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## Gender and development: Consolidating the gains and moving beyond 2015

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**Abstract**

The gender and development debate remains an important aspect in many developing countries. Over the years, progress has been made in ensuring that more women and girls access education, wage employment and seats in national parliament as enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals. Although a lot more needs to be done, it is important to consolidate the gains as we forge ahead beyond the year 2015. This paper analytically examines the different approaches that have been used in gender and development, the gains made and how to consolidate these gains as we work towards accomplishing previous goals.

**Keywords:** Gender, Development, Millennium Development Goals, gender approaches, gains

**Introduction**

This work seeks to review the gains made in as far as gender and development is concerned, the lessons learnt overtime and also looks at how to consolidate the gains and plan for the future, that is, beyond the Millennium Development Goals. This will be done by firstly looking at the different approaches that have been used in gender and development, the gains made and how to consolidate these gains and lastly the conclusion. The development process affects men and women differently. Capitalism and modernization only increased the disadvantages that women face because the roles that were previously carried out by women were mechanized and taken up by men (Momsen, 2004). Globalization has made things worse for the women as their multiple roles do not allow them to compete effectively. These roles include reproductive roles (childbearing, rearing and other household tasks), women's productive roles (this is work done by both men and women for pay in cash or kind) and lastly, women's community managing roles (which refers to voluntary unpaid work that is done at the community level to ensure the provision and maintenance of scarce resources such as water, health and education facilities amongst others) (Moser, 1993).

Gender refers to the socially constructed relationships between men and women and is culture specific and therefore very dynamic. This may be dependent on social class, family status, ethnic or religious background amongst others. Gender must be differentiated from sex which represents fixed and unchangeable biological differences (Ostergaard quoted in Tasli, 2007). Unfortunately, division of labour has been surrounded by various stereotypes whereby the male is viewed as the breadwinner and the female as the homemaker (Tasli, 2007). This notion has been widely used to legitimize the sexual division of labour whereby some roles are predominantly allocated to men while others are allocated to women. Women have both practical and strategic gender 'needs' as Moser (1993) puts it which in analogy to Molyneux (1985) differentiation between practical and gender interests. Molyneux (1985) states that strategic gender interests are derived from women's subordination by men and include the abolition of sexual division of labour, political equality, freedom of choice over child bearing, reducing the burden of childcare and domestic labour and taking measures against male violence and men's dominance over women.

Practical gender interests on the other hand are the needs that arise as a result of women's positioning within the gender division of labour. Practical gender interests or needs include access to water, fuel and food amongst others. Gender relations must therefore be interpreted within specific societies and on the basis of different economic, political, social and historical contexts. Therefore it is important to take cognizance of this heterogeneity within a certain global homogeneity of gender roles. Indeed there are differences between the experiences of educated vis a vis uneducated women, young and old women and women in the South and North.

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## Historical Overview of Gender and Development Approaches

### The Welfare Approach

This is the oldest approach that was adopted between 1950 and 1970. It looks at women as wives and mothers and therefore the policies adopted are restricted to social welfare concerns such as nutrition education and home economics (Razavi and Miller, 1995). Moser (1993) states that this approach is still popular today as can be seen in the free distribution of food aid, family planning programmes, mother-child health programs and relief aid amongst others. This approach therefore only addresses women's reproductive roles and ignores their productive and community managing roles. In essence, the practical gender needs are met but the strategic gender needs are left out.

### The Women in Development Approach (WID)

WID first appeared in the 1970s when aid agencies argued that development programmes were excluding and ignoring women. Women's movements in the USA and Europe pressurized aid agencies to add a women's component in their programs which focused on handicraft production, home economics and small-scale income generating activities (Young, 2002). The United Nations also responded by organizing the first Women's Conference in 1975 on Equality, Development and Peace. WID practitioners were mainly concerned with women friendly policies and this meant that women's units had to be developed within governments and donor agencies. However, their equality arguments were faced with a lot of resistance to the extent that they shifted their focus to anti-poverty initiatives (ibid). The WID proponents continued to argue that 'malestream' planning was ignoring women and therefore development projects were failing for having women only projects rather than integrating the women in the mainstream projects.

### Women and Development Approach (WAD)

This approach arose out of the differences that arose between women in the South and those in the North. During the 1975 United Nations Women's conference, WAD activists claimed that the gender equality debates were only to the advantage of the middle class and elite women of the North while a majority of the women in the South continued languishing in poverty and did not care much about gender equality (Momsen, 2004).

### Gender and Development (GAD)

The GAD concept emerged in the 1980s out of criticisms to the WID approach. It had its roots in socialist feminism. The WID approach focused on women as a homogenous group whereas the GAD approach looks at the social relations between men and women and how they ultimately affect women. The GAD concept sees women as "agents of change rather than passive recipients of development efforts" (Tasli, 2007:24). The GAD approach is therefore a more holistic approach as it looks at how the socioeconomic and political structures affect gender relations. The GAD approach therefore proposes that women need to organize themselves from the local, regional and national levels. Secondly, there is need for gender mainstreaming i.e the "process of assessing the implications for men and women of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies

and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality" (Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, 1997, quoted in UN 1999: ix, quoted in Tasli, 2007:25).

Gender mainstreaming was introduced with the objective of changing power relations between men and women. This is a very demanding exercise that may not always be difficult to implement (Tasli, 2007). However, this approach has also been criticized based on the fact that although the concept gender is supposed to represent both men and women, in most cases it is used to represent and refer to the women.

### The Efficiency Approach

This approach borrows from the assumptions of neo-classical economic model. It views women as "an unused or underutilized asset for development" (ibid: 17). This therefore assumes that their economic participation will lead to equity. This approach therefore shifts the focus from the women to development. Development is also only viewed from an economic perspective and yet there are social and cultural aspects to it. This approach also coincided with the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) which had devastating effects on the developing countries and more especially for the women. The SAPs led to a decline in government spending, introduction of user fees in health and education facilities, reduction in infrastructure investment and reduction of subsidies amongst others. This affected women in that more women became unemployed thereby ending up in the informal sector, women's reproductive roles increased due to a cut in social services, this meant that more girls were missing out on school thereby increasing the poverty levels of women, there was also an increase in female headed households due to men's migration and an increased incidence of violence against women due to increased stress levels amongst others (Sparr, 1994, quoted in Tasli, 2007). The efficiency approach was therefore not able to address women's strategic gender needs as it concentrated on what women could do for development rather than what development could do for the women (Momsen, 2004).

### The Empowerment Approach

This approach was developed in the mid 1980s with the aim of challenging women's subordination beginning from the family, to the social-political, cultural and economic contexts. Subordination is also examined in relation to other factors such as class, nation, ethnicity and race (Tasli, 2007). In this approach, increasing women's power is key to challenging the structures of oppression (DAWN, 1988). In this context therefore, empowerment means bringing women on board in as far as decision making is concerned in the political and economic arenas. One major shortcoming with this approach is the fact that credit provision to women has also been classified as a way of empowering women and yet providing credit to women without other support services may actually worsen women's condition in the sense that the debt burden is transferred to the women (Hashemi, Schuler and Riley, 1996, quoted in Tasli, 2007). This approach also assumes that women are discriminated and yet there are instances where women discriminate other women on the basis of race, ethnicity and class amongst others. The role of the state is also neglected in as far as women's empowerment is concerned as the bottom-up approach to empowerment is advocated for and yet issues such as inheritance and ownership and all other issues touching on legal matters require legislation from the state.

### The Eco-feminist View

This view looks at the link between the exploitation and degradation of the world with that of women's subordination and oppression (Haynes and Murray, 2013). There are four different types of ecofeminism i.e. liberal, cultural, social and socialist (Merchant, 1992, quoted in Momsen, 2004). Liberal ecofeminists change laws and regulations based on existing structures. Cultural ecofeminists examine the biological links between women and nature while criticizing patriarchy. Social and Socialist ecofeminists analyze how patriarchy and capitalism lead to the domination of women and nature by men (Momsen, 2004). This approach focuses on women's relationship with nature, the domination of women and nature and the role of women in solving ecological problems (Sachs, 1997, quoted in Momsen, 2004). Women are considered to be more sensitive to the environment than men because of their nurturing and caring roles. However, these views have been critiqued as being "essentialist, Universalist, reductionist and as having a focus on personal spirituality" (ibid: 110).

### Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals were set out of several commitments set forth in the Millennium Declaration signed in September 2000. There are eight goals with 21 targets and a series of measurable health indicators and economic indicators for each target. The goals are as follows:

- Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger
- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality rates
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

The millennium development goal number 3 has been described as a goal that is essential to the achievement of all other goals. It aims at promoting gender equality and empowering women. The target is to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and in all levels of education by 2015. The indicators:

- Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
- Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
- Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

As the year 2015 approaches a lot needs to be examined in retrospect. This is because as earlier discussed, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament is still lagging behind in most countries.

### Gains Made and Challenges Being Experienced in Gender and Development

- Gender parity in primary schooling worldwide has been achieved however girls continue to face barriers to schooling in Northern Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia. Substantial gains have been made in as far as closing the gender gap in secondary education is concerned in Western and Southern Asia. Disparities are greatest at the university level with Sub-Saharan Africa having 61 girls per 100 boys enrolled in 2011 (United Nations Fact sheet).
- The challenges that girls face thereby contributing to the unequal access to education include: lack of sanitation

facilities, child marriages and violence against girls, drop out due to pregnancy and spending many hours fetching water and firewood amongst others.

- Women representation in parliament stands at 20.4 per cent by the end of 2012 (ibid). This has been boosted by the quota systems. For example in the Kenyan constitution, article 197 (1) states that "not more than two thirds of the members of any county assembly or county executive committee shall be of the same gender". There are also provisions for electing women representatives (Article 97 (1) b) and Article 98(1) b, c and d. Currently, we have 87 of the 416 seats occupied by women in the national assembly. Rwanda has women holding 56 per cent the parliamentary seats.
- Women's share of paid employment has increased from 35 to 40 per cent between 1990 and 2010 (United Nations Fact Sheet). However, in Western Asia, Northern Africa and Southern Asia this remains at under 20 per cent. Women continue to work in vulnerable situations with no financial security and women occupy only 25 per cent of managerial positions all over the world (ibid).
- Several United Nations International Women's conferences have helped different countries to develop appropriate legislations that protect the welfare of women. These conferences include: Mexico City Conference of 1975, Copenhagen City Conference, Nairobi City Conference of 1985 and Beijing City Conference of 1995 amongst others.

### Consolidating the Gains

This paper was written against a backdrop of an escalating wage bill in Kenya that threatens to stifle development as most of the revenue generated is being used to pay salaries. As the debate progresses on how to reduce the wage bill, some members of parliament have already begun preparing bills that seek to reduce the wage bill. One of the proposals made so far has been to strike out the provisions for women representatives and nominated members of parliament in the constitution (Article 97 (1) b). Currently, the National Assembly has 47 women representatives who have been elected by voters of the counties.

The Senate on the other hand has a provision for sixteen women members who are nominated by political parties according to their proportions in senate (Article 98 (1) b.) Scrapping the positions that women now hold would be tantamount to reversing the gains. Women's representation in parliament has an impact in as far as gender-related policies are concerned. For example in Kenya, the Marriage Bill that was passed last year propounds that property in the name of only one spouse is no longer matrimonial property. This bill went through parliament because the number of women is still low therefore even if they all voted against this bill it would still sail through because of the high representation of men in parliament. In essence this bill means that women who have not been included with their husband's in ownership of matrimonial property will lose out completely and yet they may have provided the necessary support that is required to acquire these properties.

These women may not have contributed financially but they may have taken up most of the expenses in the house thus enabling their spouses to effectively pay up for these properties. In Pakistan, Bhutto's regime marked a new era for both women and development. Their constitution was promulgated in 1973 with several key articles that were addressing women's rights. For example, article 27 states that

there would be no discrimination on the basis of sex and religion (Naz et al, 2013). But during General Zia's period (1977-1988), the gains were reversed as Sharia laws were emphasized and in cases of rape, adultery and theft, a woman's testimony was disregarded leaving the male testimony as the only valid one. These are referred to as the Hudood Ordinances (ibid).

In order to secure the gains made, it is necessary to stress on the following issues:

Affirmative action is a key driver to the success of women. Different countries must continue coming up with legislations that will promote quota systems in access to power and higher education amongst others. Plans to withdraw these quotas must be highly resisted by the populace even if it means going on a referendum. Civic education should be tailored in such a way that it addresses the socio-cultural barriers to women's election. The citizenry needs to be aware of the importance of having both sexes in parliament and the impact that this would have on the overall development of the nation. This is not a herculean task. It can be done if there is good will from the government.

Women cannot ascend to power unless they are supported by their male counterparts. This must begin from the household level. Empowerment is about access to power by the vulnerable so that they can make decisions that concern their lives. For a long time, women's fertility has been controlled by the state. The best example to this is China's one child policy which was introduced in the late 70s and transformed to a two child policy in 2013 after China was accused of human right violations especially against girls. For women to ascend to managerial positions e.g. heads of parastatals, they need to be appointed by the president. Empowerment of women must not be construed as disempowering the men. Therefore, citizens must elect leaders who are keen on bringing women on board in all spheres of the economy. This also entails gender mainstreaming in all sectors. This may be a demanding exercise but at the end of the day it will bear fruit.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be observed that although there are gains that have been made in as far as women's access to education, paid employment and managerial positions and power amongst others is concerned, there are still huge gender disparities that exist in different countries. However, as we pursue on bridging these gaps, we must be careful to consolidate the gains made so that the progress that has been made so far is not reversed.

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