

Gender in the World Bank's Poverty Assessments: Six Case Studies from Sub-Saharan Africa

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◆ Contents

◆ Summary/Résumé/Resumen	iii
◆ Abbreviations and Acronyms	ix
<u>1. INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>2. GENDER IN THE POVERTY ASSESSMENTS: AN OVERVIEW</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>3. THE INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE POVERTY ASSESSMENTS</u>	<u>7</u>
◆ 3.1 The Content and Organization of the Poverty Assessments	9
◆ 3.2 How Were the Poverty Assessments Carried Out?	9
◆ 3.3 Understanding Gender in the Poverty Assessments	10
<u>4. MEASURING POVERTY AND GENDER, I: HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS</u>	<u>11</u>
◆ 4.1 What is Poverty?	11
◆ 4.2 The Implication of the Poverty Line Approach for Gender	13
◆ 4.3 Female-Headed Households	16
<u>5. MEASURING GENDER AND POVERTY, II: GENDER AND THE PARTICIPATORY POVERTY ASSESSMENTS</u>	<u>18</u>
◆ 5.1 The Content of the Participatory Methodologies	19
◆ 5.2 Four Participatory Poverty Assessments	21
◆ 5.3 From the PPA Findings to the Poverty Assessments	23
◆ 5.4 Do the PPAs Improve Gender Analysis?	26

6. GENDER AND POLICY IN THE POVERTY ASSESSMENTS	30
◆ 6.1 Gaps Between Evidence, Analysis and Policy	31
◆ 6.2 The 1990 WDR Model of Poverty	33
◆ 6.3 Gender and the Evolution of World Bank Thinking on Poverty	34
 <u>CONCLUDING REMARKS: GENDER-DIFFERENTIATED POVERTY RELATIONS</u>	 40
 <u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	 44

◆ Summary/Résumé/Resumen

Summary

Since the late 1980s, Poverty Assessments (PAs) have emerged as the most important statements by the World Bank about poverty in particular countries. This paper examines, in some depth and from a gender perspective, a set of PAs from four sub-Saharan African countries, focusing particularly on the description and analysis of poverty in rural areas. The paper begins with an overview of the ways in which, and extent to which, women and/or gender issues are present in the PAs. The overall picture is one of inconsistencies, fragmentation and gaps, both between the six examples that are reviewed and within individual country reports. By far the most common way in which women appear in the PAs is in the guise of female-headed households. Where it is not ignored, gender “becomes visibilized” in many different ways and using a very disparate range of gender concepts. Some PAs write about “women”, others use the language of “gender” and yet others have an elaborate set of concepts, including those of the gender division of labour, gender relations, gender discrimination and so on. There is no attempt to systematize the gender analysis. The final policy sections of the PAs are particularly notable for the absence or highly limited discussion of gender issues.

The inconsistencies between the PAs suggest that the country teams had a good deal of autonomy in how they interpreted and prioritized gender issues, and section 3 of the paper looks at the institutional and organizational context in which the PAs were produced. The origins of the PAs in the 1990 **World Development Report**, the organization and composition of country teams, and the processes by which the PAs were produced are all explored. Although country teams did have a good deal of autonomy in designing their PAs, they were given guidance on poverty measurement analysis and policy in two significant World Bank documents: the **Poverty Reduction Handbook** (1992a) and **Operational Directive on Poverty Reduction** (or OD 4.15, 1991). These contain virtually no gender analysis, and a limited range of unsystematic pointers as to where teams might single out women. As a result, different task managers weighted the significance of gender differently and different teams tended to bring their own approaches to gender issues.

In the absence of a clear analytical framework for understanding gender, and detailed guidance of how to produce a gender-sensitive poverty profile, the treatment of gender in the PAs is effectively driven, on the one hand, by a set of epistemological and methodological choices about measuring poverty, and, on the other hand, by the set of prescriptions for reducing poverty which originate in the 1990 **World Development Report**.

Sections 4 and 5 focus on the empirical evidence collected in the poverty profiles, and ask why gender appears as it does, or indeed why it is “invisibilized” in certain ways. While all PAs employed data collected in surveys using households as units to establish national poverty lines, some also used various other sources, including evidence collected through participatory techniques. Household surveys rarely provide any intra-household data on gender differences—on incomes, for example. The participatory approaches have greater potential to bring out gender issues, but have mainly been used to support findings from national-level surveys. So even

where there were gender findings in the initial participatory poverty findings, these have often disappeared in the final report.

Section 6 asks why gender appears as it does (or, again, is “invisibilized”) in the policy analysis of the PAs. In most of the PAs, there are significant gaps as we move from any evidence on gender and poverty that might be present, to the policy analysis. Unlike the country-specific poverty profiles, the policy sections of the PAs are heavily influenced by peer review, and hence by both the 1990 **World Development Report** model, as well as by subsequent evolving ideas about poverty within the World Bank. Ideas about gender issues and economic growth and poverty have changed over time, with a particular shift from seeing women as vulnerable groups, where they are targeted by social safety nets, to a contemporary concern with the link between female education and growth and poverty.

We conclude that the accumulating evidence in the gender and development literature—namely that men and women experience poverty differently—has had little influence on these six case studies. The PAs lack any substantial appreciation of the issues raised by the study of gender and poverty in Africa over the last two decades. We contrast approaches that treat poverty statically, as an analysis of categories and characteristics, with those adopting a dynamic analysis of poverty, seeing it as the relational processes of impoverishment or accumulation. The link between gender and poverty lies at the level of process, and social and economic relations. For this link to be established, we suggest that poverty must be analysed as relation and process, as must gender. The key conclusion of the paper is that it is impossible to integrate gender into an understanding of poverty unless the reading of evidence, analysis and policy are all based on these relational processes of impoverishment or accumulation.

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Résumé

Depuis la fin des années 80, les Bilans de la pauvreté apparaissent comme les documents les plus importants de la Banque mondiale sur la pauvreté dans certains pays. Sous l'angle de la sexospécificité, cette étude explore de façon assez approfondie une série de Bilans de la pauvreté dans quatre pays de l'Afrique subsaharienne, axés en particulier sur la description et l'analyse de la pauvreté dans les campagnes. Les auteurs commencent par examiner dans quelle mesure et de quelle manière les femmes et/ou la sexospécificité sont présentes dans ces bilans. L'image générale qui se dégage tant des six exemples étudiés que des différents rapports nationaux est incohérente, morcelée et lacunaire. C'est le plus souvent au travers des ménages dont elles sont le chef que les femmes sont présentes dans ces bilans. Lorsqu'elle n'est pas ignorée, la dimension hommes-femmes est mise au jour de bien des manières et à l'aide des concepts très disparates. Dans certains bilans, il est question des “femmes”, d'autres utilisent le sexe comme catégorie sociale et d'autres encore, un ensemble complexe de concepts, notamment ceux de la division du travail entre les sexes, des rapports sociaux entre hommes et femmes, de la discrimination sexuelle, etc. Il n'y a aucune tentative de systématisation d'une analyse sexospécifique. Les questions de différenciation entre les sexes sont manifestement absentes des chapitres sur les politiques, qui concluent les bilans, ou n'y sont que très brièvement abordées.

Les incohérences observées entre les bilans laissent à penser que les équipes nationales ont joui d'une grande liberté pour interpréter les questions de sexospécificité et établir entre elles un ordre de priorité. La section 3 de l'étude porte sur le contexte institutionnel et organisationnel dans lequel ont été dressés ces Bilans de la pauvreté. Les auteurs s'intéressent aux origines de ces bilans, qui apparaissent pour la première fois dans le **Rapport sur le développement dans le monde** de 1990, à leur mode d'établissement et à l'organisation et à la composition des équipes nationales. Bien que celles-ci aient eu une grande liberté dans la manière de les concevoir, des directives leur avaient été données sur l'analyse des indicateurs de la pauvreté et la politique à suivre en la matière dans deux documents importants de la Banque mondiale, le **Poverty Reduction Handbook** (1992a) (Eléments d'une stratégie de lutte contre la pauvreté) et la **Operational Directive on Poverty Reduction** (ou OD 4.15, 1991) (Directive opérationnelle sur la lutte contre la pauvreté). On ne trouvera pratiquement pas trace d'une analyse sexospécifique dans ces deux documents et les rares indications qu'ils donnent sur les domaines dans lesquels les équipes pourraient mettre en évidence la dimension féminine n'ont rien de systématique. L'importance accordée au sexe comme catégorie sociale a donc varié selon les répartiteurs et chaque équipe a eu tendance à aborder les questions de sexospécificité sous son angle propre.

Faute d'une grille d'analyse claire permettant de comprendre la sexospécificité et de directives détaillées sur la façon d'établir un profil de la pauvreté différencié selon le sexe, le traitement de la sexospécificité dans les Bilans de la pauvreté est en fait déterminé, d'une part, par un ensemble de choix épistémologiques et méthodologiques touchant à la manière de mesurer la pauvreté, et de l'autre, par les prescriptions de lutte contre la pauvreté initialement énoncées dans le **Rapport sur le développement dans le monde** de 1990.

Les sections 4 et 5 portent sur les renseignements empiriques glanés dans les profils de pauvreté. Les auteurs se demandent pourquoi la sexospécificité apparaît sous cette forme ou pourquoi elle est, à certains égards, occultée. Si tous les bilans se sont servis des données recueillies par le biais d'enquêtes auprès des ménages pour établir où se situe le seuil de pauvreté dans le pays en question, certains ont eu recours aussi à diverses autres sources, notamment à des données obtenues à l'aide de techniques participatives. Les enquêtes auprès des ménages renseignent rarement sur les différences, de revenus par exemple, entre hommes et femmes à l'intérieur du ménage. Les méthodes participatives ont plus de chances de révéler des disparités entre hommes et femmes mais elles ont été utilisées essentiellement pour corroborer les conclusions des enquêtes nationales. Ainsi, même là où les techniques participatives avaient permis d'aboutir à des conclusions sur la pauvreté féminine et masculine, celles-ci ont souvent disparu dans le rapport final.

Dans la section 6, les auteurs se demandent pourquoi la sexospécificité apparaît sous cette forme (ou est occultée) dans les chapitres des bilans consacrés à l'analyse des politiques. Si on les examine de bout en bout, en commençant par chercher les éléments que l'on pourrait y trouver sur les facettes masculine et féminine de la pauvreté pour finir avec l'analyse des politiques, on se rend compte que ces bilans présentent, pour la plupart, des lacunes importantes. Contrairement au profil de la pauvreté établi pour le pays étudié, les chapitres consacrés aux politiques sont largement revus par d'autres personnes et sont donc très influencés à la fois par le modèle du **Rapport sur le développement dans le monde 1990** et

par l'évolution ultérieure des conceptions de la Banque mondiale elle-même sur la pauvreté. Les idées sur les questions d'équité entre les sexes, la croissance économique et la pauvreté ont évolué avec le temps et, si l'on considérait naguère les femmes comme un groupe vulnérable devant bénéficier d'une sécurité sociale, on s'intéresse davantage aujourd'hui au lien entre l'éducation des fillettes et des femmes et la croissance et la pauvreté.

Les auteurs concluent que les éléments qui s'accumulent dans la littérature sur les femmes et le développement et qui tendent à prouver que hommes et femmes ont des expériences différentes de la pauvreté ont eu peu d'influence sur ces six études de cas. Les Bilans de la pauvreté n'ont pas su prendre en compte les questions soulevées par les études qui ont été faites de la pauvreté féminine et masculine en Afrique depuis 20 ans. Aux approches statistiques, dans lesquelles sont analysées les catégories et les caractéristiques de la pauvreté, les auteurs opposent une vision plus dynamique de la pauvreté, qui leur apparaît comme un processus relationnel d'appauvrissement ou d'accumulation. Le lien entre sexe et pauvreté se situe au niveau de ce processus et des relations sociales et économiques. Pour établir ce lien, il faut, à leur avis, analyser la pauvreté sous l'angle relationnel et dynamique, comme les rapports sociaux entre hommes et femmes. La principale conclusion de cette étude est qu'il est impossible de différencier les dimensions masculine et féminine de la pauvreté si l'interprétation des données, l'analyse et les politiques ne reposent pas toutes sur ces processus relationnels d'appauvrissement et d'accumulation.

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Resumen

Desde finales de los años 80, las Evaluaciones de la Pobreza (EP) del Banco Mundial han surgido como las afirmaciones más importantes con respecto a la pobreza en determinados países. Este documento examina con cierto detenimiento y desde una perspectiva que toma nota de las distinciones entre el hombre y la mujer en la sociedad, un conjunto de EP aplicadas en cuatro países del África subsahariana, concentrándose particularmente en la descripción y el análisis de la pobreza en las zonas rurales. El documento comienza con una visión general de las formas y la medida en que, las mujeres y/o las cuestiones relativas a las diferencias de trato por razón de sexo están presentes en las Evaluaciones de la Pobreza. El cuadro panorámico es de inconsistencias, fragmentación y brechas, tanto entre los seis ejemplos que se examinan como en los informes mismos de cada país. Sin duda, la forma más corriente en que las mujeres figuran en las EP es en su representación como jefas de familia. Cuando la distinción social y cultural entre hombre y mujer no se ignora, se le "da visibilidad" en muchas y diversas maneras, y los conceptos por razón de sexo que se emplean, son muy dispares. Algunas EP se expresan en función de "la mujer", otras utilizan el lenguaje de "género" y, sin embargo, otras abarcan un elaborado surtido de conceptos, entre ellos: división laboral por distinción hombre/mujer, las relaciones entre los sexos, discriminación por razón de género, etc. No se intenta ninguna gestión para sistematizar el análisis basado en el género. Las últimas secciones, sobre la política de las EP, llaman la atención por la ausencia o la escasa discusión de las cuestiones relativas a las diferencias de trato por razón de sexo.

Las inconsistencias entre las EP indican que los equipos de cada país actuaban con buen grado de autonomía para interpretar y dar prioridad a las cuestiones relacionadas con el género, y la sección 3 del documento examina el contexto institucional y de organización en el cual se elaboraron las evaluaciones. Se investigan los orígenes de las EP en el informe de desarrollo mundial **World Development Report** de 1990, la organización y la composición de los equipos de cada país, y los procedimientos que se siguieron para producir las EP. Si bien, los equipos nacionales procedían con bastante autonomía en el diseño de sus EP, éstos recibieron orientación en la política y el análisis de medición de la pobreza en dos importantes documentos del Banco Mundial: el manual sobre reducción de la pobreza (**Poverty Reduction Handbook**, 1992a) y la directiva sobre las operaciones para la reducción de la pobreza (**Operational Directive on Poverty Reduction** ó OD 4.15, 1991). Dichos documentos no contienen prácticamente ningún análisis de género y sólo una limitada gama de sugerencias no sistemáticas sobre dónde podrían los equipos señalar a la mujer. En consecuencia, los diferentes jefes de tareas sopesaron de manera distinta la importancia de la distinción por género, y los diversos equipos tendieron a incorporar sus propios enfoques en las cuestiones que atañen a la distinción por género.

Ante la ausencia de un marco analítico claro para entender las cuestiones de la distinción por género, así como la ausencia de una guía más detallada para cómo producir un perfil de pobreza que tenga en cuenta el sexo, las EP tratan, de hecho, la distinción por género de dos maneras: por una parte, mediante un conjunto de opciones epistemológicas y metodológicas acerca de la medición de la pobreza, y, por otra, mediante un compuesto de prescripciones para reducir la pobreza que originó en el **World Development Report** de 1990.

Las secciones 4 y 5 se ocupan primordialmente de la evidencia empírica recogida en los perfiles de pobreza y preguntan por qué la distinción por género aparece como aparece, o, en realidad, por qué de cierta manera se le “quita visibilidad”. Mientras todas las EP emplearon datos recogidos en encuestas domiciliarias que utilizaron como unidades para establecer las líneas de pobreza nacionales, algunos se sirvieron también de otras fuentes que incluyeron evidencia recogida con técnicas participativas. Las encuestas domiciliarias proporcionan raramente datos sobre las diferencias que se dan dentro del hogar entre el hombre y la mujer –por ejemplo, lo tocante a ingresos. Los enfoques participativos tienen mayor potencial para sacar a relucir las cuestiones relativas a la distinción por género, pero se han utilizado más que nada en apoyo de los resultados de las encuestas nacionales. Por ende, incluso cuando los primeros resultados de las encuestas sobre pobreza obtenidos por medios participativos, incluían resultados en materia de género, éstos con frecuencia han brillado por su ausencia en el informe final.

La sección 6 pregunta por qué las cuestiones relacionadas con el género aparecen como aparecen (o, nuevamente, se les “quita visibilidad”) en el análisis de la política aplicada por las EP. En la mayoría de las Evaluaciones de la Pobreza, se observan considerables brechas a medida que avanzamos desde alguna evidencia de la posible presencia de cuestiones relativas al género o la pobreza, hacia el análisis de la política. Al contrario de los perfiles de pobreza de un país específico, las partes relativas a la política de las EP están fuertemente influenciadas por el análisis de las evaluaciones de los expertos en la materia y, por consiguiente, por el **World Development Report** de 1990 así como por las ideas que han ido evolucionando dentro del Banco Mundial con respecto a la pobreza. Las ideas en

materia de género, crecimiento económico y pobreza han cambiado a lo largo del tiempo, variando en particular, desde considerar que las mujeres son el epíteto de grupos vulnerables, donde son el blanco de las redes de seguridad social, hasta ser una preocupación contemporánea con vínculo entre educación femenina, desarrollo y pobreza.

Nuestra conclusión es que la evidencia acumulada en la literatura sobre desarrollo y cuestiones relacionadas con el género—concretamente, que los hombres y las mujeres experimentan la pobreza de forma distinta—ha tenido poca influencia sobre estos seis estudios de caso. Las EP carecen de toda apreciación de peso respecto de las cuestiones tratadas por el estudio sobre la distinción por género y la pobreza en África en las dos últimas décadas. Contrastamos enfoques que tratan la pobreza de manera estática, como análisis de categorías y características, con aquellos que adoptan un análisis dinámico de la pobreza, viéndola como los procesos relacionales de empobrecimiento o acumulación. El vínculo entre género y pobreza se encuentra en el ámbito de proceso, y de las relaciones de orden social y económico. A fin de que se establezca este vínculo, sugerimos que la pobreza debe analizarse como relación y proceso, y de la misma forma la distinción por género. La conclusión determinante del documento es que es imposible integrar las cuestiones relativas al género en un entendimiento de la pobreza, a menos que la lectura de la evidencia, análisis y política se basen en estos procesos relacionales de empobrecimiento y acumulación.

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◆ Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
GAD	gender and development
GLSS	Ghana Living Standards Survey
HBS	Household Survey Budget
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
NPA	New Poverty Agenda
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PA	Poverty Assessment
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRA	participatory rural appraisal
SDA	Social Dimensions of Adjustment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WDR	World Development Report
WID	women in development

1. INTRODUCTION¹

Concern with poverty within the World Bank has ebbed and flowed over time. Its most recent appearance dates from the late 1980s, which saw the emergence of a “New Poverty Agenda” (NPA), and the 1990 **World Development Report** on poverty (Lipton and Maxwell, 1992). What is different about the current context from that of, say, the MacNamara period is that awareness of “women in development” and “gender and development” is far more pervasive. The literature on gender and poverty is now a mature, and very large one (see Baden and Millward, 1995 and Kabeer, 1994 and 1997 for recent reviews). In response to the growing body of study and experience on gender and development, Razavi and Miller (1995b) document in detail how attitudes within the Bank have shifted from being reactive over the 1970s and early 1980s, to being more proactive during the 1990s.

At one level, the relationship between gender disadvantage and poverty appears straightforward, and this approach has been readily taken up by development agencies such as the World Bank within a general set of arguments about the “feminization” of poverty (Buvinic, 1983 and 1997). However, on closer inspection and at a deeper analytical level, the relationships between gender and poverty are far from straightforward, and there are concerns that objectives about unequal gender relations will become subordinated to an agenda about increasing welfare (Jackson, 1996).

This is the context within which this paper addresses gender in the World Bank’s Poverty Assessments. Poverty Assessments (PAs) have emerged as the most important statements by the World Bank about poverty in particular countries, as part of the NPA. They arose partly out of a concern that the Bank did not really know enough about poverty. By 1996, almost 50 PAs had been carried out, and for some countries there is more than one. The approach we have taken is to examine in some detail a relatively small number of PAs (six) from four countries (Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania and Uganda).² Partly because both populations and poverty are mainly in rural areas, and partly because our own experience has been in rural—as opposed to urban—Africa, we have focused particularly on what the PAs have to say about poverty and gender in rural areas. In our review, we have been helped by the fact that a number of high-quality evaluations of PAs already exist and focus on complementary themes: a review of PAs and public expenditure reviews in Africa by the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex (IDS, 1994); a comprehensive examination of 38 PAs by a team at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in the Hague (Hanmer et al., 1997); an internal evaluation by the World Bank, which focuses on the links between PAs and other Bank processes (World Bank, 1996a); and a review of the Participatory Poverty Assessments for the Department

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² These were chosen so as to give a geographic spread, but also to take advantage of the countries in which we have experience of first-hand field research. The PA documents are World Bank, 1992b; 1993a; 1994; 1995a; 1995b and 1996a.

for International Development of the United Kingdom by the Centre for Development Studies at Swansea (Booth et al., 1998).

The first section of the paper outlines the ways in which gender concerns actually appear, or do not appear, in each of the six PAs we examined. The rest of the paper seeks to explain exactly why gender appears in the forms it does, and at the points it does, in these documents. In this process, a number of points emerge not simply about the approach to gender within the World Bank, but also about the approach to poverty, to methodological issues and to policy.

2. GENDER IN THE POVERTY ASSESSMENTS: AN OVERVIEW

There is enormous variation in the extent to which women and/or gender issues are present in the six PAs under scrutiny. The majority of the PAs do make reference to women and/or gender in their accounts, although to different extents. In two of the PAs there is virtually no mention of women or gender. Two others contain a separate chapter on gender aspects of poverty, while the remaining two have a more integrated approach, where references to women, and sometimes gender, occur throughout the account. Moreover, as the clumsy phrase “women and/or gender” signals, the language adopted for the analysis and description of gender issues also varies widely in the six examples. In some, the issues are addressed through talking about “women”; others use the language of “gender”—and some of these have an elaborated set of concepts, including those of the gender division of labour, gender relations, gender discrimination and so on.

By far the most common way in which women appear in the PAs is in the guise of female-headed households. This is a frequently used way of disaggregating the quantitative nationally representative household surveys. Here, as elsewhere, gender is largely used to describe a relatively fixed status or category with little reference to its relational implications. Where there is an attempt to specify the link between gender and poverty, it mainly consists of identifying women’s specific poverty characteristics. By the time the policy chapter in many PAs is reached, poor women and their specific characteristics have often almost disappeared. Most markedly, even where the main body of the PA has addressed gender issues in other ways, there is a substantial gap between these discussions and the extent to which gender is addressed in the final policy section of the main volume of each report. In these policy sections, gender sensitivity appears in highly fragmented references, largely to women and education and sometimes to the role of women in agriculture. In the case of the Uganda I Assessment (World Bank, 1993a), which has a separate chapter on women, a small section dealing with women’s issues remains wholly unintegrated with the rest of the policy chapter.

Readers will hardly be surprised at this overall lack of consistency. It mirrors the complexity—and confusions—of gender conceptualizations, analysis and language in the development field as a whole. Academic analysis and research on gender and development began with debates about language, which were part of the effort

to develop appropriate concepts,³ but it is only recently that public institutions and the donor community have come under pressure to elaborate their languages of gender. For institutions and actors in the field of public policy, one recent common shift has been a move away from women in development (WID) to gender and development (GAD) formulations, usually as a result of highly politicized debates about what the shift from women to gender means.⁴ As Razavi and Miller (1995b) document, several important institutions have changed their gender language and we can see a trend toward a more uniform language in their public documents.

However, this has not happened at the World Bank. A recent review by Moser et al. (1998) contends that there is no agreement on what the term gender means in Bank policy documents. They exhaustively document the different meanings that co-exist within and between a variety of documents. Arguably, this complexity and lack of coherence in gender language and gender approaches arises out of the relatively weak commitment to WID/gender issues within the Bank. In an analysis that spans 20 years, Razavi and Miller (1995b) document the history of the relatively limited resources allocated to gender specialists in the Bank, as well as their weak mandates and institutional position. Furthermore, they describe a marked and early preference for mainstreaming gender (i.e., diffusing responsibility for WID/gender issues throughout the organization). They also document a tendency to locate WID/gender concerns in the “soft” areas—such as human resources—in an organization, giving strong analytical and policy priority to economics.

This diversity in approaches to gender and development, diversity in definitions of what gender analysis is and diversity in the potential components of a gender analysis are thus addressed by Moser et al., who argue the need for a common framework of gender analysis (1998). However, no attempt is made by the authors to associate the use of particular approaches or definitions of gender with other differences (for example, between different schools of economic analysis, or between social development sections and others). As a result, it is unclear whether this diversity is accidental, whether it is associated with particular perspectives within different sections of the Bank and, crucially, whether it is the outcome of contestation.

Given this background, it is not surprising that the six PAs considered in this paper vary so widely in their approaches to gender. Table 1 aims to diagnose more carefully the ways in which gender does appear in the PAs. Women and/or gender figure virtually nowhere in Ghana I and Uganda II (World Bank, 1992b and 1995b). In Ghana I, for example, the only mention of gender issues is an occasional reference to female-headed households and a sudden appearance in an assertion in the discussion of farming that the agricultural labour force is becoming feminized. No evidence is offered for this generalization, and it is not linked with the previous discussion of this data. It is returned to in the final section on policy, where the main mention of women is a recommendation for improvements in agricultural extension work with women farmers. Similarly, in Uganda II, household survey data are

³ See Razavi and Miller, 1995a.

⁴ See, for example, the adoption of gender and development by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of OECD (OECD, 1998). Whitehead (1998) discusses this shift. Goetz and Baden, 1997 contains an interesting discussion of contentions around the use of the language of gender and/or women at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

Table 1: How gender appears in the six PAs

Poverty Assessment	Separate chapter on gender/women?	Gender language	Disaggregated by female-headed households ?	Women as an identified poverty group?	Gendered agricultural analysis?
Zambia	No	"Social status"	Yes	Female headed households	Gender specificities of tasks Rigidities from GDOL
Tanzania	Yes	"Status of women" "Women's education and legal rights"	Yes	Yes in PPA No in survey data	No, but women's land rights emphasized
Ghana I	No	Virtually none	Yes, occasionally	No	No
Ghana II	No	"Gender"	Yes	Some female Headed households—those with no labour	Agriculture described as being feminized. Extension services to women.
Uganda I	Yes	"Asymmetry in rights and obligations between men and women" "Gender division of labour" "Gender relations"	Yes	Female headed households	No
Uganda II	No	Female headed households only	Yes	No	No

analysed in terms of differences in per capita expenditure between male-headed and female-headed households. Women are hardly mentioned anywhere else in the report. The policy section does not refer at any point to the gender of the beneficiaries or that of the agents of the growth, rural infrastructure and human capital programmes that it recommends.

Uganda and Ghana have two successive PAs, which allows us to examine whether there is evidence of a learning process. As the number of PAs increased beginning in the early 1990s, we might expect their gender sensitivity to have grown. This seems to be borne out in the Ghana case. Ghana I, one of the earliest PAs in 1992, was followed by a more gender-sensitive assessment—Ghana II—in 1995 (World Bank, 1995a). A general trend is belied, however, in the contrast between the two Uganda studies: Uganda I, undertaken in 1992 (World Bank, 1993a), has much more about gender than Uganda II, undertaken in 1995 (World Bank, 1995b). The Uganda II and Ghana I PAs, with their little attention to gender, are the documents most dominated by a poverty strategy centred on macroeconomic growth. The identified causes of poverty are poor growth, low productivity and anti-export biases in the economy. These PAs are also content to use as poverty lines household income or consumption—money-metric household definitions of poverty.

The Tanzania and Uganda I PAs are more eclectic in their approach (World Bank, 1996b and 1993a). Each has an initial gender sensitivity: a separate report on gender/women's issues was commissioned, and a summary of this appears as a chapter in the final report. The content of these chapters is dominated by the kind of gender analysis that is prevalent in the country concerned—i.e., what themes and approaches occur in the national literature and what local feminists analyse as the policy priorities. The language used to describe gender issues is well developed. In Uganda I, there is a wholesale use of the language of gender. It appears, for example, in the idea of the gender division of labour, and in arguments about the need for gender-responsive actions and growth. The framework of gender analysis makes use of the idea of rights and obligations between men and women, and the use of the law to establish women's rights to land, labour and other resources. The problem of women's time burdens because of domestic responsibilities and their disadvantages in access to education are also prominent, as is the effect on women of the high incidence of HIV and AIDS. The treatment of gender in a separate chapter does, however, mean that there is limited focus on women throughout the rest of the report—with the exception of female-headed households, which are identified as one of the poverty categories. In the policy chapter there is no mention of gendered agents until a separate section makes a series of recommendations about women arising directly out of the analyses in the gender chapter: promoting legal rights, alleviating domestic labour constraints, reducing AIDS risks for girls.

In the Tanzania PA (World Bank, 1996b), the dominant gender language in the chapter on women is that of the “status of women” with emphasis on women's legal status and educational disadvantages, the importance of legal rights, advocacy and political mobilizations. The Tanzania PA is also one of the three PAs that adopts new methodologies for the identification of poverty, with the commissioning of a Participatory Poverty Assessment (PAs). The women's chapter has a good discussion of the link—or lack of it—between poverty and female-headed households, drawing on both household survey data and data from the

PPA. It also discusses intra-household gender equity, based on published qualitative case studies

Despite all this, the main chapter on incomes, inequality and poverty barely mentions women—except in a suggestion that women “choose” underemployment. In the policy chapters, gender issues are reduced to two: female education and targeted social spending. There are other missed opportunities and inconsistencies, as for example when women (as an otherwise unqualified social category) are described as a “vulnerable group”. The account of agriculture and rural livelihoods is completely silent on the sex of farmers and the gender of division of labour in agriculture. There is a rather good account of the causes of poverty in households with agricultural livelihoods that owes much to the findings of the PPA. Yet, while several of these findings have clear gender dimensions—such as the supply of inputs, savings, credit, access to livestock and labour—rural poverty is discussed in wholly gender blind ways.

The final pair of studies is Zambia and Ghana II (World Bank, 1994 and 1995a). These are documents in which gender is a palpable part of the PAs, although neither has a separate chapter on women/gender. Rather, gender is integrated into the analysis, appearing in a number of sections and with differing degrees of centrality to the overall account. In the five-volume Zambian PA, the language of the gender analysis shifts around quite a lot. Gender is referred to as a “social status”. “Female-headed households” appear, as do “women without support”. The “gender division of labour” is a significant element of the arguments in the rural volume, where the analysis centres on a model of the agricultural household that examines the effect of the gender division of labour on income from agriculture under a number of conditions. Female headship is listed as a cause of poverty in urban areas, and female-headed households in general are included as a poverty category.

In Ghana II, the language of gender is largely descriptive, with frequent references to women, or women and girls. The report gives prominence to the role of women in agriculture and to some of the conditions affecting poor rural women, such as the time burden of water collection in the dry north. There is no data on gender and poverty in the account of the household quantitative data, except in a disaggregation by sex of household head, where there is also a discussion of some of the problems of defining female household heads and of the importance of intra-household differences. There is also an innovative discussion of gender biases in social spending.

Zambia and Ghana II (like Tanzania) have combined national-level poverty line methodologies with specially undertaken participatory PPAs. The influence of the findings from the participatory exercises is evident throughout the accounts and appears to be one vehicle for greater gender sensitivity. Moreover, in each of these PAs, gender has been examined in one or more of the other studies commissioned to inform the findings. In the Ghana II case this is apparent in the analysis of who benefits from social spending, and in the Zambia case it is clear in the agricultural modelling, which is the centrepiece of the rural analysis. Even in these two PAs, however, the policy sections fail to match the visibility of gender in the rest of the reports. In the Zambia PA, the implications have been reduced to the need for labour-saving technology for “female” tasks on smallholdings and a prioritizing of girls’ education in human resource development policy. In Ghana II, the policy

section contains very little reference to women, apart from the need for better agricultural extension services for them. The need for more research on gender and poverty is listed as one of a series of priorities for future research.

The overall picture that emerges from this overview is one of inconsistencies, fragmentation and gaps in the treatment of gender issues, both between the six examples of PAs that we are reviewing and within the individual country reports. Where it is not ignored, gender is viewed in many different ways, with no attempt to systematize gender analysis. The inconsistencies between the PAs suggest that the project teams had a good deal of autonomy in how they interpreted and prioritized gender issues. Indeed, the PAs are very different from one another in a large number of respects. They do not appear to have a common work plan—yet the concluding policy sections, in which little attention is given to gender or women, are much more uniform. All this raises questions about the organization of, and background to, the PAs. What briefs were the project teams given? How were the PAs planned and carried out? What were the procedures for producing the final reports? What is the link between the PAs and the Bank's move to prioritize poverty as its development goal since 1990?

3. THE INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE POVERTY ASSESSMENTS

In the late 1980s, the World Bank began to step up its country-specific analysis and measurement of poverty, leading up to the preparation and publication of the 1990 **World Development Report (WDR)**. The 1990 **WDR** (World Bank, 1990) signalled a significant break from the past for the World Bank, and a move away from its 1980s preoccupation with a perceived conflict between the market and the state. Poverty, and policy to reduce poverty, moved to centre stage. By 1992, 19 PAs had been completed, and the production of PAs was accelerated and systematized. PAs were highlighted in policy statements on poverty from the highest levels in the Bank, including the President at the time, Lewis Preston. By the mid-1990s, when the Operations Evaluation Division conducted a review of the PAs, almost 50 had been completed.

Thus the programme of producing a large number of PAs—intended to be standardized—arose out of the 1990 **WDR**. One imperative for the PAs was the fact that the Bank had previously put little effort into collecting information on poverty on a country-by-country basis. This was especially true for sub-Saharan Africa: “The absence of reliable intertemporal statistics on income distribution in most sub-Saharan African countries makes any comprehensive account of trends in poverty there impossible” (World Bank, 1990:42). A second imperative was that the highly generalized analysis of poverty and its causes in the 1990 **WDR** had to be applied to each specific country, in order to produce an action plan for that country. This programme thus launched the Bank on a very large-scale exercise in collecting evidence on poverty.

The new emphasis on poverty and poverty reduction in the Bank led to the gathering of various directives and strategy papers into a new **Operational Directive on Poverty Reduction** (OD 4.15), released in December 1991 (World Bank, 1991). This was accompanied by a **Poverty Reduction Handbook** (World

Bank, 1992a) containing “examples of good-practice analytical and operational work” (World Bank, 1991:1). The directive was intended to guide operational work for poverty reduction, including the collection of information on poverty. OD 4.15 also incorporated a previous policy paper on assistance strategies to reduce poverty, which was intended to show how to apply the 1990 **WDR** approach to particular contexts.

The approach to policy in OD 4.15 is explicitly based on the 1990 **WDR**. The policy recipe consisted of: broad-based growth brought about by the removal of price distortions and the provision of credit and infrastructure; basic social services; and safety nets (World Bank 1990:73, 88-89, 101-2). There is a guide for content of the PAs based on this approach, which is clearly aimed at standardization across countries. However, OD 4.15 does recognize that the scope of issues will vary across countries, as will data availability. The level of government commitment to poverty reduction is seen as a key variable for shaping individual PAs.

Guidance on measurement, analysis and policy is spelled out in much greater detail in the **Poverty Reduction Handbook** (World Bank, 1992a). The handbook gives advice on how to draw poverty lines and create poverty “profiles”, i.e., basic analyses of who the poor are (World Bank, 1992a:1-4–1-5). One recommended question asks how poverty is correlated with “gender, racial and ethnic characteristics”. The handbook also points Bank staff toward appropriate data sources. The most important are household surveys, followed by community surveys. Where household survey data sets are not available, the handbook suggests the “eclectic approach”, i.e., using whatever micro-surveys exist (World Bank, 1992a:1-6), as well as the use of social indicators (such as demographic sources). Interestingly, participatory methodologies are not mentioned. Chapters 2 and 3 of the handbook specify policies for the reduction of poverty, focusing on economic growth and the demand for labour, and on human capital and other assets. The key instruments are macroeconomic adjustment, and the efficiency and distribution of public expenditure. Gender considerations enter only in the latter set of issues, especially in relation to education, and the legal rights of women to land (World Bank, 1992a:2-13–2-13).

The handbook most directly governs the shape of the PAs in chapter 4, where it defines the PA as analysing “the relation between the poverty profile and public policies, expenditures and institutions. It also evaluates the effects of economic and social policies on the poor and makes recommendations for the consideration of country policymakers” (World Bank, 1992a:4-1). The chapter lays out in some detail (including checklists) what should appear in each part of a PA: diagnosis, assessment of existing policies and expenditures including safety nets, and prescriptions. The authors of PAs are urged to identify the gender of the poor in the poverty profile, but gender is not mentioned again, either in relation to how existing policies impact on the poor or how policies should be changed. Finally, the handbook discusses sectoral issues (chapter 7). The most relevant here is agriculture. The only gendered element in this section is of a Nigerian project in which extension services specifically focused on women (World Bank, 1992a:7-4).

◆ 3.1 The Content and Organization of the Poverty Assessments

In practice, almost all of the PAs we looked at did follow a common overall structure, roughly similar to the model laid out in OD 4.15 and in the handbook.⁵ Each starts with an attempt to lay out a poverty line, and provide an overall headcount indicator of poverty. Most then associate poverty with household characteristics, such as location, education and sex of head. It is at this point that the format varies most between PAs. Some contain separate chapters on particular issues (for example, urban poverty in Zambia, and women in Tanzania). Common across all of the examples is a concluding policy section, as well as certain core elements in that section. Not surprisingly (given the background of the 1990 **WDR**), these centre on achieving growth through macroeconomic policies, public sector reform for the delivery of social services (especially education) and targeting of safety nets. (The policy section of the PAs is discussed in greater detail in section 6, below.)

Bearing in mind the enormous variation in approaches to gender within our sample of six PAs, it is noteworthy that OD 4.15 gives no guidance on whether and how gender considerations should be included in the PAs. The only mention of gender is the general statement at the beginning of the document: “The burden of poverty falls disproportionately on women: so it is essential to increase their income-earning opportunities, their food security and their access to social services” (World Bank, 1991:2). As noted above, gendered statements in the **Poverty Reduction Handbook** (World Bank, 1992a) are confined to a breakdown of data by gender, a discussion of female education under public expenditure, women’s land rights, and the targeting of agricultural extension services to women. These are precisely the ways in which women and/or gender find their way into the policy sections of the PAs.

Within the Bank, thinking and action on gender issues started to attract attention and resources only in the late 1980s. As recently as 1987, there were three professionals in a single WID office to service the whole institution. In the period leading up to the PAs, gender thinking in the Bank was relocated in a WID Division of the Population and Human Resources Department. It is worth noting that poverty measurement, as embodied by OD 4.15, the handbook and the PAs themselves, was being expanded rapidly at a time when efforts to mainstream gender in the Bank had stalled. Razavi and Miller cite the gender team in the Africa region of the Bank, which argued that the 1993 reorganization of the institution had led to a “temporary slowdown of momentum in building up and sustaining staff gender capacity” (1995b:38).

◆ 3.2 How Were the Poverty Assessments Carried Out?

According to OD 4.15, responsibility for operational work on poverty, which includes the PAs, was vested in regional vice presidents. They, in turn, were to look to country department directors to ensure the quality of analytical work, and

⁵ The exception to this was Uganda II (World Bank, 1995b), which was not a full PA, but a Country Economic Memorandum with an quantitative appendix on poverty.

consistency with Bank policies. In particular, regional chief economists were responsible for determining the satisfactory completion of a PA, and the position of each country's poverty line (World Bank, 1991:3).

In practice, many PAs ended up with only a loose articulation with the Bank itself. Many were funded directly by external donors, especially European donors. A team of national and expatriate consultants headed by a task manager from Bank staff typically carried them out. This relative autonomy meant that although the PAs did contain certain overall elements dictated by OD 4.15 and the 1990 **WDR**, some aspects varied between countries, and even between two PAs in one country.⁶ Observers within the Bank pointed out to us that unless someone on a team had participated in an earlier project on a country, they would not necessarily take up themes from that earlier project. As a result, there are different approaches to poverty lines, to poverty analysis, to background studies and to themed chapters. Crucially, there are also important differences in methodologies for poverty measurement and analysis, especially in how far the team embraced information beyond quantitative surveys.

The other factor here is that the PAs are also products of country governments, with national consultants and government staff involved in their production. OD 4.15 makes it clear that PAs provide “the basis for a collaborative approach to poverty reduction by country officials and the Bank . . . [helping] to establish the agenda of issues for the policy dialogue” (World Bank, 1991:4). The key role of country governments was emphasized to us by a participant in the Ghana II and Zambian PAs. He argued that the main product of the PAs was significant change in government thinking on and attitudes to poverty, rather than such change in the Bank.⁷

As noted, variation in the PAs disappears in the final sections dealing with policy. The influence of the 1990 **WDR** and Bank thinking appears to weigh most heavily here, far more directly than in the poverty profiles or country-specific issues chapters. The key factor seems to be the peer review process, in which drafts of the PAs were circulated within relevant Bank departments, especially the country director and regional chief economist. While relatively little attention was paid to the empirical details of poverty measurement and analysis, policy sections attracted detailed comments and (we suspect) rewriting.

◆ 3.3 Understanding Gender in the Poverty Assessments

The process by which PAs are produced gives some insight into where we should look to understand how gender issues are made visible, or invisible, therein. The team approach goes some way to explaining variation in how gender appears. Since, as explained in section 2, there is no common analysis of gender in the Bank (let alone among PA consultants), different teams tended to bring their own approaches, and different task managers weighted the significance of gender differently. The “terms of reference” for the PAs encapsulated in OD 4.15 and the **Poverty Reduction Handbook** introduced around 1992 give minimal guidance. They contain virtually no gender analysis, and only a limited range of fragmented pointers to where teams might single out women.

⁶ For details see World Bank, 1996a.

⁷ A. Norton, personal communication

With this as background, two central questions are taken up in the remainder of this paper. We show in detail how, in the absence of a clear analytical framework for understanding gender, the treatment of gender in the PAs is driven, on one hand, by a set of epistemological and methodological choices about measuring poverty and, on the other, by a set of prescriptions for reducing poverty that originate in the 1990 **WDR**.

The first question focuses on the empirical evidence collated in the poverty profiles, and asks why gender appears as it does, or indeed why it is made invisible in certain ways. Central to how far and in what ways it is possible to discuss gender issues in the PAs is the issue of how evidence is generated and presented. While all of the PAs employed data collected in surveys using households as units, some also used various other sources, including evidence collected through participatory techniques. These different approaches to data collection imply different possibilities for raising gender issues. This issue is taken up in sections 4 and 5, below.

The second question asks why gender appears as it does (or, again, is made invisible) in the policy analysis of the PAs. In most of the PAs, there are significant gaps as we move from evidence on gender and poverty to policy analysis. Unlike the country-specific poverty profiles, the policy sections of the PAs are heavily influenced by peer review, and hence by both the 1990 **WDR** model and by subsequent evolving ideas about poverty within the Bank. To understand how gender appears in the analytical and, especially, the policy sections of the PAs, it is crucial to examine these ideas.

4. MEASURING POVERTY AND GENDER, I: HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS

◆ 4.1 What is Poverty?

The PAs follow in a long line of attempts to define and measure poverty.⁸ The definition of poverty is of critical importance, since definition determines the approach to measurement and the types of evidence to be considered. Several reviews have examined the measurement and definition of poverty found in the PAs. The ISS study notes that most PAs say that poverty is difficult to define, but fail to justify their choice of definition, except on grounds of expediency (Hanmer et al., 1997:2.5). Of the PAs we examined, most start by asserting the multidimensionality of poverty (see box 1). This reflects an increasingly dominant approach to poverty which emphasizes that the capacity of individuals in the

⁸ Definitions of poverty have broadened out from a narrow income or consumption-based focus (Baulch, 1996). One set of additional considerations are normally unquantified state-provided consumption or common property income (Townsend, 1954; Jodha, 1986). Another dimension into which definitions of poverty have been expanded is vulnerability (Swift, 1989), while Robert Chambers has emphasized the importance of assessing the experiential aspects of poverty, to do with dignity and autonomy (1995). Finally, there has been extensive debate on whether poverty is best defined in relative or absolute terms (Sen, 1983).

developing world to thrive depends on many things—on common property assets, on a share in state welfare spending, on patronage relations that reduce vulnerability, on environmental stability. This multidimensional approach has led some (four out of six) of the PAs to adopt specialist methodologies to get at the poor's own perceptions of poverty, or at local understandings of what poverty is. None of the PAs translate the multidimensional nature of poverty into an interest in well-being or quality of life indicators, and so they ignore the whole debate about social indicators and their relation to poverty.

Tables 2 and 3, which look at the various ways in which poverty is measured in our PAs, make it clear that there is no standard, agreed way of defining and measuring poverty. Indeed, a central theme of the ISS review is the substantial variation between PAs in their definition and measurement of poverty (Hanmer et al., 1997:vii). Money-metric poverty lines dominate the introductory sections on evidence on poverty in the PAs considered here. But at various points, complementary evidence is also drawn upon (see table 2), including health and nutritional outcome indicators. Ultimately, however, all give priority to an income and/or consumption definition, a money-metric poverty line and a quantitative estimate of the percentage of the population in poverty. Table 3 also shows that there is a great deal of variation in how that poverty line is established (Hanmer et al., 1997:2.8–2.16). It gives an indication of what the ISS review refers to as “a bewildering array of poverty measures” (Hanmer et al., 1997:2.9). Of our six PAs, half define poverty lines in absolute terms and half in relative terms. In Uganda and Zambia, absolute poverty lines are determined in relation to a “minimum” food basket, and in a third, Tanzania, simply as a level of expenditure. Relative poverty lines range from 0.33 to 0.5 of mean expenditure for lower poverty lines, and between 0.66 and 0.8 of mean expenditure for upper poverty lines. Finally, while most PAs deflate household expenditure by average household size, Uganda II and Zambia use expenditure per adult equivalent.

Box 1: The multidimensionality of poverty

Uganda I: “Being multidimensional, poverty cannot be reduced to a single indicator. However, in order to estimate the distribution and depth of poverty, it is generally considered acceptable to use real per capita expenditure as a proxy for welfare” (World Bank, 1993a:4).

Uganda II: “Poverty has many dimensions [this annex] focuses mostly on poverty defined in economic terms” (World Bank, 1995b:75).

Tanzania: “Poverty has various dimensions. This section examines the poverty question based not only on consumption but also on the 1995 PPA survey based on an alternative participatory methodology” (World Bank, 1996b:65).

Ghana I: “. . . the poor, defined as living in households with per capita expenditure below two thirds of the mean . . . ” (World Bank, 1992b:8).

Ghana II: “Poverty is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. As a consequence, there are several approaches which can be taken in its analysis, each emphasizing different aspects” (World Bank, 1995a:3).

Zambia: “The basic definition of a poor household is one that is unable to attain a standard of living that is consistent with social standards and deprived of assets to fulfil basic needs” (World Bank, 1994:3).

Table 2: Measures of poverty in the six PAs

	Money metric poverty line	Nutritional and health data	Education data	Participatory poverty assessment
Uganda I	x	x	x	x
Uganda II	x	x	x	
Ghana I	x			
Ghana II*	x	x	x	x
Tanzania	x	x	x	x
Zambia	x	x	x	x

*also contains a discussion of social spending by gender

Basing the definition and measurement of poverty on a single, money-metric dimension makes poverty into a simple characteristic. In a sense this is a fundamental methodological choice, since it locks the PAs into reliance on expenditure data from surveys. The prioritization of money-metric poverty lines has some important consequences. One problem with the approach of the PAs to measurement is that the variation in poverty line definition makes cross-national comparisons impossible. In the case of Uganda, a relative poverty line approach in 1992 is followed by an absolute food basket-based approach in 1995, making comparison across time equally difficult. This point about comparison across time is key, since one of the rationales for using quantitative data is precisely that they are comparable. As Appleton's detailed work on tracking poverty in Uganda using survey data shows, this is less true in practice than it is in theory (Appleton, 1996b).

◆ 4.2 The Implication of the Poverty Line Approach for Gender

A more central issue is that, as noted, money-metric poverty lines lead to a heavy dependence on household survey data. This has profound implications for analysing gender issues. Measuring poverty based on household expenditure survey data is open to the long-standing criticism about distribution. Per capita or adult equivalent measures effectively make assumptions about equal intra-household distribution of resources (see also Hanmer et al., 1997:2.15). None of the PAs attempt a quantitative exploration of poverty within households. However, both the Zambia and Uganda I PAs show an awareness of the problems arising from the limitations of aggregated data:

Policies and programs have different effects on different members of the household particularly depending on gender and age. The relationship between increased household welfare and improved living conditions for household members is also contingent upon the age and gender of such individuals. For the purpose of this report we will attempt to examine data in a disaggregated fashion. However, we acknowledge that individual and intra-household level data are often too scant to permit sound inferences (World Bank, 1994:3).

The importance of examining *intra-household* resource allocation cannot be overemphasized. The resource allocation process within households reflects the status, bargaining power and options of the parties concerned, which in turn are largely a function of control over assets and income. . . . [However],

women generally do not, and are not expected to, control cash income or economic assets; they remain in the subsistence . . . sector, where their economic contribution is not valued but taken for granted. Household expenditure patterns, as revealed in the Household Budget Survey, confirm that gender inequity within the household is an extremely important dimension of poverty (World Bank, 1993a:33).

These insights are, however, not followed through in the analysis of the household survey data: all the PAs are confined to analysing their household survey data according to differences in the sex of the household head. Household surveys have traditionally refused to interview individuals about individual income, or have not seen the point of doing so. The income/consumption approach to household poverty appears to take it as axiomatic that intra-household differences in access to income and consumption are too complex and difficult to be researched, and information is thus collected for the household as a unit. Lying behind this is an implicit assumption of pooled income and consumption within the household, despite considerable evidence to the contrary, especially for West Africa. A “household” has a “head”, and the characteristics of this head—age, sex and marital status—are collected and form a ready basis for sorting the data. For the many analysts for whom the household-level survey is the major (or indeed only) reliable data on poverty, women can only be made visible as female heads of household. Thus, some of the approach to gender in the PAs is driven by data whose mode of collection embodies prior decisions about the level at which human agency and “personhood” can, or should be, appropriately conceptualized in policy analysis of this kind.

The contemporary analysis of gender began with the understanding that the family-based household is never a terrain of equality. Well-being, power and often access to economic resources are all differentially distributed. Intra-household relations themselves have been shown to be a powerful determinant of individual access to utilities and capabilities. Fifteen years of feminist argument and evidence about the need to analyse the household as a system of a social relations (Evans, 1991; Whitehead, 1981; Kabeer, 1994; Folbre, 1996), plus the evidence of gender-differentiated poverty outcomes, has led to several developments in the formal economic modelling of households. The conventional economic approach, which treated households either as units, or as pooling institutions driven by altruism, has come under sustained criticism. Haddad et al. (1997) examine a whole suite of alternative, non-unitary economic models of the household (termed collective). But the testing of many of the implications of collective models requires data to be collected at a more disaggregated level, which few national-level surveys have attempted.

The decision, then, to prioritize money-metric poverty lines based on households as the unit of analysis has profound consequences for any gender profiling of poverty. It is one of a number of methodological decisions that underlie the way in which gender is present, or absent, in the PAs. Poverty lines do have some valid purposes. They are often politically useful for establishing entitlements in welfare states, for example, or as baselines for assessing changes in incomes. However, it is difficult to link the measurement of poverty in this form to its causes, and therefore to any explanation and rationale for alleviation strategies. This weakness is apparent in what is done with household-level data to establish poverty profiles. These essentially consist of a series of simple static comparative analyses or correlations,

Table 3: Poverty lines in the six PAs

	Absolute v. Relative	Definition	Unit	Per cent poor
Uganda I	R	UPL: 0.8 mean expenditure LPL: 0.4 mean expenditure	Per capita Per capita	55 19
Uganda II	A	PL: cost of 2,200 calorie food basket + essential non-food exp.	Per adult equiv.	61
Ghana I	R	UPL: 0.66 mean exp. LPL: 0.33 mean exp.	Per capita Per capita	36 n.s.
Ghana II	R	UPL: 0.66 of 1988 mean exp. LPL: 0.5 of 1988 mean exp.	Per capita Per capita	31 15
Tanzania	A	UPL: exp. of Tsh 114,187 in 1993 prices LPL: exp. of Tsh 46,173 in 1991 prices	Per capita Per capita	42 22
Zambia	A (R for sensitivity analysis)	UPL: cost of food basket LPL: UPL/average % exp. on food	Per adult equiv. Per adult equiv.	68 54

Notes: PL: poverty line; UPL: upper poverty line; LPL: lower poverty line; Tsh: Tanzanian shillings

for example, of household income with education of household head, region, household size, etc. Assumptions about causal relationships are then projected onto these statistical associations.

Thus, crucially, poverty lines are a relatively weak guide to the *processes* of impoverishment. This point is made strongly in the ISS review, which recommends dropping money-metric poverty lines in favour of a socioeconomic analysis approach (Hanmer et al., 1997) because of the way in which the money-metric poverty line approach fails to produce an account of poverty processes and dynamics. As we will argue later, this has gender implications as well, since a gendered account of poverty must be based in an analysis of poverty processes and dynamics.

◆ 4.3 Female-Headed Households

Nonetheless, it is important to compare female- and male-headed households, if only because of claims that growing poverty in sub-Saharan Africa is associated with the growth of female-headed households or that female-headed households are disproportionately poor.⁹ The findings on the comparative well-being of female- and male-headed households in the PAs, as indicated by poverty line measurements, are tabulated below.

Table 4: Are female-headed households poorer?

Country	Female-headed households compared with male-headed households according to survey data
Ghana I	No comparison
Uganda I	Poorer; no disaggregation
Tanzania	Richer
Uganda II	Not poorer; but widows poorer, divorced not
Ghana II	Richer; <i>de facto/de jure</i> discussed but not disaggregated
Zambia	Poorer; no disaggregation, but "dependency" flagged as more important than gender of head

When female-headed households are compared with male headed households within each PA on the basis of the poverty measurement from the household surveys, there is no clear finding as to which is likely to be poorer. So, in Tanzania and Ghana II, female-headed households are reported as richer, while in Uganda I, and Zambia, they are poorer. Some of the statistical differences on which these generalizations are based are very small, with no comment on the level at which they have been shown to be significant, or indeed *if* they are. What is most surprising is how little further analysis is done with the simple national comparison. Given the very different income sources and employment opportunities of town and country, and the possible gender differences in these different labour markets, we were surprised that there had been no effort to compare female and male heads of households divided into urban and rural dwellers. Regional comparisons might also have been fruitful, as one way of capturing some broad differences in the link between gender divisions of labour,

⁹ For discussions see Buvinic, 1983 and 1997; Baden and Millward, 1995; Jackson, 1996; Chant, 1997a.

climatically linked types of agriculture and different forms of social organization. Indeed, such a comparison is positively crying out to be made in the Ghana II PA, in the light of the interesting finding in the PPA that female headship in the south is not perceived to be associated with poverty, whereas in the north it is.

The only PA to disaggregate the category of female-headed households is the Uganda PA, which separates households according to the female head's marital status. This points out that some but not all female heads receive remittances from absent male partners. Another important issue that should be easy to examine in most household survey data is the extent of poverty among female heads of different age groups. The account in the Uganda PA is clearly informed by the work by Appleton (1996a), which is in line with that of Lloyd and Gage-Brandon (1993) and others seeking to deconstruct the idea of female-headed households. Their findings suggest that the aggregate category of female-headed households is too crude for meaningful examination of the link between gender and poverty. Chant (1997a and 1997b) discusses different types of female heads, distinguishing between heads that are widowed, divorced or separated; those that have dependent children and those that do not; *de jure* and *de facto* female heads, i.e., those who have no male partner and those whose male partners are residing elsewhere (the latter may be making intermittent household contributions). In the Ghana case, an awareness of the difference between *de facto* and *de jure* female headship allows the authors to comment on the findings mentioned above of differences between north and south Ghana in the poverty of female-headed households.

This all suggests that disaggregation by gender of the household head does not provide a very meaningful approach to gender and poverty. The category of female-headed household lumps together different categories of household—generated by different processes at different life cycle stages and for different reasons—which are likely to have a variety of socioeconomic circumstances and opportunities. This, as Chant has documented so thoroughly, makes any simple comparison between male-headed and female-headed households impossible to interpret.

A further point is that even where certain types of female-headed households are found to be poorer, this begs a further set of questions for which we need a processual, rather than snapshot, approach to household formation. In discussions of the characteristics of the poor and poorest households, household variables are always treated as if they were independent, but it is perfectly possible that the chain of causation runs the other way. For example, lone widows may well be a significantly poor category of households in sub-Saharan Africa, but why do some widows end up living alone and others not? Widowhood may be a calamitous event for the poor because it is widows who are poor whose children leave the household—perhaps through labour migration. When more economically secure women are widowed, they do not end up living alone. This suggests the need for policies that support the social management of household membership, which is such a priority concern for African people in very many areas (Bledsoe, 1995; Lockwood, 1997).

Underlying some of the difficulties with female headship are persistent definitional problems with sub-Saharan Africa households.¹⁰ Many household surveys (such as

¹⁰ See, for example, Guyer, 1981; Guyer and Peters, 1987; Yanagisako, 1979.

the Uganda Household Budget Survey and the Ghana Living Standards Survey) contain relatively little discussion of how these difficulties have been resolved, but most of the country studies provide examples of culturally specific household forms that do not tally with standardized definitions of household. A particular issue here is that we get very little sense of how polygamy is treated in relation to household definition, and hence of how polygamy plays into the category of female headship.

5. MEASURING GENDER AND POVERTY, II: GENDER AND THE PARTICIPATORY POVERTY ASSESSMENTS

A major innovation in the PAs has been the incorporation of methodologies that are not based on conventional household-level surveys of quantitative poverty indicators, but on methods that incorporate a qualitative, or subjective, element through participation. The use of participatory methods in the PAs can be traced back to the growth of interest in social development in some quarters in the Bank—which was one of the outcomes of the 1980s critique of adjustment. A key event here was the establishment of the World Bank's Participatory Development Group. Holland and Blackburn (1998) describe how, as the PAs began in the early 1990s, the Participatory Development Group was able to interest some operational managers in commissioning PPAs as part of the work. Their survey suggests that, by 1994, one quarter of the PAs had a participatory component, and by 1995 one half did. With few exceptions, the PPAs were commissioned as separate studies, parallel to the PAs. The selection of countries used in this paper, somewhat overstates the frequency of PPAs, in that only two out of the six of the assessments considered here had no PPA of any kind (see table 2).

In a recent report for the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, Booth et al. (1998) evaluate the use of the participatory and combined methods in the African PAs. They identify several areas in which claims are made that these methods potentially improve on conventional methods and procedures of poverty assessment. In the first place, they produce different kinds of data, in particular allowing more direct access to what poor people themselves understand their poverty to be, and how they see actions to promote their own well-being. It is, of course, possible to use household or individual survey-type methodologies to focus on qualitative material about people's perceptions of poverty and its causes. Booth et al., however, point out that participatory methodologies have come to be seen as "a powerful tool" to establish how poor people perceive and understand poverty.

A second claim for participatory methodologies is that they promote a more dynamic or explanation oriented approach to poverty assessment work. The Bank's decision to use participatory methods in some PAs represented a significant breakthrough in that participatory methods had been previously used mainly at the project level. Holland and Blackburn (1998) argue that an attempt is increasingly being made to use them at the analytical level. They suggest that participatory methodologies are being used to identify and analyse a major policy issue, which will inform "the development of the Bank's own programme and policy dialogue with borrower governments" (p. 91). The implication is that this analysis is superior to that obtained using money-metric income and consumption

identification of poverty characteristics in so far as it offers greater explanation of poverty causes and a potential for identifying processes.

A third claim is more political. Several authors have argued that participatory methodologies make it more difficult for poverty to be ignored or sidelined by politicians and other decision makers.¹¹ There are a number of potential elements to this claim depending on the political arena. Although much of the discussion centres on in-country political processes, equally important are the extent to which participatory methodologies are perceived as legitimate in the Bank and, of course, by whom.

The fourth claim, made by Booth et al., concerns the relative merits of the two kinds of methodology in producing reliable evidence. They argue that the superior validity and reliability obtained in using PPAs does not result because participatory methods intrinsically produce more reliable data, but stems from the benefits of triangulation. They advocate the use of a variety of methods or investigative styles in combination, as well as the use of data of different kinds. “The case for PAs with a participatory design rests in part on the view that multi-stranded methods are more robust than single-stranded approaches such as a free standing household survey” (Booth et al., 1998:11).

To these four claims we should add a possible fifth, namely that participatory methodologies are potentially more gender sensitive, because the aim is to produce an account of poverty that is closer to people’s experience. As men and women experience poverty rather differently, we would expect gender to be made more visible through PPA methodologies. Indeed, as discussed in section 2, there is *a priori* evidence for this—of the six PAs considered in this paper, those with PPAs have a more visible gender account than those which do not. In the next section we use these five points to examine how the PPAs were carried out and to explore more closely the link between the use of PPAs and gender findings in the PAs.

◆ 5.1 The Content of the Participatory Methodologies

From a slow but committed beginning, the idea of participatory development is enjoying enormous current popularity, with some authors commenting that: “The early 1990s witnessed frenzied levels of global interest in participatory method” (Guijt and Shah, 1997:4). This interest is both in the values embodied in the use of participatory methodologies and in the use of specific methods as both a planning aide and a form of research method. There are many different kinds of participatory methodology. A recent review lists 33 separate approaches and sets of techniques, each with its attendant acronym and a substantial and multifaceted literature on its advantages and disadvantages over more traditional methods.¹²

The core idea in participatory methods is that of using a variety of techniques to elicit knowledge, characterizations and understandings that do not use the language, concepts and categories of the interviewer and researcher, who by definition does not share the economic and social reality of poor people. Participatory methodologies have developed a wide range of techniques to get at

¹¹ See Norton, 1998a; Booth et al., 1998.

¹² See Guijt and Shah, 1997. For another account of the development of participatory methodologies, see Chambers, 1994.

other forms of knowledge. These use locally appropriate ideas about climate, seasons, and ecology; build up time lines establishing locally significant chronologies; utilize people's capacity to tell stories and their capacity to visualize and express characteristics and meanings in diagrammatic form; and use concrete methods for establishing priorities. Participatory techniques are open-ended and they stress local perceptions of poverty, which allows for a fuller range of poverty concepts.

In addition to this tool chest of techniques, participatory methodologies also incorporate a philosophy that valorizes the direct involvement of people in problem identification. The emphasis is on listening, respect for local knowledge and facilitating local people's control over outcomes ("Handing Over the Stick"¹³). Participatory methodologies draw on a critique of literacy practices, which argues that these are more than a set of technical skills: they are also a key element in a nexus of power/knowledge relations. The expanded and more complex view of poverty in the last decade has been accompanied by an increasing emphasis on asking people themselves how they experience poverty and what they see as its causes and remedies—not just to get at local perceptions, but also because of a growing unease about the link between poverty and power or, rather, its absence. Participatory methodologies aim to deliver a bottom-up approach and to report the voices of the poor.

One of the most contentious areas of participatory methodologies is their use of more traditional qualitative techniques as part of participatory methods. We were initially astonished to find interviews with key informants and unstructured interviews with farmers or urban traders being described as "participatory", since we are accustomed to think of these as standard qualitative research methods.¹⁴ However, techniques such as conversational interviewing and semi-structured interviews,¹⁵ with individuals who may hold key positions as well as the general rural population, are now normal practice in various kinds of participatory methodologies. Proponents argue that the participatory context in which these semi-structured interviews are carried out is the important feature of the methodology (A. Norton, personal communication). However, the participatory element in using informal interviewing of individuals does become difficult to pin down.

Contestation about what constitutes a participatory method and its relation to qualitative methods is not simply a turf war, but has links with another history that is very relevant to the World Bank. This history is the long-standing epistemological competition in the social sciences between quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. As economics is a discipline in which the quantitative paradigm has a foundational status and the Bank's research culture is dominated by economics, the use of the new participatory methods represents a

¹³ Chambers, 1992.

¹⁴ We were almost equally astonished to find accounts of how people cope or make ends meet labelled "oral history" when they appeared to be quotes from informal or semi-structured interviews about recent experiences. There are precedents for this in the use of qualitative interviewing in development contexts elsewhere (see, for example, Cross and Barker, 1991).

¹⁵ Other commentators have pointed out (Hanmer et al., 1997) that semi-structured interviews are a core qualitative method (used in both sociology and anthropology, for example), and it is perhaps unusual to refer to them as participatory methods.

foothold for qualitative approaches. However this does beg the question of whether there should not be a greater role for the findings from more conventional research using qualitative methods in the Bank's discussions of poverty. It is possible that normal qualitative methods have such negative connotations that they have to be glossed with the perceived relative legitimacy of the use of the new participatory methods.

By stressing their capacity to give access to voices, which, it is argued, are suppressed by all conventional research methods, participatory methodologies use very different claims to legitimacy than do qualitative methods in general. The latter rest their claims to valid research findings on various procedures to establish reliability and validity that differ significantly from the statistical procedures in quantitative surveys.

As part of their overall philosophy of whose views should be reflected in the interpretation of findings, participatory methodologies do not rely on statistical aggregation to derive a view of the whole from the views of individuals. Aggregation is based on group discussions and, especially, group-based tasks to arrive at trade-offs between possible competing interests and perspectives within local communities.¹⁶ This kind of aggregation is not directly possible out of semi-structured interviewing.

The contrast with the techniques and procedures of positivist quantitative methodology is profound. It is some indication of the dissatisfaction with conventional income or consumption measures for identifying the causes and characteristics of poverty that such a radically different approach should be tried. Even so, informed comment, such as that by Norton, suggests that the authors of the PPAs constantly fight battles about whether their findings are "real". These problems are by no means confined to the Bank. Robb comments: "In Ghana, key policy makers in country were reluctant to accept the poverty assessment or PPA as credible documents until the Country Economic Memorandum (an influential World Bank instrument) reflected their results" (1998:136).

◆ 5.2 Four Participatory Poverty Assessments

Given the emphasis on flexibility and local ownership in participatory methods, we were particularly interested in how each of the PPAs in our sample had been done, before considering the link between their findings and the gender accounts in the PAs themselves. In our four examples, the Uganda I study stands out (World Bank, 1993a). Its PPA was conducted by the mission carrying out the PA, and at the same time. The PPA was conceived as providing an adjunct to existing data in circumstances where there was no other data available. It was specifically used in the war zones, where the household-level survey work on which the rest of the poverty assessment depends was not carried out. The account of what was done for the PPA is perfunctory. The assessment mentions a rapid poverty appraisal in which the mission observed conditions and listened to what poor people had to say in remote villages. The rapid rural appraisal team visited rural schools, asking older children to write about their experiences and younger children to draw them. Some of these children's drawings are reproduced in an appendix of the report.

¹⁶ Mosse, 1994, and Guijt and Shah, 1997 explore the limitations of participatory methodologies in dealing with groups of people with crosscutting or different interests.

The mission also collected information from “those who have been working with the poor for years” (elaborated elsewhere as “missionaries and NGO workers”).

The other three examples of PAs with PPAs, one from 1994 and two from 1995, all had the participatory element funded separately. The most comprehensive published PPA in our set is that from Zambia (World Bank, 1994). The published Zambia poverty assessment is in five volumes. In addition to the main report (volume 1) and a volume of statistical appendices to the main report, there are separate volumes on rural poverty (volume 3) and urban poverty (volume 4), while volume 5, at 160 pages long, gives the results from the PPA. Two teams from the Rural Development Studies Bureau at the University of Zambia carried out the PPA research. The fieldwork lasted six weeks and covered a total of 10 sites, four urban and six rural. The PPA was commissioned by the Southern Africa Department of the World Bank and co-ordinated by a member of that department, who also participated in the fieldwork. Overall research design, field guidance and training were provided by externals, who were either academics or from the Bank. The report was jointly prepared on the basis of the PPA findings by the Zambian team leader and two Bank members. The PPA findings from the 10 field sites are available as separate site reports.

The account of the methods of the PPA in volume 5 is detailed, and it is immediately clear that the participatory data collection exercise does not confine itself to what was referred to above as the participatory tool chest, but includes many forms of semi-structured interviewing of individuals and groups. The semi-structured interviews are a significant part of the research design, and the field guide includes an *aide memoire* of areas to be covered in these interviews. This *aide memoire* is not prescriptive and contains helpful suggestions as to how to probe the desired areas of information.

The design and findings of the Ghana PPA are much less transparent: very little information on the design of the research or its findings appear in the PA (World Bank, 1995a). They are described in a separate discussion paper (Norton et al., 1995).¹⁷ From this source we learn that the PPA uses the same combination of focus groups, semi-structured and conversational interviewing, and structured analytical exercises characteristic of participatory rural appraisal as found in the Zambia example. The authors recognize that some of these techniques are more conventionally called qualitative methods, and careful thought has been given in the research design to where and to whom researchers should talk. There is a spread of sites that try to capture different agro-ecological systems, different social organizations and different livelihoods. The Ghana fieldwork contained three rounds of data collection, and a specific feature of this research was that the third round concentrated on people's experience and perception of public service provision, especially health and education.

Our final case is that of Tanzania (World Bank, 1996b). As yet there has been no formal publication of the results of the PPA,¹⁸ although volume 3 of the PA, a statistical and methodological appendix, contains a succinct (and rather buried

¹⁷ The findings from the PPA are treated no differently from other specially commissioned research. Three other papers published in the same series, the Poverty and Social Policy Series, contain the results of the Extended Poverty Study containing the statistical findings on which the PA is based.

¹⁸ Although Booth et al., 1998 say they have been widely circulated in manuscript form.

account) of its methodology. The Tanzania PPA is both very individual and very interesting. Its authors argue that there are no hard and fast rules as to how to conduct a PPA, and emphasize that they wanted their PPA to unravel specific questions raised by policy makers. Part of their exercise, therefore, was to consult policy makers on what they wanted to know and to incorporate this in the terms of reference for the PPA. The emphasis on credibility led them to design one part of their PPA as a semi-structured interview format with a sample of households drawn in a statistically rigorous way as a sub-sample for the main survey. Sociological and economic household-level data were collected from 85 villages, and the analysis of these data forms an important component of the poverty assessment. The use of a sample drawn from households used in the main survey enables some of the findings to be analysed statistically. The methodological account stresses that focus groups and group exercises centring on a number of different participatory techniques—such as Venn diagrams, wealth ranking, drawings and “story with a gap”—were also used.

It should be clear from this review that it is often not easy to tell from the main report what the PPA comprised. Details on comprehensiveness, organization, logistics and even methods of data collection may be absent in the published PA. Nevertheless, our review confirms the points made by Hanmer et al. (1997) and Booth et al. (1998): there is no fixed set of methods for the PPAs, and individual teams have made many different creative solutions to the problem of getting a bottom-up view.

◆ 5.3 From the PPA Findings to the Poverty Assessments

Our second and third questions centred around what the PPAs had found out and how the findings had been used. Here the range of transparency was very wide. There is very little evidence that the results of the PPA in any way influenced the analysis in the Uganda I PA, especially its policy discussion. This was a very early example of a PPA, and the decision to employ participatory assessment as an “adjunct” method clearly had a lot to do with circumstances in Uganda. Nevertheless, according to Robb (1998), the Uganda I PA generated widespread discussion in the Bank of the value of using qualitative methods. In this case the material of the PPA was rather sketchy and its not at all clear how much information from adult rural dwellers about their socioeconomic circumstances was obtained. The Uganda II PA did not use any form of PPA (World Bank, 1995b).

It is much easier to see the influence of the PPA in the case of the Zambia assessment, which published a separate account of the PPA findings (World Bank, 1994:vol. 5). Precisely because the methodology and findings of the PPA are more transparent, it is possible to trace through the influence of the PPA in the more aggregated volumes of the Zambia PA. Many of the findings of the PPA (as recorded in volume 5) accord well with the features of rural poverty as we understand them, and the detailed findings and highly informed discussion in this volume go a long way to building an understanding of rural and urban poverty. We would expect to find much of this material discussed in the rural poverty volume as well. We find instead that the rich findings about how rural people characterize and analyse their poverty are sidelined in favour of the data from the macro survey and the findings of a complex modelling exercise.

Turning to the main report, the relevant chapters are those describing the poverty profile, the poverty analysis and the policy framework (World Bank, 1994:vol.1). PPA findings are well integrated into the diagnosis of poverty profile which uses the quantitative survey data. In some cases, material from the PPA stands alone. In the poverty analysis, however, the discussion of rural poverty summarizes not the PPA findings, but rather the analysis of poverty (found in volume 3) dominated by the modelling exercise. The discussion of rural issues in the chapter on policy reflects this analysis, with its discussion of infrastructure problems and price incentives for smallholders, especially poor food producers.¹⁹ In other words, moving backwards from the PPA volume, through volume 3, to volume 1, many themes from the PPA are lost. The specificities of rural poverty gradually shift and become dominated by analytical and policy agendas which are extraneous to the local situation.²⁰ In this process, the gender insights from the PPA are lost, first, because they are not used in the rural volume (which is dominated by specially commissioned work, notably that on agricultural modelling), and second, when the findings in rural volume find their way into the summary. Evidence that the gender division of labour is not nearly as rigid as the model specified, which is actually discussed in volume 3, is ignored in favour of the findings of the model.

Such slippage or gaps are even more apparent in the Ghana II case (World Bank, 1995a). In the PA itself, the findings from the various participatory exercises and qualitative interviews appear as a separate chapter. This immediately follows the quantitative discussion, which is based data obtained in 1991/92 in the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS). Care is taken to discuss the linkages between the two kinds of findings, while the differences in conditions in Ghana in the three years between 1991/1992 and 1994 when the PPA was done are recognized. The report thus highlights agreement between both sets of data that poverty is greatest in the north, and about the importance of community water supplies.

But some key messages about local conceptions of vulnerability and poverty from the PPA are not carried through in the PA. For example, the PPA revealed that people link rural poverty to problems of family labour availability, with the disabled, widowed or childless faring badly, but these points are lost in the rest of the document. (Arguably, they re-appear in the policy section in recommendations for targeted social fund spending, but since social safety nets seem to amount to food-for-work schemes they are hardly appropriate for those who lack labour.) Other gaps are the identification in the PPA of social networks or membership of social institutions as a key dimension of well-being and livelihood security, and the observation that men and women perceive a high level of separation in their income streams. It looks as if these important insights are left hanging because the GLSS cannot contain any analysis, with a bearing on them.²¹

¹⁹ There is a final paring down in the Zambia PA, in that the policy action plan is presented in the form of a table at the end.

²⁰ A fuller discussion of the influence of the Zambian PPA findings on the PA and other aspects of the policy process can be found in Norton (1998a). Norton is one of the authors of the PPA.

²¹ Gaps are actually more severe than this exposition suggests. If we examine the content of the background paper and how this translated into the material in the report, there are again some critical omissions. There is, for example, a marked shift from the poor's own account of individual and community factors that bring on poverty, to an emphasis on the community aspects. As individual factors, the PPA found human and social assets (reported above as labour and social networks) second and third to the first issue—that of physical

There is further slippage when we come to the final chapter, described as the policy agenda for “further” poverty reduction. The prescription is a three-pronged set: broad-based growth (especially in agriculture); deepening of human capital through education and health; and the use of a targeted social fund. This enables the appraisal of the health and education sectors made in the PPA (especially in the third round, and which produced some very interesting findings) to be taken on board. The PPA finding that community water supply is important in the north makes an appearance in a discussion of northern agriculture, but this paragraph is poor on recommendations. It concludes “. . . but Ghanaian agriculture is likely to remain dependent on rain fed agriculture for some time to come”, vaguely implying an underlying idea that irrigation is the answer to the problems of northern agriculture. Credit, which should be linked to the PPA finding that absence of assets is a significant dimension of poverty, but is not (see footnote 21), is also taken up in relation to agriculture. Altogether the discussion of agriculture seems to derive little from the PPA findings (World Bank, 1995a:55).

In the Ghana II case, there is no doubt that the PPA is relatively well integrated into the PA. Moreover, it does appear to influence the overall policy recommendations. Nevertheless, what is used is a very selective reading of the PPA findings. The gender findings of the PPA are among those that are subject to this selective reading.

In the Tanzania PA (World Bank, 1996b), the methodology enables some of the PPA findings to claim statistical significance; others have a more strictly illustrative or qualitative role. In several chapters of the PA, the findings of the PPA appear to be integrated into the analysis and discussion. In the Tanzania case, however, the PPA results are not used only when they can be backed up by household economic survey evidence. A telling example of this occurs in the discussion of female-headed households, as a result of the stark difference in the findings from the main quantitative and PPA surveys about the poverty of female-headed households. According to PPA data, 29 per cent of female-headed households are very poor, but the main survey data gives only 18 per cent. In the discussion of this difference, it is suggested that people themselves perceive poverty as being not only about current income and resources, but also about long-term security. The discrepancy arises because more female heads lack long-term security, as they are less likely to own capital assets than male heads and are more isolated from supportive family networks. This discussion is judicious in its attempt to reconcile differences in the findings. Such a serious comparison is rare, and rarer still is a preference for PPA evidence over that from a household survey.

assets, i.e., productive resources. The latter simply disappeared when the PPA findings were written into the PA.

◆ 5.4 Do the PPAs Improve Gender Analysis?

Our most important question, of course, is whether PPAs improve the gender analysis in PAs. We argued earlier that participatory methodologies might potentially deliver a gendered profile of poverty because of their capacity to come closer to people's experience of poverty. However, as we have just seen, the greater gender sensitivity of those PAs that have used PPAs does not seem to come from a direct delivery of gendered poverty analysis from the PPA findings. Given the four claims made for participatory methodologies described above, this is both striking and disappointing. To understand why PPAs fail to improve the gender analysis in the PAs, it is useful to reconsider each of these four claims. Essentially, what emerges is that the potential for PPAs to improve gender analysis fails precisely because it is not an intrinsic feature, and in the absence of existing gender awareness the PPA will add little that is new.

Voices of the poor

It is clear from many of the PAs that an opportunity to present the voices of poor people has been lost. PPAs are meant to bring out the perception of poverty of poor people themselves. In some countries there have been major advances in the quality of national debates about poverty as a result of the high profile gained by local understandings of poverty in the participatory exercises. But a different story emerges within the Bank's PA documents. Often, PPA results are introduced by a composite picture of a poor person that is very close to being banal. This is a human interest approach, aiming to show that poverty is a human tragedy, experienced by flesh-and-blood people, not by statistical units.

Although there is something rather odd about this aspect of the way the poor's own perceptions have been dealt with, there are some cases where the poor's perceptions have been used properly as evidence. Perhaps the most successful aspect of the PPAs is the detailed information they have provided on the reality of public service provision. In the Zambia PPA, rural people identified the timing of school costs and fees as a particular problem. This finding survived all the selectivities we have identified and appears in the final report. Considerable information was also picked up about the shortcomings of health services for ordinary clients. In Ghana, the PPAs repeatedly reported the failure of basic provision in schools—no equipment, teachers absent, the poor state of buildings—as well as the apparently higher rates of user fees charged to rural users of health services. Norton (1998b) identifies these as areas in which there has been a successful translation of PPA findings into public policy. It is worth pointing out in this regard that in some PPAs, data collection was specifically geared to these aspects of public service provision (for example, the third round of data collection in the Ghana PPA was specifically about this). It represents a priority of the data collectors and it is not clear how far it matches poor people's priorities.

Beyond the issue of how participatory data are actually collected, there is the question of how they are then selected, analysed and presented. Here we would simply observe that the strong moral emphasis on accessing the voices of the poor, and the subsequent focus on methods and tools in participatory approaches, side-steps questions about validity and reliability (familiar from debates within qualitative methods) and about the role of data collectors themselves. The field

worker is a crucial figure in selecting and transmitting the voice of the poor, but is largely invisible or assumed to be somehow transparent in the PPAs.

In particular, there is scarcely any reporting on how the PPAs ensured that the voices of women were heard. In the literature, participatory methodologies have been criticized for their capacity to represent multiple and different voices (Mosse, 1994; Guijt and Shah, 1997). There has been a lot of concern that the voices of farmers and the poor picked up through participatory methodologies may turn out to be the voices of men (and slightly wealthier men at that). Our suspicion that there may be such problems in some PPAs is confirmed by Kane et al.'s description of their PPA work on education policy in the Gambia. They record that a male facilitator automatically stood facing the men with his back to the women "who could not see the charts and tried in vain to get his attention" (1998:37). The general point is fully explored in Cornwall (1997). She shows how gender sensitivity fails to be built into participatory methodologies. Prior gender understanding is necessary for the development of procedures and methods for both data collection and interpretation that are geared to producing gendered data outcomes. But without more details on the processes by which the PPAs were conducted, it is impossible to assess whether a widespread and systematic gender-blind application of participatory methods has prevented the PAs from absorbing the voices of poor women.

Triangulation of data

Booth et al. (1998) argue that a major benefit of the PPAs lies in their potential for triangulation of data. We are in complete agreement of the huge benefits of triangulation in an analysis of poverty, its incidence, characteristics and causes in sub-Saharan Africa, but there is little evidence in our case studies that PPAs are being used this way. Recent literature reflecting on the use of PPAs in the PAs shows a sophisticated understanding of the methodological issues and of the policy-making process (Booth et al., 1998; Norton, 1998b). But this literature contrasts with the six PAs we considered. These seem to us to have a limited understanding of non-quantitative, non-survey based methodologies, poor conceptualization of what PPAs can do, and very little idea about triangulation and how multi-stranded methods can be successfully combined. Indeed, as we have indicated, the PPAs sit very uneasily within the PAs. Most PA teams seemed unsure of how to use PPAs. In particular, the PAs almost inevitably privilege the authority and use of quantitative data from household surveys over qualitative information, which effectively comes from the PPAs. Interestingly, the sole exception that we could identify was gendered: discussion of the poverty status of female-headed as opposed to male-headed households in Tanzania (World Bank, 1996b) gave priority to the qualitative findings. In general terms, this lack of methodological sophistication in resolving the tension between the different types of data represents yet another barrier between the potential for the PPAs to contribute a gendered perspective on poverty and their actual failure to do so.

The politics of poverty

Participatory methodologies were developed in relation to the design and implementation of projects, and were intended to change the ways in which decisions were made in that context. Such issues of power are, of course, very different when they are directed toward national-level issues of measurement and

policy. But within this new context, an important claim for PPAs is that because they are locally owned, in a way that conventional poverty measurement is not, they open up a national debate on poverty and make it a visible and legitimate issue for political discourse. Certainly, there is evidence that the PAs are opening up lively and productive debates at both national and international levels. It is too early to judge whether or how soon this will lead to shifts in political priorities and policies.

In addition, PPAs appear to be the area where local ownership is greatest, and where follow-up studies are being pursued.²² Many in-country organizations have built up teams skilled in forms of participatory poverty assessment, which are carrying out a great deal of work. This capacity building is a form of empowerment about poverty, although not of course a direct empowerment of the poor. Indeed, one of the clearer outcomes of the PPAs lies not at the level of giving access to poor people's perceptions, but of directly engaging larger numbers of people with fellow citizens as a source of research evidence. For example, the current Uganda PPA is planned to have a staff of well over 100 people. This approach gives a whole new sense of what research is about, compared with the traditional training and practice for interviewers conducting household surveys. The key issue then becomes not simply the national politics of poverty, but also the relatively neglected issues of the politics of poverty research, and takes us back to the problem of voice.

However, changing the politics of poverty in Africa—whether in national arenas or in research culture—will not in itself change the politics of gender. The greater awareness of poverty created by the PPAs does not necessarily lead to a more gender-aware national poverty debate, nor does it necessarily build capacity for gendered poverty analysis. Thus, the political discourses about poverty that are being promoted may remain aloof from the debates about gender. This is particularly clear for Uganda and Tanzania, where the current preoccupations of in-country feminist groupings dominate the chapters on women/gender. In as much as the PPA process or the PA document are locally important, they may simply reinforce the existing country-level status of gender politics.

Identifying processes

The claim that PPAs give a more dynamic picture of poverty is an important one given the relative failure to produce an account of poverty processes using poverty line measurements. The Ghana II PA (World Bank, 1995a) explicitly claims to use the PPA findings to give a dynamic account. This claim is followed by a discussion of seasonal aspects of poverty and malnutrition, which introduces the idea of poverty as vulnerability. The qualitative PPA accounts certainly include the reporting of long-term changes in the environment, which are having a critical effect on vulnerability. This is an important discussion, but it is “dynamic” only in the simple sense that long-term trends are addressed; what is absent is an account of the economic and social dynamics related to environmental trends.

In our three examples containing a full PPA component, this has not produced a substantial account of poverty causes and poverty processes. Despite a greater potential for such an account, the PPAs offer little more than the conventional

²² In addition to Uganda's current PPA, there are plans for a PPA in Pakistan in 1999.

survey-based quantitative poverty profiles. This failure illustrates well Baulch's (1996) point that there is nothing intrinsic to participatory measurement that automatically produces a more dynamic account. Both methodologies—participatory and conventionally statistical—can be deployed to produce static pictures of poverty.

The ISS assessment of the sub-Saharan African PAs makes a strong case that their greatest weakness is in identifying the causes of poverty. They suggest that the most successful causal and processual accounts of poverty are in the discussions of agriculture—precisely because of the long experience of the Bank in African agricultural development. Among other things, this implies that there is tacit (if not explicit) recourse to a much wider range of studies in these parts of the analysis. Hanmer et al. (1997) also bring out the need to move the analysis from individuals and undifferentiated households through micro-, meso- and macro-levels, with appropriate conceptualizations of the links between these. As they make clear, these perspectives on evidence and on theorizing are crucial for a gendered analysis of poverty. Gender and its links to poverty can only be understood in terms of relational processes that need to be investigated and spelled out.

An overall assessment

The analysis in this section suggests that severe constraints militate against the potential of PPAs to produce gender-sensitive accounts of poverty. This confirms Naila Kabeer's (1997) point that participatory methodologies are neither intrinsically gender-sensitive nor gender-neutral. It depends how they are done. It is also clear that there is a range of reasons why PPAs do not deliver a set of gender messages that are then picked up and used in PAs.

Gender differences did emerge in many of the PPAs, but so many PPA findings are left out of the final reports that the potential for gender analysis is completely lost. This is the point made implicitly by Booth et al. (1998), who re-analyse the PPA findings for Zambia and Tanzania to produce a strongly gendered analysis of poverty for these two countries. What is striking about the gender stories that they produce (virtually none of which can be found in the Bank's own poverty assessment) is that telling them becomes possible only because the narrators have an equally strong story about the analysis of poverty. They adopt an assets/vulnerability approach to poverty and examine gender differences in relation to a range of tangible and intangible resources. This effectively enables them to "read" the data.

At a fundamental level, one factor in this "gender weakness" in the PPAs is the absence of a gender analysis of any depth in the participatory methodologies that underlie the PPAs. There has been lengthy debate about the gender dimensions of participatory methodologies. Some feminists have hailed participatory methodologies as feminist methodologies *par excellence* (see Maguire, 1984; Mies, 1983) while other accounts point out that in practice the competing interests of different groups within local communities might not all be fully represented in participatory outcomes (see Mosse, 1994; Guijt and Shah, 1997). Cornwall (1997) gives a good recent account of all the points at which the conceptualization, procedures and analysis of participatory methodologies may reproduce gender inequities. For us it is symptomatic that, although the theoretical influences on participatory methodologies included feminist methodology, Robert Chambers

(1997) does not mention the latter in his account of theoretical influences on the PRA school. This is despite the fact that some feminist methodologies had very similar starting premises to participatory methodologies, especially in their analysis of the relationship between knowledge and power. The two schools also share sophisticated discussions of the link between research, empowerment and social differences. In the last analysis then, it is not simply the marginalization of PPA findings within the PAs that reduces their gender impacts. Serious shortcomings in the theory and practice of participatory methodologies play an important part as well.

We have addressed the participatory methodologies at some length because they are an important innovation. We are conscious that the use of the PPAs has been a learning experience, so that what they are meant to do in each PA is a bit of a moving target. Many of our criticisms of these PPA examples, which represent early attempts to incorporate the new methods, are being addressed in the plans for future PPAs. For us, two issues stand out. First, successful use of participatory methodologies has breached the monopoly over poverty measurement hitherto held by money-metric poverty methodologies. It opens up a space for more careful consideration of alternatives to national household surveys. But second, there is an urgent need for future PPAs to be much more gender-aware, in the ways that we have outlined.

6. GENDER AND POLICY IN THE POVERTY ASSESSMENTS

Methodological choices have a powerful influence in shaping the ways gender appears or is made invisible in the evidence on poverty in the PAs. However, rather different factors shape the ways in which gender is treated in the analysis of poverty, and discussion of policies to reduce poverty. As a result, the “filtering out” of gender issues and gendered perspectives that begins with the move from the PPAs to the main PAs continues with the move from evidence, to analysis and finally to policy. The resulting “gaps” in the treatment of gender are analogous to those in the treatment of poverty. One of the most striking aspects of the six PAs considered in this paper is that the relationship between evidence about poverty and its causes on one hand, and policy recommendations on the other, is highly selective and highly partial. Issues present in the evidence appear with changed emphasis, or sometimes do not appear at all.

These gaps have been identified within the World Bank itself. A 1996 review of PAs by the Operations Evaluation Department notes that 22 out of 46 PAs fail to contain recommendations that are based on the poverty diagnosis (World Bank, 1996a:7). A further “external” gap exists between the PAs as documents and the preparation of the Country Assistance Strategies (CASs), which have become the “principal document summarizing the Bank’s role in helping a country meet its development objectives and priorities” (World Bank, 1996a:8). The World Bank’s own evaluation department concludes that at least until 1994, “the findings of Poverty Assessments found only weak expression in CASs” (World Bank, 1996a:8). An evaluation of more recent CAS documents by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development found that the inclusion of poverty

reduction aims within CASs has improved, but gender analysis and gendered policy remain conspicuously absent (cited in Tjonneland et al., 1998).

In this section, we describe these gender and poverty gaps between evidence, analysis and policy in the PAs, and go on to examine the model of poverty in the **WDR**, which forms the basis of the policy sections of the PAs. Finally, we explore the implications of this model (and its evolution since 1990 in Bank thinking) for the treatment of gender in the policy sections.

◆ 6.1 Gaps Between Evidence, Analysis and Policy

Our main focus in assessing evidence in the PAs was on rural contexts. Poverty in Africa is largely concentrated in rural areas, and our experience is also of rural Africa. The following explanation of the key points on evidence, analysis and policy, brings out the lack of coherence in each case.

Poverty description and analysis find their way into policy in the Tanzania PA selectively (World Bank, 1996b). A lack of rural infrastructure and education are evoked, as are safety nets. Agricultural growth is argued to be key, achieved through better technology, to come from research and extension. Although the income sources of the poor and non-poor differ mainly in the latter getting more income from off-farm sources, this is not followed up in the policy section. Credit and input availability are downplayed, although they were heavily weighted in the PPA. The mechanics of the relationship between education and poverty is not explored at all. The issue of remoteness is addressed by proposing more roads, rather than rethinking the liberalization of marketing, which is clearly a problem in the analysis. The Tanzania PA is one of two PAs with a whole chapter on gender issues, including discussions of education, legal rights and poverty in relation to sex of the head of household. In the policy section, however, gender appears only in a recommendation about female education, and the need for targeted social spending.

The Ghana I PA is actually very thin on country-level evidence, relying instead on international comparisons to make arguments and policy recommendations (World Bank, 1992b). There are a lot of assertions and analysis without data. The policy section ignores what evidence there is for the significance of off-farm income for the non-poor, and the importance of credit. Education is assumed to relieve poverty, without any discussion of the direction of causality or its mechanisms. In the main body of the report declining agricultural terms of trade and marketing problems are identified as key, but the policy section offers little except exhortations to traders. Much in the policy section on extension policies is good common sense, but is not based on evidence. The PA is consistent in its approach to gender issues, in that they are scarcely mentioned anywhere. The sole exception is an unsubstantiated remark that agriculture is becoming more feminized and, in the policy section, an argument for targeting agricultural extension at women.

The Ghana II PA (World Bank, 1995a) is rather different, being much clearer about sources of evidence and methodology. A number of issues raised in the PPA—such as water, credit and roads—do come through in the policy section, but significantly re-ordered. High profile issues in the PPA receive much less emphasis in the policy section. At the same time, issues in the policy section—such as the emphasis on the cocoa sector in agricultural policy—do not arise in the

sections on evidence and analysis of poverty. The Ghana II PA also contains some investigation of gender issues in the main text, including material on time burdens for women, female-headed-households and intra-household dynamics, and gender bias in social spending. Most of these issues fall away in the policy section, which mentions only targeting agricultural extension to women.

In the Zambia PA (World Bank, 1994) there is a relatively rich array of sources, and much material survives in the transition from evidence and analysis to policy. However, there are some gaps and extraneous material. There is the introduction of a typology of farming households for policy use that appears to come from nowhere, but which in the end can be traced to categories used by the Ministry of Agriculture. Probably the most extraordinary lacuna lies in the treatment of agricultural liberalization. In the policy section, an argument about growth and smallholder productivity is constructed on the basis of a sophisticated linear programming model of the farming household, which comes from the rural analysis in volume 3. On the basis of the model, it is argued that smallholders are adjusting to market signals, so policy must facilitate smallholder growth through infrastructure, technology and support for private marketing. But there is no real evidence in the report that smallholders are responding to market signals, and there is evidence from elsewhere that they are not (see Wold, 1997). There is evidence elsewhere in the main PA that the record on maize liberalization is more doubtful (World Bank, 1994:88-89). The model itself is calibrated on data from the less-poor regions, and when it is confronted with some of the data in volume 3 it is clear that the assumptions about market signals are problematic (World Bank, 1994:124-125). Finally, evidence from the PPA on assets, social status and rural labour institutions also fails to make it as far as the policy section. These gaps are mirrored in the contrast between a fairly detailed treatment of gender in the household model in volume 3 and gender issues raised in the PPA on one hand, and simple recommendations about policy for saving domestic labour time, and girls' education, on the other.

As with Ghana I (World Bank, 1992b), the Uganda I (World Bank, 1993a) report is thin on useful evidence. Its policy section is explicitly based on the 1990 **WDR** and on international comparisons. The section on evidence does raise rural labour issues, but without much real analysis, and labour institutions are ignored in the policy section. The problems of agricultural terms of trade raised in the main body of the report also disappear in the policy section. The gender gap in the Uganda I PA does not arise between the separate chapter on gender in the main text and the policy sub-section on women, but rather because none of the issues are taken up in the main policy section.

The Uganda II report (World Bank, 1995b) is actually a Country Economic Memorandum, so most of the evidence on poverty is in an annex at the end of the document. The policy section makes little reference to the evidence in this annex, but policy measures are clearly aimed at export-led agricultural growth based on an analysis of terms of trade, along with infrastructure and education. The evidence that the policy section does draw on is largely international comparison. There is no evidence on poverty and education in the poverty annex, even though it features strongly in the policy section. Again, as with Ghana I, Uganda II is consistent in its treatment of gender: it is not mentioned.

There is thus a deeply embedded paradox in the PAs. On the one hand there is a great deal of variation in approaches to measurement (driven partly by data availability), identification of poverty causes and analysis of gender relations. On the other hand, there is a remarkable consistency of views on how to reduce poverty, with usually implicit but occasionally explicit implications for the treatment of gender. These views can be traced to World Bank orthodoxy on the nature of poverty and policy on poverty reduction, which has its fullest expression in the 1990 **WDR**. This influence is noted in other reviews of the PAs (see Booth et al., 1998; Hanmer et al., 1997), and since 1992 has been operationalized through OD 4.15 (World Bank, 1991) and the Poverty Reduction Handbook (World Bank, 1992a) (see Section 3). The policy sections of the PAs may therefore be read as exercises in applying the framework of the 1990 **WDR** to particular countries, rather than as being generated out of the study of poverty in those countries itself.

We have argued that the gaps between evidence and analysis on one hand, and policy on the other, reflect a process by which policy sections of the PAs came under close peer scrutiny and review. While differing empirical specifics of poverty are consistent with the Bank's position on poverty reduction, different models for poverty reduction are not. The implications for gender, and particularly for the ways in which a gender analysis informs or fails to inform policy in the PAs, are considerable. We develop this theme in two steps. The first briefly lays out the influence of the 1990 **WDR** policy agenda. The second shows the implications for gender analysis and policy of Bank thinking on poverty, in the **WDR** and beyond it. The 1990 **WDR** is a pivotal moment in the evolution of this thinking, but we explore these issues in the larger framework of the Bank's approach to poverty from the early 1980s through the mid-1990s.

◆ 6.2 The 1990 WDR Model of Poverty

The discussions of policy measures required for the reduction of poverty in the different PAs centre on the three routes identified in the 1990 **WDR**: labour-intensive growth, human resource development and social safety nets (World Bank, 1990:2-3). Of these, only social safety nets are in a strict sense a policy; the other two are desired outcomes, to be reached via an enhanced economic reform programme, and efficient public investment in health and education respectively.

Growth is presented as the central policy area in all the PAs we reviewed. A common approach is to begin by arguing that poverty will only be reduced quickly by high rates of growth, and to continue by saying that growth must be broad-based or "pro-poor" and must be achieved through growth in agricultural productivity and incomes. Redistribution is rarely mentioned.

Growth is, of course, a policy aim, not a policy. Policies for growth in the PAs are presented at both macroeconomic and sectoral levels. Macro-policies for growth are inevitably standard adjustment policies. For example, in the Ghana II PA (World Bank, 1992b) growth is identified as necessary for poverty reduction, with exports (especially agricultural exports) playing a key role. Growth through adjustment is "critical" for poverty reduction in the Ghana II PA (World Bank, 1995a:52), with a recent slowing of growth attributed to slippage on adjustment policies. In the Uganda I PA, labour is identified as "the main asset of the poor", leading to a call for a labour-intensive "growth-oriented strategy for reducing poverty in Uganda" (World Bank, 1993a:59). Three years later, in the Uganda II

PA, the focus on growth is even greater, requiring a “strong and diversified export sector” (World Bank, 1995b:24) and improved public sector management.

Indeed, many of the PAs emphasize a more efficient use of resources. This means both redirecting spending from the urban, the rich and the tertiary sector toward the rural, the poor and the primary sector, as well as using public intervention to catalyze private investment, for example through rural infrastructure (see the Ghana I and Ghana II, and Uganda II PAs). At a sectoral level, the two main messages are the need to continue and deepen liberalization of agricultural marketing and the marketing of inputs (noted in the Zambia PA), and the facilitating role of the state in providing better research and extension services. The aim is the “modernization” of agriculture, raising productivity through technology.

Human resource development at the individual or household level is the second strand of the NPA. Each PA has a policy section on human resource development, essentially education. In some assessments, for example Uganda II, state intervention in education needs to be justified in terms of the provision of a public good. Much of the policy content of the human resource development sections is about redirecting education expenditure from rich to poor, or from tertiary levels to the primary level.

Finally, each PA also has a policy section on safety nets. Often these argue that NGOs have a leading implementation role, and that interventions should be self-targeting, labour intensive public works. In the PAs, the emphasis is usually on protection from transitional threats to livelihood from natural causes, such as drought, rather than from economic adjustment. They are supposedly aimed at extremely vulnerable groups, such as the disabled or orphans.

The influence of the 1990 **WDR** is thus very clear, with some PAs making direct reference to it at the beginning of their policy sections (see World Bank, 1995a:52). The Uganda I PA introduces most chapters with quotes from the 1990 **WDR** (see World Bank, 1993a).

◆ 6.3 Gender and the Evolution of World Bank Thinking on Poverty

Other reviews of the PAs also refer to the influence 1990 **WDR**. In our view the analysis and policy prescriptions in the PAs reflect not only this orthodoxy, but also an evolving approach to poverty and policy within the Bank over a longer period. This evolution starts with the thinking on growth and liberalization in Africa in the early 1980s, encompasses the debates on “adjustment with a human face” and the UNICEF critique, the 1990 **WDR**, and the growing influence of the 1993 East Asian miracle report (World Bank, 1993b). In order to understand the implications for gender, we need to see the PAs not simply as a reflection of the 1990 **WDR** as a single document capturing a particular moment in Bank thinking, but this larger picture. We see the implications for gender emerging in three areas in the PAs, matching the three-pronged 1990 **WDR** approach. These are the idea of market-led growth—particularly export-led agricultural growth, the role of education and vulnerability.

Market-led growth?

In the early 1980s the World Bank was embarking on structural adjustment as its core policy. The key World Bank document on Africa over the 1980s was known as the “Berg Report”, after its principal author Eliot Berg (World Bank, 1981). This put forward a view of African agriculture and an account of agricultural stagnation which is still clearly visible in the PAs in the mid-1990s. The central problem, according to the Berg Report, was that African agriculture (especially export agriculture) was a victim of over-taxation, over-valued exchange rates and inefficient state marketing boards.²³ What was needed to reinvigorate African economies was structural adjustment, in the form of improving the terms of trade for farmers and liberalizing agricultural marketing, along with privatization of agricultural extension services. This would unleash the entrepreneurial potential of farmers (conceptualized as independent producers operating largely without wage labour and without land constraints), who would in turn invest in better agricultural technologies and increase yields. The role of the state was to facilitate, not intervene.

All the PAs advocate liberalization of trade and domestic marketing. For example, in the Ghana II PAs, the discussion of agriculture emphasizes stability of macroeconomic policy, a need to avoid overtaxing cocoa farmers, liberalization of the export marketing of cocoa, intensification of inputs such as fertilizers, roads for better marketing and credit (World Bank, 1995a). This approach is similar to that taken three years earlier in the Ghana I PA, where particular emphasis is laid on the point that farmers respond to price incentives (World Bank, 1992b). In the 1995 Tanzania assessment, the priorities for agriculture are the removal of pricing and marketing controls, the liberalization of external trade, better supplies of inputs and “incentive goods”, improvement of producer prices and transport rehabilitation (World Bank, 1996b:14). In the Zambia PA, deepening liberalization of rural markets is the policy priority, on the basis of an argument, once again, that smallholders are responding to market signals (World Bank, 1994:130).

However, the adjustment model behind the “growth for poverty reduction” strategy is not the same in these PAs as it was in the Berg report. By the end of the 1980s, World Bank claims about the success of adjustment in Africa had been seriously challenged by, among others, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The emphasis on cutting back the state, eliminating budget deficits and liberalizing all internal and external trade had given way to a more nuanced agenda emphasizing institutional reform, increased efficiency of service delivery and the re-direction of expenditure toward primary rather than tertiary services. For Africa, this was expressed in a 1989 World Bank report on sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 1989).

With the sole exception of the Zambia PA, there is no sustained thinking about gender in relation to the broad-based export-led growth model, except for brief assertions that agricultural extension services must target women. Even this last point is usually discussed in the policy sections on agriculture.

The Zambia PA imports the relatively sophisticated treatment of gender in the model in volume 3 on rural poverty. However, little of this survives into the policy

²³ See Gibbon et al., 1993:8-9 for a succinct account.

section, with only a rather simplistic call for the promotion of labour-saving techniques for reducing domestic labour (presumably so that women can spend more time working in the fields). The PA frames gender as a question of efficiency: rigidities in the gender division of labour are identified as potential barriers to the expansion of agricultural production. This approach very much reflects the main way in which micro-economists both inside and outside the World Bank (as opposed to social scientists) have taken up gender over the 1990s (see Collier, 1994). Razavi and Miller (1995b:40-42, 47) document how the mainstreaming of gender by “WID entrepreneurs” within the Bank was only possible through the recasting of gender equity arguments as arguments about efficiency. This has reached the stage that currently gender relations are now seen by some within the Bank as the main constraint to growth (Blackden, 1998). The issues raised by feminist economists—of gender equity within households producing partly for own-consumption and partly for the market, and of the balancing of the productive and reproductive economies—have not been absorbed into the growth agenda.

Vulnerability

In the years following the Berg report, the aim of “getting prices right” was vigorously pursued by the Bank. However, two major problems began to emerge. One was that countries were finding it very hard to move from a stabilization phase, involving large and rapid devaluation, liberalization and cuts in budget deficits, to successful adjustment and growth. Getting prices right, it became clear, would not by itself bring investment, stability and growth. At the same time, the World Bank’s entire strategy for adjustment came under increasing criticism for its harsh effects on the poor, its most high-profile critic the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) with the publication of **Adjustment with a Human Face** (Cornia et al., 1987).

The UNICEF analysis was not opposed fundamentally to adjustment, but did emphasize that it would involve costs, to which some sections of the population would be very vulnerable. UNICEF was able to draw on data monitoring the health and nutrition of women and children in particular to show how vulnerable groups were suffering under adjustment (see, for example, the chapter on Ghana in volume II of Cornia et al., 1987). The introduction of user fees in education and health came under fire, in particular. The Bank responded by arguing that adjustment caused only “transitional” poverty. In operational terms, the response was a rolling programme that the Bank called “Social Dimensions of Adjustment” (SDA), which was supposed to protect vulnerable groups during adjustment. This was the forerunner of “social safety nets”.

While the underlying concept of safety nets is clearly related to the debates on the “transitional costs” of adjustment, they are not the same. The social dimensions of adjustment programmes in Africa rarely, in practice, addressed the problems of the poor, especially the rural poor. They largely went to compensate public sector workers who lost incomes through cuts in public employment. The successors to SDA programmes—social funds—have also failed to act as proper safety nets (Tjonneland et al., 1998:73). The World Bank has continued to maintain that the majority of the poor are not hurt by adjustment, and have generally gained (see Demery and Squire, 1996).

Social safety nets as they appear in the PAs have therefore picked up the UNICEF idea of vulnerability. There are sometimes considerable continuities between the UNICEF approach and the poverty groups that emerge in the PAs—compare, for example, the Ghana I PA (World Bank, 1992b) with Cornia et al. (1987). However, when the concept of social safety nets appears in the policy sections of the PAs, it does so in a different context from its original use. The concept of vulnerability in the PAs is not used to mean vulnerability to economic change (including reform), but a more static sense of vulnerability to drought, other natural disasters, and a “common sense” notion of social vulnerability. Vulnerable groups often include orphans, the disabled, widows, female-headed households and rural producers in certain marginalized regions. These are, of course, not categories that have been identified by the statistical analysis. They do, however, represent a kind of analysis of what poverty is (vulnerability), as well as referring to particular policy needs. Women are over-represented in these “common-sense” vulnerable groups. This is explicitly or implicitly linked to a static gender-as-characteristic understanding of gender inequalities.

The role of education

The emphasis on education in the PAs, and the way it is treated, is the result of several trends in the 1980s and 1990s. First was the recognition of the limits of “getting prices right”. Second was the criticism, levelled by UNICEF and others, of the introduction and increase of school fees. Third, there was increasing emphasis on the relationship between education—especially female education—and welfare outcomes, such as nutrition and infant mortality. Female education, in particular, began to be seen as a “magic bullet” that would not only increase child welfare, but also reduce population growth and increase economic growth.²⁴

Finally, there is the influence of Bank views on the role of education in enhancing growth rates in East Asia. Even in the earlier PAs considered in this paper, such as Ghana I (World Bank, 1992b), the preoccupation with dramatic poverty reduction in South East Asia—in this case Thailand—is apparent. For countries that had undertaken substantial liberalization by the time their PA was carried out (Ghana I and II, and Tanzania) there are assertions that very high rates of growth comparable with those in South-East Asia are possible. We have called this a “post-adjustment” model, since it implies that various African countries are poised for take-off into rapid growth.

Particular policy approaches to poverty reduction in the PAs mirror the World Bank’s interpretation of the East and South-East Asian experiences in **The East Asian Miracle** (1993b).²⁵ In addition to the repeated emphasis on fiscal stability in the PAs priority is given to the importance of rural infrastructure (a key theme in **The East Asian Miracle**) for agricultural growth. There is also a more general theme that the state needs to play a role in growth, but a facilitating role. Finally, the central place given to human capital (education) in the Bank’s East Asian story sees a new emphasis on education not simply as a determinant of welfare, but

²⁴ Summers, 1994. For a critique, see Jackson, 1993 and Green, 1994.

²⁵ It is well known that the Bank struggled with Japanese sponsors over the interpretation of events in East Asia (Wade, 1996), just as it is clear that there is no single “East Asian model”.

(more importantly) as a determinant of growth (see, for example, World Bank, 1993a: 65; 1995b:24; 1992b).

It is stated widely in the PAs that education is intimately related to agricultural productivity and thus to escape from poverty. All the PAs present some sort of evidence on education and poverty, and all present the expansion of education as a prerequisite for growth in agricultural productivity. We see two problems here. First, the evidence is often weak. For example, data in the Uganda I Household Budget Survey (HBS) show that 70 per cent of the poorest household heads are literate, as opposed to 80 per cent of non-poor household heads (World Bank, 1993a). While there is clearly an association, there is no discussion of how this clearly very partial relationship might work in some cases and not in others. How do uneducated household heads become non-poor, and vice versa? Equally, the calculation of rates of return to education is a methodologically difficult area, and the Bank's estimates have been criticized as being too high (Bennell, 1996). Ironically, now that the role of education in economic growth and development has become orthodoxy at the Bank, that view has been challenged from within the Bank itself, with a study of human capital and economic growth over time that fails to find any positive relationship (Pritchett, 1996).

The second problem is interpreting the association. Whether it is at the international or household level, the assumption is that the direction of causality works from education to income. Education is argued to raise productivity, but how it does this is never investigated. Only the Zambia PA notes that "more information is needed on the relationship between education and rural poverty, to understand how it generates such high returns" (World Bank, 1994:136). Our concern here is that a relationship between education and income may be being read spuriously as causal, when both may be affected by underlying patterns of wealth organized through families. An alternative hypothesis is that the direct and indirect costs of education mean that wealthier families are more likely to educate their children than poorer families. At the same time, they will be able to invest in agricultural and off-farm activities with higher returns. These differences will be transmitted to the next generation. This hypothesis—which sees educational outcomes as the result of patterns of wealth and poverty rather than the other way round—would also be more consistent with the striking fact that education is not mentioned as an important issue in any of the PPAs reported.

The new orthodoxy on the pivotal role of human capital is reflected operationally in the fact that the Bank has switched from emphasizing cost recovery in health and education in the 1980s, to advocating the removal of user fees for education and health (at least for rural populations and at the primary level) in the 1990s.

These influences have converged to produce an orthodoxy about gender and education within the Bank (see, for example, Summers, 1994), if not about gender issues more broadly.²⁶ It means that the ways in which female education appears in the PAs is strikingly uniform. All the PAs make a strong general statement that education is a crucial factor in economic growth and poverty reduction. In some cases this is explicitly done with reference to the South-East Asian experience (see, for example, World Bank, 1992b:18, box 3.1).

²⁶ See Jackson (1993) for a critique of this "win-win" approach to female education.

Analysis of female education in the PAs is based exclusively on efficiency arguments—how female education is more efficient than male education in increasing child and household welfare, and development indicators more widely. It is not an analysis that says anything about the reproduction of structural gender inequalities, or anything substantive about how gender inequalities underlie educational outcomes. A gender gap in primary or junior secondary education is found in all cases—Uganda II (World Bank, 1995b:64), Uganda I (World Bank, 1993a:38-39), Zambia (World Bank, 1994:53), Ghana I (World Bank, 1992b:19), Tanzania (World Bank, 1996b:ch 5) and Ghana II (World Bank, 1995a:33). The explanations of why these gender gaps exist are particularly problematic. They are either purely economic, about expected future returns, or they are anodyne (“parental reluctance” and “gender bias”, both cited by Uganda I, seem so self-evident as to be virtually meaningless). Perhaps the most thorough is the discussion in Uganda II (World Bank, 1995b:64). The PA produces some evidence for the argument that parents are less interested in girls’ future earnings streams, and do not expect them to remit money. Because parental demand for female education is less, costs such as fees or uniforms deter parents from keeping girls in school. Early pregnancy and marriage are also cited. Within the PPAs, issues to do with gender and education are not much mentioned, with the exception of a claim in the Zambia PPA that Tonga communities are particularly against female education because it will reduce bridewealth.

By contrast with the apparently low expected returns to girl’s education imputed to parents, the PAs are unanimous that female education is of central importance to child welfare when girls become mothers. Girls’ education is said to have “large positive externalities” and “high returns”, in the form of lower infant mortality, lower birth rates, and better child nutrition. In the words of the Ghana I PA: “Education makes women better mothers” (World Bank, 1992b:24). Some of the PAs carry the significance of female education further, relating it to wider developmental and economic outcomes. The Uganda I PA argues that “the benefits of female education are receiving increasing attention among development practitioners, so much so that it has been argued that female education is the single most important investment that a country can make” (World Bank, 1993a:39). This approach in some cases draws explicitly on a key 1994 Bank document by Larry Summers on female education.

In conclusion, it is clear that there are gaps between the evidence on both gender and poverty issues in the PAs, and their treatment in the policy sections, because policy and analysis are heavily influenced by peer review and by the evolution of Bank thinking since the late 1980s. As a result, the discussions of growth and poverty in the PAs examined in this paper are almost entirely gender-blind, even in the case (Zambia) where the analysis of rural growth was more gendered. This lack of visibility of the role of gender relations in rural African economies is fairly striking, considering that 30 years have passed since Esther Boserup’s pioneering work in this area. The sole exception is the mention of targeting agricultural extension services to women, an approach that merely reinforces the sense that policy makers find it very difficult to engage with the gendered analysis of the economy.

Although gendered policy appears to be more visible in the area of vulnerability and safety nets, it typically takes the form of “common sense” statements about groups taken to be vulnerable as a whole, such as widows.

Finally, the gender jewel in the policy crown is female education. This is the only high-profile gendered policy prescription in most of the PAs, reflecting the fact that this is the only gender issue on which Bank staff—from country-level right up to the President—can express clear consensus.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: GENDER-DIFFERENTIATED POVERTY RELATIONS

At the beginning of this paper we suggested that the PAs carried out during the 1990s were conducted in a climate of development and aid much more alert to issues of gender equity than that of the 1970s. Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of our review of the six case studies is that the accumulating evidence that men and women experience poverty differently has had little influence in practice. The PAs reveal a lack of any substantial appreciation of the issues raised by the study of gender and poverty in Africa over the last two decades.

Our starting point was an observation that the six PAs we reviewed display a good deal of variation in the way that gender is treated, but that in none of them is there an adequate, let alone strong, analysis of gender that could form a basis for policies to assist poor women in Africa. Next we argued that variation in the gender content of individual PAs arises out of the way in which they have been carried out. They are prepared in relatively autonomous task teams, with no clear guidance in the operational directives as to how to approach the gender issues. In the absence of a systematic analytical framework for understanding gender, its treatment in the PAs is determined, on one hand, by a set of epistemological and methodological choices about measuring poverty, and, on the other hand, by a set of prescriptions for reducing poverty originating in the 1990 **WDR** (World Bank, 1990).

We then argue that the methodological approach to the measurement of poverty militates against a coherent and informed treatment of gender. Central place in the PAs given to the construction of poverty lines based on quantitative data from surveys that take households as single units. In the absence of intra-household quantitative data, the PAs can only address gender issues through looking at data disaggregated by sex of household head, or data on the characteristics of individuals (education, for example) disaggregated by sex. Gender thus emerges as a simple variable. Exploration of how women are specifically affected by poverty is limited to a discussion of female-headed households, which become the characteristic group for a gendered approach to analysing poverty.

In our view, the quantitative evidence in the PAs (on which so much importance is placed) is both under- and over-interpreted. In the “poverty profiles”, an opportunity to explore poverty dynamics through a series of comparative analyses is ignored in favour of a set of statistical associations that produce a static view of who the poor are. At the same time, the quantitative data are taken up selectively to illustrate *a priori* arguments about causes of poverty. The relationship between poverty and education discussed in section 6 is a good example.

The Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) done in four out of the six cases have a greater potential to unpick this methodological lock, in that they can potentially say something about perceptions of gender and poverty, and gender relations. Our review of the six PAs confirms the point made by a number of critical, but sympathetic, observers that PPAs are not intrinsically gender sensitive, but considerable effort needs to be made to ensure that they are so. These issues have been examined by Guijt and Shah (1998), with a particular focus on how better to access women's voices.

There is, in our view, a further problem with the participatory methodologies as they are currently discussed, and their capacity to deliver a gendered analysis. The methodological tradition that has emerged within the participatory approach, as opposed to that underlying more conventional locality-specific case studies of poverty by sociologists or anthropologists, emphasizes the importance of how data are collected, but underplays the importance of "reading" or interpreting data.

There are two main problems here. The first is that there is a strong moral perspective within participatory methodologies, which claim to give greater access to poor peoples' perceptions. In particular, they have developed techniques that are designed to privilege those perceptions over the perspective of the researcher. This leads to relatively little discussion of how raw data are treated, investigated and analysed by those collecting the data. There is considerable, but little-discussed, potential here for making gender issues invisible.

Participatory methodologies proceed as if what the poor and others do is to produce an analysis of poverty. It is clear that some aspects of poverty causes and processes do emerge from the PPAs: proximate shocks that precipitate individuals into vulnerable states; environmental patterns that affect livelihoods and food security; and marketing failures for agricultural inputs and output are well recorded. However, what do not emerge from the perceptions of the poor themselves are those factors and relationships that they do not perceive directly, either because of scale or because of ideology. Thus PPAs produce no analyses of the macroeconomic causes of poverty, or of how people in poor households may be locked into cycles of food insecurity and labour shortage. To access these within participatory poverty research, the evidence must be read. In our view, but against the grain of participatory methodology, the analyst's job of reading the evidence against alternative sets of explanations must be recognized. This job is always in fact done, but if it is not admitted to, then the potential arises for all sorts of errors of omission and commission. This is particularly important for gender analysis, given the many ways in which gender differences and gendered outcomes are naturalized in everyday life. Indeed, in the PPAs we looked at, although evidence on gender was often there in the raw data, its meaning was not taken up, suggesting that unacknowledged limitations in the gender understanding of those using the data.

PPAs are likely to be an increasingly common feature of poverty measurement and monitoring in developing countries. For example, we are aware of current or future plans for PPAs in Zimbabwe, Uganda and Pakistan. We believe that very important lessons can and should be learned from the experience of past PPAs. Most centrally, PPAs must be gender-sensitive—in the sense that the voices of women as well as men must be heard, but also in that they must be aware of and open to gendered statements about poverty coming from poor people.

In addition, the methodological tensions inherent in the use of PPAs within the PAs must be resolved. In the PAs of the early to mid-1990s, evidence from participatory methodologies remains marginal, and almost always subordinate to evidence from surveys. This reflects partly the fact that many within the World Bank did not accept the legitimacy of PPAs, and partly that they did not understand how to bring quantitative and qualitative evidence together. The potential for data from the PPAs to triangulate the survey data has rarely been achieved.

In this paper, we also suggested that there was a gendered gap between the main findings of the PAs and their policy sections. While some of the gender findings of the PPAs did find their way into the reports, and the separately commissioned background papers on gender were also represented in some PAs, this evidence and thematic discussion were usually lost when the policy section was reached. These gaps arise because the PAs are, above all, policy documents.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the organizational arrangements, individual mix of actors, and various negotiations and contestations that inevitably characterize the formulation of Bank policy on poverty, all of which are given expression in the final sections of these reports. There were also doubtless important issues in the politics of drafting each of the policy chapters, which we cannot know about. In addition, the status of the documents as World Bank papers implies that they are situated within a particular policy context. This overall policy climate embodies assumptions about what can or cannot be done, and what should or should not be done, in the realm of policy.

Beyond issues to do with the micro-politics of arriving at policy formulations, a major influence on the policy recommendations in the PAs is the underlying model of poverty causes developed within the Bank, and the associated poverty reduction policy. We argued that Bank orthodoxy on poverty reduction strategy interferes with any detailed interpretations of the evidence and findings of the PAs. It is the policy sections of the PAs that are the most influenced by the Bank's evolving but relatively universal model of poverty and poverty reduction. This model makes certain assumptions about gender. In most of the PAs these remain implicit, but the Zambia PA (World Bank, 1994) contains a discussion which anticipates the emergence of open propositions in the World Bank about gender and economic efficiency in the late 1990s.

The approach taken in the PAs does not use evidence from a particular country situation to construct an analysis from which to generate policy on poverty. Information is presented, categories are described, models of the farming household are discussed, but there is no analysis of poverty based on this evidence. Rather, the PAs apply a standard, pre-existing analysis, with its attached policy agenda, to each country. As we have shown above, the model applied is largely based on the 1990 **WDR**, with some additional features that evolve out of the Bank's interpretation of East Asian experience. Poverty is to be eliminated by economic growth, which produces employment intensively, and by developing human resources so that people can take advantage of growth (while protecting the inevitable weak groups).

One important characteristic of the analysis of poverty in the 1990 **WDR** is that it is fundamentally about the actions of individuals or individual households in markets. With the exception of the relationship between the market and the state, social and economic relations are absent from the analysis. We would therefore agree with the ISS evaluation (see Hanmer et al., 1997) that a main shortcoming of the PAs is their limited poverty analysis, and we would point to this lack of analysis of *relational processes of impoverishment or accumulation* as the critical limitation.

This can be seen in many of the themes found in the six PAs we examined, including remoteness, income sources, rural labour institutions, credit, marketing and extension, and education. However, the discussions of agriculture provide a particularly clear example of this. Many of the policy chapters of the PAs have long discussions of agriculture, which reflects the fact that huge numbers of poor people in sub-Saharan Africa gain their livelihoods in that sector. Increasing the productivity, output and returns of smallholder agriculture must be core objectives in any strategy of labour-intensive and pro-poor growth. Yet we found it hard to feel very confident about either the diagnosis of the processes that produce poverty among African agriculturalists, or the proposed remedies.

Absent from the analysis in the PAs are examinations of rural livelihoods, agrarian socioeconomic processes and rural social relations—including, of course, gender relations, despite the centrality of the gender division of labour to African agriculture. Only by including such examinations would the PAs produce the socioeconomic categories of poor people that Hanmer et al. (1997) suggest are a pre-requisite for analysis of poverty. The accounts of rural processes found in sociological, anthropological and in some cases historical case studies seem hardly to have penetrated discussions of agricultural policy in the PAs. It is true that women sometimes make momentary appearances in the agricultural policy sections of the PAs. However, they usually do so in ways that are unrelated to the previous findings and analyses, but at the same time are highly similar to the few appearances of “women” and “gender” in the **Poverty Reduction Handbook** (World Bank, 1992a).

The only sustained discussions of women and agriculture centre on land rights, and occur in those PAs that have stressed the legal basis for gender bias. But the issue of land rights and its relation to women’s poverty is a very complex one in sub-Saharan Africa. Gender equity demands attention to the land rights issue, and for some women discriminatory inheritance laws and poor land access are significant constraints. In our view, however, it is only in a minority of cases that inadequate access to land because of an inability to secure usufruct rights is the sole cause of poverty for the two-thirds of rural African women who are poor. The fact that land rights rarely emerged as a voiced concern of rural women in the PPAs we take as some support for this view.

Instead, access to land is secured or lost through the dynamics of gender relations as they intersect with socioeconomic processes, which are often but not always ones of impoverishment. Once again, the issue here is a contrast between the static analysis of categories and characteristics, and the dynamic analysis of social and economic relations. The link between gender and poverty lies at the level of process and relations. For this link to be established, poverty must be analysed as relation and process, as must gender.

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