

20 September 2002

**Study Topic (i): Gender differences as a consequence of macro-economic changes and policy decisions, The use of institutional business surveys and registers as measurement tools for gender dimensions in economic development processes.**

Mary Chamie, UNSD

Social and economic change has resulted in new requirements for economic and social statistics. Attention is now needed to the measurement of newly emerging and alternative approaches of services industries in the production and trade of goods and services. Differential labor force and educational characteristics, changes to occupational structures, production and consumption patterns as well as the measurement and classification of time use, own-account and personal care service activities all need further reflection and statistical development.

Within this context, the topic addressed today in this first session may ask, when do differences in participation in economic activity, occupation and entrepreneurship among women and men actually reflect economic processes that have resulted in gender inequality? What are some of the other competing forces at work? How do gender mechanisms influence economic activity, occupational structures and entrepreneurship of women and men? Which gender mechanisms operate economically?

How does one decide on which is the chicken (economic processes), and which is the egg (gender mechanisms)? From a policy perspective, does it matter? How are these two major dynamics of gender and economics integrated in today's discussion?

To a great extent, the presentations today address gender inequalities that are believed to be the result of economic development processes that lead to differential economic participation rates, occupational structures, and entrepreneurship among women and men (entrepreneur being defined in the Oxford dictionary as "a person who undertakes an enterprise or business, with the chance of profit or loss" and "who has taken effective control of a commercial undertaking"). Some of the gender mechanisms operating are stated in the papers that we will discuss today i.e., reproductive roles, sex discrimination in hiring and firing, time use, differential job requirements, differential training opportunities and patterns of networking.

It would seem from the papers presented here today, that there is a great need for an integrated framework for the study of social and economic change. It would be especially useful to have an integrated framework for studying gender mechanisms affecting economically and socially arranged activity of women and men.

Evidence suggests that we are in the midst of an enormous transition, of which social and demographic transformations are a major part. One of the most significant demographic and social changes occurring in recent decades, is the documented transition from large to

small family sizes among households and the related improvement by women over their control of reproduction, and the enormous social and economic impact that these changes are having on population composition and growth, and on economics and labor force characteristics.

Population aging, fertility declines, increases in adult mortality among men in some countries, as well as significant increases in mortality from HIV/AIDSs in countries, and the press for migration of people for purposes of work are notable areas of policy concern, world-wide, influencing competing markets and trade interests at the global level.

Simultaneously occurring along with these powerful social and demographic shifts, are the shifts in economies away from solely manufacturing concerns, increasingly to the production of services, along with an upsurge of new establishments and products formed in the services industry. It is noteworthy that even manufacturing itself has a services side. It has been estimated that in parts of the world, up to 2/3 of the growth of current GDP is due to the services industries.

This shift to the production and trade of services has offered an unprecedented opportunity in many parts of the world for entrepreneurial activity and for new groups to form alliances in order to establish their dominance in newly emerging areas, with specific attention to industries associated with information technology and the transference of knowledge.

There is an emerging understanding that we are now in the throes of an information and knowledge revolution, largely based on new communication and knowledge acquisition technologies, as well as an expanded services industry based on these new technologies.

Increased opportunity for gathering of information through alternative communications creates challenges for exchange of statistics. Statistical information abounds, and sources of information have multiplied; yet the importance to science of knowing the source, and agreeing on the standardization and harmonization of concepts, definitions and methods used when compiling and exchanging the data for purposes of comparability, remains a serious scientific concern. To a certain extent, it is even a greater challenge to statistics today, to manage standardized comparisons effectively, under conditions of multiples of sources and rapid and varied electronic data exchanges, often occurring without the necessary explanations of such important details.

Statisticians must not only collect based on carefully agreed principles and methods, they must also be prepared to anticipate future needs, if they are to effectively document transitions. One important area requiring significantly increased attention is in the development of statistics in the area of services. Owing to its importance, and the likelihood that it will be further developed statistically, the study of services offers an opportunity for gender mechanisms to be examined more effectively as well, if they are well-integrated from the beginning into the statistical programmes that emerge.

It is a well-known fact, that own-account services of personal care are excluded from economic analysis of the System of National Accounts, even when such socially arranged activity results in the production of viable services. This has been a contention with policy analysts concerned with the production by women of own-account services around the world, with special attention to activities that have been broadly swept into a category called “housekeeping” or earlier on, as an activity called “wife”.

Also excluded are the personal activities of daily living because they are believed in the SNA to be activities that are impossible for one person to hire another person to perform; however this is not proving to be the case. Numerous examples abound where people have hired others to complete their personal activities of daily living, with special attention to persons with disabilities.

It may be the case that differences in socially arranged production of own-account and personal care services by women and men will ultimately influence labour force participation rates of women and men. Evidence of such an influence is shown in a paper presented to you today by Leroy Stone.

In any case, it is important to note the abundant evidence of increased opportunity for women to enter in to new services industries shown by virtually all of the papers presented today.

It might be easier for women to take on new industries of services where gender mechanisms are either weak or not yet established, in their entry into economic activity, or into entrepreneurial roles. It may also be the case that the services industry offers more flexible time schedules than does manufacturing, offering more opportunity for women to work while also continuing their socially-arranged production of goods and services in the home.

Out of this force of social and economic change, there are new requirements for economic and social statistics. Improvement in the measurement of the services industries labor force characteristics, occupational structures, production and consumption patterns, patterns of time use as well as the measurement and classification of own-account and personal care activities are now increasingly necessary in order to understand the implications of these changes.

Fitting into all this change, one might ask:

Who are the women who have taken on responsibility for businesses, and what are their personal and household characteristics? What are the characteristics of the establishments that they own? How do they differ from the establishments owned by men? What are the differences? Are these differences useful or necessary? What are the characteristics of establishments that are first run and managed by men that ultimately allow them to be open to participation of women? Are such establishments different or similar to other establishments? What are the mechanisms of change in the control of management of establishments?

Where are the entrepreneurs of the future and what businesses will they establish?

Have we effectively established statistical programmes in our countries for the study of establishments, their character and composition? Which variables are important to monitor in such studies? What has been the experience of statisticians in the conducting of establishment censuses and business surveys regarding best practices? To what extent have these studies included gender mechanisms influencing establishments? What would these gender mechanisms be, and how would they be potentially measured?

Based on this newly forming economy, how shall we measure and monitor them? What are the existing statistical tools and analytical indicators for such monitoring, and how do we anticipate that they will change through the use of IT? What is the role of gender mechanisms in influencing the way in which the data collection, methods and analysis themselves are prepared?

How do gender mechanisms assist societies to face economic uncertainties? Are all gender mechanisms bad? Which ones are useful/effective when countries are in transition, or are confronting newly emerging technologies and industries?

What are the critical business service issues of women and men that need to be studied? What would be the most effective use of establishment censuses and surveys to study such concerns? Do we have the topics and variables that we need for future assessment of the economy? What future changes do we anticipate? What evidence do we currently have of future needs?

The concept of gender and the influence of gender mechanisms and its influence on the differences and similarities between men and women in macroeconomic and microeconomic processes, is both complex and challenging. This challenge of studying gender mingles with the newly confronted demands on statistics for assessment of the “New Economy”, the need for a more viable framework for social statistics, the development of statistics on international trade in services and further work on international migration, as well as the need for further discussion and analysis of the policy implications of significant shifts in population composition and growth and movements of people.

It is essential that all these demands for statistics be integrated through improved social and economic frameworks. Further work in the area of services statistics may encourage such steps. Increased attention to time use methodologies and to the measurement of services produced outside of the production boundaries of the System of National Accounts may also provide insight into the changes taking place both economically and socially.

## Questions for First Discussion.

1. How do gender mechanisms influence economic activity, occupational structures and entrepreneurship of women and men? Which gender mechanisms operate economically?
2. Who are the women who have taken on responsibility for businesses, and what are their personal and household characteristics? What are the characteristics of the establishments that they own? How do they differ from the establishments owned by men? What are the differences? Are these differences useful or necessary?
3. What are the mechanisms of change in the control of management of establishments?
4. Does the character, the composition and growth of industries in transition countries influence which gender mechanisms are important?
  - a. Under what conditions are men more affected than women by unemployment? What are the gender mechanisms influencing such conditions?
  - b. Do women have quicker responses to fluctuations in unemployment that may be explained by the extent to which they participate differently than men in socially arranged production? If so, what would these differences be? What is the end result on total production of services?
  - c. Is it important, or does it matter to policy analysts, which groups are differentially affected by unemployment? Under what conditions does it matter? What are the implications to total production and consumption of goods and services, and to savings? What is the role of gender mechanisms in interpreting policy implications?
5. Have we effectively established statistical programmes in our countries for the study of establishments, their character and composition? Which variables are important to monitor in such studies?
6. What has been the experience of statisticians in the conducting of establishment censuses and business surveys regarding best practices?
7. To what extent have establishment censuses and surveys incorporated measurement of gender mechanisms? What would these gender mechanisms be, and how are they measured?