of labor and work Distribution of benefits within the household
- Access, control and management of resources: women's agency
- Gender policy for technology development: women's indigenous knowledge

In sum: What has gender to do with planning?

Gender analysis potentially changes planning at the micro-economic units--household/family.

5.2. The meaning of gender awareness

What Does Gender Awareness Mean in Development Projects?

- Women are treated as representatives of half of the population, not as a special interest group
- Development projects do not address only women, but involve men and women according to their specific needs and strengths.
- Projects are not limited to women's traditional concerns such as health, nutrition and childcare, but also to the productive sphere, education and social-cultural fields, where women are still under-represented
- Projects are concerned not only with the protection of women as needy and vulnerable individuals, but are aimed at the enhancement and expansion of women's and men's experiences, their self-awareness, skills and creativity
- Projects do not regard women and men only as beneficiaries, but also involve them as participants and decision-makers.

Objectives of Gender Awareness Training

- This training addresses both men and women, and aims at sensitizing them for gender related problems
- It focuses on men's and women's different roles in society, shaped by ideological, historical, religious, ethical, economic and political factors
- Gender awareness training is concerned with the relationship between men and women in all fields, and the factors which influence these relationships
- An awareness about gender differences in society is a first step towards addressing and integrating the special concerns of men and women fairly in development programs and projects.