

**MIMAP GENDER NETWORK :
Background and an Account of Work in Progress**

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MIMAP GENDER NETWORK : Background and an Account of Work in Progress

I INTRODUCTION

I.1 Background

The first phase of the Gender Planning Network under MIMAP was put in place towards the end of 1998 and substantive work under GPN started from early 1999. The current phase of the GPN project will end in March 2001.

As designed, the Project has two components : a Country Component and a Regional Component. Currently the Country Component has five participating member countries in South Asia. In each, a nodal organisation has been carrying out the research agenda. These are :

**Table I
Collaborating Institutions in the country component
of Gender Planning Network Project**

Bangladesh	:	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)
India	:	Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST)
Nepal	:	Agricultural Projects Services Centre (APROSC)
Pakistan	:	Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE)
Sri Lanka	:	Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR)

Under the Regional Component, work on several sub-themes relevant to the region as a whole is currently under way. These include sector-specific studies, reviewing GDI as a measure of women's status, and some work on gender Modeling. Institute of Social Studies Trust, India is co-ordinating and directing the project activities.

Table II

A Profile of Current Activities under the Gender Network, Phase I

Country Component	Regional Component
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of country reports on gender indicators under economic reforms. • Review of violence against women • Surveys in the households of women workers in EPZs and EOUs • Case Studies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the psycho-social and cultural aspects of gender based stress and violence. • The links between high measured GDI and the 'status of women' : A case study of Kerala • Impact of trade liberalization on female employment in South Asia • A review of existing gender models • Estimating a CGE model using gender-disaggregated data

1.2 Rationale for a thematic research programme on Gender under MIMAP

All countries in South and South East Asia have recently embarked on economic reforms. Much has been written on the likely impact of such reforms on various dimensions of economic and social life, such as on the level of living standards, poverty indices and various macro economic parameters . Although not much systematic work has been done on the gender dimensions of economic reforms, the general presumption has been that the impact of adjustment on women is adverse.

A number of reasons have been cited as the basis for such presumptions. Liberalisation and consequent erosion of 'level playing fields' has been seen to lead to increased feminisation of poverty. The workforce in this region has been becoming increasingly feminised, but such

increases in the female proportion of the labour force has taken place mostly in low paying jobs, marked by a high degrees of casualisation. Privatisation has generated apprehension of reduction in state responsibility in the provision of social goods and services, thereby resulting in an increase in the burden on women in the private domain. A number of authors have argued that the likely impact of recent economic reforms on women is pre-dominantly negative. (1)

Many of these reasons would also be applicable to men. The main factor that determines the nature and extent of differences in the impact of such phenomena on men and women in economic and social spheres is the fact that reproductive tasks are almost universally seen as the responsibility of women. Over and above this, in all countries of South Asia, most women also spend a large proportion of their time on unpaid, non-market work. Therefore, concentrating only on gender differences in purely economic terms, strictly within the measured and measurable domains of economic structures, would amount to taking a very narrow and circumscribed view of the issue. Unless the burden of unpaid home-sustaining work is either reduced or substantially shared by men, provision of paid work to women by itself is unlikely to be a liberalising phenomenon. In fact, it might lead to a higher overall burden of work for women, an increase in the levels of stress and, perhaps, in domestic discord and even violence.

Unequal power relations explain the perpetuation of traditional gender roles and responsibilities centred around reproduction. The social mechanism for such perpetuation is through restrictions in access to property and education, through control over female sexuality operationalized by such factors as restrictions on mobility, early marriage and the system of the 'purdah'. South Asian society is marked by strong patriarchal values. The manifestation of such values can change from one situation to another, and from one set of circumstances to another. Norms, and social acceptability of deviations therefrom, can also be very different from one context to another. The incidence and levels of gender-related stress and violence against women can be taken as an indicator of inequalities in gender balance in all societies, including the South Asian.

The reason why so little comprehensive and systematic research on the gender impact of macro policy changes is in place is because of the intrinsic difficulty of the task. The difficulty lies in the problem of Modeling 'gender' as a structure cutting across the public-private divides, the inadequacies of data in the non-market and the private spheres, and the

generic problems of tracing out the micro impacts of macro policies, especially so in the absence either of counterfactuals , or of clearly defined lines of transmission .

These problems are by themselves complex enough. If one has to analyse gender imbalances under conditions of changing economic environment, the complexities multiply. The feed-back impulses on the ground are usually very difficult to trace because more often than not these are mediated through a range of pre-existing social and economic arrangements, both within the family and the economy. Since many of these arrangements as well as the cultural norms and values that shape them are broadly similar in the South Asian countries, the decision was to start the Network in the relatively socially homogenous region of South Asia. An equally relevant factor is that South Asia also happens to be a region which has the dubious distinction of being one of the least gender-sensitive regions in the world. (2)

Reforms would be judged as successful if they could eliminate poverty, strengthen the process of positive economic and social changes , and result in increased welfare for all. An intrinsic component of greater welfare is higher status for women. It is important to underscore the necessity of promoting a pattern of growth that has a potential for developing capabilities and enhancing quality of life for all citizens. The process of growth which intensifies gender disparities increases the work burden of women disproportionately, one that leads to discontinuation of education for women, increases the levels of stress and violence, and reduces their relative decision making powers and abilities are all factors that can affect women adversely, both in relative as well as in absolute terms.

These are common concerns that cut across national boundaries, although their specific manifestations may vary from one place to another. These considerations justify the initiation of a gender-based research programme cutting across national boundaries.

1.3 'Conventional' and 'Not- so-Conventional' Indicators of Gender Bias

A standard method of measuring gender discrimination would be through what has been popularised by UNDP in recent times in terms of the Gender Development Index. The GDI is based on the same three variables as HDI, i.e., life expectancy, educational attainment and

income, each variable adjusted for gender discrepancies and combined using equal weights.(See Human Development Report 1995, UNDP).

The simple mechanical way of expanding on this scheme of things would be to increase the number of such base indices, and/or do the exercise in as much disaggregated a form as is possible given data availability, and/or use more sophisticated methods of indexation such as those using multivariate methods like Factor Analysis. In studying the issue of gender bias, such mechanical extensions are unlikely to lead to any fresh insights. Any sensible analysis of gender empowerment must be designed to unearth the complex interrelationships between these myriad sets of indicators and examine their linkages under different contexts. These considerations are paramount in gender research, particularly in a region like South Asia where religion, class and caste hierarchies interact with forces of patriarchy to determine the nature of the overt manifestation of gender bias in terms of observed indicators. Thus mapping of various standard or conventional indicators against one another and across contexts is very important.

There is another set of issues on which a lot of information is being collected all over the world regarding women's situation. This is with regard to violence against women : a phenomenon which appears to cut across all contexts.

While it is important to look into the observable indicators of gender bias in economic, social and political domains, it is equally important, if not more, to look into the intractable phenomenon of women's status as manifested through such factors as gender-related stress, anxiety and violence. In highly patriarchal societies such as those in South Asia, rapidly changing economic environment can generate gender-differentiated patterns of change in perceived norms and values and that by itself can create enormous frictions within the family. Family frictions in households impacted by changes in the external economic environments may in fact be much higher than in those from similar backgrounds where no such changes have occurred, and values and perceptions, however gender-discriminatory, are shared equally by the sexes.

The Country component of the Gender Network Project has been designed keeping these issues in mind. The need for unravelling the contextual nature of the standard or 'conventional' indicators of gender bias is addressed. Also mapping these against more 'non-conventional' indicators of such bias, such as gender-related stress, anxiety and violence, is being attempted.

Footnotes :

1. Cf Commonwealth Secretariat 1989, Elson 1991, Bakker 1994, and Ghosh 1996.
2. Mukhopadhyay & Sudarshan 1997, Report on the Proceedings of ISST/IDRC Workshop Gender Discrimination under Structural Reforms 1997

II COUNTRY REPORTS ON CONVENTIONAL INDICATORS

II.1 Background

As explained in section I.3 above, the GDI popularised by UNDP has problems. Apart from being a non contextual index, both the choice of the base variables for the construction of GDI as well as the method of indexation are ad hoc. In many countries of South Asia, some of the major indicators of gender development do not move in a collinear fashion. Under some conditions some indicators actually may be non-linearly related. For instance, female labour force participation in South Asia generally shows a parabolic relationship both with respect to household incomes and with respect to female literacy rates, making it difficult to construct a meaningful index involving the variables.

A major task before the nodal organisations is to do the following :

- (i) Collect from all possible sources, (i.e. census, large scale surveys and micro studies), a whole range of gender-disaggregated quantitative data sets in social, economic, demographic and political spheres.
- (ii) Examine the relationship between different core indicators under different contexts as defined by country specific conditions, such as by rural/urban location, by income groups, by literacy levels of household heads, by ethnic categories and so on. This is necessary in order to understand the underlying patterns of relationships between various indicators under different contexts.
- (iii) To provide a short summary of the reform process in the concerned countries and to analyse the correlation between economic reforms on the one hand and observed patterns of gender bias in terms of the relevant set(s) of indicators on the other.

II.2 Current status of work completed and in progress

All partnering institutions have submitted draft country reports on conventional indicators during the November 1999 Seminar held in New Delhi under the GPN project. Revisions have been suggested and work is currently on in this respect. The Indicator Chart is attached as Appendix I.

III GENDER-RELATED STRESS, ANXIETY AND VIOLENCE

III.1 Background

The other aspect of the country component involves conducting of household surveys to analyse the gender impact of economic policy reforms on a range of issues , including issues of violence, in a co-ordinated manner. In the November 1999 Workshop of the Network, it was decided that, to the extent possible, the household surveys will be carried out in similar environments in the five countries. Since the project intends to look at the impact of the economic reforms on women's situation, it was decided that in this phase of the programme, the surveys will be conducted in the households of female workers working in Export Processing Zones or in Export Oriented Units, because most of these work opportunities for women in these countries have been a direct result of the trade liberalisation policy under the economic reforms programmes. The idea has been to look at one area of the economy which has been directly impacted by reforms.

The agenda in this component of the research programme also includes preparation of a review of literature on violence. Work in this area is in progress in the five countries in the Network.

III.2 Review of theory and evidence

A review of mental well being, life quality and psychopathology centered around the key question of gender disparity undertaken under the GPN was presented at the November 1999 annual workshop of GPN. This provides the foundation for analysis of 'non-conventional' indicators of gender bias in the project. The paper titled "Non-Conventional

Indicators of Gender Disparities Under Structural Reforms” has been authored by Ravi L. Kapoor and Shobna Sonpar

III.3 Household surveys and case studies

Household surveys are being conducted in four of the five countries as of now.

The Survey questionnaire which was initially drafted by ISST, was discussed at length in the November 1999 meeting and redrafted after receiving suggestions and comments from participating countries, as well as from other experts. It was decided that a core set of questions will have to be canvassed by all countries. Additional questions may be added to the core set according to local specificities in the different countries. The questionnaire which has been used for household surveys is attached as Appendix II. The data from the household survey will be used to measure the level of stress and anxiety among men and women of the households of women workers in EPZs. An attempt will be made to analyse this information along with data on Conventional Indicators to assess the impact of new employment opportunities on the objective situation and gender perceptions of men and women in the households.

Most of the countries in the Network are in the process of collecting the information. Some have finished the actual survey and are into the process of analysing the data. It is hoped that all data collection work will be completed by the end of September 2000 and reports of the survey made ready by the end of October 2000. Draft Reports on this and other items under the country component will have to be presented in the forthcoming annual meeting of the Network in late November 2000.

The household survey will be supplemented by a number of case studies of women from different backgrounds, from various socio economic groups, as well as of different ages. The life histories of these women will be recorded to give insights into the kind of gender related stress and anxiety that they have been subjected to through their lives.

III.4 GDI and women's status : A Case Study in Kerala

The State of Kerala in the South of India has attracted a lot of attention recently as an outstanding example of high gender development in terms of high female literacy, a favourable sex ratio and low infant and maternal mortality rates. It has been argued that such favourable social indicators point to a high status of women in Kerala. (Cf. A.K. Sen & Jean Dreze).

However, a large number of disparate pieces of evidence from Kerala in recent times seems to indicate that this may be too simplistic an assessment of the situation.. In spite of high female literacy in the state, Kerala presents several anomalies. Very low rates of female labour force participation rates, high recorded rates of crime against women, including high incidence of domestic violence seem to point towards the hypothesis of entrenched patriarchal norms and an increasing shift towards Sanskritisation.

One study being carried out under the GPN will look into the social, cultural and economic history of Kerala to discern what has gone wrong with the "Kerala model". This is being done by a team of researchers headed by Dr. Mridul Eapen and Dr. Michael Tharakkan of the Centre for Development Studies at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

IV GENDER MODELING AND SECTOR SPECIFIC STUDIES

IV.1 Background

There is no difference of opinion about the importance of analysing the gender-differentiated impact of macro policy changes --- using structural models, if possible. The moot question is whether it can be done sensibly, given the current state of art in econometric model building and estimation techniques, and the availability of adequate data base for the purpose.

The June 1997 Seminar on 'Gender Discrimination Under Structural Reforms' organised by ISST at New Delhi was attended by broadly three broad categories of people. These were (I) economists, especially macro-econometric model-builders, (ii) sociologists of a feminist persuasion, and (iii) a group of scholars who dabble in both sets of issues. At that meeting, the question of whether or not to go in for gender-modeling exercises at the current juncture

was discussed at length. It was noted that any sensible model seeking to trace gender - differentiated impact of macro changes at the micro level must assess changes that occur not merely in the market place but also those that occur in the non-market sphere, and those within the household. Although some work in Modeling of household behaviour within a non- unitary set up is emerging as a distinct field of activity in model building, especially in the context of Western societies, there is as yet very little work available in the area, especially in so far as embedding such household models within standard macro models is concerned. It was also noted that the data requirements for sensible gender analysis of the impact of macro policy changes, especially within the private domain, is difficult to meet.

Given these constraints, it was felt that in the first phase of the project , one could at best initiate a state of the art review of existing models of gender and attempts at new innovation could wait for a later stage.

Thus the current phase of the GPN has two components in the modeling sub-group. The first consists of a review of existing gender models (section IV.2 below), and the second is an exercise in gender modeling using gender differentiated data within a standard macro modeling format (section IV.3 below).

IV.2 Review of Gender Models

A review of existing gender models both at the micro and at the macro levels is currently under way. The study is being carried out by Anyck Dauphin of Canadian Centre for International Studies (CECI), and Laval University of Ottawa, Canada. This review is going to cover the past and current research on gender Modeling especially at the household decision making level including those that are designed to capture situations of 'co-operative conflict' (Sen 1990). A number of non-unitary models of household behaviour will be surveyed along with standard unitary models of household decision-making.

The survey will also look at attempts at gender Modeling at the macro level within a CGE format. These could be of two kinds. At one level one can use the standard multi-sectoral models and run them using gender disaggregated data, primarily by disaggregating data on such variables as employment or labour, household types or consumer groups. An example of this kind which is part of the current activities of GPN, is described below (Section IV.3).

On the other hand, analytically a more exciting exercise introducing gender into a Modeling format would be to embed a non-unitary model of household decision making within a standard CGE format. This latter variety of models is still non-existent and the survey will look into the problems and prospects of introducing such analytical innovations given the current state of knowledge.

IV.3 An exercise in Gender Modeling

An exercise in gender modeling using a CGE framework is being undertaken by Ms Anushree Sinha of NCEAR in the current phase of the GPN. The model which is being presented by Ms Sinha in this meeting involves an aggregated seven sector input-output model of the Indian economy, factors of production dis-aggregated by gender and labour status categories, and a household classification system that is based on a correspondence between household types (formal or informal) and a composite criterion based on sectoral classification and labour use categories.

IV . 4 Trade liberalisation and women's employment in South Asia

A study on the impact of trade liberalisation on female employment is in progress. This paper will review the literature on the impact of globalisation on gender and employment, both analytically as well as empirically using existing secondary data in the region.

The paper will also try to identify the data gaps that currently exist for carrying out a sensible and rigorous analysis of the issue using the Indian case as an example. Problems inherent in matching detailed data sets emanating from different official sources will be explored. In particular the difficulty of setting up a correspondence between employment data from National Sample Surveys and industry specific data from the Central Statistical Organisation or the Ministry of Commerce will be investigated. The study titled Globalisation Gender and Employment is being conducted by Ms. Manju Senpaty

V. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Gender Network in its first phase has put in place a number of research initiatives which can be consolidated and strengthened in future. In this concluding section of the paper, I would like to identify some of these options which are either in the nature of extensions of on-going research under the Network or new directions in which the research can be augmented.

- **Conventional indicators of gender bias**

Although a lot of effort has been spent to put together available country-specific data on different dimensions of gender bias in the partnering countries, there is still a lot of work which is needed for unravelling the patterns of interlinkages between these indicators. Thus mapping of set(s) of indicators over one another to identify the context within which they move together, or disparately, and analysing these in detail, is a task which is going to stay unfinished during the first phase. This may be taken up in detail later on.

- **Mental Health issues**

Although the household surveys being currently administered in the five countries include standard modules on mental health of men and women, the existing state of art in this area does not permit isolating differential sources of stress or mental ill- being by causative factors such as gender. A more in-depth study on mental health of women may be initiated in order to attempt a breakthrough in the psycho-social analysis of stress under changing economic environments.

Once the mapping of conventional indicators under one another is completed and these are analysed in relation to gender-related stress, anxiety and violence, an attempt may be made to develop contextualised sets of indicators which capture the status of women better than what is currently available.

- **Household surveys**

In the current phase of the project, the participating countries have picked up one particular area of the economy, i.e. the Export Processing Zones and the Export Oriented Units, which is known to have been directly affected by economic reforms. In the second phase similar surveys can be carried out in sectors/areas where reforms have had a directly adverse impact on households. For instance, households of workers who have been retrenched due to restructuring may be picked up for more intensive analysis. Similarly, sector- specific

studies in sectors which have been adversely hit by globalisation, such as the powerloom and handloom sectors in India, may be chosen.

One may also do surveys of workers in sectors such as the IT sector which are experiencing rapid growth under globalisation.

- **Modeling of Gender**

In the current phase, the Network is involved in two exercises within the sub-group of gender Modeling. One is a survey of existing models of gender, and the second is an exercise carried out within the format of a standard CGE model through gender-disaggregation of available data.

An exciting new area of development in Modeling can be initiated in the next phase by attempting to introduce non-unitary models of household behaviour within standard macro formats. If this succeeds, it will usher in a qualitatively different method of Modeling gender.

A second component of this sub-group of activities could be an attempt to extend the kind of exercise being carried out in the current phase on gender disaggregated data use within somewhat more extensive but standard macro models.

- **Spatial spread**

The countries covered in the first phase of the GPN were all from South Asia. It may be a good idea to include some South East Asian countries in the second phase. One might want to look at the impact of recent financial crisis on households in this region along with other things.

- **Tying up with MIMAP Poverty Monitoring Surveys (PMS)**

Since the Poverty Monitoring Surveys are being carried out under the MIMAP programme in any case, an attempt may be made in the next phase of the Gender Network to tie up with these by including strategic modules on gender in the survey questionnaires and by suggesting gender analysis of the data being generated.

- **Typing up with national level poverty analysis**

An attempt may also be made to lobby for inclusion of gender-related questions in the national level poverty monitoring surveys in the region. Alternatively one may introduce strategic gender-related questions in a sub set of national level survey module as a pilot.

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Clearly it will not be possible to do all this at the same time. Selected activities from the list above and other options that may be suggested, could be chosen for the second phase of the Network.

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