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Meeting held on engendering macroeconomic policy

The ECLAC/CDCC secretariat remains guided by the critical areas of concern identified by the region, and more recently, the Port of Spain Consensus adopted at the Third Ministerial Conference on Women has focused our work on the three broad areas: poverty and the economy; violence against women and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women.

Despite calls for social equity, there is continuing concern that the macroeconomic policies developed and pursued by the region's governments may be worsening social and gender inequality. In this regard, the Port of Spain Consensus calls upon governments to engage in gender impact assessments of macroeconomic and budgetary policies.

In reviewing macroeconomic policies through the prism of equity, the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat held an Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting in Trinidad on 16-17 October 2000. The meeting was supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Gender Equality Fund, and was attended by economists and social planners from regional institutions; the governmental sector; international organizations; the NGO sector; and ECLAC staff from the Economic and Social Affairs Units.

The meeting drew on the expertise of Dr. Nilüfer Çagatay, an economist working on gender and macroeconomic policies internationally. The work of Dr. Çagatay on this topic is presented in this issue of **Gender Dialogue**.

In their discussions, the participants agreed that commitment to gender mainstreaming within the finance and economic planning sectors would be enhanced through empirical studies which analyzed and/or demonstrated gender-differences in the distributive relations of the macroeconomic framework. To date, these studies are non-existent. The meeting also considered the need for economic literacy to strengthen gender mainstreaming in economic planning processes. In this regard, participants agreed to consider and define the core elements of a project for the development and dissemination of economic literacy materials.

In other related activities, the ECLAC/CDCC study on gender mainstreaming had highlighted, among other things, the continuing need for gender analysis and gender planning training in the region. In the first issue of "Gender Dialogue" we reported on the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat/Commonwealth Secretariat Regional Training Workshop on Gender mainstreaming. Since then, ECLAC has received a number of requests for technical assistance and we were pleased to participate at a National Symposium on "The Journey from Women and Development to Gender Mainstreaming" convened by the Women's Bureau, Dominica.

In 2001, the ECLAC/CDCC Secretariat intends to address the root causes of violence against women through gender-specific research and the development of data collection protocols. We will also be examining the construction of undesirable forms of masculinity and the ways in which violence against men and boys, in educational and penal institutions, for example, contributes to such construction. We welcome your input as we develop this area of work.

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Are macroeconomic policies gender neutral?

This article is excerpted with permission, from "Engendering Macroeconomics and Macroeconomic Policies" by Dr. Nilüfer Çagatay, a publication of the Social Development and Poverty Elimination Division, Bureau for Development Policy, United Nations Development Programme. Working Paper Series No. 6

Macroeconomic analysis can be described as the analysis of the economy-wide interaction of a few highly aggregated markets. Usually, at a minimum, macroeconomists define three such aggregated markets: the labour market, asset market and the goods market. Building on a conceptual understanding of how these markets are constituted, macroeconomists functionally specify the connections and the nature of the interaction between them. This makes it possible to build models that can capture these relations at varying degrees of detail and complexity depending on the question at hand.

The ultimate goal is to be able to identify what is ailing the economy and to determine what type of policies can be prescribed to establish conditions of growth so as to achieve a steady increase in per capita levels of income. For macroeconomists this implies pursuing three types of policy objectives:

1. The attainment of price stability, (i.e., keeping inflation or deflation under control),
2. Full employment, and
3. Foreign sector balance.

In pursuing these objectives, policy makers can make use of three traditional instruments: fiscal policy, monetary policy and exchange rate policy.

The general presumption prevalent among economists is that these policy objectives and instruments are both gender-neutral. This traditional view has been challenged by a body of scholarship which argues that:

- a. Macroeconomic policies are generally gender-biased in their effects, and
- b. Gender inequalities at the micro and meso levels have macroeconomic implications.

Gender is the basis for a very basic division of labour within most societies:- the division between "productive" and "reproductive" activities. Productive activities refer to income generating activities, generally linked to the market. Reproductive activities refer to activities for the care and development of people. Whatever their exact composition, in most societies and throughout history reproductive activities are carried out mostly by women under conditions of unpaid labour. This is in contrast to "productive" work that finds remuneration in the market, which is done mostly by men.

The fact that women are primarily responsible for reproductive labour is a social, rather than a biological, phenomenon that is only explained by "gender relations," that is, by the sum of social customs, conventions and practices that regulate the multifaceted relationship between men and women in a given society.

Feminist economists have used gender as a category of analysis especially at the micro and meso levels both to critique orthodox approaches to economics and to construct a new approach. Mainstream economics, with its gender-blind approach, had assumed households to be harmonious realms with egalitarian consumption norms and argued that the gender-based specialization in households is an efficient arrangement along the line of the theory of comparative advantage. Thus, it is not surprising that the mainstream direction of research was found dissatisfying by many economists who began to analyze gender discrimination, segmentation and segregation in the labour market and inequalities within households. The conceptual starting points for the new gender-aware approaches to macroeconomic analysis can be summarized in three main propositions:

1. Though social institutions may not be intrinsically gendered themselves, they bear and transmit gender biases. Being socially constructed institutions, 'free markets' also reflect and reinforce gender inequalities;
2. The cost of reproducing and maintaining the labour force in a given society remains invisible as long as the scope of economic activity does not include unpaid 'reproductive' labour. Thus, unpaid work needs to be made visible and the economic meaning of work redefined to include unpaid reproductive labour; and
3. Gender relations play an important role in the division of labour, the distribution of work, income, wealth and productive inputs with important macroeconomic implications. This also implies that economic behaviour is gendered.

Because it takes the legal and institutional structure of the economy as given, traditional macroeconomic analysis ends up being gender-blind rather than gender-neutral. It fails to take into account male biases in labour market legislation, in property rights and inheritance law, all of which restrict and shape the economic activity of women.

A cardinal rule of economic policy-making involves the principle that policies should target problems at their source, rather than dealing with their manifestations. Various macroeconomic problems emanate from gender inequalities at the micro and meso levels. Thus, long-term solutions can only be achieved if and when these inequalities are eradicated at their source.

Creating conditions of equality in sharing reproductive responsibilities and decision-making within the household; providing women with equal access to economic resources, education and job training; and eradicating legal, institutional and cultural barriers that prevent or disadvantage women's participation in economic activity and decision-making at the political level are just a few examples of the objectives long-term policies need to target at the meso and micro levels.

Fiscal policy is a good example of how macroeconomic policies can, and need to be scrutinized with respect to their gender effects. In countries as diverse as Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and South Africa, Women's Budget Statements and Initiatives have been developed as a device of intervention at the macroeconomic level of policy-making. They are used to review and analyze national budgets and expenditures to determine which groups benefit from fiscal policies and whether biases against women, poor people or other disadvantaged groups are built into them. In these efforts, the ultimate objective has been to make macroeconomic policy responsive to the needs of the disfranchised groups.

In the analysis of budgetary allocations, a checklist of questions are drawn, to be asked of any type of public expenditure:

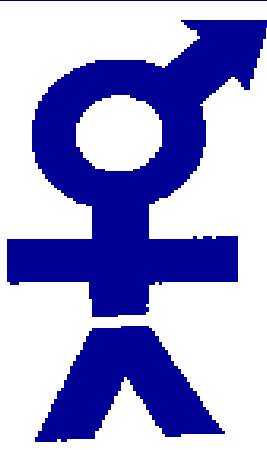
- How much is to be spent and on what?
- How will services be delivered ?
- How does expenditure relate to provision by business organizations, voluntary organizations, community groups and networks of solidarity?
- How does expenditure relate to the informal and unpaid provision of services through households and family networks?
- Who will benefit in terms of access to services?
- Who will benefit in terms of public sector employment?
- How can poor women access more time, better nutrition, health and better skills?

A similar checklist is prepared with regard to revenue raising measures, such as taxes and user fees. This list includes questions about the effects of such measures on various groups in terms of a reduction in income, consumption, access to services (e.g. through user fees) as well as a question on which groups would bear an increased workload in terms of unpaid labour time as a result of the revenue-raising measures.

Gender-analysis can play an important role, by ensuring that:

- a. Efficiency in the use of resources is properly defined. Macroeconomic policies which seem to increase efficiency in the formal economy might simply be an artifact caused by the transfer of costs to the reproductive sector of the economy;
- b. Efforts to mobilize new resources take into account the fact that women's labour is an over-utilized resource. This means that, because households do not necessarily pool all their resources, the impact of different taxes will vary by gender;
- c. Policy design of the pattern of expenditures takes into account the gender specific externalities. An important example of this is women's caring work which has wide spillover effects on the economy at large beyond the family; and
- d. Sustainability is understood in a broader sense to include the intangible social/human resources, underpinning goodwill, trust and social stability.

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A D I A L O G U E

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Women, Men and Poverty

Article supplied by Pat Ellis

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One good way to assess poverty and to understand the links between poverty and gender is to listen to the voices of women and men who are living in poverty. Although both may display similar characteristics of low levels of education and qualifications, functional illiteracy, few marketable skills and unemployment, their experience of poverty differs as do its effects and impact on them.

Recent poverty assessments conducted in several countries used focus group discussions in order to listen to the voices of poor men and women, and to gain a better understanding of the links between gender and poverty.

- "Poverty affects women more because they have to cope with single families, deprivation and neglect"

The majority of poor women are single parents with several children, often the result of unplanned and unwanted pregnancies, sometimes from different men, some of whom provide no financial or other support for their children. A common experience among poor women is:

- "Being left with children to feed and no support, monetary or otherwise, from their fathers."
- "Fathers do not provide, so women end up having children for many men"
- "You go to look for sugar to give those you have and you might get pregnant again"

Female-headed households are more likely to be poor than those headed by men and in most Caribbean countries there are large numbers of female-headed households. Some of these are headed by grandmothers who depend on small pensions to survive, and who suffer emotional and psychological stress as they face the challenges of raising a second set of children.

- "Ah don't have nothing to give the grand children"
- "The children leave and go away to look for betterment, they leave the grandchildren, but they never come back, some don't even send back money or anything"

Some poor women do find employment in low paying jobs, but the majority are unemployed and have no regular source of income. These women are unable to feed and clothe their children.

- "I does work in de factory, but the pay so small that it can't do. When I pay what I owe de shop, I ent have nothing left"
- "I can't get no work, I tired try"
- "I don't even have enough money to buy matches to boil a cup of water to give them children, they ent eat nothing for three days".
- "It real hard on me, no income, no money to buy food for the children. Dey have to go to school without lunch"

Some are therefore willing to do anything, including sell their bodies, to get money to feed their children and are thus open to exploitation.

- "I ent telling you no lie, I does take man to feed them children. It better than tiefing. If I tief dey going put me in gaol and then my children will starve"
- "Government people who give out work won't give work to women they can't touch up. They want to play with you first"

The words of poor women tell that poverty also affects their relationships with men.

- "We fight and quarrel about the simplest things"
- "My boyfriend drinks a lot and we fight often."
- "My boyfriend calls me a whore and insults me because I can't read"

In addition, poverty limits their development and independence, affects their self-esteem and undermines their self-confidence and their faith in themselves.

- "It (poverty) limit development, it leads to abuse and violence"
- "Something missing in my life"

Because attention is usually on poor women, and because men are often seen as contributing to women's condition of deprivation, men's experience of poverty is less often examined and its effects on them less often understood. But men are also affected by poverty in negative ways.

For one thing, it affects and undermines their sense of manhood and diminishes them in the eyes of other men, of their partners and of their communities.

- "I shame to go by the shop and lime with dem fellas cause when is my turn to stan a round of drinks I ent have no money to do it"
- "When you poor and have to wait on people to give you something, you can't feel like a man, you feel like a dog."

It also affects their ability to perform their roles as breadwinner and provider for the financial needs of their families and children.

- "I feel shame cause I can't take care of my family as I would like"
- "I can't meet my needs and commitments"

And it affects their relations with women and with their children.

- "I can't go by the woman and sleep cause I ent have nothing to give her"
- "It (poverty) causes neglected homes, brings conflicts in the home and lead to breakdown in families"
- "Can't see your children because of some quarrel or argument with their mother over money"

Eradicating Poverty...

Many poverty eradication initiatives in the region are not achieving the expected results precisely because they have ignored the gender dimension of poverty.

Attempts to eradicate poverty must be based on and reflect an understanding of gender discrimination, of the vulnerability of women who are single-parent, household heads, and of the factors that are responsible for the devastating effects that poverty has on them. They must also take into consideration the ways in which poverty affects gender relations and the relationship between adverse gender relations and poverty.

To be effective, poverty eradication programmes must be targeted and designed to address the particular conditions and to meet the specific needs of poor women and poor men.

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UNDP support for a gender-responsive, macroeconomic development planning in the Caribbean

by Isabella Waterschoot

The UNDPs support to the Ad Hoc Experts Group Meeting on Gender & Macroeconomic Policies: Planning in the Caribbean organized by ECLAC, 16-17 October 2000, was part of the Regional Gender Mainstreaming Programme coordinated by UNDP Headquarters. As the first of its kind in the region, the meeting provided an avenue for moving beyond the traditional issues of gender affairs. It also shed light on new ways to refine measures and reduce inequities in the area of social and economic justice since inequities do affect growth. Distorted budget allocations based on such inequities reduce the positive impacts of social investments.

The meeting confirmed that it is possible to pursue gender-sensitive planning even when dealing with ostensibly neutral fiscal and monetary instruments and that gender analysis brings to macroeconomic policy planning a new perspective on how gender inequalities affect growth.

UNDP has been at the forefront in promoting the mainstreaming of gender equality goals in programme areas. It has also been responsible for fostering new perspectives on institutional strengthening, facilitating the development of tools and methodologies to ensure that Sustainable Human Development is tailored-made to gender equality goals and in strategic areas of a gender mainstreaming (training, advocacy, planning).

What is now needed in this very ambitious forward-looking task is renewed solid partnerships. The research agenda developed at the meeting represents an opportunity for UNDP to contribute to the development agenda of the Caribbean region and to participate in increasing the availability of studies on gender differentials in economic behaviour and economic literacy advocacy.

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COMMENTARY: Males and females are victims of marginalisation

by Wayne Riley

I have read Dr. Eudine Barriteau's article "Re-examining Issues of Male Marginalization and Masculinity in the Caribbean" with interest, and while I understand the angle of truth on which she bases her discourse, my reality raises questions on a number of issues. In spite of my pursuit to resolve these questions raised, I have remained without answers. As a result, I am forced to enter this discourse.

Barriteau raised the issue of patriarchal dominance within the society as foundational to her understanding that given such male privilege, to think of male marginalisation borders on the absurd, since it does not exist. This is the gist of what I have interpreted from Barriteau's article.

Permit me to regress to antecedent memory (history) when the colour "white" was perceived as an absolute and when the lack of its adjectival use, in race talk, was a statement of power and privilege. Bell Hooks, **Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism** observed that the refusal to recognize "white" as a colour made it possible for white women to act as if alliances did exist between themselves and non-white women when in reality, it did not (1984: 140).

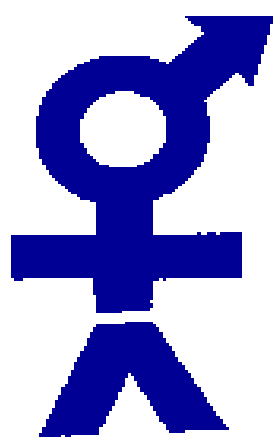
Sojourner Truth in her famous nineteenth century presentation "Ain't I A Woman", made in 1851, at a women's convention in Akron, Ohio, demonstrated that "woman" as a statement of homogeneity does not exist. Women mediate their environment differently, are victims of different kinds and degrees of marginalisation, some of it perpetrated and perpetuated by other women.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, **Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies** offered the term "kyriarchy-kyriocentrism" (from the Greek words kyria and kyrios for lord and lady) because she felt that feminism must not only be concerned with gender inequities and gender marginalisation but that it should also address other forms of marginalisation and domination such as "racism, poverty, religious exclusion, heterosexism and colonialism, all of which are inflected by gender and inflict gender"(1999: 5). Why I disagree with Barriteau (not that I totally accept Errol Miller either) is because I see her argument being articulated from the perspective of male/female dualism instead of from a wholistic perspective (e.g. race, culture, age, sex etc.). If in her discourse, I see the pursuance of an inter-linking of domination and marginalisation that exist in society, I am sure that the conclusion of the discourse will be different.

Just as I have bought into the idea of multiple feminism which academia would support, I hold on to the concept of multiple "masculinities". In our homophobic societies, we see how males of alternative sexual orientation are marginalised. In our pluralistic societies, we see how physically challenged males are marginalised. While I hold that females too are marginalised in the said ways, refusing to recognize the plight of the males is unfortunate. Those are just two variables, but other divides such as race, status, religion, to name a few, are other boundaries which provide challenges for both male and female. Marginalisation is a scourge of which both males and females are victims.

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Legislative Reform Project: Family Law & Domestic Violence

The Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC), based in Saint Lucia, is currently implementing the Family Law and Domestic Violence Legislative Reform Project. The project's primary purpose is to reform the Justice System in the Eastern Caribbean to deal with domestic violence and family issues.

The project, which is being championed by Sir Dennis Byron, Chief Justice of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, evolved simultaneously with the concern to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the judicial system, thereby improving access to justice for all members of the society. It also builds on previous reviews of family law undertaken by the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) in some member countries of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

In determining the direction of legislative reform, the project uses, as a guide, the obligations elaborated in several conventions and treaties that have been signed and ratified by OECS member countries.

Under the Women's Convention, particularly articles 5 and 16, State parties are required to take all appropriate steps to ensure the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing of their children. States are also required to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters related to marriage and family relations.

At their thirteenth session held in 1994, the treaty-based body known as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), also called upon State parties to ensure protection of the rights of persons in common-law unions. This recommendation is of significance for Caribbean States given that common-law unions are at least equal in number to legal unions and more children are born out of wedlock than to married persons.

The concern for shared family responsibilities is also to be found in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC elaborates the obligations of States to protect children from physical and mental violence, abuse, neglect, negligent treatment or maltreatment.

Domestic violence legislation has since been enacted in Antigua and Barbuda, the British Virgin Islands, St. Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. However, in the area of family and children's law, law reform is still a priority, and a number of new concerns have emerged. These include the treatment of juvenile offenders and of children in difficult circumstances and the need for a regulatory framework to deal with care facilities for the elderly.

In order to identify the reforms needed, the project calls for a review of the existing legal provisions in order to identify gaps and/or areas that are inconsistent with the obligations under the human rights treaties.

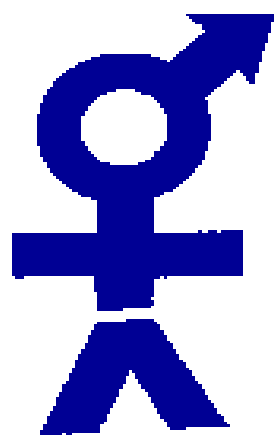
Throughout the process, researchers will engage in a wide-ranging consultative process with the stakeholders and actors within the legal system, (including litigants), to ascertain the inadequacies as well as the good laws and practices in the areas identified.

The research at national level is to be presented to a consultative workshop at which input can be made towards recommendations for legal reform. This research, together with recommendations, will be compiled into a regional report and forwarded to legislative drafters for the development of model legislation in the areas identified as requiring reform.

The ECSC project, which has been endorsed by the member countries of the OECS, has wide ranging support from international agencies including the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, UNICEF, CIDA and Commonwealth Secretariat.

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