



# WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2012

## GENDER EQUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT

### BACKGROUND PAPER

# THE ROLE OF MEN FOR GENDER EQUALITY

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# The role of men in gender equality

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## Introduction

Gender as an interdisciplinary concept refers to women and men, the relations between them, and the institutions that govern these relationships. However, most of the literature on gender focuses on women and girls and the factors that affect their socioeconomic outcomes.

For a long time, a commitment to promoting gender equality in economic outcomes, as in other areas of social development and human rights, has emphasized women's empowerment. There is evidence that expanding woman's opportunities - in particular health, education, earnings, rights, and political participation - drives down gender inequality and accelerates development<sup>1</sup>. In developed countries women are also considered to be responsible of the reduction in economic gender disparities<sup>2</sup>. Despite important advances towards equality, differences in the socioeconomic outcomes of men and women still persist both in the developing and developed world. Recently, policy makers and social scientists have begun to emphasize the role and responsibility of men and boys in promoting gender equality.

Men - as community, political or religious leaders - often control access to a large variety of resources such as health and educational services, but also transportation and finances. As heads of states and government ministers, as leaders of

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<sup>1</sup> See Duflo (2005) for a detailed survey.

<sup>2</sup> Several complementary theories have been proposed to explain the profound transformation in the role women in the family and the workplace during the last century in developed countries. These explanations range from the liberation effects of new consumer durables, as suggested by Greenwood, Seshadri and Yorukoglu (2004), that greatly decreased the amount of work required to run a household (e.g. washing machine, vacuum cleaner, etc), to the revolutionary effect of the oral contraceptive that, as argued by Goldin and Katz (2002), facilitated a woman's investment in her career. The expansion of the service sector with strong demand of white-collar jobs or skilled-biased technological change is also thought to have greatly facilitated the strong increase in female labor supply (Goldin, 1990).

religious and faith-based institutions, as judges, as heads of armies and other agencies of force, as village heads, or indeed as husbands and fathers, men often wield enormous power over many aspects of women's lives. Therefore, the role of men's attitudes and behaviors should not be ignored in the debate and the design of gender related policies.

The family is the institution where gender interactions are likely to be more intense, ranging from marriage and child-rearing decisions to consumption, time allocation to work and human capital investment. In what follows we consider the family as the main unit of analysis and review the contribution of men as fathers and husbands (or partners) to the evolution of women's socioeconomic outcomes.

The survey is organized as follows. Section 1 reviews the process that governs decisions within the family and the economic factors that can affect this process. Section 2 takes a look at recent studies that investigate the critical role of fathers and husbands for the economic well-being of their wives and daughters. Finally, the survey concludes with a revision of economic policies that intentionally or unintentionally have affected men's attitudes and behaviors towards gender equality.

### **The distribution of power within the family. Why did men shift it towards women?**

Modern economic theory recognizes the presence of multiple agents within the family, with distinct preferences, who are jointly determining the observed outcome. Thus household allocation decisions are the result of a bargaining process in which its members seek to allocate resources, over which they have control, to goods they especially care about (Chiappori, 1988; Bourguignon and Chiappori, 1992). Crucial to the final allocation is thus the bargaining strength of each spouse. Relative income clearly influences the intra-household distribution of power (Duflo, 2004; Thomas, 1990, 1994; Hoddinott and Haddad, 1995; Khandker, 1998), but it is not the only possible variable that affects the decisional process. Factors that change the household's economic environment and in particular their members' respective bargaining positions are also important.

Among those factors, the rise in the returns to human capital may have increased men's incentives to share power with women (Doepke and Tertilt, 2008) and made polygyny less affordable (Gould, Moav and Simhon, 2008). The narrowing gender gap

in pay seems to be partly responsible for the enfranchisement of women (Bertocchi, 2007; Braun and Kvasnicka, 2010) and an important determinant for the reduction in gender violence against females (Aizer, 2010). The substantial increase in female labor supply has also affected men's attitudes towards working women and boosted employment among younger generations (Fernández, Fogli and Olivetti, 2004). Others have suggested that offspring's gender influences men's political views and preferences towards redistribution (Warner, 1991; Washington, 2004; Oswald and Powdthavee, 2010). Finally, media exposure also seems to affect public opinion regarding women in society (La Ferrara, Chong, and Dureyeva, 2007; Jensen and Oster, 2009). All the previous studies identify several factors that have led men to share, or give up, some of their traditional privileges and authority in favor of women. We next carefully revise these studies and derive lessons to be considered in the design of future gender equality policies.

Doepke and Tertilt (2008) show that technological change and its associated increase in human capital may have been the cause of the expansion of women's rights through the nineteenth century in England and the US<sup>3</sup>. Those higher returns raised the importance of education and recalibrated the trade-off between the rights of a man's own wife and those of other men's wives. The authors argue that improvements in married women's economic rights increase female's bargaining power within the household. As there is evidence that women spend more resources in their children's well-being than men (see Duflo, 2004; Thomas, 1990, 1994), more bargaining power for women means greater investments in their children's human capital.

Though husbands may not benefit directly from their wife's increase in bargaining power, they might indirectly gain from augmenting other women's rights in two ways. First, men are altruistic towards their own children, some of which are daughters. Since men want their daughters to be treated well by their sons-in-law and they want their grandchildren to be well educated, men have a motivation to improve their daughters' bargaining position. Second, a father prefers high-quality mates for his children and therefore stands to gain from building the human capital of his future children-in-law through their mothers.

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<sup>3</sup> The expansion of women's rights is related to the evolution of laws that allowed women to own and control separate property, to write contracts, to own and control their earnings, or to maintain custody over their children.

Note that the previous theoretical mechanism suggests that the historical advance of women's rights in the West was driven by old-fashioned self-interest deriving from men's concern about their daughters' welfare and their descendants' education. This result indicates that inducing developing countries to improve women's rights on men's accord may be a more promising strategy than trying to impose gender equality from the outside. Governments can further the cause of women's rights by focusing on policies that increase families' incentives to educate their children, high quality public education, and subsidies for families who keep their children in school.

Men's selfish behavior also explains the relationship between economic growth or development and women's rights in Fernandez (2010). Her main idea is that at some critical level of wealth or fertility (characterized by the process of economic development or growth), a father is better off sacrificing the consumption benefits he obtains from being selfish with his wife in order to ensure that his sons-in-law are forced to be generous towards his daughters. That is, although men in general benefited from a patriarchal society in which women enjoyed few economic and political rights, they also suffered from the welfare consequences of such a system for their daughters. Accordingly at a sufficiently high level of wealth and/or at a sufficiently low level of fertility, a man's conflicting interests from being both a husband and a father are resolved in favor of the latter. This theoretical mechanism attributes a crucial role to men in driving the positive relationship between economic development and women's empowerment as suggested in earlier studies (see Duflo, 2005 for an extensive survey).

In a context of technological progress with increasing returns to human capital, men's preference for skilled women also seems to be responsible for the transition from polygyny to monogamy. This argument is developed in the theoretical models of Gould, Moav and Simhon (2008) and Lagerlöf (2005). Accordingly, skilled men in modern economies increasingly value skilled women for their ability to raise skilled children. This drives up the value of skilled females in the marriage market to the point where skilled men prefer one skilled wife to multiple unskilled ones. This theoretical argument also highlights that education can improve the well-being of women (and their kids) as they are all better off in monogamous than in polygynous societies.

While previous evidence suggests that education is an important factor for the economic and social development of women, certain social structures may distort this

positive relationship. For example, patrilocal marriages (i.e. brides join the household of grooms and their families upon marriage) that prevail in most parts of South Asia would seem to imply that the husband's family stands to retain the major part of any additional gain an educated woman would generate. Hence, men would seem to have a strong incentive to prefer educated women as brides, especially since returns to women's schooling are significant. Marriage markets in South Asia also exhibit widespread presence of dowry (i.e. payments from the bride's family to that of the groom). Intuition would suggest that parents of educated women should face lower dowry demands. Thus, competitive adjustments in dowry that internalize the returns to schooling should induce parents to educate their daughters. Yet, the persistence of low levels of female enrollment and the available micro evidence on dowry payments both suggest such incentives are neither strong, nor generalized. Dasgupta et al. (2008) argue that marital arrangements may be behind these patterns. In South Asia married sons typically live with their parents in a subordinate capacity. This suggests that when seeking wives for sons, parents may value characteristics that facilitate the continuation of parental control over sons after marriage. Lack of education on part of the bride may constitute such a characteristic. Hence, parents may prefer uneducated brides unless educated brides bring in significantly more dowry. This in turn would reduce parental incentive to educate daughters. Therefore the success of the human capital investment policies identified by previous studies will crucially depend on the living arrangement and cultural norms of each society.

In the developed world women have caught up with men in terms of human capital accumulation and the gender gap is also shrinking. This substantial economic empowerment of women has been accompanied by a decreasing trend in female domestic violence. Aizer (2010) proposes an economic theory of households bargaining that incorporates domestic violence. There, an increase in woman's relative wage increases her bargaining power and lowers the levels of violence by improving her outside options. Using new sources of administrative data for the US, the author finds that the decline in the wage gap witnessed over the past 13 years can explain nine percent of the reduction in violence and the costs associated with it.

The decline in the gender wage gap is also an important determinant in the extension of the franchise to women in Bertocchi (2007). She argues that an earnings gap, in a politico-economic framework, implies a gap in the desired level of

redistribution. The steady decline of the earnings gap associated to the industrialization process reduced women's demand for redistribution. This fact and the expansion of non-traditional views toward women's roles led men to power-share.

Woman suffrage seems to be also affected by sex ratios. Braun and Kvasnicka (2010) study the timing of woman suffrage extensions at the level of US states and territories in the late 19th and early 20th century. Their results provide strong evidence that women obtained the right to vote earlier in US jurisdictions in which they accounted for a smaller share of the adult population. Indeed, sex ratios imbalances appear to be the single most important determinant of jurisdictions' transitions to woman suffrage. Accordingly the relative scarcity of women in the West fundamentally altered the power calculus for men, the pre-woman-suffrage electorate and potential grantors of voting rights: in the American West, the enfranchisement of few rather than many women carried lower potential costs for men in terms of any devaluation of their own vote and influence than in other parts of the country. Woman suffrage also posed much lower risks to political stability in the West, as the already enfranchised male voters by far outnumbered potential female voters.

Information and media exposure has proved to be useful in affecting individuals' attitudes towards a variety of issues (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2004; Della Vigna and Kaplan, 2007; Olken, 2006). Several papers by Fernandez, Fogli and co-authors show that the increase in female labor force participation after the 1950's led successive cohorts of women to enter the market at higher rates. The dramatic increase in female participation shaped men's views towards working women (Fernández, Fogli and Olivetti, 2004), but also the views of the society in general towards the conciliation of work and family life (Fernández, 2007; Fogli and Veldkamp, 2010; Euwals, Knoef and van Vuuren, 2007).

Jensen and Oster (2009) explore the effects of the introduction of cable television on women's status in rural India. They find that the introduction of cable television improves the status of women: women report lower acceptability of spousal abuse, lower son preference, more autonomy, and lower fertility. In addition, cable is also found to increase school enrollment, perhaps itself an indicator of similar increased status and decision-making authority within the household. The authors argue that cable television may affect women's socioeconomic status through several mechanisms. For example, television may affect fertility by providing information on family planning



services or changing the value of women's time. Alternatively women may be given more freedom to do things outside the home such as going to the market, because the value of men's leisure is increased by television. However, one plausible mechanism is that television exposes rural households to urban lifestyles, values and behaviors that are different from their own and thus these households begin to emulate them. This result is consistent with the evidence in La Ferrara et al. (2007) who find that exposure to soap operas in Brazil reduces fertility. Their argument is that soap operas (novelas) portray families that are much smaller than in Brazil, a country with a high fertility rate. Thus exposure to alternative family compositions seems to alter individuals' preferences for fertility.

The possibility that changes in norms, values, or preferences that lie behind media exposure is particularly intriguing as a contrast to typically proposed approaches to improving education and women's status or reducing fertility. These alternatives imply significant resources and will be effective or achieved over a long time period. The possibility that some of these behaviors can be largely modified because of changes in attitudes, cheaply and quickly supplied by TV, offers a significant promise.

Finally there is evidence that such an exogenous event as it is the gender of the offspring may provide a mechanism for social change where fathers' connection with their daughters undermines patriarchy. An interesting line of research has examined the influence of having daughters on fathers' political views. In this sense, Warner (1991) and Warner and Steel (1999) analyze American and Canadian parents and find that support for policies designed to address gender equity is greater among parents with daughters, particularly strongly for fathers. The authors argue that the anticipated and actual struggles that offspring face, and the public policies that tackle those, matter to their parents since the latter invest a significant amount in their children. Washington (2004) uses data on the voting records of U.S. congresspersons to provide persuasive evidence that congresspersons with female children tend to vote liberally on reproductive right issues such as teen access to contraceptives. In addition, Washington (2008) argues for broader results: congresspersons vote more liberally on a range of issues, such as flexibility for working families and tax-free education. Oswald and Powdthavee (2010) model the idea that daughters make people more left-wing. Their model incorporates the presence of pay discrimination and the fact that women derive greater utility from public goods than men. In this scenario, women prefer a larger supply of the public good and a greater tax rate on income: the reason is that their

marginal utility from the first is relatively high and the tax penalty they face from the later is relatively low. As men have female children, however, they shift their political stance and become more sympathetic to the "female" desire for a steeper income tax schedule and a larger amount of the public good, so they become more left wing. Similarly a mother with many sons becomes sympathetic to the "male" case for lower taxes and a smaller supply of public goods and becomes more right wing. Their theory is supported by German and UK data.

The previous studies clearly indicate that men's behavior and attitudes toward women are likely to be affected by a range of factors (i.e. technological progress, media exposure, wage gaps, sex ratio, and offspring's gender). Given the great influence that men exert on the economic development of women, those factors should be considered in the design of public policies addressed at improving women's well being.

## **The role of men for the socioeconomic and health outcomes of women**

### *Reproductive health and sexual behavior*

Men are important actors who influence the reproductive health outcomes of women. The role of men is even more important in some developing countries or patriarchal structures where husbands or other family members control women's health-related decisions. In those societies female's reproductive health is affected by male policy makers, male health-care administrators, and male service providers, who may perpetuate a dominant "male definition" of what is important and what is not for women's needs. Men also affect women's reproductive health as partners and fathers. Accordingly, understanding men's behavior and beliefs towards fertility and family planning becomes crucial for the design of successful reproductive health policies. Next we review some studies on male reproductive roles. We focus on men's knowledge of various contraception methods, attitudes towards those methods, couple communication and family planning decisions.

Were we to assume that childbearing and pregnancy are primarily women's concerns, then it would not be surprising to find that men did not know much about contraceptive methods in general (and female-controlled methods in particular). Nor would we expect men to know much about the female reproductive cycle. In fact, poor

knowledge of reproductive health issues among males may pose barriers for women to seek care for these problems. However, there is mixed evidence when referring to male-education about contraceptive methods. In general, men are as knowledgeable as women about contraceptive methods (Ezeh et al., 1996), but also better informed than females about male methods (Hulton and Falkingham, 1996; Mbizvo and Adamchack, 1991), and sometimes less informed than women about female methods (Kalipeni and Zulu, 1993). This knowledge is usually defined as men's awareness of contraceptive methods -phrased in surveys as having "heard of" a particular method- and does not refer to other aspects of contraceptive knowledge or how to use a given method.

In some developing countries, the conclusions are less optimistic. The study by Bloom et al. (2000) for Uttar Pradesh, India, shows that men know very little about reproductive health (fertility, maternal health and STDs) and that while the understanding of these issues is largely driven by socio-demographic characteristics, men's belief about their ability to control reproduction has its own independent effect on their knowledge in each of these areas. Men's lack of reproductive health knowledge leaves women particularly vulnerable in this region, as they are dependent on their husbands and other kin members for most types of health-related decision-making. Thus educating men about the reproductive process, disease prevention and the benefits of reproductive health care for both men and women seems an urgent need to reduce for instance the growing AIDS epidemic in India (Pais, 1996).

Not only men's knowledge about contraception is important but also its use and effectiveness depends directly on men's involvement. Several studies have examined the ways in which culture and social organizations may influence contraceptive patterns. Research from Ghana (Ezeh, 1993) and Nigeria (Bankole, 1995) suggests high levels of men's influence over women's contraceptive decisions; however the converse may not be as true. Bankole's analysis (1995) for the Nigerian Yoruba shows that the number of offspring has important consequences on the apparent "equality" in spousal desire for more children. In addition, there is evidence that men's preferences have major direct impact on the first decade of a marriage and the first four children. It seems that men are likely to wish more kids in families with few members and that women's wishes prevail with more surviving children in the family.

The importance of including men in policy design and research related to reproductive health is also highlighted by other researchers. Bankole (1995) and Doodoo

(1993) suggest high probabilities of invalid estimates for unmet contraceptive need in sub-Saharan Africa when derived from data collected only for women. In Zimbabwe, despite men report having “the final say” in contraceptive use, women are the ones responsible for obtaining contraceptives (Mbizvo and Adamchack, 1991). These and other studies demonstrate discordance within couples in contraceptive use (Isiugo-Abanihe 1994; Bankole and Singh 1998; Wolff et al. 2000; Ashraf et al. 2010). The main conclusion in those studies is that men agree on using contraception for birth spacing purposes but not for limiting family size. The fact that men prefer more children than women suggests that reproductive health programs or policies in developing countries should involve both sexes.

There is much less evidence about male views of abortion, an important element in fertility control given that an estimated one in four pregnancies worldwide is terminated deliberately. Abortion is perhaps the best example of direct connection between laws and policies and poor reproductive health outcomes, and in most countries, it is men that write, ratify, and enforce abortion. In Turkey, for example, abortion among married women is restricted to those who have their husbands' permission, reflecting conservative interpretations of Islamic law (Gürsoy, 1996). Men, furthermore, may directly affect women's decisions about abortion. For example, in her investigation of amniocentesis and abortion in New York City, Rapp (1999) found that partners' beliefs greatly influenced women's use or refusal of prenatal tests like amniocentesis. According to her results, women who felt that their male partners would love and help raise a disabled child were less likely to undergo such test, relying heavily on their partner's beliefs about the desirability of a disabled child in their decisions about testing. The study by Browner (1979) for Colombia shows the strong influence that partners have on women's abortion decisions. In instances in which women were told directly or perceived that their partners would abandon them, they sought abortions more frequently and with more resolve.

In many parts of the developing world, women consider childbearing as their only means of gaining status. Thus, women often find themselves in a paradoxical situation: high fertility is their main channel to improving their status, but it also increases their risk of STD (i.e. sexually transmitted disease), HIV contagion or maternal death. Women's access to contraception use and health services is limited by constraints on their autonomy. In countries such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tunisia, India and

Korea, studies show that in seeking health care, women do not decide by themselves and depend on decisions made by a spouse or to senior members of the family (Thaddeus and Maine, 1994). In Nigeria, for instance, the only one who can give permission to a woman who develops obstructed labor to leave the home for hospital is her husband. Moreover in his absence, those present are reluctant to accept such responsibility. In Ethiopia, women use primary care facilities close to their homes because of customary laws restricting them to travel to other communities. As results they often face obstetric complications, or staff errors and misdiagnosis. Thus constraints to hospital access placed on women are likely to have severe implications for their health, particularly during pregnancy or at the time of delivery.

The previous evidence highlights the importance of men for women's health. As a result, fertility and family planning programs that continue to focus solely on women will continue to achieve only limited successes, especially in many of the patrilineal societies that characterize several developing countries. In the next section we revise some policy interventions that have increased contraceptive use by increasing men's education on this area.

### *Domestic Violence*

Domestic violence is a universal phenomenon. Irrespectively of whether a country is poor or rich, spousal violence is pervasive. Men's violence against women is a key determinant of gender inequality as it disempowers and impoverishes women. Further, violence against women profoundly limits choices open to women and girls.

Women's economic empowerment and in particular the autonomy to work outside the home has been proposed as a powerful instrument to eradicate domestic violence. On one hand, an increase in income may lead women to end the partnership if abuse continues (Aizer, 2010). On the other, the increase in outside home employment reduces domestic violence by reducing the time partners spend together (Dugan et al., 1999). However, a wife's economic independence represents a challenge to a culturally prescribed norm of male dominance and female dependence. When a man lacks this sign of dominance, violence may be a mean of reinstating his authority over his wife (Macmillan and Gartner, 1999). Outside employment can also lead to an increase in domestic violence resulting from the insecurity and jealousy that males feel when their

partners are exposed to the possibility of sexual encounters with other males (Daly and Wilson, 1993, 1998).

From the previous studies it seems that the effect of a woman's intrahousehold economic status on violence is theoretically ambiguous. While an increase in household economic resources attributable to women may reduce economic stress and spousal violence, it may also introduce additional tension and struggle. In an effort to maintain the status quo, the increased economic strength of a woman may be countered by an increase in violence. Consistent with this theoretical ambiguity, the existing empirical evidence on the link between a woman's involvement in income generating activities and violence is not conclusive.

In a recent survey for developing countries Vyas and Watts (2008) find that women's involvement in income generation activities is generally associated with a higher lifetime history of physical violence. For India the National Family Health Survey 1989-99 reveals that women face greater domestic violence and the ones who face even more are those working away from home (Eswaran and Malhotra, 2009). In a multi-country study including data for Cambodia (2000), Colombia (2000), the Dominican Republic (2000), Egypt (1995), Haiti (2000), India (1998-1999), Nicaragua (1998), Peru (2000) and Zambia (2001-2002), the authors report that, compared to non-working women, women being paid in cash were more likely to have experienced lifetime physical violence.

In contrast, Panda and Agarwal (2005) identify that in Kerala (India), women with regular employment as compared to unemployed women, were far less likely to have ever experienced violence. Beyond employment status, Panda and Agarwal's innovative study (2005) uses women's ownership of property (land and house) to capture economic status and finds that women's ownership of property is associated with a sharp reduction in domestic violence. The study by Bhattacharya et al. (2009) based on evidence from North Indian villages also suggests the wider implications of female ownership of property and lends support to their view that ownership of property increases a woman's economic security, reduces her willingness to tolerate violence and by providing a credible exit option, works towards deterring spousal violence. Aizer (2010), using evidence for the US for the period 1990-2003, finds that decreases in the male-female wage gap reduce violence against women. This evidence suggests that

improving the employment and earning opportunities of women relative to men reduces violence and the costs associated with it.

Another strand of the literature focuses on the link between domestic violence and dowry. Several studies for Asia indicate that spousal violence is used to extract rents from the wife's family after marriage (see Bloch and Rao (2002) and Srinivasan and Bedi (2007) for India, Naved and Persson (2005) for Bangladesh and Zhang and Chan (1999) for Taiwan). For example, Bloch and Rao (2002) find that marital violence is not only closely linked to low dowry payments, but that a woman who comes from a wealthy family is more likely to be beaten by her husband in an effort to extract higher transfers from her parents. In Bangladesh, while dowry has been illegal since 1980 the practice persists as does the perception that a generous dowry will strengthen the position of women within her marriage. Also in this country dowry demands have been found to be positively related to the risk of spousal violence in both urban and rural areas (Naved and Persson, 2005).

This evidence suggests that the type of marriage "contract", in particular, its ex-ante provisions (i.e. the size of the dowry) should reflect the interest of the wife and her family in deterring or mitigating ex-post malfeasance on the part of the husband. Jacoby and Mansuri (2010) analyze a particular marital institution in rural Pakistan (i.e. the *Watta Satta*) that has important implications for married women's welfare. The *watta satta* (literally, give-take), usually involves the simultaneous marriage of a brother-sister pair from two households.<sup>4</sup> *Watta satta* is more than just an exchange of daughters, however; it also establishes the shadow of mutual threat across the marriages. A husband who mistreats his wife in this arrangement can expect his brother-in-law to retaliate in-kind against his sister. The empirical evidence in Jacoby and Mansuri (2010) indicates that women in *watta satta* marriages have substantially lower probabilities of marital estrangement, domestic abuse, and major depressive episodes. The latter two findings, in particular, suggest that the peculiar institution of *watta satta* protects the welfare of women in rural Pakistan.

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<sup>4</sup> This marital arrangement accounts for about a third of all marriages in rural Pakistan.

### *Women's autonomy*

Female autonomy has been defined as the capacity to manipulate one's personal environment (Dyson and Moore, 1983). Measures of female autonomy include the degree of power women have over their own mobility, personal decisions and decisions within the household. Several studies reveal that women's autonomy is severely limited by men, in particular husbands and fathers, in a significant minority of regions around the world.

One of the channels through which men, in this case the father, can influence women's autonomy is marriage. Research in this area dropped out the assumption of extensive mate choice (spouses choose freely their partner) demonstrating that marriage decisions can be heavily controlled by parents. While in developed countries individuals tend to postpone their marriage after finishing education and therefore after succeeding in being financially independent, in developing countries children are often dependent on their parents' investment and hence their marriage decisions are more likely to be controlled by the latter. Reviews of the evolution of human mating literature reveal that indeed parents have a crucial role in choosing in-laws for their offspring and not few times use threats, bribe and persuasion to make their children "go with the right people". However, this role is more accentuated especially in the case of daughters (Apostolou, 2007b, 2010; Perilloux et al., 2008).

Apostolou (2010) uses 186 pre-industrialized societies from the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample to test to which extent parents are able to take control of their offspring's marriage decision. Results suggest that marriage arrangements are the most frequent for both men and women across various society types. Despite children are usually consulted by their parents, daughter's consent is not a prerequisite for the marriage to proceed. Similar results are documented in Perilloux's et al. (2008) study on two samples of US students and parents. By appealing to the so-called "Daughter-Guarding Hypothesis" (i.e. parental motivation to protect their daughter's sexual reputation and prevent her from sexual exploitation) they find that parents do express greater attempts to influence their daughter's mating decisions.

Recently there has been growing interest in examining to which extent fathers can decide their daughter's age at marriage. Seen as strategies to reinforce ties among communities, to preserve the assets within the family, the honor and sexual health of the



daughter, or to assure stability in situations of financial pressure, early child marriages are a common practice in many countries of the developing world. According to UNICEF (2001) among women aged 15-24, almost 48% were engaged in child marriages in South Asia, 42% in Africa and almost 29% in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The most striking evidence of early marriage is documented in India. According to Burns (1998), a survey conducted in 1993 by the National Government on 5000 women in Rajasthan shows that more than half of them were married before they were 15, of which 3% married even before being 5 and another 14% before 10 years old. A more recent study using the Indian National Health Survey-3 for the period 2005-2006 finds that the prevalence of child marriage of adult Indian women aged 20-24 is almost 50% (Raj et al., 2009).

Extreme cases are Afghanistan and Bangladesh where more than half of the girls are married by the age of 18 (World Marriage Patterns 2000), and Nepal where early marriage is present in 40% of the girls aged 15 and below (UN 1991). However, this practice is present not only in Asia, but also Africa and Latin America. Countries such as Niger, Burkina-Faso, Chad, Nepal, Liberia and Cameroon present high levels of child marriage (International Center for Research on Woman 2007). In addition, low ages at marriage are reported in Paraguay, Mexico and Guatemala (UNICEF 2001).

Despite strong paternal control over the choice of a husband or the age at marriage, female choice may still be exercised through divorce. However, this decision is not fully characterized by complete autonomy, sometimes being burdened by social and cultural norms. It is important to mention that in Islamic law divorce is exclusively a man's right, except in cases such as adultery or domestic violence. Moreover, it is enough for the husband to repeat three times "I divorce you" for the divorce to take place (Islamic Law, Shari'a).

Men have been shown to influence not only women's decisions regarding marriage and divorce, but also a large array of other aspects of women's life such as physical mobility to access services (e.g. health and education) as well as participation into the labor market.

A study by Khan (1999) in three villages in Punjab region, Pakistan, explores the heavily constrained mobility of women to access health care. Her findings suggest that while for married women the mobility outside the household or village in seeking a doctor often requires husband's permission, unmarried girls are more likely to be restricted in accessing health care by their parents due to the fear of keeping the so-called "family's honor". Allendorf's (2007) analysis for Nepal also shows high levels of husband decision making when referring to health care utilization. She uses a sample of the Nepal Democratic and Health Survey that incorporates data not only from women responses, but also from men and finds that almost 55% of the husbands have the final say concerning the wife's health care. Also, the extent to which a woman obtains maternal and child health care increases with the autonomy the female enjoys.

Additional insights regarding physical mobility to access health care services are given by Ghuman et al. (2006) who investigate samples of married women aged 15-39 and their husbands in 26 communities of India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand for the period 1993-1994. The results indicate that the wife has to ask permission to go to the health center in North India, Pakistan and the Muslim area of the Philippines and that lower levels of movement are attested in Malaysia and Christian and Chinese areas of the Philippines. However, these results are in line with prior studies in the literature that note substantial gender differences between North and South of India (Dyson and Moore, 1983) or between Muslim and Non-Muslim areas (Ghuman, 2003; Morgan et al., 2002).

Shocking evidence in favor of low female autonomy in seeking health care comes also from Africa. While some studies fail to prove discrimination against girls in Sub-Saharan Africa (Garenne, 2003; Hill and Upchurch, 1995), others highlight a slight preference for boys when referring to acute respiratory infections treatment (Klasen, 1996). In Burkina-Faso women cannot decide by themselves to go to the dispensary, even if they have the financial resources to do so, and are ought to have the husband's consent (Nikiema et al. 2008).

When referring to women's autonomy in developing countries it is important to emphasize not only the low access to health care services, but also the degree of mobility women have in attending schooling. The first ones to constrain female educational level are again parents, mostly fathers. Religious and social-values, poverty,

the dowry system, lower returns to education than men, higher productivity costs (if daughters work more in the household) are some of the reasons why parents discourage girls to seek for education (Khan 1989). Once again daughters are seen as economic burdens, which sooner or later will become the propriety of their husbands, and hence not feasible to invest in.

In Nepal, son preference is a deeply rooted value that has a strong voice in determining behavior related to education of children. Pokharel (2009) studies discrimination in two ethnic communities, Brahmin and Tamang, and brings evidence that daughters are restricted by both parents when referring to education. In a small study for rural Pakistan, Sandhu et al. (2005) find that 91% of male headed households are in favor of sending their male offspring to school, while only 63% would do this for their daughters. Further evidence for Pakistan stands in Khan's et al. (2010) comparative analysis between rural and urban areas. Their results show that boys are more likely to attend school than girls. Moreover gender disparity is higher for rural children than their urban counterparts. Further mixed evidence is given by Quisumbing and Maluccio (2000) that use data sets from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Ethiopia and South Africa in order to examine how father's education influences gender equity in their offspring's schooling. The results for Bangladesh, Ethiopia and South Africa show that daughters of wealthier fathers and/ or daughters of better-educated fathers are likely to complete fewer years of study compared to their brothers. Moreover, little evidence for gender preference is found in Indonesia.

However, it is important to note that recent studies challenge the idea of gender inequity by drawing attention to a reversal in the educational gender gap. This is the case of today's Bangladesh (Shafiq, 2009), where the strong pro-male favoritism when referring to education not only diminished, but made place to a relative new phenomenon: discrimination of boys relative to girls. In this sense, boys in urban areas are found to be between 7.4-27.4% less likely to be enrolled in school and between 9.7-20.8% less likely to be literate at all. Sons exhibit the same patterns in rural areas of Bangladesh.

But women are not only discriminated by their fathers (and mothers) regarding education, but also in some situations by their husbands. A striking example is Tanye's (2008) article that documents strange practices in order to avoid wives to keep going to

school, such as threats of marrying another woman, turning off the light with the excuse of high electricity bills, giving children to be raised by relatives. Again, it is important to highlight that sometimes women auto discriminate themselves by thinking that keeping the household and taking care of the children is their only duty. That is why in many cultures they never try to find a job or continue the educational process, even having their husband's support.

Despite the increasing economic value of women with the growing importance of education and employment opportunities, traditional families are still focused on the growing son, not daughter preference. Therefore we assist to a gender discrimination bias regarding female participation into the labor market.

Kantor's (2009) study on women employment in Lucknow, India, gives insights on who decides whether a female works or not. It seems that even if the quantitative analysis suggests that greater autonomy has a say in the decision of participation into the labor market, qualitative results illustrate a stronger influence of husband's decision power. It is also interesting to investigate the role of religion when documenting the economic position of the woman, especially the Islamic religion, assumed to be particularly oppressive for females. Indeed, the Islamic law can be an important impediment to woman's engagement into the labor market. A society where women have to ask for their husband's permission to leave the house, where the man is responsible for family's maintenance (breadwinner) and his wife is seen as a housekeeper, raise important barriers to woman's economic role (Nejad, 2000). Syed (2008) sees modesty as a condition for women employment that protects them from unwanted male attention. Moreover, women should find jobs that are suitable such as nursing, teaching, medicine, business or farming (Badawi, 1995).

Another important aspect of women's autonomy refers to asset accumulation. Traditionally, property laws were biased in favor of men, usually seen as family heads with the right to enjoy complete control of family property. Despite a gradual change of this perspective, females still lack control over resources, especially productive assets. For example, Moser and Felton (2010) uses data on a longitudinal study of an urban community in Ecuador for the period 1978 - 2004 in order to examine the relationship between gender and asset accumulation (such as human capital, productive and physical capital). Their findings indicate that male-headed households accrue assets more

quickly that female-headed households. However, when disaggregating assets within household to the next generation, it seems that daughters are more educated than sons and are doing better in the job market. Therefore, girls are better off than boys when referring to human and productive capital.

Another piece of evidence is Pandey (2010) who contextualizes gender opportunities and constraints in asset accumulation among women in Katmandu, Nepal. Her analysis suggest that about one third of females are sole owners of land and households and that this phenomenon is more frequent in new areas of the city compared to older ones. Different channels of asset accumulation are stated such as gifts, bequests, purchases using personal income, legal transfers of property from husband or in-laws.

The study by Deere et al. (2009) shows that gendered distribution of household ownership is much more equitable in some Latin American countries and varies across countries depending on the type of asset. The highest level of gender ownership equity concerns houses. In countries such as Nicaragua and Panama, almost 50% of homes are owned by women. Females are more discriminated when regarding landownership (ranging from 12.8% in Honduras to 29.7% in Paraguay).

Data on land rights in Africa is less available than for other regions of the world and that on women's land rights is even scarcer. The limited data do suggest that the gender gap in land ownership in Africa is substantial (Deere et al., 2009). In Cameroon less than 10 per cent of the title deeds correspond to women and in Kenya only 5 per cent of women own land in their own names. In Uganda only 7 per cent of women own land themselves. Land is acquired through marriage, inheritance, the market, the state, and through local community leaders. In Africa, local leaders often control the final allocations and can reallocate the land as they deem necessary. Purchase of land comprises a relatively limited means of obtaining land. In general, however, the most common way that women gain access to land is through marriage. These rights may either be use rights, where the land is allocated to her by her husband, or permanent rights. In effect, most marital regimes are separation of property regimes, where men and women hold their property separately and women have little or no permanent claim on the property owned by their husbands. Thus, although women gain access to land

through their husbands, they do not gain ownership of it, so that they lose the land in case of death or divorce.

Apart from interventions in women's decisions regarding marriage, divorce, education, seek of health care services, and entry into the labor market, both fathers and husbands can exercise their influence in subtle autonomy issues such as visiting relatives or friends, access to household budget, opening a bank account, or even the right to vote. Allendorf's (2007) study for Nepal gives not only insights about who has the final say in wife's physical mobility to access health care services, but also in household purchases, visits to relatives or friends or what food to cook. The study reveals that the only area where women can fully decide is which "food to cook", while husbands alone decide the level of household spending and whether she is allowed to go out of the house. Other studies find similar results. For example, more than half of the Nepali couples agree that the wife alone or jointly decides on daily household purchases, while 60% of the Guatemalan marriages think that woman has some say concerning buying articles for the house (Becker et al. 2006).

Outcomes for India indicate the same pattern. Jejeebhoy (2002) investigates women's autonomy by using data on women and their husbands from two rural communities, Tamil Nadu (South) and Uttar Pradesh (North). Her findings suggest indeed the documented gender difference between the North and the South and moreover between Hindu and Muslim women. It seems that out of 5 places (home of relative or friend, community center, health center, next village), Tamil Nadu women are allowed to go unescorted to 2.4 places, while their Uttar Pradesh counterparts only to 1.4 places on average. In addition, in the North women are equally constrained no matter their religious belief, while in the South, Muslim women are more limited.

In Egypt, an unmarried women aged below 21 must seek her father permission to obtain a passport and travel. While it is not legally required for married women to have their husband's consent, police ask for it.<sup>5</sup> In Botswana and Swaziland, woman are, respectively, under their father's and husband's authority in credit and property matters concerning land and the household, and therefore cannot open a bank account without prior approval from their guardian.<sup>6</sup> In Namibia, women are seen in community

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136067.htm>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.saiia.org.za/press-room/in-southern-africa-women-are-changing-the-face-of-migration.html>

property laws as minors and ought to have husband's consent to have access to a bank account. However, women's autonomy is even more limited in Afghanistan or Saudi Arabia, where women not only need a male-relative's permission to open a bank account, but also vote or drive a car.<sup>7</sup>

### *Son Preference*

Son preference and its implied discrimination against girl children are widespread in the Middle East and North Africa (Yount, 2001) and in South and East Asia (Chan and Yeoh, 2002).

Most of the researchers interested in son preference have had as their central concern its adverse consequences; particularly excess female infant and child mortality or the poor health of girl children relative to boys (Das Gupta, 1987; Das Gupta and Shuzhuo, 1999; Pande and Yazbeck, 2003). Others have examined the role of son preference in slowing the transition to low fertility as couples bear children until they have sufficient boys (Clark, 2000; Das Gupta and Bhat, 1997; Yount et al., 2000 among others). The advent of technology permitting prenatal sex selection has shifted the focus of scholars and policymakers to sex-selective abortion and consequent distorted sex ratios as materializations of son preference (Arnold et al., 2002 and Murphy, 2003).

Son preference is one of the strongest manifestations of gender inequality. Social norms and patriarchal institutions lay the foundation for gender inequality that reinforces the preference for sons. These include kinship and marriage norms, the organization of the agrarian economy, and rules and rituals associated with caste and religion.

The pervasive prevalence of payments between families at the time of marriage in many areas of the developing world has important effects on women's welfare and contributes to the persistence of son preferences. These payments can be substantial. Recent estimates document transfers per marriage amounting to six times the annual household income in South Asia (Rao, 1993) and four times in sub-Saharan Africa (Dekker and Hoogeveen, 2002). These marriage payments can be of different sizes and forms, but are mainly classified into "brideprice", seen as payments from the groom

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=20556>

side to the bride side, and “dowry” or negative brideprices understood as a payment made by the bride’s family to the groom’s family.

Most of the documented research on marriage payments is for India, where dowry has become a wide phenomenon associated with the rise in dowry prices and important implications for the welfare of women (Rao, 1993; Deolalikar and Rao, 1990; Edlund, 1996). Even though it was prohibited as early as 1961, this practice was not only impossible to eliminate, but also spread and increased.

Based on a study in rural South India, Srinivasan (2005) brings strong evidence in favor of a preference for sons over daughters. This non preference for daughters is justified by the large amounts of dowry her family has to pay to groom’s side. However, women in her study seem to be in favor of such practice, seen mostly as a way to create bonds among families, to bring protection and happiness and not linked to growing evidence of dowry related violence. Pande and Astone (2007) using data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) India for the period 1992-1993 also show that dowry is one of the determinants of son preference in rural India.

Comparatively little research has explored marriage transfers in the rest of south Asia, though several studies point to dowry payments now occurring in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Anderson (2000) analyzes the causes of dowry in contemporary Pakistan. He documents three possible explanations for the use of such a payment: a transfer to the groom’s family in order to acquire a high quality groom, a compensation payment to the groom’s for receiving the bride (seen as a liability for the family by not contributing to the household income), and a pre-mortem inheritance to the daughter, which is preserved throughout marriage. The empirical results support the groom-price explanation for urban areas, while dowry is seen as an inheritance in rural areas.

An article that points to contemporary dowry payments in Bangladesh is the one of Nasrin (2011) that also sees dowry as an asymmetry in gender equity that favors men. Her study in three villages shows that girls are often seen as a burden for the family on account of the cost of dowries. Moreover, it seems that parents are willing to engage their daughters into early marriages due to a low level of marriage transfers.

Substantial research by anthropologists has aimed at distinguishing between those societies where the burden of marriage payments falls primarily on the groom's



family and brideprices are paid, and those where the bulk of the transfer comes from the bride's family and dowries are paid. Brideprice-paying societies are relatively homogenous, women have a prominent role in agriculture, and polygyny is practiced (e.g. sub-Saharan Africa and China). Dowry, in contrast, is found in socially stratified, monogamous societies that are economically complex and where women have a relatively small productive role (e.g. South-Asia). There is also evidence that while brideprices are relatively uniform within societies and do not vary by family wealth, dowries increase with the wealth and social status of both sides of the marriage bargain.

Beside those marriage rules, religion also plays a role in defining appropriate social and gender norms, which in turn influence son preferences. For example among Hindus a dead parent's soul can only attain heaven if that person has a son to light the funeral pyre, and salvation can be achieved through sons who offer ancestral worship (Vlassof, 1990). Studies suggest that son preference exists also among other religious groups such as the Sikhs (Das Gupta, 1987) or the Muslims (Murthy, 1996).

Caste may also be associated with cultural practices that influence women's roles, and thus son preference. Compared to lower castes, higher castes have more rigid gender stratification systems, with strictly enforced rules of seclusion and greater use of dowry. Lower caste and tribal women may have fewer restrictions placed on their movement or employment outside the home (Srinivas, 1976), often due to economic pressures that force them to earn an income.

The economic system also affects gender equity and son preference. For example in East and South India the main crop is paddy where women play a key role in weeding, transplantation, harvesting and threshing. In contrast, in the North and West, wheat and other dry-agriculture crops predominate, and - particularly where there is irrigation - the work involves more male-biased "muscle power". Researchers have argued that the higher demand for women's agricultural labor in rice areas makes girls and women more valuable than in wheat areas, thus contributing to less discrimination against girls in rice-growing regions.

Finally, inheritance laws that render sons crucial to retain family property (Agarwal, 1994) and the need for sons so as to exercise power in violent areas or to assure household security (Dharmalingan, 1996; Oldenburg, 1992) are also both thought to influence gender inequality and thus son preferences.

As a result of the previous social and economic structures that characterize several areas in East and North Africa and South and East Asia, daughters are often seen as an economic drain on families. Once married, daughters' incomes invariably go to their marital households and socio-cultural norms do not allow parents to expect any material support from married daughters.

In the developed world evidence of son preference is also present in some critical parental decisions. For example, recent research presents proof in favor of parental gender preference regarding custody. Analysis for small samples in US (Wisconsin, Michigan and California) suggests that the paternal custody of boys is more common following divorce<sup>8</sup>, even though children are often assigned to the mother.

Additional insights are given by the study of Dahl and Moretti (2004, 2008) that analyze the impact of son preference on divorce, child custody, marriage and shotgun marriage in the US and find significant parental bias in favor of sons over daughters in all cases. The empirical evidence shows a large custody effect, fathers being 11 to 22 percent more likely to have custody in all-boy versus all-girl families. Also, the authors compare the US results to 5 developing countries and find that the gender bias is bigger in countries such as Mexico, Colombia and Kenya and that in China and Vietnam paternal custody is by far much more common. For example in Vietnam, 48 percent of the parents that obtain boys' custody are fathers, compared to approximately 20% in the US.

Besides custody, paternal gender preferences may manifest in child support and alimony, enforced by legal means. Evidence for the US suggests that if in the case of custody fathers are more attached to boys than to girls, when talking about child support, the evidence indicates the opposite: it seems that often sons are more likely to receive equal or even less levels of paternal assistance. Paasch and Teachman (1991) examine a sample of divorced women from the National Longitudinal Study of the Class of 1972. The results show that fathers contribute to a lesser extent to their daughter's direct participation (such as helping with homework, attending different school events) but that monetary contributions are not gender biased.

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<sup>8</sup> Maccoby and Mnookin (1992); Cancian and Meye (1998); Fox and Kelly (1995).

Additional proof is brought by the analysis of Mammen (2008, 2010) who investigates a large, nationally representative data set for the US, March/April Match Current Population Survey, for different time-spans (1988-2006, respectively 1994-2008). Her findings suggest no evidence of gender discrimination on child legal and informal support (whether the child received any holiday, birthday, clothes, food, any gift, summer camps, medical expenses from the absent father). Moreover, she suggests that even if there is incomplete consistency across specifications, it seems that if gender discrimination exists, then boys are more likely to be disadvantaged than girls.

### *Household chores and childcare tasks*

A well-established limitation to women's economic success in developed countries is their greater involvement in household task and childrearing activities. In recent times there have been increased attention focused on trends in domestic or household labor patterns and the gender participation and contribution. This increasing attention stems from the implications that the substantial changes in family formation and dissolution and the changing gender distribution in paid work, may have had on the distribution of work between men and women in the home.

Most research tend to suggest that women's hours on housework are declining as a result of involvement in paid employment but there are mixed views about whether men's hours on housework have changed (Hochschild, 1989). Women continue to perform a greater proportion of domestic tasks than men do. Various studies consistently reveal that women do most of the housework and childcare within the family, but the explanation for gender inequity within the home is not well understood. Three theoretical perspectives on the process of domestic labor allocation dominate the literature: (1) the time availability perspective, (2) the relative resources perspective, and (3) the gender perspective.

The time availability perspective suggests that the division of labor is allocated according to the availability of household members in relation to the amount of housework to be done. Hence, women's and men's time in housework should be strongly related to time spent in market labor and family composition. Shelton's (1990) research documents that time constraints, measured by employment status, marital status, and parental status, account for a large amount of variation in household labor.

The association between these indicators of time constraints and household labor differs markedly by gender, however, with women's time more affected by these factors.

The relative resource perspective argues that the allocation of housework reflects power relations between men and women: the level of relative resources partners bring to a relationship determines how much domestic labor is completed by each partner. Higher levels of education and income relative to one's spouse, for example, are expected to translate into more power, which is used to avoid doing domestic tasks.

The gender perspective argues that housework is a symbolic enactment of gender relations and explains why there is not a simple trade-off between time spent in unpaid and paid labor among men and women in either marital or cohabiting relationships. Early formulations of the gender perspective focused specially on gender role ideologies formed through childhood socialization about appropriate adult male and female roles (Coverman, 1985). More recent formulations have combined gender ideology with the theoretical construct of "doing gender" (Berk, 1985; West and Zimmerman, 1987). South and Spitze (1994) demonstrate how housework is an enactment of gender - controlling for other factors, they find that women and men in marital households, compared with other household types, have the greatest gap in housework time, indicating the power of the roles "wife" and "husband". Gupta (1999) shows that after marriage, women's housework hours increase while men's housework decline. Brines (1994) argues that husbands' housework contributions do not follow "logical" rules of economic exchange. Rather, the more a husband is dependent on his wife economically, the less housework he does, most likely as a way to reassert his masculinity. In other words, wives and husbands display their "proper" gender roles through the amount and type of housework they perform.

Most of the research on the division of household tasks has been conducted using time use surveys for the US and Scandinavian countries. Bianchi et al. (2000) try to disentangle the contribution of the three previous theories in explaining the evolution of the gender division of household tasks. Using time-diary data from representative samples of American adults they find more support for the time-availability and relative-resource models of household production than for the gender perspective, although there is some support for the latter perspective as well.

Evertsson and Nermon (2007) investigate the gender distribution of household tasks in Sweden. They use data from the Swedish Level of Living Survey for the years 1991 and 2000. The analysis shows that changes in spouses' relative resources only result in a moderate change in women's share of the housework between 1991 and 2000. The change that nevertheless does take place indicates that women's share of the housework decreases if their relative resources in terms of level of education and social status increased between the analyzed time span. If a woman's economic dependency on her spouse decreased between the two years, her share of the housework also decreases. The decrease in women's share of the housework is mainly due to an increase in men's time spent in housework. However, regardless of access to resources, Swedish men do less housework than Swedish women.

### **The effect of gender policies on men's behavior and attitudes towards women**

The evidence summarized in the previous section identifies an important role of men for the well-being of women. Men clearly influence women's health outcomes by controlling reproductive methods and access to health care facilities. They can badly damage women's health through their violent behavior. There is also evidence that culture and public institutions that favor men and place women in a residual position - patriarchal societies and certain kinship norms - limit a woman's autonomy in many respects. In developing countries those social structures favor the persistence of son preference and have adverse effects on girl children outcomes. In developed countries, the unequal distribution of household tasks represents an important barrier for gender equality in the labor market.

In this section we review some gender policy interventions aimed at achieving gender equality that intentionally or unintentionally affect men's attitudes and behavior and their final implications for women's outcomes.

#### *Health interventions*

Men's sexual and reproductive needs had been overlooked for a long time until the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 where it was agreed that information, counseling and services must be made available to men. At the Women's Conference in 1995 in Beijing, it was argued that

shared responsibility between men and women on these matters would improve women's health. With men as the main decision makers, particularly in many developing countries, it seems obvious that involving men will indeed enhance women's health. Next we review some of the successful stories of involving men in women's health.

There is evidence showing the benefits of educating men about contraception in Bangladesh (Becker, 1996; Green et al., 1972) and Ethiopia (Terefe and Larson, 1993). These studies find that the inclusion of the husband in family planning programs resulted in a relevant increase in the use of modern contraception methods. Similarly, Wang et al. (1996) found lower discontinuation rates in their randomized study in China: when both parents were educated about family planning, IUD users had significantly lower pregnancy and abortion rates than users whose husbands were not educated with their wives on the matter. The evidence in those studies suggests that educating men about contraception makes a difference in overall contraceptive use, but that it is important to simultaneously educate both partners. Ultimately, there is a strong effect on the outcome when both partners (individually or separately) receive family planning education.

Several studies also suggest that education and health services provided during the antenatal period can reduce pregnancy and delivery complications. Mullany et al. (2007) prove that the inclusion of men in reproductive health interventions can enhance positive health outcomes. They conduct a randomized controlled trial in urban Nepal and find that women who received antenatal services during the second trimester of pregnancy together with their husbands were much more likely to attend a post-partum visit than women who received education alone. Similar results are found by Bhalerao et al. (1984) in a study conducted in Mumbai, India. In this case a greater involvement of husbands in antenatal care counseling significantly increases the frequency of antenatal care visits, significantly lowers perinatal mortality, and pays dividends even among uneducated and low socio-economic groups.

### *Reducing domestic violence*

In the recent years, there has been a growing recognition that the role of men is crucial in changing unequal power relations. In particular, actions involving men in movements to end violence against women, focusing on men's roles and responsibilities and emphasizing them as part of the solution to combat gender violence has gained

increased attention. There are local, national and international laws, conventions and agreements that define gender-based violence and legislate against those who use it. There is more public education, awareness and acceptance of the problem and more institutions acting in accordance of the laws.

The evidence in the previous section indicates that empowering women is not always a solution to eradicate gender violence. There is a growing awareness that men can play a significant role in ending violence and thus violence prevention programs should be addressed towards them. Reviews of the literature suggest that sexual assault prevention programs for college men can be effective in improving attitudes that may put men at-risk for committing violence against women, although these attitudinal changes are often limited to periods of a few months. In contrast, programs that focus only on providing information have not been found to be effective. Moreover the evidence suggests that these programs are more effective in all-male groups. For example, Brecklin and Forde (2001) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of forty-three college rape prevention program evaluations and concluded that both men and women experienced more beneficial change in single-gender groups than in mixed-gender ones.

The only experimental evidence on the impact of women's economic status on domestic violence comes from a randomized intervention combining microfinance with violence education in South Africa. Women randomized to receive the intervention experienced a 55 percent drop in domestic violence relative to the control group (Pronyk et al., 2006). These results suggest that a combination of women's economic empowerment and men's education on gender violence can have a substantial effect in ending domestic violence.

#### *It is not only about women's economic empowerment*

Previous studies demonstrate that prescribed social systems and norms limit women's rights and access to and control over economic resources. In patriarchal societies promoting gender equality is impossible without the consent, mindset and involvement of the male population. Accordingly, to improve the status of women efforts should be addressed to get support, assistance, understanding, and involvement from the major partner - the "male" of the society. There is the need to empower boys and men in terms of their understanding, information, and capacity building regarding equal opportunity for both sexes.

Chowdhury and Patnaik (2010) provide a critical revision of several gender equality policies in India. There are various welfare programs for maintaining gender equality and reduce disparities between male and female from the very beginning of individual's life. However, these are not able to be successful due to a variety of reasons. One of the fundamental causes for their unsuccessful implementation is the lack of direct involvement and positive mindset of males in these programs and too much emphasis and focus on the females. Observations and findings from empirical data suggest that because of women's quota or reservation systems, women are getting more jobs and are engaged in various activities, whereas men are lacking the scope of doing and getting the same level of opportunities. Rather, men are always there to control the women and expect them to act and behave in accordance with their desire and wishes. If men are given equal opportunity along with women, the work can be done in a better way with much dignified manner without any ill feeling against women. Rather, men will feel involved, engaged, and empowered to work along with women for various developmental works for the society.

Without the empowerment on the part of boys and men to realize women's importance and their contribution in various spheres of life, true empowerment for women is not possible in our society.

#### *Social structures that devalue women*

The evidence in previous papers suggests that economic development will not blunt son preference or eliminate discrimination against girls and women, unless social structures such as dowries, patrilineal living arrangements and discriminatory inheritances will be eliminated.

An interesting paper by Das Gupta et al. (2000) compare changes in gender roles and women's empowerment in China, the Republic of Korea, and India. This comparison is interesting as by 1950s the three countries shared strong commonalities in their systems of patrilineal kinship and inheritance that marginalized women and made them powerless in public and domestic life – which is reflected in some of the highest rates of excess female child mortality in the world.

Under those patrilineal systems women had rights of maintenance as daughters in their natal home, and as wives in their husband's home, but they had no rights to own key productive assets such as land. Women were only valuable sources of progeny and daughters had very limited value to their parents, as they were lost throughout marriage.



An adult woman had no socially acceptable role in their parental family except as a visitor, nor could she have rights to their productive assets except for gifts on ritual occasions. As an adult she became extraneous to her family of birth, her appropriate position being a wife in another family. She had to leave and make way for incoming daughters-in-law.

Shaped by different circumstances, these three nation-states took quite different paths of economic and social development. The Chinese Communist party was deeply committed to equity, including gender equity. The Republic of Korea's government opted for the path of export-oriented industrialization to achieve rapid economic growth, while preserving its culture and family system with all its implications for gender equity. India became a democracy in which the influence of social movements for gender equity remained strong, but where the process of setting and implementing development agendas was constrained by the need to balance the competing political demands of an enormously heterogeneous population.

These different paths have profoundly affected development outcomes but also had tremendous impact on gender outcomes. China has succeeded not only in improving living standards but has also gone far towards establishing gender equity. The Republic of Korea has transformed living standards, but women's subordination has been slow to change. India has achieved considerable improvement in gender equity as compared to the past, but the results are still uneven and the gaps still substantial, while both women and men continue to struggle with poverty, illiteracy and poor health conditions.

Several lessons emerge from the experience of these three countries. One is that even when states are interested in promoting gender equity, their actions are often constrained by the desire to maintain stable family structures. In China efforts to protect women workers have been double-edged weapons. During the 1950s and early 1960s, women were given special consideration at work during menstruation, pregnancy, birth and breast-feeding. The motive was both to protect women and also enable them to raise healthy children. During the Cultural Revolution, the emphasis changed to one in which women were no different from men. After 1979, these forms of protection were reinstated. However, they have been used to justify lower wages for women, and they also run the risk of reinforcing the stereotype that a woman's primary role is reproduction. Another gender gap is introduced by mandatory retirement for women 5 years earlier than for men. This does little for gender equity, but helps the state by

freeing up middle-aged women to look after aging parents-in-law, grandchildren and the home while their daughters-in-law go out to work.

Another lesson to be learnt from those countries' experiences is that in rigidly patrilineal settings, it is very difficult for the state to make rules of residence and landownership more gender-equitable. For example, the Republic of Korea has suffered an important transformation during the last decade. By 1995, it had become the world's fifteenth largest economy. Poor in land and natural resources, the government concentrates on building a skilled and healthy workforce to lay the basis for rapid industrialization. This emphasis on human development and economic growth has dramatically transformed the living conditions of both women and men. However, women's position in the family and society has been slow to change. The land reform redistributed property to male heads of households, and had little implication for gender equity. State policy has made considerable effort to protect Korean culture in the face of rapid industrialization or urbanization. Patrilineal social organization and segregated gender roles are perceived to be central to Korean culture, and consequently state policy has sought to prevent them.

As a result of this cultural preservation the social, economic, and political participation of Korean women are still among the lowest in the world. In 1996 women's enrollment rate in education was only 45%. Despite women's participation has risen substantially in recent years, women in most occupations face gender discrimination, including hiring practices, wage differentials, limited opportunities for long-term employment, and male-oriented culture of the workplace. In any given occupational category, women tend to have the positions with the lowest pay and status. Given their relatively poor prospects in the job market, one major incentive for women to enroll in higher education is to increase their chances of marrying men with higher incomes. The Equal Employment Act of 1987 has made explicit discrimination against married women illegal, but strong cultural norms regarding women's proper role as wife and mother continue to prevail and many employers and employees alike expect that female staff will leave their jobs when marry.

Those countries have also tried to alter women's legal rights and many aspects of family life arrangements. For example, the Chinese Communist party sought to eliminate arranged marriages, brideprice, and child-marriage. Women were given the right to choose their own partners and demand a divorce, and rights to inherit property and control of their children. Although the Marriage Law was well-intentioned and its

implementation had successfully reduced the incidence of arranged marriages and increased the domestic autonomy of young women, it slacked off when it began to threaten the family system and to generate political disaffection.

In India a very problematic issue is that of dowries and its related violence. Dowry in its coercive extravagant form does not enhance a woman's status or strengthen her bargaining power. In reinforcing the image that daughters are an economic burden, the indispensability of marriage and their dependence status, the practice only maintains and reproduces the devaluation of women. In 1986, the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act was an important instrument in the direction towards improving gender equality. However dowry practices are still frequent pointing out the inadequacies in the law itself and the need for more broad-based efforts. The problem is that the law is couched in a patriarchal framework which views the woman as dependent. Some researchers suggest that the strengthening of women's right to property legally and in practice could pave the way for elimination the dowry system (Srinivasan, 2005).

A starting point would be to modify the inheritance laws. In a recent paper, Deininger et al. (2010) evaluate the impact of changes in the Hindu succession Act in 1994 that grant daughters equal coparcenary birth rights in joint family property. They show that the amendment significantly increased the probability of daughters inheriting land, but that even after the passage of the amendment, significant bias against females persists. Their results also indicate a significant increase in educational attainment for daughters, suggesting an alternative channel of wealth transfer.

#### *An important structural barrier in the developed world*

Most care and household tasks are provided through family obligations, unpaid but not free, since they are paid for by reducing the labor market opportunities of careers. Family careers are mostly women, because of gender norms and also the gender wage gap, which makes it more costly for men to reduce employment hours.

In developed countries, the substantial improvement in the labor market outcomes of women has not gone hand in hand with a more egalitarian division of household tasks. To improve female labor market opportunities many countries are reconsidering their family benefit policies with a view of increasingly involving fathers in child care and housework tasks.

Pioneering countries in developing more gender equal family benefits are Norway and Sweden where their maternity leave systems were transformed into paternal leave systems as early as in the 1970s. Currently, a large number of other countries are reconsidering their benefit systems. Mainly they extend parental leave periods and impose gender restrictions. In Denmark, Italy and Norway, for instance, at least one month of the extension is a "use it or lose it" option for fathers. In Austria, two years of extended leave is offered, but only if the father takes at least six months of leave before the child turns three (Gatenio and Kamerman, 2002). Iceland has introduced the most radical reform. Here, three months are allocated to fathers, three to mothers. Only three months can be freely allocated between the parents. All these policies aim at providing fathers with stronger incentives to take parental leave, and share household work and the responsibility for child care.

Increased individual eligibility to paid and unpaid parental leave schemes has caused fathers to increase their usage of the leave schemes. This result has been found both for the relatively moderate US parental leave schemes (Han et al., 2009), where increased eligibility makes fathers increase leave taking by 50-80%, and for the more generous Swedish parental leave schemes (Ekberg et al., 2005) where a one-month quota dedicated to the father, makes fathers increase leave by 2 weeks on average.

Considering the effects of child leave on male care-taking activities, Nepomnyaschy and Waldfogel (2007) find evidence that US fathers who take parental leave are more involved in dressing, feeding, bathing and getting up at night, nine months after birth. Looking at long run effects on male care-taking activities, Ekberg et al. (2005) find no effect of Swedish father's leave usage on their involvement in child care and household work when the child is eight years old. The authors argue that the results are likely to reflect causal effects as identification is based on comparison of fathers with children born slightly before and slightly after the introduction of the "daddy month", which increased father's leave by two weeks on average. It is perhaps not surprising that such a small increase in fathers' involvement has no long run effects.

The previous results suggest that it may be relatively easy for a government to incentivize fathers to take parental leave. However, it appears much harder to induce behavioral changes, through the acquisition of human capital for household work and child care.

### *The gender condition of Conditional Cash Transfer programs*

In less developed countries, several governments have launched Conditional Cash Transfer programs designed to alleviate short-term poverty and to increase long-term human capital among the extreme poor in the rural areas. *Oportunidades*, for example, is a very popular program conducted by the Mexican government. It has two design features presumed to be critical to its success, and that have formed the core of the programs adopted also in other countries. The first is the conditioning of transfers on beneficiary responsibilities such as school enrollment, health check-ups, or attendance to seminars that teach about health, nutrition and sanitation. The second design feature is the delivery of the cash benefit directly to women. The motivation for this choice is the presumption that money in hands of responsible female households members will more likely be spent in a "family-friendly" way and thus be consistent with the objective of the program. However, academics have often expressed a disagreement with the gender CCT as the policy may increase women's burden in the home without asking much of men in their roles as parents and partners (Molyneux, 2006, 2009).

It has also been argued that those women-targeted public transfer programs will improve female's bargaining position in the household and decrease the incidence of spousal abuse. Bobonis et al. (2009) examine the implications of the *Oportunidades* conditional cash transfer program for spousal abuse and threats of violence. They find that although women in beneficiary households are 33 percent less likely to be victims of physical abuse than women in comparable non-beneficiary households, they are more likely to receive violent threats with no associated physical abuse.

This evidence suggests that while the CCT programs have been proved to be powerful tools in increasing school enrollment and children's health outcomes in deprived areas, there may be adverse effects on adult gender related issues. In particular, those programs seem to reinforce the role of women as main child care providers.

## **Conclusions**

Recent years have witnessed considerable advances in women's attainment of economic and social rights. However, the implementation of full gender equality requires a profound shift in individual attitudes and behaviors, which will ultimately transform the underlying structure of social and economic institutions, making them more welcoming to women.

From the previous literature review we conclude that men play a key role in bringing about gender equality since, in most societies, men exercise preponderant power in many spheres of life. In a significant fraction of developing countries men have full control of economic resources and, in some cases, they can even have the final say regarding women's health and socioeconomic issues. In the developed world the unequal distribution of family care and household tasks represent a barrier for the economic success of women. Gender violence is also an important factor that deteriorates women's integrity all over the globe. Thus the transition towards a more egalitarian society requires the contribution and commitment of men.

The evidence so far suggests that gender policies that exclusively target women can easily fail to achieve their intended goals. Indeed, some of those policies designed to only promoting women's empowerment have been shown to have adverse effects on their well-being. In contrast, programs that take into account the role of men and inform them about the benefits of improving women's socioeconomic status are more likely to be successful. Particularly popular are those focused on women's reproductive health that educate men on contraception, STD and HIV prevention methods.

On the whole, the evidence in this review challenges policy makers and development institutions to seriously consider the role of men in achieving gender equality. To this end, it is important to note that gender equality does not mean women ruling over men, but it rather guarantees a level playing field absent of all forms of discrimination that prevail against women.

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