

Dimensions of poverty and gender policies

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This article holds that poverty is multidimensional in nature, and that the ways to measure it and the policies to fight it are determined by how it is defined. After reviewing various definitions, the article notes that there is some consensus that poverty means the deprivation of the basic assets and opportunities to which all human beings are entitled; it examines concepts related to poverty, such as vulnerability, inequality, marginality, exclusion and discrimination, and analyses specific forms of gender-based poverty. It then discusses the link between the definitions of poverty and some of the policies being implemented; it compares poverty reduction policies with gender policies; and it proposes a typology that distinguishes four types of policies involving various actions, projects and programmes aimed at fighting gender-based poverty.

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I

Introduction

It is now recognized that poverty and inequality are on the rise rather than on the decline in the Latin American region: the reduction of poverty and mitigation of social inequality are still elusive development objectives that have been hard hit in recent years by our macroeconomic vulnerability (Ocampo, 2002).

The processes of poverty are aspects of certain broader phenomena related to current development models and strategies. These models and strategies have delimited the options for trade and financial openness, for macroeconomic and mesoeconomic policies mediated by institutions, for norms and practices that together define access by individuals and families to the use and control of resources and, specifically, for access to the labour market and income. The traditional Latin American backwardness with regard to poverty and income distribution is compounded by the recent impoverishment of large sectors of the Latin American middle-class as a result of the economic crises in the region during the 1990s, which have hit some countries harder than others. Moreover, there is growing evidence that these crises have affected men and women differently (ECLAC, 2003 and 2004b).

A certain consensus has been reached that poverty means the deprivation of essential assets and opportunities to which all human beings are entitled. Poverty is related to unequal and limited access to productive resources and to a low level of participation in social and political institutions. It stems from restricted access to property, low income and

consumption levels, limited social, political and job opportunities and insufficient access to education, health, nutrition, the use and control of natural resources and other areas of development. According to Amartya Sen and his capabilities and achievements approach, a person is poor if he or she lacks the necessary resources to carry out a certain minimum of activities (Sen, 1992a and 1992b). Desai, quoted in *Control Ciudadano* (1997), proposes five basic and necessary capabilities: capability to stay alive and enjoy a long life; capability to ensure intergenerational biological and cultural reproduction; capability to have a healthy life; capability for social interaction (social capital); and capability to have knowledge and freedom of expression and thought. Thus, poverty is linked with the right to a decent life that provides for a person's basic needs, in other words, for his or her economic, social and cultural rights.

Likewise, it is held that poverty is complex, relational and multi-dimensional in nature. The causes and characteristics of poverty differ from one country to another, and the interpretation of the exact nature of poverty depends on cultural factors such as gender, race and ethnic group, and on the economic, social and historical context.

This study examines various ideas about poverty and its connotations from a gender perspective; it briefly analyses poverty reduction policies; and lastly, it proposes a typology that relates these policies to gender policies.

II

The many dimensions of poverty

More than two decades ago, ECLAC defined poverty as a situational syndrome that combines infraconsumption, malnutrition, precarious living conditions, low levels

of education, an unstable position in the production system, attitudes of discouragement and anomie, little participation in social integration mechanisms, and perhaps adherence to a particular scale of values, to some extent differentiated from that of the rest of society (Altimir, 1979). This first definition contained elements that took into account the many dimensions of poverty: aspects relating to nutrition, housing,

□ A preliminary version of this article was presented at the expert meeting on gender and poverty held by the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC and ILO at ECLAC, Santiago, 12 and 13 August 2003.

education, health, jobs and social participation, together with other subjective and symbolic elements that also describe various areas requiring the intervention of social policies.

The concept of poverty has been further elaborated, at times being measured on the basis of deficiencies or unsatisfied basic needs, using indicators such as food intake, income level, and access to health, education and housing. ECLAC has developed a methodology to measure poverty on the basis of the cost of satisfying basic needs by drawing poverty in terms of consumption or income. This indirect method focuses on measuring material deficiencies. It has the advantage of allowing for international comparisons and an accurate estimate of household consumption capacity. According to the latest ECLAC figures for 2002, 44% of the Latin American population were living in poverty that year. This percentage represents 221 million people, of whom about 97 million were indigent. For 2004, these percentages are projected to fall slightly: it is estimated that poverty now affects 42.9% of the Latin American population, and extreme poverty 18.6%, meaning that 222 million people are living in poverty, and 96 million in extreme poverty (ECLAC, 2003 and 2004b).

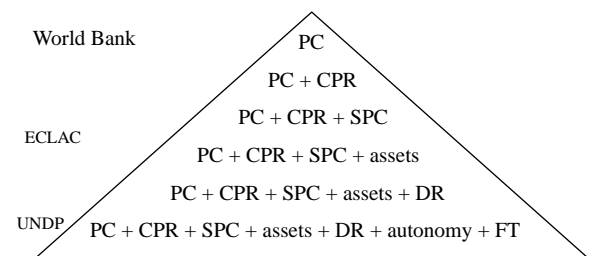
However, the income-based method does not take into account that household living conditions partly depend on accumulated assets, or that the internal distribution of resources is uneven among sex and age groups. Moreover, income is a difficult variable to measure, since it is subject to systematic under-recording and significant proportions of "no response". In addition, by exclusively taking into account cash income, it ignores accumulated household resources (assets), indirect transfers and in-kind State subsidies (health and education services, for example). Moreover, the poverty lines often intersect with modal intervals of income distribution, where population is more highly concentrated. Thus, poverty measurements tend to be very sensitive to changes caused by current conditions (increases in inflation or unemployment, for example), registering sharp rises or drops in the incidence of poverty (Martínez, 2002).

Attempts are currently being made to incorporate into these measurements certain non-material aspects of poverty related to the expansion and build-up of the social capital of the poor through their participation in social exchange networks, such as education, work, information and political power. This enhanced involvement of the poor strengthens the democratic culture and solidarity of society, and increases the free

time available to them for rest and recreation, representing a valuable asset in situations where the difficulty of earning enough to survive tends to make the workday longer. In brief, six sources of well-being for individuals and families have been identified: (i) income; (ii) right of access to free or subsidized government services or benefits; (iii) ownership or rights in respect of assets for basic use or consumption (accumulated basic assets); (iv) educational levels, with skills and abilities as expressions of the capability to act and understand; (v) time available for education, rest and recreation; and (vi) the dimensions that together strengthen individual autonomy. Thus, poverty is defined in its broadest sense by little or no income; lack of access to State-provided goods and services, such as social security and health; non-ownership of housing or other assets; little or no education and training; and lack of free time for educational activities, recreation and rest, all of which is expressed in a lack of autonomy and in nonexistent or limited social and family ties. Of course, as the number of dimensions included in the notion of poverty increases, the concept becomes less specific and its measurement becomes more complex.

As we see in Figure 1, non-material aspects relating to individual well-being and other, more qualitative aspects such as those linked with vulnerability, insecurity and social exclusion are increasingly being incorporated into the definition. In addition, poor people's view of their own situation and the concept of poverty in the various national and local cultures have gradually been gaining importance as variables in the analysis. The fundamental premise is that there is a set of aspects that are difficult to measure in

FIGURE 1

Pyramid of poverty concepts^a

Source: Prepared on the basis of Baulch (1996) and UNIFEM (2000).

^a PC = private consumption; CPR = individual and family property resources; SPC = State-provided commodities; DR = dignity and rights; FT = free time.

quantitative and monetary terms, but that have a strong impact on poverty: these variables are linked to psychosocial and cultural components, together with normative, institutional and cognitive elements. In addition, from a philosophical standpoint, some have drawn attention to the ethical aspects of poverty and the need to make certain principles of equality and freedom compatible with distribution criteria, the rights of the poor and respect for their preferences (Dieterlen, 2003).

The placement of poverty at the centre of public policy concerns may have a strong impact on the possibilities for overcoming it, because it may change the scope and nature of relations between the poor and non-poor sectors; in brief, it may modify the scope of social networks and the existing degree of associative behaviour between families and groups (“bonding social capital”), between similar groups (“bridging social capital”) and between groups with different access to economic, social and symbolic resources (“linking social capital”).¹ This means emphasizing the role of social relations such as trust, reciprocity and cooperation, the sustainability of community initiatives and of various life strategies to mitigate the effects of poverty. As for the concept of social capital, although it was originally used to denote the capacity of poor groups to react to economic crises, “market failures” and the effects of economic inequality, the current debate has also focused on factors that help perpetuate social exclusion and the reproduction of poverty. In the context of State intervention, it is estimated that the promotion of social capital in development strategies will allow actors to participate more and become protagonists in solving their own problems (Arriagada, I., Miranda and Pavez, 2004).

Briefly then, it could be said the poverty has certain basic dimensions that must be taken into account in designing appropriate public intervention policies:

- Sectoral dimension: education, employment, health, income and jobs, housing.
- Other factors: gender, race and ethnic group, which cut across sectoral dimensions. Individual age and stage in the life cycle should also be taken into account.
- Territorial dimensions. Efforts to reduce poverty should be based on existing initiatives and

potentialities in the poor sectors (social capital) and on the environment where they live or work (Raczynski, 2003).

- Family dimension: the stage and cycle of family life, together with economic exchanges and distribution of work in the family, must be taken into account. This could indicate that some members of non-poor households (for example, women without their own income) could be considered poor, just as men living in poor households might not be poor themselves if the distribution of household income is inequitable and they keep most of their income for themselves.

1. Poverty from a gender perspective

A look at poverty from a gender perspective shows that women are poor because of gender discrimination. The subordinate nature of women’s participation in society, for example, limits their opportunities for owning property and controlling economic, social and political resources. Their fundamental economic resource is paid work, on very unequal terms, given the present gender-based division of labour in which women do the domestic work and care for children almost exclusively, and the persistence of traditional and new forms of discrimination with respect to women’s wages and permanence in the job market. Although the situation in Latin America is not the same for all women, there is no country where they earn equal pay for equal work in comparison with men; the existence of considerable occupational segmentation, both vertical and horizontal, means that women do not have the same jobs or the same upward career path as men. This adverse situation is compounded by essentialist views which attribute characteristics to women that place them in a lower position than men, linking their reproductive potential to the attribution of reproductive tasks.

Kabeer (1998a) writes that poverty may be seen from two points of view: as deprivation of the opportunity to meet basic needs and as deprivation of the means to satisfy them. Women are poor to the extent that they do not have time available to seek more appropriate ways of meeting their needs, and a large proportion of them do not have their own income.

Thus, besides measuring female poverty in terms of income, it is important to also measure it in terms of time. To understand the dynamics of poverty, one must analyse the concept of time, especially because

¹ See the conceptual and methodological study of the social capital approach in Arriagada, Miranda and Pavez, 2004, and Arriagada, 2003.

a large part of women's work —housework— is not valued monetarily, but it can be measured as time spent. Various studies, especially time use surveys, have shown that women's workday is longer than that of men if unpaid housework, done by all women in their homes, is included.² In addition, the growing number of women joining the workforce has not meant that men have started doing more housework or caring for children, older people, other family members and the sick.

Moreover, traditional ways of measuring poverty, which stress family income, obscure the poverty of the less favoured members of the household, namely, women, young people, children and older people. Thus, it makes sense to examine the different use of time made by men, women, young people, children and older adults. This measurement requires a dynamic analysis of poverty and the ways it increases or decreases throughout the family life cycle.

With regard to paid work, four different forms of exclusion affect women more severely: (i) unemployment; (ii) unsteady types of jobs; (iii) unpaid jobs; and (iv) exclusion from opportunities to develop their talents. These forms of exclusion are compounded by inequalities in the types of jobs they take (horizontal and vertical job segmentation) and wage discrimination in the labour market.

In brief, in order to analyse gender poverty, we must look at various power relationships, such as those linked to exclusion, inequalities and gender discrimination in the labour market, the unequal division of unpaid labour, physical and symbolic violence against women and the differences in time use between men and women.

2. Relational aspects of poverty

In Latin America, the relationship between poverty and inequality has existed for a long time. The evolution of both phenomena in recent decades has been uneven: although the proportion of poor and indigent people has declined, inequality has persisted in terms of regional income. The concentration of income is a variable that directly influences how much time it will take to

overcome poverty (UNDP, 1997). "Inequality (understood as the degree of concentration and polarization of urban income distribution by population groups), although a broader problem than poverty, is a necessary and complementary referent in the case of Latin America, since it has common determinants and marks both the economic growth levels and social spending that will be required to eradicate urban poverty, and the estimated amount of time it will take to achieve this objective in the various countries" (Arriagada, C., 2000). It is estimated that inequality in income distribution in Latin America —as measured by the Gini coefficient— increased between 1990 and 2002, mainly because of the large proportion of income concentrated in the decile of high-income households (ECLAC, 2004b).

It should also be noted that there is an interrelationship between the concept of poverty and the notions of distribution, exclusion, vulnerability, discrimination and marginality, to name a few. When the concept of poverty is defined in its broadest terms, exclusion and inequality tend to be included in it, although it is possible to differentiate them analytically. The distinction is important, however, since the chosen approach will dictate different policies and programmes to deal with the phenomenon (table 1).

In this context and from a gender approach, we draw attention to the following seven specific gender-based inequalities proposed by Amartya Sen: (i) mortality inequality, meaning that in some regions of the world (North Africa, Asia including China and South East Asia) there is a disproportionately high index of female mortality; (ii) natality inequality, when parents prefer male children and selectively abort female foetuses; (iii) basic facility inequality (prohibition or inequality of access to basic education and health, the cultivation of one's natural talents or social functions in the community, among others); (iv) special opportunity inequality (difficulty or prohibition of access to higher education); (v) professional inequality in access to the labour market and better jobs; (vi) ownership inequality (property and land); and (vii) household inequality, reflected in the gender-based division of labour, where women are exclusively responsible for household duties (Sen, 2002). In addition, any analysis of poverty must take into account the average societal pattern of well-being, because this standard sets the conditions for integration, without which there can be no citizenship.

The concept of marginality arose in the 1960s in Latin America to denote population groups migrating from the rural areas and forming a band of poverty

² The latest time use surveys done in Mexico and Uruguay in 2002 and 2003, respectively, showed that Mexican women contribute 85% of total housework time, while men contribute 15%; Uruguayan male heads of households devote an average of 31 hours a week, and female heads of household 50 hours a week, on housework and childcare (INEGI, 2004; Aguirre, 2004).

TABLE 1
Poverty-related concepts and dimensions

Concepts	Dimensions
Marginality	Geographical and ecological context Economic, employment and educational marginality Reserve labour force
Vulnerability	Insecurity and risks in crisis situations Incapacity to respond Inability to adapt Target groups and their assets
Inequality	Unequal assets/endowments Justice and equity Rules and norms for resource distribution
Exclusion	Broken social, community and individual ties with the system Emphasis on processes and multiple causality Interrelationship among aspects of poverty Relational dimension Institutionality
Discrimination based on gender, ethnic group or race	Implicit or explicit mechanisms of discrimination by sex/ethnicity Cultural attribution of inequality based on gender/ethnicity Uneven distribution of resources Cultural construction justifying discrimination Discriminatory division of domestic, social and community work

Source: Prepared by the author.

around major Latin American cities. According to Nun and Marín (1968), marginality is defined as the structural process characterized by the formation of a proletariat, the “new poverty” and the constitution of social classes. The marginalized population is described as lacking infrastructure and educational and job opportunities, and constituting a reserve army of labour that is functional to the economy because its pressure on the job market tends to keep workers’ wages low.

The notion of vulnerability is related to two dimensions: one is external and objective, referring to the external risks to which a person, family or group may be exposed (greater instability of family income or more uncertainty in the job market, as reflected in the growing proportions of people employed under temporary or part-time contracts, or without contracts or social security); the second is internal and subjective, referring to the lack of resources to enable the poor to face these risks without suffering some losses. This approach combines three main dimensions: the assets

(physical, financial, human and social capital) of individuals and communities; strategies for using these assets; and the series of opportunities offered by markets, the State and society (Moser, 1996).

The concept of social exclusion, although it arose from the European debate, is broadly applicable to the Latin American region, specifically with regard to the new situations of poverty and exclusion caused by economic crises. Social exclusion has two dimensions: lack of social ties linking the individual with the family, community and, more generally speaking, society, and lack of the basic rights of citizenship. What differentiates the concept of social exclusion from that of poverty is that the former refers to relations between aspects of poverty. The process elements included in the debate on exclusion are interesting to consider, to the extent that they relate to the various mechanisms and types of exclusion, whether they be institutional, social, cultural or territorial. The ties that bind the individual with society may be divided into three types: functional ties, which enable the individual to become an operational part of the system (job market, social security institutions, legal system, etc.); social ties, which incorporate the individual into social groups and networks (family, primary groups, trade unions, etc.); and cultural ties, which enable individuals to become part of societal patterns of behaviour and understanding (participation in socially accepted norms and beliefs). Spatial exclusion, related to territory and geographical location, may also exist.

Discrimination based on gender and ethnic group has its roots in the attribution of certain personal and behavioural characteristics to people because of their sex, the colour of their skin or other physical features. It is based on essentialism, for it relates a person’s sex and physical features to certain socially constructed characteristics that segregate these groups.

In analytical terms, and for the purposes of designing a suitable poverty reduction policy, a distinction must be made between:

- Differentiation factors of poverty, such as ethnic group, gender and generation, educational and job level and area of residence, among others;
- Reproduction factors in the causes of poverty (intergenerational transmission) that are related to the individual and family life cycle and with access to property, assets and social and symbolic economic resources;
- Consequences of poverty, such as loss of opportunities and well-being, and accentuation of inequality.

In view of the multidimensional nature of poverty, its study should take into account the diversity of causes of deprivation, while the heterogeneity of poverty reinforces the importance of recognizing its different manifestations. From this standpoint, in order to formulate social policies to fight poverty, it is essential to identify the main sources of poverty and the heterogeneity of its manifestations in different groups or countries.

3. Poverty as a process rather than a static situation

One fact that is usually overlooked in studies on poverty, and especially in the social policies designed to reduce it, is that poverty is a situation that in some cases persists over time (structural poverty, extreme poverty), but in many other cases varies. Most analyses tend to see it as a static situation. The situation of poverty, however, may change over a short period of time, especially in relation to unemployment/employment, or the effects of an economic crisis that may lead, among other things, to a devaluation of local currency. The permanent precariousness of some people's situation, especially those with lower levels of education and skills, together with new kinds of jobs that entail instability and high turnover in the workplace, increases their vulnerability to interruptions

in income as a result of job loss. Other interruptions in income may be related to health problems, age, retirement or withdrawal from the labour market, or separation and divorce, especially in the case of wives who lack their own income.

Thus, it is of crucial importance to understand the dynamics of poverty in order to determine who among the poor may be able to escape from it, and who are more likely to fall into it owing to problems of health, unemployment, divorce and/or absence of a spouse, among other factors.

Some of the contributions made by gender studies to a better understanding of poverty are the following: (i) they point out the heterogeneity of poverty, thereby helping to better understand it and adjust the policies designed to reduce it; (ii) they take a new look at differences in behaviour between men and women; (iii) they improve the analysis of the household, focusing on power asymmetries, both gender-based and generational, within it; (iv) they contribute a multidimensional perspective on poverty, by examining the multiple roles played by men and women; (v) they show other types of discrimination that combine with gender discrimination, such as those based on age and ethnic group; (vi) they add a dynamic view of the notion of poverty by demonstrating how it changes over time; and (vii) they distinguish among various strategies for escaping gender-based poverty.

III

Poverty reduction policies

Changes and reforms in Latin America during the 1990s resulted in a reduction in the size of the State and its functions. This was due to an increase in the privatization of public enterprises; changes in the State's functions, whereby it no longer acted as a producer of goods and services; growing decentralization of services and resources; appearance of new actors in non-State public policies, where non-governmental organizations began to play a part in the delivery of public services and to promote grass-roots participation and control. Against this backdrop, approaches to reducing poverty also changed, resulting in more resources, fresh institutions and programmes, new ways of managing more decentralized and participative policies and programmes, with more input

from civil society, and the application of new tools for allocating resources (Raczynski, 2003). In brief, beginning around 2000, together with an increase in the poverty levels of the population, new forms of public management appeared that re-focused State efforts to promote poverty reduction programmes, but especially to fight extreme poverty.

The concept of poverty is not new in history. Already by the mid-16th century in England, laws were proposed to combat it (the English poor laws, enacted in 1563, 1572, 1576, 1597 and 1601, in the Elizabethan era) for a number of reasons: first, because of economic conditions and popular pressure; secondly, because of changes in the idea (based on Puritanism and Protestantism) of what governments could and should

do for the poor; and lastly because of the political ambition to control those whom the elites considered “inferior” subjects (Dieterlen, 2003). What is relatively new is the idea that the State (together with international and non-governmental organizations) should intervene continually and systematically in order to improve the situation of those living in poverty and extreme poverty. Newer still is the confirmation that the causes of poverty and the situation of poverty itself are different for women and men, and that policies and programmes are therefore needed that will take into account gender differences in the processes that cause and sustain poverty.

Explanatory models of poverty and the way that it is measured may also help determine the best policies for reducing it. If poverty is measured on the basis of situations of deficiency and by the income method, the most frequent result is that action is taken to correct deficiencies by the transfer of monetary subsidies, job-training courses, street paving, sanitation, education and health services, granting of loans on favourable terms, and other short-term compensatory measures (Raczynski, 2003). On the other hand, the proposals made in the 1960s for reducing marginality considered the provision of urban infrastructure, organization of marginal groups and incorporation into the job market as the primary mechanisms to help the poor become more socially and economically integrated. Policies designed in that era to reduce social inequality included reallocation of resources through taxes and redistributive social and economic policies, such as the special earmarking of resources for basic health and education and affirmative-action policies for disadvantaged individuals and groups (Raczynski, 2003).

As for discrimination on the basis of gender and ethnic group, the proposed steps in both cases consist of promoting affirmative action policies to help women and ethnic groups in more disadvantaged situations, and cultural deconstruction policies to combat prejudices against these groups (table 2).

Before designing poverty reduction policies it is important to make one clarification. Policies for reducing poverty, which lay stress on its causes and correction, and are related to macroeconomic management, regulations and institutional policies to promote equitable development and prevent crises and inequality, must be distinguished from policies aimed at alleviating and dealing with poverty (social protection) which are designed to lower the social risk in crisis situations, that is, they seek to attenuate the

TABLE 2

Poverty-related concepts and policy proposals

Concepts	Policy proposals
Marginality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of urban services • Organization of marginal population • Incorporation into labour market
Vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted support to increase incomes • Promotion of new sources of income or subsidies • Strengthening of individual, family or social safety nets
Inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redistribution of resources • Redistributive social and economic policies • Affirmative action policies
Exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of conditions for broader citizenship and full exercise of rights • Comprehensive social policies • Participatory and integrative policies • Access to institutional services
Discrimination based on gender/ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirmative action • Cultural deconstruction • Policies to reconcile paid work with family responsibilities

Source: Prepared by the author.

consequences of the various manifestations of poverty. Policies for reducing poverty include those aimed at establishing economic and social rights; policies for alleviating and dealing with poverty include compensatory measures (social assistance) and those aimed at providing sectoral goods and services to target population groups.

1. Various perspectives on gender-based poverty

The public policy agenda of governments and international organizations shows a wide diversity of approaches to poverty and gender, which have been applied either separately or in combination in the past three decades; these are summarized below.³

(i) *Assistance-based approach*: this includes specific programmes for poor women, as a “vulnerable group”. It provides support to women on the sole basis of their reproductive functions, as wives and homemakers. It was more widely used in the 1970s and 1980s, but some remnants exist in current programmes

³ See Moser (1991).

of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

(ii) *Efficiency-based approach*: under this approach, in order to achieve a higher level of development, it is more efficient to consider the whole population, both men and women, as available to the job market or, in a more elitist version, from the standpoint of the contribution which the incorporation of educated women, as highly qualified human resources, can make to the economy. This is used by the World Bank, IDB, ECLAC and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

(iii) *Equity-based approach*: this suggests that improving the situation of poor women would contribute to equity, since there is a higher incidence of poverty in households headed by women; women's wages are lower and their position in the job market is precarious and segmented, which translates into poor living conditions and difficult access to equity. This approach is used in studies by ECLAC and ILO.

(iv) *Approach based on empowerment, exercise of social citizenship and decision-making*: under this relatively recent approach, in order to improve the quality and efficiency of programmes targeted to women and other groups (ethnic groups, classes), these groups must become involved in the elaboration and execution of the programmes, reinforcing their capabilities through organization, raising of self-esteem, access to material resources and strengthening of their social ties, so that they can fully exercise their citizenship and take decisions at the individual, family and social levels. This approach is used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ECLAC and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).

This last approach emphasizes the promotion of poverty reduction policies that take into account all the factors that cause poverty, from the most personal—lack of self-esteem and autonomy, or violence against women—to social and economic factors such as access to jobs, health, education and technical and financial services. To this end, the approach advocates involving the target groups and State, trade union and business actors in the design and execution of these policies and assigns an important role to the new criteria of empowerment and social capital.

In turn, gender policies include two important types: recognition policies, dealing with differences in identities, and redistribution policies, such as equal

opportunity measures (Fraser, 1998 and 2000). Recognition policies, which Fraser calls “the identity model”, include policies aimed at recognizing unfairly devalued identities. Redistribution policies, on the other hand, are aimed at socioeconomic transformation or reform in order to correct injustices based on gender or ethnic group.

Equal opportunity policies have become more widespread throughout the world. Equality of opportunities in the classic liberal political tradition involves the belief that all individuals should have the same opportunity, and that existing inequalities are due to different personal merits. In other words, everyone has the same opportunities, but since people are different, some are more capable than others, and therefore they become unequal. Therefore, when the same opportunities were not available in the beginning, unfair inequalities arise which must be corrected, whereas inequalities that merely express differences in merits are legitimate. In order to correct unfair inequalities, affirmative actions have been designed to establish equal opportunities from the start (Astelarra, 2003).

Nonetheless, since equal opportunities do not immediately produce equal results, emphasis is placed, from a democratic perspective, on creating the social conditions for real equality of opportunity. But even if an egalitarian situation existed initially, unequal retribution would tend to be perpetuated from one generation to another through “inheritance” and “gender biases”, thereby affecting equality of conditions and opportunities for women.

Recognition policies focus on topics relating to the identity that defines the groups being discriminated against. The aim of these policies is to encourage the dominant culture to recognize the rights of those groups. One of the main criticisms of this approach is that it could tend to stigmatize the groups by focusing on the maintenance of an identity that keeps them apart from the rest.

According to Fraser, recognition and redistribution policies are not mutually exclusive.

2. Interrelationship between poverty and gender policies

Poverty reduction policies with a gender perspective cut across two important groups of policies established and implemented for a number of decades in Latin America: those aimed at eliminating gender inequalities and those designed to fight poverty.

TABLE 3

Poverty reduction policies with a gender perspective

Poverty reduction policies	Gender policies	
	Rights	Compensatory and sectoral/ Services
	Recognition	Rights and cultural recognition
Redistribution and equal opportunity	Rights and redistribution ("empty pigeonhole")	"Economic" redistribution and compensatory

Source: Prepared by the author.

By combining these two groups, we may obtain a potential set of policies to reduce gender poverty, using very different types of approach. The array of actions, projects and programmes designed to reduce gender poverty gives rise to four types of combined policies (table 3).

Within the set of policies applied so far, we may distinguish four types, whose most salient features are as follows:

(i) *Gender-blind universal policies*. These policies do not distinguish between men and women. They are applied in various social sectors, such as education and employment, and they perpetuate gender inequalities.

(ii) *Redistributive and compensatory "economic" policies*. This type of policy was put in place with a more redistributive bias in the 1960s, and with a more compensatory and assistance-based approach in the 1980s. It was reflected in many programmes for female heads of households that were carried out, with varying degrees of success, throughout the region. Towards the 1990s, programmes devoted to extreme poverty incorporated a more specific territorial focus, and their execution was more decentralized, with cash transfers directed primarily to mothers; but these policies did not change the view of women in general, and of mothers in particular, as people whose role it is to serve others, nor were they linked in any clear way with sectoral policies.

(iii) *Policies involving rights and cultural recognition*. These are more recent policies—they have been applied since the 1990s—and their purpose is to ensure recognition of the rights of excluded groups, including women. They primarily involve legislative measures to promote gender equity.

(iv) *Policies involving redistribution and economic and cultural rights*. This group is the so-

called "empty pigeonhole", because it deals with future policies that have never been applied in any country. Although their design requires a careful balance, they are not mutually incompatible, and they will require a strong political will and consensus in order to be set up and executed. In particular, these policies should offer more autonomy and power to women, correcting the existing gender imbalance and making gender roles more flexible with a view to increasing options for both men and women.

As for the design of social policies, the heterogeneity of poverty requires the elaboration of policies that are both universal and selective, targeted to specific groups. A woman living in poverty who is a teenage mother is in a situation unlike that of a widow without her own income, and their needs, strengths and the programmes and policies most suited to them will also be different.

If poverty is seen as a process that goes beyond a mere "snapshot" (Kabeer, 1998b), it is clearly important to formulate heterogeneous, flexible and appropriate policies to deal with the increasingly diverse and changing situations among the poor and their constant shift between stages of well-being, poverty and indigence.

Poverty reduction policies, as seen from a gender perspective, must therefore take into account the individual, family and social resources of both men and women; measure the use of time by both genders; support the strengthening of poor women who are in weaker positions; take into account subjectivity and the different needs of men and women; incorporate the dynamics of poverty, including the movement into and out of poverty; and deal with the relations between the various aspects of these processes.

3. Assessment of poverty reduction policies from a gender perspective

A first step in evaluating gender policies is to determine their basis (ethical, cultural, economic and others) and to find out whether the methods of conceptualization, measurement and application have detracted from their primary objectives. It is therefore worth asking whether the implementation of these policies has promoted gender equity or, rather, new forms of inequality, and whether the process is strengthening autonomy or, rather, dependence with regard to the programmes being established (Arriagada, I., 1998). Another fundamental element is to encourage the active participation of men and women in the design, execution and evaluation of the social programmes and interventions that affect them. The incorporation of the population in decision-making could slow down the process somewhat, but in the long run it will result in a greater commitment to the programmes, making them more sustainable, and a considerable enhancement of self-esteem.

It is worth stressing the need to make a precise assessment of each change as it is introduced, in order to learn from past and recent experience in the design

of social programmes and projects. This will help formulate a gender policy that is consistent with the initial objectives, preventing them from weakening during the execution phase. Likewise, the uneven impact of social and economic policies on men and women should be constantly reassessed. This evaluation should deal with all the policies comprehensively, since it has sometimes occurred in Latin America that the adverse effects of one policy (such as a given economic policy) has had to be mitigated by others, as in the case of compensatory social programmes. In order to assess the expected and unexpected results of programmes, up-to-date information must be available both before and after social interventions.

Particular care must be taken to incorporate gender-based poverty reduction policies into the public agenda; to strengthen the political will to carry out such policies; to broaden the coverage and quality of services and programmes for poor women from a gender perspective; and to continually evaluate the degree of participation and growing autonomy of the individuals, especially women, who are targeted by these policies.

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