



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Rural livelihoods and gender

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Rural livelihoods and gender

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Abstract

This paper is primarily a literature review, which focuses on: a) the gendered aspects, dimensions and gender impact of rural livelihoods in the Asia-Pacific region; and b) how these aspects and dimensions are (or not) changing; and c) the impacts of these changes. It has the following objectives. First, it highlights the existing and emerging trends in the area of gender and rural livelihoods in the Asia-Pacific region. Second, it analyzes how the existing literature links different concepts such as gender equality, sustainable livelihood and human development. Third, it identifies the good practices and policies that work for promoting gender equality in rural livelihoods and proposes some policy recommendations.

Key words: Rural livelihoods, gender equality, agriculture, labor

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations, including UNDP, or the UN Member States.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Asia Pacific
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DDS	Deccan Development Society
ETI	Ethical Trade Initiative
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAD	Gender and Development
HNSA	HomeNet South Asia
IDRC	International Development Research Center
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture and Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFI	Microfinance institutions
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SEA	South East Asia
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
SL	Sustainable Livelihoods
WDR	World Development Report
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

Rural livelihoods and gender

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives and Rationale

A person's livelihood is comprised of 'the capabilities, assets (material and social) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base.'¹ Rural livelihoods is a key area for understanding how gender operates in limiting or expanding men and women's access, options and choices regarding the use of resources and their material conditions, and ultimately their ability to voice concerns and influence their positions in life.

The focus of this paper reflects the important role played by agriculture and non-farm activities, primarily based in rural areas in the Asia-Pacific region.

The World Bank categorizes most of the South and East Asian and Middle Eastern countries as 'transforming economies', where agriculture is not a major source of economic growth (World Bank 2008). However, in most of these countries, poverty remains rural; about 80 per cent of the poor in this region live in rural areas (World Bank 2008). Attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and economic equity in the region require a focus on rural livelihoods.

Moreover, the current economic crisis and its gender impact in rural areas highlight the importance of food security, and the gender asymmetries in rural livelihoods, particularly agriculture.

According to the World Development Report (2008), the rural poor use the following livelihood strategies: smallholder entrepreneurship, participation in agricultural and non-farm labor market, and migration. Migration from rural to urban areas is increasing in some parts of the Asia-Pacific (which has a gender dimension) and urbanization is taking place at a rapid pace for many of the countries. The livelihood strategies adopted by many in the urban areas are strongly linked to agriculture and non-farm activities in the rural areas. The decisions by the rural poor to adopt a particular livelihood strategy or the impact of strategies used are influenced by the gendered access to resources and gender power relations within the household, community, rural markets and the policy arena.

In addition, the nature of patriarchy² varies widely in this region. Parts of South Asia and the Middle East impose a more restrictive or rigid form of patriarchy, specifically evident in rural areas, influencing the strategic life choices (Kabeer 1994) related to livelihood options for poor women and men. In other parts such as the Southeast and

¹ Chambers and Conway (1992).

² In this paper the term is used to refer to male power, i.e., in decision making and authority in society, that is supported by kinship, marriage and family systems which allow men to control women's labor, mobility and sexuality in the family and by extension in the public arena, i.e., market, community and the state.

the Pacific,³ patriarchal norms take a more loose form (Kabeer 2003), yet they influence options, choices and positions of poor women and men in rural areas (Table 3.1). This implies that in order to understand the gendered nature and form of livelihood strategies, rural livelihood merits a close focus.

Though the primary focus of this paper is on women in rural areas in South Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific region, it takes into account that women are differentiated by class, caste, ethnicity, race and age. It also acknowledges that poor men in rural areas may face specific disadvantages. In addition, people with minority gender identities may have different access to resources and may face different challenges regarding livelihoods in rural areas.

1.2 Scope

The literature review aims to explore the following. First, how do different bodies of literature conceptualize the links between gender equality, sustainable livelihood, and human development? Second, what are the regional level changes and trends in rural livelihoods and their gender impact? Third, how does gender affect women's access to resources and participation in many areas such as, rural labor, product and finance markets? Fourth, how have women's rural livelihoods strategies and changes in these strategies, influenced gender division of labor, family structures, and led to the emergence of new norms.⁴

Identification of the nature, key issues and trends for researching the gender dimensions of livelihood in the Asia-Pacific region requires an analysis of gender asymmetries within the different institutional sites⁵ (i.e., household, market, community and the state). The nature of gender asymmetries that exist within these sites influences the livelihood strategies of rural women (i.e. by affecting the context of choice, range of choice, and how women's agency is exercised) and leads to different wellbeing outcomes (Figure 2.1). These sites are interlinked. Gender bias in one site reinforces gender disadvantage in other sites. Similarly, gender transformative changes in one site create transformative opportunities in other sites. The globalization process and liberalization policies may intensify gender asymmetries or help to mitigate gender disadvantages within these sites.

A focus on institutions is useful because: a) it illustrates the gendered nature of power and how it operates within and among the different institutional sites (i.e., in terms of access to resources, being able to exercise agency, and the gendered impact); b) it shows how various change agents and interventions (such as civil society actors, state policies,) may alter the gendered nature of power that operate within these sites and have a spill over effect on other sites. For example, gender sensitive land titling policies in Lao People's Democratic Republic introduced by the state not only changed poor women's livelihood options but also the gender power relations within

³ East Asian countries (China, Japan, Taiwan, Province of China, Republic of Korea) are classified by the IDRC as displaying characteristics of a restrictive form of patriarchy similar to that found in the Middle East and South Asia. Therborn (2004) distinguishes between the nature of patriarchies in these regions and separates them.

⁵ Institutions are a set of formal rules (law or regulations) and informal norms that regulate interactions between people (North 1991).

the household and promoted women's voice in community land management (World Bank et al. 2008).

The literature reviewed in this paper can be broadly categorized under three main areas: a) literature on sustainable livelihood (which has three main strands; agriculture, natural resource management and coping strategies);⁶ b) literature on formal and informal employment and labor markets; c) research on the impact of economic/ trade policies, legal reforms and state support services on the livelihood choices of rural women.

The review is guided by the following questions:

- a) How are gender asymmetries conceptualized and linked to employment /sustainable livelihoods in these researches?
- b) How has this conceptualization changed over time?
- c) What are the research and data gaps in each of these categories?

1.3 Constraints

The paper is based on secondary documents-- existing academic and policy research. The discussion below highlights the constraints this paper faced in analyzing the gendered dimensions, aspects and impact of rural livelihood.

Under-researched Areas, Particularly in Feminist and Gender Research

Not all areas and issues that fall under the rubric of gender and rural livelihoods have been extensively researched. For example, feminist analysis of home-based production workers and employment in the informal sector in the Asia Pacific remains comparatively less researched. The studies on informal sector are country-specific or at times do not differentiate between informal employment in rural and urban areas and categorize data based on different types of work (Doane 2007). Research on rural women's non-farm employment is constrained by the following facts: a) availability and quality of data are limited, b) cross-country comparisons are not possible as different definitions are used, and c) data is collected in an ad hoc manner (Chant and Pedwell 2008).

Some issues, such as livelihood strategies adopted by gendered minority communities and their role in agriculture or labor markets are not covered by the various regional or international reports on agriculture, industry or other issues. (Esplen 2007).

Existing feminist studies on China have explored the gender impact of Chinese state policies and reforms (Howell 1998; Croll 1983); the impact of state sponsored feminism on women's political participation (Zhang 1995); and gender impact on internal migration on rural areas (Croll and Huang 1997). These are useful for gathering insights into the gender dimension of changing nature of rural livelihood during economic transition, however, there may be more to learn from about these issues from China.

⁶ These have sub themes. For example, agriculture covers issues such as agriculture labor market, product market, innovation and technology, state services, impact of liberalization policies, also areas such as aquaculture, livestock etc (World Bank 2008).

Specific Challenges that Arise from Feminist Analysis

Feminists have long pointed out that ‘geography of gender’ (Townsend and Momsen 1987) is vital for understanding the regional variations in patriarchies. A ‘geography of gender’ is a useful tool since it draws attention to kinship, marriage, inheritance systems and how these affect gendered access and gender division of labor in a particular context. Feminist analysis of crop systems, inheritance patterns in a majority of the cases tend to be country/within country region-specific. There are exceptions (Agarwal 1994). This makes it challenging to use the conclusions drawn from these very context specific studies and applying them at a wider level.

In recent years feminists have pointed out realities of poor women that have been researched focusing on women being able to earn and control their income/assets, and women’s individualized welfare (Vera-Sanso 2009). These studies largely take marriage/household/community as institutions/sites where women experience subordination. While these interpretations are correct, analysis of livelihoods requires a focus on interdependencies and alliances that men and women form within marriages and beyond the household, particularly in contexts where state provision and regulation of markets are limited (Vera-Sanso 2009). Understanding livelihood choices of poor women, for whom security and subsistence are accessible through social networks, requires a focus on how women are affected by the structural factors and policies *as* women, and how they are affected by the opportunities or constraints that are experienced by the other members of the household.

Developing Macro-Micro Link

Studies on gender and rural livelihood mainly either focus on the macro level policy and institutions or the micro level (household level). In terms of livelihood issues, most studies focus on gender inequalities at the household level. The focus on public policy has been selective, especially, trade and capital flows have not always been subject to gender analysis (Chant and Pedwell 2008;). As a result, it is difficult to grasp and make regional (and sub-regional) changes.

Problems of Attribution in Analyzing Policy Impact

Analysis of policy impacts at a regional level is difficult to conduct. This is because many social processes influence why changes happen. It is difficult to establish counterfactuals, i.e., what type of changes would have happened if the policies were not implemented (Jackson and Rao 2004). For example, analyzing the impact of liberalization on the Asia-Pacific region is difficult. Many of the social processes were in place even before countries started to liberalize. The time-scale involved and the diversity of the region also create challenges in attributing changes to liberalization. Moreover, whether the changes have intensified because of liberalization is difficult to attribute since this requires clear counterfactuals.

Lack of Gender Disaggregated Data

Gender disaggregated data may not be available for all categories for each of the sub-regions in the Asia-Pacific. This makes comparison difficult. Women (and gender) feature heavily in certain areas such as micro-finance and there is an official

acknowledgement of feminized poverty and feminization of labor. However, gender disaggregated data on land ownership, remittances (it exists for some countries such as the Philippines, see discussion in Jolly and Reeves, 2003), and the impact of trade policies are difficult to find for each of these sub-regions. Moreover, different studies use different definitions, indicators and interpretations that make it difficult to draw conclusions.

Methodological Challenges in Conducting Intra-household Analysis

While there is increased data on women's condition, there is still a lack of data required for sophisticated analysis of the changes in gender relations within the household. Gender disaggregated data sets do not have information on the relational aspects of the members of the *same* household (Jackson and Rao 2004). Without the data on members of the *same* household and transfers that take place between them in redistributing costs or benefits of the material, social or policy changes, it is hard to analyze and identify the trajectories of change in gender relations (Chant and Pedwell 2008).

2. LINKING GENDER EQUALITY, SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

This section analyzes the literature on sustainable livelihood, employment, gender analysis of development projects and feminist and human development theory. The purpose of this categorization and linking of concepts is to explore: a) how gender inequality affects livelihood options and strategies chosen by women (and men); b) to what extent women (and men) are able to negotiate within the structural constraints.

2.1 Gender in the Existing Sustainable Livelihood Literature

The existing literature on sustainable livelihoods (SL) has three main domains: a) agricultural perspective; b) environmental management perspective and c) coping strategies and food security perspective (Masika and Joeke 1996). Each of these domains has focused on gender issues in a specific manner. Very broadly, the literature on agriculture has focused on the role of women in agriculture, the impact of gender division of labor and the consequences of women's lesser control over assets, resources and income (World Bank et al. 2008). However, there has been a shift in focus on gender and agriculture to include new areas such as research on agricultural value chains (Barrientos 2001) and the impact of liberalization policies (Chant and Pedwell 2008). The environmental management literature has mainly taken a Women in Development (WID) approach focusing on the different activities of men and women as users and managers of these resources and the impact of this on women's workload (Jackson 1995). During the present decade, there has been a focus on how social institutions mediate women's access to and control over natural resources (Agarwal 2002; BRIDGE 2008). The coping strategies literature has mainly focused on the different coping strategies used by men and women during periods of crisis (Davis 1996). In recent years, there has been a shift in focus on linking how coping strategies, particularly migration affects household structure and the nature of the gender division of labor, etc. (Kabeer 2007). The evolution of SL literature into these three specific domains influences how gender analysis is brought into this body of literature.

The literature also illustrates that livelihood strategies include employment, but also incorporate informal sector employment, the use of common property resources, social networks, etc. This raises questions about how insights from the literature on gender dimensions of employment (defined as productive activity, including formal sector employment) can be linked with the three different domains of the SL literature.

2.2 Feminist Research on Livelihood Strategies

It should be noted that feminist research on gender and rural livelihoods is extensive, however some of the areas are under researched. Feminist research covered here includes both academic policy research on: development process (see Goetz 1997), economic policies (Elson 1995); and social and anthropological research on households (see Kabeer 1994). Gender analysis of different development projects⁷ and institutions are also reviewed.

Issues such as impact of macroeconomic policies and land reform are well-researched for certain regions such as Latin America (Elson 1995) or Africa (Jacobs 1998; Kawamara-Mishambi and Ovonji Odida 2003). Though the land ownership issues are researched for development programs and are area-specific, regional analysis by feminists remain limited in number for the Asia-Pacific (there are exceptions, see Agarwal 1994). Agricultural studies by feminists have highlighted women's unpaid work, the nature of household structure and labor usage patterns (see Kabeer 1994). Compared with the work on Latin America, there are fewer works on the impact of agricultural value chains and diversification for the Asia-Pacific region. However, there are country specific studies (see Jackson and Rao 2004).

In terms of women's work, the majority of the literature on Asia-Pacific has explored the entry barriers and impact of women's involvement in export industries (Lim 1990; Kabeer 2000). etc. There is also a plethora of literature on micro-finance and self-help groups and how these affect women's empowerment (Rose 1992; Goetz and Gupta 1996; Schuler et al. 1996, Kabeer 1999). However, women's work in home-based production (other than micro-finance projects) is mainly country-specific and under researched compared to these other areas (Doane 2007).

Gender issues in community resource management have been researched by feminists mostly from the following two perspectives: a) gender impact of state programs on forest management (Agarwal 2002), particularly on indigenous women or water resources management; b) women's movement against environmental degradation, for example, the literature on the Chipko movement.

Notably, feminist literature takes different institutional sites—household, markets, community, or the state, as their unit of analysis. For analyzing the complexities and synergies between gender inequality and livelihood, the gender asymmetries in access to, control over resources (both material and social) and participation in each of the

⁷ See Goetz (1997) for cases of institutional/ organizational review, Jackson and Rao (2004) for case studies of development projects in India; World Bank et al.(2008) for analysis of cases of various development projects and programs.

different institutional sites needs to be explored. This indicates that one needs to explore the following: a) how the gendered nature of these institutional sites (for example, gender bias within the households; biased community norms etc) creates gendered access to and control over resources (i.e., economic, social, human etc) and limits women's participation and voice; b) what is the gender differentiated impact on men and women's wellbeing resulting from gendered access and control over resources and limited participation of women in different institutional sites? and c) how bias in one institutional site reinforces gender bias in another institutional site (for example, gender bias in inheritance influences women's voice and participation in community power structures).

2.3 Gendered Institutions and Rural Livelihood

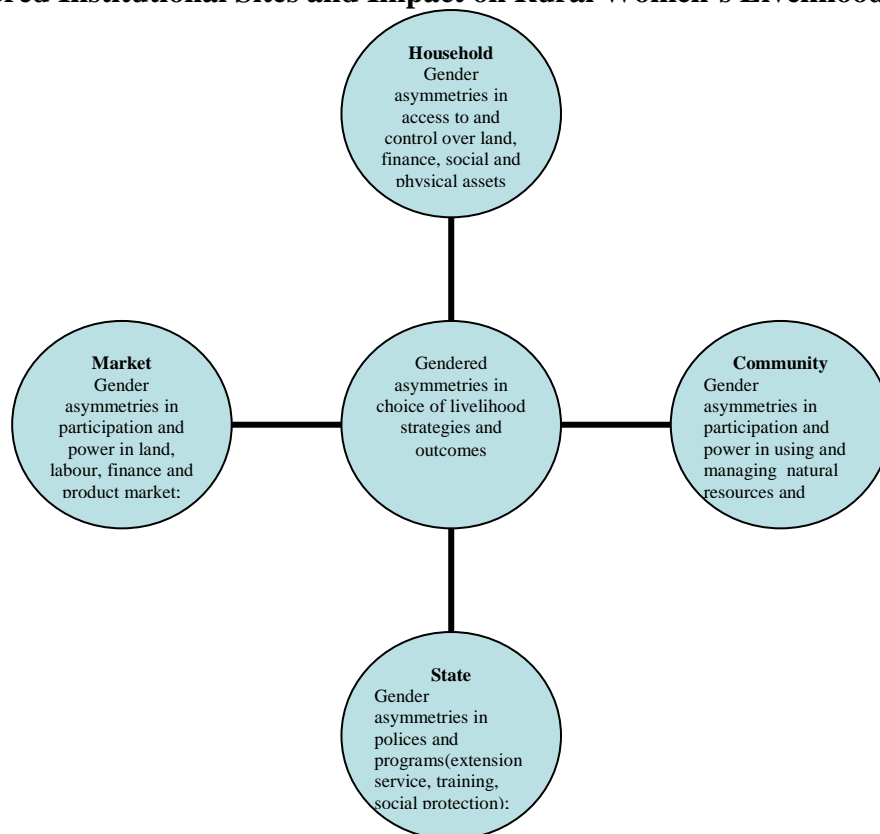
Livelihood strategies are influenced by 'access to and control over assets, access to markets, information and organization, effective management of vulnerability and the interaction of these policies at the global, national and local levels' (World Bank et al. 2008). A gender lens requires a focus on the following factors: a) assets (social, financial, human, physical, natural); b) markets; c) risk and vulnerability; and d) knowledge, information and organizations (World Bank et al. 2008). Some of these are marked by gendered access, control, participation and/or have a gender-differentiated impact. This is a useful framework for incorporating gender. However, this was developed to analyze gender issues in the agriculture sector.

This needs to be modified if other relevant bodies of literature such as those on formal sector employment/labor markets need to be incorporated in this discussion. Moreover, while the literature on agriculture is extensive, the mitigating/adaptation/coping strategies that are undertaken by rural women and their impact may not all be covered by focusing only on seasonal agricultural migration. In addition, the impact of these coping strategies on the household structure and women's/men's agency at the intra-household level also need to be explored. This implies that analyzing how each institutional site is gender-biased and how this affects women's livelihood strategies provides a better entry point for understanding the gender dimensions of rural livelihoods.

Figure 2.1 illustrates four different institutional sites: household, market, community and the state, and the nature of gender asymmetries at these sites. These asymmetries are based on gendered access, control over resources, gendered state policies and programs, unequal power and participation within the market and community, and the gendered pattern of risks. At the household level, men and women have different access to and control over land, monetary resources, own labor and labor of other household members. All of these influence the choice of work, the nature of engagement at the market and at community levels. Regarding access to markets, men and women have different access to agricultural finance, input and produce markets because of gendered social norms, control over assets, and knowledge about market operations. Their access to and participation in labor markets is also different given the role they play within the household, social norms on mobility, gender segregation of occupation, etc. This also implies the risks and vulnerabilities faced by men and women are also different. At the community level, the roles played by women and men in local community power structures or user rights/control over community resources, is different. Women's presence in agriculture, or natural resource policy

making or local governance structure is low. Moreover, the state policies can be gender-biased in delivering services to women. These indicate women's voice has less influence. However, poor rural men may have less influence in the political arena.

Figure 2.1
Gendered Institutional Sites and Impact on Rural Women's Livelihood



Source: Author.

Gender asymmetries in all of these sites, ultimately lead to unequal livelihood options and gender-biased outcomes for men and women, not only in terms of wellbeing, but also unequal power relations and capabilities to voice their concerns. Figure 2.1 illustrates the gendered nature of these sites and their gender impact.

In light of the preceding discussion, gender equality in livelihoods literature and feminist analysis is understood as: *equality of access to resources, opportunity, engagement in different spheres and equality of outcome for men and women*. Many of the gender analysis of development projects focus on structural constraints experienced by women, i.e, biased laws, custom, gender segregated markets, gender division of labor, etc. (Jackson 1997). However, feminist research since the late 1990s have also shifted towards an actor-oriented approach by exploring how women exercise agency and negotiate within these structural constraints (Jackson 1997). Feminist analysis of human development approaches may help in linking this gender analysis of sustainable livelihood to issues around choice and agency.

2.4 Linking Gender Analysis of Rural Livelihood to Human Development

The gendered impact of livelihood strategies on human development has been interpreted in feminist literature, particularly those exploring the notion of women's

empowerment, in the following manner. First, it reviews how gender asymmetry in access, control, and participation affects women's well-being or women's condition (i.e., nutritional status, health, education, etc. as a result of their productive activity). The wellbeing aspect or women's conditions are affected by availability of resources (i.e., financial, social, physical) and the context within which these resources are made available for women to use.

Second, the literature also covers how women's agency is affected by, or how women exercise agency given, the available resources and the context of choice (Kabeer 1999). If the context is restrictive, then women, despite the fact that resources are available, may decide not to use them.

This literature mostly focuses on women's work or productive activity and empowerment. One of the key assumptions in feminist and development literature is that involvement in economic activity (productive activity) leads to women's empowerment (i.e., women's ability to exercise agency). However, feminist studies have brought in a nuanced reading of the relationship between women's empowerment and work/access to resources. They have shown that a positive relationship depends on the nature of the work (Masika and Joeke 1996) and how resource, choice and agency are combined (Kabeer 1999). Many of the feminist and development researchers have explored the impact of work on women's empowerment at the individual level, through analyzing changes in decision-making at the intra-household level. Agency in these studies is interpreted as the 'power to' dimension of power, such as the ability to do things, follow through with one's decision (Lukes 1974). However, the impact of women's work on collective empowerment of women remains under researched.

This discussion illustrates that feminists and gender studies in researching livelihoods have explored: a) how individual women exercise agency; b) how agency is qualified and constrained by political, economic and social opportunities; and c) the impact of the gender-biased structure on women's (and men's) well-being. These structural and agency-related analyses are closely linked to the idea of human development.

2.5 Key Considerations

In light of the discussion on various bodies of literature, this paper will take the following issues into consideration.

Inter-sectionality

A gender analysis of livelihoods needs to incorporate how gender asymmetry in access to and control over resources, and how participation in and power over resources, information networks, and markets affects men and women. It also needs to explore how this varies among women and men.

Links Between the Different Institutional Sites

How do gender asymmetries in one institutional site (such as the household) affect gender asymmetries in other institutional sites (market and states)?

Contradictory Nature of Changes in Gender Dimension of Rural Livelihood

The changes in market demand, technology and environment have created new opportunities for women. In many cases, they have also adversely affected women. These changes in the different sectors can have contradictory effects on women's empowerment—increasing their agency in one institutional site; while reducing their well-being in another. Moreover, the analysis needs to take into account how women are affected by the structural changes and policies *as* women, and how these changes may create opportunities for or constrain choices of the other members of their household.

Reproductive Work and Double Burden

Reproductive work refers to work done by women within the household that reproduces and sustains labor power of the household members. For rural women, this term refers to many different types of activities, such as fuel and water collection, caring for children and elderly, cooking, cleaning, food processing (such as husking), informal entrepreneurial work such as kitchen gardening, poultry raising, etc. (Annex 1). The latter categories indicate that the line between reproductive and productive work (that contributes towards an income) is blurred. All of these reproductive activities influence women's time and labor power. These indicate that there are trade-offs for the choices women make regarding livelihood strategies, and structural changes may (or may not) lead to changes in gender division of labor.

3. RURAL LIVELIHOOD AND GENDER IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC: THE BROAD STROKES

This section discusses the key trends in rural livelihoods in the Asia-Pacific and the gender nature and implication of these trends. It also briefly discusses the nature of patriarchal systems in the region for contextualizing the trends discussed in this section.

3.1 'Geography of Gender' for the Asia-Pacific Region

Inter-regional and sub-regional comparisons of gender inequality in matters related to rural livelihood need to be contextualized within the 'geography of gender' (Townsend and Momsen 1987) for this region. The sub-regions, Middle East and South Asia and East Asia (excluding southern India and Sri Lanka) are classified as regions where a more restrictive form of patriarchy operates compared to Sub Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean regions (Kabeer 1994), whereas Southeast Asia and the Pacific are classified as less rigid or as loose forms of patriarchy (Kabeer, 2003).⁸ As stated before this paper focuses on South Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific region.

⁸ Rigid forms of patriarchies are patrilineal, patrilocal, with corporate forms of households where men control women's labor, sexuality, mobility. Segregation of sexes and gender division of labor is rigid, household resources are pooled and men have decision making power, the ideology of male guardianship is promoted.

The difference in gender division of labor (i.e., gender difference in productive and reproductive work, paid and unpaid work) in these sub-regions reflects the following: institutions of kinship, family systems in a region and the resulting household patterns and gender division of resource and responsibilities. Kabeer (2003) points out that women's participation in the larger/wider economy is influenced by two factors: a) the nature of the household (corporate or loose form); b) the nature of the public-private divide and restrictions on women's mobility. The types of households vary depending on land inheritance systems, marriage practices, economic activities and welfare outcomes. Households in the South Asia and East Asia are organised along the corporate line.⁹ These sub-regions have the following characteristics: patrilineality (descent and property traced through the male line); exogamous patrilocal marriage.¹⁰ Given households are organized along the corporate line, the ideology of male provider and female dependent persists in these sub-regions. Household income is pooled and men have control over female labor, sexuality and mobility. The public-private divide is strong. All of these points towards a condition where women have less access and control over family land and other resources. They have less social capital as they would relocate after marriage. Restriction on their mobility and sexuality and social norms of female dependency imply that extra-household relations (access to state services, formal markets, information and community resources) may be of limited nature.

The Southeast Asian sub-region (and southern India and Sri Lanka) also have households that are organised along the corporate line. However, these countries also have the some or many of the following characteristics: matrilineal kinship systems, virilocal¹¹ marriages, less restrictions on female mobility, children are equally related to both sides, income is pooled but women maybe largely responsible for managing the household budget. All of these indicate that women's access to and control over resources within the household, women's claim over family and common resources, women's ability to participate in and take decisions at the market, community and state levels vary from the other sub-regions. The nature of patriarchy that affects women's agency, options and choices is different.

Table 3.1 categorizes the sub-regions according to the nature of patriarchy, kinship, inheritance and marriage systems and the resulting gender division of labor and access to both family and extra household resources. This provides a picture of the 'initial conditions' that influence women's and men's access to and control over resources and how they respond and negotiate structural changes.

⁹ The head of the household, usually a man, decides how resources and other members' particularly women's labor would be used, income spent, and women's relations with people outside the household conducted. Degree of corporateness varies depending on the degree of head's control. In loose forms other members are able to exchange their labor and have some control over particular resources.

¹⁰ Marrying outside the village and residing at the groom's village.

¹¹ This type of marriage practices can happen in patriarchal society also. Couples reside separately.

Table 3.1
Classification of Different Sub Regions based on Geography of Gender

Region	Nature of Patriarchy	Kinship and Marriage Systems	Inheritance systems and Sex Segregation	Gender division of labor, control over resources, livelihood options
South Asia (North India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, except for South India and Sri Lanka)	Rigid Form	Descent and lineage through male line Patrilocal marriage, the woman relocates after marriage and lives with the man's family The conjugal unit plays a key role	Inheritance through male line (however, bilateral inheritance systems also exist, where people inherit from both parents) Sex segregation exists and restrictions over female mobility	Men control women's labor, mobility and sexuality. Female ownership of land very low; most women in rural areas work as contributing family workers and casual agricultural laborers. A significant number of women work in the informal sector. Women, generally have less bargaining power inside the household, cannot exchange labor or command labor of other members, are dependent on men for conducting interactions in the market, community and state sphere
East Asia (China, Japan, Republic of Korea)	Classified as Rigid Form, however gender inequality has been challenged because of various state policies and structural changes in the economy	Descent and lineage thorough male Line The conjugal unit plays a key role	Inheritance through male line, although in the case of communist states such as China this would not be relevant	High female labor force participation, because of state policies and growth of export oriented economy; female and male participation in agriculture, service and manufacturing sectors are almost equal. Gender wage gap exists. However, gender division of labor within the household remains largely unchanged

Region	Nature of Patriarchy	Kinship and Marriage Systems	Inheritance systems and Sex Segregation	Gender division of labor, control over resources, livelihood options
Southeast Asia, Pacific and also Sri Lanka and parts of South India	Less rigid or loose form	Descent and lineage through male line, but existence of matrilineal societies and also bilateral lineage Virilocal marriage, where the couple sets up an independent household The lineage, particularly the female's kin, plays a key role	Inheritance through male line, also female line, and bilateral inheritance systems Sex segregation does not exist in the form of other regions; and less control over female mobility	In matrilineal societies women have more control and voice over properties; they also have access to social networks as the women do not relocate to the man's village. More female mobility allows women to access information, and interact in the market, community and state sphere. Compared to other regions, high female labor force participation, more women as smallholders and traders and non farm activities.

Source: Author (Based on information collected from Kabeer 1994; Kabeer 2003; Therborn 2004)

How does the sub-regional 'geography of gender' throw light on how women's empowerment and agency may vary within the household in these different sub-regions? Table 3.2 shows by sub-region the percentage of married women who have no say over matters concerning their own well-being and household expenditures (and by extension empowerment and gender equality at the family level).

Table 3.2
Married Women Who have No Say Over Final Decisions

Region	Own health care	Large purchase	Visits to Relatives	Daily purchase
South Asia	54	52	47	46
East Asia and the Pacific*	7	18	9	7

Source: UNIFEM 2008,

Note: * the countries include Southeast Asian countries

Marriage, in one form or another, remains universal in the Asia-Pacific region (Therborn 2004). The data in Table 3.2 shows that married women's decision-making power in East Asia (which includes the Southeast Asian countries) is very different from the other two regions. Less than 10 per cent of married women in the East Asian region reported having no decision-making power regarding their own mobility, health care and daily household expenditure. Interestingly, South Asia trails behind across all categories. Almost 50 per cent of married women reported having no decision-making power regarding their mobility, household expenditure or health care issues.

This is perhaps a clear reflection of the nature of patriarchy (based on kinship, family and marriage systems) that operates in these sub-regions and influences women's access to and control over intra and extra household (social networks) resources and agency and ultimately their well-being. It also indicates how the map of Asia-Pacific may be divided into two halves regarding the nature of patriarchy. South Asia has rigid forms of patriarchies and Southeast Asia and the Pacific have a loose form of patriarchy (although there are sub-national and regional differences).

These different forms of patriarchies are the 'initial conditions' within which new policies, programs and opportunities function. Women's and men's choices and the way they take up opportunities and how they negotiate different constraints are influenced by these 'initial conditions'. This does not imply that structural constraints determine decisions and that people do not have agency. Instead, state decision-making bodies must consider these differences, as a program/policy aimed at increasing female mobility in a region where female mobility was never restricted may not have the same empowering impact compared to regions where women's extra household relations and interactions have been limited. This implies that policies and programs to promote gender equality in terms of rural livelihoods in these sub-regions need to take into account the nature of patriarchy that operates here.

3.2 Comparing Asia-Pacific and Its Sub-Regions

The WDR (2008) categorizes most of the countries in, South Asia and East Asia as transforming economies, where agriculture is no longer the major source of economic growth.¹² Most of these countries are experiencing a high level of urban-rural income disparity, a rise in non-farm activities, and an increase in internal or international migration. Countries such as China, India, Indonesia and Viet Nam fall under this category. However, agriculture remains a key source of livelihood for 86 per cent of the rural population in these transforming economies. In addition, sub-national and geographical disparities exist within these transforming economies; for example, the state of Bihar in India remains agriculture-based.

There has been a decline in rural poverty in the East Asian and Pacific sub-region, but in South Asia it is quite high (World Bank 2008). The Asia-Pacific region varies from other regions such as Latin America, where the economies are urbanized (direct contribution of the agricultural sector to economic growth is five per cent or less), and

¹² WDR (2008) categorized three types of economies: a) agriculture based economy (where agriculture is the main source of economic growth); b) transforming economies (where agriculture is no longer the major source of economic growth, but there is high rural poverty); c) urbanized economies, where agriculture contributes to five per cent or less to economic growth.

poverty is urban (World Bank 2008). It is also different from the Sub Saharan Africa, where agriculture is the main source for economic growth. Table 3.3 shows the distribution of rural populations in different sub-regions of the world.

Table 3.3
Distribution of Rural Population in the Three Types of Economies by Regions

Sub region	Agri based economy	Transforming Economies	Urbanized
South Asia	2.2	97.8	0
East Asia and Pacific*	0.9	96.1	2.9
Middle East and North Africa	8	92	0
Sub Saharan Africa	82.2	13.6	4.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	2.2	9.7	88.1

Source: WDR (2008);

Note: * includes Southeast Asian countries

Most of the countries categorized as transforming economies are marked by: a) high urban-rural income disparities, and b) extreme rural poverty, which are the key challenges for reducing poverty and creating sustainable rural livelihoods (World Bank 2008). In this context, a development approach that creates multiple pathways out of poverty is required. WDR (2008) argues that a shift towards high-value agriculture, decentralization of non-farm activities to rural areas, and assistance for people to move out of agriculture are useful strategies in these economies. However, for extremely poor rural men and women in these transforming economies, provision of social security and safety nets remain key areas (Agarwal 2009).

According to the WDR (2008), rural households' livelihood strategies fall under the following four categories: a) farming-oriented households; b) labor-oriented households; c) migration-oriented households, and d) diversified households. It should be noted that all household may use these multiple strategies. The categories were developed based on the main source of income for the households. The WDR (2008) points out that although all of these strategies are complementary pathways out of poverty for rural households, for transforming economies key pathways are non-farm activities and remittances. Some of the countries in this region also have a high number of households that do not have a dominant livelihood strategy and are being complemented by other two strategies. About 20 per cent of the rural households in this region fall under this category.¹³ The higher proportion of this type of household may not necessarily indicate that these households have been successful in diversifying their income and graduating out of poverty, but that they face serious livelihood constraints.

How women (and men) are able to gain from these strategies is dependent on whether the labor is used in high-skilled jobs (of which there are few in most of cases) or low-

¹³ WDR (2008) does not provide sub regional or gender disaggregated data for this category.

skilled jobs; and whether they are involved in work abroad that has high or low returns. Whether women (or men) enter high/low- skilled jobs or go abroad to work in high/low-return employment are determined by: a) personal endowment, b) assets the households have, c) social norms that place constraints on individual agency in the market/public arena, and d) how individuals bargain within the household. The effectiveness of policy in expanding rural livelihood options lies in analyzing these different pathways out of poverty and the gender impacts. Table 3.4 illustrates the different pathways out of poverty (successful livelihood strategies). Admittedly, not all market oriented producers or high-skilled labor are successful. Moreover, the current economic crisis has shown that market oriented producers, high-skilled workers (both at home and abroad) are vulnerable to economic shocks.

Table 3.4
Pathways Out of Poverty: Who Gains and Who Loses?

Strategies	Successful	Vulnerable/ Disadvantaged
Agriculture	Market oriented small holders	Subsistence oriented farm holders
Labor	High skilled labor	Low skilled labor
Migration	Those in high return jobs	Those in low return jobs

Source: Based on information from WDR (2008)

Where are the women of the Asia-Pacific region situated? Are they mainly market-oriented smallholders or are they subsistence smallholders? Are they working in non-farm activities that require high skills or are they in low-skilled jobs? Are they migrating to work in jobs that have high returns or not?

UNIFEM (2008) points out that only in East Asia do men and women have similar patterns and compositions of employment in agriculture, service and industry. In other sub-regions, gender disparities exist. In South Asia and the Middle East, women tend to work in agriculture and service sectors (ILO 2008). In fact, women's engagement in the agriculture sector (as a share of total employment in that sector) for South Asia is 59 per cent. This indicates for rural poor women in South Asia, agriculture still remains a key source of livelihood. However, female land ownership in particular sub-regions is low; such as in South Asia, where about 3 to 10 per cent of the rural women own the land they cultivate (Kelkar and Nathan 2005). Women tend to work as contributing family workers (UNRISD 2005). This indicates fewer women are concentrated in the sector as market-oriented smallholders. However, women in certain countries, such as Thailand, have benefited from development of agro processing industries. This has made a particular impact in terms of increasing women's agency at the household level, as well as their engagement in the market. What should be noted is that this is not a general pattern.

Regarding women employing labor-oriented strategies, ILO's (2008) analysis shows that more women are in vulnerable work (own account workers and contributing to

family workers)¹⁴ compared to men in all the sub-regions of Asia-Pacific (Table 3.5). South Asia has the largest percentage of women working as own account or contributing family workers, about eight out of 10 women workers are included in these categories. Generally, vulnerable forms of employment suggest informal work arrangements that lack social protection and where the pay is too low to generate savings. According to the ILO (2008), although the number of women working in vulnerable employment has dropped for every sub-region since 1997, it has been at a slower pace compared to men's involvement in vulnerable work. A larger proportion of female vulnerable workers can also be an indicator of the feminization of poverty. This may also indicate that women have more limited employment opportunities compared to men and that female concentration is in low-end and low-skilled jobs, thus preventing them from moving out of poverty.

Table 3.5
Men and Women's Status in Employment as a Share of Total Employment

Sub regions	Wage and Salaried employment/ employer		Vulnerable employment/ (own account and contributing family workers)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
South Asia	27.2	17.5	73	82.3
East Asia and the Pacific	47.0	39.5	53.1	60.7

Source: ILO (2008)

Note: * these figures are not exclusive to rural areas

Migration, both internal and external, is a key rural livelihood strategy. In fact, women represent half of the world's migrants (UNIFEM 2008). According to Jolly and Reeves (2003), female migration in South Asia is largely seasonal and occurs between rural areas. It is mostly the males who partake in rural-urban and international migration (UNRISD 2005). This does not mean that the rate of international migration of females is low. Many women migrate abroad but as wives or family members of male migrant workers (Jolly and Reeves 2003).

Migration of the male members of the household creates *de facto* female-headed households. Depending on the patriarchal context, these households face different types of livelihood constraints in terms of accessing resources and mobility. Moreover, seasonal female migration for agricultural work limits women's livelihood opportunities to low-skilled/low paid work. While this may allow the family to subsist, it does not allow women to move out of poverty. However, in certain countries such as, Bangladesh and Viet Nam, female labor-dependent export industries have created opportunities for a large number of young women to migrate to urban areas. In some countries of the Asia-Pacific, such as the Philippines and Sri Lanka, women outnumber men in migrating to other countries (UNIFEM 2008). These patterns of migration have had mixed impacts on gender power relations within

¹⁴ Own account workers are self-employed workers with no employee working for them. Contributing family workers are own account workers without pay for an unit operated by a relative living in the same household (UNIFEM 2008).

the home and at the market and community levels. On the one hand, migration to urban areas or abroad in many cases have increased women's bargaining power within the household and increased their range of choices. On the other hand, sometimes women have experienced increased conflict at the household level and have experienced exploitative work conditions. The laws and state policies still remain inadequate for dealing with the challenges faced by women.

Invariably, these sub-regional gender differences of engagement in different sectors and the use of livelihood strategies needs to be analyzed, taking into account the gender access barriers to rural infrastructure and local/national/global markets and the gendered nature of the policy-making arena.

3.2.1 Feminization of Agriculture

The multiple country surveys conducted for the WDR (2008) found that agricultural labor is declining for both men and women in every region, except for the Middle East and North Africa. According to World Bank et al. (2008), more women compared to men work in the agricultural sector, though their roles are unrecognized. Many of the women may work as contributing family workers.. There is debate over whether countries such as India, or provinces within India such as Kerala, are experiencing a feminization of agriculture (Jackson and Rao 2004). In order to claim that agriculture is being feminized in the Asia-Pacific, the data must show that: a) there are more women than men in agriculture; and b) the number of women in agriculture is increasing compared to the number of men in agriculture.

In East Asia and the Pacific, sub-region, a significant number of women, about 38 per cent, are self employed workers in the agricultural sector. The percentage of women as self-employed or agricultural workers is low in South Asia. However, for almost 65 per cent of women in South Asia, their economic activity is not reported. It is likely that many of them are contributing family workers, who are not paid and work for their families. Moreover, for all sub-regions, more men compared to women work in the non-agricultural sector. For South Asia, this gender gap in men and women's participation rate in non-farm activities is very high. Table 3.6 shows the percentage of men and women in different rural employment sectors and the types of activities for each of the sub-regions.

Table 3.6
Rural Employment by Sector and Type of Activity

Sector	East Asia and the Pacific	South Asia
Men		
Agriculture self-employed	46.8	33.1
Agriculture, labor	9.4	21.8
Non-agriculture self-employed	11.5	11.8
Non-agriculture, labor	17.4	15.4
Not reported/not active	14.4	14.6

Women		
Agriculture self-employed	38.4	12.7
Agriculture, labor	5.7	11.4
Non-agriculture self-employed	11.3	2.9
Non-agriculture, labor	8.4	2.7
Not reported/not active	35.5	64.3

Source: World Bank (2008).

Why are there more men in non-agricultural employment? Why are women compared to men slow to move out of the agriculture sector in the Asia-Pacific? Is it because the agricultural sector is undergoing a feminization process or that a feminization of farm management is taking place? Or do women have fewer opportunities in the nonagricultural sector?

Not many rural women in the Asia-Pacific (particularly in South Asia) own land (Agarwal 1994); and not many women are owners of agro processing farms producing high value agricultural product (World Bank et al. 2008). Women tend to be contributing family workers or casual agricultural labor. This indicates that women's presence in agriculture in the Asia-Pacific does not mean a shift towards female ownership of agricultural farms.

World Bank et al. (2008) attributes feminization of agriculture to the following factors: a) male migration; b) growth of agricultural sector through expansion into areas such as horticulture, etc.; and c) casualization of agricultural work. Both male migration and casualization of agricultural work may have mixed and potentially increased the adverse impact on women in the region.

In rigid forms of patriarchal systems, such as in South Asia, the absence of male support makes it difficult for women to access agricultural input and produce markets, information and government services. Sometimes this has also led to internal family conflicts. In Pakistan, substantial male migration to West Asia has created opportunity for women to manage agriculture and non-domestic activities. This has led to a conflict between older male relatives and younger wives/daughters-in-law (Lefebvre 2001).

The expansion of corporate farming, particularly in Southeast Asia, has led to an increase in females working as seasonal laborers in insecure, high risk, labor intensive and low paid jobs. A gender pay gap exists in these areas, and occupations are gender segregated, while the gender division of labor at home has not changed. The feminization of farm management for all the sub-regions remains negligible (ILO 2008).

In South Asia, rural women have unequal access to employment in the informal sector and non-agricultural activities. Underdeveloped labor markets; lack of legal protection; and class, caste, and gender based discrimination adversely affect women in agriculture in South Asia. In Southeast Asia and the Pacific (including China), the

key gender issues in agriculture are: gender wage gap, poor working conditions and gender discrimination in agro processing industry.

Table 3.6 shows the regional characteristics and key issues of agricultural labor for each of the sub-regions.

Table 3.7
Regional Characteristics and Key Issues of Women's Agricultural Labor

Regions	Women in agriculture	The Key Issues	Interventions
<p>South Asia</p> <p>Employment to population ratios: Women: 31.4%; men: 78.1%</p>	<p>High percentage of informal agricultural labor</p> <p>Higher percentage of women in agriculture (women: 60.5%; men 42.9%)</p> <p>High percentage of self employment</p> <p>Overlap of culture and caste with gender discrimination</p> <p>Occupational segregation</p>	<p>Unequal access for women in informal sector employment</p> <p>Few legal protections</p> <p>Underdeveloped labor market</p>	<p>Legal protection for informal workers</p> <p>Increase women's non farm employment opportunities</p> <p>Social protection schemes for informal worker</p>
<p>Southeast Asia and the Pacific</p> <p>Employment to population ratios: Women: 62.5%; men: 78.4%</p>	<p>Highest women's labor participation</p> <p>High percentage in agriculture Women: 43.4%</p> <p>High involvement in fisheries</p> <p>Overlap of culture and race with gender</p> <p>Labor gender wage gap</p>	<p>Improvement in work conditions in agro processing and agricultural wage markets needed</p> <p>Discrimination in all forms to be addressed</p>	<p>Improve workers conditions through use of legal means</p> <p>Use of CSR, ETI</p>

Source: World Bank et al. (2008);

Note: * UNIFEM (2008) data

3.2.2. Feminization of Employment

The feminization of the labor force is a global phenomenon. According to ILO (2008), about 200 million women joined the global labor force in the last decade. In 2007, there were about 1.2 billion women in paid work compared to 1.8 billion men (ILO 2008). Female participation in paid formal work has increased globally while male employment had remained stagnant (Elder and Schmidt 2004; Arias 2001). There has been a steady rise in the female labor force participation rate since the 1970s in most regions, including South Asia and Southeast Asia (UNRISD 2005).

This is due to changes such as rising levels of female education, decline in the average family size, and the changing aspirations of women and their families. It is also influenced by changes in structural factors such as, a decline in agricultural production, growing landlessness, withdrawal of agricultural subsidies, declining levels of male employment and male wages as a result of the dismantling of state owned enterprises and structural adjustment policies (Chen et al. 2004).

According to Kabeer (2007), the informalization¹⁵ of paid work and the changing nature of demand in the labor market also influenced the feminization of employment. Female labor is considered flexible labor for certain highly competitive, labor-intensive sectors of global supply chains such as clothing, fresh produce, etc. (UNIFEM 2008). This is due to the following reasons: 1) female labor is free of the fixed cost (i.e., employer provided benefits, social security) associated with male employment in the organized sector; 2) male breadwinner ideology still influences the view that women are secondary earners, thus low pay is justified; 3) gender discrimination and segregated markets curtail women's options and reduce their reserve price (Elson 1999; Kabeer 2007). In addition, there has been a sectoral shift in female labor. The feminization of employment indicates that demand for women's labor is present. Being able to earn an income and other things associated with work such as mobility, create opportunities for women to exercise agency and choice at an individual level. However, the type of work women are being recruited for is important. The structural factors such as occupational segregation and male breadwinner ideology, which create demand for women's flexible labor may not necessarily strengthen women's voice and collective bargaining power in the market.

What does feminization of employment mean for rural women? Women are a part of the movement from agriculture to taking up an increased share of the manufacturing labor force. Female migration from rural to urban areas for work in manufacturing sectors has created opportunities for women to negotiate household relations. However, this section largely focuses on employment in the informal sector and leaves out the formal manufacturing sector as this does not fall under the purview of the paper on rural livelihoods.

There are intra-regional differences in terms of employment growth. The ILO (2008b) study on ASEAN countries (excluding Myanmar) shows that ASEAN countries have made gains in labor markets growth and productivity in 2007 in comparison to the other sub-regions. Informal sector employment, which include own

¹⁵ The movement of formal paid work into the informal sector through subcontracting, home-based production etc.

account workers, self-employed workers, casual day laborers and owners of small-scale enterprise is one of the key sources of income for the poor in this region. Farrington et al. (2004) point out that the contribution of non-farm economic activities to rural income has been underestimated in South Asia, and contributes between 40 to 50 per cent to rural income.

Women are predominantly employed in the informal sector in this region. They comprise about 65 per cent of non-agricultural workers in the Asia-Pacific (ILO 2002). The number of female workers in the informal sector has risen in absolute terms in South Asia, and compared to other regions, women's involvement in salaried work remains low. The growth of home-based workers in South and Southeast Asia is a dominant trend in female employment. According to Doane (2007), women prefer home-based work as it allows for flexibility to do reproductive work. An income and social hierarchy exists among informal workers and the home-based workers are at the bottom of this hierarchy. They are not covered by social protection laws and are considered as supplementary earners. Their fall-back position is weak, as there is limited demand for their products, and they are vulnerable to market shocks. In rigid forms of patriarchal regions, such as South Asia, women home-based workers have limited access to raw materials, capital and market information. These barriers lead to production of low quality products. The working conditions of informal workers indicate that while being able to work and earn an income may be an empowering experience, the experience of the work itself may not be empowering and will not lead to structural changes.

3.2.3 Gender and Agricultural Markets

According to the World Bank et al. (2008), women entrepreneurs and farmers face constraints stemming from lower mobility, restrictions in accessing training, market information and productive resources. Gurung's (2006) research in Tamil Nadu shows that women lose income and control as the product moves from the farm to the market.

The types of constraints women face in accessing the market differs across the sub-regions in the Asia-Pacific. In East Asia, the Pacific and South Asia, the agro-climatic diversity has led to the production of many different types of crops. Yet, poor market distribution affects most of the region, although domestic markets are growing. According to World Bank et al. (2008), several countries such as China, India and Thailand have matured agro-processing industries. These countries are in a position to supply processed and value-added products to the domestic and international markets. However, in other Southeast Asian countries that are in transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, the businesswomen lack entrepreneurial skills and access to technology. For example, in Lao People's Democratic Republic, 48 per cent of male owned enterprises use technology compared with only five per cent of women-owned enterprises (World Bank et al. 2008). The smaller Pacific Islands are facing competition from the larger economies in the region. Booth (1999) points out that women's role in production, natural resource management and fishing were not addressed adequately by policies. There is a shortage of traditional food crops produced by women (that are high in demand because of tourism and growth of export sector) given the emphasis placed on cash crops.

The sub-regional pictures indicate that women's participation in the market is limited in the Asia-Pacific. Women have distinct rights and obligations within the household and market-related activities. According to the World Bank et al. (2008) most of the female farmers are small holders producing traditional food crops for subsistence and sales. Female managed farms have lower productivity as they use low levels of mechanization and technological input (ibid). Women generally own small-scale farms whereas, men own medium to large-scale commercial farms. Thus, men are better able to capitalize from the commercialization of agriculture. The global integration of markets implies that free entry of traditional agriculture crops into domestic markets has an adverse effect on the smallholders (usually women) unless they are prepared. IFAD (2002) research shows that women have a lower presence in the formal sector and in the urbanized/developed markets. Women's ability to participate in these markets is dependent on women gaining landownership, access to technological assistance and formal financial markets, and training. Given that women-owned farms are small, increasing mechanization without increasing women's landholding may produce the best results.

Box 3.1

Learning to Survey the Market: LEAF program in Bangladesh

Livelihoods, Empowerment and Agroforestry (LEAF) projects in North Bengal, Bangladesh trained local women and minority communities to run small businesses through local CBOs. The focus was on diversifying livelihoods prospects and limiting income insecurity of vulnerable groups. The income generation activities focused on developing new products and identifying niche markets. The community organizations were trained by NGOs to undertake market survey trips, which increased their confidence and brought the women into direct contact with the market actors. The direct contact with market actors allowed women to overcome information barriers. Before women's only channel of information were the local traders. The women were also trained to calculate cost/profit margins. They also became aware about the different players in the market—the middlemen, wholesaler, retailers etc. Women learnt to compare products, make realistic assessment for production, identify risks, and develop planning strategy. Their links with distant traders, allowed them to expand their production, as they could sell their surplus.

Source: World Bank et al. 2008

However, women can still benefit from the commercialization of agriculture. The expansion of high value products such as vegetables and crops in the urban markets presents an opportunity for women. However the key challenge lies in how women are able to retain control over processing and marketing (Box 3.1). Production of some of the high-value crops requires labor intensive techniques, such as pruning or trellising, where women tend to specialize. The key question in terms of the agricultural market is how will the commercialization of the agricultural market affect women? Much of the market created by commercialization may be difficult for small farm holders to access. They may lack the required capital and technological know how. Commercialization also affects the gender division of labor in small-scale farms, which in turn affects how resources are managed, as well as income and expenditure flows. The introduction of commercialized small-scale farming may change gender

relations within the household with women taking on roles that were previously held by men (World Bank et al. 2008), thus risking increased conflict. Women's effective participation in supply chain requires interventions such as, reduction of structural barriers to entry for women; capacity development of small enterprises; and the development of market linkages.

3.2.4 Gendered Voice

Women's voice is a crucial factor for highlighting women's livelihood concerns and in promoting women's interests both at the local level and within the national policy making processes. Regarding women's representation in parliaments, the Asia-Pacific region has yet to reach a critical mass. However, according to UNIFEM (2008), in the last decade the percentage of women in parliament has increased. South Asia is ahead of other regions at about 16 per cent, whereas East Asia and the Pacific are at 11 per cent. The reason behind the difference between South Asia and other regions is the quota (UNIFEM 2008). At the local government level, which is a key arena for influencing rural livelihoods, South Asian countries, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have reserved seats for women. The experience of these countries illustrates both the positive and adverse impacts of the quota system. The presence of women in the formal political arena does not necessarily imply that they would act for women. Research shows that quotas were used in India and Bangladesh for proxy representation (Hassan 1999). There is a tendency among women representatives to identify with their caste identity and to promote caste interests rather than gender interests (World Bank et al. 2008). However, comparative studies conducted in Rajasthan and West Bengal, India, showed that female-headed *panchayats* addressed livelihood concerns raised by females at a higher rate than male-headed *panchayats* (Box 3.2). In Bangladesh, research shows people reported a higher rate of satisfaction with the performance of the female local representative in terms of distribution of public resources and allocation of projects, compared to the performance of the male members (Khan and Mohsin 2008).

Box. 3.2

Acting for Women: Local Level Female Representatives and Livelihood Policy Outputs

India introduced gender reservations for all tiers of local government in 1992. One third of the *panchayat* seats are reserved for women only through competition, and one third of the council heads are also reserved. Studies comparing how local councils function in West Bengal and Rajasthan show that there is a systematic difference in the complaints and requests filed based on the sex of the person filing the complaint. More women than men filed complaints on water resource management. Interestingly, the number of drinking water projects was 60 per cent higher in female led councils compared to the male-led councils. In West Bengal, female-led councils undertook road-building projects at a higher rate compared to male-led councils, since the jobs were likely to go to females. The evidence here suggests that the presence of women in decision-making bodies can make a difference in addressing women's livelihood concerns.

Source: Chattapodhaya and Duflo (2004)

In socialist countries, such as China and Viet Nam, women have a significant presence with the Communist party and at different levels of the local government structures for the following reasons: a) historically, women participated in large numbers in the nationalist struggles and in the communist revolution; and b) during the post-revolution period, the state policies created space for women in formal politics. In China, about 21 per cent of the members of parliament are women (de Hann 2009).

Activism by civil society organizations to create pressure on the government for addressing women's livelihood concerns is another way for channeling women's voice. This can be created through opening up formal spaces. For example, the PRSP consultation process in Bangladesh included a wide range of feminist organizations that led to more gender sensitive analysis. However, collective organizing and the creation of networks can raise issues of concern more effectively. For example, GABRIELLA in the Philippines, the largest alliance dedicated to promoting women's and indigenous people's rights, used the party list system to campaign and win seats for their members. These members were able to file for legislation in behalf of rural women, migrant workers and on other issues.¹⁶

According to the World Bank (2008), community driven development or CDD and self-help groups are effective ways for increasing women's participation and voice in matters related to rural livelihoods. In the Asia-Pacific region, many countries such as Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cambodia and Sri Lanka have community driven development projects. These create space for women to participate in the development and implementation of projects. However, the effectiveness of women's voice is influenced by the social and gender norms around how women should exercise voice (i.e., content and how things are said) in the public arena. In rigid forms of patriarchies, women may face mobility related constraints that may limit their participation in community projects.

4. GENDER AND AGRICULTURE

4.1 Gender and Land

Women's direct access to, and ownership of, land in the Asia-Pacific region is affected by gender-biased inheritance laws, customary practices and land policies. Women mainly access and use agricultural land as sharecroppers, laborers, or *de facto* household heads due to male migration. In South Asia, about three to 10 per cent of the rural women own the land that they cultivate (Kelkar and Nathan 2005).

Ownership of land or formal land rights is critical for the rural poor since ownership or formal rights provides access to key markets and nonmarket institutions such as community power structures. Direct access to land and formal rights are critical for female-headed households (headed by widows, abandoned and divorced women, or females becoming heads of household due to migration of the male head) to establish claims over household assets and labor contributions from immediate and extended

¹⁶ See (www.gabirellawomensparty.net).

family members. Moreover, formal claims increase women's bargaining power within the household and increases household welfare (World Bank et al. 2008). An inverse relationship exists between women's property ownership and domestic violence against women (UNRISD 2005). Agarwal's study conducted on 500 households in Kerala showed that only seven percent of women who owned land and their house reported experiencing violence compared to 49 per cent of women who did not own property (Agarwal 2009).¹⁷

In Asia-Pacific, inheritance practices are patrilineal, matrilineal and bilateral. Patrilineality is the dominant pattern in South Asia. Matrilineality and bilateral inheritance exists in South India (*Nayar*, *Tiyyars* and *Chettis* communities), Northeast Asia (*Khasis*, *Garo* and other communities) Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia (countries such as Malaysia and Lao People's Democratic Republic). In addition, Muslim inheritance norms are bilateral, although in practice for Muslim women in rigid form of patriarchies, the customary tenure system is patrilineal. How family land is allocated is also influenced by marital residence (patrilocal or matrilineal/virilocal) and asset transfers during the marriage (bride price/dowry).

The land inheritance and marriage practices determine the degree of female dependence, control over crop and income, women's managerial authority over land and labor.

Agarwal (1994) draws attention to the fact that in matrilineal societies, women's fall-back position in case of marital breakdown is strong. Women are less dependent on the husband for their material well-being and exercise more agency in household decision making and use of labor. Women are able to control crop surplus, cash earnings and participate in trade, particularly in Sinhalese communities (Agarwal 1994). Women also had greater mobility. However, property rights did not change the overall gender division of labor; women are responsible for household work and childcare. Moreover, the managerial authority over land in some of the matrilineal communities was exercised by the men in the family (brother and/or maternal uncles). Interestingly, while in some communities women are able to exercise managerial rights over land, they are not able to participate in public decision-making bodies. This implies that while land ownership confers important benefits to women, their exclusion from land management and public authority curtails the power they can derive from having land rights.

Another way of acquiring land is to buy it. Yet, poor women lack the capital and information to purchase land off the market. In customary societies where women do not own properties, land acquired may be held under husband's name. In market economies, prevailing patriarchal norms may make gender equality within marital property contentious. In these cases, redistributive land reform programs, resettlement

¹⁷ It should be noted that Kerala is a matrilineal society, where women in practice inherit property, which is why the study was conducted in Kerala. The study results controlled variables such as: husband's and wives' occupation, education, parents' occupation and education, the proximity of the couple's residence to the wife's natal household etc. The study divided women in four groups: a) those who owned land and house; those who owned only the house; those who owned only land and those who had no property. The study also found that fewer women in both groups-- who owned only the house or only land reported lower levels of violence compared to the women who did not own property (Agarwal 2009).

programs and leasehold arrangements by the state can play crucial roles in creating the scope for women to own and use land.

Generally, land reform programs that take households as distribution units generally targeted landless men for redistribution since men are considered the household heads (Jackson and Rao 2005). However, women have been targeted for redistribution as a group under some land reform movements, such as the *Bodghaya* movement in Bihar, India, where 10 per cent of the land was redistributed in women's names (Jacobs 1998). In socialist countries such as China and Viet Nam, poor women had access to land as farmers through the establishment of agricultural collectives (Jacobs 1998). However, Viet Nam's land reform did not abolish family-owned small holdings, which were cultivated by the families. The land reform and establishment of collectives increased the visibility of women's role in agriculture and established a separate identity and allowed them to escape different forms oppression, such as early marriage, etc. However, men were able to control women's labor for cultivating family farms and control the outputs and income. The collectives produced subsistence crops whereas the family-owned farms earned higher profits through the production of cash crops. The male owners, however, were unwilling to join the collectives. Eventually, the family small holding farms were contracted producing for the collectives, which made women's labor less visible (Jacobs 1998).

Creation of group-based agricultural collectives for landless women may create scope for women to lease or buy land collectively and link up with produce markets. However, creating and sustaining such groups require state sponsorship or assistance from NGOs. For example, the Deccan Development Society (DDS), an NGO in Andhra Pradesh was able to organize low caste *Dalit* women in small groups for leasing and purchasing land. At present, the women in these groups in 14 villages have managed to purchase 500 acres (Agarwal 2009). The women have also leased land under Andhra Pradesh's anti poverty scheme and have received subsidized credit from the state (Agarwal 2009). This program allowed women to earn additional income, and pool resources and credit. The collectives were successful since participation in these are voluntary. The groups are small in size, and there is a clear and transparent redistribution principle of the benefits among members. Monitoring mechanisms ensure that the free rider problem does not arise. Moreover, because of their economic and caste-based identities, women in these groups have fewer alternative options for income and a high incentive for co-operation. This perhaps indicates that in contexts where women engage in subsistence based farming, a group approach to land lease and ownership may work well for women (Agarwal 2009).

4.2 Gender and Agricultural Labor Market

Gender inequities in the agricultural labor market are pervasive across all regions. In the Asia-Pacific region, more women than men work in agriculture. According to ILO (2006), twice as many women compared to men in Southeast Asia and about one third more women compared to men in South Asia work as agricultural laborers. Women involved in agricultural work engage as: unpaid family workers, those who are paid in kind (exchange labor), self employed workers and wage labors. Typically for rural women in South Asia, women tend to have less control over their own labor, and their role in agriculture is assumed to be an extension of their reproductive role at home.

They also have less control over the labor of their household members/relatives because they are unable to provide reciprocal labor or favors.

This section focuses on women who engage in agricultural work in exchange for cash. These can be on-farm (weeding, planting, etc.) or off-farm (cutting, packaging, etc.). Assessing agricultural wage labor, especially by gender is difficult. However, studies show that women's time constraint remains a key issue. In the Asia-Pacific where households are organized along corporate lines, women are still responsible for the reproductive work. This places constraints on how women engage in the labor market and perhaps explains why women in this region have been slow to move out of this sector compared to men. According to the World Bank (2008), this has reduced women's bargaining power in the market. The impact of this kind of work on gender power relations within the household is not transformative.

Moreover, the casualization of agricultural production has led to a concentration of females in low-paid, insecure, labor-intensive work. The gender wage gap exists in all the sub-regions. For example, the average wage for casual labor for women is 30 per cent lower than men (UNRISD 2005). Seasonal migration for agricultural work had contradictory effects on women. On the one hand, the experience of work itself is not empowering as women are in insecure, low-paid work with no opportunities for alternative employment. The reproductive burden on women, those who migrate with families, does not change (UNRISD 2005).

In agro-processing industries, the wage gap also exists. In Bangladesh, female shrimp fry catchers are paid about 64 per cent of what male fry catchers are paid (World Bank et al. 2008). Occupational segregation exists in the agro-processing industry in Southeast and South Asia. Studies on Punjab (India) show that about 60 per cent of the laborers in tomato farming are seasonal female laborers (Gill 2001). This study shows that although a gender wage gap (females get about 60 per cent of the wages compared to men) and occupational segregation exist, and women have to work long hours in insecure jobs, tomato farming has provided a new form of employment for women (Gill 2001). For women, being able to migrate and earn money changes their bargaining power as well as the family structure. There is a rise in female-headed households (women leaving their husbands and women workers collectively living together). However, workers experience limited tenure, labor-intensive work, sexual harassment, and health and safety hazards.

The employment guarantee schemes, such as those in India, have actually had a positive gender impact. The scheme stipulates that one third of those participating in public work projects must be women, thus increasing women's sense of entitlement, and voice into this process (Box 4.1). In terms of policies, steps need to be taken for providing legal protection, developing labor codes and rural transport and infrastructure for strengthening women's voice and shifting the power structures.

Box 4.1

Establishing Women's Livelihood Rights: The Employment Guarantee Scheme

India enacted the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in 2005. The act guarantees 100 days of employment on a rural public works project to a member of rural households. The stipulation makes it mandatory that one third of the workers are women, which was not the case before (Jackson and Rao 2004). Women's share in this scheme is over 40 per cent, and in some states such as Tamil Nadu it has risen to 82 per cent. This scheme has created scope for women to access wage work and also increased their sense of entitlement. For example, in Karuli district in Rajasthan, a woman *panchayat* leader has taken this scheme further by creating a women-only monitoring committee for the NREGA in the region. This has increased the responsiveness of government officials to the needs of women. In another district of Rajasthan called Dungrapur, women do two-thirds of the work on NREGA projects. Women dig, break stones, lift and deposit stones. The women in this district report that they are proud of the work they do.

4.3 Rural Finance

There is a range of financial service providers focused on rural areas such as banks, microfinance institutions, etc. They offer a range of services to the poor such as credit, savings, insurance, remittance services, leasing, etc. However, this section specifically focuses on microfinance, which has emerged as a key strategy in South Asia for poor women to access financial assets. It is also a key mechanism for coping during the agricultural lean periods and for diversification into non-agricultural based work (Kelkar and Nathan 2005).

Studies have analyzed the benefits of microfinance programmes on women. They have researched the impact on individual and household level well-being (Pitt et al. 2006) and women's empowerment. The studies have also looked at women's groups acting as a collective (Kabeer 2005). The overall impact of credit on well-being has been positive, improving nutritional status, children's schooling, consumption, etc.

However, some studies also demonstrate impoverishment of the households as a result of debt recycling (Kabeer 2005). Time analysis shows that the overall work load of women involved in group-based programs has increased. Women make time for income generation activities and also complete reproductive work. Qualitative studies from Bangladesh show that women are aware about this trade off between leisure time and income generation work, but are willing to carry the double burden (Kabeer 1998). Some studies provide anecdotal evidence where men offer to share childcare, while women are away for group meetings (Nazneen 2008).

Debates exist on whether credit is empowering for women. Some studies show that credit empowers women at the individual level increasing their decision making power. However, other studies illustrate that group based credit fails to promote broader empowerment at the political and social levels (Sharma et al. 2007; Kalpana

2008). Women's sole control over loan use and management remains open to question (Goetz and Sen Gupta 1996). Some studies suggest that involvement in MFI has changed the proportion of women's wage compared to men's wage through non-agricultural work. It has also reduced rural women's underemployment to almost half in Bangladesh (Kelkar and Nathan 2005).

MFIs prefer women as clients as they are reliable in terms of repayment. Though poverty alleviation remains the key focus of these programmes they are also seen as a pathway to empower women. How gender equitable the impact of microfinance is depends on the following aspects: female mobility; women's responsibility for subsistence work (which means they may invest in safe products); opportunity for investing in non sex-stereotyped activities; female literacy level and costs related to accessing information (Mayoux 2005).

Despite women being preferred clients, they are still institutionally discriminated against. Women's access to institutional services is unequal. Studies show that if the range of services is compared against what women actually received; they access a very small portion of the services (World Bank et al. 2008). This is because women receive smaller loans compared to men and there are no clear guidelines on graduating out to the small enterprise development category. Additionally, there are not enough support services to help women remove market access constraints and increase access to other resources (e.g. land) that help to use credit successfully. Institutional gender bias (small loans, lack of support services), restrictive social norms (restriction on mobility, gender norms around work); individual factors (lack of literacy skills), all limit women's options in diversifying their livelihoods in a manner that increases women's participation and voice in rural markets (Nazneen 2008). Studies have shown that credit groups and self-help groups, ubiquitous in South Asia, have not proved effective for financing agricultural production. This is because these groups are unable to provide large amounts of capital needed for farming at different points of the farming cycle (World Bank et al. 2008).

4.4 Gender, Rural Infrastructure and Water Management

Land and water rights are closely related. Given the lower level of female land ownership in the Asia-Pacific, it is not surprising that women have fewer rights over water and a minimal role in water management processes. As women are responsible for domestic water collection, access to clean water may reduce their workload, and increase overall well-being. Water management influences the livelihood strategies of women, thus they need user and ownership rights over water as they are producers in the agricultural sector (IFAD 2007).

Many women are involved in farming as laborers and as *de jure* family heads (due to male migration). According to the World Bank et al. (2008), agricultural water management includes the following: irrigation, drainage, recycled water use, water conservation and watershed management. There is an overwhelming emphasis on the engineering and technological aspects of this sector, as well as on the environmental impacts. Policy making processes related to water bodies and management is a male-dominated area, and in many cases has not taken into account women's knowledge, needs and unequal ownership/user rights. The reasons for this oversight are many: lack of staff capacity, absence of gender disaggregated data, and gender biased social

and cultural norms (IFAD 2007). Women are rarely seen as farm owners. This perception even affects group-based strategies for managing water resources. For example, India's watershed development program relies heavily on farmers' groups to deal with land degradation. However, the emphasis on men as land title holders leads to marginalization of women's groups, even though women play a key role in managing common resources (World Bank et al. 2008).

The access and use of production technology by poor women are constrained because they lack literacy skills and money to buy inputs from the markets, and due to class (and gender) bias that operates in agricultural extension services. Women do not have the money to buy new seeds, fertilizer or other technological equipments. Extension agents who transmit knowledge and services do not see women as targets of their work, whether in rigid forms of patriarchies like Bangladesh or in societies where female mobility is higher like Sri Lanka (Agarwal 1994).

4.5 Governance, Gender and Agricultural Livelihoods

Frequently, gender analysis of rural livelihoods focus on the gender biased access to resources and the gendered nature of participation and power within households, rural markets and communities. Gender analysis of agricultural policy making processes and state service provision, and how these can reinforce or mitigate gender biases at the market, community and household levels, are key for understanding how women's power and participation can be expanded. Feminist studies have shown that state service provision remains male biased, especially when it comes to agricultural extension services (Elson 1995). Creating gender sensitive state services, policy-making arenas and legal reforms are crucial for making space for women (Goetz and Jenkins 2005). These reforms make the public service providers and policy makers act in a more gender equitable manner. Aside from these supply side reforms, there are demand side reforms that strengthen women's ability to hold state officials to account (Goetz and Jenkins 2005). The demand side includes the use of various participatory methods such as citizen's report cards and public assessments. For example, in Bangladesh the Local Government Support Programme (LGSP) has created processes for local people to monitor how block grants are spent and establish social accountability relations. The participation of female elected councilors in this process is mandatory (Hassan 2008).

One of the key areas is to focus on how policy processes and projects remain gendered (Goetz 1997). According to the World Bank (2008), engendering the existing processes and projects require the presence of active women policy makers (this does not rule out active male policy makers); gender inclusive policy making processes and policies themselves. This indicates that the supply side of gender sensitive agricultural governance works at the national and local levels. It requires national and agricultural policy formulation processes that create space for women to participate; creation or reformulation of national machineries that addresses gender issues in agriculture; gender sensitive budgeting; and incorporation of women as service providers.

Decentralization is generally considered to be a positive step towards ensuring participation of poor and marginalized groups in decision-making processes at the local level. However, research shows that projects that are administered through local

level public administration are less likely to address women's needs when compared to projects that are community driven (Baden 2000). This is because women may have greater access to local decision making bodies and the issues they raise would have greater relevance. However, the local level patriarchal structure may be stronger and when combined with customary laws, these may make it harder for women to participate effectively and influence decision-making. Moreover, the structure, availability of resources and the politics of decentralization also affect what women can do at the local level. Women themselves may lack capacity, literacy skills and time. Community driven projects may create scope for inclusion of and participation by women. However, these projects are affected by local customs and class/caste/ethnicity based divisions. They may lack institutional capacity and may be implemented in a top-down manner.

Good governance also includes collective organization by people. Rural women in the Asia-Pacific participate in different types of groups related to agriculture; including self help groups, producer associations, voluntary and business groups. There are also natural resource management groups, NGO credit groups, etc. There is variation in how women benefit from participating in these groups and whether they are able to exercise their voice to influence service provider's policies or hold organizations to account in matters that affect their livelihood. This is because existing gender relations and norms effect how and to what extent women are able to derive benefits from groups. Credit and saving groups may facilitate women producers to diversify, while common resource management groups may create space for women to participate (Heyer et al. 2002). Aside from access to economic resources, these groups are a space where women can develop their organizational skills, self esteem and a social network outside their kinship based networks (Agarwal 2009; Kabeer and Matin 2004). In patriarchies, the latter is a significant source for women to access information and for the development of women's collective identity. Research also shows that very poor women rarely form strong groups and external catalysts play a key role (Hossain and Matin 2004g).

However, feminists point out that group benefits may be reaped by educated women who engage in non-farm activities and leave resource-poor women out. They may also reproduce the existing hierarchical gendered structures and exclude minority, disadvantaged, extremely poor women (Kalpana 2008).

Women's producer's associations or agricultural co-operatives show mixed results. Some, however, have been successful such as SEWA, a registered trade union of 800,000 women of which two thirds are small farmers or landless laborers. It has been able to create a comprehensive strategy for empowering women by improving their assets, employment opportunities and ability to negotiate with power holders at different levels (Rose 1992). It has also created the All India Women Farmers Association. This created space for enhancing skills, opportunities, development of women's leadership. However, collective organizing into a producer's co-operative does not necessarily guarantee that changes will take place at the structural level, i.e., women's access to land or user rights over natural resources. Moreover, self-help groups or NGO credit groups may exclude marginalized, minority or poor women. For example, Kalpana's (2008) research on self-help groups in Tamil Nadu shows that *Dalit* women are systematically excluded. The groups can be used as mechanisms to create pressure for collecting payment on loans (Nazneen 2008).

5. GENDER AND EMPLOYMENT

5.1 Gender and Formal Employment

In the Asia Pacific region, countries that have large export based sector, there has been feminization of certain forms of industries that are *perceived* to be more suited to traditional skills and attributes associated with women. For example, female workers are perceived to have ‘nimble fingers’ and patience suitable for garment, micro chip processing, etc (Elson and Pearson 1981). Initially, the demands for female labor for these industries were influenced by factors such as: a) gender segregation of occupations; and b) female labor being free of ‘fixed costs’ associated with organized labor (security benefits, etc). In addition, Agro processing industries have led to the development of a female workforce in formal employment. However, most of the female employment in this region still remains in the informal sector. In fact, few of the countries that have growing export oriented manufacturing sectors, such as Malaysia, Thailand and Bangladesh, have women been absorbed into the formal sectors. The work conditions and payment are better in these sectors compared to the other sectors in the rural/urban economy. Many of these industries are not based in rural areas, so does not fall under the purview of this paper. However, these industries have created different livelihood opportunities for rural female population. Moreover, female migration to urban areas has changed the nature of family structures and their ability to make decisions and bargain at the household level.

5.2 Gender and Informal Employment

Women’s informal employment comprises of 65 per cent of non-agricultural work in the Asia-Pacific (ILO 2002). Informal work includes workers in the unorganized or informal economy that include both employee and own account workers in non-agriculture and manufacturing employment.¹⁸ According to Kelkar and Nathan (2005), in South Asia, the informal workers have grown in both absolute and relative terms compared to the formal workers and this trend has a female face. There are about 50 million home based workers in South Asia and 80 per cent of them are women (Doane 2007). In India, the unorganized sector accounts for about 90 per cent of female workers, including wage and piece rate workers and the self-employed (Doane 2007). However, the women moving out of home based production, or self-employment to salaried wage work is low compared to Southeast Asia (Kelkar and Nathan 2005).

Informal workers have been incorporated into the global commodity chains to reduce costs. Different types of home-based work have developed, which reduce the cost of production by transferring part of the cost to the worker and economizing on the benefit accorded to formal economy workers. Home-based workers in Southeast and South Asia are not covered by social protection laws and classified as housewives in

¹⁸ Definitions of informal employment includes: a) Self employment in formal enterprises (small or unregistered enterprises); b) unpaid family workers, employers, own account worker; c) wage employment in informal enterprises: (without secure contracts, worker benefits and legal protection): employees of informal enterprises, informal wage worker, casual day laborer, domestic workers contract workers, temporary part-time workers (ILO 2002)

the census. They are assumed to be supplementary workers for the family. HNSA (2006) points out that while home based work allows women to carry the double burden, there is an income and social hierarchy among informal workers and home-based workers at the lowest rung. At the upper end of the hierarchy are those workers who are less vulnerable to shocks and have access to resources and market information, supplying high quality products. At the lower end, are workers with limited access to resources, market information, and technology with fewer direct linkages. It is difficult to categorize home-based workers along this hierarchical scale based on what they do. However, mostly isolated, rural self-employed workers comprise the bottom rung of the ladder.

Doane (2007) points out that gender is a key determinant of a worker's position within this hierarchy. Women may prefer home-based work as it provides flexibility for carrying out reproductive work. However, the nature of the work itself may be problematic as it isolates women from other women and public settings. Moreover, in rigid forms of patriarchies very few home-based workers have direct access to the market, and lack information related to the market about prices, raw materials, etc. For example, women pottery makers in Bangladesh and Pakistan have remained at the low end of the hierarchy although the demand for pottery has increased in the urban and international markets. This is due to restricted mobility, limited access to raw materials and information in markets.

For some industries such as garments and papermaking, the growth of the modern sector has lessened the value of the products produced by home-based workers. Economic instability creates increased vulnerability of the female home based workers. In Southeast Asia, during the Asian financial crisis in 1990s combined with footloose capital moving to cheaper production places, home-based subcontracting emerged as a way of production. This increased competition for existing home-based workers, and made them more vulnerable. The poorest of the home-based workers may not have any access to micro-finance institutions or NGOs. For example, the shell collectors who live in boats in Bangladesh do not receive any formal assistance.

HomeNet studies on South Asia and Southeast Asia suggests that factors such as gender, social exclusion and economic trends have an intergenerational poverty effect on the children of home-based workers (Doane 2007). A HNSA study (2006) pointed out that girl children of home-based workers in South Asia were taken out of schools and employed in home based work, whereas male children were allowed to go to school. There is a marked education gap among girl and boy children of home-based production workers in South Asia. However, Southeast Asian countries demonstrate a different trend. In the case of economic difficulties, the eldest male child may be taken out of school to look his siblings, while this is not the case for girls.

5.3 How Empowering is Paid Work?

Paid work is seen as a pathway of women's empowerment and promoted as such in the policy literature (Kabeer 2007). However, the extent to which paid work is empowering depends on the geography of gender (Townsend and Momsen 1987)—the nature of family and kinship systems, and the gender division of labor patterns. Moreover, the nature of work, and the stage the women are at in their life cycle, are crucial to analyzing the impact of paid work. Women's experience of paid work is a

contradictory process, generating gains as well as losses (Elson and Pearson 1981). Kabeer (2007) argues that by and large, the entry of younger women into paid work in formal sectors has expanded their life choices. They are able to control their own incomes, have increased mobility and can negotiate over strategic decisions such as marriage. They also contribute significantly to the natal family. There are numerous studies on Southeast and South Asia where women have sought employment in factory work/export processing industries (Ong 1987; Davin 2004). These studies show that work has allowed women to resist parental authority. They also have a greater sense of responsibility for their own actions and a wider social orientation. Wolf's (1992) comparative study between women workers from Indonesia and Taiwan, Province of China shows that women's room for maneuver depended on how restrictive the patriarchal structures are.

Despite the opportunities that paid employment provides, married women's participation over own labor and income in rigid forms of patriarchy is controlled by men. However, studies conducted in India and Bangladesh show that there is a positive relationship between women's economic involvement and women resisting male control and trying to renegotiate gender power relations (Kabeer 2000; Blomquist 2004). Generally, work outside the home leads to a shift in the domestic balance of power. Decision moves from norm-based decision making to negotiated decision-making. In fact, working women report a jointness in decision making rather than men being the sole decision maker in household matters. The studies conducted in Bangladesh show that regardless of who controls the wages, women's involvement in outside work led to higher levels of savings, mobility and surprisingly lower levels of domestic violence (Kabeer 2008). The type of work women engage in plays a key role. Kabeer's (2008) study on Bangladeshi women found that compared to women working in the informal sector or those not involved in the productive sector, women involved in paid work in the formal sector had more control over household expenditure, were most likely to buy assets, save and experience a higher level of mobility.

Admittedly, studies on relations between women's work and domestic violence have shown mixed results. Some studies show that in certain contexts, particularly where there is extreme poverty-related stress, violence increases after the women start working (Kabeer 1998; Kabeer 2007). Notably, the relationship between women's work and domestic violence has been more researched and the results are more mixed compared to the very few studies that analyzed the relationship between women's property ownership and domestic violence (Agarwal 2009). The results show a strong inverse relationship between the two.

Studies conducted in Bangladesh, show that women engaged in informal work tend to acquire non-land assets such as a rickshaw, poultry, other livestock, jewelry, grocery shop, etc (Farrington et al. 2004; Schuler et al. 1996). This may be because the loans were given to build productive capital. However, this does not imply that women have control over these assets, since studies also show that a significant number of women reported that their personal items such as jewelry were sold off by their husbands (Schuler et al. 1996).

The gender division of labor at home is an area that is slowly changing. Research shows that negotiations do take place over the distribution of workload, though the

male privilege of not having domestic chores is difficult to change. In fact, studies conducted on Bangladeshi women show that married women take the burden of domestic chores as a trade off for being allowed to work (Kabeer 2007). Female migrants in areas that have a loose patriarchal form, such as the Philippines, do not expect the gender division of household to change because of paid work or migration. Most of the female migrant workers either ask other extended family members to help or hire people to do the housework.

6. GENDER AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

6.1 Gender and Forestry

For rural poor women, forests are a source of subsistence and they provide safety nets in times of crisis. UNRISD (2005) points out that gender asymmetry in land ownership causes women to rely on non-wood forest products. Women's household activities also make them dependent on some of the forest products such as firewood.

Women's (and men's) access to forest products and user rights are influenced by community norms on gender and common resource use and formal laws. Women's role in accessing, managing and benefiting from non-wood products not only affects their livelihood strategies but also their power relations within the household and community. This is because women do not have to collect and sell non-wood products through men, unlike crops. According to Kelkar and Nathan (2005) in South Asia, women's rights to access forest resources can mitigate gender power relations in patrilineal indigenous communities. For example, among the *Naga* community in India, women's roles in processing forest products for the market have positively affected their bargaining power. In matrilineal indigenous societies of South Asia, women play a larger role and have clear user rights to forest products. However, the gender relations and community norms around forest product use are changing given the pressure from the state in favor of andocentric systems (Kelkar and Nathan 2005).

Community forestry programs were initiated in the belief that these would provide spaces for local poor to access and manage forest resources. There has been increased control over forest products by local elites, particularly of community forestry programs. The forest-based livelihood needs of poor women have mostly been ignored in these programs, which encouraged timber planting. Leasehold forestry that assigns a particular part of the forest to the poor (sometimes to women) places restrictions on forest use. However it may create opportunities for women to increase their income.

A community forestry program in India, shows that inclusion of women into forest management meets male resistance both at the administrative and at the community levels (Agarwal 2002). Aside from male resistance, women's work burden increases as they take on additional duties along with household responsibilities. However, the community may treat these additional duties as a natural extension of women's work and may not recognize women's role. Agarwal's study (2002) shows that separate women's groups may create women's capacity better than mixed groups. In mixed groups, men tend to dominate over women and women have weaker voices given the prevailing gender norms. Women's groups generally created scope for building

solidarity among women. However, research shows that these groups also reproduce social hierarchies (Agarwal 2002; Kelkar and Nathan 2005).

7. GENDER AND COPING STRATEGIES

7.1 Gender and Natural Disasters

Poor men and women are affected differently by natural disasters. Women and girls have limited access to resources and control over critical assets, thus are more vulnerable when disasters happen. More women also die in natural disasters. According to World Bank et al. (2008), women are present in higher numbers in vulnerable social groups, such as poor and the elderly. They are less prepared for disasters given restrictions on mobility. They also have less information about what to do during disasters, and their dress code may restrict their ability to swim or climb trees during cyclones, etc. All of this contributes towards a high female mortality rate. During the post disaster period, women are burdened with reproductive duties (i.e. fetching water), thus increasing women's workload. Women in most cases, because of restricted mobility cannot migrate from disaster prone areas. In case of slow onset of disasters, such as drought, land degradation and desertification, women spend extra time carrying out reproductive duties, leaving them with little spare time (BRIDGE 2008). Sometimes, girls leave school to help with the extra work burden. Responses by men and women to natural disasters are linked to their social roles and status. Women generally take the supportive role and care for the children, while men take up the leadership role. Social networks determine what strategies the households can take to mitigate the impact of disaster. Female-headed households generally lack access to these types of resources and rural poor women and men do not have savings or assets to mitigate external shocks (World Bank et al. 2008).

Post disaster management may create opportunities for women to participate and access resources depending on how the land reform, skills, employment programs are designed and implemented (World Bank et al. 2008).

7.2 Gender and Migration

Globally, feminization of paid work has been driven by a rise in female migration at both domestic and international levels (Kabeer 2007). The sub-regions vary in terms of internal and international migration. In regions where rigid forms of patriarchy operates, such as South Asia or the Middle East, urban and international female migration is lower compared to Southeast Asia, which allows for greater mobility of females. International migration from South Asia and Southeast Asian regions are mainly to the Middle East and other developed economies in East Asia and for a limited range of work such as domestic service, informal commerce, etc. Urban migration is higher in countries such as China and Bangladesh where export processing industries created work opportunities for women. Female migration remains poverty driven with women having less choice for taking up migration as a diversification strategy in Asia (Jolly and Reeves 2003). The change in demand for female labor and gender segregation of labor markets has created opportunities for women to migrate. This section mainly focuses on international migration since seasonal migration in rural areas and female migration to urban areas have been discussed in other sections of the paper.

The flow of migrant labor has added to the flexibility of the market. Migration of female domestic workers into developed countries in the West as well as Japan and Taiwan, Province of China mirrors the rise in female labor force participation in these countries (Kabeer 2007). For example, there is one foreign maid for every eight households in Singapore (Yeoh et al. 1999). However, this perhaps indicates that intra household division of labor remains unequal in affluent families living in developed countries. This also indicates a strength of ideologies in these regions that support male privilege.

Migration has led to a change in family structure and a rise of transnational families (Jolly and Reeves 2005). Studies conducted in the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries shows that migration of a daughter causes the least disruption to the family structure. Moreover, daughters are more reliable in terms of sending back their earnings compared to sons. Therefore, the migration of unmarried daughters to a major city or abroad is a strategy to increase income (Chantavich 2001).

However, it is different when married women migrate. In some areas, female migration may not be socially acceptable. However, qualitative studies conducted in Bangladesh and the Philippines show that women who migrate have reported that there is an increased willingness among husbands to consider their wife's opinions regarding household matters (Siddiqui 2001; Oishi 2005). They also reported an increase in co-operative ventures. Some qualitative studies also found that the men were juggling both domestic duties and work and reported a new found respect for the domestic burden carried by their wives (Asis et al. 2001).

However, these studies have highlighted the exceptions, since macro level analysis shows a less harmonious picture. Studies conducted on Bangladeshi female migrants (both to urban areas and abroad) revealed that they migrated to escape from social and domestic oppression in order to gain their independence (Oishi 2005). Moreover, in Gamburd's (2003) study on Sri Lanka, men reported that their masculinity (i.e., role as provider) was questioned by the family and the community. What these studies indicate is that norms around family systems, marriage and domestic division of labor are in flux. However, research also shows that women, even in loose forms of patriarchies, do not expect the domestic division of labor to change even after undertaking migration (Parrenas 2001).

Closely related to the ideas around masculinity and domestic division of labor is the ideology around motherhood. Interestingly, research shows that the majority of female migrants, regardless of their country of origin, reported that they relied on other female members of their extended families or external help to care for their children (Kabeer 2007). The fathers do not feature prominently in matters related to childcare. Gamburd's study (2003) on Sri Lanka found that in 50 per cent of the cases, the grandmothers cared for the children.

What are the impacts of female migration on children? Studies conducted in the Philippines show a mixed picture. Studies carried out in 1990s showed that the children of female migrants are lagging behind in school. Research conducted during the following decade show that children of migrant mothers and similar grades kept up with other children of parents who had not migrated (Kabeer 2007). However,

about 35 per cent of the children reported that they found it hard to cope without their mothers, although about half of them reported that they understood the need for their mother's decision to migrate. Overall, for female migrant workers the support of extended family is vital. Despite the difficulties they have experienced in the receiving countries many reported a growth in self-confidence and autonomy.

There are legal restrictions that limit female migration. According to Jolly and Reeves (2005), many countries such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and the Philippines have placed age limits on migration. These legal restrictions are placed to tackle trafficking and a response to the exploitative experience of female migrants in the Middle East. However, only few countries such as the Philippines and Sri Lanka, have taken steps to address gender specific aspects of migration and their impact, although their effectiveness is widely critiqued (IOM 2003; Jolly and Reeves 2003).

Aside from female migration, male migration has increased. Male migration led to the feminization of the agriculture sector and has increased women's workload (Jolly and Reeves 2003). What is the impact of male migration on household structure and women? Studies show that male migration has led to a greater role for women's participation in household and farm management (Croll and Hung 1997; Siddiqui 2001). However, in rigid forms of patriarchal regions women also have to rely on extended family networks for accessing extra household resources and markets. This has led to conflicts with family members and daughters-in-law left behind (Lefevbre 1999). At other times, the families, particularly in South Asia, have adopted conservative norms around gender relations (Jolly and Reeves 2003).

8. GENDER, RURAL LIVELIHOODS AND THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

8.1 Gender Impact of Liberalization Policies

It is difficult to assess the gender impact of liberalization policies on rural livelihood since various social processes influence the gender dimension of rural livelihood (Jackson and Rao 2004). Moreover, liberalization is a very complex process, which influences livelihoods in different and at times contradictory ways. As a way to unpack the complexity of the issue in a manageable form, this section will focus on gender impacts in the following areas connected to liberalization policies: a) rise of corporate farming; b) increased casualization of agricultural labor; c) opportunities or constraints regarding diversification of livelihood strategies (non farm activities and migration); and d) increased vulnerability of smallholders.

According to the UNRISD (2005), agricultural liberalization has contributed to the vulnerability of smallholders and added to the workload of women without providing the sought stimulus to production and technological change. It has also led to a restructured economy and changed social relations. Liberalization has increased the female presence in the agricultural sector (UNRISD 2005). Though overall agricultural labor has declined, except for in the Middle East, women have been slow in moving out of the agricultural sector to non-agricultural work. This is particularly true of regions where a rigid form of patriarchal system operates. Increased male migration to perform non-agricultural work in the urban sector is a key factor behind the increased female presence in agriculture. Moreover, casualization of work has led

to women being concentrated in low-status, vulnerable work in the informal economy. However, there is no systematic data to show the impact of liberalization on women's unpaid work (reproductive work).

Liberalization has led to a development of commercial farming or corporate farming. These large-scale farms that produce high value agricultural products such as horticultural produce, are a new source of employment. These farms have highly gendered occupational systems. Moreover the gender pay gap exists. However, these farms also provide women an opportunity to diversify their income. The question is what type of strategies are women pursuing regarding these types of employment? What are the changes that are taking place?

Corporate farming in the Indian states of Punjab and the Andhra Pradesh, show that this type of model has alienated the smallholders. Most of the women who are either land owners or de facto owners are smallholders. The work on these farms is seasonal, with long hours, less safe and insecure with no scope for advancement (Jackson and Rao 2004). However, this is a new alternative to women as a source of livelihood other than migration. Also women's physical mobility has increased and in certain cases given the seasonal and migrating nature of the work, there is a rise in female-headed households and greater autonomy within the households.

There are very few studies on the gender impact of different diversification strategies (UNRISD 2005; BRIDGE 2008). Does diversification (i.e., taking up non-farm employment, formal employment in corporate agricultural farms, migration) offer more effective routes of out poverty? In other words, does non-farm or corporate farm income have an impact on increasing well-being? What types of opportunities are there for women for non-farm employment and commercial farm employment? Once women have engaged in non-farm employment or migrated or worked in corporate farming, are they able to invest back into the household/farms?

Studies show that in rigid forms of patriarchies (South Asia and the Middle East), men benefit the most from diversification (UNRISD 2005; Jackson and Rao 2004). This is because their mobility is higher, and they have more options regarding non-farm employment in construction and services in urban areas. Women migrate to urban areas if there are large manufacturing industries. It is the younger women who mostly migrate for these jobs and have managed to exercise agency over their labor supply decisions. However, studies on South Asia show that women mostly engage in rural-rural migration (Jackson and Rao 2004; Kelkar and Nathan 2005); although in Bangladesh women migrate in significant numbers to work in the export sector. The types of work they have are not useful for investing back into the households or farm holdings (UNRISD 2005). Women's strategies remain survival driven and they save less as they earn less, which means they are make fewer investments. However, the household structure is changing given the seasonal migration for agricultural work and also migration abroad.

9. CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Uneven Progress and Persistent Inequalities

The gender dimensions of rural livelihoods in Asia-Pacific are diverse and complex. It is difficult to draw conclusions about existing and emerging trends in this region which include: feminization of agriculture, increased participation of women in non-farm activities, internal and international migration of women, and other structural changes. These have had contradictory impacts on women's (and men's) choice and agency within the household, community, market and state levels. On the one hand, they indicate that the established patterns of gender asymmetries regarding livelihoods are changing as more women enter agriculture labor markets and take up non-agriculture based work or diversify their livelihood strategies. They also indicate that new forms of gender asymmetries have emerged, which exist along with many of the older forms of gender asymmetries (Kabeer 2007). For example, more women compared to men are taking up vulnerable forms of employment, which limits their ability to cope with economic shocks and crisis. It also means many of them are without social protection (not that poor men do not face the same conditions). However, demand for female labor for these kinds of work indicates that women face challenges that will limit their ability to negotiate in the market.

The increase in the number of women participating in agriculture and the diversification of livelihoods does not necessarily translate into being able to participate and take equal advantage of these opportunities compared with men. Moreover, in many cases these developments may have increased empowerment in one institutional site, for example increased bargaining power within the household. However, these place women in a disadvantageous position in other sites, such as the market, and have not led to structural changes of women's positions.

What are the commonalities and differences in matters related to rural women's (and men's) livelihoods that exist among the sub-regions?

Overall, women's engagement in the agriculture labor markets and informal sector, and women's labor force participation has increased in the region which indicates women have established their right to work. 'women's right to work' (Kabeer, 2007).

Second, though women's labor force participation has increased in all of the sub-regions, the number of women in vulnerable forms of employment, i.e., self-employment, own account work, contributing family worker, has also increased. The number of women in these vulnerable forms of employment is higher compared to men for all sub-regions (Table 3.4).

Third, compared with men, women's movement out of agriculture is slow (except for Southeast Asia) and involvement in formal paid work is lower (ILO 2008). In South Asia, eight in ten women work in vulnerable forms of employment (UNIFEM 2008). Typically, these forms of work are insecure, low paid and not covered by the legal framework. This indicates that the female labor absorption rate is high, but results from casualization, deregulations, male migration and demand for particular forms of flexible labor (World Bank et al. 2008; Kabeer 2007).

Fourth, liberalization has led to the diversification of livelihood strategies as women participate in new forms of work in commercial farms and agricultural value chains, particularly in Southeast Asia, China and India. However, these changes have also increased their vulnerabilities.

These **new** trends in livelihoods have created **new** forms of gender asymmetries. More women are vulnerable to economic shocks and crises compared to men. Women, as the trend for casualization and flexible labor increases, will find themselves without social security and protection (particularly in countries where these systems do not work effectively). Moreover, as these trends continue, women may have to carry the double burden, but yet may lose the traditional support they receive from their families if they are unable to provide safety nets.

The progress towards gender equality in rural livelihoods has been **uneven**. Who has gained or has been disadvantaged from the changes in livelihood opportunities caused by existing and emerging trends in rural livelihoods, depends on different factors. At an individual level, these include: one's stage in the life cycle, one's marital status, the particular strategy one has undertaken, and one's class, caste other social markers, etc. The complex interaction between these factors and other social and economic factors influences livelihood options, choice and ability to exercise agency.

Some women, depending on the point they are at in their life cycle and the strategy they chose, such as the young female migrant workers in export processing sectors, have come out as winners (although they may face structural constraints at work). Others, such as those taking up seasonal rural migration or small farm holders producing subsistence crops and facing competition from commercial farms, have been affected adversely. Moreover, the choice of livelihood strategy may, in one institutional site, increase women's bargaining power while making them vulnerable in another site. For example, in many cases, access to microfinance and involvement in non-agricultural work has increased women's well-being and voice. However, the way these loans are provided have not in many cases challenged the gender biases that operate within the market (i.e. gender segregated work, development of market linkage).

In certain cases, gender norms have proved to be persistent, such as women's engagement in income generation and different forms of work have not changed the gender division of labor and women's overall work burden has increased. Moreover, in certain cases new forms of gender asymmetries have arisen as women's numbers swell in vulnerable forms of employment because of the demand for women's flexible labor rises. All of these indicate that there cannot be a blanket strategy/policy for attaining gender equality. Moreover, the policies need to take into account not only labor markets or occupational segregation, but how rural women can access, participate and influence policy. There also need to take into account how linkages and networks can be developed between rural women and actors who are willing to work for gender equality.

9.2 Moving Forward

Given the existing trends described above, what are the key policy areas and activities that may expand women's livelihood options, address gender power relations and increase women's participation and voice? The discussion below highlights the activities that can be undertaken by different actors at different institutional sites. While labor market oriented strategies are discussed in this section here, it also focuses on how rural women's participation and voice and those willing to act for rural women within the institutional sites such as community, state, and the international policy making arenas, can be strengthened.

It is difficult to prioritize policy prescriptions for a region as diverse as Asia-Pacific, particularly given the contradictory nature of the existing and emerging trends on women's choice, agency and voice. The policies and activities that need to be prioritized are: a) those that strengthen women's fall back position economically and socially; b) activities that strengthen coping abilities during crisis periods; and c) group based activities that strengthen women's collective voice and bargaining power at the different institutional sites. The state is a main actor for the activities that fall under the first two categories. However, activities related to strengthening collective voice and bargaining power can be facilitated by civil society and international actors at different levels.

Bringing the State Back In

The state should prioritize enacting gender sensitive laws, implementing measures to create a dynamic rural economy, providing social security, and creating social safety nets during periods of crisis. All have far reaching impact on improving rural women's livelihood opportunities and promoting gender equality. The aim of these policies and programs should be to strengthen rural women's fall-back position. This requires the state to create synergies between social protection policies with agricultural policies (Farrington et al. 2004). Aside from the stand alone social protection policies such as cash transfers, subsidized food, employment generation, insurance and contributory pensions, the state must also consider the gender impact of agricultural policies and services regarding insurance, financial services (savings, insurance); technology, input supply and marketing services.

Generation of rural employment opportunities both off and on the farm is vital for creating a dynamic rural economy. Government policies must focus on creating a good investment climate through securing property rights, improving communications and transport, and removing barriers to accessing finance.

Social protection for informal workers, particularly women, remains a key policy area for the state. This can be addressed through many different kinds of systems. A multilayered approach to the provision of social protection is useful, as this approach emphasizes national policies but allows for it to be supplemented by other actors. It also does not undermine community-based approaches. The provision of cross subsidies is one way to ensure social protection. For example, the Indian government provides subsidies to large insurance corporations, who offer some of the services to informal workers, including SEWA members (UNRISD 2005).

State partnerships with CSOs can work to the benefit of informal workers. Of course, the extension of social protection to informal workers implies additional administrative costs. In SEWA's case, the additional cost was borne by a solidarity network that was built with a large part borne by members themselves. Employer's contribution may also be another possible avenue for raising part of the cost.

Rural public works, such as employment guarantee schemes, food for work and cash for work help to keep poor women afloat during lean agricultural periods. Aside from rural public works, there are other measures that may strengthen the fall-back positions of workers in the informal economy, one being legal protection.

Better targeting systems need to be created to identify vulnerable households and remove them out of poverty. Rural household types vary between those with primary income from informal sectors to those with primary income from formal work. Targeting the former category for specific welfare benefits and schemes may benefit poor rural women, since the majority of female informal workers are concentrated in these types of households.

Gender sensitive governance reforms are crucial for improving state responsiveness towards women in agriculture. This requires institutional and legal changes such as the decentralization of agricultural services and functions. This implies transfer of staff, resources and functions to the lowest tier of the government, which is closer to the people. Decentralization by itself does not mean it will be gender sensitive and elite capture is a key problem. This requires the creation of reserved seats for ensuring women's participation; building capacity of the state service providers to do gender analysis; and creating an incentive system that rewards workers for addressing gender needs of women.

Identifying key persons to act as gender focal points within agricultural ministries and district offices, plus the creation of monitoring are key for ensuring women's needs in agriculture are addressed. Aside from these measures, the creation of mechanisms and forums where women are able to participate in the policy making process is also vital. Some of the existing policy analysis tools such as formulation of PRSP plans and gender responsive budgeting can be used by women's organizations and other CSOs to analyse whether and how gender issues are addressed by the state.

Community driven projects created by the state for agriculture or natural resource management can create scope for women (and men in disadvantageous positions) to participate in how resources are managed at the local level. However, these projects need to be carefully designed to mitigate the class and gender (caste and other) effect on how the groups function. Studies have shown that the poorest women (and men) are excluded and sometimes women's work burden is increased and women do not participate effectively because of gender norms. This indicates that these committees have to consciously target less powerful groups and also provide women with training and other capacity development skills.

The enactment of progressive laws and state programs based on these laws can provide women access to critical resources such as land. The state can allocate land through land reform, resettlement programs, leasehold programs and anti-poverty programs. However, whether a land redistribution program is effectively able to

address gender issues depends on how programs are implemented and how negotiations are performed with the participant populations to overcome resistance to women owning land. Negotiations on land redistribution must include women (not only household heads). The promotion of collective land rights of women can increase women's access/ownership, particularly through helping women to purchase or lease land.

The extension of the legal rights framework for female agricultural and informal workers is a key step towards ensuring decent work conditions for women and men. International conventions and frameworks exist with many countries as signatories, yet national legislative frameworks may still be inadequate. Moreover, in many countries family laws need to be changed as these serve as a basis for a husband's control over his wife's labor. A key element in ensuring the rights of informal workers is to create legal provisions that allow them to benefit from collective provisions (such as equal pay for equal work).

Linking Women to Markets and Getting Markets to Work for Women

The activities and policies that should be prioritized in this area are: a) capacity development of rural women (and rural women's collectives/collectivities); b) provision of information, credit and access to input, produce, product markets to rural women (and women's collectives); and c) regulation.

Women entrepreneurs in the Asia-Pacific own small-scale farms, thus facing high risks and low capacity for market integration. For these female smallholders and entrepreneurs, a key area is capacity development so that they are able to: a) access markets, both input and produce markets, as buyers and sellers; b) secure market information about what is in demand; and c) add value to their products.

Capacity development of female entrepreneurs requires context-based skills/training programs, that not only include literacy and numeracy, but also confidence building measures and ways to access market intelligence. The use of female trainers may help in circumventing the influence of gender hierarchy and create an enabling environment.

Procurement centers can be established that are community managed and decentralized for storing, assessing and trading agricultural commodities. Establishment of these types of centers can be owned and operated by women's self help groups. These centers are like depots at the village level and can localize the value chain by acting as a 'one stop shop'. Both small scale and marginal farmers and suppliers (input suppliers, banks) do not have to deal with different producers/suppliers. It also helps to overcome the access barriers and ensure product quality and standards.

Providers of rural finance must move beyond providing access, and should consider how access can enable women and men to challenge gender power relations and gender-biased structures. This implies that the providers in the rural financial market need to change their organizational structures and mechanisms for delivering credit. It requires the following: establishment of clear guidelines related to graduation procedures; the removal of gender bias in program design through the involvement of

gender experts and women's organizations; collection of gender disaggregated data; identification of good practices; collaboration among the various service providers; and gender audits of the organizations at the local level.

For female traders, particularly micro-traders, information technology and skills training may increase their productivity and competitiveness. A computerized system to measure and test the quality of products at local collection centers is useful for creating confidence in terms of product quality and reduces underpayment.

Specific programs must be set up to address gender segregation in the market. Education programs that are not biased along these themes and occupational lines is a first step for increasing the range work options for women.

Building Women's Voice and Acting for Women

Priority activities to build women's voice are: a) creating channels and mechanisms for women's participation in formal policy spaces and at the community level; and b) establishing networks and alliances that help women to channel voice horizontally and vertically.

Building rural women's voice is a key area for promoting gender equality in various arenas related to rural livelihood. Building women's voice includes activities to open up formal policy spaces for actors who can give voice to rural women's livelihood needs. It also incorporates the creation of new forums and the opening up of spaces for rural women to participate and influence services, programs and policies. These refer to the supply side of governance. For example, the quota system in South Asia at the national and local levels has effectively brought women into formal politics and political spaces. Admittedly, male policy makers can be gender responsive and female policy makers may fail to act for women. Direct elections to reserved seats, reservation of council headship in certain constituencies for female headship, and earmarking a certain number of projects to be headed by female councilors have not only brought women into policy spaces but created scope for the elected councilor to act for rural women.

Collective organization by women themselves and the creation of trade unions and networks have increased women's ability to influence livelihood issues. This is particularly effective for informal, home-based workers and small farm holders. For example, SEWA in India, a registered trade union for female small farmers and informal workers, has managed to successfully campaign, negotiate and create pressure on power holders to address the needs of informal workers and to create women's leadership. It has also created a platform for female farmers in India to raise their demands.

Setting up user groups is also a popular way to incorporate women's voice into decision making regarding services and management of resources. However, they can be dominated by people in power, and actually increase the workload of women members.

The creation of national and international networks facilitated by CSOs or women's organizations is useful for channeling rural women's voice at the

national/international policy level. CSO and networks can act as key points for accessing information and also combine different national and local schemes that are created for informal workers. For example, a SEWA-led campaign on the ILO adoption of the Convention on Home Work, was coordinated by HomeNet, an international network of home workers worldwide (UNIFEM 2008).

Network and umbrella alliances created by women's organizations can create successful campaigns for the concerns and needs of female farmers and informal workers. For example, GABRIELLA, the biggest alliance of women's organizations in the Philippines, was able to run on a ticket that stressed pro-women legislation, and after winning the seats, was able place legislative proposals on benefits for Filipino women workers.¹⁹

Media can play a key role in channeling rural women's voice and highlight their livelihood concerns. Media can also act as a watchdog to monitor the implementation of state policies. They can also be effective partners in creating civil society alliances for promoting the needs of female migrants, female farmers and informal workers (also male workers).

Enabling Policies, Mandates, Monitoring and Civil Society Initiatives

How gender and livelihood issues are incorporated in national and international policies effects whether policies can be used to promote gender equality. National and international policies can serve as government mandates, which can be rallying points for mobilizing around women's rights or the rights of men in vulnerable positions. These can also be used for citizen's action at the local level or for creating external pressure on the state. In fact, the existence of public service charters that specify responsibilities towards women can be a powerful tool for ensuring rural poor women's (and men's) needs are addressed.

While codes of conduct such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and Ethical Trade Initiatives (ETI) help to ensure proper standards, not all of these benefit men and women equally. Capacity of local organizations to monitor implementation of the codes; ensuring coverage of informal/casual workers under the code; inclusion of gender specific issues in codes of conduct are key areas that need to be addressed.

Partnerships need to be built between the women's organizations and civil society organizations regarding aid effectiveness in promoting gender equality. There should be regular tracking and reporting of how donor resources are spent on gender equality and women's empowerment (and empowerment of disadvantaged communities). This is needed for determining whether adequate resources are spent for attaining MDG goals.

The discussion above highlights that to challenge the persistent inequalities²⁰ and address the uneven progress made towards gender equality, requires many different types of actors from local level associations to policy and market actors. It also requires a wide range of actions by these actors to empower women individually and

¹⁹ See www.gabriellawomensparty.net.

²⁰ Borrowed from Tinker (1990).

collectively through establishing women's livelihood rights, increasing their capability, strengthening their participation and voice. Most of all it requires these actors to recognize that once space and opportunities are created women are able to exercise these choices in their own way.

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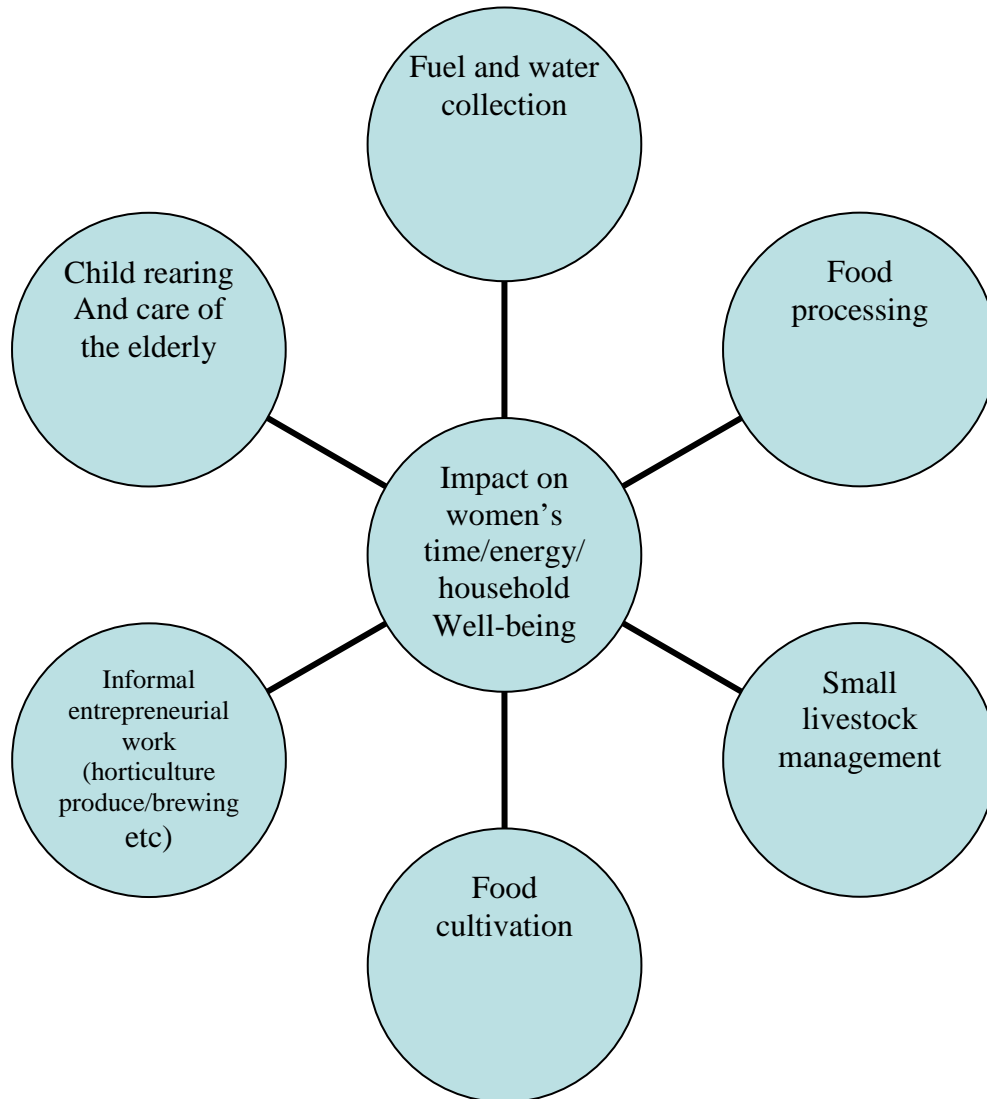
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Annex -1

Women's Unpaid Work



Annex 2

The table presented below lists the different measures taken in Asia-Pacific to promote gender equality in rural livelihoods, and their impacts. This is not a comprehensive list of all measures undertaken.

Category	Intervention	Gender impact
Agriculture, natural resource management	Land reform Joint titling Change in personal law-inheritance law Agricultural credit scheme Pro poor Investment infrastructure development etc Market regulation Community development projects (women's participation) Natural resource management programs (women's groups) Extension services for women	The gender impact of legal reforms depends on implementation also the nature of reform Impact depends on whether it creates a dynamic rural economy Services and program quality impact depend on how women's role is incorporated, whether workers address women's needs
Social protection	Cash transfers Rural public work Food for work Food distribution School feeding Insurance Scheme with CSOs	Depends on how households are targeted; whether women's access is stipulated and how programs are implemented
Migration	Laws protecting rights of migrant worker	How this is enforced Proactive high commissions and state at the international level
Voice	Quotas for women Governance reforms such as decentralization, gender sensitive policy process	How quota system is implemented, formal stipulations clarifying women's role; support and training for women

Source: Author