

Incorporating a Gender Perspective into Economic Research: A Conceptual Framework

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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.