



Chapter 6

The changing terms of rural living

Famines and food crises expose the precariousness of the livelihoods of those affected. In 2002 several countries in southern Africa experienced serious food shortage. The effects were widespread: 14 million people suffered hunger and hardship. The immediate causes were drought and severe local flooding, but the impacts were made greater by the lack of food security to which many households were already acutely vulnerable. The ravages of HIV/AIDS had helped erode assets and social support networks. As critically, the onslaught of economic liberalization over two decades, undermining smallholders' ability to construct viable livelihoods, had helped to deepen rural poverty.¹

At around the same time, India experienced a spate of suicides by hopelessly indebted cotton farmers. In response to rising world prices for cotton during the early 1990s and official encouragement as trade was liberalized, farmers had converted to cotton land that had been under food grain cultivation, particularly in Andhra Pradesh but also in northern Karnataka and Punjab. After a peak in the mid-1990s, world cotton prices suddenly declined. In the early 2000s, swamped by debt, thousands of farmers committed suicide, often by swallowing pesticides.²

These examples of severe distress are connected. Both, whatever their incidental causes, are unanticipated outcomes of systemic policy choices by powerful governments and international financial institutions (IFIs). The food crisis in southern Africa threw a spotlight onto what had been happening to the lives of farming people in poverty-stricken and indebted countries forced onto a diet of liberalization. The story of cotton encapsulates the risks associated with reliance on the export of volatile primary commodities—cotton is by no means the only

case—whose prices in global markets are unstable and which experience sharp, sometimes prolonged, falls. At the end of 2001, real non-fuel commodity prices had plunged to about one-half of their annual average for the period 1979–81, leading to the build-up of unsustainable external debt in the non-oil commodity exporters.³ Such crises, of which many other examples could be cited, raise serious questions about liberalization as a universal policy model for developing countries with high proportions of rural populations dependent on agriculture.

The distortions within the current agricultural trading system, whereby European and US farmers enjoy protection and subsidies and Southerners find their produce excluded from Northern markets, have been strongly protested by governments from the South; despite protracted negotiations within the World Trade Organization (WTO), these tensions remain unresolved and the future directions of agricultural trading policy remain unclear.⁴ Such grand-scale North–South discrimination within the global trading system attracts widespread attention. But other ways in which the outcome of economic liberalization in the agricultural sphere discriminates between social groups are frequently overlooked. The gender perspective—differentiated impacts on women and men, girls and boys—has been neglected.

This chapter scrutinizes agricultural liberalization from a gender perspective, highlighting the changes in rural women's, as compared to rural men's, earning opportunities, farming and family responsibilities, and access to resources. Liberalization has contributed to the vulnerability of smallholders, and to women's workloads, but without producing the anticipated

growth rates and the sought stimulus to production, to technological change and to a restructured composition of the rural economy. It has also shaken up social relations and triggered changes in gender relations.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF LIBERALIZATION FOR RURAL POVERTY

In both sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, a high proportion of the population continues to live in rural areas, and agriculture is vital to GDP and to people's livelihoods (table 6.1). Rural poverty, including female poverty, is behind the selection of these regions for examination. By contrast, Latin America is much more urbanized and farming contributes a relatively small share of GDP. However, agricultural products remain an important source of foreign exchange, and the IFIs have praised Latin American success in shifting into high-value agricultural export (HVAE) production. This strategy relies heavily on female agricultural workers, and its implications are therefore worth exploring.

During the 1980s, many African and Latin American countries suffered economic crises, and this was diagnosed by the IFIs as stemming directly from heavy state involvement in the economy. The agricultural sector was seen as a prime victim of state-directed regimes; cheap food policies, for example, distorted prices and depressed farming incomes. If instead the market were to determine prices, they would rise naturally and benefit producers; meanwhile currency devaluations and lowered export taxes would help promote agricultural exports. That, at least, was the accepted international policy view.⁵

In truth most developing country states were heavily involved in the economy. In the newly independent states in Africa in the 1960s, for example, there was a widespread view that markets were not adequate to build a strong economy. State marketing boards were set up to govern production and trade in major agricultural products; these provided subsidies, and usually paid the same prices to farmers in remote areas as to those close to urban markets. In Latin America, agricultural

prices were artificially depressed by an overvalued exchange rate and export taxes; but this was to some extent redressed through positive resource transfer into the sector via public investment, subsidized credit and agricultural services.⁶

In both regions, there were wide fluctuations in marketed agricultural output over the period (see figure 6.1). In Latin America, growth was respectable in the 1970s at an average annual rate of 3.3 per cent. During the 1980s—the first reform decade—the rate veered widely; this crisis-ridden period also saw an overall increase in poverty, from 41 to 48 per cent of all households. During the 1990s agricultural growth averaged only 2.2 per cent. Poverty indices improved, but only at a lagged pace, so that Latin America entered the new millennium with a higher proportion of poor and indigent rural people than in 1980 (see table 6.2). At the same time, the economic reforms tended to reinforce existing divides between regions and producers.⁷ The most dynamic products of the 1990s were those grown by modern, capitalized farmers with links to international agro-industry and export markets. Those in decline were largely produced by small farmers. One of the downsides of liberalization in Latin America has been the rise in agricultural imports.⁸

Nowhere have the rural effects of liberalization policies been more profound than among the agriculturally dependent populations of sub-Saharan Africa. Compared with other developing regions, agriculture had been a sluggish earner before liberalization, although not uniformly. State bodies were perceived as significantly to blame: a costly drain on government revenue, they were also inefficient in delivering inputs and paying farmers. Adjustment policies, notably the reduction of state involvement, were supposed to reverse African agricultural fortunes.

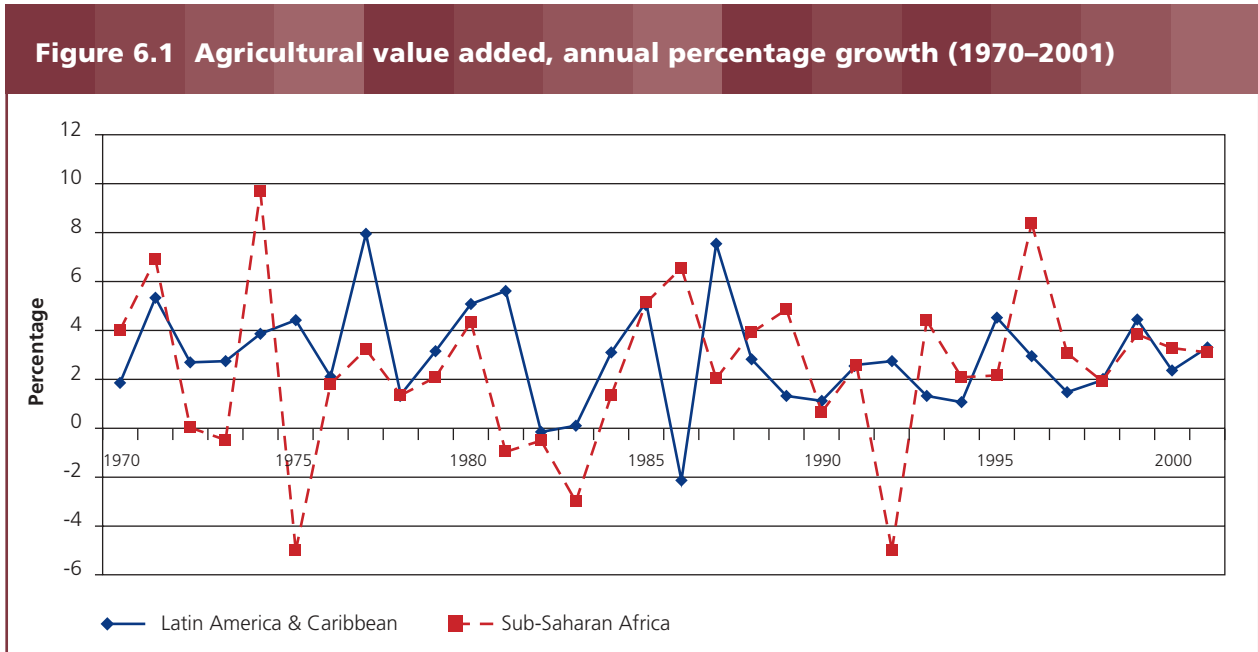
Over the past 30 years, agricultural growth rates in sub-Saharan Africa have fluctuated wildly (see figure 6.1). Both high and low—some years have been negative—growth rates have been the product of special circumstances, mitigating the impact of liberal reforms. Uganda, often glowingly cited as a reform success story, is a case in point. High growth rates have been achieved, but the turmoil of the years preceding reform had hit the economy to such an extent that the baseline for measuring performance was extremely low.

Table 6.1 Economically active population in agriculture, agricultural value added and agricultural exports, regional averages and some country examples (1980–2000)

	Proportion of economically active population in agriculture ⁽¹⁾			Agriculture, value added (% of GDP) ⁽²⁾			Agricultural exports (% of merchandise exports) ⁽²⁾		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Africa	69	64	59	29	29	27	51	45	43
<i>North Africa</i>	44	32	27	15	16	13	16	15	11
Egypt	57	41	34	18	19	17	22	19	-
Tunisia	39	28	25	14	16	12	8	12	9
<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>	72	68	63	31	30	28	59	55	52
Cameroon	73	70	59	31	25	43	64	35	36
South Africa	17	14	10	6	5	3	11	12	12
Tanzania	86	84	80	-	46	45	76	-	-
Zimbabwe	72	68	63	16	16	18	43	51	60
Latin America and the Caribbean	31	25	21	16	14	10	47	47	44
<i>Caribbean</i>	26	22	17	14	11	7	38	36	43
Dominican Rep.	32	25	17	20	13	11	73	-	-
Jamaica	31	25	21	8	7	6	14	20	23
<i>Central America</i>	42	34	27	22	19	13	65	68	57
Guatemala	54	52	46	25	26	23	70	73	60
Mexico	36	28	21	9	8	4	15	13	5
Nicaragua	42	34	27	23	31	-	83	91	90
<i>South America</i>	31	25	21	13	14	12	42	39	36
Argentina	13	12	10	6	8	5	71	61	45
Brazil	37	23	17	11	8	7	50	31	28
Paraguay	45	39	34	29	28	20	88	90	80
Asia	46	41	36	21	23	23	28	15	11
<i>East Asia</i>	49	40	33	15	13	13	5	6	3
China	74	72	67	30	27	16	-	16	7
Republic of Korea	37	18	10	15	9	5	9	5	3
<i>Southeast Asia</i>	56	52	48	21	29	25	31	17	9
Indonesia	58	55	48	24	20	17	22	16	13
Thailand	71	64	56	23	13	10	58	34	18
<i>South Asia</i>	67	61	57	40	33	27	48	23	19
India	70	64	60	39	31	25	33	20	14
Pakistan	63	52	47	30	26	27	44	20	13
<i>Central Asia</i>	-	-	-	-	33	32	-	-	-
Kazakhstan	-	-	18	-	-	9	-	-	8
Uzbekistan	-	-	28	-	33	34	-	-	-
<i>West Asia</i>	26	20	15	9	14	17	19	12	12
Jordan	18	15	11	8	8	2	25	11	16
Syrian Arab Rep.	39	33	28	20	28	23	13	18	13
Oceania	48	43	37	27	21	19	70	71	43
Developed regions	15	11	8	8	10	7	23	19	14
<i>Eastern Europe</i>	28	23	17	20	18	12	17	15	9
<i>Western Europe</i>	12	8	5	7	5	3	21	17	13
<i>Other developed</i>	7	5	4	6	4	2	34	27	22
World	43	38	34	20	20	18	39	32	29

Note: Regional averages for each variable have been calculated from countries with available data for at least two of the periods considered. Agricultural exports comprise exports of food and of agricultural raw materials.

Sources: (1) Calculated from FAO 2004; (2) World Bank 2004b.



Source: Calculated from World Bank 2004b.

Table 6.2 Poverty and indigence rates in Latin America, percentage of population (1980–2002)

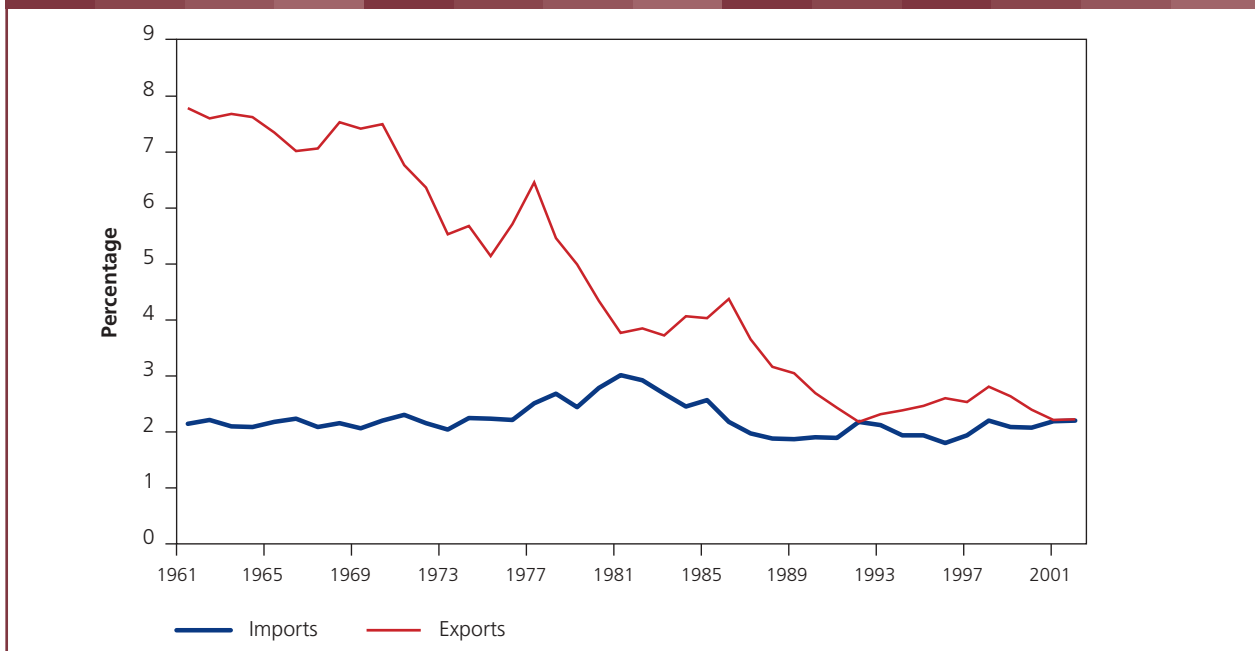
Year	Poor			Indigent		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
1980	41	30	60	19	11	33
1990	48	41	65	23	15	40
2000	43	36	63	18	12	38
2002	44	38	62	19	14	38

Source: ECLAC 2004.

Over the years, proponents of reform have increasingly accepted that African agriculture’s response to liberalization has been disappointing.⁹ Larger-scale commercial farmers and estate proprietors have been in a better position to take advantage of improved prices and new markets than have smallholders, who are everywhere in the vast majority. In several countries and for particular commodities, liberalization did produce spurts in smallholder production of export crops, but these gains have not been maintained. As figure 6.2 indicates, throughout the

1980s and 1990s as liberalization progressed, sub-Saharan Africa witnessed the steady decline of its agricultural exports as a share of world agricultural trade.¹⁰

Meanwhile the problems surrounding food production and security are far from resolved. The 2002 shortages in southern Africa, as already noted, showed up the increasingly parlous state of rural livelihoods. Deteriorating household food security in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe has been attributed to the loss of subsidies for fertilizers and seeds and of rural credit, and the

Figure 6.2 Sub-Saharan African share of world agricultural trade (1961–2002)

Source: Calculated from FAO 2004.

erosion of agricultural marketing services, especially in remote areas.¹¹ Although much derided, marketing boards serviced smallholders' needs for inputs, provided marketing channels to remote and widely dispersed farms, and enforced commodity standards. Their dismantling has led to expressions of serious concern.¹² The private traders who have taken their place provide patchy services, bypass farmers in areas where transport costs are high, and do not carry out adequate checks or enforce quality control.¹³

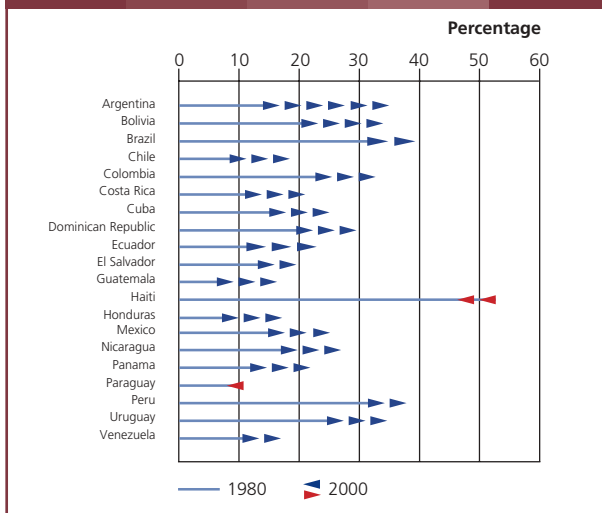
THE GENDERED IMPACTS OF ECONOMIC REFORM

Gender-differentiated examination of the implications of economic reform on rural livelihoods is hard. The evidence base for a generalized gender analysis of agrarian change is poor; information from selected countries is the only usable guide to regional trends, which are hard to extrapolate from sparse and unindicative data.¹⁴

National agricultural statistics are inadequate in a number of key respects, some of which stem from using either the individual holder, or the holding, as the unit of analysis, which means that the relationships between the farming of household members cannot be assessed. It also remains the case that accurate information about women's own-account farming, which is ostensibly collected in national agricultural statistics, is rare, largely because of the techniques and methodologies of data collection. While labour-force surveys provide gender-disaggregated data, their information is frequently unreliable or misleading. Much of the suggested increase in rural women's economic activity in Latin America between 1980 and 2000 is simply a reflection of their previous under-enumeration (see figure 6.3). This makes it difficult to draw accurate conclusions about rural women's employment trends, especially as the data implies against all probability that women workers are concentrated in non-agricultural activities.¹⁵

Case studies of changing gender relations under the unfolding impact of liberalization are few and far between, especially

Figure 6.3 Female rural activity rates, Latin America (1980–2000)



Note: Data refer to population aged 10 years and over.
Source: ECLAC 2002.

from sub-Saharan Africa. From Latin America, there are case studies on HVAE where women workers are highly visible; but there is much less information on the gender impacts of liberalization on smallholder production of traditional commodities.

This chapter first considers smallholder farming, agricultural production that is organized on a household basis with the unit of production and consumption overlapping, and where typically a proportion of what is produced does not enter the market system but is consumed by the household. This remains a key institution within the agricultural economy in many developing regions, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Smallholder farming has come under severe stress over the past two decades. The chapter then goes on to explore rural wage employment in large-scale corporate export farming. This has emerged as a significant new source of employment for rural women, especially in Latin America where levels of socioeconomic differentiation are very high and a sizeable stratum of households is landless or near landless and dependent on wages. The third section looks at the more general diversification of smallholder livelihoods, in which men, women and child household members are increasingly involved. The

unpaid domestic and care economy is central to rural livelihoods in all their diversities.

The invisible economy: Unpaid household-based work

The unpaid domestic economy, whereby households are managed and their members' needs met, is central to rural livelihoods. Women undertake multiple roles in this context. They often help in domestic food cultivation and small livestock management, as well as food processing and preparation; they are exclusively responsible for fuel and water collection, childraising and care of the sick and elderly; they also often earn small amounts of cash from informal entrepreneurship including sale of surplus horticultural produce and brewing. All these activities consume time and energy and carry economic significance for the household. Livelihood research pays lip service to them, but few studies collect systematic data concerning women's unpaid work. As a result, it is difficult to trace the implications of liberalization on unpaid work burdens and on health and nutrition indicators. The latter may only become manifest over the long term.

In sub-Saharan Africa, rural women typically spend 3.5 to 5 hours a day fetching water and fuel, preparing food and looking after children; they also work in the fields alongside men. HIV/AIDS has intensified the burden carried by many African women and girls, since they have to nurse patients through their long decline. Girls may be withdrawn from school to support the family; older women are left to provide for many dependent orphans of their own deceased sons and daughters. The responsibilities and family costs associated with caring for the sick are heaviest in countries where the health and social infrastructure is minimal.¹⁶ Accordingly, reductions in services and the introduction of user fees associated with economic reform agendas discriminate against women by throwing extra work onto their shoulders (see also chapter 8).

In addition to the implications of reduced public subsidies for health services and utilities provision—water, sanitation, electricity—pressure on women's resources of time and energy

have also been increased by environmental degradation and the marketization of natural resources.¹⁷ The collection of fuel and water is more time-consuming and costly. In a study of women's adoption of bicycles in a drought-prone area of Tamil Nadu (India), a major use was to collect drinking water from distant sources.¹⁸ Public investment in technologically appropriate, low-cost infrastructure and delivery of basic services would offset growing disadvantage; but that is not the thrust of policy agendas emphasizing service and utility privatization.

Domestic burdens can be said to inflict upon many African women a “time famine”, limiting their possibilities of engaging in productive work.¹⁹ Others already spend a great deal of time on very poorly rewarded work, where such work is available.²⁰ Even if they do not suffer the acute gender discrimination over access to food that occurs in South Asia, their general level of physical well-being is affected by the long hours they spend on energy-intensive work, and by repeated childbearing.²¹ Maternal mortality rates are high compared with other regions, and have been rising in recent years.²² Even where there is no demonstrable direct effect of women's unpaid care burdens on measurable economic productivity, the women's health and nutritional status, and their children's, suffer. There are therefore good reasons for reducing women's unpaid work burdens, even if these burdens do not operate as an inevitable binding constraint on the daily allocation of their time to so-called “productive” pursuits.

Smallholder farming in the context of liberalization

Liberalization and smallholders in sub-Saharan Africa

Tanzania is a rare case where there is excellent research into the effects of liberalization in rural areas, including its gender differences. One of the features of Tanzania's post-independence rural development policy was to boost smallholder incomes and favour food rather than export crops. However, state support for agriculture proved costly and became increasingly inefficient. Production declined, contributing to severe economic crisis by the early 1980s. IMF loans for economic recovery were

conditional on structural adjustment programmes, in which reform of the agricultural sector was a high priority.

The effects of liberalization on particular crops—coffee, cotton, cashew nuts—have since been studied extensively.²³ Problems identified include the collapse of credit systems; a sharp decline in inputs especially among smallholders; the imposition of complex and onerous local taxes; and the volatility of world agricultural commodity prices. Similar constraints affect smallholders throughout the region, contributing to the low or even stagnant growth rates in agriculture over the period from the start of liberalization in the early 1980s until today. Food crop production has not increased, while the performance of export crops is very uneven.

Changes in the Tanzanian market include a large increase in cashew exports. Where they can, smallholders have moved out of traditional cash crops into cashew production. The results of this move have been mixed. Farmers and district officials questioned in a study conducted by Action Aid distinguished sharply between a “honeymoon” period, starting soon after the market reforms of the mid-1990s when the world price was high and continuing until 2000, and a crisis period, starting in 2000 and still ongoing.²⁴ During the honeymoon, small producers benefited a great deal from the liberalization of the cashew nut trade. Competition between buyers in the newly privatized sector was stiff, and farmers received good and rising prices. The area under cashew nuts expanded, as did the yields per hectare, the export price and the producer price. But by 2001 crisis had set in, led by drastic cuts in world market prices. Apart from the falling prices, the buyers had established cartels through which they were able to squeeze the small producers.

How have these changing fortunes affected male and female household producers? Men traditionally own cashew nut trees, and women provide most of the labour. In the honeymoon period, women were remunerated better for their work and extra labour was hired to assist them. Nevertheless, the study found that women gained less than men. This is partly because men control the sale of the cashew crop, negotiating the prices with the buyers; therefore women have little idea about the quantity sold or at what price. There is also indication of an increase in gender tensions during the time of lucrative income.

As producer prices rose, so did the divorce rate according to the women. Husbands, they complained, used their wives' labour during the cashew nut season, only to abandon them for new wives when the season was over.

Despite these protestations after the event, women did gain temporarily from the boom. They did not object to having to work much harder in the honeymoon era, did share in the rising household incomes, and were better off in the initial post-liberalization period than after 2001. Their families had then been able to hire labour to assist on the farms, but this was no longer possible. Some women could no longer afford to buy even a small quantity of paraffin for a lamp, and spent their evenings in the dark.

More detailed gender impacts of liberalization within cashew nut production and processing are reported in an extensive study from Mozambique.²⁵ This confirms that impacts depend on differences between male and female control over key resources, crop income and labour inputs. The extra work burden carried by women does not appear to create gender conflict. The more important effects are on the household economy, with their special implications for family well-being. Liberalization has brought a loss of real income, and increased exposure to powerful traders and volatile global markets. The lessons from these case studies, borne out by other country examples, are that the private sector provides inadequate markets for smallholders, and that exposure to world markets brings increased vulnerability.

Changes in work burdens, as these cases demonstrate, have a potential for male–female tensions. A view which gained currency in the 1990s, especially within the World Bank, was that the weak “supply response” of African agriculture to liberalization could be ascribed to the inflexibility of gender roles within households, and women's unwillingness to contribute unpaid labour to cash crops controlled by their husbands.²⁶ An alternative proposition is that these intrahousehold gender constraints and conflicts of interest, while they do occur between husbands and wives, have been overemphasized. There are significant areas of common interest between husbands and wives in smallholder households, and there is considerable evidence of flexibility in gender roles in agriculture more generally. If liberalization has

failed to enhance agricultural production, it has much more to do with the broader constraints on smallholders that liberalization itself has exacerbated, rather than the economic consequences of intrahousehold gender roles and conflicts. Gender conflict itself is often one form in which the deleterious outcomes of liberalization for households and communities are experienced. In this sense, it is a symptom of economic malaise and not a cause.

Liberalization and farming households in Latin America

Several overlapping processes over the past 30 years have contributed to changes in the gender division of labour among Latin American smallholders, sometimes described as a tendency towards the “feminization of agriculture”.²⁷ The leading cause has been the emergence of a class of impoverished and dispossessed smallholders, a process which gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, and is generally associated with men becoming landless or land-poor labourers. Male participation in temporary wage labour, particularly when it involves seasonal migration, has everywhere been associated with higher female participation in agriculture. This has as its basis the general flexibility of the gender division of labour in smallholder agriculture.

During the liberalization era, women's participation in agriculture appears to have changed: they are no longer merely “secondary” workers. Women are emerging as farm managers, providing the bulk of family farm labour and taking on extra tasks as men migrate in search of alternative sources of income. By withdrawing direct state support to domestic food production, agricultural reform has galvanized this process. In addition, exports of traditional agricultural products such as coffee have declined as a result of global trade liberalization and depressed commodity markets. The “feminization of agriculture” is therefore a phenomenon associated with the lack of viability of smallholder agricultural production in the current era.

The degree of distress to smallholder farming inflicted by liberalization largely depends on the degree of state support smallholders previously received, and the extent to which they previously supplied basic foodstuffs to the market. Subsistence producers in countries such as Peru and Bolivia have been less

directly affected by such policies than by changes in urban and rural labour markets. Those most negatively affected have been the small and medium producers, the beneficiaries of previous rural development initiatives. The withdrawal of previous state support and the pace of external liberalization are critical.

These factors distinguish the case of Mexico. From 1970 through 1982, successive Mexican governments pursued a policy of “food sovereignty”, investing in rural social and physical infrastructure and providing credit and technical back-up to smallholders. The stabilization and adjustment policies associated with the debt crisis of 1982, combined with the general opening of the economy and the dismantling of state institutions supporting agriculture, had severe implications for smallholder profitability. The pressures were compounded after the implementation of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994; corn imports from the United States suddenly increased. This drove down prices to such an extent that the government’s compensatory measures to maintain farm incomes became wholly inadequate.

The “feminization of agriculture” in Mexico is directly associated with the increase in long-distance male migration in the 1980s and 1990s, and particularly with migration from rural areas to the United States. Women, particularly married women, become farm managers when both sons and husbands are absent for considerable periods of time. Similar processes appear to be at work in Central America, where the state has gradually cut back support to basic grain production.²⁸ Since it is more common for men to seek wage work through long-distance migration, it is usually women who maintain agricultural production and guarantee the household’s food security. This also explains the high share of female-headed households in the region.

The Indian experience

The feminization of agriculture in India has taken a different form. Between 1972/3 and 1999/2000, the proportion of rural workers in agriculture declined from 84 to 76 per cent. This was largely due to male workers moving out of agriculture entirely, while women substantially remained. Since 1987/8, whatever absorption there was of women into the non-agricultural sector has slowed down, and since the economic reform programme

began in 1991, this deceleration has been dramatic.²⁹ Indeed, rural women’s employment at the all-India level has shown remarkable stability over the years. In 1961, nearly 90 per cent of rural women workers were in agriculture; in 1994 the figure was 86 per cent, a marginal drop. Women comprise an increasingly important proportion of the casual labour force in rural areas, as men withdraw from agriculture into other occupations. Some analysts therefore claim that rural India has also been witnessing a feminization of agriculture.³⁰ But feminization of agricultural wage labour—often fieldwork of the most laborious, worst paid and lowest-status kind—is not the same as the feminization of farm management.³¹ As far as India is concerned there is little evidence that farm management is being assumed by women.

The diversification of rural livelihoods

Two important trends have emerged as companions to liberalization. The first and most directly attributable is the growth of large-scale corporate export farming, particularly of high-value horticultural products such as flowers, fruits and vegetables. This is a significant new source of employment for rural women in many parts of the world. The second is the more general diversification of smallholder livelihoods, into which men, women and child household members are increasingly propelled. Two key gender-related questions in connection to both trends are as follows. What kind of diversification strategies are women pursuing, and what are their effects? And what kinds of changes are taking place in gender relations within rural households as a result of these new agricultural lifestyle developments?

New forms of agricultural employment

Corporate farming is a relatively new and growing source of employment for rural women in India. In Andhra Pradesh and Punjab respectively, hybrid cottonseed and tomatoes have become the mainstay of new-style corporate farming. These consolidated farming units have led to the alienation of land from smallholders, and have drawn on an extremely casual and vulnerable labour force composed mainly of women and children.³²

Table 6.3 Women's employment in high-value agricultural export production

	Numbers employed	Gender composition (% females)	Age (range or median)	Employment status
Cut flowers				
Kenya	40,000 (+ 4,000 to 5,000 small holders)	75	20–34	Seasonal
Uganda	3,000	75–85	–	Permanent
Zimbabwe	27,000	79–87	–	Seasonal & permanent
Colombia	70,000 (+50,000 in female packing industry)	60–80	15–28	Permanent & contract
Ecuador	30,000 – 50,000	50–70	16–29	Permanent & contract
Fruit				
South Africa	280,000	53	31	Seasonal, temporary & contract
Brazil	–	65	–	Permanent
Chile	336,739	45	30	Temporary
Vegetables				
Kenya	20,000–32,000	66	18–29	Temporary
Guatemala	18,000 smallholders	33 in field work 100 in processing	–	–
Mexico	1.2 million	50–90	–	Temporary, seasonal

Source: Adapted from Dolan and Sorby 2003.

A study in Punjab showed women labourers accounting for 60 per cent of tomato production while receiving 60–75 per cent of male wages.

HVAE crops are also grown in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa, mainly supplying European markets during their off-season. Exports of cut flowers and vegetables are expanding in Kenya, Uganda, South Africa and Zimbabwe, although as table 6.3 indicates, the numbers of workers involved mostly remain small. Women form a high proportion of this new workforce.

The trend towards corporate agriculture and its exploitation of a supremely casual, mainly female labour force has been most marked in Latin America, and of much longer duration there than elsewhere. Historically, land distribution has been very skewed in this region, with a substantial number of households being landless or near-landless, and relying on wage work. The economic reform policies of the 1980s and 1990s prompted an increase in the wage-labour force necessary for the take-off of corporate export farming. Women constitute between

40 to 60 per cent of the labour engaged in fieldwork for these crops, as well as the overwhelming majority of those employed in packing houses.³³

Several factors undermine the positive livelihood effects of this new form of employment for women. Significantly, corporate farms use a gender-segregated workforce, and women are overwhelmingly employed in more insecure, less well-paid, and lower-skilled activities, without opportunities for advancement. The work is often seasonal, with long hours of work, poor health and safety conditions and no social protection.³⁴ The use of toxic inputs without adequate training and protective clothing is identified as a major health risk. There are also possible longer-term health effects which are not being sufficiently researched.³⁵ In some countries producing HVAE (including South Africa, Chile and Argentina) there has been a notable rise in the use of contract labour, both male and female, hired by third-party contractors. This reduces labour costs and facilitates the flexibility of export production as contractors move their teams from site to site. But contract labourers rarely enjoy

any employment benefits or social protection, and constitute a highly vulnerable worker group.

However, women's new opportunities have also triggered some positive social changes. Young women now have an alternative to rural–urban migration and domestic employment, and a degree of economic autonomy, physical mobility, and possible choice over who they marry. Young single women tend to be preferred as job candidates over married women with children, particularly in the packing houses, but these jobs have also become crucial to the growing number of female household heads. Greater bargaining power, derived from their higher contribution to household income, has given married women greater leverage over household decision making. It has also, however, increased tensions within households as women attempt to exert more influence over family decision making.

Addressing the high level of insecurity and low levels of income and social protection suffered by women workers would require some form of collective action on their part. Nurturing labour and community organizations amongst seasonal, physically dispersed and often isolated workers is a major challenge, although some efforts are being made, notably among the *temporeras* (temporary women workers) in the fruit sector in Chile (see box 6.1).

Gender impacts of livelihood diversification

“Income diversification”—the term used when farming households take on activities other than agricultural production to expand their sources of living—has become widespread in many rural settings over the past 20 years. This includes seasonal migration in search of work, a longstanding feature of rural livelihoods in many parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Box 6.1 Fruit *temporeras* in Chile

In Chile's expanding fruit export sector, a high proportion of seasonal workers are women, many employed in packing. Working collectively in the packing houses should provide an opportunity to organize; however, temporary workers in Chile are still dispersed and have difficulties in organizing long-term collective activities. In 1998, only 1 per cent of temporary fruit workers belonged to a trade union.

Low union membership is in part a reflection of the repressive policies of the military regime at the time that the sector was expanding. However, even in the new democratic era, unions do not have collective negotiating power on behalf of temporary workers. In the specific case of women *temporeras*, many of their needs—childcare facilities since the working season coincides with school closure; out-of-season employment, education and training—are not addressed by trade unions, and this acts as a disincentive to membership.

The women tend to look elsewhere. One avenue for advancing their needs has been through participation in community-based organizations outside the workplace supported by churches and non-governmental organizations. These organizations have an advantage over trade unions: they can adapt to the specific needs of female seasonal workers, acting as focal points during periods of unemployment, dovetailing work-related demands with social, self-help and out-of-season projects. But community-based initiatives also have their limitations: they lack co-ordination and depend on external sources of funding, which have been in decline following the return to democracy. They may also not be able or willing to assist migrant workers.

Within the workplace, women *temporeras* use their own strategies to improve working conditions. For instance, they resort to wildcat strikes to raise their rates. Women refer to this type of stoppage as *cruzando los brazos* (crossing the arms): by taking advantage of the perishable nature of the products they handle, *temporeras* only have to cross their arms and let the fruit rot in order to gain some bargaining power. Key to success is the number of workers participating, which in turn is heavily dependent on social networks of families and friends. The heterogeneity of *temporeras* as a social group, and the fact that the basis for their unity dissolves at the end of each season, make sustained unified response difficult.

Sources: Barrientos et al. 1999; Barrientos and Barrientos 2002.

Diversification is therefore hardly new, but appears to be intensifying. There are different schools of thought about whether this trend is positive or negative for those involved, and for the rural economy more generally.

Diversification of income sources is welcomed by policy makers, who stress that it indicates a “thickening” of the rural economy and rural markets to include a wider range of activities, including rural industries. Enhanced linkages backwards and forwards to agriculture are said to be important for rural poverty reduction. However, increasing concern has been expressed at some of the forms income diversification is taking. Some analysts claim that the increasing move into off-farm income generation represents a search for survival under conditions of increasing economic stress. This has led authors to underline that there are in effect two different kinds of link with poverty. Some off-farm incomes provide routes out of poverty, either because diversification itself gives higher and more secure incomes, or because such incomes can be reinvested in farming. In other cases, incomes earned are so poor that diversification in fact contributes to a cycle of impoverishment.³⁶

Relatively few studies examine the process of diversification from a gender perspective. One detailed research project that does so covers four village-level studies in southern Tanzania.³⁷ This showed the following four trends. First, there is a major diversification in rural incomes away from farming, and this diversification is into mainly non-agrarian rather than agrarian sectors. Second, new forms of migration are important in contemporary diversification strategies; and third, diversification does not provide the kind of savings needed to invest in farming. Instead it is dominated by petty trading, often of cheap imported consumer goods from South and East Asia, second-hand clothes and imported foodstuffs. Finally, most of the opportunities taken up by young men and young women are of the low-entry and low-return type, producing poor incomes; a few young men achieve better-remunerated activities.

There are parallel findings from elsewhere. Studies into off-farm employment and incomes in Ecuador, El Salvador and northeast Brazil suggest that women tend to be more likely than men to engage in low-productivity, poorly paid, non-agricultural activities.³⁸ A detailed qualitative study of livelihood

strategies in rural Uzbekistan also shows women largely confined to the survivalist, low-return strategies in over-crowded segments of the informal economy.³⁹

A survival strategy adopted by impoverished women is to undertake casual work in smallholder or commercial farming, remunerated in cash or in kind. The available research evidence suggests that this is a growing area of diversification in sub-Saharan Africa. Little is known about the wage rates for this kind of work, or about its effects on women’s own farming; there is, however, evidence from Malawi that this suffers when women are forced into *ganyu* labour (casual agricultural piece-rate work).⁴⁰ Estimates suggest that women are paid from one-third to one-half of the rate paid to men for a day’s work, and that engaging in casual farm work of this kind is a sign of extreme poverty. Studies carried out in Uganda, Mozambique and South Africa, however, find that wage work brings in more income than self-employment. In South Africa, employment on large-scale state or agribusiness farms can provide women with far more reliable and secure earnings than those available on small-scale farms or through other forms of self-employment.⁴¹

Diversification’s darker side

The picture is sometimes grim. A study of the female labour market in Zimbabwe examined a sugar cane factory employing 3,400 permanent employees and a smaller cohort of casual workers, many of whom were women. Although the casual wage rate was relatively good, employment was seasonal. The critical factor affecting overall earnings was the length of the working period, which varied from year to year. Many women were in dire circumstances, especially when their contracts expired. Mostly single, they had migrated for work, left children behind in their home villages, and lived near the factory all year round. When they were not needed, their only option was selling sex. They lacked the protection of family and kin, and some entered partnerships with men just to get a place to live.⁴²

The Zimbabwe study shows how livelihood predicaments have reduced some women who are not regular sex workers to trading sex for money or goods on an occasional basis. A similar finding is shown by a study on women sex workers in the Indian state of Orissa. This documents the phenomenon of

“flying sex workers”: married women with children who come to town in the evening to earn extra money, especially before festivals.⁴³ In these instances, sex work is part of a portfolio of activities that women—and some men—engage in sporadically, not a specialized occupation.

As already noted, diversification out of agriculture among rural workers in India has mostly been confined to men; but it has a variety of gender impacts, and the mobility involved has also made a contribution to changing family structures (see box 6.2). In non-farm activity, the main sectors of growth appear to be construction, transport, storage, retailing, hotels and restaurants, all of which prefer male workers. Female employment has remained more or less confined to the agricultural sector, sometimes involving rural–rural seasonal migration.⁴⁴ In some areas and among some social groups, joint family migration is the norm. Many such families are landless, low-caste and illiterate, and work in unskilled jobs in brick kilns and construction, fish processing, and seasonal agriculture; women only occupy the most menial and low-paid activities. In such cases, gender relations remain undisturbed.⁴⁵ After a whole day’s labour, women still have to cook for the family group and fetch

water and fuel, while men relax. Also, the control of the women’s wages remains with the men as heads of households.

One of the most significant aspects of labour-force segmentation is the divergence of low-entry, low-return activities and higher-entry, higher-return occupations. Not surprisingly, women are overwhelmingly clustered in low-entry, low-return activities to which they are driven by survival needs, as are men, but some men also occupy high-entry, high-return positions. The pittance that women receive from their new sources of income contributes to a vicious circle of under-capitalization. Men’s savings from migrant labour or formal wage employment have often been used for investment in higher-value agriculture or family enterprise, enabling them to market an increasing output commercially. Women are much less likely to earn sufficient off-farm income to provide savings for agricultural investment.⁴⁶

There are exceptions, notably in West Africa where women dominate the marketing of agricultural products. In southern Ghana where women traders are prominent, they are more likely than men to be found in low-entry, low-return type of activities, but there are a minority who operate on a very large scale, including at international level. One of the impacts of

Box 6.2 Diversification and changing household structures in India

Changes in marriage practices have been observed across India, some of which interact with rural income diversification. These changes include rising age at marriage, intensification and spread of dowry, and the trend towards household nucleation. Households may split into nuclear components when members move from agriculture to other occupations, or migrate separately for work; and when members seek to control earnings rather than share with the wider group. This may be a survival strategy for some people within an impoverished family unit, or it may derive from upward social mobility.

Part of the logic underpinning large birth orders and an extended family structure is to provide labour and mutual support for a farming family; thus the trend towards nuclear households is connected to declining land ownership and diversification from agriculture into non-farm occupations. Among better-off and more educated groups, it may also reflect the desire of daughters-in-law to escape the iron rod of mothers-in-law and their domestic labour demands, as well as their competition for their husbands’ allegiance, and to have more control over household finance.

Since women are themselves influential in this trend, it must be perceived by them as in their interests, although there are losses too: assistance with domestic work and provision of childcare is less easy for women to procure within the nuclear family. Since liberalization tends to accelerate the diversification of livelihoods away from agriculture and reinforce landlessness, it can also be seen as supporting the process of family nucleation—which is likely to continue.

Source: Jackson and Rao 2004.

trade liberalization on market women in Ghana has been tougher competition; more resources and skills are needed to compete, and women who are poor and disadvantaged lose out to larger operators.

Where young migrant women seek employment in cities, opportunities arise for economic mobility, and social norms and practices can change dramatically. In countries such as China and Bangladesh where manufacturing industries employing women have expanded in recent years (see chapter 5), significant numbers of young rural women have gained access to salaried employment for the first time.⁴⁷ Many maintain their family links and invest their savings in land, agricultural inputs, housing, and tuition in vocational skills. Married migrant workers spend heavily on children's school fees, a potential route for upward mobility.⁴⁸ Unfortunately in some countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, rapid liberalization has been accompanied by the collapse of national industries, and there is thus a dearth of jobs to absorb rural migrants in search of new life chances.

Constraints on women's diversification

There are a number of reasons that rural labour markets in different settings remain so strongly gender-segmented. Some are straightforward and strictly economic, relating to entry costs (capital requirements), and the value that job-seekers place on their own labour. Many typical off-farm employment opportunities for women are in small-scale enterprises based on very low start-up costs.

The reasons that women are willing to work for very low wages compared with men are complex. Important considerations include the low income potential of their own production, and pressing family needs—to feed their children, for example. There are often few local earning opportunities for the large numbers of women seeking work to meet basic survival requirements, which male heads of household cannot or do not provide. Men's higher standing as farmers and their greater access to land and credit give them a stronger fall-back position and offer them opportunities with better returns. Social and cultural constraints on women can play an even more critical role than economic factors. In many parts of Asia only women in the lowest social groups work for pay on other people's farms,

while at the same time trust, reputation and social contacts preserve certain lucrative niches of the labour market for men.

Access to resources: Land and credit

Gender and land

One of the major lessons of the experience of economic reform and liberalization is that the resource poverty of farmers prevents them from taking up new opportunities. A critical asset in the rural economy remains land.⁴⁹ During the 1990s, land-tenure institutions were subject to reform in a number of countries. International donors have been heavily involved in the design of these reforms in many cases, underpinned by the view that having the "right institutions" (that is, private property rights through registration and titling) would strengthen markets, facilitate the entry of foreign capital into the agricultural sector, and enhance overall development.

In many countries women's rights activists have been closely involved in policy debates on land, often alongside other civil society groups such as rural trade unions, NGOs and social movements. Women's claims to be entitled to hold or own land have provoked contention, showing up deep divisions within civil society and generating accusations that some individual women or groups are willing to be co-opted by the state or by external donors. This occurred during debates on the recent land tenure reforms in Tanzania, which culminated in the passage of two pieces of detailed legislation in 1999.⁵⁰ Where rural social movements and trade unions have embraced women's landholding interests—as in the case of the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (movement of landless rural workers) and the *Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura* (national confederation of agricultural workers) in Brazil—this has only happened after many years of feminist activism within and outside the movements in question.⁵¹

Such efforts led to significant progress in the passage of more gender-equitable land-tenure laws during the 1990s. The reform of civil codes in Latin America has gradually expanded the property rights of married women and those in consensual unions. Women have also gained access to land via state programmes of

land distribution and registration over the past decade, largely as a result of the rise and consolidation of national rural women's organizations and their success in pursuing their demands.⁵² In India, the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997–2002) paid particular attention to the land rights of women and of tribal populations, both groups heavily represented within smallholder agriculture.⁵³

In sub-Saharan Africa, women's access to land has historically been sanctioned within indigenous or "customary" systems of land tenure. However, since the early 1950s, women's position has receded in the face of land registration and the introduction of land title and individual proprietorship. The assignment of formal landowning rights has tended to promote inequality and enhanced insecurity: the customary access rights of women, and of pastoralists and minority tribes, have often been denied recognition during registration processes.⁵⁴ The experience in Kenya is often cited as emblematic of how processes of land titling and registration fail women. In the recent wave of land tenure legislation and titling programmes in Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Ghana, Zimbabwe and South Africa, women's interests in land have been given greater, although uneven, recognition.

Even where women's rights are formally recognized, there continues to be a substantial gap between the legal recognition of their right to own or hold land, and women's effective access to land as an income source. The reasons for this gap are complex, and vary from place to place. But two significant policy trends require attention if poorer women especially are to access land on a secure basis: the emphasis on developing markets in land, and the resurgence of policy interest in local and informal mechanisms for land management.

Creating land markets

If poorer women in particular are to access land on a secure basis, attention will have to be paid to the over-emphasis within current policies on the creation of markets in land by registration and the conferring of title. These are far from being a complete solution to under-capitalization, lack of farm improvement and depressed smallholder incomes. Evidence from different countries suggests that land markets rarely favour the rural poor, nor are they gender-neutral; see table 6.4 for information from Latin America.

Table 6.4 Form of acquisition of land ownership by gender (in percentages)

	Inheritance	Community	State	Market	Other	Total	
Brazil							
Women	54.2	—	0.6	37.4	7.8	100	n = 4,345
Men	22.0	—	1.0	73.1	3.9	100	n = 34,593
Chile							
Women	84.1	—	1.9	8.1	5.9	100	n = 271
Men	65.4	—	2.7	25.1	6.8	100	n = 411
Ecuador							
Women	42.5	—	5.0	44.9	7.6	100	n = 497
Men	34.5	—	6.5	43.3	15.6	100	n = 1,593
Mexico							
Women	81.1	1.8	5.3	8.1	3.7	100	n = 512
Men	44.7	14.8	19.6	12.0	8.9	100	n = 2,547
Nicaragua							
Women	57.0	—	10.0	33.0	—	100	n = 125
Men	32.0	—	16.0	52.0	—	100	n = 656
Peru							
Women	75.2	1.9	5.2	16.4	1.3	100	n = 310
Men	48.7	6.3	12.4	26.6	6.0	100	n = 1,512
Couples	37.3	1.6	7.7	52.6	0.8	100	n = 247

Source: Deere and León 2003: table 3.

A comprehensive study of continent-wide evidence on the effects of land privatization in sub-Saharan Africa also finds that recent processes of privatization and land concentration (rather than national land registration schemes *per se*) have reduced women's rights over land.⁵⁵ In the context of the reforms in Tanzania noted above, in which a Gender Land Task Force (GLTF) was created, some feminists argue that whereas women's rights to land as wives are protected under the new Village Land Law, their rights as community members are at risk given the liberalization principles and the administrative structures that have now been established.⁵⁶

Not all women's advocates, however, share this dim view of liberalization. Some of the most influential groups in the Tanzanian GLTF supported land titling, registration and the creation of land markets, since it would allow women to purchase land and have it registered in their own name to be inherited by their descendants. However, such optimism may prove misplaced, especially as far as low-income women are concerned; in the context of commercialization and marketization, the tendency is for weaker groups, including poorer women, to lose customary rights they once had, while powerful contestants for control over such a vital resource consolidate their hold.

In South Africa land reform is a somewhat different process, operating against the historical background of apartheid. Here, reform has followed a "willing buyer-willing seller" model of exchange; commitment to gender equity has operated mainly at the level of lofty principle due to the absence of political accountability around women's land rights, as well as institutional and operational weaknesses. Concern with the process has centred on the state's inability, within the market-friendly straightjacket, to acquire and redistribute productive land proactively and on a large scale. By June 2000, the national average of transfer of farmland to new owners was 1 per cent—a paltry achievement relative to the need and the demand. A strictly demand-driven programme conflicts with the policy aim of reaching women as a constituency, because it overlooks the way in which power relations and divisions within communities influence the way in which "demand" is articulated.⁵⁷ The major achievement to date has been to ensure that women are chosen to serve on project committees along with men; however, given the difficulties

that women often experience in voicing their views in such circumstances, this cannot guarantee representation for women's interests in project planning. Nor is the representation of women in the future assured.⁵⁸

The lack of an overall agrarian policy—in South Africa as in many other countries—further limits the effectiveness of land reform and proprietorship as agents of development. Given this policy vacuum, it is not at all clear that having secure access to a parcel of land is enough to provide the basis for a decent livelihood. In the case of India for example, the slow growth in the agricultural sector, the decline in public investment and other signs of rural stagnation are serious causes for alarm. Whether a change such as recognition of women's right to hold *patta* (title) to land, or the provision of training and extension services for rural women, would really make a difference is at least questionable.

The (re)turn to local and informal institutions

Recently there has been a resurgence of policy interest in informal, local-level "customary" mechanisms for land management, as part of the wider interest in decentralization and the strengthening of local government.⁵⁹ But so far there has been little discussion as to how these local-level systems work in practice, including their capacity to deliver more gender-equitable resource allocations. In most Asian and African settings, women have little power at any decision-making level involved in land tenure, not only within formal institutions of government and the law, but also, and especially, in informal local decision making. In several countries including South Africa and Ghana, there are serious concerns about the place to be assigned to "traditional" authorities in rural local government, since the basis of their power is not always democratically anchored and the "traditionalism" they espouse can be inimical to women's interests.⁶⁰

Where decision making regarding land has been devolved to informal community-based institutions, as in Uganda which has gone furthest along this road, women are finding the "justice" delivered by local councils highly discriminatory. An observer explains: "Women ponder openly whether they, as quintessential outsiders in patrilineal and patrilocal society, can obtain an impartial judgement before a local council constituted by their

husbands' family and friends".⁶¹ Similar concerns have been raised about the decentralization of land administration in China. Here the shift of power to local authorities, unaccompanied by clear instructions from the central government, has led to the development of local practices that violate national laws intended to safeguard women's rights to land.⁶²

Access to credit

Capital constraints are extremely important to both men and women farmers. All smallholder farming requires some capital, even subsistence farming for which there must be seeds and tools, but cash crop farming, whether of food or export crops, requires much more outlay. The sums involved are often beyond the reach of many women, through whose hands pitifully little cash may pass during the normal year.

Over the past decade, considerable policy attention has been given to micro-credit interventions for poverty reduction. Women have frequently been the specific targets of micro-credit facilities, as was mandated by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Given rural women's lack of independent access to all kinds of resources including capital, this policy attention to credit has been a boon.

South Asia has been home to some of the most active campaigns for extending micro-credit to women. In India the provision of adequate and timely credit, at reasonable rates of interest, has been a stated objective of public policy since Independence. Formal-sector lending institutions have been expanded accordingly, and concessional or subsidized credit has been made available to socially disadvantaged groups through the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and other bank lending routes. However, there were many bureaucratic problems as well as a lack of sensitivity to the social and economic context in which these programmes operated.

A period of banking reform began in 1991, alongside other reforms directed at liberalization. Recent research on credit provision shows that the share of agriculture in total credit disbursement declined between 1985 and 2001. More significantly, the share of agricultural credit to marginal farmers, who in

1990 accounted for 30 per cent of agricultural credit from commercial banks, declined to 24 per cent in 1999–2000. During the same period, the number of beneficiaries receiving credit through the IRDP also declined from 2.9 million to 1.3 million.⁶³ While gender-disaggregated data is not available, it is likely that an insignificant proportion of this went to women due to the need for land as collateral for agricultural credit and the lack of land titles with most women.⁶⁴

The government has sought to fill this gap through a rapid expansion in micro-credit provision through the formation of self-help groups (SHGs), mainly among women. These aim to overcome the problems of inaccessibility, high transaction costs and poor repayments encountered by the formal institutions. From support to 500 groups in 1992 the programme extended to 500,000 groups in 2002, altogether covering over 40 million people of whom 90 per cent are women—a significant achievement.⁶⁵

There are however some shortcomings in the outreach of credit to women in the poorest sections of society. NGOs are responsible for linking women members to credit sources in 70 per cent of cases; thus the presence of NGOs active in micro-finance dictates the spread of credit to potential customers. Such NGOs are unevenly spread across the country, tending to be concentrated in certain states and areas. It is also disappointing that, despite women's involvement in livestock-raising throughout rural India, the share of animal husbandry and dairying was only 6 per cent of the total small-scale credit offered for agriculture and allied activities during 1999–2000. Another problem is the relatively small size of average loans: R1,000 is the amount typically given to members of SHGs. This low loan level has often in the past led women into a trap of under-capitalization in income-generation projects and failure to create economic lift-off.

A study of women's SHGs in Andhra Pradesh points out that while the organization of women into groups is indeed a strategy in the right direction, it does not automatically contribute to changing social norms and gender equality.⁶⁶ From Bangladesh—another South Asian country where micro-credit schemes have mushroomed in recent decades—the evidence is mixed. Some studies show that women's bargaining position within households is strengthened by access to credit and the control over income and assets it brings, while other

researchers argue that the loans and the pressure to repay lead to stress, and to higher levels of domestic violence.⁶⁷

DETECTING CHANGE IN GENDER RELATIONS

During the 1990s, eroding state support for domestic agriculture and exposure to highly volatile and generally depressed global commodity markets have dealt heavy blows to many smallholder households in developing countries. Although few researchers have singled out for study the changes in gender relations within these communities and households, there is no doubt that severe economic pressures have provided a context for family disruption, interchange of gender roles, and shifts in resource control and male–female relations. In many countries where permanent or seasonal male out-migration has been heavy, women have assumed sole responsibility for the farming household. In contexts where liberalization has failed to produce a sustained rise in agricultural incomes, gender tensions and conflicts are a potential outcome of the livelihood adaptations households have been forced to undertake.

A few studies do give specific insights into the effects on gender relations in rural societies of the processes set in train by liberalization, including the Tanzania study previously referred to.⁶⁸ Here, the “scramble for cash” caused an upheaval in age-old gender and generation divisions of labour. The previous distribution of work between men and women has broken down, and men have generally accepted that their wives and daughters now work outside the home. Women often talk of their new income-earning roles as having been thrust upon them by worsening economic circumstances. While the range of cash-earning activities that women pursue constantly widens, some men have also taken on tasks traditionally assigned to women, such as beer brewing. As age and gender barriers to market entry melt away, a growing divide has appeared between those with and those without sufficient capital to enter non-agricultural opportunities yielding high returns.

The Tanzanian study also points to profound effects on gender and generational relations. While men seemed willing

to acquiesce in women’s new cash-earning opportunities, they were much less willing to accept a restructuring of household relations. Women complained of an intensified working day, and in communities where women have gained cash relative to men, they may face complaints from demoralized husbands who resent their wives’ efforts to realize extra cash from trade and beer-brewing. Wife beating was also cited as an increasing problem.

The difficulties in renegotiating conjugal relations and responsibilities are echoed in another study into the effects of liberalization on gender relations and food security in two villages in rural Kenya.⁶⁹ Here men’s income and employment opportunities have been undermined by liberalization, but women have sought out new opportunities both on and off their farms. Gender conflicts have subsequently ensued over control of income, decision making and questions of family respect. Pressures on the household and men’s loss of their breadwinning role have exacerbated problems, and domestic violence has increased. Women’s cash-earning work leaves less time for household and childcare tasks, and their expenditure choices have provoked men’s suspicion and distrust.

This is part of a classic picture stemming from declining returns to smallholder farming and the intensification by rural households of long-standing income diversification, in the process of which gender and generational divisions of labour and authority are shaken up. As well as leading to strained gender relations, this has also produced new spaces of personal autonomy which women have seized. The process of diversification has taken varied forms. The negotiation of gendered responsibilities at lower levels of overall income is likely to lead to gender conflicts, and is also likely to be the most widespread effect of liberalization. As this chapter has shown, although there are some women who are diversifying into better incomes, for the vast majority of rural women diversification is more of a survival strategy than a route out of poverty. In some circumstances, where both men and women household members need to earn non-farm incomes to survive, there may be more opportunities for women to do so, but then there may be gender tensions over women’s new earning opportunities, especially if men cannot find employment or men’s farming income is going down.

Notes

- 1 House of Commons, International Development Committee 2003:15; Devereux 2002.
- 2 Patnaik 2003.
- 3 UNCTAD 2002; Gore 2003.
- 4 TWN 2003; Raghavan 2004.
- 5 World Bank 1981.
- 6 For Latin America, see Spoor 2002.
- 7 David et al. 2001.
- 8 Deere 2004:table 2, based on FAOSTAT for 43 countries and territories.
- 9 World Bank 1994:171.
- 10 Moyo 2002.
- 11 Abalu and Hassin 1999.
- 12 Bryceson 1999a, 1999b; Deininger and Olinto 2000; MAFF 1999; Oxfam/IDS 1999; Wold 1997.
- 13 Bryceson 2002.
- 14 For an extensive discussion of the statistical and methodological problems see Deere 2004 for Latin America, Whitehead 2004 for sub-Saharan Africa, Jackson and Rao 2004 for India.
- 15 See Deere 2004.
- 16 Msimang and Ambert 2004; Mackintosh and Tibandebage 2004; on elderly women in Thailand, see Knodel et al. 2001.
- 17 Heyzer 1996.
- 18 Rao 1999.
- 19 See Blackden 1997 for Zambia, and Dolan 1997 for Kenya.
- 20 Whitehead 2001.
- 21 Kabeer 2003:155.
- 22 Galli and Funk 1995; Bijlmakers et al. 1996.
- 23 Rweyemamu 2003; Mung'ong'o 2000; Sen 2002; Bigsten et al. 2001; Ellis and Mdoe 2002; Baffes 2002a, 2002b.
- 24 ActionAid 2004.
- 25 Kanji and Vijfhuizen 2003.
- 26 Blackden and Bhanu 1999; see Whitehead 2001 for a critical review of the empirical literature.
- 27 Arizpe et al. 1989.
- 28 Chiriboga et al. 1996.
- 29 Agarwal 2003.
- 30 Agarwal 2003; da Corta and Venkateshwarlu 1999.
- 31 Jackson 2003.
- 32 Gill 2001; da Corta and Venkateshwarlu 1999.
- 33 The extensive case study material for Latin America is reviewed by Deere 2004.
- 34 Dolan 1997; Oxfam/IDS 1999; Dolan and Sorby 2003.
- 35 Barrientos and Barrientos 2002.
- 36 Ellis 2000; Reardon 1997.
- 37 Bryceson 1999a, 1999b.
- 38 Lanjouw 2001; Ferreira and Lanjouw 2001; Elbers and Lanjouw 2001.
- 39 Kandiyoti 2003.
- 40 Whiteside 2000.
- 41 Sender 2002; Sender et al. 2004.
- 42 Adams 1991 cited in Whitehead 2004.
- 43 Gangoli 2003.
- 44 Breman 1985; Teerink 1995.
- 45 Mitra 1989/90.
- 46 Moore and Vaughan 1994.
- 47 Kabeer 2000; Gulati 1993.
- 48 Lee 2004.
- 49 Agarwal 1994.
- 50 Tsikata 2003b.
- 51 Deere 2003.
- 52 Deere 2003.
- 53 Jackson and Rao 2004.
- 54 Platteau 1995.
- 55 Lastarria-Cornhiel 1997.
- 56 Mbilinyi 1999:5 cited in Tsikata 2003b.
- 57 Walker 2003.
- 58 Walker 2003.
- 59 Whitehead and Tsikata 2003.
- 60 Tsikata 2003a.
- 61 Khadiagala 2001:67.
- 62 Zongmin 2004.
- 63 Ramachandran and Swaminathan 2004.
- 64 Jackson and Rao 2004,
- 65 NABARD 2004.
- 66 Deshmukh-Ranadive 2003.
- 67 Schuler et al. 1996; Goetz and Sengupta 1996.
- 68 Bryceson 1999a, 1999b.
- 69 RODI-Kenya 2004.