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Working towards a more gender equitable macro-economic agenda

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united nations research institute for social development
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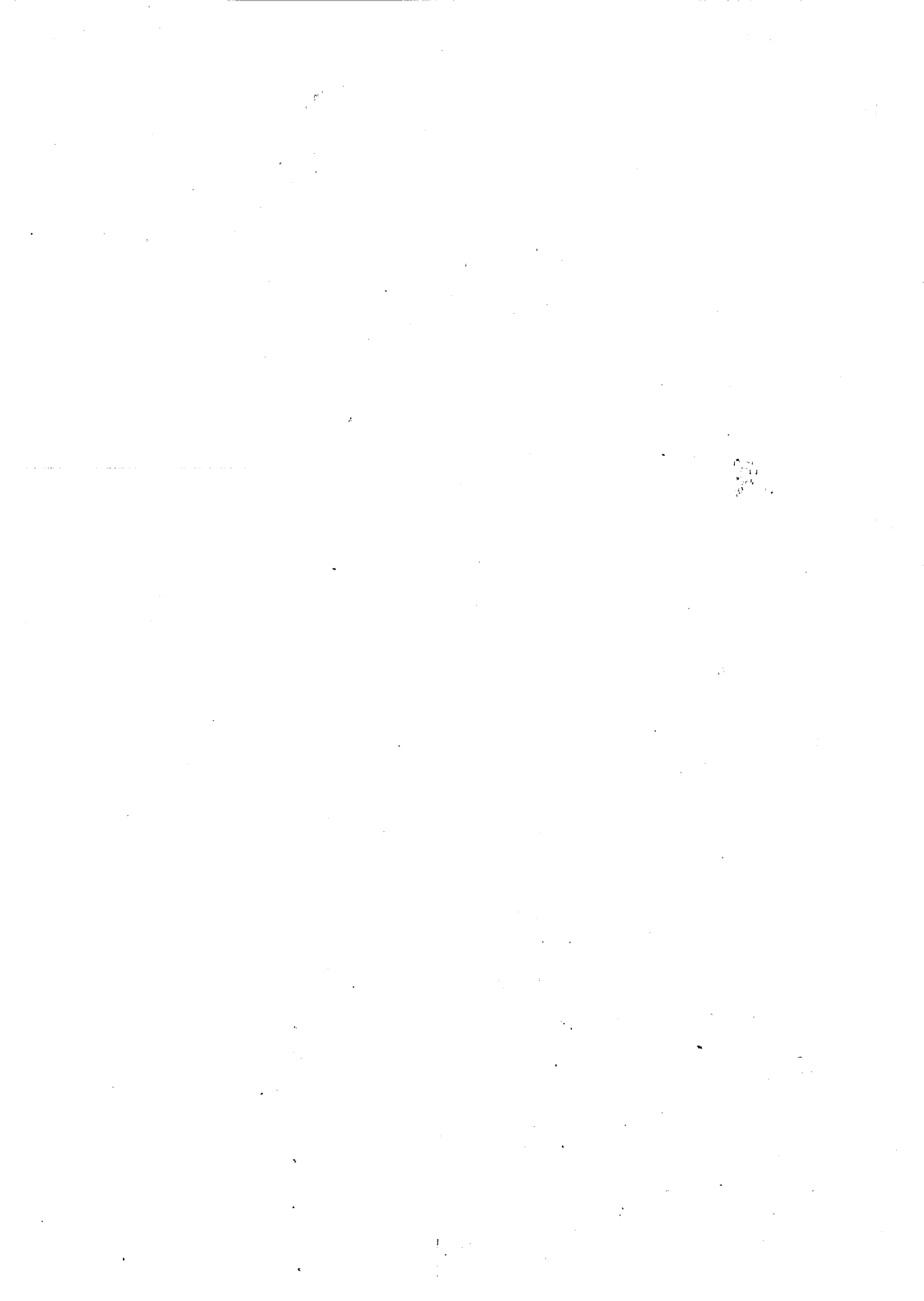
Working towards
a more
gender Equitable
macro-economic Agenda

report of the unrisd / cpd workshop
(rajendrapur, bangladesh, 26-28 november 1996)



UNRISD

geneva, october 1997



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Preface

On 26-28 November 1996, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) held a workshop on Working Towards a More Gender Equitable Macro-Economic Agenda. On this occasion more than 50 policy makers, researchers, entrepreneurs and representatives from international and non-governmental organizations and other civil society groups met at the BRAC Conference Centre in Rajendrapur, Bangladesh, to discuss the research findings from the UNRISD/UNDP project, Technical Co-operation and Women's Lives: Integrating Gender into Development Policy.

While the negative impacts of structural adjustment policies on women have been increasingly recognized, the relationship between gender relations and macro-economic outcomes has received far less attention. In recent years feminist economists have attempted to move beyond the analyses of the gendered effects of adjustment at the micro level in order to demonstrate the relevance of gender as a set of relations that impact on the achievement of macro-economic objectives. The workshop deliberations on what a gender analysis of macro-economics would entail spanned both conceptual issues relating to the content of macro-economic policy and feminist insights into that domain, as well as the institutional and political means of bringing gender analysis into the arena of macro-economic decision-making.

One central issue that raised considerable debate and contention related to the boundaries of macro economics and how gender analysis could be introduced therein. Macro-economics, it was argued, was essentially about monetary aggregates and policy tools like the exchange rate and the interest rate, which were applied in order to balance those aggregates. Based on such an interpretation, it was suggested that gender analysis could be considered successful if and when it could identify a set of macro-economic levers that, when manipulated, could produce certain desirable consequential micro-economic outcomes that impact on the circumstances of women. Other participants, while agreeing with the need to aim for improving women's circumstances through macro-economic policy, emphasized the need for an alternative interpretation of macro-economic objectives. According to this view, what gender analysis shows is that the boundaries of macro-economics need to be shifted from a concentration on balancing the monetary aggregates of the "productive economy" to the human resource aggregates of the "reproductive economy" using indicators of health, nutrition, education and skills. The third perspective represented at the workshop involved looking at

the macro-economy through the meso- and micro-level foundations — the institutions and the social relations — that link macro-economic policies to their outcomes. According to this view orthodox macro-economic policy prescriptions need to be tempered by further analysis of the complex social and gender relations that form the “real world” of macro-economic adjustment and restructuring. In some instances macro-economic levers may prove to be too blunt for producing desirable policy outcomes for specific groups of women, and it may be more effective to use policy levers that work at the sectoral and micro levels. These sectoral and micro policies are nevertheless an important part of the macro-economic agenda.

A common theme that emerges from these different perspectives is the importance of public policy in creating a “level playing field” so that economic agents can compete on an equal basis irrespective of their gender identity. In other words, the state needs to play a supervisory role vis-à-vis the market. But it was also clear from the deliberations at the workshop that the state itself needed to be made more accountable to its women citizens. Different views were expressed as to how feminist insights might be brought most effectively into the process of policy-making. Political and institutional barriers continue to obstruct the involvement of gender advocates in a process of dialogue with macro-economic decision makers. While engaging in dialogue with technocrats demands technical competence, reliable data and useful conceptual tools — a point firmly made by the feminist bureaucrats present at the workshop as well as the national research teams engaged in a process of policy advocacy — the outcomes from such a process of engagement will at the same time be conditioned by the cohesiveness of the women’s movement and its capacity to obstruct unsatisfactory policy outcomes.

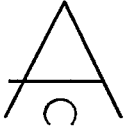
In addition to some of the conceptual issues already mentioned, there were also focused discussions based on country level research into specific items on national macro-economic agendas. There were presentations by the national research teams from Bangladesh and Morocco on issues relating to the feminization of the labour force in the context of trade liberalization and labour deregulation, while the research teams from Uganda and Viet Nam concentrated on the implications of gender relations for the success of agricultural growth strategies and for household food security and well-being. In some cases the national research teams were able to report their completed findings (Morocco), while in other cases they presented their preliminary results (Bangladesh and Viet Nam) or their ongoing research activities

(Uganda). The Jamaican case study was somewhat unique as the project's activities in that country had been confined to a training session for macro-economists, rather than in-depth research.

As the workshop took place prior to the writing-up of the findings from country level research, it provided a timely opportunity for the members of the research teams to disseminate their results and to obtain feedback from an informed audience. It was also the first occasion for a direct face-to-face encounter among the members of the five national research teams. The discussions at the workshop were significantly strengthened through the active participation of scholars, activists, entrepreneurs and policy makers from the host country, Bangladesh. It is hoped that this report will be useful to development specialists, policy makers and the international donor community.

July 1997

Dharam Ghai
Director, UNRISD



Acknowledgements

UNRISD is grateful to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Sweden; the Directorate-General of International Cooperation (DGIS), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands; and the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka, Bangladesh, for their support and co-operation in the organization of this workshop. At UNRISD Josephine Grin-Yates, Carol Miller and Shahra Razavi were responsible for organizing the workshop, with the collaboration of Nural Haq, Iqbal Hossain and Nasreen Khundker at CPD. UNRISD thanks the CPD and its Executive Chairman, Rehman Sobhan, for making excellent arrangements for the workshop. The present report was prepared by Shahra Razavi; with editing by Jenifer Freedman; and proof-reading, design and layout by Rhonda Gibbes.

A Cronyms

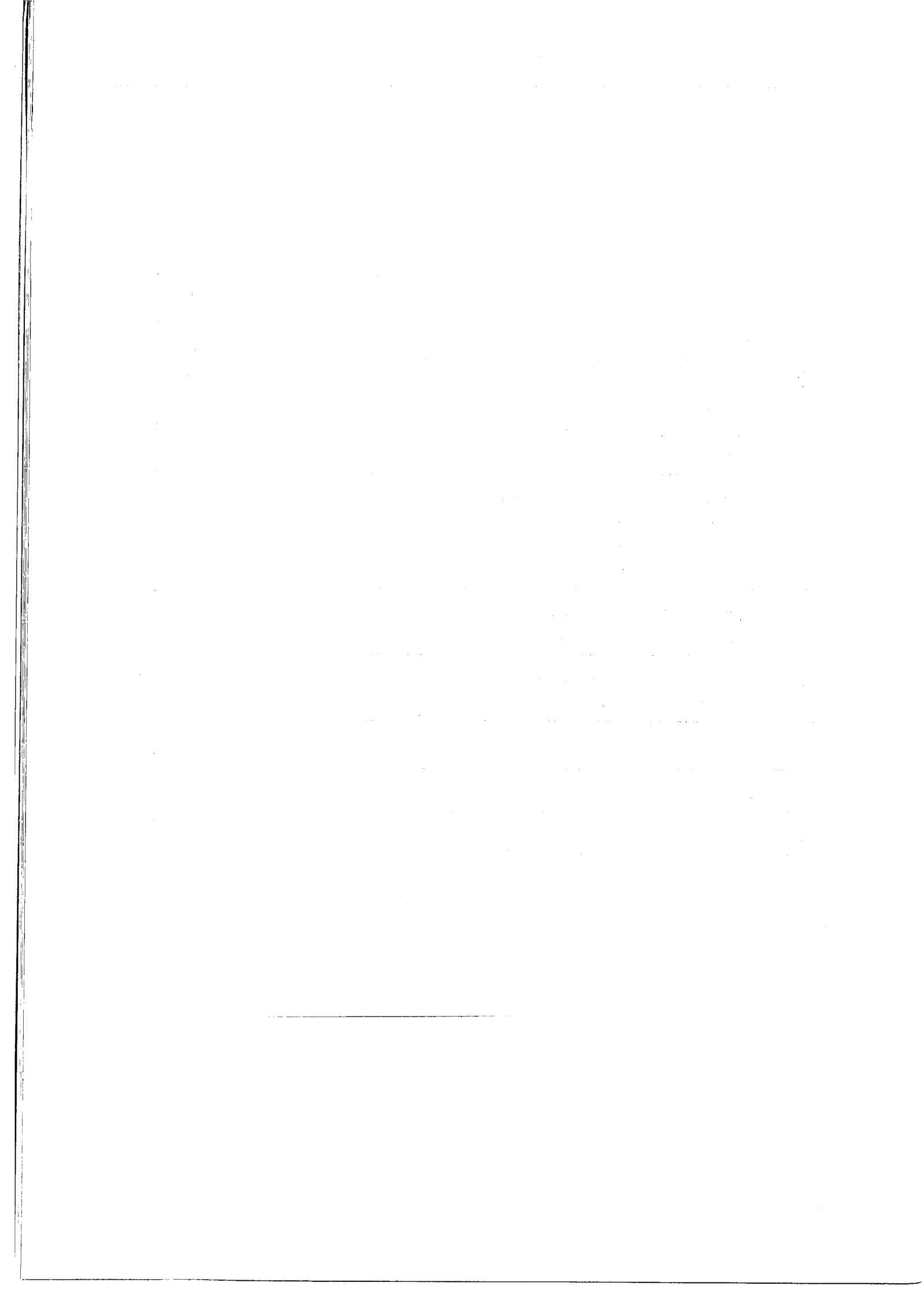
adb	Asian Development Bank
anu	Australian National University
bids	Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies
bpps	Bureau for Programme and Policy Support
brac	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
cerab	Centre d'études et de recherches Aziz Belal
cpd	Centre for Policy Dialogue
dgis	Directorate-General of International Cooperation
epz	export processing zone
gad	gender and development
gdi	Gender-related Development Index
gem	Gender Empowerment Measure
gnp	gross national product
ids	Institute of Development Studies
ilo	International Labour Organization
ntec	non-traditional export crops
oecd	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
pra	participatory rural appraisal
sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
unctc	United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations
undp	United Nations Development Programme
unesco	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
unicef	United Nations Children's Fund
unrisd	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
uwonet	Uganda Women's Network
wid	women in development
wider	World Institute for Development Economics Research

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introduction

1

Since the late 1980s a growing body of scholarship by feminist economists has been demonstrating the complex ways in which gender relations mediate and impact on the objectives sought by macro economists through economic restructuring. Whether the aim is to increase foreign exchange earnings through agricultural reforms, or to facilitate the orientation of industrial production towards export markets, or indeed to reduce public expenditure outlays on health, education and infrastructure, according to feminist economists, the nature of conjugal contracts and householding arrangements — along with other social and power relations that constitute the social settings in which reform programmes are being applied — will have a decisive impact on policy outcomes. Yet, despite this shared conviction that gender relations mediate the achievement of macro-economic objectives, what has emerged is not a single approach to “gender and macro-economics” but a variety of perspectives that diverge at several fundamental junctures. Some of these contentious points are represented in this report.

Notwithstanding their different conceptual underpinnings, there is a degree of consensus among the various contributors to this debate on the need for public policy to play a more active supervisory role vis-à-vis the market if women and men are to be given equitable opportunities to seize the benefits from the reform process and to be able to withstand its inevitable risks and costs. This in turn means that the state itself has to become more accountable to its female citizens — a process requiring public action from a variety of civil society groups and a cohesive gender constituency.

intellectual antecedents

2

Gender insights into macro economics do indeed constitute a novel development in the history of feminist thought. The field that has become known as gender and development (GAD) was until recently predominantly concerned with the micro-economic foundations of development. Here analyses of an anthropological and sociological nature shed new light on the household as a locus of competing interests, needs, rights, obligations and resources, which involve household members in bargaining, negotiation, co-operation and conflict (Folbre, 1986; Sen, 1990). Feminist theoretical insights based on concrete micro-level research questioned many of the

assumptions of conventional micro-economics, both neo-classical and Marxist, which invoked a unitary model of the household.

Similarly, early gender critiques of development practice were confined to analyses of development projects — why they “misbehaved” and why they consistently failed to deliver resources to women. A point made repeatedly in the early WID (women in development) evaluations of development projects was the inability of agricultural innovation practices and extension services to meet their own objectives of increasing rural productivity and incomes, because the relevant policy-making institutions systematically overlooked women’s roles in the production process (Staudt, 1978; Dey, 1981).

But the focus of feminist research did shift quite significantly in response to the globalization of stabilization and structural adjustment policies. The preoccupation with short-term efficiency goals that characterized the first decade of adjustment clearly revealed the extent to which progress in gender equity depended on a conducive macro policy environment. It thus galvanized feminist researchers to focus on the macro-economic arena. Similarly, for gender practitioners it signalled the need to extend their critical insights beyond discrete micro-level projects, to macro-economic policy agendas that were becoming the main target of gender activists worldwide. The outcome of this effort has been a rich and diverse literature, which includes concrete empirical research and theoretical analyses, both providing critical policy insights. It has also reinforced useful patterns of collaboration between feminist scholars and policy advocates.

The empirical literature on the “burdens of adjustment”, which is relatively well known, documents the predominantly negative outcomes that macro-economic policies have unleashed at the micro level: cutting back on women’s leisure time, intensifying their reproductive work, pushing them into segments of the labour market that pay at or below subsistence and offer little or no protection (Benería and Roldán, 1987; Moser, 1996). Less visible and more isolated are studies that document favourable policy outcomes for women: less time spent queuing for consumer goods, more choice within the labour market and a more diversified livelihood strategy.

The theoretical insights, heavily influenced by the writings of Diane Elson, Ingrid Palmer and Paul Collier, attempt to go beyond the analyses of the gendered effects of adjustment at the micro level to demonstrate the relevance

of gender as a set of relations that impact on the achievement of macro-economic objectives. As Ingrid Palmer puts it:

"... if it can be argued that gender issues impact on adjustment at every turn then it might be easier to persuade policy makers to review gender issues at the earliest stage of planning, before options on overall adjustment strategies are closed off and certainly before policy packages are detailed".
(Palmer, 1992: 70; emphasis in original)

These frameworks, which were critically reviewed in Naila Kabeer's opening remarks, provided a useful backdrop for the discussions at the workshop and were constantly drawn upon by other speakers. In order to provide greater clarity in this report, they are briefly outlined below (section 4). However, before we do so, a few words on contending macro-economic models are necessary.

macro-economic models: neo-classical, keynesian and other contenders

3

In the 1980s macro-economic policy became increasingly focused on cutting back aggregate public expenditure and the money supply in order to reduce deficits and curb inflation, in conjunction with a series of changes at the meso level to remove "distortions" and promote market efficiency. In the industrialized countries of the North the main thrust of macro-economic policy has been to reduce aggregate demand through credit restrictions, increased real interest rates and restraints on public expenditure, with negative repercussions for many developing regions (Ghai and Hewitt de Alcántara, 1991). In many countries of the South the reforms have been initiated under pressure from international creditors and in a context where "cross-conditionality" have significantly weakened national processes of decision-making to shape macro-economic policy. In practice these orthodox policy prescriptions have rarely produced the desired results; in some cases, such as in the countries of the Southern Cone of Latin America, they have caused long-term damage and an escalation of debt. But even where the specific mechanisms of conditionality have not directly impacted on policy design, the

logic of global markets has forced governments of many developing countries

According to this [neo-liberal] model, the goal of public policy should be to eliminate economic distortions, rigidities and deficits; roll back the state; beat back the power of "big union battalions"; and allow the market to determine the dynamics of economic activity.

Yusuf Bangura, UNRISD, Geneva, Switzerland

to initiate broadly similar macro-economic reforms, even though such "heterodox" policy reforms have been more sensitive to local conditions and generally more successful in meeting their aims (UNRISD, 1995).

Absent from this macro-economic policy agenda and the micro-economic model of utility maximization upon which it is based are any direct references to human well-being and social equity — whether of gender, class or race. The model assumes that once market distortions have been removed, supply and demand will be brought into balance (since the economy tends towards general equilibrium), and Pareto optimality¹ will be restored. However, even when equilibrium is restored this does not necessarily mean that the basic needs of the population are met; nor does it mean that a desired degree of social equity is achieved. Pareto optimality is consistent with a very unequal income distribution as well as a very equal distribution of income; it may coincide with poor social indicators as well as an outstanding human development record (Elson, 1993).

Given this indifference to social issues, a pertinent question, raised at the workshop by Nasreen Khundker, was whether a concern for gender equity could nevertheless be introduced into the dominant macro-economic paradigm using neo-classical tools of analysis. Section 4 will attempt to answer this question, drawing on the writings of feminist economists and the discussions at the workshop. As a background to that discussion, this section will briefly look at some of the developments within neo-classical thinking that seem to provide openings for introducing both social issues and gender concerns. A related question, raised by Simeen Mahmud, was whether there were alternative macro-economic frameworks that directly addressed human development and social equity. Are these alternative frameworks, in fact, more gender-friendly? And, finally, can these socially sensitive frameworks replace the dominant neo-classical paradigm? These questions will be briefly explored here.

1. Pareto optimality is the situation where no one can be made better off without somebody else being made worse off.

Along with other non-orthodox economists, some feminist economists have been very wary of the "fetishism" of mathematical formalism that characterizes mainstream economics (Ferber and Nelson, 1993). They question the presumed "rigour" of neo-classical economics, which is very often associated with its reliance on abstract models, and stress the need for a variety of approaches to producing knowledge. Neo-classical economists claim simplicity and hence prediction, parsimony and elegance for their approach. Yet, because of their insistence on a relatively simple underlying model of human behaviour, the more rigidly deductive elements of their models tend to discard the complex processes of economic and social change and to homogenize the highly diverse social arrangements, cultural constructions and institutional set-ups that characterize human society. The inability of neo-classical economics to capture social, institutional and political complexities very often leads policy advisers to work with "idealized" visions of society and to come up with standard policy packages that inevitably produce poor results (UNRISD, 1995).

However, it was clear from the discussions at the workshop that some of the shortcomings of the neo-liberal model, which have become apparent during the process of economic reform, are obliging macro-economic thinking to evolve beyond the "hands-off" stylized market liberalization strategy. Some of these developments provide entry points for raising social development concerns and gender issues. One significant area is research on "human capital" development.

Recent estimates suggest that natural and physical capital can account for less than half of the observed rate of growth, while more than half of growth arises from human sources (UNDP, 1996). It is therefore being argued that investment in human capital — expansion of labour power, expenditures on health and nutrition, investments in education, training and research — is the single most effective route to growth (Griffin, 1997). This finding has significant implications for macro-economic theory and policy. The distinction between investment and consumption, for example, loses much of its significance because many items classified as "consumption", such as current outlays on health and education, should be understood as a form of human capital expenditure. Inequitable patterns of growth marked by high rates of unemployment, which result in a process of de-skilling (depreciation of human capital), also jeopardize a country's prospects for continued growth.

I wouldn't take it for granted that neo-classical economics has been particularly successful in explaining the world ... economists make predictions but very often they don't come true ... Unfortunately, because the rest of us do not necessarily believe in abstract quantitative models, we don't come up with predictions; we seek to explain the world.

Naila Kabeer, IDS, Sussex, United Kingdom

In recent years ideas like these have been gradually percolating into mainstream policy-making organizations. Under pressure from numerous quarters, towards the late 1980s the World Bank was beginning to acknowledge that early adjustment packages had given insufficient attention to social dimensions. At about the same time that interest grew in exploring the impacts of adjustment on the poor, calculations made of the economic benefits attributable to a healthy and well-trained workforce, such as those cited above, helped to generate concern that "human capital" not be allowed to "depreciate" during the adjustment period (Vivian, 1995), thereby justifying long-run public investments in health and education. As the following section will make clear, the emphasis on human capital is one of the main entry points that gender advocates have used to put forward their demands for gender-sensitive social expenditures — commonly referred to under the euphemism "investing in women".

Another related development in the field of economics has been the effort under way to correct the weak institutional foundations of the neo-classical

paradigm through work that looks at how institutions develop to solve efficiency problems arising from imperfect information and high transaction costs (North, 1990). Institutional economists question the validity of some of the fundamental assumptions of mainstream economics — that information is perfectly available to economic agents, that transactions are costless, and that norms and culture do not matter. The main

Neo-classical economics is changing in some very important ways, and what we have today is a far cry from what was being taught in economic textbooks of the 1970s ... institutional economics attempts to go beyond the under-socialized atomistic model of neo-classical economics by introducing notions like "social norms", "networks" and "trust" ... while these may seem quite simplistic concepts, they nevertheless indicate a sea-change in neo-classical thinking.

Naila Kabeer, IDS, Sussex, United Kingdom

thrust of their argument is that social institutions and arrangements that were previously thought to be irrelevant to economic performance are, in fact, the efficient solution to certain economic problems, such as imperfect information, uncertainty, malfeasance and mistrust.

By bringing into focus aspects of the economic and social structure that have conventionally been treated as "given" (i.e. exogenous), the institutional perspective provides the possibility for taking into account social relations and their impact on market forces — issues that have not hitherto been of concern to economists. As we will see below, the work of Paul Collier, which constitutes one of the main approaches to integrating gender concerns within macro-economic thinking, uses elements of institutional economics such as "role copying", "information costs" and incentive problems ("principal-agent") to argue that gender relations impact on the responsiveness of agricultural production to market incentives, acting as a constraint on adjustment, effectively reducing agricultural supply response. At a more general level, it seems that the problems of market reform — "the micro-level details of imperfectly competitive markets" (Granovetter, 1985:59) — have focused policy attention on institutional constraints, alerting macro economists of the need to be informed by an awareness of what goes on at the meso and micro levels.

The neo-institutional perspective has, however, been criticized for its functionalism, for making the *a priori* assumption that the institutions that survive are necessarily the ones that provide the most efficient economic arrangements. These assumptions, critics have argued, ignore the fact that dysfunctional, economically inefficient and socially undesirable institutions may persist if individuals are motivated by power and personal aggrandizement rather than efficiency (Granovetter, 1985; Bardhan, 1989).² Some of the carry-over assumptions from the neo-classical analytical model — in particular its choice-theoretic framework — which have disallowed institutional economists from taking into account ideological and power aspects in explaining economic behaviour, have also hindered a more satisfactory analysis of the interaction and tensions between social institutions, gender relations and economic performance (Evans, 1993). This point will become clearer in the following section, where some of the shortcomings of Collier's model are discussed.

... with the macro economists it was very hard to even start a discussion about gender because they are all trained in neo-classical economics ... but we also had some advantages and one was that at that time [late 1980s] we started having a discussion about the macro-meso-micro levels, so that gave us the chance to bring in gender issues ...

Marjan Kroon, DGIS,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands

2. The persistence of inefficient institutions can also be explained in neo-classical terms by resorting to the notion of "path dependence" (Bardhan, 1989:9) whereby lumpy costs and increasing returns "lock in" certain sub-optimal technologies or institutions.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned innovations within neo-classical economics, which have opened the way for analysing the impact of social issues on market behaviour, it is important to recognize that the macro-economic agenda has not always been silent about human well-being. In Keynesian macro economics, which underpinned policy debates for much of the post-war era, the concern for human well-being was a central feature — expressed in terms of full employment. The argument in essence was that money constrained human development principally by being kept in short supply so that there was not enough effective demand to generate full employment, and the shortage was made worse by governments giving priority to balanced budgets and "sound finance". The solution was to create more money in the form of an international currency, so that governments could deal with balance-of-payments problems through expansionary rather than deflationary policies, investing in the infrastructure and industries required to generate full employment (Elson, 1994).

It could, of course, be argued that Keynesian macro economics largely overlooked gender issues. It defined employment in terms of paid, full-time, long-term jobs for male breadwinners, and effectively excluded the large numbers of women who were over-represented in the "informal sector". It also ignored the unpaid labour of women in caring and reproduction tasks and the contribution of these to aggregate levels of economic activity and human development. Moreover, the corporatist arrangements that emerged under Keynesian macro economics for the most part excluded women's voices since trade unions very often failed to represent the specific interests of women workers. Yet in spite of these weaknesses, two important contributions of Keynesian macro-economics stand out.

First, as far as gender is concerned, there is evidence that policy agendas informed by Keynesian thinking, though not explicitly concerned with gender issues, may nevertheless go a long way in meeting gender equity. Cross-country comparisons show that, in countries where labour markets have been more regulated with more centralized wage bargaining systems, gender gaps in wages have been smaller (Cagatay, 1996; Standing, 1992).

We [in Australia] have had centralized wage fixing, and once the principle of equal pay for work of equal value was adopted it meant that we could narrow the earnings gap between full-time men and women workers to a point not too far behind Sweden.

Marian Sawyer, ANU, Canberra, Australia

Moreover, comparative analyses of the Scandinavian countries and the United States suggest that in the former set of countries, where labour unions have been strong and the macro-economic discourse for bargaining has been sensitive to equity issues, women have registered more significant gains across a wide range of social and economic indicators, even though the women's movement has not been as strong as in the United States (Bangura, 1997).³ Similarly, while the women's movement in socialist countries (such as Viet Nam) has not been as strong as those in many pluralist democracies of South Asia, the commitment to social development and equity, which characterized socialist policies, has nevertheless facilitated significant social gains for women in the former set of countries.⁴

The second outstanding feature of Keynesianism was the idea of an international financial system and national macro-economic policies explicitly geared to promoting social equity and human well-being. In contrast, the absence of policy attention to social issues, many would argue, has been the Achilles heel of the neo-liberal framework. With mounting dissatisfaction and concern about social inequalities between and within countries, "the pendulum is beginning to swing away from the Washington Consensus, although not necessarily directly back to a new Keynesian Consensus" (Singer, 1997:295).

One emerging candidate that seeks to replace the neo-liberal framework is the human development paradigm, which situates human well-being and "capabilities" at the centre stage of development, as a means of displacing the emphasis on commodities and utilities in mainstream economic thinking and policy. Human development is defined broadly to include the formation of a wide range of "capabilities" — such as improved health, education and skills — and the use people make of their acquired capabilities for leisure, productive purposes or being active in cultural and political affairs (UNDP,

One country may have a high level of activism, a high degree of scholarship and conceptualization, but women may still be burned to death because they don't bring home a dowry. Another country may not even have a theoretical paper on what feminism and gender are, but there women are not burned to death or subjected to violence. I would regard the second country as having made a greater advance in the conditions of women.

Rehman Sobhan, CPD,
Dhaka, Bangladesh

3. The comparison looked at the GDI and the GEM. The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the Human Development Index (longevity, education, GNP), but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) concentrates on women's participation in economic, political and professional life (UNDP, 1996).

4. While state socialism and welfare capitalism (informed by Keynesian macro economics) are distinct models, they nevertheless share a number of significant features, among them employment and income security.

1990:10). Capabilities are far more extensive than "human capital"; they go beyond the usual list of well-being indicators that are often included under "human capital" (e.g. education, nutrition, health) to include aspects of human agency — such as autonomy, civil and political liberty, self-respect and the ability to participate in decisions that affect one's life (Sen, 1985). Capabilities have intrinsic value, even though their instrumental role in promoting economic growth and development may be recognized (Sen, 1987). At the macro level, the human development paradigm sees growth merely as a means to the end of human development. In other words, "growth is to be valued only insofar as it contributes to human development and not in its own right" (Griffin, 1997:4). Moreover, the human development paradigm casts a shadow of doubt over the "great trade-off" in economic thought between efficiency and equity (or growth and equality) by highlighting the long-term costs of social inequality and discrimination, and the significant economic and social pay-offs to widely dispersed social investments (Griffin, 1997).

The human development paradigm, which has been popularized by the annual **Human Development Report** of UNDP, affirms that development should be equitable, gender-balanced, participatory and sustainable, and that it should also respect human diversity. These five values constitute the main

axes for the reform of the current world system. The human development paradigm is thus the only paradigm that explicitly identifies gender equity as one of the main conceptual pillars for transforming the way the current world system operates.

It is important for us to link what we are doing to human development; the high levels of social disintegration taking place in all our countries should be a convincing reason for looking at models that combine growth with equity.

Beverly Anderson-Manley, Kingston, Jamaica

Yet, despite its persuasive critique of dominant growth-oriented development and its holistic and multi-disciplinary treatment of development issues, the human-development-paradigm may be criticized for failing to provide an alternative theory of development with a rigorous analytical framework that can explain the dynamics of world society (Bangura, 1997). The argument that, in the long-run, the interests of different social groups converge — both within and between North and South — takes the idea of synergy beyond the expression of interactions and interdependencies, effectively precluding any consideration of politics, which is, by definition, about short-term

conflicts of interest. The human development paradigm has thus been criticized for being "largely politics-blind" (Bangura, 1997:18).

However, while there may be conceptual blind-spots in some of the alternative paradigms, these are not serious enough to undermine the soundness of some of the proposals for policy reform that have been made by their proponents, such as the 20:20 compact (20 per cent of donors' aid and 20 per cent of developing countries' budgets for basic human development goals); the "Tobin tax" on international foreign exchange transactions (to reduce speculative opportunities and "put sand in the wheels of international financial markets"); and various suggestions for global institutional reform. After all, the neo-liberal revolution was not won by the intrinsic truth of neo-classical theory; rather the decisive factors at that juncture appear to have been the pressures for globalization, mounting debt, and the coming to power of conservative/neo-liberal administrations in Britain and the United States (Bangura, 1997). The dominant neo-liberal paradigm continues to enjoy the support of powerful states, transnational corporations and international financial institutions — powerful actors whose decisions structure global markets in ways that seriously restrict policy options for less powerful actors. In these circumstances support for the implementation of many of the proposals for national and global reform has not been strong enough to transform the way the world system operates.

... there are certainly the beginnings of an alternative economic paradigm but there is very little institutional space for it ... it is not given the same serious treatment in the media and certainly not given the same credibility in the prime minister's private office or the treasurer's.

Marian Sawer, ANU,
Canberra, Australia

feminist insights into macro economics

4

Feminist writings on macro economics suggest that it is possible to integrate a gender perspective into most macro-economic models.⁵ Some models, however, may be more conducive than others to the incorporation of social concerns and gender issues. Within neo-classical economics the work of Ingrid Palmer and Paul Collier deserves special mention since they provide innovative

5. The World Development issue on Gender, Adjustment and Macro-Economics (Vol. 23, No. 11, November 1995) provides illustrations of how gender issues can be integrated into both neo-classical and Keynesian macro-economic models.

ways of integrating gender within macro-economic frameworks, drawing on elements of institutional economics (Palmer, 1991; Collier, 1989) and new growth theory (Palmer, 1995). This section highlights three distinct ways of introducing gender into macro-economic frameworks. It should be noted, however, that most writers use a combination of approaches, rather than rigidly confining themselves to a single approach. This is also true of the country level research programmes discussed in sections 5 and 6 of this report.

First, "the gender disaggregation method" has been used by Paul Collier to model the reallocation of labour during structural adjustment.⁶ What distinguishes this genre of writing from some of the other commentaries on gender and adjustment is that, rather than focusing on how structural adjustment policies have affected the welfare of women and children, their aim is to show how gender biases and rigidities affect adjustment policies and can ultimately frustrate them. Ingrid Palmer, for example, accepts the concerns of policy makers about price distortions and their negative impact on Pareto efficiency, but then goes on to criticize the existing adjustment policies for not going far enough to remove "gender-based market distortions", which are also causing allocative inefficiency.

Adjustment, neo-classical economists would agree, is essentially about inducing the inter-sectoral flow of resources (especially labour and credit) from non-tradables to tradables in order to alter what are seen as original misallocations of resources between sectors. If, however, resources are not mobile between sectors, raising prices of tradables is not likely to bring about the desired flow. Collier's model combines the disaggregation of economic agents by gender with a sectoral disaggregation of activities (tradables and non-tradables; marketed and non-marketed output). It is argued that gender is significant in disaggregating economic agents if men and women are initially allocated to different sectors and have different capacities to move between sectors because they face different constraints. The thrust of Collier's argument is to show that resources, especially female labour, may be allocated between sectors in a skewed and inefficient manner due to various constraints arising from gender roles and inequitable gender relations. Moreover, the same constraints may reduce the mobility of resources between sectors, and leave them stuck in the production of non-tradables, thereby reducing the desired

6. Many of the points raised here may be found in the writings of both Palmer (1991) and Collier (1989). For a thorough discussion of Collier's model see Lockwood (1992) and Elson (1995).

supply response. An important part of the explanation offered for why gender identities produce low mobility and bias in labour allocation lies with information costs and role copying — notions drawn from institutional economics.

Collier locates four distinct processes for understanding why women face differential constraints upon economic activity — processes based on underlying “social conventions”. The first is discrimination outside the household — in labour markets and in credit markets. The second is that role models (in production) are gender-specific — so that girls copy women while boys copy men. The third is that within the household there are asymmetric rights and obligations between husband and wife, such that women have little incentive to increase their labour input — the “principal-agent” problem. The final element is the “burden of reproduction” — with its attendant demands on women’s health and time.

The policy implication of Collier’s model is that public policy should target women with measures that reduce barriers to their incorporation into the tradable sector (e.g. through extension service, credit, marketing channels). There is no mention, however, of the food security risks (at the household and national levels) involved in relying on export crop production, nor is there any recognition of the long-term price risks if agricultural export strategies are pursued in many countries simultaneously — two of the fundamental criticisms that have been levelled at structural adjustment policies.

While this model provides a number of useful conceptual tools for integrating gender issues within macro-economic policy — many of which have been used by the Ugandan research team (see section 6) — it may be criticized on a number of fronts, as recognized by participants at the workshop. One of the most problematic features of the model is its emphasis on “role copying” and information costs as the explanation for gender segmentation in the labour market. By explaining segmentation as a voluntaristic process determined by individual preferences, it provides a misleading picture of the social mechanisms through which gender-differentiated roles (and segments of the labour market) are created and maintained. There is no mention of the ways in which the more powerful agents construct and maintain the boundaries between male and female sectors — sometimes using brute force. As a result, the responsibility for gender inequality is essentially placed on women themselves who adopt less remunerative activities. The choice-

theoretic approach underpinning this model thus “begs all the important questions about how ‘choosing subjects’ are constituted and choice sets constrained. Herein lies its particular male bias” (Elsou, n.d.:7).

Also problematic is the model's representation of conjugal conflict over women's labour as an instance of the “principal-agent” problem. The model suggests that asymmetric rights and obligations within the household result in a weak incentive for women in male-headed households to spend more time and effort in the production of cash crops. By implication, the incentive problem may be resolved if women are not autonomous enough to refuse their husbands' labour demands — not a desirable state of affairs if the concern for gender equity is taken seriously.⁷ Moreover, where husbands are powerful enough to bring about such a transfer of labour this may not necessarily be a cause for celebration since it may jeopardize other important objectives such as household food security and well-being.

A more fundamental problem with the model, as Naila Kabeer argued at the workshop, is that it presents “an iceberg view of the economy”: what is visible is actually only a very small part of what goes on in the economy, i.e. the goods and services that enter the market. What remains largely invisible in this model is the entire array of activities that keep this first set of activities going: activities for one's own consumption and one's own use and, above

all, the “care economy” (the activities that look after human resources and thereby reproduce the labour force).

The only way that these activities figure in the model is as “burdens of reproduction”, i.e. a key constraint preventing women from conforming to a well-behaved supply function.

However, as feminist economists have demonstrated, gender bias in macro economics lies precisely in the way macro-economic models overlook and suppress any recognition of the care

economy and the intrinsic value that women (and men) attach to childbearing and rearing.

It is extraordinary how things that might matter in everyday life appear always as a cost in these models. From women's point of view — and men who are fathers — the idea of childbearing and rearing as a burden is not one that will hold much water. I think that from their perspective it is macro-economic policy that is a burden, and the people who make these policies in a way that impedes their ability to carry out activities that they value very highly.

Naila Kabeer, IDS, Sussex, United Kingdom

7. As Granovetter (1985) observes, institutional economists tend to appeal to authority relations in order to tame incentive problems.

By raising fundamental questions about the objectives of macro-economic policy, feminist economists have opened the way for the formulation of an alternative macro-economic agenda that gives priority to the care/unpaid economy and to human well-being — a point that is altogether missing in Collier's model.

The second body of literature to consider is a paradigm that has recently emerged in economics, commonly referred to as "feminist economics" (Cagatay, Elson and Grown, 1995). Conventional macro economics is all about monetary aggregates — the output of human effort that money can mobilize and is counted in the gross national product, in savings and investments, in exports and imports, and in public expenditure and public revenue. Absent from this picture, as Diane Elson and other feminist economists have argued, is the whole area of production referred to as the reproductive economy — the unpaid production of human resources that underpins the paid economy and is, in turn, dependent on it. Thus the second strategy for introducing gender into macro-economic policy is to make visible the unpaid reproductive work that is predominantly assigned to women, and to highlight the close interdependence between the marketed output that macro analysis does take into account and the non-monetized services that are critical for human resource production but that nevertheless remain outside the purview of macro analysis. Unlike Collier's model, which introduces gender by disaggregating activities, for feminist economists gender analysis highlights the interconnections between sectors — in particular those between the paid economy and the reproductive economy. These have been eloquently described by Gita Sen:

"A gender perspective means recognizing that women stand at the crossroads between production and reproduction, between economic activity and the care of human beings, and therefore between economic growth and human development. They are workers in both spheres — those most responsible and therefore with most at stake, those who suffer the most when the two spheres meet at cross purposes, and those most sensitive to the need to better integration between the two." (cited in Elson, 1995:1863)

This alternative feminist strategy thus entails a critique and an extension of the gender-disaggregation model, thereby reshaping our understanding of the conditions necessary for the functioning of the paid economy — the traditional domain of macro-economic analysis.

The suggestion that macro economics is all about monetary aggregates I think misses the point of what we are saying has to take place as a result of gender analysis and gender integration ... We are saying that we have to shift the boundaries of what macro economics is about and change its objectives ... monetary aggregates have to become the instrument, the means, for improving society and well-being ... the ultimate focus of economics has to be on human and social well-being.

Rosina Wiltshire, UNDP, New York, USA

It is this understanding of macro economics that underpins current efforts by women's machineries in both North and South to better incorporate unpaid work into national income accounts. As was illustrated in the presentations by Zeynep Karman and Marian Sawyer on the efforts by the Canadian and Australian women's

machineries to better measure and include women's unpaid work within national accounts — through so-called "satellite accounts" — it is now widely appreciated that the failure to take account of reproductive labour renders much of women's work invisible.⁸ Having identified the critical importance of reproductive work and quantified it, the challenge now is to move beyond measurement issues and to ensure that there are appropriate policy responses to the phenomenon of unpaid work. In this context a number of strategic policy implications may be identified.

As far as intra-household relations are concerned, the recognition of women's reproductive work increases awareness of the "double load" and highlights the need to restructure intra-household relations and renegotiate domestic workloads. This is an area where feminist groups can play a potentially useful role — in helping women see their subordinate status and confront and transform the aspects of family life that oppress them. Public policy can also direct attention to the need for men and women to share domestic work and reproductive responsibilities (as in Cuba). As for employment policies, the recognition of women's reproductive work alerts employers to the impact of family responsibilities on employees and the need for those to be accommodated in the design of paid work. Similarly, it strengthens the

8. The attempt to make women's work more visible — both theoretically and empirically — dates back to the 1970s, even though its implications for macro-economic policy were not always explicitly recognized or theorized.

arguments for parental and family leave as well as workplace flexibility to enable men to take up a greater share of family responsibilities. And, finally, it increases the visibility of the contribution that unpaid work makes to the economy and hence strengthens the case for increased public expenditure on infrastructure to support it. The last point is one that comes through very clearly from Ingrid Palmer's (1995) gender-sensitive reading of "new growth theory". Rooted within a neo-classical framework, Palmer (like Collier) highlights the important role that adjustments in public finance can play in raising the productivity of women's non-marketed work (which is used "lavishly and thus inefficiently"), thereby releasing their labour for incorporation into the market economy and correcting a massive distortion in the labour market (Palmer, 1991:164).

The prospect of long-term growth in the transitional economies of Asia may be seriously hampered if public investment in infrastructure and labour saving technology does not reduce the inefficient application of unpaid female labour to social reproduction.

Patricia Alexander, ADB, Manila, the Philippines

While this is not the place to discuss the nuanced differences between the approaches advocated by Ingrid Palmer and Diane Elson, a brief clarification is useful. Despite the significant similarities in their arguments, the fundamental difference between the two lies in their diverging interpretations of markets. According to Palmer markets can provide "a proper costing of resources" and can be relied upon to provide a "proper valuation" of women's labour.⁹ For Elson, markets are inevitably social institutions contingent on social norms and power relations; hence markets can only provide a "proper costing" if they are socially regulated through "public action".¹⁰ Related to this first point, Palmer suggests that the non-biological elements of women's reproductive work be subjected to market forces. Like Collier, she sees reproduction as a "burden" women bear that prevents them from contributing labour to the market economy; this leads her to liken reproduction to a "reproductive labour tax" (or overhead) that women have to pay before they can engage in market activities.¹¹ Elson, however, questions the possibility and desirability of complete commercialization of reproduction given the intrinsic value that some

9. The analogue here is environmental economics; the argument is that costs and benefits need to be internalized.

10. The term "public action" is used in the sense developed by Drèze and Sen (1989) to refer not only to action undertaken by the state for the public, but also — and more importantly — to action undertaken by the public itself through non-state organizations.

11. However, it could be argued that in Palmer's work greater analytical weight is attached to women's reproductive work, while Collier sees it as one of four constraints on the mobility of women's labour between different economic sectors.

reproductive tasks, like child rearing, may have for women (and for men). In addition to infrastructural support via public expenditure, Elson thus identifies a more equal sharing of domestic responsibilities as a critical component of the feminist response to reproductive work. Adopting a wide definition of the "policy process", she sees an important role for women's groups in bringing about these changes.¹²

The policy implications that emerge from recognizing the interdependence between production and reproduction — a fundamental premise shared by both approaches — are now being highlighted by women's machineries and women's groups in their efforts to influence public expenditure patterns and public revenue systems. This constitutes one important way of integrating gender within macro-economic policy. The most obvious example is the need for transfer payments to support maternity leave and child care facilities, the revenues for which could come from an employment tax on all enterprises (Palmer, 1991). Other examples may be cited from government capital expenditure on physical infrastructure. It has been argued that public investment in rural infrastructure and in labour saving technologies that help reduce the time women contribute to the self-provisioning of the essentials of life (water, fuel, food, etc.) will improve their health status and increase overall economic efficiency (Palmer, 1995). Similarly, in the area of urban transport infrastructure, it is increasingly recognized that men and women have different transport needs due to different travel patterns; women, for example, undertake far greater non-employment-related trips during off-peak periods to meet household needs when transport services tend to be irregular. The problem is that levels of service in peak and off-peak periods are calculated on the basis of cost-benefit principles that do not include the value of women's domestic-related trips (Levy, 1992). Recognizing the value of women's reproductive work can shift investment patterns significantly.

In the context of raising public revenues, it is now widely recognized that while at the aggregate level of total revenue raised through taxation there are no obvious gender differentials, once taxes are decomposed into direct (income) and indirect (consumption, value-added), several gender effects become visible. Indirect taxes tend to have more of an impact on women because of their universal role as managers of the household consumption budget, while direct income taxes fall more on men because of their greater

12. Again, the analogy would be with environmental economics versus ecological economics.

access to employment and higher incomes (OECD, 1985, cited in Bakker, 1994). Thus the general trend in the 1980s towards value-added taxes has been criticized not just from a social equity perspective (since it impacts disproportionately on the poor), but also from a gender perspective for being gender-regressive and having negative implications for the well-being of children. Women's groups in Canada, for example, argued very strongly against the introduction of a value-added tax in 1989 (MacDonald, 1995).

In sum, according to the feminist critique discussed here, "male bias" at the macro-economic level stems from the way the macro economy is conceptualized and the activities and values that are left out. Recognizing these "invisible" activities — and their contribution to the productive sphere — has profound policy implications. But, as argued by participants at the workshop, their omission is not simply due to the complexities of measurement. It is also a reflection of some of the assumptions that are built into the neo-classical model, which have serious implications for the way macro-economic policies are formulated.

One of the most dangerous assumptions implicit in the neo-classical view of the macro economy is that the reproductive economy will continue to function irrespective of the changes in the rest of the economy. In other words, it is assumed that women will continue to supply all the labour that is needed to ensure the satisfactory reproduction of human beings, compensating for all the shortfalls in purchased inputs required to sustain human resources. However, as some of the empirical studies on the social impacts of adjustment have documented, women's labour is not infinitely elastic; a breaking point might be reached where the household is no longer able to reproduce itself: daughters may be withdrawn from school, and parents may no longer be able to supervise children because fathers have migrated and mothers are out in the market-place while young boys are being exposed to drugs and street gangs. The implications of this breakdown may be serious for the paid economy too.

One study of economic policy reform in Zambia, for example, documents that cutbacks in health expenditure have hampered women farmers who were spending far more time looking after sick family members and less time farming (Evans and Young, 1988). If daughters are withdrawn from school or if women are unable to contribute labour to their paid activities because of the urgent need to attend sick children, this is likely to have a negative effect on

the balance of payments — through shortfalls in human skills and through the diversion of public resources to the tasks of policing and repairing the damaged fabric of society. As the presentations by Patricia Alexander on Laos, and Naila Kabeer and Van Anh Tran Thi on Viet Nam highlighted, a backslide in human skills, especially in female education, is one of the dangers currently confronting many transitional economies. Feminist economists thus warn that, while the costs of economic change may not show up immediately and may be difficult to measure, in the long run they will hamper development.

The third feminist insight relevant to macro economics comes through a "worm's eye" perspective that sees the entire macro economy as being gendered via the meso-level institutions — households, markets, firms, states — through which economic agents operate. As was noted above (section 2), while much of the focus of the early gender and development literature was on domestic institutions where gender relations are most explicit, since the mid-1980s increasing attention has been directed to the ways familial and gender norms are drawn upon to construct the terms on which women and men enter, and participate, in public life and in the market-place. The burden of this new genre of feminist analysis has been to demonstrate the extent to which gender operates as a pervasive organizational principle across "impersonal" institutional arenas. In modern industrial firms and in agribusiness ventures, for example, definitions of "skill" and of tasks tend to institutionalize a hierarchical and gendered labour force whereby each gender has its own areas of work, wages, patterns of employment and promotion prospects (Humphrey, 1987; Mackintosh, 1989). Similarly, gender operates across a wide range of rural markets, very often in ways that constrain women's economic agency (Agarwal, 1994).

This feminist insight draws on and shares several features with the work of socio-economists (Granovetter, 1985) and those who have explored the interface between policy prescription, on the one hand, and "real markets", on the other (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1993; Mackintosh, 1990). In response to the standard policy packages prescribed by the international financial institutions, these critics highlight the notion of "embeddedness" — that institutions and economic actions are rooted in complex social relations. The key question posed by this approach with regard to macro-economic policy is whether policy makers — and the theory that underpins their thinking and actions — are paying sufficient attention to the social relations

and institutional arrangements that will inevitably shape the economic outcomes of macro policy initiatives.

Critical feminist institutional analysis entails recognizing that the matrix of gender relations is an intervening variable in all economic activities, so that institutions (e.g. markets) and social relations (e.g. buyer-seller, employer-employee) that are not themselves gendered nevertheless become "bearers of gender" (Elson, 1995).¹³ In other words, even though women and men do not enter market institutions and the public realm as "wives" or "husbands", they nevertheless have very different experiences as workers, farmers, entrepreneurs and users of public service because of the social norms and familial ideologies that are drawn upon and reproduced within those "impersonal" institutional arenas. This approach, which was referred to by several participants at the workshop, thus modifies the pre-existing vision of the macro economy by introducing the idea that gender relations, like class relations, affect the functioning of the market economy from within.

The Ugandan case study brought out an example of this approach. Although the government is keen to see an expansion in the supply of non-traditional export crops (NTEC), whether there will be a supply response will depend, as Deborah Kasente put it, on what goes on at the micro and meso levels — whether women farmers will get access to land, credit and other inputs on the same basis as men, and whether conjugal and kinship relations will facilitate their economic activities. If patriarchal systems of land tenure are biased against women farmers, if state extension services reinforce rather than subvert class and gender hierarchies, and if women's responsibility for feeding the household acts as a constraint on their ability to grow NTEC, then the realities of women's lives meet at cross purposes with macro-economic objectives.

To put it briefly, this approach demands that orthodox macro-economic policy prescriptions be tempered by further analysis of the complex processes of social and economic change that form the "real world" of macro-economic adjustment and restructuring (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1993). At the theoretical level, unlike the neo-institutional approach, it makes no *a priori* assumption about the allocative efficiency of surviving institutions; nor does it

13. The distinction between social relations that are intrinsically gendered (e.g. kin, conjugal) and those that become "bearers of gender" (e.g. employee-employer, buyer-seller) was first made by Ann Whitehead (1979).

assume that economic choices and preferences are made voluntarily. In other words, it takes the coercive nature of power inequalities and ideologies seriously (rather than reducing them to "information problems") and recognizes the extent to which they shape economic behaviour. At the more practical level, it avoids making standard policy prescriptions; instead it argues that policy reform will have to be worked out pragmatically, on the ground, taking into account the complex and idiosyncratic social and institutional arrangements that mediate policy outcomes.

If research in Uganda suggests that the expansion of NTEC, mediated through these micro-level realities, accentuates women's work loads and jeopardizes household food security, then macro economists may wish to rethink their policy priorities, exploring alternative ways of raising foreign exchange from the agricultural sector (e.g. encouraging agro-processing for the export market¹⁴). However, even if a concern for gender equity and food security prompts policy makers to rethink their policy priorities, this does not necessarily mean that the most effective way of bringing about the desired change is through manipulation of macro-economic levers, such as the exchange rate. Macro-economic levers impact on a wide range of sectors (not just the agricultural sector) and lack the precision that is needed to bring about the desired policy change — in this case encouraging agro-processing. Rather, what may be needed in this hypothetical example is a wide range of sectoral and micro policies, such as tax and subsidy packages to encourage investment in agro-processing plants, and investments in rural infrastructure to facilitate their access to export markets.

This section has attempted to provide an overview and a categorization of some of the conceptual insights that gender analysis provides into the macro-economic domain. To bring gender concerns into macro-economic policy does not necessarily require that macro-economic levers be used. As all of the above models illustrate, gender advocates very often highlight the need to alter public revenue and expenditure priorities — agricultural budgets, social budgets, infrastructure spending, tax regimes. At a more general level they demand that the institutional set-ups, "the rules of the game", that define the terms on which women and men enter and participate in the market arena and in public life be restructured in ways that can accommodate their social differences, thereby allowing them to participate on an equitable basis. It

14. It cannot be assumed, however, that agro-processing will be more gender equitable. It is simply an example to illustrate the need to explore other options for raising foreign exchange.

needs to be recognized, however, that redistributing resources between women and men will involve conflict, losses for some and gains for others, attempts by the more powerful to subvert the redistributive attempts in some instances, while in other instances women may be able to renegotiate the terms of the conjugal contract in ways that are more favourable to them.

As we will see in sections 5 and 6 of this report, the country level research activities, which have focused on specific items on the governments' macro-economic agendas, have tended to draw on a combination of insights rather than limiting themselves to a single approach. The themes selected in the project countries fall under two broad headings: labour-intensive, export-oriented industrialization in Bangladesh and Morocco, and rural/agricultural growth strategies in Uganda and Viet Nam.

labour-intensive industrialization and female employment

5

While developing country governments have been implementing quite diverse industrialization strategies, in recent years there has been a degree of convergence in their industrial policies marked by a significant shift away from import-substituting industrialization and towards greater openness. The shift to an export-oriented strategy — very often under pressure from international creditors — has been put into effect using a wide array of policy instruments that have typically included privatization, devaluation of the local currency, lower tariffs on imported materials and components, and improvements in the administrative treatment of exporters (such as “fast track” provisioning of operating permits and special tax holidays).¹⁵

Coinciding with these micro- and macro-economic policy changes has been a significant transformation in the gender composition of the manufacturing labour force. The rise in women's share of manufacturing employment — which has been most marked in South-East Asia but is also evident in Latin America, Africa and the rest of Asia — has been explained in a variety of ways. Joeke (1987, 1995) and Elson (1995) have argued that the rise in

15. While developing countries have shifted their domestic policies in favour of openness to trade, there remain numerous restraints and discriminatory provisions in world trade regulations that impact very negatively on developing country exports, one of the most pernicious being the Multifibre Arrangement.

female labour participation rates should be attributed to the faster growth of labour-intensive sectors in which women have been traditionally employed, such as textiles, clothing and footwear. In other words, women's increased

... this [the export-oriented sector] is where women are finding a larger and larger place in the market. Now this is taken at one level to depict the growing involvement of women in the market, therefore the growing economic emancipation of women in the market. But it may not always be so ... this is really in a sense the reinforcement of certain stereotypes that have already existed ... in India much of the training goes on in very traditional occupations that make women fit for industries like the garment industry.

Smita Nagraj, Ministry for Human Resources Development,
New Delhi, India

labour force participation reflects a shift in development strategy to emphasize labour-intensive sectors targeted for export promotion, which happen to employ a significant number of women. By implication women continue to be employed in typically "female" sectors and the gender division of labour remains largely intact. Standing, however, has suggested a substitution process whereby women workers are replacing men workers because employers have been seeking cheaper and more "flexible" (or "docile") workers in order to compete in global markets (Standing, 1989).

Notwithstanding these diverging explanations for the feminization of the industrial labour force, three fundamental questions for gender policy arise from this situation. First, does the mobilization of women into a country's industrial labour force

through export growth enhance women's overall position in the labour market in terms of quality of jobs provided and remuneration? Second, what impact does the mobilization of women have on issues relating to gender subordination? And, third, does reliance on female labour persist as export capacity is deepened and diversified in later stages of industrialization? The presentations by the national research teams from Bangladesh and Morocco dealt with these issues at length based on their research findings.

The first question may be tackled from two angles. A quantitative approach would look at gender pay relativities in export-oriented manufacturing compared to other urban industrial sectors.¹⁶ A more qualitative take on the same question would be to consider the physical working conditions and labour relations prevalent in the export-oriented industries. The results from

16. The method commonly used to identify "true" wage gaps by gender takes data on individuals' earnings together with information on individuals' labour characteristics that may be relevant to their level of pay, such as years of experience, age, education and marital status. "Earnings functions" calculated separately for men and women can then show whether different wage structures exist for men and women, i.e. whether given attributes (education, years of experience) are valued differently for women and men — in which case discrimination in the technical sense exists.

both endeavours, extensively discussed at the workshop, illustrate in concrete terms the feminist assertion that the macro-economy is gendered from within via the meso-level institutions through which economic agents operate. While the macro-economic policy changes aimed at "opening" the national economies have facilitated the emergence of "new" forms of employment for women, the terms on which women participate in these supposedly gender-neutral (or "impersonal") labour markets carry and reproduce familial and gender norms that are distinctly biased against women. This should not, however, be taken to mean that gender hierarchies are static. As the following account will illustrate, the availability of new sources of employment has at the same time provided the opportunity — in some contexts at least — for women to renegotiate the terms of their conjugal contracts from a position of greater strength. The picture that emerges is therefore very complex, with contradictory implications for women's economic and social status.

The Moroccan research team carried out the quantitative analysis using official data sources (Belghazi, 1996). Belghazi's econometric exercise reveals a significant degree of "pure" gender wage discrimination operating in the Moroccan urban labour market as a whole. The main components of discrimination against women workers are, in order of importance, the age of starting work (women who start working late are penalized in the labour market), length of the working week (women are rewarded for longer working hours less favourably than men) and household headship (women heads of households are penalized in wage terms compared to women who are not in this position, while male household heads receive a premium in wages over other men). However, Belghazi also finds that the level of wage discrimination is lower in the export-oriented textile and garment sectors than in the urban labour market as a whole. A similar pattern of wage discrimination is observed in Bangladesh, where the gender gap in wages in the export-oriented manufacturing sectors (nearly 10 per cent) is only a fraction of the gender gap in wages for the manufacturing sector as a whole (49 per cent) (Bhattacharya and Rahman, 1997).

While this observation may be taken to support the prediction from international trade theory that, over the long run, expansion in trade will raise aggregate income and wages in developing countries and reduce discriminatory forces, the micro-level mechanisms that might bring this about, and the gender dimensions of these mechanisms in particular, have not been

identified or adequately explored in the literature. Moreover, the econometric results reported here will have to be tempered with two critical qualifications. First, in both countries the relatively low level of discrimination in export industries would look less benign if it signified that men who worked in feminized industries fared badly compared to other male workers, i.e. that in feminized sectors the whole wage structure is dragged down (Joeke, 1996). In both Morocco and Bangladesh, there are some indications that the feminized sectors of industry tend to have generally lower wages. The second qualification is that the very high share of women in these export-oriented industries renders direct comparisons of pay relativities (or wage discrimination) between export and non-export sectors problematic. If, with industrial diversification, women become increasingly confined to a narrow range of occupations, a dual (male/female) wage structure may gradually emerge; it is thus imperative that the notion of discrimination be raised in a more dynamic sense. We will return to this issue below.

The second set of observations that needs to be made about the export sector is of a more qualitative nature; some of these are based on women's perceptions of work in the garment factories. Here too the picture is mixed.

Women workers interviewed by the Moroccan research team emphasized the

In Jamaica the reactions of women to work in these EPZs [export processing zones] is very complex ... some of the women who worked in these zones are now reverting to being domestic helpers, which is considered "the lowest of the low", and women are now debating which type of work makes more sense ... so I think we have to be concerned not just about growth and jobs, but also about the kinds of jobs that are being generated.

Beverly Anderson-Manley, Kingston, Jamaica

economic necessity of work, and voiced a degree of preference for working in the traditional hand-made carpet workshops as opposed to the modern factories because of the greater flexibility of traditional employment practices (Bourqia, 1996). Evidence from countries like Jamaica suggests that similar considerations about the

incompatibility of factory work with women's reproductive responsibilities have underpinned the withdrawal of women workers from export factories and their entry into the informal sector where working hours are more flexible (Dunn, 1995).

Quite a different picture, however, emerges from the interviews carried out by the Bangladeshi research team. In addition to its financial incentives, the interviewees considered garment work to be "cleaner" and less "physically taxing" than domestic work, brick breaking and agricultural labouring; it also carried more dignity and status and had a more "modern" image (Kibria, 1996).

These positive assessments notwithstanding, there have been serious concerns about working conditions — especially health and safety standards — prevalent in the garment factories of Dhaka, as well as the physical hardships and health risks faced by factory women of working extremely long hours with no discretion over the timing or extent of work.

Research in both Bangladesh and Morocco has also drawn attention to the authoritarian management practices prevailing in these female-intensive enterprises. In Morocco, women workers perceive the middle managers — workshop supervisors (*chefs d'atelier*) — as illegitimate and coercive, because persons in that role often know nothing of the actual sewing or other work involved in the production process and rely on insults and verbal aggression to enforce an authoritarian and often arbitrary system of discipline. By contrast, the line supervisors and the owner-managers are respected and their roles acknowledged. In addition, in many enterprises the situation, or the rules, were unclear in another respect — the system of remuneration was non-transparent; a significant minority of women did not know what determined their wages from week to week, because the incentive system was obscured (Bourqia, 1996).

The research team also reports a certain degree of disingenuousness among employers who complain about the instability of women workers and the high levels of labour turnover, but who subscribe to a system of management and production organization that finds a high level of instability functional and wish to nurture only a small group of stable workers at the centre. While

... earlier options included domestic service, home-based livestock rearing. Wage work in a factory represents one more option ... As one of the workers I interviewed said, "before I was a servant, now I have a job".

Naila Kabeer, IDS, Sussex,
United Kingdom

... we have had about six fire accidents this year, but no one is accountable. The inspectors tell us that they have inspected the factories, but when the factories get the license to operate nobody is really held accountable for the conditions under which they are set up ... they are set up mainly in commercial or even residential buildings with no emergency stairs, which are required by law. But the law is not operative.

Hameeda Hossain, Ain O Shalish Kendra, Dhaka, Bangladesh

management in Morocco speak of the dire need for skilled and educated workers, they are reluctant to hire workers with degrees (who may not be so "malleable" and who demand higher wages). A similar reluctance is documented for Bangladesh, where entrepreneurs refuse to hire educated workers, preferring instead to hire less educated/unskilled workers. The econometric exercise on the determinants of wage discrimination in Morocco provides further evidence of the problematic relationship between education and employment. In the export textiles sector a primary diploma has little effect on women's wages, while it has a strong positive impact on men's wages; thus at higher levels of education the gender discrimination in wages is accentuated. This raises questions about the emphasis placed on education as the panacea for gender-based constraints within the labour market. The reluctance to hire educated workers is also likely to act as a constraint on the capacity of garment factories to recruit the workforce necessary to upgrade their production processes, as they will need to do if they are to maintain their international market share in a changing trading environment.

Research in Bangladesh revealed the inadequacy — and near absence — of collective bargaining arrangements in the ready-made garment industries, where industrial conflicts are often resolved through autocratic and unilateral decisions of the owner-managers (Khan, 1996). In some instances patrimonial relations have been recreated through the recruitment of workers from villages where the owner-managers are among the landowning élite. While it may be true that most women workers resort to individual strategies for obtaining higher wages, those workers who have sought to form unions to achieve their legally sanctioned rights (such as timely wages, proper remuneration for overtime, maternity leave) have faced strong opposition from the management. The negative perceptions of the latter towards trade unionism — which seem in part at least to emanate from the history of unionism in the public sector — have in effect prevented the healthy growth of trade unions in the garment factories with the unfortunate outcome that a pervasive patron-clientelist nexus has developed between interested male outsiders and mostly female garment workers. The existing male-dominated garment federations have thus far been unable to represent the interests of women workers adequately (Khan, 1996).

The failure of trade unions to represent women's demands for the provision of child care facilities and the lack of initiative on the part of governments and enterprises to assume their share of responsibility means that ultimately all the costs and anxiety involved in the balancing of the productive and reproductive sectors fall on the shoulders of women workers. As feminist economists have argued, by refusing to recognize the costs of reproduction inevitably borne by women workers and their families, both private entrepreneurs and the state may be undermining the continued viability of the paid economy, especially if daughters are withdrawn from school to replace their working mothers at home.

One of the factors we come across in these garment factories is employers' resistance to unionization ... we are dealing with cases where women workers have been dismissed for forming their own unions. Not only were these women dismissed, they were also prevented from joining other factories.

Hameeda Hossain, Ain O Shalish Kendra,
Dhaka, Bangladesh

The second set of considerations relevant to a gender audit of these new forms of employment relate to issues of gender subordination. Are these new employment options helping women to break down traditional kinship and conjugal relations that have undermined their agency? The fact that intrahousehold relations are marked by complex interweavings of self-interest and altruism, and co-operation and conflict, makes the operation of power within the household — and the impact of wages on it — very difficult to track down. These difficulties notwithstanding, the few in-depth studies that have focused on these issues in Bangladesh support the view that the opportunities for waged employment for women have transformed their lives in a number of positive ways — enabling them to renegotiate the terms of unsatisfactory relationships or to walk out of, or not enter into, relationships that undermine their agency in unacceptable ways (Kabeer, 1995). The research in Morocco, however, provides a less sanguine account.

... for men a minimum wage is the demand, but for women some kind of child care support may be much more important than having a minimum wage ... in fact it would be their minimum wage. Given the amount of anxiety and money that women spend in terms of trying to balance these different roles, it may be that some kind of child care support, which is participated in by the employers, by government and by women themselves, might be much more promotive of their interests.

Naila Kabeer, IDS, Sussex, United Kingdom

Women workers who were interviewed neither acknowledged the emancipating possibilities of wage work for themselves, nor was their economic contribution acknowledged and valued by family members (Bourqia, 1996). Clearly women's entry into labour market situations that are to some extent similar is nevertheless experienced very differently

If capitalist entrepreneurs realize the social costs and political dangers of the deterioration of the social fabric, would it not make sense to help finance the collectively provided welfare services — corporate responsibility out of self interest?

Ingrid Eide, Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO,
Oslo, Norway

depending on the social and cultural configurations within which different groups of women find themselves.

The last set of issues explored by the two research teams relates to the long-term prospects for female employment as industrialization proceeds. Evidence from countries such as Singapore suggests that with product diversification the proportion of women

employed falls markedly, and a cross-country study of export-processing zones by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC) hypothesizes that the fall in the share of women workers is a general phenomenon (Joeques, 1995). In other words, as the mix of products produced for export markets is diversified beyond the relatively labour-intensive and low-technology ones (garments, footwear), in the process of product upgrading and deepening of the employment structure through investments in technology and skills, the share of women workers tends to fall. In the case of Singapore the swing back from female intensity in manufacturing has been attributed, as a proximate cause, to the fact that women workers with the requisite qualifications are not available for recruitment to technical and other skilled grades, because few women have had access to the necessary technical education and training. Joeques therefore predicts that, with industrial diversification and upgrading, the distinction between educational attainment levels per se and the subjects in which women obtain educational qualifications will become increasingly important in the future (Joeques, 1995).

In the case of Bangladesh, the immediate growth prospects for the textile/garments sector appear to be quite favourable. Yet there are some early signs that the rate at which women have been participating in garment manufacturing may not be sustainable as export manufacturing diversifies, currently in the fastest growing sub-sectors, such as knitwear and hosiery, women constitute no more than 4 per cent of the labour force. Questions thus need to be raised about the type of constraints that are preventing women from entering these dynamic subsectors.

While the immediate growth prospects for the textile/garment sector appear to be favourable in Bangladesh, the Moroccan textile/garment sector has been facing declining international competitiveness due to several factors, among

them stagnation in productivity growth. The research team suggests that, if Morocco is to overcome the current stagnation in its international competitiveness, alternative industrial models must be explored — as some entrepreneurs in the garment industry have already begun to do. Such models would improve product quality by retaining the best women workers, reducing labour turnover, and providing more scope for worker responsibility and participation through trade unions and other organizational forms. In other words, a low-wage export strategy based on the use of female labour, subject to discriminatory forces, is no longer viable. The common explanation that Moroccan wages are “too high” relative to those in competitor countries is thus rejected. Instead, it is argued that wages should be interpreted not as a fixed absolute component of production costs but as a factor that influences production methods and factor use (Belghazi, 1995).

The challenge in Morocco, as in many other countries, would be to make this transition without substituting male workers, and more socially privileged female workers, for the existing female workforce drawn from lower income households. The training of the existing workforce, and improvement in methods for the valorization of the skills and experience of current workers, seem to be important aspects of the production upgrading process. The role of public policy is critical too in providing accessible training programmes. Training and education issues thus deserve imaginative policy response notwithstanding the inertia of the education system and the general crisis of resources for social development.

Many of the other policy recommendations that emerged from the deliberations on these new forms of employment for women were also of a sectoral and micro-level nature, such as the provision of affordable housing and transport facilities, the need for accessible training programmes, child care facilities and health insurance schemes. In other words, while macro-economic and trade policy changes have underpinned the emergence of these new forms of employment for women, the significant interventions that will have to be made in order

... they [the government] should be investing in transport ... they should be investing in street lighting ... after all, if large numbers of women are going to walk along these roads in the dead of night at the very least you would expect to have the roads lit and police posts manned — if not “womanned”. So in that sense a feminized police force would be a minimal investment based on human considerations but also in the interests of the macro-economy of Bangladesh. The physical landscaping of cities in the next decade or so should also be sensitized to the fact that large numbers of single women are coming into the labour force, leaving their own habitat which remains rural Bangladesh.

Rehman Sobhan, CPD, Dhaka, Bangladesh

to enable women to secure labour market entitlements are not achievable through the manipulation of macro-economic tools, such as the exchange rate and the interest rate, which are too blunt. Instead, these social objectives can be more readily met through a wide range of micro policy instruments. The labour market interventions recommended are essentially aimed at making both public authorities and the private sector more accountable for the social costs of production — or more “socially responsible” — thereby enabling women workers to enhance their capabilities (health, skills, decision-making power) and to obtain more sustainable labour market entitlements. Interestingly, there was no suggestion that the entire direction of macro-economic and trade policies needed to be changed away from export-orientation. As it has been repeatedly pointed out, the import substitution/export promotion policy dichotomy is a false one: most of the successful industrializing countries have practised both, systematically and simultaneously (Ghosh, 1997). Governments in these countries have used a diverse range of policy instruments, ranging from subsidized credit to priorities in foreign exchange allocation, and public expenditures on physical infrastructure and “social overhead capital” to launch a sustainable industrialization process.

6 agricultural growth strategies: ongoing research in uganda and viet nam

As was noted in section 2, some of the pioneering work by gender analysts in the area of development practice included evaluations of development projects that sought to understand why these interventions consistently failed to reach women farmers and why they fell short of their own objectives of increasing rural productivity. Many of these projects had, in fact, been implemented in rural sub-Saharan Africa, where planners' assumptions about intra-household gender relations in the countryside considerably diverged from the concrete conjugal contracts and householding arrangements that prevailed in the region. Project evaluations time and again pointed out that the typical farmer was not necessarily male in that region, and that the expectation that male farmers would be able to recruit the labour of their wives for their

farming activities without causing imbalances in other spheres, such as in food production, was unrealistic.

While these project evaluations and other micro-level research that they generated did not explicitly focus on the macro-economic policy agenda, they nevertheless provided useful empirical and analytical insights into the types of issues and questions that a gendered approach would need to raise at the macro level. In fact the "gender disaggregation model" which was subsequently developed (see section 4) explicitly drew on such micro-level findings to explain why price incentives — the central feature of structural adjustment packages — might not bring forth the desired agricultural supply response in sub-Saharan Africa. As it will become clear, however, the questions that are being posed by the Ugandan research team are not confined to the constraints posed by gender relations on the production of tradables — which is the core concern of the "gender disaggregation model". The research team has also been concerned with the impacts of agricultural growth strategies on women's work burdens, on the food security of the household, and on wider issues of gender equity — issues that are central to the other two models discussed above. The Ugandan research team has therefore used a combination of insights in its efforts to explore the gender implications of the government's macro-economic agenda, which identifies the promotion of non-traditional export crops (NTEC) as one of its main pillars.

Uganda's macro-economic policy has included the classic path of stabilization followed by adjustment, involving exchange rate liberalization, reduced government spending in certain areas, improved incentives for investors and the dismantling or restructuring of the various state marketing boards. However, despite the steps taken to improve producer price incentives for cash crops, in several key export sectors — cotton and tobacco among them — prices have not even managed to cover the costs of production (UWONET, 1995).

Currently the focus of macro-economic policy is firmly on export growth, which in the case of Uganda means agricultural exports. The traditional agricultural export sector (coffee in particular), which remains the backbone of the economy, has seen severe fluctuations in its revenues, in great part due to slumps and booms in international prices. Much of the growth of GDP has come from increased production and marketing of food crops and the emergence of non-traditional export crops such as maize, sesame, vanilla, fish

and horticultural products (Lockwood, 1996). As Beatilda Bisangwa explained, the policy emphasis on promotion of non-traditional export crops should be seen as an attempt to diversify the export base away from traditional agricultural commodities, such as coffee, which face fluctuating prices and unfavourable terms of trade. There have also been suggestions that more emphasis needs to be placed on generating additional demand for traditional Ugandan crops through the creation of value adding, agro-processing industries mainly oriented towards export markets (Helleiner et al., 1993).

However, in the context of the emphasis being placed on the promotion of NTEC, the Ugandan research team felt that a number of critical issues needed to be investigated. These questions can be summarized under two main headings. First, drawing on the insights of the "gender disaggregation model", the question is whether, and how far, gender relations may hinder the further growth of agricultural export production, especially through discouraging productivity growth. While it is known at a general level that women's labour is central to household-based production of export crops throughout most of Uganda, it is also clear from several micro-level studies that women are for the most part excluded from a process of positive feedback between price incentives, increased production, increased revenue and investment in yield-enhancing measures. As a result, they may not be able to secure the resources or incentives to improve agricultural productivity. In other words, women may not be able to respond **independently** to price incentives because of lack of access to land, inputs, credit, labour and product markets. In addition, while women's labour is central to the production of export crops for their husbands, they have little incentive to increase their labour contributions because they are unpaid.

The research team will, however, move beyond the generally known patterns and look more specifically at the relative price increases for particular non-traditional export crops and their supply response to see if women have been able to increase supplies of crops, which they sell on their own account, in response to price changes. This question will be tackled by comparing the supply response of male-headed and female-headed households, controlling for the socio-economic status of the household, which is known to affect supply response in a significant way.

While the first set of issues noted above relates to the limits that gender relations place on the supply response in export agriculture (i.e. the limits to growth), the second set of questions is about the welfare consequences of growth for women and their children. In other words, even if the agricultural growth strategy is "successful" in bringing forth the desired supply response (in terms of increased production of non-traditional export crops), questions need to be asked about the welfare consequences of such "success". Drawing on the insights of feminist economics (see section 4), the research team is concerned about the problem of heaping more work demands on women (i.e. increasing labour time not productivity) when there are already considerable time constraints on them. In other words, there is concern that women will be further squeezed between production and reproduction, with potentially negative consequences for household welfare. These questions will be explored by comparing adopters and non-adopters of NTEC to see where the extra labour for growing non-traditional export crops is coming from (hired labour and household labour disaggregated by age and gender). Additionally, there is a concern that household resources — land and women's labour in particular — may be drawn into cash crop production away from food crops for own consumption, or from crops grown by women on their own account. These patterns may have damaging effects on women's position within the household, and on food security for women and their children, if the cash revenue from NTEC is not used to buy enough food to make up for the losses. This may especially happen if the cash income from NTEC is controlled by men rather than women — given the well-documented tendency by the former to allocate the resources under their control to non-food items.

Several participants at the workshop drew the attention of the Ugandan research team to findings from other parts of sub-Saharan Africa that document the extent to which women farmers' responses to policy incentives (e.g. price increases) are conditioned by a different set of priorities from male farmers, such as food security and risk minimization as opposed to income maximization, which underpins the theory of supply response. A recent study on the gender dimensions of supply response to agricultural price

When high-yielding varieties of maize were introduced in Malawi, women very meticulously kept the old varieties for own-consumption because of the risks attached to the new varieties.

Ingrid Eide, Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO, Oslo, Norway

reform in Zambia, cited by Dag Ehrenpreis, found a negative supply response from women farmers to maize price increases. And the explanation offered was that after obtaining a certain minimum income level to meet household needs, women farmers preferred to spend more time with their families and to improve their children's welfare.

The issues raised above are being explored through village level studies in Uganda, drawing on both PRA (participatory rural appraisal) techniques and survey methodologies. While village level research will not yield "statistically significant" findings, it should provide useful insights into issues and processes

... from 1986, when the current government came to power, until 1996, Uganda was in a phase of reconstruction and rehabilitation, but we are now moving into full-fledged development. A great number of reforms are being carried out now, a lot of innovations are being put in place ... this study comes at a most appropriate moment when very many opportunities exist regarding entry points for gender concerns.

Charles Gashumba, Agricultural Policy Secretariat, Kampala, Uganda

that are currently by-passed in large-scale surveys carried out by various public bodies. It is hoped that, in addition to their impact on policy, some of the findings from the research will be used to restructure the scope and the methods underpinning large-scale official surveys. The fact that the project is located within the

Agricultural Policy Secretariat should facilitate this task.

Somewhat similar issues have been explored by the Vietnamese research team. The general thrust of macro-economic policy in Viet Nam since the late 1980s has been to promote the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-based one. The key goals of the policy package have been to increase economic growth and social development with its main elements being the de-collectivization of agriculture, price liberalization, devaluation, the reduction of public sector employment and the concomitant promotion of private enterprise. The reforms have been remarkably successful in economic terms, with agriculture registering a particularly strong record. Despite this dynamism, there is considerable underemployment in the countryside and a disproportionate share of the country's poor are found there. Rural employment and poverty reduction have consequently figured significantly in the official policy discourse of the Vietnamese government. Increasing small farm productivity and the diversification of rural livelihoods and income sources — both on- and off-farm — through labour-intensive rural industry and trade, and backed by improvements in rural roads and infrastructure, are seen

to hold the key to this goal. The aim is to encourage underemployed sections of the population to "leave the rice field but not the village".

The Vietnamese research team has therefore been exploring the possible relevance of gender to these broader goals of growth, diversification and poverty reduction in selected villages in both north and south Viet Nam. More specifically, research has been conducted to assess the relevance of gender in understanding the household's ability to earn an income, to diversify into off-farm activities and to meet welfare goals of enhanced food security. As data analysis had not been completed in time for the workshop, the research team was not able to present its findings. Some preliminary results were nevertheless presented and discussed.

Somewhat similar to the Ugandan scenario, the division of labour and the management of economic activities between men and women are not rigid in Viet Nam. There do not appear to be systematically "male" and "female" activities across the population — what might be characterized as a male activity in one village may be a female one in another. Rice farming is an obvious example; it is predominantly female-managed in the north, while it is male-managed in the south. This suggests that it may not always be possible to determine *a priori* which members of the household should receive agricultural inputs. By assuming that the male household head is the most suitable target (an assumption that was made in the decollectivization of land rights), policy makers are introducing a degree of male bias into households that appear to function as relatively egalitarian organizations. If the provision of credit is tied to land ownership, so that loans can only be accessed by the formal holder of the land titles, discrimination in access to public resources will be exacerbated. Such mis-routing of public expenditure may have potentially negative impacts on the ability of households to meet their welfare needs and to raise an income.

The research findings confirm that the ability to diversify economic activity — whether undertaken by women or men — significantly increases household income and ability to save. Diversification also contributes to household welfare (proxied by absence of extended periods of food shortage, frequency of daily meals, meat consumption, quality of housing), independently of household income. In other words, the ability to diversify seems to reduce fluctuations in resource flows and hence contributes to the security of welfare-related outcomes rather than just their level.

A related finding that raised considerable debate was the lower rates of saving ratios from economic activities managed by women compared to those managed by men, independently of the level of income. As several participants noted, this finding is quite consistent with other research, which has shown that for the same level of income, women have a higher propensity (than men) to spend income under their control on household (and in particular children's) needs (such as food, health care, housing and school fees). Even though women's enterprises may register lower rates of capital accumulation than men's, if household welfare and "human capital" considerations are factored into the macro-economic objectives of the government, it will become difficult to justify the mis-routing of public resources away from women entrepreneurs.

7 engendering macro economics: the politics of policy-making

A common theme that emerges from the above-mentioned perspectives is the importance of public policy in creating a "level playing field" so that economic agents can compete on an equal basis irrespective of their gender identity. According to this understanding the state is expected to play a supervisory role vis-à-vis the market in order to ensure that social (and gender) concerns are met. Implicit in this exhortation to public authorities to take gender concerns into account, is the model of an essentially benevolent state. Ironically, even some neo-classical analysts who look at gender issues in the context of structural adjustment policies seem to endorse such a model of the state — contrary to their otherwise negative perceptions of the state. According to Paul Collier, for example, if private sector credit and labour markets and private processes of information dissemination all make it likely that women will be less mobile than men, then there is a good case that where public mechanisms exist they should have an offsetting bias.

Gender advocates, however, may find this simplistic reliance on public authorities — benevolent in intent — to set things right to be negligent of the fact that policy-making institutions are themselves "gendered", that they have historically upheld women's structurally unequal position, and that they

often respond to pressures of a political nature. A more nuanced view of public policy emerges from feminist analyses of the state.

Debates between feminist "engagement" and "disengagement" strategies have been rooted in conflicting views of the state: a vehicle for social justice versus a protector of male interests (Miller and Razavi, forthcoming). The "engagement" strategists advocate change within existing bureaucratic structures, even if it is recognized that change will be incremental. In view of the tremendous influence exercised by the state over every facet of women's lives — and the gender biases around which their programmes and policies are constructed — state institutions are considered too important to ignore. This approach underpins the ongoing efforts at both the national and international levels to set up women's machineries inside state bureaucracies and other development organizations, to issue gender guidelines and to put in place "satellite accounts" and "women's budget statements" aimed at increasing state accountability to women. The engagement strategy has been particularly attractive in countries where the history of feminist engagement with the state has been located within the political tradition of social liberalism, which has allowed women's groups to place their claims on the state and to register significant gains through the state.

This strategy may be contrasted with the alternative "disengagement" approach, which is sceptical of the ability of bureaucracies to promote women's concerns and sees the state as biased with regard to gender issues. The reticence on the part of some women's groups about direct involvement with the state and with mainstream political parties should be located in the broader history of state-civil society relations where dominant political actors have used women's groups for the legitimation and perpetuation of their own position. Such factors — in addition to the visibility of wives or female relatives of national leaders in high political positions — have led to a certain weariness about mainstream politics and party-linked WID units or women's associations.

Recent feminist formulations have attempted to reconceptualize this ambivalence about the state, pointing to its contradictory role in both constructing and deconstructing gender disadvantage. The state, they argue, should not be seen as a unitary structure but as a differentiated set of institutions and practices. While the state can reinforce gender disadvantage, opportunity structures exist within it that can be used by women's

movements to challenge unequal gender relations. It follows, therefore, that feminist analyses of state-civil society relations must be historically, culturally and politically grounded. Feminist engagement with the state in any given context will be shaped by historical legacies and political traditions, the nature of the state and its basis of legitimacy, the nature of civil society and the relative power of its constituent parts, and the relations between the state and civil society.

Likewise, feminist policy advocacy within the state should be seen as a complement and not an alternative to women's organization and activism on the outside. Strategically positioned within the state, "femocrats" (feminist bureaucrats; see Sawyer, 1996) are in theory well-situated to identify and

... access to data and knowledge of the policy process are keys to effectiveness ... through the use of research and factual data we must also be able to provide rigorous value-added input to the policy process and provide alternative policy options.

Zeynep Karman, Status of Women Canada, Ottawa, Canada

take advantage of the political opportunity spaces to push forward a feminist agenda. But the strategy of implementing change "from within" demands a wide range of skills on the part of femocrats, which can be

most usefully summarized under the headings of "technical" and "political". As Zeynep Karman explained at the workshop, femocrats have to identify new issues, skilfully mobilize facts about them that can serve as a justification for action (hence, the emphasis on data), and cultivate allies whose support can help promote policy change. Tampering with the nuts and bolts of a

bureaucracy in the context of a highly sophisticated policy development process requires an in-depth understanding of how the bureaucratic machinery works. Gender advocates also need to have astute political skills in order to identify the strategic points of leverage in the policy establishment and to cultivate allies despite the distrust of traditional bureaucrats.

We always wanted to be aware if policy co-ordination took place and the ambitions of feminists coincided with the ambitions of heads of premier's departments and prime minister's departments who wanted to strengthen their own co-ordinating role vis-à-vis other departments, particularly economic departments such as finance and treasury.

Marian Sawyer, ANU, Canberra, Australia

One policy area particularly resistant to feminist incursions has been macro-economic decision-making. This is in part a reflection of the weak bargaining position of women's machineries vis-à-vis powerful ministries of finance. Under

pressure from international creditors, in some countries at least, ministries of finance have become increasingly alienated from the rest of public administration, undermining the possibilities for meaningful dialogue with line ministries (including women's ministries) and with civil society groups more generally. At the workshop, Rehman Sobhan's analysis of attempts by civil society groups in Bangladesh to initiate a process of dialogue with the government on strategic policy issues highlighted some of the most serious obstacles that have been encountered, among them the alienation of the finance ministry from the rest of the public administration as it has become increasingly engaged in dialogue with the World Bank and other international creditors.

But there are also important professional/conceptual barriers that prevent women's machineries from taking part in macro-economic policy processes. Having the competence and confidence both to understand and to question economic policy requires fluency and skill in the kind of analysis that economists do (Pearson, 1995). Moreover, to ensure that policy commitments do not remain trapped on paper, gender advocates need financial analysis skills that can tie those policy commitments to budget allocations (Goetz, 1995). The growing body of work by feminist economists outlined above provides a potential resource that women's machineries can use to help them focus on the design of policy reforms and to facilitate communication with economists who dominate macro-economic policy-making.

While some gender machineries manage to demonstrate considerable dexterity in both budgetary and policy analysis, many suffer from skill shortages and remain understaffed and under-resourced. In many Southern countries concerns for fiscal prudence and economic stabilization have, over the course of the past two decades, significantly weakened the capacity of public administration to carry out its remaining areas of responsibility (UNICEF/UNDP, 1995). The phenomenon of "moonlighting" by civil servants is a stark indication of the changing orientation of bureaucrats in such contexts. In the face of such deeply entrenched bureaucratic malaise in many Southern countries, the task of engendering macro-economic policy remains a formidable challenge.

In addition to the more technical skills, gender advocates within public administration also need a range of "political" skills to maintain legitimacy in

The real task in Bangladesh has been to rescue the dialogue process from the hegemony of the World Bank. A situation where a Bank-influenced reform agenda is worked out through the Ministry of Finance but then is completely disowned by the cabinet colleagues of the Finance Minister ... has led to a massive alienation from the reform agenda and to considerable problems in its implementation and sustainability.

Rehman Sobhan, CPD,
Dhaka, Bangladesh

We should perhaps remember that policy, perhaps more often than not, is a political process, and it doesn't necessarily rely on solid evidence and arguments ... although it is important to address rigorously these concrete policy issues, it is certainly not the only thing to be doing.

Matthew Lockwood, University of
Sussex, United Kingdom

the eyes of the women's movement. This is a central part of their policy advocacy work, for as experience in several countries has demonstrated organized external pressure has played an indispensable role in pushing through feminist policy initiatives.

Iterative relationships between women's units in public administration and women's constituencies in civil society have proven difficult to establish or exploit in other contexts where women's autonomous groups have been reluctant to become too closely associated with WID units (for historical reasons noted above). Even in countries like Australia, where the inside-outside relationships have been relatively successful, femocrats who are career civil servants and have not therefore "cut their teeth" in the women's movement are often viewed with suspicion by those on the outside.

... we are bureaucrats, we are civil servants so we have access to cabinet documents, we have to keep the secrecy of these documents and we are of course very much criticized for not sharing all of this information with women's groups ... for having "sold out"... but we are also considered far too radical by the government departments.

Zeynep Erden Karman, Status of Women Canada, Ottawa, Canada

Overall, then, while the evidence points to the importance of strong external women's constituencies to support internal gender policy advocacy, at the same time it also depicts the complex and often mutually distrustful nature of relations between insiders and outsiders.

8

concluding remarks

The "fall-outs" from macro policy reform agendas initiated at the instigation of international creditors in many Southern countries during the 1980s rallied a wide range of social movements — among them gender activists — around macro policy issues. At the same time feminist scholarship rose to the challenge of moving the debate beyond a discussion of the impacts of adjustment on women, and onto a more pro-active phase of demonstrating how gender relations in turn impact on the achievement of macro policy objectives. This report has reviewed some of the approaches that have sought to explore the interface between gender and macro economics, drawing on the proceedings of the UNRISD/CPD workshop, which looked at these issues at some length. While significant areas of divergence among the three main approaches emerged during the course of the workshop discussions, this

report has also drawn attention to some of their shared premises. One critical area that has emerged from the discussion is the need for better integration between the "productive" and the "reproductive" spheres, and the dangers of assuming that the reproductive sector will continue to accommodate all the changes in the rest of the economy. The other common theme that emerged from the country level research documented in this report has been the need for greater social regulation and gender auditing of emerging markets through "public action". Therefore, in a very important sense, the task of gendering macro-economic policy should also be seen as a political exercise wherein gender constituencies play a pivotal role.

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working towards
a more gender equitable
macro-economic agenda
(rajendrapur, bangladesh, 26-28 november 1996)

Agenda

tuesday 26 november

9.00-10.45	INAUGURAL SESSION
Opening statements:	Rehman Sobhan (Executive Chairman, CPD) Dharam Ghai (Director, UNRISD) David Lockwood (Resident Representative, UNDP)
Keynote speaker:	Naila Kabeer (IDS)
Inaugural address:	Matia Chowdhury (Minister for Agriculture, Government of Bangladesh)
Vote of thanks:	Nasreen Khundker (Assistant Professor, Dhaka University)
10.45-11.00	COFFEE BREAK
SESSION I — GENDERING ECONOMIC POLICIES: THE ROLE OF THE STATE, CIVIL INSTITUTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS	
11.00-12.30	PANEL I — Feminist initiatives to gender macro-economic policies in Canada and Australia
Chairperson:	Myrna I. Jarillas
Speakers:	Zeynep Erden Karman Marian Sawyer
Discussant:	Beverley Anderson-Manley
12.30-14.00	LUNCH
14.00-15.00	PANEL II — States in flux: The implications of democratization and economic transition for gendering macro- economic policies
Chairperson:	Dag Ehrenpreis
Speakers:	Maria Nemenyi Patricia Alexander
Discussant:	Mirza M. Hasan

15.00-16.30	PANEL III — Attempts by multilateral and bilateral agencies to gender programme assistance
Chairperson:	Najma Chowdhury
Speakers:	Rosina Wiltshire Marjan Kroon Dag Ehrenpreis
Discussants:	Ingrid Eide Nasreen Khundker
16.30-16.45	TEA BREAK
16.45-18.00	PANEL IV — Opportunities for institutions of civil society to influence the policy process: Reflections on the concept of policy dialogue
Chairperson:	Akmal Hossain
Speakers:	Yusuf Bangura Rehman Sobhan

wednesday 27 november

SESSION II — TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AND
WOMEN'S LIVES: COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

9.00-10.00	Project overview
Chairperson:	Dharam Ghai
Speakers:	Carol Miller Shahra Razavi
10.00-12.30	PANEL V — Industrialization, export promotion and the changing pattern of women's employment in Bangladesh
Chairperson:	Mujibul Huq
Speakers:	Nasreen Khundker Simeen Mahmud Debapriya Bhattachariya Rita Afsar
Discussant:	Rahma Bourqia
10.00-11.00	• <i>Presentation of findings by CPD research team</i>
11.00-11.15	C O F F E E B R E A K
11.15-12.30	• <i>Influencing the policy process in Bangladesh through research findings</i>

12.30-13.30	LUNCH
13.30-15.30	PANEL VI — Female employment, industrial models and international competitiveness in Morocco
Chairperson:	Deborah Kasente
Speakers:	Saâd Belghazi Rahma Bourqia Rabéa Naciri
Discussant:	Debapriya Bhattachariya
13.30-14.30	• <i>Presentation of findings by CERAB research team</i>
14.30-15.30	• <i>Influencing the policy process in Morocco through research findings</i>
15.30-15.45	TEA BREAK
15.45-17.00	PANEL VII — Influencing the policy process through gender training for senior government officials in Jamaica
Chairperson:	Rehman Sobhan
Speaker:	Beverley Anderson-Manley
Discussant:	Zeynep Erden Karman

thursday 28 november

SESSION III — TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION
AND WOMEN'S LIVES: COUNTRY CASE
STUDIES (CONTINUED)

9.30-11.00	PANEL VIII — The gender dimensions of agricultural policy in Uganda
Chairperson:	Yusuf Bangura
Speakers:	Charles Gashumba Deborah Kasente Beatilda Bisangwa
Discussant:	Matthew Lockwood
9.30-10.00	• <i>Discussion of research by the Agricultural Policy Secretariat</i>
10.00-11.00	• <i>Influencing the policy process in Uganda through research findings</i>
11.00-11.15	COFFEE BREAK

working towards
a more gender equitable
macro-economic agenda

(rajendrapur, bangladesh, 26-28 november 1996)

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