

The books in Oxfam's *Focus on Gender* series were originally published as single issues of the journal *Gender and Development* (formerly *Focus on Gender*). *Gender and Development* is published by Oxfam three times a year. It is the only British journal to focus specifically on gender and development issues internationally, to explore the links between gender and development initiatives, and to make the links between theoretical and practical work in this field. For information about subscription rates, please apply to Carfax Publishing Company, PO Box 25, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 3UE, UK; Fax: +44 (0) 1235 401550. In North America, please apply to Carfax Publishing Company, 875-81 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139; Fax: (+1) 617 354 6875. In Australia, please apply to Carfax Publishing Company, PO Box 352, Cammeray, NSW 2062, Australia; Fax: +61 (0) 2 9958 2376.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the written permission of the Publisher.

Front cover: Milking a cow in Bolivia Photo: Sean Sprague

© Oxfam GB 1999

Published by Oxfam GB, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, UK.

Typeset by Oxfam Publishing

Oxfam is a registered charity No. 202918

Oxfam GB is a member of Oxfam International

ISBN 0 85598 400 7

This book converted to digital file in 2010

Contents

Editorial 2

Caroline Sweetman

Liberalisation, gender, and the land question in sub-Saharan Africa 9

Kaori Izumi

Does land ownership make a difference?

Women's roles in agriculture in Kerala, India 19

Shoba Arun

Rural development in Brazil: Are we practising feminism or gender? 28

Cecilia Sardenberg, Ana Alice Costa, and Elizete Passos

Women farmers and economic change in northern Ghana 39

Rachel Naylor

'Lazy men', time-use, and rural development in Zambia 49

Ann Whitehead

Integrating gender needs into drinking-water projects in Nepal 62

Shibesh Chandra Regmi and Ben Fawcett

Structural adjustment, women, and agriculture in Cameroon 73

Charles Fonchingong

Interview with Penny Fowler and Koos Neefjes of Oxfam GB: Are genetically modified foods a new development? 80

Resources: 86

compiled by Erin Murphy Graham

Books and papers 86

Organisations 88

Web resources 89

E-mail lists 90

Index to Volume 7 91

Editorial

As we enter the new century, there is an increasing trend towards the 'feminisation of agriculture' (FAO 1999i). The role of women in food production is expanding: in south-east Asia, women currently provide up to 90 per cent of labour for rice cultivation, while in sub-Saharan Africa, women produce up to 80 per cent of basic foodstuffs for household consumption and sale (FAO 1999ii). One key element in this process is the fact that rural livelihoods are changing, as a result of economic crisis and growing pressure on scant natural resources. For example, male migration has led to a 21.8 per cent drop in the rural male population in Malawi between 1970 and 1990, while the female population declined by only 5.4 per cent (ibid.). The role of women is also expanding to compensate for 'missing men', lost in armed conflict and through disease, including AIDS. In sub-Saharan Africa, AIDS is devastating agricultural production, and there is an increasing dependence on households headed by females, children, and the elderly. The 1999 harvest in Zimbabwe saw a 61 per cent decrease in maize output (*Mail and Guardian*, 16 August 1999). Agribusiness is also being 'feminised': in countries like Chile, where overall economic statistics reflect the achievements of agribusiness in bringing about an economic 'miracle'

(Barrientos et al. 1999, 1), women workers have become central to the production of fruit for export, providing 'flexible female labour ... with a clear pattern of gender segregation' (ibid., 9).

Articles in this collection assert that women's contribution to global agricultural production for food and for profit continues to be largely unacknowledged and undervalued, and that their ability to farm is constrained, because the resources they need are often controlled by others. Women in many different contexts continue to have their rights denied to independent control of land, agricultural inputs, credit, and other essential resources. Their access to training, education, and extension services, and to gaining leadership of rural organisations are impeded by assumptions on the part of national governments, community leaders, and development policy-makers that farmers are male, because 'men are the providers'. New technologies which are available to male farmers may not be available to women, while women's own knowledge of crops and husbandry is either underestimated, or appropriated by private companies which can profit from it. New agricultural policies are needed, founded on a gender analysis of the process through which agriculture is becoming feminised, and a commitment to gender equality.

Agriculture, production, and gender relations

The high productivity and low visibility of women in agriculture first received worldwide attention 30 years ago with the publication of Ester Boserup's book *Woman's Role in Economic Development* in 1970. The UN International Decade for Women (1976-85) subsequently focused on women's role in production.

The main focus of Boserup's book is the impact on international development of a failure to recognise the extent of women's responsibilities, and to support women in this. During International Women's Decade, feminist researchers shifted the emphasis to gender equity, to focus on the ways in which changing conditions of production, and shifts in the division of labour, are linked to changes in women's status — for better or worse.

These studies drew the attention of policy-makers to the enormous workload of women across the world, and contrasted this to women's lack of control over the land and property they used in production, and their lack of a say in how the products of their work were used. These analyses questioned racist stereotypes of rural societies as backward, by pointing out women's similar experiences in the industrial, 'modern' settings of Europe and North America. Cross-cultural comparisons showed that women's role in production was under-valued everywhere: a shift away from farming to manufacturing and service industries did not necessarily end inequality between the sexes. These studies also exposed the fact that women were — and still are — burdened with almost all the domestic work and child-rearing throughout the world, and that this is linked to the lesser value ascribed to women's and men's work.

Rural development interventions focus primarily on promoting efficiency in the agricultural sector, rather than promoting

equality between the sexes. However, all the articles in this issue assert that a focus on gender equity is essential, even if the aim is only to increase efficiency. It is clear that (in societies where agriculture is the sole or the major source of household livelihoods) modes of production are related to the division of labour within the household, and in particular to marriage and family forms. The implications of this were clearly recognised by Ester Boserup: 'Economic and social development unavoidably entails the disintegration of the division of labour among the two sexes traditionally established in the village' (Boserup 1989, 5). Feminist analysis also confirms the links between underlying power relations between the sexes, which define, and are defined by, the gender division of labour. For example, norms of female submission and fidelity within marriage are an economic, as well as a social, issue: control of women's bodies is essential if men are to be certain of the paternity of the children who will inherit their land and property. This control in turn shapes women's participation in production, since their mobility outside the household may be restricted and policed. Forms of marriage — monogamy, polygamy, and polyandry — determine the size and nature of the household labour force, and the resources available to the household are determined by different systems of land and property inheritance, forms of marriage, and norms of access and control.

Women's land rights: access, control, and ownership

Independent land rights, which enable women to decide on the use of land and keep the proceeds from such use, are still a dream for women in many countries, despite their increasingly central role in agriculture. Women's relationship with land is determined by customs and laws of inheritance and marriage. If a woman does

not inherit her father's property, but is expected instead to marry and move to her husband's land, she only has access to the land of her natal and marital homes. In some contexts, women do keep the proceeds from the crops they grow and sell on their husband's property; but without formal ownership of land, they are barred from using it as collateral for loans or credit, selling it if they have to raise money, or bequeathing it to daughters or others.

The need for women to secure full and independent land rights has been argued on the grounds of welfare, efficiency, and gender equality (Agarwal 1994). On welfare grounds, landlessness has been linked in many studies to poverty in South Asia. In comparison, landlessness in sub-Saharan Africa has been comparatively rare until now. However, the AIDS epidemic is causing distress sales of land in Zimbabwe, because many families cannot make a living from the land due to a lack of labour, and need to pay for medical care. It is likely that a new group of landless will arise from this problem (*Mail and Guardian*, 16 August 1999). As can be seen from this example, land is not only valuable for its use in agriculture, but is also a marketable commodity which provides security in times of crisis. In terms of efficiency, the 'women and environment' approach to development (WED) adopted by some development organisations argues that women are more likely to use land productively and sustainably. Empowerment approaches stress the fact that land ownership is not only an economic issue, but is closely correlated with social and political power.

However, ownership of land does not guarantee control over land or power in the home. In her article, Shoba Arun focuses on Kerala in southern India, which is well-known to gender and development researchers and workers for its relatively high level of social development, against a background of poverty. A feature of

Kerala's *nair* communities is women's ownership of land, but control over it is either joint or determined by the natal family (Agarwal 1994). In Kerala, husbands and wives are also increasingly moving away from their land to gain male employment, and land is passing out of women's ownership. In other households, male migration has increased, and the impact of this is similar for women in both matrilineal and patrilineal households: both groups of women supervise farming, with little infrastructural support, and juggle this with their household work.

Today, women in many areas are unable to obtain rights to land by recourse to the law. While rights to equality are enshrined in many constitutions, laws do not always match this commitment, and where laws do exist they may not be accessible for women living in poverty. In India and many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, customs on land use and ownership were codified during the colonial era. Traditional customs had been relatively flexible and open to interpretation, but colonial officials who consulted male elders recorded their versions as 'customary law'. Currently, the situation is worsening for women in some countries; advances made in civil law are undermined by forces who wish to consolidate their power through asserting that 'custom' does not give women equal rights. Earlier this year, the international women's movement was horrified by the decision of the Supreme Court of Zimbabwe that Venia Magaya could not inherit her father's estate, citing customary law as a reason for treating women as 'junior males' (*Southern Africa Chronicle*, 31 May 1999). The political and economic background to Zimbabwe's ruling is discussed in Kaori Izumi's article here, and compared to the case of Tanzania.

Izumi also explores the different aims of various phases of land reform policy. During the first years after the colonial era, many countries emphasised redistribution of land to people living in poverty.

However, during the economic adjustment drives of the 1980s, with their political ideologies of deregulation and individual competition, women and other marginalised groups have lost out. Debates on land and gender equity tend to be limited to discussing the pros and cons of civil law and individual rights versus collective ownership and customary law. In her accessible discussion of land theories, Izumi shows how these reflect the historical context and current political and economic ideologies.

Agriculture, livelihoods, and economic adjustment

Over the past decade, world trade has expanded, but while many countries have increased their agricultural exports, others (including most in sub-Saharan Africa) have not been able to take advantage of the opportunities of global trade. The 48 least developed countries, home to 10 per cent of the world's population, have seen their share of world exports decline to 0.4 per cent over the past two decades. In contrast, the United States and the European Union contain roughly the same number of people, yet account for 50 per cent of world exports (World Bank 1998). Poor farmers not only are unable to gain access to global export markets for cash crops, but also face other threats to their livelihoods, health, and food security. The activities of multinational corporations, promoting patented technologies developed through genetic modification, pose one such threat.

The impact of globalisation on farmers varies according to their context and social identity. Two articles in this collection discuss how structural adjustment has affected African agriculture, and women's lives. Rachel Naylor discusses Ghana, where path-breaking feminist research on patterns of agricultural production and household budgeting was carried out by Ann Whitehead almost two decades ago.

Naylor points out that the language used in discussions of women's vulnerability, of the impact of economic reform, and of the 'rural poor', renders rural dwellers passive, and obscures the fact that people adjust to meet challenges posed to them. Yet while men and women are taking advantage of new opportunities, the evidence shows that in Ghana, as elsewhere, women are also shouldering added burdens. In his article, Charles Fonchingong charts how members of women's self-help groups in Cameroon perceive life during the structural adjustment programmes of the past decade. In this case study, women from rural areas describe how they see the formerly clear divisions between male and female systems of agriculture blurring into one, as household members struggle to overcome the threat of poverty brought about by structural adjustment.

Several articles in this issue discuss agricultural production as one component of increasingly diverse livelihoods in rural and (to a lesser extent) urban areas. Migration — already a key component of rural livelihoods for many — has become increasingly significant in this era of environmental degradation, pressure on scant resources, and structural adjustment. Many in rural areas have no sources of cash, and subsistence cannot be guaranteed, so they have to maintain living standards through cash employment. Migration is a gender-specific issue: depending on the nature and conditions of the work available, either women or men will travel to find it. Age, and the stage of the family life-cycle, also determine who goes and who stays. In central and south America and east Asia, women are often the migrants; in south Asia, the picture is different. In their article focusing on an arid area of Brazil, Cecilia Sardenberg, Ana Alice Costa, and Elizete Passos focus on a major project which aims to alleviate poverty among rural dwellers. They point out that 'loss of labour through migration can effectively double women's

workload: in certain communities, nearly 80 per cent of the households and the care of the land are under women's responsibility for the greatest part of the year' (Sardenberg et al., this issue).

The second green revolution

From the mid-1960s onwards, rural development research and policy concentrated on the need to 'modernise' the agricultural sector, promoting the cultivation of cash crops on large-scale land-holdings. The first green revolution saw the advent of high-tech 'solutions' to food insecurity in Asia and Africa, including chemical fertilisers and pesticides, mechanised irrigation, and new high-yield crop varieties developed in the laboratories of North America and Europe.

At present, consumers and environmental activists are challenging the right of private companies to shape the second green revolution, with an eye to profit rather than the goal of human development through global, sustainable, food security. While international development agencies and national governments controlled the first green revolution, the second green revolution is being shaped by the will of multi-national corporations, and by specific governments which are pursuing the new technologies (the US is currently exporting \$50 billion of agricultural products a year and planting transgenic varieties for 25-45 per cent of its major crops, according to UNDP 1999 figures¹). There is currently an international outcry, caused by a concern for public health, for the right of states to ensure food security of their populations, and by the threat of environmental hazard and the appropriation of communal resources by private ownership. In an interview with Koos Neefjes and Penny Fowler here, these issues are explored, and the connections between this debate and gender issues teased out.

Vandana Shiva, who is perhaps the best-known feminist environmental activist today, highlights the links between the ideologies which determine the course of global development, the damage which development interventions have wreaked on the environment, and women's well-being and status.

For gender and development researchers and workers, ecofeminist approaches which believe in the close connection between women and nature (Agarwal 1992) may seem naïve in their failure to analyse the way in which women are divided as a group by other aspects of their identity, and in their conflation of 'women's perspectives and actions' with other 'alternative' visions of agriculture and world trade (Shiva 1996, 26). Data on the impact of the first green revolution of the 1960s and 1970s show that 'the major beneficiaries are those who were already relatively well off ... but there is no simple opposition between men and women' (White 1992, 46). Key elements of Shiva's recent work on globalisation agree with the views of activists from anti-poverty and environmental organisations: for example, that states should have the right to feed their people without competing with global players in a so-called free, but unfair, market, and that consumers should 'think globally, act locally'. While it is true that 'in the North and the South, women have been in the forefront [of the struggle] against industrial farming methods which destroy livelihoods and ecosystems' (Shiva 1996, 25), women involved in political protest on these issues have more in common than their sex.

Analytical tools and women's workload

Two articles in this issue shed light on important methodological issues for development policy-makers and practitioners. A number of development orga-

nisations and individuals have developed analytical tools to assist the process of integrating gender issues into planning and implementation. However, a major risk in using such tools is that they can be applied mechanistically, without commitment to challenging injustice (Smyth 1999).

Another risk is that inaccurate data are produced and development interventions informed by them. Studies of women's and men's time-use formed a vital element of the pioneering research into the role of women in agriculture of the 1970s and 1980s. Data of this type has been used to raise awareness among community groups and development practitioners of the unequal workloads of women and men, and of women's multiple roles in productive and reproductive work. In an article which reviews an influential paper on time-use in Zambia, Ann Whitehead points out the need to understand the role of agriculture in rural livelihoods, and the gendered nature of the external employment market, before making assumptions about women's and men's roles in production. Whitehead argues that in the absence of such a detailed understanding of context, skewed figures can result in a lack of understanding of rural livelihoods and in inaccurate stereotypes of African men as lazy.

Women's central role in contributing to rural (and urban!) livelihoods through domestic work is rarely shared by men. The need to alleviate the time-consuming drudgery of water and fuel collection in developing countries is widely accepted as essential if welfare goals are to be met, and rural development initiatives to be rendered sustainable. Shibesh Regmi and Ben Fawcett's article, focusing on water provision in Nepal, criticises the limited understanding of 'gender' or 'women's' issues on the part of development practitioners involved in technical aspects of rural development. This article offers useful insights for other technical

specialists involved in aspects of rural development, who commonly consider 'strategic' (Moser 1989) — or feminist — issues of gender power relations to be outside their remit. The language of many rural development initiatives speaks of women's 'practical needs' and 'women's participation', but the links between practical needs and strategic issues — including control over essential resources — are lost. Regmi and Fawcett document how a water project can fail in the absence of an understanding of how gender relations affect a community's chances of attaining sustainable development.

To close, there is one final stereotype persisting in rural development to be challenged, which is extremely influential in determining what kind of work with women in rural areas is appropriate for NGOs and government bodies to attempt. This stereotype is one of exhausted, victimised, and uneducated rural women, who are victims of back-ward, traditional forces in their households and at community level, and who are unaware of the obstacles they face. Issues including domestic violence may be tip-toed around by development workers who are anxious to focus on meeting 'basic needs' and chary of broaching sensitive issues which they cannot address through tangible work. Staff promoting social development are often located in urban areas, in the belief that gender inequality can be challenged better in this setting, and lack the understanding to challenge rural reality.

Articles in this collection make suggestions on ways to 'work on gender' as an essential component of all development initiatives, and highlight the impact on the food security and wellbeing of women, men, and children in rural areas if women's interests are disregarded. There is compelling evidence here that economic, legal, and social aspects of women's poverty, and especially their rights to land, must be challenged simultaneously.

Note

- 1 UNDP Human Development Report 1999, 72.

References

- Agarwal B (1992) 'The Gender and Environment Debate: Lessons from India', in *Feminist Studies*, 18:1.
- Agarwal B (1994) *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*, Cambridge University Press.
- Barrientos S, Bee A, Matear A and Vogel I (1999) *Women and Agribusiness: Working miracles in the Chilean fruit export sector*, Macmillan, London.
- Boserup E (1989) *Women's Role in Economic Development*, Earthscan, London.
- FAO (1999i) <http://www.fao.org/Gender/en/agrib2-e.htm>
- FAO (1999ii) <http://www.fao.org/Gender/en/agrib4-e.htm>
- Mail and Guardian*, South Africa, <http://www.mg.co.za>
- Moser C (1989) 'Gender planning in the Third World: Meeting women's practical and strategic gender needs', in *World Development* 17(11).
- Shiva V (1996) *Caliber of Destruction: Globalisation, food security and women's livelihoods*, Isis International, Philippines.
- Smyth I (1999) Introduction in *A Guide to Gender-Analysis Tools and Frameworks*, Oxfam GB, Oxford.
- UNDP (1999) *Human Development Report*, UN, New York.
- White S C (1992) *Arguing with the Crocodile: Gender and class in Bangladesh*, Zed Books, London.
- World Bank (1998) *World Development Indicators*, World Bank, Washington DC.

Liberalisation, gender, and the land question in sub-Saharan Africa

Kaori Izumi

This paper focuses on land reform initiatives undertaken in a number of African countries since the late 1980s. Current theories of land and debates on gender issues fail to explain the complex processes through which women's access and rights to land have been affected, contested, and negotiated during socio-economic and political restructuring. Drawing on the case studies of Tanzania and Zimbabwe, this paper is a call for policy-makers, researchers, and activists to return to these neglected issues.

In the process of social, economic, and political restructuring that most African countries have undergone in the past two decades, land has been one of the most contested issues. Privatisation of land has become the major objective of land reform in a number of African countries — including Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Botswana and Namibia — where economic adjustment policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank aim to allow market forces to determine the efficient allocation and use of land. This shift in the direction of land policy has also affected countries like Zimbabwe and South Africa, where redistribution of land to the black majority was the original rationale of land reform.

Land policy formulation has become an arena of conflict for a number of interest groups¹: at the local level, land-related conflicts have arisen and intensified for reasons including pressure on land-use, and the investment potential of particular areas. Political parties have used the question of the direction, the pace, and the way in which land reform is instituted, as a means of acquiring support in new multi-

party systems. Political conflict over land has emerged between ethnic groups, as well as between national and local state institutions.

In this article, through a review of the cases of Tanzania and Zimbabwe, and a discussion of both mainstream theory² and gender analysis of land issues, I will discuss how economic and political liberalisation have affected women's access and rights to land. Two concerns are of particular importance: first, the question whether market-driven land reform can be compatible with a goal of equal distribution of land among vulnerable groups, including poor people, the landless, and women. Debates on land reform in the context of economic liberalisation have tended to omit gender-related issues. This omission is also reflected in the process of actual land reforms in the 1990s: because the logic of the market is to promote maximum efficiency through competition, it is indifferent to issues of equity. Gender issues have been largely sidelined and compromised, and control of land has been retained by existing powerful social groups.

The other, related, concern is to track why particular groups are vulnerable as regards land. During the period of econo-