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GENDER EQUALITY AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE RURAL URBAN SETTLEMENTS.

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ABSTRACT

Gender does not really refer to sex either male or female, however this study intends to underscore the gender equality and economic empowerment in the rural and urban settlements. It want to study the discrimination and subordination each sex suffers which is exacerbated through policies which is promoted by the international monetary fund (IMF) and the world bank, having looked at various literature, it has it that trade liberalization and economic development has also focused on labour intensive industry and increased commodity production (agriculture and mineral) for the export market. analysis provided show that changes in agricultural policies have fundamentally changed women working relationship with land, women have often been displaced due to land given to export crops and minerals and women supply cheap labour. Conclusively gender policies should inherently contain a generated perspective if equality and sustainable development are to be achieved

Introduction

The term gender does not exclusively refer to women; however, the reason that women are a particular concern in the study of gender relations is because they suffer from discrimination and subordination which prevent equality between the sexes. This is exacerbated through policies promoted by the International Monetary fund IMF and the World Bank. Trade liberalization and economic development has also focused on labour intensive industry and increased commodity production (agriculture and mineral) for the export market. Changes in agricultural policies have fundamentally changed women's working relationship with the land, women have often been displaced due to land being given over to export crops and minerals and women supply cheap labour in often appealing working conditions. Trade policies should inherently contain a gender perspective if equality and sustainable development are to be achieve

To thoroughly define and discuss the concept of gender is usually a lengthy and often complex exercise. It is a term that was defined and used for a number of decades in many feminist discourses and continues to be used in a multidisciplinary way. The term gender does not exclusively refer to women. The gender of a person is their sex, inclusive of social and cultural meanings attributed to this sex. Gender identity, therefore, is relative to external forces. Gender works to define women and men in society and affects the roles they play in life. People do not necessarily share united gender identities. Gender formation recognizes not only difference between women and men, depending on sex, race, ethnicity, class etc.

Gender identities, therefore, can be transgressed through political mobilization. The reason that women are of particular concern in the study of gender relations is because within this patriarchal culture, women suffer from discrimination and subordination which prevents equality between the sexes.

Wood D.H. (1980) Panache is the system of male domination and Female subordination in economy society and culture that has characterized much of human history to the present day. Discrimination, subordination and violence against women still exist and are prevalent in most societies today, despite common claims that feminism are antiquated and alienating to the majority of women. In fact, women currently make up 70% of the world's poorest population, still earn comparatively less money than their male counterparts, hold fewer seats in national governments, and face an alarming amount of sexual violence.

As far as work is concerned, women suffer from the effects of unemployment, job share typing, workplace sexual harassment, and wage disparity, reduced access to jobs and occupational training and difficulties in accessing promotions.

Women And The Environment.

Scoth, G. (2003) Women have a particular social relationship with the environment due to their daily interaction with it—either in the city or the country either for survival or for a better quality of life in general. Both women and men are stewards of the environment and victims of its degradation in ways specific to their gender. Women are most often affected more adversely by changes to the environment because of their interaction with it and of their social position in this patriarchal world. Women's interactions with the environment give them valuable knowledge and practical expertise. The interactive relationship, as well as women's social position, is constantly affected by economic factors. The impacts of trade liberalization and globalization are extremely detrimental for the environment and for women, particularly in the so-called 'developing' world. According to Food Agriculture Organization (2005) The impact of world trade is different on women and on men, dependent on their level of interaction with the environment. All concerns need to be considered when developing trade policies. Indeed, many women's groups have specifically focused on gender and development issues over the last two decades, and in their discourse have highlighted the specific relationship that women from the developing world have with the environment. These issues have spent years appearing on international trade agendas, yet few policies trade agreement have been inclusive of these concerns, policies and agendas formed around the idea of trade liberalization largely ignore the different roles that women and men take in the household, with reproductively, at work, in the environment land, and the in society.

Hoskins Marilyn (2005) This is often referred to as gender blindness. Intrinsic to the aim of creating sustainable societies is preserving and maintaining a healthy environment. A healthy environment is necessary for women in the rural and urban, setting who are still the main cures of the family and managers of welfare in communities in the developing world. A healthy environment is essential in order to maintain the welfare of families through the production of food, and the collection of food, water and energy supplies. In many circumstances, a healthy environment is essential to the survival of indigenous people. Women have accumulated, and passed down through lineage, a great deal of knowledge concerning effective environmental management and conservation. They use this knowledge to maintain a healthy environment for the benefit of their community and much discourse on trade seems to underestimate the importance of this.

Tinker et al (2006) WOMEN AND THE EFFECT OF TRADE LIBERALIZATION. The trade liberalizing agenda promotes sectors in the developing world where women are excluded and marginalized. This marginalization occurs because many women access to training, to credit to resources and because of the responsibilities relating to the home and family. Women are largely denied access to decision-making, especially at the international level because of cultural or because of their social position in the community (this is despite the few women who hold major positions in trade organization, and international decision-making bodies on trade, infrastructure and financial institutions), access to the above would help women participate in these sectors and to move out of the poverty cycle.

Structural adjustment policies (SAPS) and other agreements associated with trade liberalization have inevitably brought about a lowering of welfare funding in developing countries. Loan conditions set by the (IMF) international monetary fund and World Bank have forced developing countries to make cutbacks in other sectors in order to repay foreign debt. The welfare sector has traditionally been the hardest hit and directly affects women for example, a reduction in health care increases women's responsibilities in caring for the sick

and elderly in their families or communities cuts to public transport, utilities and education put increased pressure on women who are in the majority of cases directly in contact with these issues and rely on public services for maintaining a certain standard of living.

Tinker and Irene (2006) A trade liberalization policy that aims for equity for women in the developing countries must contain an understanding and commitment to achieving:-

- Fairer and more achievable access to resources, credit training, education and infrastructure,

- Acknowledgement of women's direct experience with the land and economics and inclusion of this into policy.

- Participation for women in trade policy-making and decision-making.

- The status of female labour, paid and unpaid rose to a culturally and socially equitable status.

- Women and agriculture.

Tinker, Irene (2006) Economic development and trade liberalization Focuses on, financial support, labour-intensive industry and increased commodity production (such as agriculture and minerals). In the developing world, these international trade policies can be extremely detrimental to the lives of small-scale farmers and land holders. In many societies it is women who are the primary producer of food and managers of animal husbandry. Changes to the food production and distribution system, through policies contained within the Agreement on Agriculture and Trips are affecting women's working relationship with the land, often displacing them and thus making huge structured changes to their societies.

In African history, for example, Nigerian women held positions of responsibility outside of the family, including officiating in markets, assisting in legal and economic trade matters and obtaining wealth for the community through agriculture. The wealth that was achieved gave women a high social status. Occupational guilds were farmer and women were central to decision-making. A move to market oriented agriculture, which is ultimately unsustainable, has in the forces, alienated the small-scale farmer who is moved onto marginalized lands and receives very little economic support. Small-scale farming of this nature is not seen as economically viable in the international marketplace. The roles that women played in this societies, therefore, things have been changed over time.

According to World Bank Newslet (2006) Women's expertise in local agriculture, trade and marketing is still being undermined by international trade agreements, which largely ignore the issues facing these local farmers and their communities. Women farmers often hold the responsibilities of the family and household which are unpaid, while smugglings to complete in the international marketplace- a marketplace that gives little value to traditional crop growing activities and women's knowledge. When control is taken away from the local producers and increasingly moved into corporate hands, women have little political action to take, this is often due to their social position and access to credit and the necessary resources needed to make changes or participate in decision-making when control moves into corporate hand, therefore, indigenous societies are affected.

According to food Agriculture organization (2006) State that Export crops are usually crops not traditionally grown by the local female farmers. They are crops that are produced by a country in order for them to compete in the international market. Men mainly control this export-oriented production while the domestic market is managed largely by women and is declining fast. This often means that families who have survived on the subsistence farming of women are now suffering from shortages of fresh food. Further, the women who continue to farm are facing difficulties in competing with large-scale exports and subsidized food imports, making domestic trading difficult and cost effective. The government gives subsidies and tax advantages to support crops that can compete in the international market yet rural subsistence communities are largely demand economic consideration, women's

agricultural work and national resource management is given little economic value in the trade scheme and is not rewarded according at the local, national or international level. The family and whole communities suffer because of this. In Africa and Latin America, however, there are a number of groups working for the rights of women agriculturist and women workers generally. In India, women have formed unions and support groups for working women in order to campaign for better working conditions and to exchange ideas and give solidarity to each other. These groups seem to have only limited influence within the international areas. These women's groups are, nonetheless, tremendously important on many level- local, national and international.

Changes to particular societies that occur because of macro changes to the agricultural industry, must be given priority in future trade talks. Indeed the local most is contained in the international the micro in the macro. For example, the introduction laws guaranteeing women independent property rights is a positive move towards ensuring women have greater control over credit and resources. Yet these sorts of changes need also to take place in a large frame work, where efforts are also made to ensure women have access to political representation and to networking and collective action. This would allow the laws to be used to the full potential as well as minimizing their isolation and marginalization in the trade market.

* **Women and forest resources.**

As forest and tree resources become scarce, the balance between what people need and what they can obtain shifts. For rural families, the struggle to survive becomes even harder.

The effect on women is particularly severe because women are more dependent than the men on tree and forest products and because they are taking on an ever increasing share of family work as men seek cash incomes further a field. Furthermore, in failing to recognize the importance of forestry resources to women.

Development experts often introduce technologies and activities that women off from a critical resource. If development plans to succeed in reducing rural poverty, the balance between women and their forest resources must be restored.

* **Tree for fuel.**

A full granary is no guarantee against fame without fuel to cook with, as the women of the Sahel know well, there may be nothing to eat. Fueling and tending the household fire has always been women's work so that the much harder job of collecting and transporting the fuel one study has shown that in Nepal women and girls together collect 84 percent of the fuel. Since in of these countries fuel wood comprises 80 or 90 percent of the wood consumed, this implies that women locate and fetch well over half of all the wood extracted from trees and collecting and transporting fuel wood has always been arduous. Fuel wood shortages, though worse today than ever before, are not new in 1795, a European explorer in what is now the Niger noticed that all wood had been stripped within three kilometers of the city of kaarta.

Today women have to walk much further than three kilometers to collect their fuel wood for large towns and cities often comes from 100km always. The fuel wood shortage in Bangladesh, for example, is so severe that rural women and children spend an average of 3-5 hours a day gathering and transporting fuel. Women have acquired no intimate, practical knowledge of the suitability of different tree species for cooking. Women know which trees burn slowly and which fast, which smoke and which burn easily. The extent of this knowledge is often surprising. In Burkina Faso, for example, women who joined a discussion about what tree species to plant in a forestry project spoke authoritatively about a certain variety of Eucalyptus. They knew that burning its leaves can drive away mosquitoes and that boiling them produced a broth useful for treating colds. They admitted that because the

Eucalyptus thrives even under arid conditions and is not preferred by animals for fodder, it might be seen useful for fuel wood plantations. But they pointed out that no part of the tree could be eaten by people or domestic stock. They said they found its wood difficult and time consuming to cut though. They disliked its fierce burning qualities caused by the presence of an oil in the tree which made wood burn and fast-making it unsuitable for the long cooking needed for most local dishes. And all that company it is smoke when gave food flavor and damaged the eyes. When the tree was planted in gardens or fields, they claimed it damaged other plants and poisoned the soil.

One of the common misconceptions is that women collect fuel wood simply for cooking. In fact the homestead fire provides many other-benefits. Drinking water is boiled and washing water is warmed on the fire, while fish and meat are smoked above it. The fire provides light at night, and heat to dry a wet harvest. It may also be used to cure tobacco, boil water to extract natural medicines from leaves and bark, and make dyes. The smoke from fires is used to keep insects away. In some countries, household fires are used to keep livestock warm on chilly night (a use which, in some Ithai Hill Villages, consumes more fuel wood than cooking fires also have many social and ritual uses, particularly as the focal centre for evening conversations. In India, the practice of cremation, for example, consumes large amounts of fuel wood.

This the fuel wood women collect and transport has many functions. When it becomes short, much more than the family meal is threatened the basis of village life is altered.

Some uses of fuel wood:-

Cooking, water heating, preserving food, light and heating drying produce and socio and ritual uses.

Conclusion

It is concluded that gender does not really refer to sex either male or female however this paper has found out that gender equality and economic empowerment in the rural and urban settlements could be overlooked but all forms of discrimination and subordination in each sex suffers exacerbated through the policy which is promoted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the world bank having looked at various components to this paper it has it that trade liberalization and economic development has also occurred on labour intensive industry and increased commonly production (agriculture and mineral) for the export market analysis provided show that changes in agriculture policies have fundamentally change women working relationship with land, women have often been displaced due to land given to export crops and minerals and women supply cheap labour conclusively gender policies should inherently contain a generated perspective if equality and sustainable development are to be achieved.

Recommendation

Women should be given equal opportunity in all of human Endeavour.

- women should not be used in hard labour in the society
- there shouldn't be violence against women in the society
- although rape and other gender based forms of violence continue but women should not be treated in that manner.
- Women accountability should not be overlooked as they are truthful in all their ways and process of peace building.

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