

## ***Gender and Development: A Historical Overview***

*We have moved from viewing women as victims to seeing them as essential to finding solutions to the world's problems.*

Speaker at the UN Conference on Women, Beijing 1995

### **Introduction**

Until the publication of Ester Boserup's book *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (1970), the notion that economic development might have a different impact by gender—or even that development had anything to do with women—was unthinkable. To be sure, in the 1960s, women anthropologists such as Eleanor Leacock, June Nash, and Helen Safa had considered women in their work on different communities and in their concerns on socio-economic change. And, earlier, Margaret Mead had showed how gender roles differed across small communities in the Pacific, challenging the prevalent notions that Western gender norms were universal (Mead 1958). However, Boserup's book represented a turning point in shining the spotlight on the specific ways in which colonialism and “modernization” had affected women differently from men. It came at a historical moment when there was intense interest in taking stock of development policies pursued by newly independent nations and at the height of social movements, notably the women's movement, in the rich countries of North America, Europe, and in many parts of Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa. The 1970s

thus gave birth to the policy-oriented research field of “women in development,” what we now call “gender and development.” In this chapter, we present an overview of this field and the conceptual shifts and innovations it has experienced.

The United Nations (UN), through its World Conferences on Women (1975, 1980, 1985, and 1995) and through its different agencies, served as a catalyst for creating the institutional frameworks for research and policy in national and international institutions. The passage of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 and additional key international conferences in Vienna (1993) and Cairo (1994) buoyed continued international policy interest in women’s well-being and gender inequality questions. The policy interest culminated in the Millennium Declaration of 2000 that reinforced the message that there could be no development without pursuit of women’s equality with men. Indeed, since the late 1990s the predominant policies to fight poverty globally—including microcredit and conditional cash transfer schemes—have featured women as the main agents. Over the years the policy interest spread from the UN agencies, international donors, and non-governmental organizations to the World Bank and the IMF, the premier international institutions behind economic globalization and neoliberal policies. Even the World Economic Forum, which represents global elites, has felt compelled to deal with gender issues, albeit these institutions differ in their emphases on why gender equality matters.

The research and teaching on gender and development has evolved since the 1970s to encompass an expanding range of topics that are studied using a number of social science frameworks, including economics. The field has also experienced a number of conceptual shifts. The original Women in Development (WID) and Women and Development (WAD) perspectives that appeared during the 1970s have largely given way to the more encompassing Gender and Development (GAD) perspective generated from the important theoretical changes that transformed feminist theory in the 1980s.<sup>1</sup> While WID emerged from liberal feminist circles that incorporated Boserup’s analysis of women and development, WAD emerged precisely from a critique of liberal feminism and orthodox development theory. Proponents of WAD pointed out that women’s disadvantaged position is also a result of the way the economic system recreates gender inequalities and precarious types of employment, thereby raising questions about the type of development that women are to be integrated in (Benería and Sen 1981; 1982).

Over the years, GAD has incorporated both WID and WAD perspectives, given that a degree of convergence between WID and WAD took place around the notion of gender as a central category of analysis. The emergence of postmodernism, with its emphasis on difference and attention to particular



contexts and identity issues, contributed to this convergence. Yet, there is a wide range of feminist scholarship and action that falls under the GAD umbrella; in particular, a general differentiation can be made between those who are closer to liberal feminism à la WID and those who represent extensions of WAD. The distinction between the two shades of GAD turns on the degree of critical thinking among GAD feminists with regard to key issues such as gender and globalization, class inequality, the nature of capitalism, and the role of markets and their regulation. While there are differing interpretations of what GAD represents, in this book we identify the GAD approach with this second strand—the critical perspectives in the field of gender and development.

The field has come a long way from its origins, theoretically, empirically, and in terms of policy and action. Now there are gender-differentiated datasets, gender-inclusive measures of well-being, and gender concerns and empowerment goals are integrated in the development policy agenda. Despite the enormous progress in the inclusion of gender issues in international organizations and development agencies, gender integration in development policy remains problematic in a number of ways that we view as a barrier to advancing an agenda that promotes equitable well-being for all.

First, there is the danger of its instrumentalization, that is, the inclusion of gender in program activities and projects for purposes that do not necessarily serve goals of gender equality and enhancement of women's well-being or that might even conflict with them. Feminists have long been wary of instrumental approaches to women's issues (Benería and Sen 1981; Moser 1989; Elson 1991a). The examples are numerous, such as programs of population control whose objectives reflect not so much a concern with women's well-being or gender equality than as a way to use women to achieve demographic targets. Similarly, short-term employment programs for women can be aimed at toning down the negative effects of male unemployment rather than promoting women's long-term interests. The World Bank, and regional development banks, donor agencies, and government ministries have provided many examples of instrumental arguments for gender equality, for instance by emphasizing the importance of women's education as a way of increasing productivity in the household and the market. Their concerns have often focused on women's contributions to economic growth rather than the importance of women's education as a means for empowering women and enhancing their capabilities. Upon release of the World Bank's *World Development Report* (WDR) of 2012, feminists have criticized this "efficiency" or "smart economics" approach, pointing out that the primary goal should be the promotion of women's well-being while economic growth should be seen as a means rather than an end in itself (Global Social Policy 2012; Razavi 2012).<sup>2</sup> This critique emphasizes that the efficiency concerns should not



#### 4 • Gender, Development, and Globalization

eclipse the goals of gender equality and promotion of women's rights as primary ends in and of themselves.

A second concern with gender integration in development policy has to do with the practice of "gender mainstreaming." This refers to the effort to integrate gender issues across programs and projects of national and international programs, organizations and donor agencies, attentive to planning, implementation, and monitoring activities, which normally did not include them. While the term gender has been integrated in development policy discourses, gender mainstreaming in policy and organizational mandates has often resulted in a simplification of gender equality and empowerment goals, turned a feminist process of social transformation into a technical process to be overseen by bureaucracies, and became depoliticized (Rai 2002; Mukhopadhyay 2004; 2013). It has produced policy approaches that lack a comprehensive understanding of the gender dimensions of the issues at hand. This is so particularly when policy measures overlook the range of gender constraints and naively seek to empower women by simply supplying what is perceived as the missing ingredient (e.g. credit or business skills).<sup>3</sup>

A third concern is that, well into the twenty-first century, in the development policy agenda gender equality is being pursued as a standalone goal, women and men being considered as homogeneous groups, and without regard to reducing other social inequalities such as class, race, and ethnicity. The broad acceptance of gender equality objectives likely owes to the fact that standard strategies such as increasing women's participation in labor markets or in microenterprises, or making them property owners, do not necessarily challenge the prevailing socio-economic order. Undoubtedly, positive transformations have taken place for those women who have benefitted from new opportunities afforded by economic change, but not so for those who have been marginalized and excluded as a result of their position in the national and global economies. Gender equality appears to be less politically threatening to the hegemonic system when isolated from other social inequalities. As many proponents of the GAD perspective have long argued, however, we cannot speak of gender without also speaking about these inequalities with which it intersects. Gender equality is only a part of the overarching fundamental goal of social equality. Yet, neoliberalism appears to have taken on board feminist concerns that are narrowly focused on gender equality, leading commentators to argue that feminism has been coopted in this process (Eisenstein 2009; Fraser 2013).

In this chapter we problematize the state of the dominant gender and development discourses and examine the history of conceptual and policy shifts that have brought the field to its current state. We focus on the frameworks that have been most influential for research, policies, and action, starting with the WID perspective and the contending GAD approach. Second, we examine



two disparate developments that have shaped the research agenda of the field since the 1980s: the critique of WID framework by postmodern writers, feminists, and women's organizations in developing countries and the rise of neoliberal economic policies that continue being implemented in most countries. We review these developments and three counter discourses to neoliberalism, which provide the conceptual tools for transcending these policies: feminist critiques, the capabilities approach and the human development paradigm, and the more recent human rights approach that emphasizes economic and social rights.

### **In the Beginning There Was WID . . .**

Until the early 1970s, women were invisible in economic development analysis and ignored by policymakers, except in their roles as mothers and wives. Policy sought to make women better mothers through child-focused health and nutrition and family planning programs. As Moser (1989) pointed out, this "welfare approach" to women in developing countries was characteristic of the late colonial and post-independence era. No doubt this identity of women had its counterpart in the male breadwinner ideal underlying the characteristic Keynesian macroeconomic policies and welfare policies of the 1940s–1960s, whereby women and children were considered to be dependents of the male wage earners who were entitled to social security and unemployment insurance (Elson and Çağatay 2000). These women-only programs in developing countries were in sync with traditional gender norms in most societies and not threatening to the social order. While in the early twenty-first century, policies continue to pay attention to women in their role as mothers, most notably in the conditional cash transfer schemes, in the 1970s there was a dramatic shift in women's perceived and ideal role in the policy discourse as a result of the women's movement and the rise of feminism. Advocates, practitioners, and scholars drew attention to women's productive roles, and to what women contributed to the economy. This new identity of women became the hallmark of the emerging interdisciplinary and policy-oriented field of women in development and the associated WID perspective. WID advocates promoted women's integration into the economy on an equal footing with men as the means for improving women's status in developing countries.

The WID approach characteristic of this period and tied to liberal feminism challenged the notion that women were unproductive members of society. A number of contributory influences were at work in the emergence of the field and shaping its concerns. First, women practitioners in development agencies, notably USAID, provided their experiential knowledge for



the WID argument (Tinker 1990). They had first-hand knowledge of the work women did in fields and factories in developing countries and the differing impacts of development policies on women and men. Second, the Population Control Lobby of the 1960s and 1970s drew attention to the connection between women's work and fertility; increasing women's education and employment, it was argued, could potentially reduce fertility rates that would then decrease the population growth rate.

Third, the shift in identity of women from mothers/wives to economic agents in the development policy discussions also resonated with the second wave of the women's movement in the 1970s. The liberal feminist agenda and call for action, particularly in the US, traced the source of gender inequality to the gender norms and stereotypes that confined women to the home and to their roles as mothers and wives. Accordingly, the solution for gender inequality was to remove the legal and institutional barriers to women's education, training, and employment. Activists emphasized equity as the key goal of the women's movement and this was pursued on many fronts through legal changes.

Fourth, shifts in economic development thinking in the 1970s also contributed to the reshaping of the gender and development research. These shifts emanated from the realization that pursuit of economic growth implemented through industrialization policies in the 1950s and 1960s did not improve the lives of the majority of people in developing countries. The search for alternative approaches produced the Basic Needs Approach (BNA) spearheaded by the International Labour Office (ILO) in 1976, which drew attention to alleviating rural poverty through investments in social and physical infrastructure. The BNA brought attention to rural women's poverty and catalyzed research on rural women's work and gender division of labor in agricultural households. It also raised issues of redistribution and the need to combine economic growth with equity objectives. This emphasis also resonated with the equity and efficiency argument of WID proponents in shaping development policy.

Fifth, Ester Boserup's *Woman's Role in Economic Development* heavily influenced the emergence and growth of the field. Boserup rejected the narrow view of women as mothers and wives and highlighted the wide range of productive work performed by women in developing countries and called for policy attention to increase women's productivity. As Tinker (1990: 30) put it, Boserup "legitimized efforts to influence development policy with the combined argument for justice and efficiency." Boserup's book became an inspiration for much of the work that followed on these issues in the 1970s and early 1980s. She raised the major problems affecting women's condition in the developing world—from questions related to the gender division of labor across sectors, countries, and regions to the undercounting of women's



work in domestic and unpaid activities, and the exclusion of women from industrial employment.

Boserup's contributions are encapsulated in two themes that run through her book: she sought to show that (1) gender division of labor is a social category that varies by place and changes over time; and (2) women were harmed by the process of modernization; they were either left behind relative to men and/or experienced an absolute loss in status over time. With respect to the first theme, Boserup produced a sector-by-sector examination of gender division of labor based on the very limited data available. In agricultural production she distinguished between the farming systems in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Through her discussion of what she referred to as the "female-farming system" in Africa she challenged the assumption that men everywhere are the providers of food. She also examined how the gender division of work changed over time, highlighting how growing population pressure on land and colonial administrations' prejudices on who should be the farmer resulted in a transition from female- to male-farming system in many parts of Africa.

Boserup's diagnosis of the forces underlying this change also illustrates the second theme in the book: that the modernization of farming (or industry, services) did not benefit women. For her, women's marginalization in the development process was the only shortcoming of an otherwise beneficial process characteristic of the colonial and postcolonial era.<sup>4</sup> Guided by their own gender values, she argued, colonial policymakers introduced plough agriculture and cash crops to men, trained men, and gave land titles to men. As a result, men became the farmers and women became helpers and lost status.<sup>5</sup> In her view, the cause of economic inequality between women and men was productivity differences: the less productive the work one performs, the lower one's income will be.

Boserup noted that a similar process of marginalization occurred in the course of industrialization, whereby women who lost their jobs in traditional manufacturing were not hired in modern manufacturing enterprises. Hers was a comment on the track record of the inward-looking strategy of import-substitution industrialization that drew upon the male labor force, with the exception of a few industries, such as textiles and food processing. Recent evaluations of this history support Boserup's observations on the gender effects of early industrialization across countries, for example, Chile, Uruguay, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Korea (Berik et al. 2008). Boserup's analysis showed the decline in women's share of employment with industrialization—a process commonly referred to as "defeminization" in the contemporary gender and development discourse. With the increasing reliance on women's labor in export manufacturing in developing economies after the late 1970s Boserup's argument was replaced by the feminization U-hypothesis that



posits a decline first and subsequent increase in women's labor force participation with the rise in the average income level of a country. This hypothesis continues to be examined in the economic histories of the US and Western Europe as well as in contemporary developing country contexts (Goldin 1995; Çağatay and Özler 1995; Humphries and Sarasúa 2012; Kucera and Tejani 2014). More recently, defeminization of industrial labor has reappeared in contexts where industrial upgrading took place or there was a large inflow of low-wage male labor, such as for example the decrease in the proportion of women in Korea's and Taiwan's export sectors or in Mexico's maquiladora industry.

In her discussion of rural-urban migration Boserup also discussed its effect on women's work. In urban settings women were unable to continue subsistence work, which was replaced by a narrower range of domestic tasks. She problematized the omission from labor force statistics of subsistence activities, which led to the statistical invisibility of much of women's work. The questions she raised initiated subsequent feminist work on the "Accounting Project" that extended the concerns about undercounting from subsistence work to domestic labor, volunteer work, and informal work (Benería 1981).

The upshot of Boserup's analysis of changes in gender division of labor was that in all sectors of the economy men advanced in modern activities, while women were left behind in the traditional, lower productivity sectors. As a result, women's and men's productivity, income, outlook, and attitudes diverged. Boserup called for state attention to integrate women in development. Her emphasis was on education and training of women so that they would close the gap with men in productivity.<sup>6</sup> She argued that the failure to utilize women's productive work would amount to inefficient resource use. This line of thinking later evolved into the "efficiency" approach that characterized the work of some international organizations and became mainstream at the turn of the twenty-first century. For example, the 2006 World Bank Gender Action Plan (GAP) argued the "business case for expanding women's economic opportunities . . . [which] is nothing more than smart economics" (World Bank 2006: 2).

### *Institutionalization of WID: The UN, CEDAW, and the Equity Agenda*

The women's movement was the force that propelled the institutionalization of the field of gender and development in the 1970s and beyond. It has continued to influence the work of grassroots non-governmental organizations and generated the multiple international networks that contributed to the impressive increase in awareness regarding women's condition and gender inequality across countries. The movement was instrumental in shaping the pioneering WID-inspired foreign assistance programs of the US that included the condition that US foreign aid be used to promote integration of women



in development. Also far reaching was the UN's role in the institutionalization of research on gender and development. The UN spearheaded research efforts through its agencies, particularly through the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) (Pietilä and Vickers 1990). These agencies were integrated into a single organization, UN Women, in 2010.

Perhaps the UN's most visible effort reflecting the pressure from the global women's movement at the international and domestic levels was the organization of the UN Decade of Women conferences that sprang from Mexico City in 1975 to Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985, followed by Beijing in 1995. These conferences served as powerful mechanisms for consciousness raising to discuss women's condition and concerns worldwide and to set agendas at the international level. They provided important venues for women activists, feminists, scholars, and practitioners from different backgrounds to discuss and debate the priorities and direction of economic development. Amidst these debates, the 1995 UN World Conference on Women produced the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that provided an overarching agenda to serve the goal of "empowerment of all women" and "the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedom of all women" (UN 1996: 21). These conferences also helped strengthen the combined argument for efficiency and equity, as equity arguments faced resistance by national bureaucracies (Razavi and Miller 1995). Gender issues were also at center stage at other world conferences organized by the UN, such as the 1994 Cairo conference on population, and the Vienna conference on human rights in 1993. By the end of the twentieth century, practically all UN agencies had incorporated gender-related research and programs in their specific areas of work—from the ILO to UNFPA, UNRISD, FAO, and the UNDP.

Similarly, the UN was the forum that brought countries together to adopt the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, which entered into force as an international treaty in 1981. CEDAW represents the culmination of decades of efforts to elaborate from women's perspective the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948. CEDAW reflects principles consistent with the equity emphasis of WID. Often described as "a bill of rights for women," since 1979 CEDAW has served as the main vehicle for promoting gender equality internationally (Simmons 2009; Byrnes and Freeman 2012).

Unusually for an international convention, CEDAW covers not only rights in the public sphere but also those in private life: the right to non-discrimination and rights related to marriage and family relations, which



asserted the equal rights and obligations of men and women with regards to choice of spouse, parenthood, personal rights, and command over property. CEDAW also pioneered the reproductive rights of women, which specify what it means to have equal rights with respect to family formation and planning. The Convention's preamble emphasized that "the role of women in procreation should not be a basis for discrimination."<sup>7</sup> Family planning and fertility control was an area of rights that became the subject of much debate in the UN International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994.

CEDAW upholds equal rights of women and men before the law—formal equality—as the prerequisite for achieving equality of outcomes. In doing so, CEDAW promotes the same values of equality everywhere and does not leave policy open to cultural interpretation that may restrict women's rights. However, CEDAW goes beyond a call for formal equality. Some articles specify the means to achieving equality. Article 11, for example, points out that to achieve gender equality, creating a non-discriminatory legal environment is not enough; state policies have to support couples by providing access to childcare and paid maternity leave so as to remove pregnancy and childcare as obstacles to achieving equal opportunity in employment. The concept of equality underlying CEDAW is thus based on recognition of the biological difference of women and men, but one that seeks to ensure that this difference is not a basis of unequal treatment. Article 4 stipulates that any affirmative-action type measures—referred to in CEDAW as "temporary or special measures"—that will necessitate different treatment of women and men should not be considered discriminatory to men, making explicit that these are measures on the path to equality and they are implemented to make up for the effects of past discrimination against women. In addition, CEDAW Committee's General Recommendations to national governments are important in raising attention to issues on broader aspects of the treaty, even though they are not part of the treaty, for example, violence against women raised in its General Recommendation No. 19 of 1992.

By ratifying CEDAW countries commit to a process of bringing their national laws in conformity with CEDAW. However, CEDAW's reach beyond the usual political, economic, and education areas and into the realm of family and cultural practices resulted in many countries placing "reservations" on certain of its articles and some have yet to ratify CEDAW.<sup>8</sup> As of late 2014, 187 countries had ratified the Convention and the remaining seven are an odd group consisting of Islamic Republic of Iran, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Tonga, Palau, and the US.<sup>9</sup> A reservation on an article meant that the country is not able to comply with that aspect of CEDAW, which in some cases are contrary to the Convention itself.<sup>10</sup> Despite the reservation loophole, the CEDAW process—the regular reviews of country performance on



CEDAW articles—has put countries under the international spotlight, and opened up the political space for local activists to push for change in national laws and to raise awareness about gender equality questions. As a result, several countries have changed their national laws to reflect principles of gender equality and lifted reservations on CEDAW. Recent evidence finds support for a positive “CEDAW effect” in the area of political and, to a lesser extent, social rights of women (Engelhart and Miller 2014).

Ultimately, the effect of CEDAW depends on the enforcement of these laws and the implementation process at the national level. Since governments are responsive to majorities and will rarely take steps that will upset their values or sensibilities, a key roadblock to implementing CEDAW or other international treaties is the persistent patriarchal values and norms that permeate economic, political, and social life. As with any example of the legal approach towards social change, to attain significant progress towards gender equality a critical mass in a society has to embrace the ideals underlying the laws. Thus, critical to making its principles a reality is to promote “CEDAW literacy” and consciousness raising, which entails making sure that women and men even in remote areas become aware of their rights and of their being equal under this UN Convention.

With regards to the agenda-setting efforts carried out by the UN over the years, the 1993 international conference on human rights in Vienna was another important event. Under the slogan of “women’s rights are human rights,” it became a comprehensive step to emphasize women’s rights in general. As in the case of the passage of CEDAW, the debates on gender issues in the Vienna and Cairo conferences were a reflection of the influence that feminism and the women’s movement had acquired over the years with regards to the discourse on human rights affecting women and the call for equality.

The WID agenda of the 1970s and 1980s also set in motion the establishment of “WID units” and programs by national governments. These units tended to focus on women-only projects isolated from the regular policy agendas of government ministries. The women-only economic activities that were often implemented with donor funds tended to “misbehave” in the sense that they were marginal efforts that ended up not being economically sustainable (Buvinić 1986). The efforts to “mainstream gender” were partly a response to these problems.

## From WID to WAD to GAD

In contrast to the WID perspective, a more critical view of the development process, both from a socio-economic and a feminist perspective, unfolded in the late 1970s. Focusing on questions inspired by feminism, Marxism, and



the New Left, this perspective represented a critical view of both mainstream economic analysis, its economic growth model and modernization theories, and capitalism and class inequalities. This approach, referred to as "Women and Development," or WAD, was not only concerned with raising productivity and earnings of women but also in laying bare the socio-economic exploitation that affects women and men, albeit in different ways (Deere 1977; Croll 1979; Elson and Pearson 1981; Benería 1979; Benería and Sen 1982; Sen and Grown 1987). Proponents of WAD pointed out that the WID arguments were often made without questioning the economic system that generated gender inequalities. In contrast to the WID approach, the WAD approach saw the need for structural change and transformation of the development process itself, for example, through redistribution of wealth and creation of decent employment, in order to attain gender equality.

The systematic evaluation of Boserup's work by Benería and Sen (1981) illustrated the methodological differences of this critical perspective from the WID approach, and partially laid out the conceptual foundation of what would become Gender and Development (GAD) perspective in the field. Benería and Sen argued that Boserup did not explain colonialism's impact sufficiently. Colonialism was more than a value system; it was an economic system designed to promote capital accumulation, which caused class differentiation. This process, which Boserup saw as beneficial to men, for example the introduction of cash crop agriculture, in fact left many men behind as well. It was colonial policy that confined Africans to small areas, which made it difficult to produce enough food and forced them to either work the land more intensively or migrate to search for work. Moreover, Boserup's sole focus on changes in the sphere of production (farm work) was insufficient to explain how women's social status changed with capitalist development. And in a context where whole families were becoming landless and being pushed off the land her proposed solution to close education gender gaps was insufficient. What good would teaching better techniques to women subsistence farmers do, they argued; this solution was like "treating cancer with a bandaid" (p. 287).

Benería and Sen (1982) articulated an alternative conceptual framework to generate a more adequate explanation of how and why the capitalist development process affects women and men differently. Using some of the conceptualization at the time, they called for framing the explanations in terms of the concepts of capital accumulation and reproduction. The concept of capital accumulation would provide insights into the uneven and disruptive social (class) differentiation process underway in a given society undergoing capitalist development and help identify the uneven effects on the gender division of labor. Development, in this perspective, is not a linear process of growth, but one that dispossesses a large majority from their means of



livelihood, except for their labor power, and concentrates wealth in the hands of the few.

In addition, Benería and Sen argued that the concept of reproduction was needed to draw attention to the reproductive labor of women and its relationship to paid labor. Reproduction encompasses activities that go beyond childbearing to include childrearing and the provisioning of care to ensure the daily and intergenerational reproduction of family sustenance and of the labor force. Given that historically women have been concentrated in these areas, they argued that the different ways in which the processes of capital accumulation and production impinge upon the sphere of reproduction are highly relevant to understanding women's status in society, gender roles, and inequality.

The concept of reproduction was part of the framework of the social reproduction approach that dated back to Frederick Engels and was especially developed by feminists in the 1970s. In the Preface to *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* of 1884, Engels emphasized the two-fold character of social life. He argued that the analysis of social change would be incomplete if it only focused on production of goods and services for subsistence or the market, without analyzing the evolution of institutions concerned with reproduction, such as the family and the division of labor in the household (Engels [1884] 1981).<sup>11</sup> Along these lines, feminist theory has contributed extensively to emphasizing women's key role in social reproduction and the care economy (Picchio 1992; Folbre 1994).

Methodologically, WAD and early GAD theorists insisted on a contextual analysis of impacts of capitalist development processes on women's lives that did not allow for easy generalizations. Benería and Sen, for example, argued that general conclusions could not be reached on whether development intensifies women's work, brings loss of control of land, generates migration, or weakens patriarchal control. These questions required a specific analysis of the nature of capitalist development in context. Similarly, Elson and Pearson (1981) examined the impact of work in export factories on women's subordinate social status in terms of a framework that allowed for contradictory effects.

Beyond the broad concepts of capital accumulation and reproduction, Benería and Sen (1981) argued that an analysis of the development process had to be attentive to gender and social class differences. In the early 1980s researchers' emphasis was on the intersection of gender and social class, which later expanded to include race/ethnicity and other forms of identity such as sexual orientation. The category women, central to the WID approach, concealed the diversity of experiences of women and left out of consideration the experiences of children and men. Gender relations needed to be part of the focus, whether captured in terms of gender division of labor or of



resources. In addition, Benería and Sen argued that women's (as well as men's) experiences vary by social class and give rise to the concrete meaning of gender. In turn, these differing experiences result in differing interests, which have implications for political organization. If poor women's lives were marked by overwork and undernourishment, the authors asked, how could these women be assumed to share similar experiences with well-off women and unite around common goals?

According to Benería and Sen (1982), the strategy to address the inequalities generated by capitalist development is to tackle the ill-health and overwork consequences for poor women. Through self-organization poor women could fight for immediate policy changes to benefit themselves in their daily lives (such as infrastructure investments). Pursuit of goals to alleviate immediate hardship is a prerequisite for questioning broader inequalities in the social order and long-term radical transformation of society (to create more egalitarian institutions and economic system). GAD theorists further fleshed out the short-term policy goals and long-term goals of social transformation by differentiating between "practical" (more immediate) gender needs/interests of women and the "strategic" (long-term) gender needs/interests (Molyneux 1985; Moser 1989).

This strategy for change was emphasized by Sen and Grown (1987) who articulated the vision of a group of developing country scholars, practitioners, and activists who formed Development Alternatives for Women for a New Era (DAWN).<sup>12</sup> The DAWN perspective went beyond the goal of gender equality to question the nature of development and the domination of developing countries by rich economies. These authors argued that development policies must be conceived, revised, and evaluated from the perspective of poor women in the Third World, since this group of women is the largest and most disadvantaged group.<sup>13</sup> In addition, they argued that change that improves the lives of this group of women can only come from such a bottom up mobilization of Third World women's organizations and global activism.

## **The Challenges from Postmodernism and Women of the Global South**

Can there be a homogenous group of "Third World women" or "poor Third World women," who in turn can push for changes in the strategy of economic development? This was the challenge posed by Aiwa Ong (1987) and Chandra Mohanty (1988) and other feminists from the global South to those engaged in issues of gender and development. The answer of both groups was a resounding "no," but their arguments differed.



The postmodern critics argued there could be no general, coherent category “Third World woman.” They also challenged structural approaches and the 1970s paradigms that relied on general categories such as “patriarchy” and “capitalism.” They rejected essentialism in the concepts used, and questioned the use of general concepts—such as “labor,” “gender division of labor” or “production”—and the previously assumed connections between economic structure and the socio-economic conditions affecting women and men.

The unfolding of postmodernism was a key turning point in feminist theory. The postmodern challenge had its sources in the profound changes that feminist theory underwent in the mid-1980s. One influential source was feminist theorists’ call for a deeper understanding of the social construction of gender. Scott (1986) argued that gender involved culturally available symbols, normative concepts that set forth interpretations of gender meanings, kinship systems, and subjective identity. The all-encompassing nature of these elements led her to argue that “gender is everywhere.” Scott’s emphasis on the notion of gender as a way of denoting “cultural constructions” became dominant in feminism’s shift towards cultural studies. Another influence was the feminist emphasis on intersectional analysis, which emphasized the connections between gender and other dimensions of identity, including social class, race, ethnicity, and sexual identity, which GAD researchers increasingly emphasized.

When their work engaged with countries of the global South, many postmodern critics identified as “postcolonial” theorists, albeit another entry point to postcolonialism was a critique of Western conceptualizations of gender and gender equality. The work of feminist postcolonialist scholars such as Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela (2004), for example, assessed the predominantly Western perspective in the developmentalist and feminist approaches’ interpretation of non-Western women’s situation and experiences. They argued that Western (or Western-influenced) women tend to adopt the modernist organization of society as the norm for development and such an approach fails to provide appropriate solutions to the problem of gender subordination in non-Western societies.<sup>14</sup>

In this vein, Ong, Mohanty, and later Parpart and Marchand (1995) questioned the WID and critical gender and development studies of the 1970s and 1980s for their Western, middle-class feminist presuppositions. The feminist critics of WID (that is, the proponents of WAD) were also lumped together in this postcolonial critique, despite their attention to class differences among women. Mohanty argued that the writing on women in developing countries gave rise to a coherent image of Third World women with certain negative attributes. Accordingly, the Third World woman was a poor, dependent, passive, oppressed, uneducated, helpless, tradition-bound



victim. Her implicit counterpart was the First World/Western woman, a representation that was similarly homogenized: she was independent, well-off, educated, autonomous, liberated. The dichotomy was characterized by the superiority of the First World woman. She was the norm, the role model by which progress for the Third World woman could be gauged. Mohanty argued that this image was generated discursively, via common textual strategies used by WID and WAD researchers. For example, whenever authors referred to the impact of some factor on women—such as economic development, Islam, the family structure—this, according to postcolonial critics, reduced Third World women to object status, taking away their agency.

Postcolonial critics also problematized the attempts to document the extensiveness of Third World women's powerlessness through the "arithmetic method." For example, based on their wearing the veil and the presumption that the veil denoted powerlessness, veiled Muslim women were assumed to be oppressed and powerless. In addition, Mohanty and other postcolonial theorists argued that the use of general concepts in gender analysis, such as labor, gender division of labor, and justice, created a distorted image of Third World women's experiences. Such theoretical entry points presumed universal explanations and a reality that was not necessarily one experienced by any particular group of women.

Postcolonial critics argued that these representations have consequences. The generalizations do not do justice to the complexity of Third World women (that is, differences among them by class, ethnicity, nationality, age, and cultural differences). Moreover, the characteristic images "colonize" Third World women; they stifle Third World women's agency and knowledge and perpetuate the domination of the West over the Third World. The images, they argued, are used to legitimate the need for rich country interventions in the affairs of developing countries and to promote control by and dependence on rich country experts and technical aid (Parpart and Marchand 1995; Parpart 1995). These images bolster arguments in favor of policies to educate, civilize, and liberate women, for example, through Western models of development, foreign interventions, and foreign aid, which can be harmful, according to postmodernists. In addition, given the messages of superiority of Western women and inferiority of Third World women implied by the imagery, Mohanty (1988) also argued that these representations make it more difficult for Third World women's groups to form political coalitions with Western women's groups and thus they stand in the path of global feminist activism.

Postmodern critics favored a research approach that was more characteristic of the discipline of anthropology—ethnographic research—that is attentive to the concrete realities, indigenous knowledge, and local expertise of women. They called for the discovery of the experiences of Third World



women through careful, locally grounded, small-scale case studies with due attention to power, meaning, and differences. This meant emphasis on differences among women and the multiple identities that shape women's lives. Mohanty held Maria Mies's study of lacemakers in Narsapur (India) as exemplary in this regard, in its focus on a specific caste of women, in a specific location (Mies 1982). Yet, while Mies's study fit many features that are attractive to postmodern critics, as Udayagiri (1995) pointed out, it defied other postmodern tenets, such as the use of a Marxist-feminist framework and associated general categories of analysis. Even the book's subtitle engages in the dreaded totalization of women's experiences in India and posits an essentialized world market by referring to "Indian Housewives Produce for the World Market."

While agreeing with many postmodern critiques of WID, many women scholars from the global South raised doubts about the promise of postmodernism in helping forge national and international political movements and in bringing about social change. Of particular concern was the postmodern focus on deconstruction and struggle in the terrain of representation. While useful regarding issues of identity and corresponding struggles, such as within the gay and indigenous movements, struggles over representation did not help in addressing the immediate crises and social problems experienced in either high-income or low-income countries. Udayagiri (1995) raised the difficulty of building coalitions on the basis of a theoretical position that views women's experiences as local and contextual. A prerequisite for feminist political movements, Udayagiri argued, is Third World women's mobilization around a shared sense of injustice. She also pointed out that postmodernism was not the only approach to guide understanding of local and contextual experiences of people, and that many scholars and activists from the global South were already emphasizing attention to difference and context.

Indeed, as early as the first UN Conference on Women held in Mexico City, feminists from the South highlighted the importance of differentiating women on the basis of their locational setting and background. Feminists from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia sought to understand the dynamics of gender within the context of their countries whose socio-political and economic structures were shaped by colonial legacies (Ahmed 1992; Berger 1995; Mills and Ssewakiryanga 2002). Hence, women's situation in the development process and their struggle against patriarchal norms needed to be understood as part of the broader struggle against the forces of colonialism and neo (post)-colonialism. Zein-Elabdin (1999), for example, noted that there are significant historical and cultural contrasts between women and men in Ghana, Somalia, and South Africa, which require careful application of feminist concepts and development frameworks in each case.



There is need to take into account the diversity of women's experiences on the basis of their class, ethnicity, race, and nationality. Some Southern feminist scholars have brought particular attention to the need for understanding the local interpretations and meaning of gender and have enriched the gender and development discourse.

Another concise response from the South to postmodernism came from Maria Nzomo (1995), an activist in Kenya's democratic movement. Nzomo argued that, contrary to postmodernism's insistence on generating knowledge from the particular local level, Kenyan activists should be able to appeal to universal ideals of democracy in their fight for equality and to adapt them to the Kenyan context, rather than reinventing democratic ideals. Having universal ideals is important, she argued, to show that Kenyan women are demanding what is accepted as goals everywhere.

Nzomo also cautioned that postmodernism's insistence on attention to differences among women can undermine collective action, which Parpart and Marchand (1995) concede is a danger. Nzomo argued that emphasis on difference would fuel divisions among women who come from different backgrounds and have different interests, rather than uniting them around shared goals. Relatedly, Nzomo was concerned about postmodernism's objection to representing poverty as a key concern of Kenyan women on grounds that all Kenyan women are not poor. She argued that one could make the case that poverty is the most pressing problem affecting most women (even women married to rich husbands, should their marriages fail).

Other critics argued that postmodern rejection of universal moral principles could lead to condoning questionable age-old practices that are harmful to women (Udayagiri 1995). In a similar vein, Moghissi (1999) problematized the relativist positions that emerged from postmodernism in the context of Islamization of societies. As they sought to validate women's experiences, she argued, postmodernist critics softened the harsh daily reality experienced by women, colluding with Islamic fundamentalist views about women's lives as culturally authentic. The irony of speaking on behalf of Third World women and criticizing their colonization in WID and WAD writings while writing in opaque prose also did not escape the critics of postmodern critics (Udayagiri 1995).

In spite of these shortcomings, postmodernism has strongly influenced not only the humanities and literary fields but also the social sciences. The undermining of formerly stable categories of analysis, such as labor, gender division of labor, reproduction, opened up new questions about the most effective way of theorizing, doing research, and promoting action on gender inequality. Most notably, postmodernism shifted the emphasis from material to cultural issues. As Barrett (1999) pointed out, the role of the material in feminism was replaced by the new emphasis on culture, meaning, and



identity, which implied that the social sciences lost out to the humanities in academic work. In Nancy Fraser's terms, issues of "representation"—such as identity, discourse analysis, and citizenship—took priority over economic questions, including issues of redistribution (Fraser 1997).

At the same time, recognition of the importance of understanding "the material" did not diminish, despite the postmodern influence within feminism. This interest, in fact, explains the growth of feminist economics with the birth of the International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) in 1992. Even so, postmodern sensibilities influenced many feminist economist critics of mainstream economics. As discussed in Chapter 2, feminist economists sought ways of integrating the different streams of feminist thought, a task that has required an important effort to develop interdisciplinary analysis by finding commonalities between the disciplines and the crossing of boundaries with respect to gender analysis (Ferber and Nelson 2003a; 1993). The influence of postcolonial thought was also felt in feminist activism. For example, in Latin America where feminism had originally been connected to leftist parties, there was a shift away from political parties and towards more specific feminist politics that made gender inequality at all levels more central. Understanding gender relations and gender constructions, the emphasis on identity and cultural norms, together with North–South differences, became the target of a strong re-affirmation of feminisms from the South (Kapadia 2002; Saunders 2002).

The postmodern influence continues to be felt, and is "mainstreamed" in contemporary commentary on representations of Third World women. With increasing violence against women globally and increasing awareness of extreme constraints on lives of women in various parts of the world, in countries such as Sudan, Afghanistan, India, and Yemen, the postmodern caution against sensationalizing women's lives is ever present, while at the same time serving as reminders of the differing concerns and priorities of women. But do these cautionary notes downplay the harsh realities experienced by women? Where do they lead in terms of the political agenda for promoting well-being in an equitable manner?

One highly contentious area that continues to have political implications is the veil, in its various forms, that is worn by Muslim women. Echoing Mohanty's critique, in "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" Abu-Lughod (2002) problematized the use of Afghan women's dress in arguments to justify the US invasion of Afghanistan. In the post-9/11 era the oppression of Afghan women under Taliban rule was prominently featured as one justification for the Afghan war. Abu-Lughod argued that the veil, in and of itself, did not represent the unfreedom of Afghan women. After enumerating a number of arguments on what the veil does and represents<sup>15</sup> and explaining the mode of its use in the pro-invasion discourse, she proposed an ethic of



respect for different gender norms.<sup>16</sup> For Abu-Lughod the veil is a trivial matter; Afghan women do/did not need to be “saved” on account of the veil; any strategy for improving women’s lives in distant lands had to address the crushing conditions of daily poverty that is the most pressing problem and the product of the history of the country. Her argument thus prioritizes alleviating the constraints of poverty in women’s lives while downplaying the constraints associated with the veil; this position discourages activism on all goals other than poverty reduction and issues of representation.

A similar argument is made by Kabeer (2004) who presents an argument that foregrounds the power of representations of Third World women. In her critique of the representation of women export workers in the US media that are used to justify implementing international minimum standards on working conditions, she calls for examination of women workers’ own views of the meaning of export factory employment. This “view from below” shows a more complex picture of benefits for women in a context where women have virtually no job alternatives. Sure there are problems with working conditions, Kabeer argues, but the jobs in question offer benefits for women that should not be overlooked and these jobs should not be endangered by any scheme designed to improve their quality. Similar to Abu-Lughod, Kabeer emphasizes poverty reduction as the goal for action in low-income countries; short of that, she suggests, not much can be done to alleviate the problem of poor working conditions, without hurting women’s employment. While Kabeer promotes policies to reduce poverty (through funding a universal floor for incomes), postmodern authors tend to not problematize conditions of poverty or other deprivations experienced by women. Nor do they take up how these deprivations might be reduced. This type of argument shirks from applying a universal yardstick to identify what is wrong with the conditions observed; and its paralyzing effect on solidaristic international political action is one legacy of postmodernism.

Nonetheless, postmodern and postcolonial feminism has had an important influence on recent gender and development research. Now, researchers address economic problems that affect the lives of women and men in developing countries with greater sensitivity to postmodern critiques. Specifically, there is greater caution in making generalizations, greater attention to the local context, and the voices of women themselves, and greater sensitivity to explaining experiences and goals from a variety of perspectives. We believe that these features of the postmodern/postcolonial critique are invaluable if they are combined with a normative framework for evaluating well-being in order to strengthen the potential of gender and development research in promoting social justice. As explained below, the capabilities approach complemented by the human rights arguments provides such a



normative framework. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 2, with its roots in the WAD approach, feminist economics provides the key conceptual framework necessary to guide policy to promote gender equitable livelihoods and well-being. Specifically, feminist economists' attention to issues of social reproduction and the sustainability of human life provides an important framework with which to approach multiple crises—financial, economic, political, ethical, and ecological—facing the world today.

### **The Rise and Rise of Neoliberal Policies<sup>17</sup>**

The end of the 1970s and early 1980s marked a shift away from the Keynesian approach in macroeconomics to a free-market approach in mainstream economics that was favored by ascendant conservative political and economic forces. With the arrival of neoliberal economic policies on the global scene, a good proportion of the gender and development research, in particular from a GAD perspective, focused its attention on the gendered impacts of these policies.

Keynesian economics entailed reliance on fiscal and monetary policies and government regulation to promote employment, economic growth, and stability. This approach was influential in guiding development strategies in many high-income and low-income countries in the 1950s and 1960s, in the latter through an emphasis on import-substitution industrialization and public investment. However, Keynesianism appeared to be unable to address the inflation and unemployment problems in high-income economies in the aftermath of the oil-price hikes of the 1970s. In addition, ascendant conservative voices in the North deemed it responsible for the unsustainable domestic and external debt amassed by low-income countries.

These perceived failures ushered in the policy shift to what are variously known as “supply-side,” “free-market,” “neoliberal” policies. The shift also had a strong ideological component. The proponents of neoliberal policies argued that economic growth was impeded by the heavy-handed role of the government and that the solution was to give free reign to markets in operating the economy. The standard neoliberal policies consist of deregulation of the economy, privatization of public enterprises, government budget cuts, trade liberalization and export orientation of the economy, together with openness to foreign investment and financial flows. Each of these policies was intended to reduce the balance of payments problems faced by developing countries and to rein in the runaway domestic debt and associated inflation problem. In developing countries, their implementation through Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) resulted in recessions and stagnation everywhere, adversely affecting the livelihoods of low-income



groups and increasing poverty. In Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, it resulted in the “lost decade” of the 1980s and 1990s. Proponents argued that stagnation was only a temporary effect that would give way to vigorous growth once the economy adjusted to the new rules.

In high-income countries neoliberal policies were first adopted in Anglo-Saxon countries such as the US, UK, and Canada, after the election of conservative governments in the 1980s. In low-income countries the early adopters were Argentina (under the generals), Chile (under Pinochet), and the Philippines (under Marcos) in the 1970s, Mexico and Bolivia in the early 1980s, while other countries followed soon, mostly under the pressures of the “Washington Consensus.” In many African and Latin American countries SAPs were imposed as a solution to the debt crises of the 1980s. In some countries, such as Turkey and the Philippines, the suspension of democratic rule and declaration of martial law proved to be a prerequisite for their implementation. In some Latin American countries, austerity measures were adopted by governments during and after the end of military rule, which justified them as a way to accompany pro-market reforms. Even as the debt crisis lost its importance towards the end of the twentieth century, neoliberal policies continued and became the new normal in macroeconomic policy regime for developed and developing countries alike, with global financial institutions—the World Bank, the IMF, the European Central Bank—acting as enforcers of these policies.

### *Feminist Critiques of Neoliberal Policies*

As soon as the social costs of SAPs began to be felt in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, it became clear that they had specific gender dimensions. Along with critics such as Cornia, Jolly, and Stewart (1987), feminist economists provided critical evaluation of the social costs of adjustment from a gender and class perspective (Elson 1991b; Benería and Feldman 1992; Çağatay et al. 1995). In fact, the effort to understand the specific effects of SAPs on women led to a new understanding of macroeconomic policy as non neutral with respect to gender. Studies of SAPs showed that the social costs of adjustment were not shared equally among different social groups, and by women and men in particular (Elson 1991b; Sparr 1994; Benería 1999a). For women, SAPs and austerity policies have often generated an intensification of their unpaid work when budget cuts result in diminished public services or their deterioration while family income decreased. Given that these policies also tend to increase women’s participation in the labor force, they also contribute to the problems of reconciling unpaid workload with labor market work. Likewise, analysis by feminists of the post-2008 crisis has showed similar gender effects (Benería and Martínez-Iglesias 2014; Elson 2012a; Antonopoulos 2013; Albelda 2014).



In addition, as we discuss in detail in the chapters that follow, the feminist literature produced critical information about the effects of globalization and a range of macroeconomic policies, such as trade and fiscal policy (Seguino 2000a; Berik 2000; Van Staveren et al. 2007). These studies gave impetus to work on measurement of unpaid work and gender budgeting initiatives (Floro and Messier 2010; Floro and Komatsu 2011; Budlender 2000; Sharp and Broomhill 2002). Some UN organizations, such as UNICEF, the ILO, INSTRAW, and UNRISD, have also provided critical analysis of neoliberal policies. Much of this research bears the hallmarks of the GAD approach, which questioned the predominant distribution and redistribution of resources and also placed emphasis on social policies that deal not only with gender inequality but also class, ethnic, and other forms of inequality.

At the same time, the feminist literature has subjected these policies to the scrutiny of human rights criteria. Balakrishnan and Elson (2011) use the economic and social rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and subsequent international human rights covenants and conventions to construct alternative criteria for assessing the effectiveness of macroeconomic policies.<sup>18</sup> Key economic and social rights are the right to work; right to rest; right to adequate standard of living; right to education, by which all governments have to abide.<sup>19</sup> The principles necessary to uphold these economic rights involve commitment to promoting them in an equitable manner by raising adequate funding for programs to ensure the government's compliance with its international obligations.<sup>20</sup> Balakrishnan and Elson evaluate macroeconomic policies—fiscal, trade, and monetary policies—to determine whether a government is promoting the right to health.<sup>21</sup>

When economic and social rights are used to assess macroeconomic policies, Balakrishnan and Elson (2011) and Elson (2012a) show that Mexico, the US, and the UK are doing poorly in meeting their international obligations. Elson (2002a; 2012a) argues that the evidence flies in the face of the neoliberal presumption that reducing the role of the state while expanding the private sector would boost efficiency and growth and give substance to human rights. Quite to the contrary, she argues, the most basic economic rights provided in the UN Declaration and later covenants ratified by many countries have suffered from the results of deregulation of markets, privatization, austerity measures, and the implementation of other neoliberal dictates.

The most recent entry point to the feminist critique of neoliberal policies has been provided by the literature that focuses on the 2007–08 financial crisis and its consequences, particularly in countries where the crisis has generated high levels of unemployment and where austerity policies have been adopted. This includes several European countries and, to a lesser extent, the United States and developing countries. The literature points out the gender effects



of the crisis, including the dismantling of the welfare state through budget cuts, particularly in health and education, the reversal of policies regarding for example policies to reconcile family and labor market work, and the differential effects on women's and men's labor force participation.<sup>22</sup> We will return to these issues in later chapters.

In contrast to feminist critiques, the hegemonic neoliberal discourse has viewed the expansion of globalized production processes and global markets as positive for the empowerment of women and gender equality. The basic neoliberal argument with regard to gender equality is that the free market and deregulation at the national and global levels are important means in the pursuit of gender equality. And looking at the record of the 1980s and 1990s, it is apparent that in some respects feminist discourses and actions regarding women's needs and rights are compatible with the neoliberal order. Neoliberal globalization buoyed the trend towards feminization of the labor force in developing economies. Women's share of employment rose across sectors, most prominently in the informal sector and manufacturing sectors that produced for the world market (Chen and Carr 2004; Chen et al. 2005; Standing 1989). Women became the desirable workers for the export sector. In addition, women entered professions from which they had been largely absent, albeit they continued to face discrimination, glass ceilings, and new forms of employment segregation (Anker 1998; Seguino 2000b; Salzinger 2003; Rio and Alonso-Villar 2012). Women have also experienced much progress in education, including in countries where their educational levels had been traditionally low such as in the Middle East and North Africa. Although decline in gender education gaps was slow in translating into changes in the jobs most women held, some women have reached positions never held before—becoming country presidents, CEOs, legislators, and top administrators. At the same time, the large majority of women have remained at the lower levels of the labor hierarchy, earning poverty-income levels (see Chapters 3 and 4).

From a political perspective, the neoliberal approach has been accompanied by hegemonic discourses that associated “the market” with “democracy” and with the discourse of “freedom to choose” (Friedman and Friedman 1980). Since the 1980s there was fresh evidence for this association in many developing countries where political democracy or some form of electoral voting system was introduced along with neoliberal policies. Such was the case in Latin America where pro-market reforms were introduced by governments that followed the military regimes of the 1970s and 1980s, and where in some cases the transition to formal democracy was accompanied by continuation of neoliberal policies, such as in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. For women, the new democracies ran parallel to their greater participation in economic and political life during the 1990s, a tendency that



became particularly visible in the 2000s with the election of women presidents in Chile (2005), Argentina (2007), and Brazil (2010).

Thus, within the mainstream framework of neoliberalism, a number of feminist goals around women's autonomy, participation, and representation have been partially fulfilled and gender inequality has declined in some sectors and occupations as well as in some key dimensions, such as property rights for women (Deere and León de Leal 2001a; World Bank 2011). Gender mainstreaming was introduced in multilateral institutions and programs, even though their work has not always reflected feminist objectives. In general, the goals of gender equality have been promoted but without supporting agendas to reduce other forms of social inequality such as class.

Specifically, according to the neoliberal framework, gender equality is a goal to be pursued within the existing social structure and international economic order. In this respect, neoliberalism is consistent with liberal feminism, which does not question class differences and patterns of income and wealth distribution and their impact on political power. In the gender and development field, this position has been exemplified by the WID approach. The WID approach has been attentive to gender inequalities mainly in markets, for example, the gaps in labor force participation or unequal access to productive resources, and emphasizes market solutions to these inequities.

### *The Case of WDR 2012*

An interesting illustration of the way mainstream economics has dealt with gender issues is provided by the World Bank's *World Development Report 2012, Gender Inequality and Development* (World Bank 2011). The WDR 2012 represents the culmination of the Bank's efforts to incorporate gender issues in its programs and is an extension of the "gender equality is smart economics" approach fleshed out under the World Bank's Gender Action Plan, which was carried out in 2007–11 to address gender concerns (World Bank 2006).<sup>23</sup>

The WDR 2012 represents a massive compendium of information on issues that are very relevant to analyze gender inequality—ranging over the links between development and gender equality, women's voice and agency, gender norms, employment, trade and globalization, public policy and "the political economy of reforms for gender equality" (p. 35). It takes a broad view of development by addressing its social dimensions and recognizing the role of cultural norms and social practices in the different positioning of women and men in society and in determining economic outcomes. But the report also illustrates the limits to addressing gender inequality within mainstream economics and a liberal framework. Typical of the mainstream approach, the report does not problematize nor mention the neoliberal macroeconomic



policies that have increased class inequalities—with consequences for men and women—since the early 1980s. At the same time, the report views the forces associated with globalization very favorably on the basis that they “have operated through markets, formal institutions, and informal institutions to lift some of the constraints to greater gender inequality” (p. 256).

The WDR 2012 presents the Bank’s most well-articulated argument to date in favor of reducing gender inequalities to achieve economic growth. It makes the standard two-fold case on the benefits to be gained from promoting gender equality: that it matters intrinsically and it makes economic sense. On the intrinsic argument, that gender matters “in its own right,” the WDR 2012 references Amartya Sen’s definition of “development as freedom” and emphasizes that this notion calls for the gender equitable expansion of freedoms. It also reminds readers that the pursuit of gender equality is part of international commitments of governments that are party to CEDAW and the Millennium Declaration.

Not surprisingly, given the World Bank’s principal mission, the Report’s emphasis is on the instrumental argument. In making the “gender equality is smart economics” cause the Report draws upon the rich gender-aware economics research, much of which was produced by feminist researchers in the 1990s and early 2000s, and supplements it with the World Bank’s own research and commissioned background papers. There are four strands in the Bank’s instrumental argument that gender equality makes economic sense. The first two emphasize direct efficiency gains. Accordingly, the Report argues that equal access to endowments (resources) and economic opportunities will increase productivity in both the short run and the long run. In the short run, output would increase if discrimination against girls and women in education, employment, and access to land and other productive inputs is reduced. Echoing Boserup, the Report suggests that more educated women, better equipped women farmers, and a greater number of women employees will contribute to greater efficiency and growth across economic sectors.

In the long run, gender equality is deemed important for improving the capabilities of the next generation. The WDR 2012 argues that if women have greater control over household resources, they are more likely to invest in children’s health and education, which would boost future economic growth. Moreover, improving women’s own education and health would improve child health and survival; educated mothers (and fathers) are more likely to seek immunizations for their children, provide better nutrition, and thereby improve the survival chances of their children. In addition, mothers who have more control over their lives are less likely to experience domestic violence; hence their children would be less likely to be exposed to violence in the home, which in turn reduces the likelihood of lifetime adverse



consequences of this exposure for the next generation (for example, alcohol abuse, greater susceptibility to intimate partner violence, health problems).

The third argument in the World Bank's case for reducing gender inequality involves the value of the feminine touch in governance. The WDR 2012 recommends actions to reduce the gender gaps in power, particularly in decision-making in various institutions. It envisions benefits from individual or collective agency of women in making institutional change. This component of the argument also represents continuity from World Bank (2001), which anticipated positive impacts on governance of women's greater participation in political decisions. As a striking example, the Report points to evidence on the effect of political quotas at the village level in India whereby women representatives are both less susceptible to bribery and more likely to support the provision of public goods. While the examples of positive effects on governance are clear signs of win-win possibilities for promoting gender equality, nonetheless there are also other examples across countries that show that having a woman leader does not necessarily change the status quo policies—examples with which the Bank does not engage.

While the instrumental argument for investing in women and girls is always cast in terms of a win-win scenario, feminists point out that the efficiency argument threatens to eclipse the intrinsic argument for gender equality and for ending gender norms oppressive to women (Chant and Sweetman 2012). They question the extent to which promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is a priority, rather than facilitating "development 'on the cheap' and/or [promoting] further economic liberalization" (Chant 2012: 202). There are reasons to be skeptical: first, the WDR 2012 presents a limited agenda for change that focuses on micro- or sectoral-level policies, without regard for macroeconomic policy. Yet, neoliberal macroeconomic policy has not only been complicit in aggravating gender inequalities in the home and the market and destroying jobs, but also stands in the way of implementing the World Bank's own narrow agenda for reducing gender inequality (Berik and van der Meulen Rodgers 2012; Elson 2012b).<sup>24</sup> Second, the win-win rhetoric of the Report contrasts with the actual lived experience of women in poor households and communities (Chant and Sweetman 2012). Poor women's work burdens are on the rise as they are asked to bear more responsibilities with minimal or no public support. Third, the emphasis on girls' well-being, while an important priority, seems to neglect the contributions and needs of older women. It seems women and girls are worthy of investment only "if they can fix the world" (Chant and Sweetman 2012: 527).

Currently, the strategic win-win argument is pervasive. Feminist researchers in multilateral organizations often settle for and rely on this justification in their quest to prioritize funding flows or policy attention to



women and girls, even as they are aware that the funding organization has little interest in gender equality (Chant and Sweetman 2012). And the smart economics argument is very much in sync with arguments that promote other contemporary win-win scenarios, as evident for example in the increasing prominence of social entrepreneurship: social entrepreneurs profit while investing in a project that they deem will improve the lives of the disadvantaged. Only if the investor can count on profits can the disadvantaged become the beneficiary and only in ways deemed appropriate by the investor. The scale of benefits the disadvantaged can derive from the business plan or whether they actually benefit are not relevant considerations. In such instances we witness the corrosive effects on moral causes of the expansion of the market and decline of public funding—only if private returns can be guaranteed is a moral cause worthy of attention.

To what extent has the neoliberal approach taken over the field of gender and development? There are reasons to argue that the field has been highly influenced by the hegemony of neoliberal discourses and policy during the past two decades. This influence has not only been manifest in the field of gender and development; Hester Eisenstein (2009), referring to feminist scholars in general, and to feminist economists in particular, has argued that feminism has been “seduced” by women’s accomplishments and positive changes in gender equality during the neoliberal era. This has resulted, she argues, in giving too much ground to neoliberal hegemony. Fraser (2013) has also argued along similar lines, pointing out that “in a cruel twist of fate” feminism “has become entangled in a dangerous liaison with neoliberal market society.” Although both authors are referring to feminism in general, we concur with the notion that, in the field of gender and development, a significant proportion of the work during the 1990s and 2000s could be viewed as lacking a critical view of neoliberalism. However, even if there is evidence that feminist analysis has accommodated to this era, as we discuss in Chapter 2, in feminist economics there has also been a large amount of critical thinking during the period. Many studies have analyzed the negative effects of neoliberal policies from different perspectives. In addition, we emphasize that first the capabilities approach and more recently the human rights framework, both empirically rooted in problems of gender inequality in developing countries, have provided theoretical and empirical foundations for the critique of neoliberal policies.

## **The Capabilities Approach and Human Development**

The strongest counter discourse to the neoliberal approach since the 1980s has been the capabilities approach developed by Amartya Sen and Martha



Nussbaum. This approach gained prominence in economic development circles in large part through its operationalization in the *Human Development Report* (HDR) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which launched its Human Development Index (HDI) in 1990. The capabilities approach provides a normative framework for evaluating the well-being of individuals and the effectiveness of policies. Its central idea is that development entails (and policies should aim for) the expansion of people's capabilities, defined as what each person is able to do and be. Proponents of this approach have argued that capabilities provide a more adequate yardstick for measuring individual well-being (how well people are doing) than the income-based or preference-based measures of mainstream economics. The approach calls for policies that seek to remove obstacles in people's lives "so that they have more freedom to live the kind of life which, upon reflection, they find valuable" (Robeyns 2003a: 6).

Capabilities represent the multi-dimensional potential of individuals. A capability is the ability to be and to do what an individual wants to be and do. Capabilities range from the most elementary, such as being able to ride a bike, to those that are central to debates in economic development policy, such as the ability to be well nourished, to be educated, or to be free from discrimination. The framework distinguishes between capabilities and functionings: the former represent what an individual can do or what is possible and desired while the latter is what s/he actually achieves (Nussbaum 2004; Robeyns 2003a; Robeyns 2005).

As Sen and Nussbaum argue, the expansion of national income is a means to the expansion of capabilities, but not an end in itself. Engaging with cross-country evidence and a comparative discussion of growth records of a selected number of countries for the early 1990s, Sen (1999) argued that a higher level of national income is not sufficient to expand the capabilities of a country's citizens.<sup>25</sup> Higher GNP may not even be necessary for citizens of low-income countries to enjoy the most basic capabilities. Sen's basic point is that a country's capacity to improve the capabilities of its citizens depends on the utilization of the proceeds of growth, hence its institutional arrangements and policies concerning distribution. Further, Sen argues that even low-income countries can prioritize improved health and educational achievements, rather than awaiting the attainment of a higher income level. Because health and education are labor-intensive services, investment in these sectors not only delivers vital services to improve the basic capabilities, but also generates employment, which in turn can set off a virtuous circle of development. While the capabilities approach does not spell out the nuts and bolts of the policies that are necessary to support the livelihoods of people that, in turn, enable their capabilities, it emphasizes the imperative of doing so. Thus, the capabilities approach offers a people-centered notion



of development that contrasts with the mainstream focus on expansion of output.

Nussbaum (2000a; 2003; 2004) has gone beyond Sen's more general approach. She developed the capabilities approach as a theory of justice and made the case for promoting women's capabilities universally. She identified a list of ten capabilities as an irreducible list that should be promoted everywhere, although she argues that desired capabilities might differ according to specific circumstances related to socio-economic conditions and cultural factors. The list ranges from "life" ("being able to live to end of human life of normal length . . ."), "bodily health" ("being able to have a good health . . ."), to "bodily integrity" ("being able to move freely from place to place . . . and to be secure against violent assault . . ."), and others such as "control over one's environment," which includes political participation as well as control over material aspects of people's lives such as being able to hold property (Nussbaum 2003: 41–42). The list is premised on the notion that to be human entails being a bodily entity, being cared for, and being capable of caring for others.<sup>26</sup> The list is gender aware in that it includes capabilities that are particularly important for women, such as the capabilities to be safe from domestic violence and to have reproductive choice.

Delineating a list of capabilities is invaluable in that it can be used to design indicators of well-being and to set social goals and design policy. Benería (2008), for example, develops a capability-policy matrix in the context of Bolivia based on discussions with local women's groups to identify policies that would help balance unpaid family work with market work and to alleviate the work burden of women.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, lists can be used as a "capability diagnostic" framework to describe the capability deprivations experienced by women and the forces that contribute to them. For example, so-called honor killings (an example of deprivation in capability of life) or poor health of women (that is deprivation in bodily health) in specific contexts can be examined from the perspective of the capabilities approach to map out their causes and to examine their potential solutions.<sup>28</sup>

By her insistence on the universality of capabilities, to be upheld everywhere as constitutional guarantees, Nussbaum strikes a moral stance that could raise skepticism among many post-postmodern era gender and development scholars. Critics could argue that these norms articulate goals on behalf of (some) Third World women. However, Nussbaum's is a list of capabilities, which means that each individual can choose whether or not to pursue these capabilities.<sup>29</sup> Nussbaum's basic point is that as long as women (and men) have the freedoms to choose the lives they lead, it is up to them what they choose—whether it be cloistered or segregated lives or public participation, or whether they wear the veil or not.<sup>30</sup>



*Alternative Frameworks of Well-being Require Alternative Measures*

Once we recognize that well-being entails more than income and that aggregate average income per capita conceals inequalities, including gender inequalities, then it is important to identify gender-aware measures to assess progress in meeting goals towards gender equality and women's empowerment. In the early twenty-first century, researchers are faced with an abundance of cross-country composite gender-aware indices from which to choose, ranging from those that measure well-being outcomes (such as UNDP's Gender Inequality Index) to those that measure institutional obstacles to gender equality (such as the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)).

The pioneering efforts in creating gender-inclusive measures began with the UNDP's Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which were introduced in 1995. These measures grew out of the UNDP's Human Development Project, which was inspired by the capabilities approach. The UNDP launched the Human Development Index (HDI) in 1990 to assess the extent to which countries were making progress towards building people's capabilities in a few key areas. The HDI included indicators for health and education, and income level, to represent the means for achieving capabilities in a country.<sup>31</sup> The HDI showed that countries with the same level of income did not necessarily have the same level of human development, which allowed for evaluating policies and economic regimes that were more effective in promoting well-being.

In 1995 the HDR introduced GDI and GEM in order to provide some degree of quantification of gender inequality that would enable comparisons between different points in time or across countries or regions.<sup>32</sup> While such composite indexes represent only a crude and limited way to assess gender inequality and women's empowerment and cannot match the value of textured information on gender relations generated from small-scale qualitative studies, the effort has important benefits for policy analysis of gender inequality. Composite measures that highlight countries' relative performance call the attention of policymakers to the problem of gender inequality in a direct way that other more detailed information and indicators cannot do. Moreover, such measures can be used in cross-country or country-level research to assess the impact of various policies or economic growth on gender inequality and to examine the correlates of this inequality. These evaluations, in turn, enable design of policies to reduce gender inequality and promote women's empowerment.

While this path-breaking effort of the UNDP was welcome, the GDI and GEM were problematized on various grounds. Chief among these was that neither the GDI nor GEM was a measure of gender equality (Dijkstra and Hanmer 2000; Dijkstra 2006; Schöler 2006). In addition, use of a constructed



income measure and inclusion of an income component that rewarded high-income countries in rankings were subject to critique. Criticisms have also been leveled at all composite indices in that each is a summary measure that is not transparent and conceals differences across the various indicators and dated information for some countries. For these reasons, there has been a flurry of suggestions to improve the measures (Benería and Permanyer 2010; Klasen and Schüler 2011).

Partly in response to these critiques and as part of its overhaul of the methodology of HDI, in 2010 the UNDP introduced a new measure of gender inequality, the Gender Inequality Index (GII), to replace GDI and GEM. The new index has three components: an entirely new, women's reproductive health component; empowerment; and labor market. However, as Permanyer (2013) argues, the GII introduced more problems than it solved. At the conceptual level, one problem is the lop-sided nature of the index as a measure of gender inequality. By choosing women's reproductive health as its health component GII settles for an absolute measure that has no counterpart for men, whereas the other components are relative measures. Moreover, the problem of rewarding high-income countries with a better (lower gender inequality) rank continues with the GII, which means country rank is not entirely reflecting discriminatory norms and practices against women.<sup>33</sup> One solution to these problems is to revise the GII (or create a new index) so that its components all measure women's relative standing compared to men, for example, measuring the health component by women's and men's life expectancies at birth, and using a simple average of the components (Benería and Permanyer 2010; Permanyer 2013).

Several other gender-inclusive measures are also currently available for researchers, thanks to the increasing availability of comparable cross-country data. As Irene Van Staveren (2013) shows, however, not all gender indices are created equal. Focusing on the five best-known, high-coverage, and easily accessible gender indices, including the UNDP's GII, Van Staveren shows that country rankings differ depending on the index used, which makes these indexes not interchangeable, and that understanding the conceptual and methodological underpinnings of each is important for proper use in analysis.<sup>34</sup> The choice of the gender index depends on the researcher's objective. The indices emphasize different aspects of gender inequality in the capabilities approach, ranging from resources and institutions to capabilities and functionings. Most measures gauge achievements (outcomes) for women in the absolute sense or relative to men (as in the case of the Gender Inequality Index (GII)). Distinct from this group is the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) of the OECD that measures legal and informal institutional barriers to gender equality, providing a useful complement to outcome measures (Branisa et al. 2014).<sup>35</sup>



Despite the flourishing of gender-inclusive measures there are still data gaps that hinder the measurement effort. Lack of individual income or wage data for many countries is one obstacle. There are also limitations in obtaining information on intra-household processes of income use or prevalence of violence. Another shortcoming of the current gender indices is that very few include indicators for unpaid work, such as care work. In addition, we need to be aware of the fact that measuring is an important but insufficient condition for design and implementation of policies for transformative action that increase gender equality.

### **The Human Rights Approach: Economic and Social Rights**

While Nussbaum's elaboration of the capabilities approach in more gender-aware ways strengthened the potential of the approach for gender and development scholarship, the capabilities approach has had limited practical effect in altering neoliberal policies. In this regard, the project of Balakrishnan and Elson (2011), focused on human rights, has greater potential. Their work reclaims the human rights approach for their evaluation of neoliberal policies, putting the critique on firmer ground than the capabilities approach. The value of the human rights approach is that it forces governments to prioritize their human rights obligations in designing macroeconomic policy, in a way that the arguments of the capabilities approach do not: governments have to find ways of achieving economic growth in a human-rights-compliant manner; they have to avoid becoming party to international treaties or the IMF stand-by agreements that violate economic and social rights of their citizens. If they fail to do so, they can be held accountable in international, regional, or national fora.

Focusing on economic and social rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes the human rights criterion for evaluation of policy effectiveness commensurate with the standard economic criteria. Contrary to the mainstream approach in economics that focuses on economic growth, the human rights approach insists upon the essential minimum levels of economic and social rights that must be maintained in the performance of economic processes, whether it be in commodity production, social reproduction, allocation of government budgets, or international trade. The human rights approach puts forth what we may call a "provisioning" criterion—which is more compatible with the goals of feminist economics, as discussed in Chapter 2—while the mainstream criterion focuses on efficiency.<sup>36</sup>

There is substantial overlap between, indeed complementarity of, the capabilities approach and the human rights argument for economic and



social rights (Nussbaum 2011a). Both approaches promote similar goals and cover a comprehensive domain of activities that encompass those pertaining to the provisioning for human needs (Balakrishnan and Elson 2011; Elson 2002a; Nussbaum 2003; Robeyns 2003a). For example, the right to health has a counterpart in the capability to be healthy. The right to work, likewise, has a counterpart in the capabilities approach's emphasis on the means (institutions and resources) that enable people to pursue their capabilities. Second, while the human rights language provides a more authoritative and urgent discourse that identifies the deprived as active claimants of rights, the capabilities approach provides some notion of a basic social minimum so that all people, women and men, are actually able to lead a life worthy of the dignity of the human being (Nussbaum 2003). Third, there is complementarity in foci of the two approaches: the human rights approach provides a new criterion for judging the effectiveness of social institutions, such as markets, in allocating resources and economic policies to ensure or satisfy the minimum essential levels of economic and social rights. The capabilities approach, on the other hand, guides the development of alternative measures of well-being or social welfare that go beyond incomes and GDP per capita growth, such as the HDI, and can be used for comparison between groups and across countries and for monitoring progress.

The overarching objective in both frameworks is to ensure and expand the capability (right) of each and every person to live a dignified human life based on the economic goal of provisioning for human life. Both frameworks treat each and every person as an end and not merely as means to an end, or as tools for the ends of others.<sup>37</sup> The justification in both frameworks therefore involves weighing the alternative uses of resources and manner of allocation in terms of meeting the essential level of economic and social rights of each and every person (above a critical threshold) and thereby to guarantee the substantive capabilities that the members of that society can enjoy. This reasoning differs from the mainstream economics framework that focuses on the weighing of costs and benefits to satisfy individual objectives such as the maximization of utility, income, or output.

While Articles 23–26 of the Universal Declaration are not intrinsically gendered, the principle of nondiscrimination and equality that is integral to the human rights framework can easily incorporate gender awareness. The framework thus allows evaluation of government commitment to gender equality in the promotion of economic and social rights and, whenever possible, measurement of the gendered outcomes of policies. The framework can thus help evaluate and prevent implementation of policies that increase the incentives to deceive and distort rules, and cause financial disaster for a large proportion of the population, as has happened since 2008 in countries hit by the economic crisis. One advantage of the human rights over the



capabilities approach is that the proponents of the former have shed light on and problematized instances where a narrower gender gap has been a result of deterioration in men's/boys' achievements without any improvement in women's capabilities.

Thus, the combined human rights and capabilities approach provides a powerful counter discourse to neoliberal economic policies and an alternative approach to rethink economic policies. It opens the boundary of economic analysis to go beyond the preoccupation with output and incomes and to include a deeper examination of the nature and constraints that restrict an individual from realizing her economic and social rights or that impede her ability to enjoy substantive capabilities—such as freedom from hunger and starvation, or from violence. The combined approach views basic economic and social rights (capabilities) both as ends and means; fulfillment of rights (capabilities) of women and men serves as a basis for evaluating economic and social progress and the effectiveness of economic policies. We believe the combined capabilities–human rights approach has immense potential that can be developed for the integration of gender into economic analysis in a manner that is both transformative and empowering.

## Conclusion

The gender and development field has come a long way from its modest beginnings in Boserup's pathbreaking work. The themes laid out in Boserup's book continue to define and inspire the research agenda: gender division of work, women's education, access to land rights and other inputs, women's contribution to the economic activities in developing countries, and women's economic power relative to men. At the same time, globalization and its concomitant developments have raised new questions that are being taken up by gender and development researchers. These questions emerge from the unfolding of capitalist development on an international scale, the enhanced power of capital to move globally, the ongoing commoditization and proletarianization of the labor force, and rising income inequalities. In the context of increasing income inequalities globally, improvements in women's relative wages in some contexts may mean that women are getting a slightly bigger share of a shrinking pie that goes to labor. Other new topics range from the intensification of international migration, to land grabs (that is, corporations or rich countries taking control of land in poor countries or from poor groups), the transformation of post-Soviet economies, increased risk to livelihoods of most inhabitants of the planet posed by the inherent financial instability of the deregulated global economy, and the unfolding of the climate crisis. Similarly, new economic development models, such as



those being implemented in some Latin American countries, bring up interesting new questions about the connections between institutional change and gender inequality.

The competing frameworks that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s—WID and GAD—still shape the approach of researchers of these issues, if not in name, at least in orientation. The gender and development research exemplified by the WDR 2012 bears many of the characteristics of WID, while the GAD perspective continues to shape an oppositional discourse. This critical perspective now includes the theoretical innovation of the capabilities approach and the human rights approach in its critique of neoliberalism and a good proportion of work in feminist economics.

The mainstreaming of gender inequality concerns and integration of much feminist research in the international policy agenda in the first decade of twenty-first century have been important developments. While this was a goal sought by gender and development researchers, we view the nature of this institutionalization with skepticism, since the neoliberal macroeconomic policies that underpin gender inequalities continue to be implemented. There is also a tendency in the development policy agenda to take up gender issues in isolation from the discussion of more general political issues and macroeconomic policies. At both the theoretical level and in policy discourse, neoliberal policies have to (continue to) be challenged, particularly after the financial crisis of 2007–08 that has generated multiple adverse effects on livelihoods in many countries. The next chapter will examine the project of feminist economics, its critiques of mainstream economics, and its trajectory in shaping the discipline. This evaluation will provide a more detailed discussion of the contributions of feminist economics in topics related to economic development.

## Notes

- 1 We refer to WID and GAD as distinct perspectives in the field that started out as “women in development” and later came to be called “gender and development.”
- 2 The following quote by World Bank President Jim Yong Kim typifies this smart economics approach: “We know that reducing gender gaps in the world of work can yield broad development dividends: improving child health and education, enhancing poverty reduction, and catalyzing productivity” (Foreword, World Bank 2014a: ix).
- 3 This problem is illustrated, for example, by the view that “empowering women to compete in markets” through microcredit programs and an enabling business environment for working women is key to attaining Millennium Development Goal 3 of promoting gender equality (World Bank 2006: 4).



- 4 Boserup viewed the basic principles of economic development to be the same everywhere, as a process driven by technological change that responds to population growth.
- 5 As Razavi and Miller (1995) point out, Boserup's marginalization story in African agriculture implies a gender-equal past (not only in productivity but also in status), which is not supported by evidence of patriarchal norms in precolonial societies.
- 6 She appealed to planners via standard development concerns: far from creating further unemployment, integrating women in development would increase food production, reduce urban unemployment, and raise labor productivity.
- 7 CEDAW defines discrimination in its Article 1, "as any distinction, exclusion of restriction made on the basis of sex in the realm of the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" and sought to eliminate it in all areas of life (UN Women 2014).
- 8 As Andrew Byrnes and Marsha A. Freeman (2012) report, 29 of the 187 countries that had ratified the convention by 2011 had not fully endorsed Article 16 (which calls for the elimination of discrimination in all matters relating to marriage and family).
- 9 While President Carter signed CEDAW on behalf of the US in 1980, the US Senate has not ratified it. The principles of gender equality and fairness are embraced by the majority of the US population. Yet, the sentiments in the US Senate appear to have reflected the backlash against women's rights in the 1980s and subsequently the resistance against the US becoming signatory to any international convention that could threaten its sovereignty. Nationally, ratifying CEDAW could strengthen US efforts to support the struggle for gender equality in a number of areas such as pay discrimination, education, domestic violence, and sex trafficking. Moreover, the absence of the US from CEDAW leaves it with little credibility as an advocate for the rights of women and girls around the world.
- 10 For example, a reservation on Article 2 means that the country cannot abide by its obligation to remove discriminatory laws or to promulgate gender equality in laws. Other reservations have put crucial areas of social life in the countries in question beyond the reach of CEDAW, such as the reservations placed on Article 16. Here CEDAW has run into conflict with the national "personal status" laws that reflect religious law or norms.
- 11 The use of the concept of reproduction in feminist analysis goes back to the late 1970s when it was used to analyze questions around the gender division of labor and women's involvement in the reproduction of the labor force (Benería 1979). Over time, the focus of analysis of reproduction shifted from unpaid domestic work towards childcare and it came to include the continuous marketization of unpaid care work (Folbre 1994). This type of analysis has expanded into a large body of literature concerned with care work, the care economy, welfare regimes, and social policy.
- 12 DAWN was formed at the Third UN World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 to express dissatisfaction with the WID formulations and to articulate the Third World women's perspectives.



- 13 A similar articulation of the standpoint perspective is by Nancy Hartsock (1983) who drew on Marx's argument that only the working class had the most complete perspective on the workings of capitalism. Hartsock formulated the argument that women who engaged in care tasks due to the gender division of labor had a unique understanding of the workings of the capitalist form of patriarchy.
- 14 In addition, some postcolonial theorists identify themselves with postmodernism. In our discussion, we identify the overlapping positions of postmodern and postcolonial critics as postcolonialism, even as we acknowledge their different analytical starting points.
- 15 Abu-Lughod's list includes both the practical benefits of the veil (a form of "portable seclusion"; symbolic separation of women and men; a sense of belonging to a particular group and upholding its moral ways) and a caution against jumping to conclusions about lack of agency or freedom of women who wear the veil.
- 16 While Abu-Lughod claims that she is trying to steer clear of cultural relativism and is not condoning the government-imposed restrictions on women in Afghanistan, she seems more concerned about the agendas of pro-invasion groups than furthering the cause of alleviating constraints on women's lives.
- 17 The dominant responses after the 2008 crisis indicate the striking resilience of neoliberal economic policies that warrants this characterization, which is our take on Ruth Pearson's "The Rise and Rise of Gender and Development" (2005).
- 18 These are the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), and regional conventions.
- 19 These rights are articulated in Articles 23–26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948.
- 20 The key principles are: progressive realization (whether the government is engaged in ongoing pursuit of the rights); use of maximum available resources (both within the country and from international cooperation; and government attempts to mobilize domestic funding to meet its obligations); avoidance of retrogression (undermining of rights by cuts to public expenditures or by cuts in taxes necessary to fund these programs); satisfaction of minimum essential levels of economic and social rights (to the poorest and most vulnerable groups, regardless of the extreme resource constraints); non-discrimination and equality (commitment to formal and substantial equality for all groups); and participation, transparency, and accountability in the pursuit and promotion of human rights.
- 21 The assessment compares the US and Mexico's performance to countries at comparable income levels (OECD and Latin America, respectively) as well as examining changes in the US and Mexico over time. Balakrishnan and Elson also compare how different social groups fare in each country.
- 22 The impacts of these policies in producing the 2007–08 financial crisis and the subsequent stagnation are evaluated from a feminist economics perspective by several contributions in a 2013 *Feminist Economics* special issue, that focuses on Canada, Spain, Turkey, UK and US and examines cross-country and regional (Latin American) impacts.



- 23 The Gender Action Plan (GAP) sought to accelerate the implementation of Millennium Development Goal 3 by “making markets work for women (at the policy level) and empowering women to compete in markets (at the agency level)” (World Bank 2006: 4). Thus, GAP emphasized the creation of incentives to increase women’s market participation and measures that reduce transaction costs, such as infrastructure investment, and improving the policy and institutional environment for women in land, labor, finance, and agricultural product markets (World Bank 2006).
- 24 For instance, the WDR’s solutions for improving maternal health (such as investment in infrastructure) will likely run into financial constraints imposed by the neoliberal approach to government budgets.
- 25 Sen pointed out that while Brazil and South Korea both experienced high growth rates of GNP per capita, Brazil’s growth did not guarantee improvement in life expectancy comparable to that of Korea.
- 26 This notion of human nature is very different from the disembodied one in liberal theory that underlies mainstream economics (Jaggar 1983).
- 27 Based on the list of capabilities drawn up by Robeyns (2003b) and discussions with local groups, Benería identifies six relevant capabilities that are associated with inequalities in time allocation and time poverty and that represent the expressed needs of the local population. In turn, in collaboration with local groups she identifies a set of public policies that could promote these capabilities.
- 28 In the case of honor killings in Pakistan, for example, multiple capabilities of women are severely constrained by institutions and tribal norms that defy Islam and national laws (Appiah 2010). This diagnosis points to changing the norms as the solution. What is needed is to reshape the meaning of what is honorable by engaging—in solidarity with international groups—in national organized action against the institutions that condone or encourage the killings.
- 29 The question of lists has been subject to debate among capabilities researchers.
- 30 Nussbaum (2004) anticipates likely critiques that insist on the cultural roots of certain practices that constrain the capabilities of women. First, she argues that cultures are neither monolithic nor static, and one particular norm/tradition cannot be taken as representative of a country’s traditions. Second, traditional practices that hinder one or more capabilities, specifically harm a person (for example, his/her bodily integrity) should not be maintained. Third, she argues that her list of basic capabilities could not be construed as a paternalistic imposition either, because she is calling for broadening freedoms, rather than restricting them, and is arguing against voices that seek to restrict women’s freedoms.
- 31 These components initially were measured by life expectancy at birth, adult literacy and school enrollment ratio, and the real GDP per capita. There were subsequent changes to the education and income measures.
- 32 The GDI measured gender differences in the same dimensions included in the HDI, thus measuring loss in human development represented by gender inequality in a given country. GEM was constructed to examine the extent to which women and men are able to participate in decision-making in economic and political life and have access to certain levers of power.



## 40 • Gender, Development, and Globalization

- 33 Another problem owes to the methodology of the construction of the index: due to the symmetric construction of the GII, the rank of a country can be more favorable in cases where disadvantage for women in education and labor force participation components can be compensated by disadvantages for men in these components.
- 34 Van Staveren's evaluation focuses on the GEI (Gender Equality Index) of the Institute of Social Studies, GII of the UNDP, SIGI (Social Institutions and Gender Index) of the OECD, and WEOI (Women's Economic Opportunities Index) of the Economic Intelligence Unit, all four of which were first published in 2010, and the GGGI (Global Gender Gap Index) of the World Economic Forum, available since 2006.
- 35 SIGI's components measure five institutions: family code and norms, civil liberties, physical integrity, ownership rights, culture of son preference.
- 36 The provisioning criterion, however, raises the difficult and legitimate question as to what kind of coordination and system of entitlement relations would enable the realization of human rights, given limited resources. Inevitably, the approach requires a system of setting priorities for resource use and a framework for evaluating potential trade-offs between the attainment of different needs of people, for example, housing, food, education, medical services, mobility, self-expression.
- 37 For example, they criticize the view and the practice of treating women as adjuncts to men and their labor as a resource for reproducing and maintaining the labor input in market production processes (Sen 1999).