Incorporating a Gender Perspective into Economic Research: A Conceptual Framework

What is a gender perspective?

• Women and men occupy different positions in the economy and are subject to different constraints.
• Policies and programs have different effects on women and men.
• But a gender perspective goes beyond simply comparing outcomes for women and men.
• Recognition of gendered processes and dynamics in the economy.
• Expands the scope of what we mean by the “economy”. Changes the way we measure the economy.
  • e.g. Non-market, unpaid household work.
Structural sources of gender inequality

Why structural?

- Look beyond individual choices to examine how women and men are positioned differently in the economy.
- Choice is still important, but women and men face different constraints.

Important for evaluating economic outcomes: e.g. what do we mean by inclusive growth?
The gender division of labor

Unpaid household work
  • Non-market processes, not paid (although can be paid and involve market exchanges: domestic workers)
  • But important contribution to well-being and human development

Gender division of labor
  • Women typically spend more time working in non-market, unpaid activities compared to men.

Sources of inequality
  • Less income/earning potential. Constrained choices.
  • Heightened risks from “specialization”
  • Lower returns to women’s education/less investment.
  • Economic contribution undervalued.
Unequal access to assets, finance, and technology

Financial markets often exclude women or are segregated
  • Segregated financial markets: women only have access to smaller-scale, informal, or marginal sources of credit.

Assets are often unequally distributed
  • Land tenure and inheritance laws
  • Reduces women’s earnings potential as operators of small-scale enterprises

Women and men may have differential access to technology
  • Norms regarding who operates equipment, who engages in specific types of activities
Intra-household dynamics

Households are critically important economic institutions
• Labor supply decisions, distribution of resources, poverty & welfare outcomes.

Bargaining power and distributive outcomes
• Women may have a weaker fallback position than men. Reinforces traditional gender roles.
• Access to income affects consumption patterns in households with important welfare implications (e.g. children)

Access to outside options improves women’s choices and independence
• Access to paid employment/entrepreneurship linked to economic empowerment
Gender inequalities and enterprises

Gender earnings gaps
• Differences in earnings between women and men
• What factors explain this (segregation, assets, technology, unpaid care work)?

Economic mobility
• The ability to take advantage of new opportunities as they become available.
• How do constraints to mobility differ between women and men (including youth)?
Gender inequalities and enterprises (cont)

Skills and education gaps

• Why would there be under-investment in skills acquisition among women? Example: vocational training programmes.

Supply chains and market power

• What relationships exist between enterprises (including various intermediaries)?
• How are small enterprises inserted into supply chains and how does this affect distributive dynamics?
• Are there differences between women and men? Example: do men have better networks that advantage them in supply chains?
Incorporating a gender perspective into research design

Need to be aware of gender dynamics and explicitly incorporate this analysis into the design and conduct of research.

• Also important for the interpretation of results

Requires examining new issues and economic dynamics

• e.g. relationship between unpaid household work and enterprise development

Use both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

“Gender blind” research does not imply “gender neutral” research
Some practical guidelines

• Try not to treat gender as a dummy variable
  • Separate analysis for women and men
• Ask yourself: do the standard approaches contain hidden biases? Do variable definitions reflect women’s contributions?
• Include gender-sensitive household variables
  • Composition & unpaid household work
• Intra-household distribution can be important
  • Who gets/controls what? Access to assets, finance, technology
• Recognize segregation by branch of activity
• Norms and values
  • If information exists, include it.