

UNIT ONE

GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT: AN INTRODUCTION

This introductory unit of your module will introduce you to an overview of the course on ‘Gender and Development’. It aims at introducing you to the basic rationale of why and how far, ‘gender’ as a subject has become a core issue in the development discourse and public policy issues (its making, implementation, the challenges posed, and the opportunities available). The unit consists of definitions on gender and development; rationale behind integrating gender into development policies and programs; the evolution of gender in the development discourse; and the role of gender in economic growth.

Section One: Defining Gender and Development

Section overview

Gender and development are so fluid terms that they do not have a one-fits-all definition that works consistently under all socio-economic and political settings. As a result, various definitions have been provided for gender and development. In this section, we will introduce you to some selected definitions of each term and/or concept separately. You will also learn how the concepts embedded in the definitions of gender and development inherently relate to one another.

1.1 What is Gender?

Dear learner, it is important that to anticipate that, within the discourse of feminism and amidst the development debate, gender has become an increasingly theorized concept that is repeatedly defined and redefined vigorously from a variety of different standpoints. As a result, we have multiple definitions of gender. We will focus only on some selected definitions for this course. Some of the definitions provided below are supplemented by further explanations so that you would be able to better understand it in relation to development.

“Gender refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female at a particular point in time” (World Health Organization, 2001).

Gender refers to the array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviors, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them (www.uninstraw.org/en/index.).

? What do you learn from the above definitions of gender?

Dear learner, we hope that you have learnt from the above definitions that gender is about what people understand about what it means to be a woman and a man under a given socio-economic and socio-cultural setting. You are also right if you have understood that gender is the socially expected behaviors from men and women as deemed appropriate, the roles culturally ascribed to them and the benefits allocated thereto as a result of those socio-economic and cultural impositions. You must have also learnt that gender is about the perceived roles women and men differentially play and the respective responsibilities they should shoulder in society.

Dear learner, ‘gender’ generally refers to the socially determined ideas and practices of what it is to be female or male. It denotes the condition of how a person’s biology is culturally valued and interpreted into socially accepted ideas of what it is to be a woman or man. This acceptance of socially constructed ideas and behaviors establishes gender attitudes. Gender attitudes and behaviors are learned and can be changed. Gender is the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men, in a given culture or location. These roles are influenced by perceptions and expectations arising from cultural, political, environmental, economic, social, and religious factors, as well as custom, law, class, ethnicity, and individual or institutional bias.

1.2 What is Development?

Dear learner, ‘development’, like ‘gender’, is overloaded with a variety of definitions and multitude of explanations. We hope that, from your previous courses from Governance and Development Studies, you would recall that the subject of development is one of the most complex subjects in academics in general and in social sciences in particular.

To begin with, Dudley seers (1977) identifies, ‘...the questions to ask about a country’s development are three: ‘What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality?’ If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned.’ (Seers, 1977:3)

Dear student, we hope that from this definition, you learn that development is about the conditions of those who are impoverished; about those who lack access to the means of incomes and related resources; and about those who are at a disadvantaged position in society.

? Who do you think are more impoverished, less employed and more marginalized, women or men?

Gender issues in development arise where an instance of gender inequality is recognized as undesirable, or unjust. Three aspects of gender issues which are raised in development are gender gap, gender discrimination and women’s empowerment. This arose out of the general conviction that women have been more impoverished, have enjoyed limited access to means of income and have occupied a much more marginalized position as compared to men. ? Dear learner, who do you think are poorer, women or men? Who do you think are less benefited from the benefits of development?

Findings of multitudes of researches indicate that women have historically benefited less and little from the fruits of development and they are generally poorer than men. In the next section, you will see how women have been differently, and marginally, benefit from development and how this has put them at a disadvantaged position in society.

Development is also defined as a social ingredient measured as well-being in health, education, housing and employment. In this regard, it is evidenced that women suffer more from poor health, low level of education, greater unemployment, and poorer access to housing services and its ownership than men.

Dichotomizing development into rural-urban distinction, Robert Chambers (1983) defines rural development as, ‘...a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping

the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of development.’ (Chambers, 1983:147)

Currently, sustainability issues are the principal concerns of development. It has been globally, hence conventionally, recognized that the existing pattern of economic growth favors the rich and the current generation at the expense of the poor and the future generations. It is also agreed that the current pattern of growth favors men at the expense of women. Rephrasing the Brundtland (1987) definition of sustainable development, development implies a commitment to ecologically sound and socially desirable economic growth where the consumption of the present generation does not undermine the interests of the future generations. In view of this, sustainable development considers two equity dimensions: intra-generational and inter-generational. Intra-generational equity is concerned with existing inequalities and inequities. It involves the inequalities and inequities that persist between the rich and the poor, the north and the south, the developed and the developing world, and above all, the inequalities and inequities that subsist between men and women. Intergenerational equity is concerned with potential inequalities that affect the future generations. As Meadows (1992) argues, if the current pattern of development is sustained, it will eventually overshoot and exceed the shouldering capacity of the earth. This has a tendency to borrow resources from the future generations (from our children), which weakens their capacity to meet their needs, and hence undermine inter-generational equity. And if the condition continues unaddressed, it is feared that the current inequity trends would restore and exacerbate future inequalities and inequities that would make the position of women worse off from now.

Since the mid 1980s there has been a growing consensus that sustainable development requires an understanding of both women’s and men’s roles and responsibilities within the community and their relations to each other. This has come to be known as the Gender and Development (GAD) approach. Improving the status of women in society then came to be no longer seen as just a women’s issue, but as a goal that requires the active participation of both men and women.










Section two: Gender and Development: evolution, rationale, and economic growth

Section overview

Dear learner, in this section we will explore the rationale behind gender as an issue of development. As you may guess, there are a complex set of explanations provided as to why gender has become a subject in the development discourse so that it influences development policies and program interventions. This part is organized into two sub-sections: the evolution of gender in development and the rationale for integrating gender into development.

2.1 The Heydays of Gender in the Development Discourse

In the past four to five decades, there has been growing acceptance of the gender-focused approach to development. Gender training and gender analysis are now considered essential tools in the development process. Gender equity was a foundation for the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and in the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. The Fourth World Conference on Women reviewed its precursor's progress, Nairobi Conference (1985) that celebrated the International Women's Decade (1975-1985), and it came up with the 'Beijing Platform for Action'. The most important areas of concern identified under the 'Beijing Platform for Action' are outlined below. All actors (governments, the international community and civil society, including nongovernmental organizations and the private sector) are called upon to observe and take strategic actions in the following critical areas of concern:

-  The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women;
-  Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training;
-  Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services;
-  Violence against women;
-  The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation;
-  Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources;
-  Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels;
-  Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women;
-  Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of Women;

- ✚ Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media;
- ✚ Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment; and
- ✚ Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child.

2.2 Why is gender a development issue: the rationale?

There are both pushing and pulling factors to panel gender issues into the development agenda. The pushing factors refer to past trends and socio-economic conditions regarding the relationship between men and women and the resultant disadvantaged position of women in society. The pulling factors are current problems that need to be addressed so that future challenges of gender inequality would be anticipated. These pushing and pulling factors are multiple, complex and interdependent development problems. They constitute the rationale for integrating gender into development policies and programs. ? Dear learner, what do you think are the bases for integrating gender into development policies and programs?

Some of the major factors that bring on gender into development are outlined as follows:

Population composition: population census results of any country report that women constitute slightly more than 50% of a nation's population. A healthy development thus cannot bypass half of its population. But women constitute 2/3rd of the world poor. Women also make up 2/3rd of the world illiterate.

Women's poverty: more than one billion people in the world live in unacceptable condition of poverty. The great majority of these impoverished people are women. Women constitute more than 70% of the world poor, and the trend in the poverty of women is increasing as compared to the number of men. This has led to what has been coined as the problem of 'feminization of poverty', particularly in developing countries. Reducing women's poverty is part of the Millennium Development Goals.

Women's workload: reports indicate that women perform about 67% (2/3rd) of the world's work. Those women from developing countries pass 17 hours a day at work. But women earn less than 10% of the world income and women own only about 1% of the world property.

Women produce food for both women and men: women produce about 50% of the food consumed by the world population every day. Women are however the most vulnerable group of societies to hunger and starvation. Women thus face nutritional and related health problems.

Women and health: women have different and unequal access to and use of basic health resources. Discrimination against girls, often resulting from “son preference”, in access to nutrition and healthcare services endangers their current and future health and well-being. Conditions (traditions, poverty and illiteracy) that force girls into early marriage, pregnancy and child-bearing subject them to harmful practices, such as female genital mutilations, pose grave health risks.

Violence against women: sexual and gender-based violence, including physical and psychological abuses, trafficking of women and girls, rape and other sexual exploitations, and other forms of abuses and harassments put girls and women under harsh risk of physical and mental trauma, diseases and unwanted pregnancy. Some groups of women, such as women belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, refugees, migrants and expatriates (=migrant workers and forced dislocations), remote rural, women under detention, disabilities, elderly women, repatriates, women participating in armed conflicts, wars aggression, civil wars, terrorism and hostage-takings are all vulnerable to violence. Violence against women is obstacle to equality, development and peace.

Women’s human rights: all forms of gender violence or violence against women involve violations of women’s human rights. Violence against women impairs and nullifies the enjoyment of women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Women and the environment: women play as crucial, or even more important, roles as men in the achievement of sustainable development objectives. In other words, women, like men, are important to foster the realization of environmentally friendly and socially desirable development. However, women remain largely absent at all levels of decision-making and policy formulations in natural resources and environmental management. The experiences of women in the conservation and rehabilitation of natural resources as well as their skills in advocacy for

environmental protection have often remained marginalized. But equitable socio-economic development that recognizes empowering women to utilize environmental resources is a necessary foundation for sustainable development.

Existing knowledge gap: there has been lack of scientific studies and adequate information about and interest in the situation of women. Hence, women's and gender studies came into the scene to provide academic support and reliable data on the situation of women.

Urgent need to criticize gender blindness of disciplines: historically, there existed gender blindness in almost all disciplines. This has negatively affected the interests of women in education and the knowledge that could have been generated otherwise for use and change.

Urgent need to challenge traditional monolithic assumptions about women and sexual division of labor: socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women have resulted in a disadvantaged position of women in society. There is an urgent to criticize and transform the existing gender roles and sexual division of labor.

Policy implications: gender concerns are important for policy analysts and development planners. From poverty issues to women's human rights, gender issues need to be mainstreamed into gendersensitive and gender-transformative development policies and programs.

2.3. Gender and Economic Growth

? Dear learner, can you make a logical guess about gender inequality and economic growth impact one another?

Dear learner, we hope that you are now able to locate the major areas of development where gender becomes a critical concern. There are various ways by which gender and economic growth are interrelated. This can be direct or indirect. On the one hand, participation of women directly affects economic growth and development. Women, like men, contribute to development through their labor, knowledge and skills. A society also directly benefits where there are equitable benefitsharing and participative decision-making processes in development. On the other hand, one of the defining characteristics of development and economic growth is the effect of population growth. Fertility and mortality are key issues closely linked to women and population growth. This can be said indirect.

Education and population growth are interrelated issues as fertility and mortality are linked closely with awareness and knowledge. There are a large number of studies that link gender inequality in education to fertility and child mortality. A research finding shows that females with more than 7 years of education have, on average, two fewer children in Africa than women with no education. Such writers as King and Hill (1995) find a similar effect of female schooling on fertility. Over and above this direct effect, lower gender inequality in enrollment has an additional negative effect on fertility rate. Countries with a female-male enrollment ratio of less than 0.42 have, on average, 0.5 more children than countries where the enrollment ratio is larger than 0.42 (in addition to the direct impact of female enrollment on fertility). Similar linkages have been found between gender inequality in education and child mortality. Thus reduced gender bias in education furthers two very important development goals, namely reduced fertility and child mortality.

The place of gender in economic growth can also be seen from the perspective of education and knowledge. In this regard, there are some models that consider gender inequality in education and its impact on economic growth. It is argued that initial gender inequality in education can lead to a self-perpetuating equilibrium of continued gender inequality in education, with the consequences of high fertility, higher population growth rate and low economic growth. Various research findings conclude that gender inequality in education may generate a poverty trap with self-perpetuating gender gaps in education. Barro and Lee (1994) and Barro and Sala-i-Martin (1995) suggest that a large gap in male and female schooling may signify backwardness and may, therefore, be associated with lower economic growth. Conversely, too, Hill and King (1995) relate levels of GDP to gender inequality in education. They find that a low female-male enrollment ratio is associated with a lower level of GDP per capita, over and above, the impact of levels of female education on GDP per capita. They find that female secondary education achievement (measured as the share of the adult population that have achieved some secondary education) is positively associated with growth, but it turns out that in countries with low female education, furthering female education does not promote economic growth, while in countries with higher female education levels, promoting female education has a sizeable and significant positive impact on economic growth.

Unit summary

Dear learner, in this unit, you have learnt that both ‘gender’ and ‘development’ are complex concepts. We have referred to gender as the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men, in a given culture or location, which are influenced by perceptions and expectations arising from cultural, political, environmental, economic, social, and religious factors, as well as custom, law, class, ethnicity, and individual or institutional bias. We have also stated that gender is power relationship between men and women. Among others, we have defined development as a social ingredient measured as well-being in health, education, housing and employment. In this regard, you have learnt that women suffer more from poor health, low level of education, greater unemployment, and poorer access to housing services and its ownership than men. As a result of poverty, unemployment and inequality, women occupy a disadvantaged position in society.

Gender issue enjoyed its heydays when it received global recognition in 1975 as the ‘International Women’s Year’, followed by the declaration of the ‘International Women’s Decade’ (1975 to 1985). The Beijing Platform for Action was the landmark for global acceptance of conventional strategies to mainstream gender into all aspects of development policies, programs and projects. Various factors have brought gender into the development debate. The fact that women constitute more than half of a country’s population; that they contribute to society through their triple roles (reproductive, productive, and community management) but experience unrelenting poverty; that they play unrecognized roles and occupy a disadvantaged position; that they experience gender violence and violations of human rights; and that they suffer from poorer health and greater unemployment, among others, have ignited the inclusion of gender issues to the development agenda.

Hence, gender affects economic growth and development in various ways and at all levels. This can be direct or indirect. Gender inequality directly undermines growth in that it affects participation, contribution and benefits-sharing. Gender inequality indirectly affects development in that inequalities in education undermine effective population control. Gender inequality in health services lessens the gains from a healthy labor force and cuts up contribution of women to development.