

## BOOK REVIEW

**Engendering Development: Through gender equality in rights resources, and voice, (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. xx + 364, n/p.**

This World Bank piece is a timely publication in the sense that it brings together the various issues relating to gender equality facing different countries at present. It may be of interest to economists, lawyers, demographers and sociologists as it brings together multidisciplinary research. It points to the considerable advances made in gender equality in recent decades as well as gender discriminations that still persist in many dimensions across the world. The emphasis then shifts to gender equality as a development issue a “development objective in its own right”. Gender equality is emphasized to be an important part of development strategy that enables people to escape poverty and improve their standard of living. The book also asserts the role of an institutional environment that provides equal rights and opportunities for both men and women. The book is divided into six different chapters.

The first chapter reviews the state of gender equality across and within developing regions as well as between the rich and poor within countries. It indicates that gender gaps have narrowed on average and have done so unequally over time and across regions but they still persist. Gender differences considered are rights, resources and voice. Gender equality is measured in terms of primary and secondary enrolment, life expectancy and parliamentary representation. A comparison across regions of low middle and high income countries shows that gender discrimination has increased overtime for low and middle income countries. In the later part of the chapter it is indicated that gender is a broader issue and that costs and consequences of gender inequality are much broader than usually perceived. For example low investment in female education may translate into poor health and nutrition for the mothers and impact on the productivity of an entire generation.

Gender equality and development is the subject of Chapter 2 and shows how gender inequality hinders development. The costs of gender equality are shown to be large for low developing countries and within countries they are highest for the poor. They impact negatively on men, women and children’s well being and health and result in poor nutrition and higher child mortality. In the second part of the

chapter costs of gender inequality on productivity, growth and output losses, as a result of prejudice in the labour market, are highlighted. It discusses how less schooling means missed opportunities, lack of female education and loss of earnings. The gender inequality links to economic growth are established through cross country evidence. In the last part opportunities for intervention by the state and the civil society are examined. Although evidence is not conclusive women's participation in decision making at the government level bring new perspectives to decision making and enrich political processes.

The next chapter deals with effects of institutions, household dynamics and economic policy on gender inequalities. It examines how gender structures are embedded in social legal and economic institutions and how they affect gender relations. These institutions establish the incentives, opportunities and constraints that determine people's choices and decisions, therefore to achieve gender equality they have to be transformed to give equal opportunity and voice to men and women. Institutional reforms can have a profound effect on the decisions of individuals and households and make any development strategy more effective. Gender norms and customs are also discussed. Through data on more than 100 countries it is shown that where economic, social and legal rights are more equal gender gaps are smaller. The next section reviews the evidence on the direction of regulation like equal pay, special protection, family support and regulation of the informal sector and their effectiveness in ensuring equal treatment for men and women. Constraints to institutional changes are outlined and importance of international support highlighted.

Chapter 4 looks at power incentives and allocation of resources within a household and shows that household distribution of resources reflects the unequal bargaining power among its members. The evidence suggests that putting more resources in the hands of women empowers them and alters the resource allocation patterns within the household. When women control resources more is spent on the family welfare, especially on children and results in expenditure patterns that improve women's welfare and status in the household. There is therefore a strong case for targeting resources on the basis of gender. Evidence from Bangladesh's microfinance programs and their gender impacts of resource controls on household suggests that women's independent access to credit also empowers them in other dimensions. Through a review of policies in a number of developing countries the last section shows how policy incentives and public investments affect gender equality. Evidence in these countries suggests household demand for female education and health care responds to changes in prices and therefore these can be effectively used. Design of service delivery especially investment in time saving infrastructure can particularly increase the pace of progress toward gender equality.

Chapter 5 suggests that economic development can improve gender equality in a number of ways by creating deepening and opening markets by enabling new

investment and by expanding opportunities to increase income. Large empirical evidence exists that suggests that gender equality improves with a rise in income but that some gender equality exists despite economic development. Evidence from a range of countries also suggests that investments in females are more sensitive to prices than investments in men therefore policies that promote investments in women are likely close the gender gaps. An analysis of 127 countries is presented to examine whether income growth leads to greater gender equality in secondary school attainment, life expectancy and woman's political representation. It concludes that increases in incomes leads to greater gender equality.

Based on the evidence a three part strategy to promote gender equality is outlined in the last chapter. This strategy is as follows:

- Reform institutions to establish equal rights and opportunities for men and women, this involves establishing equal rights and protection under the law incentives that discourage discrimination by gender and designing service delivery to facilitate equal access.
- Foster economic development to strengthen incentives for more equal resources and participation
- Take active measures to redress persistent disparities in command over resources and political voice. Focus here is on four kinds of active measures namely promoting gender equality in access to productive resources and earning capacity, reducing personal costs to women of their household roles, providing gender appropriate protection and strengthening women's political participation and vote. Active measures taken in a number of countries are presented.

In the last part a few basic principle to guide policy maker's analysis and choice of active measures are highlighted. It is highlighted that policy makers face several important challenges namely sharpening policy through gender analysis; addressing emerging issues like globalization, technology and information decentralization and localization; spread HIV/AIDS and broadening partnerships.

The report makes interesting reading for a variety of audience and provides very useful information in a number of countries. The text become repetitive in a number of places and leaves the reader confused. However it is overall a good contribution to the literature on the subject. Data and additional information provided in boxes supports the good piece on the subject.

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