



Chapter 5

Changing Gender Relations in the Household

*In our village, the women cannot do much. They do
agricultural labor, bring fuel wood from the jungle,
and look after children.*

—A village man, India 1997d

*Having 10 daughters but no boy is the same as having
no children.*

—A poor woman, Vietnam 1999a

*Sister, if you don't beat them they'll stop being good.
And if they're good and you beat them, they'll stay
that way.*

—A man, Bangladesh 1996

One of the most important institutions in the lives of poor people is the household.¹ The household is a basic unit of society where individuals both cooperate and compete for resources. It is also a primary place where individuals confront and reproduce societal norms, values, power, and privilege. Gender norms expressed within the household are reinforced and reflected in larger institutions of society. “Gender relations are not confined to the domestic arena—although households constitute an important institutional site on which gender relations are played out—but are made, remade, and contested in a range of institutional arenas” (Kabeer 1997). In other words, this is not simply a story of the household and its members, but about the shaping of gender identities by larger institutions, and the ongoing participation of family members in creating new gender norms.²

This chapter is about *gender anxiety*. The household as an institution is strained and in flux. Vast economic, social, and political restructuring has not—with few exceptions—translated into increased economic opportunities for the poor. Under increasing economic pressure, men in many parts of the world have lost their traditional livelihoods, and women have been forced to take on additional income-earning tasks while continuing their domestic tasks. These changes touch core values about gender identity, gender power, and gender relations within poor households, and create anxiety about what is a “good woman” or a “good man.” Values and relations are being broken, tested, contested, and renegotiated in silence, pain, and violence. What is striking is that, despite widespread changes in gender roles, traditional gender norms have shown remarkable tenacity, leaving families struggling to meet the often-contradictory demands.

This tension impacts all household members. In the absence of outside support, it is unclear whether the changes will, in fact, lead to more equitable gender relations within the household, or avoid the trauma of abuse, alcohol, separation, divorce, and dissolution of the household. The PPA reports capture the silent trauma going on within poor households that has yet to be factored into poverty-reduction strategies.

Over and over again, in the countries studied women are identified, and identify themselves, as homemakers, the keepers of the family, responsible for the well-being of their children and husbands. The PPAs also relate the entrenched nature of men’s identities as breadwinners and decisionmakers even as these roles are undermined and eroded by changing social and economic environments. These socially defined roles of men and women are not only unattainable, they sometimes are in stark contradiction with reality. This is what creates the stress that seems to be endemic in poor households today.

The PPAs show that households are adapting to acute and long-term stress in gender-specific ways: men often seem to react with defeat, while women react by swallowing their pride and taking desperate actions. When men are unemployed or underemployed, women enter low-income, low-status jobs, often at considerable risk, in order to feed their families. As a consequence of their inability to contribute adequately to the family income, men may start feeling redundant and burdensome to households; they experience disorienting challenges to their perceptions of themselves as providers and heads of families, often resulting in anger and frustration. Women, on the other hand, continue to care for their families and gain a shaky new confidence, though their income-earning opportunities remain tenuous. These broad patterns are summarized in figure 5.1.

The Swaziland PPA notes, “The pressures of poverty are experienced very differently by men and women. Men have experienced a threat to their social status, self-respect, and confidence in their economic role as providers for their family, through the loss of their cattle and through increased dependence on the informal earnings of their [wives] to meet basic household needs. Many instances were cited of men who had left the community and deserted their families because of debt they could not repay, or simply because they were unable to provide for their wives and children” (Swaziland 1997).

What is the outcome for households where gender identities are shifting? Some households cope by cooperating and dealing with the shifting identities. For other families, the outcome is violence, family break-up, or divorce.

This chapter is structured around the patterns, linkages, and relationships that emerged from listening to the voices of poor women and men in the PPAs. We first discuss some key concepts that are useful for understanding the findings emerging from the PPA analyses. We then focus on traditional gender norms, gender identity, and traditional divisions of labor, followed by a discussion of the impact of large-scale economic and political change on gender relations and the changing roles of men and women. Finally, two sectoral case studies on education and property rights are presented to demonstrate how gender roles and rights in the household affect and are affected by these larger institutions in society. There is one striking imbalance: we find remarkably little information on men’s lives compared to women’s lives. Hence the section on men, while revealing, is brief. It appears that, despite a switch in terminology, development thinking is still very much caught in the framework of women in development.³

Figure 5.1 Economic Disruption and Gender Anxiety

	Male	Female
Traditional Identity	Breadwinner	Caregiver
Roles	Income-earner	Mother, wife
Reaction (to male job loss)	Stress, humiliation, alcohol, drugs, violence	Stress, conflict, anger, hopelessness, depression
Adaptation	Collapse, defeat	Take action; find risky low-income, low-status jobs, and take care of family
Consequences	Redundant males in households, collapse, family break-up	Shaky new confidence, vulnerability, family break-up
Interventions	Employment creation	Protection, organi- zation, employment
Dialogues	Male-female identity	Male-female identity

Roots of Gender Inequality

Men own everything because when they were born, they just found it like that. —Kanazi village, Kagera, Tanzania 1997

From multiple perspectives women often find themselves in positions subordinate to men. In most societies women are socially, culturally, and economically dependent on men. Violence against women is an extreme expression of male dominance and “one of the most intractable violations of women’s human rights” (Davies 1994).

The persistence of domestic violence across many societies suggests that it is not merely a characteristic of particular individuals but is, at a deeper level, related to social structures that maintain unequal socioeconomic relations between men and women.⁴ At the core of gender-based violence are the unequal power relations that limit women’s choices and reinforce dependency on men. In Cameroon, for example, control and dependency is perpetuated in different ways. Women in some regions require a husband’s, father’s, or brother’s permission to go outside of the home. In addition, “A woman’s husband or brother has access to her bank accounts, but not vice versa, providing him with information on her assets. When

women in one farmers' group were asked how their husbands used their money, they laughed and said, 'We don't know'" (Cameroon 1995). Davies argues, "The social, political, and economic dependence of women on men provides a structure wherein men can perpetuate violence against women" (Davies 1994). Despite the widespread nature of domestic violence, the subject appears to be socially and politically "untouchable" by state agencies and international institutions.⁵ One PPA report stated, "Wife-beating is a family problem not to be discussed publicly. Sometimes the cause is that women are rude and arrogant with their husbands who beat them to discipline them. But some men are just oppressive and like to mistreat their wives" (Tanzania 1997). Unfortunately, men's reactions to their own violence against women is not often recorded in the PPAs.

When their authority is challenged men seem to experience stress and exert their right to control the women in their lives through threats and violence. Moreover, this violence, depending on prevailing social norms and structures, may even be naturalized by the victim and perceived as acceptable or normal. Rupesinghe and Rubio argue, "An outstanding feature of structural violence is that the victim is also a part of it, in a position of acquiescence or confrontation. We cannot predetermine which of these positions will be taken, because this depends, among other factors, on the degree to which the victim has internalized the predominant culture or the degree of criticism toward it that he or she has developed" (Rupesinghe and Rubio 1994). A PPA from Jamaica reports that "on occasion, when women felt able to speak openly about their experiences, stories of everyday domestic brutality, fear, and a sense of being trapped emerged" (Jamaica 1997).

Traditional Gender Norms

Like hens, women wait for cocks to crow announcing the arrival of daylight. —Proverb, Ghana 1995a

The cock does not know how to look after chicks, but only knows how to feed itself. —Proverb, Jamaica 1997

A norm is a shared expectation of behavior that expresses what is considered culturally desirable and appropriate, while a role is a set of norms attached to a social position (Marshall 1994). Social norms are reinforced through popular culture, radio, television, traditional art forms, proverbs and stories, customs, laws, and everyday practice. Common proverbs such as, "When a girl is born, the karma must be bad" (Durga Pokhrel, personal communication), and in India, "A good girl suffers in silence," indicate that cultural norms are deeply embedded and understood

as facts. In general, as a Ugandan man succinctly stated, “Women are taken to be the inferior gender” (Uganda 1998).

Women’s presumed “inferiority” is used to justify discrimination and abuse in the household and in society at large; power inequity is reflected and reinforced by traditional and modern laws and institutional practices. A woman’s extrahousehold bargaining power with legal authorities, society, and the market impacts her intrahousehold bargaining power (Agarwal 1997). In country after country women explain that their right to inheritance is either nonexistent or limited. When women do have inheritance rights, and assert them, they risk social ostracism from the very same kinship networks on which they base their daily survival.

The ability of men and their families to throw women out of their marital homes with or without a final divorce, without even their own jewelry, reflects a social inequality of power. The threat of divorce is perhaps an even more potent deterrent to women’s self-assertion. In North India the idea that “a woman leaves her father’s home in a wedding palanquin and only returns in a coffin” is staple fare for many a Bombay film.

Other research in Bangladesh reports women’s silence as a self-protecting strategy in the face of few social or economic options. “If I ever argue with him, he hits me,” one woman in Bangladesh said. “I don’t argue much because he might abandon me, and I would have no place to go. Usually he doesn’t beat me unless my shortcoming is serious” (Schuler et al. 1998).

A woman widowed by the genocide in Rwanda reports being treated like a horse on the property of her former husband. She adds, “My husband’s parents are like strangers, yet one day they may leave their land there and claim my fields” (Rwanda 1998).

Similarly, in Kenya women report being chased out of their homes by their husbands, without being allowed to take even their utensils with them. In Ukraine, Latvia, and Macedonia women say that they do not bother to report rape because of lack of action by authorities. Around the world women report having little recourse when faced with abuse and threats to property and their lives.

While many women organize, take action, and protest,⁶ in the studies analyzed poor women report using individual exit strategies, becoming silent, or using indirect ways of asserting themselves. Women also try to improve their lives by using indirect or discreet, traditionally and culturally appropriate means to negotiate more authority in the household. In South Africa some poor women feel that they can gain more by manipulating men than by rejecting them. They speak of the ‘art’ of selecting the ‘right man,’ and of asserting themselves in a relationship. Being able to get your man to hand over his wages at the end of the week

was viewed as a major achievement. “This way,” one woman stated, “you are in charge and you can decide how to spend the money” (South Africa 1995).

Social norms are remarkably tenacious. Even in the face of changing gender roles, rigid social norms ground men and women in particular identities and expectations. These norms constitute a formidable barrier to survival of individuals, households, and communities. PPAs confirm that traditional gender norms and roles continue to play a role in the perpetuation of poverty.

Gender Identity

Women can do all the work, except to propose marriage. Nature does not allow women to marry men, just like nature does not allow men to wash dishes, cook, and sweep. People will lose confidence in a man and his wife if they find him in the kitchen. —Older woman, Uganda 1998

In our culture women tend to feel small. Men have always been the leaders; their voices are final. —South Africa 1998

Domestic work is usually divided into male and female and is thus performed. Women cook, clean, wash, bring water (where there is no water supply); while men take care of the heating, repairing of the house, and, if necessary, help their wives with the children. —Macedonia 1998

Identity is a person’s sense of self. It is a fundamentally relational concept based on social differences. Some aspects of identity are fixed, such as age and race, while others are changeable, such as career, place of residence, and degree of participation in social networks. It follows, then, that identities can be created or changed and used in strategic and pragmatic ways for one’s own benefit.

Akerlof and Kranton (1999) connect the psychology and sociology of identity to economic behavior. “Stereotypical characteristics of men are competitive, acquisitive, autonomous, independent, confrontational, concerned about private goods. Parallel stereotypes of women are cooperative, nurturing, caring, connecting, group-oriented, concerned about public goods.” Thus gender identity even plays a role in shaping economic outcomes. In Swaziland, for instance, “Most women in the rural communities reported needing the permission of their husband, or their nearest male relative proxy, to seek employment. Often, selling vegetables or crafts was the

only culturally approved income-generating activity and, as a result, the competition for these activities was very strong. Many rural women said they believed they were poor precisely because their husbands refused to let them work” (Swaziland 1997).

With marked consistency around the world, data from the PPAs show that men’s primary role is breadwinner and decisionmaker, and women’s primary role is family caretaker. Moreover, urban-rural differences do not particularly interfere with fundamental norms around female and male roles. In Panama, for instance, “In urban communities, girls stay at home, do homework, watch TV, and do house work, the wash, and sweep floors while boys are allowed to go to the sports fields. The situation is not very different in rural communities, where girls help their mothers sweeping floors and working in the vegetable garden. Later in life, in rural communities men do work, going to the fields and clearing with machete and the like. Women’s cooking is not considered work. Women participate in the harvest but not in sowing the seeds” (Panama 1998).

Women are identified and identify themselves as the keepers of the family; they are responsible for the health, education, and well-being of their children and husbands. In this way concepts of identity influence how power and work are organized in households through gender divisions of labor. A PPA from Vietnam defines gender roles simply: “The husband makes the big decisions in investments and housing while his wife is responsible for the children and for the household, including marketing” (Vietnam 1996). In Uganda women say that men control the profits of women’s labor and restrict their access to household income. This prompts the saying, “Women plan the income and men plan the expenditure” (Uganda 1998). In many societies women feel that housework is their natural duty. In India, “women’s perception regarding the household work reflects their firm belief in traditional gender division of labor. It can be seen that women do all cleaning work within the household and that they think it is their duty to do household work once they are married into another family. Women from Dudkasira and Saltarpalli have expressed that the very purpose of marriage is to bring extra hands into the house to take care of household work” (India 1998a).

Though traditional identities, norms, roles, and behaviors exist and continue to be “a determinant in the cultural and social perpetuation of poverty” (Cameroon 1995), the PPAs show clearly and vividly that tradition is not static. Economic hardship is forcing poor people to adapt to new environments and, in turn, these adaptive actions are forcing wrenching change in gender roles in households in both subtle and obvious ways.

From Breadwinner to Burden: The Changing Roles of Poor Men

Your hands and feet are whole and all right, but you are unable to earn a living. —Unemployed man in Latvia 1998

A happy man is an employed man. —Niger 1996

When men's roles are directly linked to income-earning potential any threat to that potential becomes a threat to gender identity, and spills into gender relations. A South African PPA notes a worrisome "absence of useful social and economic roles for men in the face of the current division of labor within households, high unemployment, and the marginalization of men" (South Africa 1998). Similarly, a Moldova report notes that, "Men used to enjoy higher incomes and be considered the family breadwinner and household head. This is no longer always the case, and men feel displaced when their wives earn more than they [do]. These tensions contribute to family stress and disintegration. Women often blame their husbands for the family's financial situation and criticize them for their lack of success in finding work. Unemployed or underemployed husbands feel emasculated and angry; some confess to losing their tempers and hitting wives and children" (Moldova 1997).

Male identity may intersect with ethnic identity and restrict men's occupational options. In Mali it is found that "for men who do not migrate there are relatively few alternative strategies to pursue ... as cultural taboos often prevent them from engaging in activities reserved for other ethnic groups (for instance, a farmer could not fish, because fishing is reserved to the Bozo group) or for men belonging to a particular caste (for instance, blacksmiths or potters)" (Mali 1993).

When jobs are difficult to come by, men may give up and neglect their families. "Men expressed a sense of social impotence, the inability to fulfill socially important roles as breadwinners for their families ... Many female respondents felt that men had collapsed under the current stresses, while they, because of their sense of responsibility toward their children and their greater psychological adaptability, had taken on greater burdens and become more proactive in their search for solutions" (Latvia 1997).

So strong is the tie between men's self-worth and earning capacity that it may be difficult for men to even acknowledge their dependence on women's incomes. In Pakistan, for example, while interviewing men in

rural areas researchers experienced great difficulty in uncovering the extent of women's economic activities. There is both a social stigma about women having to leave the house to work and a sense of shame among men that women have to work to earn incomes. Researchers find that the subject can be broached only after talking about other safe issues such as health. Discussions reveal that, in addition to walking long distances to gather fodder and fuel wood, women work as laborers on nearby landholdings and on rice farms in neighboring provinces (Pakistan 1993).

Household members often unknowingly redefine gender roles as they take action to adapt to changing environments. These actions and opportunities are influenced by the broader institutional environment in which households exist and interact, such as the state, the market, and the community. It may be easier for women to step outside their traditional roles for the sake of their children than for men. For example, in Latvia men may be ashamed to do traditionally women's work, but "society pardons a woman for doing men's work when she does so to feed her children. ... The breadwinner of the family is now anyone—even children—who procures work and income, and this role gives a commensurate authority in the family" (Georgia 1997). When men are considered to be, or in fact are redundant, the stage is set for family conflict. Similarly, it may be more culturally acceptable for women to ask for help than for men. "When the situation is desperate, women will ask as discreetly as possible for gifts from relatives or their women's groups. Men will not do this, but for women it is more acceptable because 'they do it for their children and the children belong to the community'" (Mali 1993).

Due to the traditional expectation that men will provide for a family's livelihood, the adverse effects of unemployment on men and the coping strategies used by them can resonate throughout a family. A young man in Gabon explained, "As time passes ... unemployment begins to undermine the young man's self-esteem. He starts to see himself ... as having failed in his supreme duty as father and head-of-household, and this may drive him to drink and violence. When I don't know how my children are going to eat tomorrow, I tend to get drunk whenever I can. It helps me forget my problems" (Gabon 1997).

Of course, not all men break down. In some societies, despite rigid prescriptions of appropriate gender roles, some men cope with economic stress by adopting new roles in the household, as women become the new breadwinners. In one urban area in Pakistan poor men spend much time carrying their young children with them. However, women still retain primary responsibility for domestic chores (Pakistan 1993).

Women: The New Breadwinners

Whether a woman wants it or not, the man must control the money, and if she refuses she is in danger of being retrenched [sent away from home]. —Woman in Kabarole, Uganda 1998

Where there are jobs, they tend to go to men, not to women.
—Mexico 1995

Rather than suffering from poverty, we should better go sweep up the garbage in other people's houses. —Moldova 1997

In their desperation to keep the family together and to provide food for their children poor women have emerged in large numbers in the informal sector, despite the risk and discrimination they face. The Indian study (1997a) documents a typical pattern: “Women receive consistently lower wages than their male counterparts for the same work due to extremely prevalent wage discrimination, especially true in the interior parts of the *tehsils* (districts). While men are likely to spend a significant portion of their income for personal use (for instance, smoking, drinking, gambling), the women in the survey villages tended to devote virtually all of their income to the family (for food, medical treatment, school fees and clothing for the children).” Over and over, what emerges is that women are prepared to do jobs considered too demeaning by men to ensure that their children survive. In Swaziland, for example, while women consider work-for-food programs to be crucial to survival, men do not work on them, as they consider it “degrading, a form of slavery, and inadequate” (Swaziland 1997). As mentioned above, some men instead take the option of leaving the family.

In the Philippines, to cope with periods of difficulty, in the lowlands of Mindanao, “women resort to vending, laundering, sewing and doing other menial jobs. Others seek employment in the town centers. They deheat dried coconut at P30.00 per 1,000 coconuts; they harvest coconuts at P60.00 per 1,000 coconuts; and they harvest rice at 7:1 sharing. They also work as farm laborers. ... During food scarcity they eat root-crops or bananas for breakfast and lunch, and take rice for dinner. Usually the women will miss meals and prioritize available food for the children and husband” (Philippines 1999).

As men become unemployed and underemployed, households increasingly depend on women's incomes from jobs that are often considered marginal or degrading. Women's participation in the informal labor force ranges from 20 percent to 80 percent from country to country

(Charmes 1998). Globally women are not the majority employed in the informal sector, but they produce the majority of informal sector GDP. This is because they take on multiple income-generating roles within the sector. With the exception of Latin America and the Caribbean, the majority of employed women in the developing world are in the informal sector (Charmes 1998).⁷

The informal economic sector is legally unregulated and untaxed, and tends to expand in times of overall economic stress. While the informal sector offers some opportunities for women to earn income, it is also laden with risk, because informal workers are frequently exploited, abused, asked to engage in physically demanding or dangerous occupations, and deprived of legal recourse. Castellás (1997) and Portes (1998) characterize the informal sector as evolving “along the borders of social struggles, incorporating those too weak to defend themselves, rejecting those who become too conflictive, and propelling those with stamina and resources in entrepreneurship.” Its characteristics include small-scale economic activity; self-employment (usually including a high proportion of family workers and apprentices); little capital and equipment; labor-intensive technology; low skills; low levels of organization; and limited access to organized markets, formal credit, training, and services (Charmes 1998).

Women are still disadvantaged in labor markets because children are seen as burdens on workers and women are primarily responsible for their care. Sometimes employers are also reluctant to hire younger women in their early 20s “because they fear that she will soon have a child and go on maternity leave. If she already has a child it is assumed that the child will frequently fall ill and she, as the primary if not the only caregiver, will often be absent from work” (Ukraine 1996).

Women’s vulnerability in the marketplace takes different forms in different countries. In many of the countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union expectations of sexual favors from young women seem to be widespread. This also makes it very difficult for women over 25 years old to get jobs. “Women in their early 20s who do get hired often complain of sexual harassment. Employers feel licensed to make such demands on their female employees knowing that the alternative to refusing is simply unemployment. The knowledge that young women face a tremendous uphill battle to find a steady job paying a living wage encourages employers to make outrageous demands of female employees who frequently complain only to one another” (Ukraine 1996).

In Macedonia the unemployed poor also said that the cut-off age for women to be hired was 25 years old, and that being attractive helped them to be hired. Older women (above 25 years old) said, “It happens that we apply to an advertisement requesting cleaning ladies, dishwashers, sales

persons, and secretaries. When they learn how old we are they say we are too old to be employed. ” An unemployed woman from Skopje said, “I applied several times to an advertisement requiring a cleaning lady and agreed with the owner to meet at a certain place. Sometimes I would wait for an hour and nobody would come. I suppose they would see me from a distance and since I am not young—I am 41 years old and not attractive—they would leave” (Macedonia 1998).

In many parts of Bangladesh (1996) poor women say that lack of employment is their major problem, but women want opportunities for self-employment based in their own homes, because they feel they cannot leave their homes and children. In Nepal the PPA reports wage discrimination against women. When men receive five kilograms of grain in payment, women receive only three kilograms (Nepal 1999).

In Rwanda women adapt to changing economies by using diverse survival strategies, including increasing the rate of domestic work by taking on childcare, gardening, and housekeeping in the homes of the middle-income and rich. Strategies also include adopting traditionally male jobs such as construction work, vending from small booths and kiosks on the roads, selling door-to-door, and participating in formal and informal rotating credit schemes. Often this category of work is unregulated, and women are exposed to theft and police harassment, among other dangers. The Rwanda PPA introduces the phrase “running the marathon”: “Women run around because they haven’t the means to rent space in the market and to pay municipal taxes. Marathon comes from the coming and going across town to avoid the police, who patrol unauthorized areas” (Rwanda 1998).

The Niger PPA confirms women’s adaptability and determination to support their families. “Commercial activity is risky. Bankruptcies occur and capital is hard to come by to start up again. Many men abandon commercial activity, while women often recycle themselves back into the market, even if this entails a smaller-scale activity and less income. Among the poor urban households interviewed, business was limited to petty trade that brings in little money and so is primarily a female activity. The most common business [that] women undertake is the sale of cooked food, especially *la boule*, a mixture of millet flour and curdled milk. A few women had moved to the Benin border or into villages along the river to sell cloth or fresh fish. The women not able to engage in small business activities grind millet for those who are selling it or work as maids” (Niger 1996).

Not only are women contributing economically to the household in nontraditional ways, they are also maintaining their traditional roles as homemakers. A PPA from India notes, “[Women] make a significant contribution to the household chores such as fetching water, collecting firewood, procuring groceries, preparing meals and taking them to the

Box 5.1 Women's Domestic Work in South Africa

Unpaid domestic work is a full-time job for women. They must balance the many tasks including childcare, farming, shopping, cooking, and water collection.

I would like to spend more time with my baby, feeding and washing her, but I have to spend two hours at a time fetching the water. Fieldwork takes up most of the time as we have to get up as early as 4 a.m. to go to the field and leave the baby behind not knowing whether she will be fed in time or not.

At times domestic work makes me feel tired and I cannot look after the baby properly.

In the winter we spend more time in our gardens where we spend a lot of time watering the vegetables, as we have to collect the water from the river.

Source: South Africa 1998.

fields for male members, cleaning, washing clothes, looking after the children. In addition to all the household responsibilities they also do agricultural labor and road construction, spin thread, and make *bidi* (hand-rolled leaf cigarettes), that increases their workload considerably” (India 1997b).

As a result, women's overall work burden has increased relative to that of men. A Nigeria report states, “For both urban and rural women, the time chart shows that within a single hour, a woman is involved with multiple roles. In Akeju Rabin, within a one-hour period, a woman undertook cooking, breastfeeding, picking food items, washing utensils, drying cocoa, and preparing yam/cassava flour” (Nigeria 1996). The demands of paid and unpaid labor consume most of women's days (see box 5.1). Women report feeling isolated because “the workload left them no space for relaxation with friends” (Swaziland 1997). In Ecuador studies indicate that “women in the communities studied had work days of 15 to 18 hours; culturally, leisure is considered unacceptable for women, and they may work at spinning wool even as they walk and talk” (Ecuador 1996a).

Women's workloads also have consequences for their children. In Uganda women's 15 to 18 hours of work per day results in a neglect of children due to time constraints and fatigue. In addition, the younger generation and urban women are increasingly working outside of the home with no reduction in domestic chores. However, when women's

work outside the home begins to be profitable, it is no longer identified as women's work, and men take over. In Arua district, "it was revealed that as the cash crop production moved from farming practices to marketing and sale, the involvement of men increased and that of women decreased, such that the women performed the majority of the manual labor while men received the financial returns from the sale" (Uganda 1998).

Women who enter the labor force may find work in nontraditional or traditional occupations. Women are engaged in trade, migrant labor, and to some extent in the sex trade, as well as in traditional occupations such as domestic worker and maid.

Trade: A Growth Opportunity for Women

I was not brought up to be a smuggler, and in the former system such activity was punishable and rightfully ridiculed.

—Macedonia 1998

Charmes (1998) establishes that women in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union make up 65 percent of the trading force. The Georgia PPA confirms that "interestingly, women have come to play an important role in trade, even when it involves behavior once considered unseemly for women, such as traveling abroad by themselves and absenting themselves from their families. It may be their very lack of integration into the male world of doing things through long established ties and procedures that has allowed them to move so readily into this new niche. Also, women's responsibility for the daily welfare of children and family has been a strong incentive to swallow their pride and move into such 'unprestigious' activities as street trade" (Georgia 1997).

Women have become active in trade, shuttling goods in the region. In many countries women are less harassed than men are by police and border guards. In Armenia, because many younger men are in hiding to avoid the military draft, people feel it is easier for women to step into the role of trader. In Georgia women travel in small groups between countries such as Russia, Turkey, Hungary, and Poland trading and selling goods. They have to contend with various criminal organizations and corrupt police (Georgia 1997). The most predominant groups among female traders are those who are unmarried, widowed, divorced, or whose husbands are unemployed (Armenia 1995). Increasingly women are hired to run drugs across borders because they are less likely to be suspected by authorities.

Poor households in Macedonia use their own savings and loans from friends and relatives to smuggle goods from Bulgaria and Turkey and resell them on the local streets and in the markets. In Macedonia, "women

frequently deal with smuggling. The reason for this is that they raise less suspicion at the border crossings, so they more easily pass the border. But some of the women who earn money in this way consider it demeaning. 'I was not brought up to be a smuggler, and in the former system such activity was punishable and rightfully ridiculed'" (Macedonia 1998).

According to the PPA from Cameroon, women's participation in the informal sector has both positive and negative outcomes: "Increased participation of women in the informal sector has opened up avenues for female empowerment and innovation, and, in the far north has given them increased mobility. Such changes are tempered by increasing [school] dropout rates, early marriage, and prostitution of young girls, an increasingly prevalent mechanism for coping with falling incomes" (Cameroon 1995).

Domestic Workers and Maids

We are not living. We are just surviving. —Group of women,
Tanzania 1997

Domestic work is typically done by girls and young women who in effect have been socialized to be domestic workers through gender divisions of labor within the household. A PPA from India explains, "Girls need to help their mothers in carrying out household chores, and the minimum knowledge to run the household can be acquired at home" (India 1998a). These skills can then be carried into labor markets.

In Senegal, for example, young women and girls from rural areas migrate into the cities, as farm labor needs decline. "When demand for their work in the rice fields wanes, many young girls from the Casamance migrate to urban areas in search of (low-paid) work as maids or laundresses (41 percent of all domestics are under age 18)" (Senegal 1995). In Niger, "our daughters work as maids in homes from where they bring their mid-day and evening meals. Their salary rarely exceeds CFAF 3,000 a month. With this, we scramble to make a little business of cooked dishes; we save a bit for the family, but most is sold. The earnings buy water, soap, and a few condiments. By the end of the month, the salary has barely made ends meet" (Niger 1996).

The low salary of domestic work is sometimes compensated for by in-kind payments. In Pakistan employers will pay school fees for some domestic workers: "However, private charity or patronage often comes with strings attached in the way of obligations to repay the donor in labor, loyalty, or even commitment to supporting a particular political party" (Pakistan 1993).

In some cases, however, domestic work provides a substantial income, and pays better wages than professional work or casual work done by males. For example, in Nicaragua the basic teacher's salary reported is 506 córdobas per month, less than that of a domestic worker. One teacher observed, "A domestic maid is asking 700 córdobas, and she gets extra salary for Christmas and holidays" (Nicaragua 1998). In Pakistan, "Women domestic workers in Dhok Naddi, Rawalpindi make Rs. 600 to 1,000 per month, while unskilled male casual workers make Rs. 700 to 1,000. But men are only guaranteed regular work at this rate during the peak summer season" (Pakistan 1993).

Even with relatively high wages and in-kind compensation, domestic workers often do not make an adequate income to survive, and the PPAs show that they must find additional sources of income. Domestic workers are vulnerable to cutbacks by employers in hours and benefits, or unemployment in the domestic work sector. Some studies found that nonpoor households are cutting down on nonessential expenditures, often seeking savings by reducing the hours requested or benefits for low-paid workers such as maids or laundresses (Senegal 1995). In Ethiopia, "In desperation, some [domestic workers] turn to hidden prostitution to make ends meet."

Workplace harassment and abuse of domestic workers is described in several PPAs, as are parents' efforts to prevent young girls from working as maids to protect them from possible sexual harassment. A PPA from Pakistan describes how older women seek to protect daughters from workplace sexual harassment. "In Dhok Naddi in Rawalpindi District, for example, older women continued in domestic service for as long as their physical strength would allow in order to protect their daughters from the rigors of the work and the sexual harassment that often accompanies it" (Pakistan 1993). In short, despite relatively good wages, domestic work is generally thought of as a bad job with low status, and is often seen as a last resort for female employment.

Female Migrant Labor

We came to Niamey with our children to find food and our husbands. Those who stayed behind in the village, who did not migrate, because they didn't have the money for the trip—our cousins, our brothers—what has happened to them?
—Niger 1996

While certain jobs are still traditionally women's work, gender norms are shifting in the formerly male work enclave of migrant labor, and female labor migration is increasing. Often, female labor migration takes place

to take advantage of more lucrative domestic positions in other regions and countries. International domestic work is seen as a solution to poverty for young women as described in this example from Moldova: “Women have increasingly broken into the formerly male domain of seasonal labor migration. ... Greece has become a significant destination for young women, who work as maids and nannies for \$400–\$600 a month” (Moldova 1997).

Migration can bring several risks to the household. Migrant work can be dangerous for both the migrant worker and the family that is dependent on remittance income. Remittance payments themselves can be irregular. In Nkundusi many women confirm that remittances are small and often irregular (South Africa 1998). In one household, business failure left a Marneuli family with a \$2,000 debt incurred by the absent member who disappeared (Georgia 1997). Migration itself is risky, as work may not exist in the country to which the migrant travels. In one PPA women migrants note that “Niamey has changed over the last two years. Today there is no work, no dry food (to send back to the village), no old clothes. People here don’t even have enough for themselves” (Niger 1996).

In Mali women’s migration in search of income is a recent phenomenon. It is hardly admitted by men, who claim they would never allow their women to leave: “If the women leave, then everybody leaves” (Mali 1993). Women go to the rice fields to barter their crafts, work in the rice fields, or prepare food for the harvesters. They are often paid in kind, mainly in rice. The two or three bags of rice they bring home are sold in the village, while the men’s rice is stocked for home consumption. Young women also migrate to towns as maids or washerwomen; their salary goes partly for their dowry and partly to their husbands or fathers.

In addition, some members of families who migrate together may be excluded from receiving social services in their host countries. A man in Vietnam, for example, was the only household member with official permanent registration. The mother and children are classified as long-term temporary residents, without access to free state health care and education:

Ms. D has lived with her husband and their four children in Ward 5 since 1986. ... She goes every day to a different place in the city to buy recyclables and sell them for a small profit. Her husband has official permanent registration, but she does not. Because they were late with their marriage registration, she and her children are only classified as long-term temporary residents. Her three older children go to evening classes because they cannot go to a regular day school. The youngest daughter is four years old but she does not attend kindergarten. “How

can I afford that?" D asks. For a week now she has had a pain in her belly near the scar of her last operation. She dares not go to the hospital for a check-up because she is afraid that she will not have the money to pay for it. She does not have a free health checkbook like some other poor people in the neighborhood. She buys some pain-killing pills at a local pharmacy to take. —Vietnam 1999b

When families do not migrate together the family members that remain may be forced to contend with new divisions of labor. A Moldova PPA illustrates shifts in gender roles related to migration: "The prolonged absence of husbands, and in some cases wives, has further challenged the division of labor and power in the family. When husbands leave for a season or even longer ... women take over traditionally male responsibilities and decisionmaking. Sometimes prolonged absence turns into abandonment, as men establish new families where they work, and women are left to support their children and themselves as best they can. A few women have, likewise, used trips abroad to search for new husbands. Sometimes, husbands object to their wives' working abroad, fearing her prolonged absence may result in divorce" (Moldova 1997).

Finally, migrant work may lead to family dissolution, as men and women establish new families at their current work location (Moldova 1997). Similarly, in Armenia young wives whose husbands migrate to Russia sometimes find themselves in vulnerable positions. Brothers-in-law and fathers-in-law have seduced young wives left behind; some men have abandoned their families in Armenia, while others have brought their Russian wives back to live with their first wife and family in Armenia. "The Armenian wives tend to swallow their pain and humiliation, knowing that they and their children are dependent on the earnings from Russia. Sometimes the two families establish positive relationships, and the Russian wife has taken the Armenian children to Russia for an education" (Armenia 1995). While migrant work has strained household relations, many women may benefit from related independent incomes (Moldova 1997; Georgia 1997).

Migration and Sex Work

I would not survive, were it not for my lovers. —Georgia 1997

Young girls are no more afraid to leave home to make some money ... many women associated with this industry have become the victims of HIV/AIDS. —Cambodia 1998

Increased worker mobility is often related to sex work for both men and women. In Armenia, for example, “some female traders also engage in prostitution while abroad. Family members, even husbands, sometimes turn a blind eye to their wives’ prostitution because the income is essential to the family. Although [it is] discouraged by the trading firms working in the Persian Gulf, prostitution in Dubai is very profitable” (Armenia 1995). In Ethiopia, a group in Teklehaimanot also noted an increase in prostitution since 1993, driven by the arrival of more female migrants from rural areas and by a larger number of women from the *kebele*,⁸ previously employed as maids, becoming prostitutes for economic reasons (Ethiopia 1998).

Migration for sex work can preserve personal honor in a profession often considered shameful. A single mother from the eastern region of Macedonia explains, “I am 45 years old and I feel incapable of such a thing, but I am forced to do it and bear shame before the children. I do it in neighboring cities to avoid unpleasant situations in the city I live in” (Macedonia 1998). This is also true in Georgia where “Some women find it less shameful to engage in prostitution outside Georgia, particularly in Greece and Turkey, sometimes in connection with the shuttle trade, sometimes sending money home to their families” (Georgia 1997). Sometimes the word “lover” is used as a euphemism in the PPA reports. A divorced Roma woman explains, “I would not survive were it not for my lovers” (who help her with money and gifts) (Georgia 1997). In Swaziland women report exchanging sex for food (Swaziland 1997). In Moldova many newspapers now carry job offers for “nice girls who are not self-conscious,” or invitations for weekends or longer vacations, and attach a list of young women available with their photographs (Moldova 1997).

Sex work comes in many forms, including the trade in children and women. This can mean an underground traffic in children, or the sale of women as brides. “In Marneuli some families are said to sell women and girls as brides to buyers in Uzbekistan; in 1989–92, the going price was 3,000 to 5,000 rubles” (Georgia 1997).

In Cambodia sexual exploitation of poor women was reported during group discussions because “Lacking alternative modes of survival, hundreds of young women have opted for this occupation” (Cambodia 1998). Poor women cited three reasons for the dramatic increase. “First, most families face acute shortages of money and everyone will have to work hard. Second, farm work is less and less available and so girls seek nonfarm employment. Third, as instances of domestic violence increase, divorce rates have surged in Cambodia. After separation, she has no means of subsistence, and she has no right to the family land” (Cambodia 1998).

Consequences and Coping

He gets up in the morning, he looks at me, and he asks, "Is there any dinner?" If I say there isn't any, he starts drinking.
—A female respondent in Tbilisi, Georgia 1997

Economic changes and the changes they effect in gender roles can produce significant household stress, humiliation, and conflict in both men and women. Unable to contribute adequately to the family, men may feel powerless, redundant, burdensome, and may react violently. Women, on the other hand, continue to care for their families and sometimes walk out of abusive relations. Women may gain confidence as they start earning and retaining cash incomes, yet due to their tenuous connections to employment they may also remain vulnerable.

The Georgia PPA reports that many men, unable to keep up with the socially mandated role of breadwinner, find that "their sense of emasculation and failure often leads to a host of physical ailments and sharply increasing mortality, alcoholism, physical abuse of wives and children, divorce and abandonment of families" (Georgia 1997).

Alcohol Abuse

Eat and sleep then wake up and go drinking again. —Women's response to the question, "What kind of work do men in your area do?" Uganda 1998

We divorced because my husband was an alcoholic. He started selling property ... to get money for alcohol. We had no shamba [garden plot]. When I stopped him from selling things, he beat me. He chased me, and I came to Korogocho slums.
—Kenya 1996

Alcohol is frequently used to manage and alleviate stress and has a strongly negative impact on household members. Men are reported to be drinking more in recent years in Macedonia: "They usually drink when they find somebody prepared to pay for their drinks. Their drinking is painful for those at home, but they [family] have already become used to such scenes like extensive talk, crying, loud music, and so on" (Macedonia 1998).

Reports from Latvia claim that "the most common causes of poverty are the death of the male provider, divorce, and most often male alcoholism" (Latvia 1997). High alcohol costs and the spending of male wages on leisure activities bring additional financial burdens to households

(India 1998a; South Africa 1998). According to one report, alcohol abuse contributes to conflict within the household and beyond: "Alcoholic habits among the males put a tremendous strain on the financial and emotional well-being of the family, and also caused a great deal of conflict within individual households and the community as a whole. ... There have been changes in their drinking habits due to the unavailability of traditional *mahua* liquor. ... Whereas *mahua* liquor consumption did not create excessive financial burdens on the family, it is not uncommon for a man to spend an entire day's income in a few hours of drinking the more costly 'country' liquor" (India 1997a). In Macedonia a number of women reported having lost spouses to alcohol-related car accidents (Macedonia 1998).

In Vietnam drinking, drug abuse, gambling, domestic violence, and crime are all reported as negative mechanisms used by some men to cope with poverty (Vietnam 1999b). In contrast to the negative coping strategies ascribed to male stress several PPAs describe women as being particularly skilled in dealing with anxiety. Thus, while both men and some women abuse alcohol, "Many respondents of both sexes felt that women had proved psychologically more resilient during periods of economic stress, perhaps because their identity depends more on performance of domestic and child-related tasks. Men, whose identity is more dependent on their ability to earn money, had crumbled more easily, and responded to economic difficulties by retreating into alcoholism and suicidal depression" (Latvia 1998).

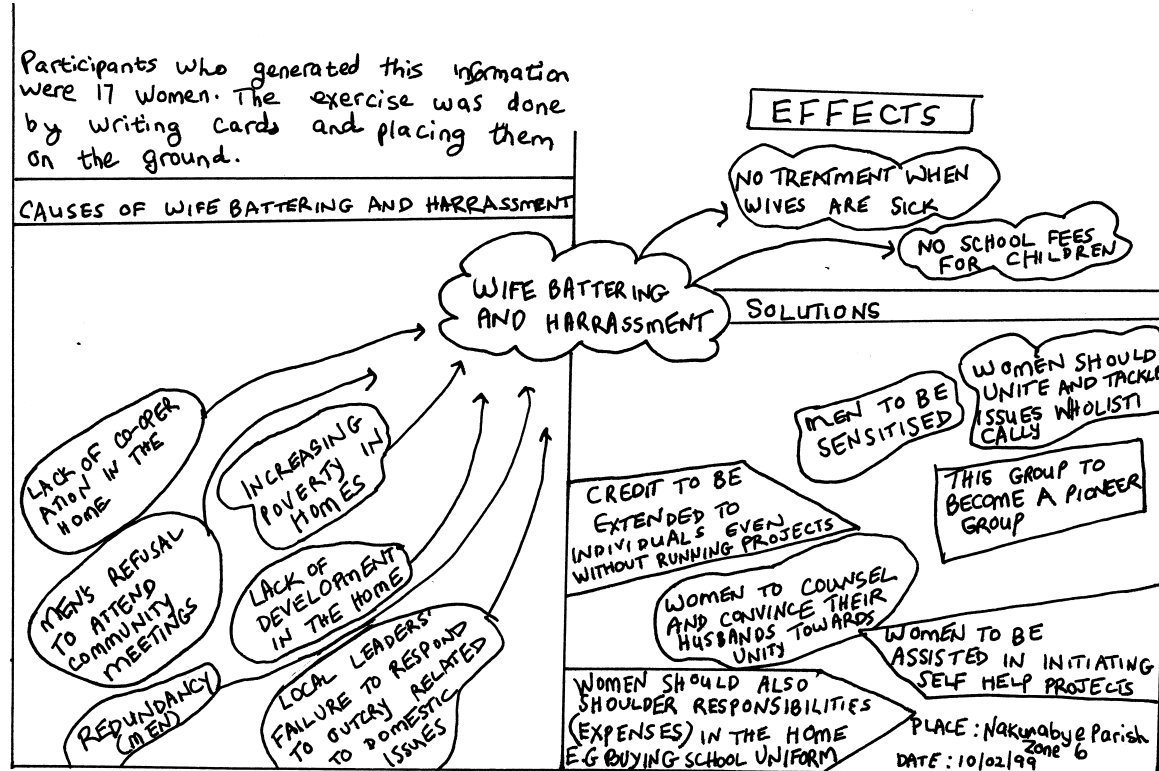
Violence

In all communities, wife-beating was perceived as a common experience in daily life. —Jamaica 1997

Violence against women is a basic abuse of human rights. In addition to the physical injuries, abused women suffer from health and psychological problems. Abused women experience a range of feelings related to the violence, from confusion about what brings on the violence to feelings of hopelessness about the possibility of stopping the violence, to feelings of isolation and depression from being under the violent control of their husbands. Sometimes women consider suicide as an option to escape violence.

In many countries women acknowledge widespread domestic violence. Sometimes, as the issue is acknowledged more openly, as in Uganda, women diagram perceived linkages to violence (see figure 5.2). In Georgia, "Women confessed that frequent household arguments resulted in being beaten" (Georgia 1997).

Figure 5.2 Causes of Wife Battering, Uganda



Note: Observations of women in Nankulabwe Parish, Uganda. Focus Group: Sewakiryi, Buyenka, Bankus and Gitta, Uganda 1999.

In all communities included in the Jamaica PPA wife-beating is perceived as a common daily occurrence. On occasions when women feel able to speak openly about their experiences, stories of everyday domestic brutality, fear, and a sense of being trapped emerge. One woman in Greenland, Jamaica talks about how the man she was with for 18 years, whom she loved dearly, continually treated her as a 'beating stick.' In some areas young women say that most women are beaten, but most women hide it. In many areas domestic violence is linked to attitudes of both men and women: women's dependency on men for employment, and frustration and hopelessness arising out of unemployment, cause a cycle of violence, which is usually followed by making up. On rare occasions, "this cycle was broken by the woman's hitting the man or leaving him, or getting him jailed through police involvement" (Jamaica 1997).

Researchers in Bangladesh report that men see wife-beating as their right, and use religious and sociological arguments to legitimize this right. Some men claim that it is condoned in Islamic religious texts. Others describe hitting their wives as a normal way to keep women's unruly natures in check (Schuler et al. 1998). The Bangladesh PPA tells of a 17-year-old woman, married for five years. Her parents had paid about TK 40,000 in ornaments and household goods in dowry. About 18 months before the PPA she was thrown out of her house by her husband after he found that she had not cooked dinner because she was sick: "He scolded her and physically assaulted her for not preparing his meal. Her mother-in-law joined in the abuse, and that evening [she] was sent back to her parents without the baby" (Bangladesh 1996). In order to file for divorce her husband is trying to get a certificate from a doctor to declare her insane. However, the woman's parents' most cherished desire is that her husband will take her back again.

Domination and violence may invade poor households irrespective of whether a woman is working outside the home or not. In Nepal, a major problem reported for women in the communities was dowry because of which "so many women got torched and there were so many deaths and injuries" (Nepal 1999). In villages, discussion groups openly acknowledged that a woman's decisionmaking power within households depended upon the dowry at the time of marriage. "Those girls who bring more dowry command respect and those who do not get beatings and murder is committed" (Nepal 1999).

Children: Vulnerable Inside and Outside the Home

I also have two grandchildren, Miemie (15) and Sharon (17). Sharon's father is in prison serving a 20-year sentence. The mother of these children lives on the farms around Patensie

and doesn't look after them. Sharon was raped when she was 14 by a man who has a clerical post at the citrus factory. We only discovered that she had been raped when she told us that she was pregnant. She was in Standard 3 at the time. She came out of school and has been working on the farms with her sister ever since. Her child, Hendrika, is two years old and has been left with me. She doesn't give me any money to support the child and she only comes back at the weekends to see her. I agreed to look after the child as long as it is a Swarts [the family name]. —South Africa 1995

Violence in the home affects children directly and indirectly. Some PPAs document physical and sexual abuse of children, including rape and prostitution. Some evidence suggests that among the most vulnerable to sexual abuse are girls with stepfathers in the home (South Africa 1998). In addition to facing violence in the home—which is not an experience limited to poor children—children of poor families are often forced to work in order to contribute to household income; this puts them at risk of facing abuse on the streets. The South Africa PPA notes that “gender-based differences ... persist even amongst street children.” Boys undertake activities such as petty theft and begging and girls take on sex work. “Girls are at great risk of HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases, whereas boys may face greater risks of assault and abuse” (South Africa 1998).

Family Break-Up

A woman is allowed to move out of the house only with baskets, cooking utensils, bracelets, and her clothes. In rare instances, the man may decide she is worthy of assistance and give her half the crop of that year's harvest. —Tanzania 1997

Family break-up affects men and women differently. In general, men are the financial winners from divorce, and women are the financial losers. Women's assets after a divorce tend to be less valuable than those of men. In addition, laws regarding division of marital property are frequently not implemented. Women then have to rely on social and family networks to start life over again. PPAs often identify divorce as a contributing factor to women's poverty.

A woman in Kagera, Tanzania, says, “A woman can't own anything valuable. On divorce or separation a woman can take a young child with her until he reaches the age of seven. Then she must return him. The children belong to the father. If she has no children, she gets nothing except

what she brought when she got married” (Tanzania 1997). In the Tanga region a woman said, “If the fight has not been so bad, a woman may get a few more things, like a radio and a hoe, especially if the family is well-off.” In Kasangezi, Kigoma region, a woman said, “In this village men have the bad habit of chasing women away after the harvest, so they can have a good sale for that year, and then try later to get them back” (Tanzania 1997).

In neighboring Kenya women report taking items they had bought with their own money in the event of separation or divorce. After the break-up of a family some women take all the money they can find in the home, and deny taking it if asked, as there would be no evidence. If a woman has a small baby at the time of divorce she is expected to care for it until it stops breastfeeding, and then she must return the child to the man. Sometimes a woman may decide to take her children, which is often not challenged because children are seen as a woman’s only asset after divorce (Kenya 1996). In Togo “divorce reduces a household’s capacity to overcome external shocks and is one of the main causes of destitution” (Togo 1996).

Some families continue to live together following a divorce for economic reasons. In Moldova some couples who divorce because of alcoholism and domestic violence continue to live together because neither spouse can afford to move out (Moldova 1997). And a household in central Macedonia continues to live together in the house of the former husband because, after the divorce, the woman did not have anywhere else to go with the children (Macedonia 1998).

Family maintenance and child-support payments are reportedly rare. In South Africa one woman who was able to extract R20 from her divorced husband for child support had to give it back when he demanded it (South Africa 1998). Situations are difficult for divorced women in Latvia whose ex-husbands cannot pay child support because of disinterest or unemployment. Benita, aged 43, is a divorced mother living in Riga, Latvia, where she is bringing up two children alone. As a result of “incompetently divided property” after the divorce, her husband received all their joint property, and he provides no support for the children (Latvia 1998).

In Benin men benefit from the valuable labor of their children, except in the few cases where the court may grant women custody or child support. “In the case of divorce the ex-husband will generally take everything with him, including the children, while the parents of the wife still have to refund the bride price. If the children are very young, they will remain with the mother until they become potentially productive, that is, until they are six or seven years old. Payment of child support is a rare exception, although modern courts (only accessible to a small minority) tend to protect the child’s interests, occasionally granting custody

to the mother, or requesting a family support payment from the father” (Benin 1994).

Unfortunately, legal proceedings following divorce do not ensure fair division of property. In Tanzania some young and more-educated women pursue court battles with the support of women’s organizations; these efforts succeed in securing some marital property in a handful of cases. Most women avoid legal action. As one woman explains, “It is tiresome for the legal process to reach conclusion; and there is a possibility that the woman can fail to get her rights. This is because the man can give a lot of money to all the people dealing with legal rights to make sure the woman fails” (Tanzania 1997). Women say that they are allowed back into their natal homes only if they had not brought the shame of public proceedings or become aggressive in trying to claim justice (Tanzania 1997).

Cooperation

Other than food, there aren’t any other expenses. Everything else depends on the relationship between a man and his wife.

—A poor woman, Bamako, Mali 1993

If I knew you cannot live without money, I would not have gotten married. We loved each other a lot. Today we only fight. —Macedonia 1998

Obviously not every family breaks down under stress. In Latvia researchers conclude that poverty may affect families in one of two ways: “Either it brings family members together, in some cases even couples on the verge of divorce, as they realize that solidarity is the only way to cope with their economic problems. Or the daily stress of financial problems splits families, particularly those who had experienced discord in the past” (Latvia 1998).

Many families work together to attempt to meet their needs. For example, a farming family with 13 children in Membrillal, Ecuador receives income from the family’s combined efforts. “Tomas is primarily a farmer ... he is always in search of ways to earn extra income. His major source of income is coffee, but productivity is low, and prices have dropped consistently for the past three years. This year he and Roberto (a son) went to the Oriente to work for a friend for six weeks. While Carmen considers herself to be a housewife, she harvests coffee in nearby plantations every June and July; this year three of her daughters accompanied her” (Ecuador 1996a).

Households use a wide variety of strategies to “work their way out of poverty” and remain together. The most common strategy for generating family income lies in transforming as many family members as possible into workers. The following story of one family in Brazil demonstrates the

degree of cooperation and coordination required among family members to cope. “In this family, consisting of the husband (52), the wife (32), and five children ranging in age from 8 to 13, the husband worked outside the home at two jobs, selling lottery tickets, and guarding a parking lot. The wife spent 38 hours [a week] at home doing housework and 35 hours working outside the home, washing clothes and cleaning houses, and as a manicurist for neighbors. The four boys attended school; the three eldest also worked at a parking lot and undertook minor chores. The 12-year-old girl did not attend school, but rather played a key role in family survival. She spent 40 hours [a week] doing domestic work, freeing her mother for other activities. She also helped care for the family’s chickens and even helped her mother at her paying jobs” (Brazil 1995).

In sum, in many households men are an important family resource, but due to low wages, the lack of jobs, and ill health, they are not able to generate sufficient income to help the family out of poverty. In South Africa one man earns R250 a month as a farm worker. The PPA reports, “He earns only a little money. He shows [his wife] all the money, and only uses R12 or R24 to travel home. He does not drink beer. [He is a] good husband, but can’t survive on this sum—we help him” (South Africa 1998).

Many men share the view that cooperation is essential to survival. A migrant worker in East London, South Africa, said, “We are different from other men in the township because we have respect for our families. We do not just drink our wages away at month’s end” (South Africa 1998).

Female-Headed Households

I don’t have any house or any land or anything because I parted company with my husband and he does not want us.
—Kenya 1997

One consequence of family break-up is female-headed households. In some societies female-headed households contend with the daily demands of economic survival in addition to facing ostracism from kinship systems that treat them as outcasts. The Ghana PPA reports that “Female-headed households tend to be genuinely socially marginal under the patrilineal kinship systems that prevail in the north” (Ghana 1995a).

It is widely accepted that female-headed households are more likely to be poor than male-headed households (Folbre 1991:89–90), an observation supported by many reports, including the Kenya PPA: “In 35 villages people were asked to mark all of the female-headed households on a map. Overall, while 25 percent of the study population was categorized as very poor, there were over twice as many female-headed households (44 percent) as male-headed households (21 percent) in this group. While 59 percent of

the male-headed households were categorized as poor or very poor, this was true for 80 percent of the female-headed households. The pattern of greater poverty among female-headed households was true for every district and for all 35 villages” (Kenya 1996).

Similarly, the South Africa PPA reports that “many of the poorest households were female-headed where it was left to the grandmother or single female to look after the whole family. Consequently, they were excluded from many of the local income generating activities because they could not afford the joining fee or the time” (South Africa 1995). A researcher in Nigeria observed, “Some categories of individuals are regarded as particularly vulnerable, especially female-headed households, particularly those with children too young to work. Widows and single mothers face special difficulties when their children fall sick, since no one is willing or able to help them. They also lack the necessary farm labor and cannot afford to hire it” (Nigeria 1995).

Not all female-headed households are necessarily poor or the poorest in the community. There are multiple causes of female-headed households and these causes determine the households’ ability to cope. Some cultural traditions provide safety nets for women, such as the Islamic social category *mustaheqeen*, which “includes households without earning men ... such as widows without family support” (Pakistan 1993). *Mustaheqeen* translates as “the deserving poor” and as such this group receives *zakat*, an official tax that is disbursed by the government to the poor.

Women head households for several reasons, among them migration of male members, divorce, and men who are present but not contributing financially to the household. Male migration that leads to the creation of female-headed households is usually for certain seasons, but sometimes for longer, leaving women to fend for themselves and their children.

Divorced women are another prominent category of female heads of households, and they are particularly vulnerable to poverty. A man may take his social networks with him, leaving his ex-wife to cope only with her own. In addition, a divorced woman typically has restricted access to the very basic household necessities such as housing and land for food production. Divorced women’s access to income is hampered by a range of factors including lack of child support from the ex-husband or his family. They also have limited employment opportunities due to demands of child-rearing and preexisting occupational segregation of women to low-income, low-security jobs. Finally, divorced women may face strong cultural stigmatization due to their divorced status. The combination of unemployment and female-headed household is particularly deleterious for the family. A young and unemployed single mother in Libreville explains, “I have to be both father and mother to my children. I never know what’s going to

happen. If you don't have any friends, you're on your own. ... The government doesn't know or care about the problems of young mothers—all it can do is talk about birth control! ... We live in constant insecurity—the local thugs have an easy time of it when they know a woman is living alone” (Gabon 1997).

The issue of physical vulnerability of women living by themselves is mentioned in several PPAs. One woman from rural Mali who was abandoned by her husband and could not muster the resources for health care describes the experience of vulnerability. “My husband went away ten years ago and never came back. If my eyes were not sick, I could go to the bush to pick wild fruits. ... Now that my eyes hurt and I can barely see, I don't know what to do. I asked my brothers, but they are too poor to be able to give me anything. I cannot ask my sister or my mother because they are widows, and on top of that my mother is very old and half-paralyzed. So I asked the women's group, but they have nothing” (Mali 1993).

Some women find themselves heads of households when a man is present but is no longer contributing financially to the household. In these cases household survival depends on the income-earning potential of the wife and the children. A woman in Ethiopia, married with six children, has reservations about accepting the representation of households, including her own, as male-headed households. She says, “Although we may take these families to be male-headed, the breadwinners for these households are women.” Her own husband lost his business and slid into poverty. Although he struggles to make money by selling meat he buys from butchers, the source of income for the household comes from *kolo* [roasted grain], oranges, and bananas sold by one of the daughters (Ethiopia 1998).

Finally, many women find themselves heads of households when their husbands die. In Nigeria as in many other countries, destitution follows widowhood (box 5.2).

Conclusions

Gender relations are in troubled transition in poor households. This basic fact needs to be a central part of poverty reduction strategies. In economically constrained environments men appear to have great resistance to doing what are often considered demeaning jobs. Women, on the other hand, seem to have greater resilience and hit the streets and do whatever it takes to keep their families together. Many men react to their loss of power as breadwinner by collapsing into drugs, alcohol, depression, wife-beating, or by walking away. Women may find a new confidence through new economic opportunities, although these may be tenuous; they may expose themselves to risk and take on work in the informal sector in

Box 5.2 Widows Organizing in Nigeria

Many PPAs show that households headed by widows are among the poorest and most vulnerable groups in this category. However, the proliferation of widow's associations in Nigeria provides an effective example of how organizing to share stories and resources can result in positive outcomes.

“One of the most successful of these is the Widow's Association in Adikpo ... formed in 1986 [with] a membership of 350. Catholic missionaries were instrumental in assisting its establishment. The association's main functions are those of educating and generally caring in the areas of health and social security for the children of widows. The association is also a thrift and credit organization. The Adikpo Widow's Association has land on which it has citrus fruits and farms from which much revenue is generated. It has also installed a grinding machine, which apart from removing drudgery from grinding corn, brings revenue to the Association. In 1991 the Association won a prize for being the best-organized women's association in Benue State. However, some men interviewed are against the Association. They feel that if women can expect succor after the death of their husbands, they may have a tendency to neglect them and not care whether they live or not! Despite this opposition from some men, this association has grown in membership with the support of church organizations. This accords with the broader finding of this work that informal participatory structures can best obtain their objectives if they receive support and cooperation from formal structures.”

Source: Nigeria 1995.

addition to their household responsibilities. Families may cooperate or eventually collapse.

Overwhelmingly, the PPA reports echo the conclusion of Standing (1999) that the feminization of the labor force and the informalization of the economy reflect “the weakening position of men rather than improvement of the economic opportunities for women.” Taking on additional income-earning roles has not necessarily led to the social empowerment of women or greater equity and peace in the household. “The impact of employment on women appears to be ambiguous, with some women

succeeding in gaining control over the affairs of the household, some women being able to establish their own male-free households, and some women continuing to subsidize men” (South Africa 1998). In some cases the employment of women is viewed as a regrettable necessity, and the dream of achieving prosperity includes the hope that daughters will be spared this necessity (Pakistan 1996).

At the same time some women feel a sense of empowerment with the chance to take on new roles. “Some women reported that female economic independence had grown, improving their coping abilities and their capabilities, especially in terms of work outside the home, and that in rural areas of central Uganda, changes in attitude toward the payment of bride price had occurred. In addition, younger women, particularly from urban areas, noted changes in attitudes toward and of women, as well as some changes in gender roles in recent years” (Uganda 1998).

What is clear from these studies is that the entire household—women, men, and children—pays a high price for adjusting to new gender roles and deeply held notions of gender identity. With few exceptions international development agencies still use an approach focused on “women in development” rather than developing approaches to both poor men and women that acknowledge that men’s and women’s well-being are intertwined. To help women, it is also critical to understand men’s roles and to reach men. Since men still dominate the public space, their involvement is critical in changing institutions. Change is likely when there are alliances between powerful men within organizations and women. And such alliances are more likely to develop if women organize and gain economic power.

Two fundamental issues have to be addressed, one economic and the other social. First, both poor men and women need greater access to economic opportunities, especially for profitable self-employment. This is difficult in an environment of corruption, lack of organizations of the poor, lack of support to battered women, and the breakdown of law enforcement agencies.

Second, in order to assist families both women and men need social and psychological support to explore and navigate change that brings into question their worth as human beings. The issue of gender-based violence needs to be confronted. Deeply entrenched social norms will not automatically change with more women entering low paying jobs. Gender relations must become an integral part of all poverty reduction strategies. This has to be reflected in institutional goals, design, incentives, and criteria of success that are monitored and evaluated. Poor women also require access to legal aid and police that protect rather than assault. Implementing gender strategies implies accepting that women’s and men’s lives are interlinked. Discussion of gender issues must include both men

and women to increase the probability of less traumatic transition toward gender equity. Whether conversations about gender identity and gender relations are appropriate in separate gender groups or mixed groups; whether this should be done by religious leaders, NGOs, governments, or in the workplace is culture- and context-specific. A poor woman in Uganda suggests: “Women and men should sit at a round table to discuss their rights. Unless men are included, these things will not be understood. It will be like bathing in mud again” (Uganda 1998).

Case study 5.1 Gender and Education

In the PPA reports education and household gender issues intersect in six main areas: household literacy; distance and transportation; direct and indirect costs; family security; marriage; and sexual harassment and abuse. The overall result is that girls tend to receive fewer years of formal education than boys do. (See figures 5.4 and 5.5 in appendix 7.)

Household Literacy

We would like to go to school with enough books.
—Children, Vietnam 1999a

Women are less literate than men, and female illiteracy has far-reaching implications for development because illiteracy further marginalizes women in the public sphere. Women are often simply unable to participate in literacy programs. In Mali, for example, adult female participation in functional literacy programs is extremely weak because women’s 17-hour work days prevent them from participating (Mali 1993). In a PPA from India, in a region where the number of girls attending school is less than half the number of boys, information distribution depends largely on literacy; it is therefore not surprising that women are less aware than men of government programs or other services. Similarly, women are less aware of their legal rights, such as their right to own and inherit land (India 1997a).

Distance and Transportation

[Schools] are not what they used to be. —Guinea-Bissau 1994

Kwame Lambor comes from a family of 19 children. Each morning he walks the one-and-a-half-mile stretch to his school, the Gambaga JSS. Kwame sometimes leaves home for school without eating. During the rainy seasons he is sometimes

unable to go to school if the river which he has to cross floods its banks. —Ghana 1995a

Schools are often far away for children, and attendance may require parents to bear the costs of transportation. Moreover, in many regions girls are required to travel with chaperones or else risk violating social norms. Sexual harassment of girls and women traveling independently reinforces such gender norms. In Pakistan, for example, “fear that girls would be teased or harassed en route to school was a constraint for households that could not spare an adult to accompany the child” (Pakistan 1996).

In a PPA from Bangladesh the problem of educating children is identified as the highest priority in some areas, followed by problems of water shortage. Women are particularly concerned about sending children to schools that are long distances from home, across rivers and unsafe hilly terrain. High schools are particularly far away (Bangladesh 1996). In Pakistan distance is named second only to cost as the issue of greatest concern; this issue is compounded for girls, who are unable to travel any distance alone due to cultural norms. Some mothers say they accompany their daughters to school, but mothers with preschool children may be unable to do this. From one focus group we learn, “In an urban slum near Rawalpindi mothers voiced a positive desire to provide higher education for their daughters but said that in order to attend a girls’ secondary school their daughters would have to travel (accompanied by a mother) three miles by bus and an additional mile on foot. The entire trip was said to require an hour and a half each way” (Pakistan 1996).

Direct and Indirect Costs

We never finish the book in the prescribed year, yet the fees keep going up. —Uganda 1998

Education costs include both school fees and costs associated with the loss of the child’s labor. In addition, families are often asked for bribes and donations to schools. All these costs are a significant disincentive for many poor families. When weighing the cost families frequently choose to educate boys rather than girls.

Often families who wish to educate their children cannot afford to do so. In a Bangladesh PPA men and women report being very supportive of education for girls and boys, and rural women insist that education must be made affordable. These women propose the following: no bribes for education; subsidized books and stationery; less costly admission fees; open and flexible school hours; distribution of wheat; and more schools in

remote areas (Bangladesh 1996). In Zambia the seasonal nature of educational fee payments was noted, unfortunately coinciding with the time food stocks are lowest (Zambia 1997). Women in Swaziland face constant stress finding the money to pay for schooling (Swaziland 1997). A woman in Brazil said, "The schools where they were wouldn't let them attend without all the material. I couldn't afford it. First it was the uniform; I managed to get them uniforms, but then it was all the other material. It's very sad. I tell them you have to find some work to pay for your school supplies" (Brazil 1995).

Quite apart from the costs of fees and school supplies many poor families face a loss of children's labor when children are in school. In Mali, although few people claimed that schooling was a burden on domestic life, it became evident from a number of statements that the additional labor provided by the child was sorely missed at home (Mali 1993). The labor of girl children is often described as particularly useful for families, and it is directly related to low female student enrollment. In India girls' time is devoted to household domestic purposes, preventing them from attending school (India 1997a).

In a community in Nigeria parents are upset with government restructuring of education funding. They place responsibility for efficient educational funding firmly on the shoulders of the government. "The government has messed up [the schools]. They should help teachers or hand the schools back to missionaries. ... It is for the government to do it. We have many oil wells, and every day they pump oil overseas without improving our welfare" (Nigeria 1997).

When scarce resources require that parents must withhold education from some of their children, a disproportionate number of these children will be female. In Pakistan, although a number of poor families are educating daughters, in no family did the team find a girl who is educated in preference to her brother (Pakistan 1995). In part this is because girls' labor in the household is typically more valuable than boys' labor. In part it has to do with the family's "investment strategy" for its own future security.

Family Security

We want to be rich women. —Nigeria 1997

PPA descriptions frequently mention that parents seek future security and independence for their children, and this of course influences education decisions. In many cases both marriage and income provision for men and women factor into these decisions. For girls in Armenia education lends status to potential wives and acts as a surrogate dowry. Urban women also

mention the need for girls to have higher education “because they need independence ... to be prepared in life” (Armenia 1996). For boys, security and independence are often linked to being an income-provider. There may be great cynicism about the correlation between higher levels of education and higher earnings or employment prospects. A father in Lusarpiur, Armenia, explains, “Because I have no money, I cannot support my son’s studies at the institute. There would be food, transport, and lodging expenses—without mentioning bribes of which even a first-grader is aware. What would these expenses be for? So he can earn 10,000 dram salary? Now my son is keeping cows for 10,000 drams a day. Education is not the future” (Armenia 1996).

Some parents also fear that allowing their girls to venture into public spaces such as schools where they will encounter unrelated boys will lead to loss of reputation. Schooling could also encourage daughters to reject their parents’ choice of a (possibly illiterate) relative for a husband (Pakistan 1996). Further, many participants believe that girls in school are more likely to become pregnant before marriage. In Mali respondents remark, “Girls who become pregnant out of wedlock have jeopardized their marriage opportunities altogether and, in addition, will be thrown out of school” (Mali 1993). In order to avoid conflicts with school authorities parents prefer to keep their girls home altogether.

In some cases children themselves prefer work to school, and are strategic about their own future plans. In Nigeria two girls in a mixed-gender children’s focus group claim that they prefer hawking (informal sales) to school because they can save up money by the time of their marriage. “We want to be rich women,” they said. Two boys, aged 7 and 9, who have never been to school, are working on a farm in Maidamashi (Northwest) and do not think they are missing much: “Our parents are farmers and have not found it necessary to send us to school. Farming is a better occupation because potentially it offers a lifetime’s livelihood” (Nigeria 1997).

Marriage

My brother completed primary school and went on to college. I look forward to getting married someday. —Nigeria 1996

It is wasting money to educate girls because they will marry and join another family. —South Africa 1998

Families are dissuaded from educating girls and young women in some countries due to marriage systems that place the daughter in the care of the husband’s family after marriage. This causes parents to see female education as a waste of money since it is like investing in someone else’s family (Togo

1996; Nigeria 1997). As this is explained in Pakistan, “Daughters are destined to be ‘other people’s property’” (Pakistan 1996).

In other societies educating girls can actually increase the dowry required, as reported in Bangladesh: “The people of Refayetpur in Khustia told us how they assess the likely dowry rates. An educated girl who is unemployed requires the highest dowry. This is because social norms require that the boy is more educated than the girl and boys are not willing to marry girls with higher education than themselves. If the girl is educated and has a job, the dowry rate is the lowest. An uneducated girl without a job commands a dowry in between” (Bangladesh 1996). From the family’s point of view, if prospects for a rich match for their daughter are not good in any case, it is not to their advantage to educate her. They will reduce the required dowry if she stays at home and learns useful household skills.

Finally, PPAs frequently mention that educational institutions do not adapt to adolescent pregnancy and marriage customs. Many of the African PPAs report that girls and young women leave school when they become pregnant (Uganda 1998; South Africa 1998). Some young women may also be cast out of their families when they become pregnant.

Sexual Harassment and Abuse

I didn’t like the school because there were troublemakers, and the teacher hated me and hit me. —El Salvador 1995

Some young people, overwhelmingly girls, report abuse and sexual harassment in schools by male teachers and students. Educational institutions often have a slow response—or no response—to these problems.

PPAs report that sexual harassment is an impediment to the education of girls. In Pakistan, for example, “Virtually all parents desire literacy for their children, but school enrollments, especially of girls, lag behind the stated desire for education. Parents also express fears that daughters will suffer harassment or loss of reputation by attending school with boys. Poor attendance or supervision by teachers, and consequent classroom rowdiness, exacerbate these dangers. It is suggested that enrollments could be improved if monetary incentives were provided and if teacher performance and girls’ security issues were addressed” (Pakistan 1996). In Nigeria it is noted that the unequal distribution of female teachers biased toward urban areas adversely affects girls’ school attendance in the rural areas (Nigeria 1997).

In Uganda girls drop out of school at higher rates than boys because the boys harass them in school, and girls fear being “wooded into early sex

by men with promises of money and clothes” (Uganda 1998). In South Africa sexual harassment is reported along with pregnancy as contributing to girls’ failure to continue education (South Africa 1998). A girl from a village in Macedonia reports, “I did not continue to attend secondary school in Struga because I had to travel every day by bus. Many boys would tease me, and people in the village would talk about me—look at her, alone in a bus or in a van—and that is why I do not want to go” (Macedonia 1998).

Children themselves may decide not to attend school due to poor security. For example, in one case from Pakistan, parents identify costs as a major impediment, followed by the children’s unwillingness to attend school: “[Parents] would enroll them if all expenses were paid—provided the children in question were willing to attend school. Four families mentioned that one or more of their children disliked school and refused to attend. Among these were a girl who had been beaten by a teacher and a pair of sisters who feared harassment from ‘wicked boys’” (Pakistan 1996).

When teachers and staff abuse students, communities may find it difficult to remove offenders from their professional positions. In El Salvador a male teacher abused his girl students. As an officially appointed teacher, he could not be fired, so the girls were removed from school for several years. Now, the community runs the school board and hires only female teachers (El Salvador 1997).

Case study 5.2 Gender and Property Rights

Even if a woman is given a chicken or a goat by her parents, she cannot own it. It belongs to her husband. A wife may work hard and get a chicken. If it lays eggs, they belong to the husband. —Uganda 1998

Property rights and property arrangements affect gender relations within the family. In some places women and children are regarded as property themselves and their lives are regulated accordingly through marriage and labor practices. In other places women have control over few assets and the security of their inheritance is tenuous. Lacking access to assets, poor women are more dependent on the environment and diminishing common property resources. This case study explores these issues.

Women as Property

Men rape within the marriage. Men believe that paying dowry means buying the wife, so they use her anyhow at all times. But no one talks about it. —Uganda 1998

Women are often legally considered the property of male family members. In Togo, for example, women cannot inherit, “but the levirate tradition makes it possible for their brothers-in-law to inherit them along with the rest of the deceased husband’s estate (including children).” Children are also frequently considered property, particularly girl children in marriage negotiations. Male-centered inheritance systems and residential patterns dictate that a girl must take up residence with her husband and his extended family after marriage, and that her children and benefits of her labor belong to that family (Pakistan 1996). In Tanzania, when it comes to ownership of property following divorce, because a man pays a bride price he is considered to own his wife, the product of her labor, and any children they have together. In Uganda a husband’s possession of his wife is reinforced by the payment of a bride price, particularly in the north where it is seen as repayment to the family for loss of the woman’s labor. Male ownership of a woman as property under marriage rationalizes marital rape (Uganda 1998).

Girls and young women can be particularly vulnerable as “assets” that can be traded across borders. In Marneuli, Georgia a 16-year-old girl had been raped while doing domestic work, and gave birth to a son. To hide this dishonor and also to improve the family’s terrible material conditions, the mother sold her daughter for 5,000 rubles (Georgia 1997).

Security of Home, Land, and Inheritance

Women with no male children must rely on husbands or other male relatives for land access. —Nigeria 1996

Women are often not aware of their legal rights to own and inherit land due to a general lack of awareness of existing laws and regulations, often related to limited literacy (India 1997a). Poor women in Hathazari, Bangladesh, express their main problem as access to land or house, and homestead. “Women are both psychologically insecure and physically distressed with house, land, mortgaging arrangements, and being residents on others’ land. With no land or house, men and women find it difficult to borrow capital, which is scarce, expensive, and not provided on easy terms” (Bangladesh 1996).⁹

In many places where the PPAs were conducted it was found that women cannot inherit property. In Uganda inheritance exclusively by males is clearly connected to women’s lack of power, control, and decisionmaking in marriage (Uganda 1998). Inheritance in Swaziland is passed through male children, denying women ownership rights and forcing women to be dependent on males for access to land.

In Kenya women suffer twice from land inheritance practices. First, girls are often discriminated against in land inheritance from their birth families. Poor families pass the majority of land to their sons. Second, whether a woman leaves her husband or a man leaves his wife, ownership of the land stays with the man. On his death, in-laws are entitled to seize the land, and may grant the widow limited cultivation and harvesting rights. There were various stories of widow's land inheritance experiences in the Elugulu village in Busia district, for instance. Men state that "when a husband dies and the woman has children with him, she may keep all the household assets." The women told a different story: "The brothers-in-law ... take all the valuable assets, leaving the widow with barely enough to give her a new start" (Kenya 1997).

Women in the Lubombo region of Swaziland express the hardship they face regarding the allocation of land within marriage. "If the wife was out of favor or neglected by the husband, she might find it more difficult to gain use rights to land since 'we are too many and there is too little land.' For a woman, even as a female head-of-household, her usufruct access would be facilitated through a male relative, including younger relatives and sons. Should these male relatives be absent or disinterested, the woman's needs were disregarded" (Swaziland 1997).

Women with no male children must rely on husbands or other male relatives for land access (Nigeria 1996). Infertile women may be condemned and treated with disrespect. Mothers with only daughters may suffer neglect from their husbands, face opposition from in-laws, and be denied access to their husband's property; their husbands may take other wives in an attempt to have male children (Nigeria 1996).

In South Africa the form of land tenancy and land tenure (communal tribal land allocation) has increased the uncertainty of women's right of access to land by only recognizing males as titleholders. This has increased women's food insecurity. Women proposed an alternative: "Since most men migrate to urban areas, they should have in place a system like a power of attorney that will enable them to make decisions as members of the household" (South Africa 1998). In Zambia, although no legal restriction on land use exists, women have a difficult time obtaining land from land authorities. Under the statutory system, in some districts married women must provide evidence of their husband's consent to obtain land, while unmarried women are often not recommended for allocation of land if they do not have children. PPA respondents in Zambia suggest a traditional tenure system in the PPA, with rights of long-term occupancy and use allocated to families by chiefs. They fear that land reform and titling will primarily benefit the rich and politically well-connected (Zambia 1997), and urge appropriate consultation before any such programs is undertaken. "There

is a great deal of debate about the appropriate land tenure policy for Zambia. There are fears that the rural poor might suffer from establishment of formal tenure systems on traditional land ... because land is their only fixed productive resource” (Zambia 1997).

Control Over Other Assets

The pig is the woman's cow. —Swaziland 1997

As has been already discussed, women in most countries studied have very unequal access to land, homes, or other capital assets, including their own children. Women in the Lowveld region of Swaziland point out that men's ownership of cattle does not help women and children because the men could decide to sell the cattle without family consultation and the money will not necessarily benefit the household. This could apply to the cattle that accompany women as dowry. Women's assets are few. “Besides the utensils of the household and their traditional clothes, the women owned only chickens. None of them owned goats, donkeys, or cattle. Some women in the Lowveld reported that they have a greater say in the decisions about pigs—‘The pig is the woman's cow’—because the women are more involved in the husbandry of pigs. With chickens, women were free to slaughter or sell when they decided, but they would nevertheless usually consult with the men” (Swaziland 1997).

Environment and Common Property

Some women gather firewood to sell it to town, while others go deep into the mountains to cut trees to be processed to charcoal. Others gather cogon grass which is sold at P0.50 to P 1.00 a bundle. This usually brings them a daily earning of P3.00, just enough to buy a small amount of salt. —Philippines 1999

The degradation and disappearance of common property resources is a major issue for poor households. Acute water scarcity is a problem for women and men, but the impact on women is especially severe since in almost every culture they are responsible for collecting water. Deforestation similarly impacts women, since usually they are also responsible for collecting firewood and for nontimber forest products for the household.

In India (1997b) women are the main collectors of nontimber products such as *rengal* (a kind of leaf) to make leaf plates. “Due to the low paying nature of nontimber products, many villagers, especially the male,

tend to move away from collection of forest products to wage employment. This, in fact, adds additional burden to women, who need to put extra effort to collect the leaves and make plates. Along with this, there are a number of risk factors, especially harassment by forest officials in collecting forest products from reserve forests. Fuel wood collection appears to be the more risky job, often attracting severe penalties and punishments” (India 1997b).

The impact of the drought on women in Swaziland is particularly harsh “because women have to walk further for water and spend more hours each day obtaining food. Many women engaged when they could in informal vending and making crafts to sell, that is crucial for income in the winter. But drought conditions have depleted the grasses on which women depend for their crafts; even cutting grass for thatching as piecework has become precarious and unreliable. ... Women in the Maphilingo community in the Lowveld, for example, now travel in winter and in spring as far as Malkerns for a species of grass they need to produce sleeping mats” (Swaziland 1997). To survive, women also engage in seasonal cotton-picking and harvesting and selling wild green vegetables and aloe plants.

Notes

1. The terms “household” and “family” will be used interchangeably in this chapter.

2. Gender relations vary by social group. For aggregate statistics on gender differences in participation in parliament and women’s economic rights, see table 5.3 in appendix 7.

3. For a history of the evolution of gender strategies in development agencies see Moser et al. (1998).

4. According to a WHO (World Health Organization) compilation of 17 primary survey studies undertaken around the world between 1990 and 1997, between 20 and 50 percent of women sampled report physical abuse by their intimate partners (WHO 1997). Although there are mixed data about whether violence in the home is decreasing, increasing, or staying level, a few studies identify an increase in abusive behavior with the length of marriage. In India, in rural Gujrat, for example, 53 percent of newlyweds report verbal abuse as compared to 85 percent of women married for more than 15 years (Visaria 1999).

5. The U.N. Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), for example, makes reference to violence against women in three articles, but does not explicitly state it is a problem.

6. For a review of women's movements in the developing world, see Ray and Kortweg (1999).

7. Recent surveys show that the informal sector represents 50 percent of GDP in Latin America, 40–60 percent of GDP in Asia, and 75 percent of GDP in Africa. From the perspective of a household, informal sector activities contribute a significant source of income. For example, in Africa informal sector income accounts for nearly 25 percent of rural nonagricultural income, nearly 30 percent of total income, and over 40 percent of total urban income. Moreover, it is likely that the size of the informal sector is larger than official statistics suggest since much of women's paid work is not counted in official statistics.

8. *Kebele* is the lowest level of government administration, or community; *kebele* describes both a geographical area and the committee that runs it.

9. In response to this problem Grameen Bank has started a housing loan program for women. See Narayan and Shah (2000).