

CAN THE GENDER GENIE BE PUT BACK IN THE BOTTLE? SOME EVIDENCE FROM TANZANIA

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Abstract *In the 1980s research on gender issues was in its infancy in many tropical African Universities. At Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) -then the University of Dar-es-Salaam at Morogoro, 99% of the faculty and administration staff were male as were 98% of the graduate students. A few female junior faculty/graduate students were trying to fund some research on gender issues from donors but were having little success. With the arrival of expatriate faculty undertaking joint research with SUA faculty and with graduate student training overseas, the amount of research on gender issues grew rapidly. The interest in gender research at SUA has now spread across departments and faculties. Unfortunately the knowledge of this productivity has not been disseminated across the campus let alone beyond the campus and into the region. This article documents the growth of gender research at SUA during the last 15 years, which parallels the growth in the region: it gives examples of research undertaken and policy recommendations which flow from the results.*

1. Introduction

Can the readers of the new Journal of Agricultural Economics and Development (JAED) tolerate a small amount of economic history? This article documents the significant amount of research which has been undertaken at Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania using data disaggregated by gender (thus highlighting the contributions of women in various economic activities); similar types of research have occurred across the region. This research influences policy decisions, some of which have changed materially, others much more slowly.

Research on gender issues was already underway in the late 1970s in the region and especially at the University of Dar es Salaam (eg Mbilinyi, 1974a&b; Meena, 1991; Tibaijuka, 1979 and 1984) but was almost unheard of among faculty members at Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), then the University of Dar es Salaam at Morogoro. In the early 1980s when the USAID-financed Bean/Cowpea Collaborative Research Project (CRSP) team initiated joint research with SUA faculty, to develop higher yielding beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) resistant to insects, disease, and drought to assist in the alleviation of hunger, the SUA faculty was 99% male, graduate students were 98% male and drawn primarily from the SUA student body, and administrative staff was also 99% male. The senior author was one of the few female full professors/role model/researchers who had appeared on campus. She had recently completed research in Zambia documenting the fact that women put in more labour than men in small holder agriculture (as well as doing the water and fuel gathering, household activities and child rearing). Thus she was aware of the fact that farmers were women and men, even though the SUA faculty always referred to farmers as men. In the Zambian study, the first to interview women in farm households, results indicated that females contributed more total hours per day (8.5) than males (7.4) in agriculture as well as in non-agricultural tasks (5.0 hours for females compared to 1.1 hours for males) (Due, Mudenda et al., 1985).

Even in the early 1980s there were a few female junior faculty/graduate students trying to develop proposals to obtain funding from donors for their gender related research but it was difficult as they were few in number and had diverse interests, although almost all were in crop science.

It was important, in researching the importance of beans in the farming systems in Tanzania, to ascertain who did the farming, chose the seeds, etc. It quickly became apparent that women in smallholder agriculture in Tanzania also contributed over 50% of the annual labour (Due and Anandajayasekeram, 1984) even though our marketing data were significantly underreported by gender (as we were unaware of the large amount of time women allocated to husking and shelling beans, maize, etc. before products could go to the market (male interviewers did not report this labour).

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Females contributed more labour than males in planting, weeding, and harvesting of all the major crops and 59 and 67% of total labour for beans and rice, respectively, in Morogoro region in addition to their traditional roles in fuel and water gathering, and household and food preparation duties. Women also chose the seeds to plant. Beans in the farming systems in the three most important bean-growing regions of the country were also documented; see Due et al. 1984a & 1987a&b).

During this period some seniors who participated in the data gathering and analysis were exposed to gender issues but most of the faculty could not see why gender was being included. Most of the cooperating colleagues in crop science and our US co-principal investigator thought including agricultural economists in a bean development program was off the wall anyway, so they tolerated gender analysis by this muzungu (Kiswahili for foreigner [from outer space!]).

The presence on campus of the joint research team for a month each year encouraged the discussion of gender research and applications for graduate training overseas of junior female faculty/graduate students. Several were trained under the Bean/Cowpea CRSP as were a larger number of males.

Fifteen years have passed since this less than encouraging beginning in gender research at SUA. At retirement the senior author donated \$100 to SUA for the best senior student research paper on Women and International Development (research papers, commonly called special projects, are compulsory for all SUA graduating students). The income from the \$100 was to be used for the award with the capital remaining invested. At the time she was not sure a faculty member could be found to supervise such a paper but the award has been made each year and competition has been keen.

It was thus amazing when the senior author returned in the fall of 1995 to find that a significant amount of research on gender issues has been generated at SUA, that the number of persons who have been involved was significant, as has been the involvement across disciplines - Molllel, Magayane, Rutachokozibwa and Rwambali in the Department of Agricultural Education and Extension; Kurwijila, Lazaro, and Temu in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness; Mahommed, a Master of Science degree (MS) student in Crop Science, Mtenga, MS student in Agricultural Education and Extension, Chove in Animal Science, Due and Kurwijila, Due et al., and three MS female students in Agricultural Education & Extension in 1995, to mention just a few. Unfortunately, the knowledge of this productivity has not been disseminated across campus let alone beyond the campus and into the region. Many graduate students writing on the subject do not realize that a number of studies have been undertaken in other SUA departments; they quote North American and European authors rather than their own sources. One objective of this article is to highlight this SUA productivity. It parallels productivity in the region.

2. Why Undertake Gender Research?

Research on gender is undertaken to allow documentation of the work of one-half the population of any country/economy. It is not just "economic man" who is involved in investing, decision making, capital accumulation, resource allocation, etc. to provide goods and services in the economy but men and women, families, etc. It is important to know the roles of each rather than assuming that all are equal or one is of little value/importance.

First, let us turn to our mother discipline, Economics, and learn what the feminist economist scholars are arguing about the subject. Economics is often defined as the study of the use of scarce resources in the satisfaction of human wants. It is based on the assumption that all persons seek to maximize the attainment of their goals. Individuals as consumers seek to maximize satisfaction from given incomes, owners of businesses seek to maximize profits, and factor owners seek to maximize their incomes. Persons are assumed to act autonomously— independent of gender—with no concern for others or for the operation of the economy as a whole.

In a recent book, *Beyond Economic Man*, 1993, Blank argues that feminist scholars criticise the economics profession in two ways:

First, they detail "the unique and important ways in which gender interacts with the economic structure of society. They argue that the economic decisions and constraints faced by women—the economic reality of their world—differ consistently and substantially from the economic reality faced by men. The authors claim that past and current economic analysis has, at worst, actively denied this fact, or, at best, ignored it or only partially attempted to understand it" (Blank, 1993, p.134).

Second, some feminist scholars argue that economics needs to be redefined and reformed. Economics has grown too narrow, defined primarily by "the market"; they would make the discipline much more inclusive. They argue that feminist economic theory is concerned with far more than gender issues; it provides an alternative perspective on all aspects of social analysis.

As mentioned above, these feminist economists would broaden the discipline to include the study of the basis of human material welfare. "The emphasis is shifted from efficiency to well-being and equity." Public policy would be redefined to ask, "What does it do for the poor?" (Blank, 1993, p.135). They criticize the focus of most of modern economics on individuals as separate selves who make autonomous, rational decisions, compare utility, and assume that each individual is equal to each other. They do not see families and societies in which some individual's worth is undervalued, unequal, dependent or interdependent, and choices are constrained/dominated by others. As a result of this broadening/redefining, research would change materially focusing on economic behaviour in a broader sense as well as on issues of gender in a social sense (Ferber and Nelson, 1993, p.10).

Unfortunately, in the volume referred to above, the authors do not give examples of the types of research they would see arising out of these changes. However, papers submitted for inclusion in the annual American Economic Association meeting in early 1996 give some examples: "Welfare Reform as if Women Mattered: Feminist Critiques of the Current Debate"; "A Feminist Analysis of Environmental Valuation"; "Towards Feminist Economic Policy: Income Generation for Women in Developing Countries"; "The Pivotal Role of Exploitation of Women in Thailand's Capitalist Development"; and "Women in the Export-Led Development in Singapore and Ireland: The Differential Impact of State Policy." In addition to the examples above, the entire issue of the November, 1995 *Journal of World Development* (Vol.25, No. 11) is devoted to Gender, Adjustment and Macroeconomics. The authors strive to for a greater intergration of gender in economics; several attempt to develop "theoretical and empirical macroeconomic models that incorporate gender as an analytical category" (p.1825). The authors believe this incorporation is especially important in assessing the effects of Structural Adjustment Programs and "other macroeconomic policies that are capable of provisioning human needs and enhancing human capacities" (Ibid).

Agricultural economics has already broadened and deepened to include environmental, poverty, and other issues but more needs to be done to model and include gender. At the last international meeting of Agricultural Economists held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1994 the women in agriculture group recommended that all data analyzed by members be disaggregated by gender. Currently, in most social science disciplines the term "gender research" is used rather than "Women in International Development", as the interest is much broader than women.

3. Some Examples of Gender Research

3.1 Gender Research on Agricultural Extension

Fifteen years ago all of the agricultural extension officers in Tanzania were male, yet women were contributing more than half the agricultural labour. Custom and practice often precluded male agents disseminating information to females and husbands did not bring the information home to their wives (Spring, 1988). Mollé (1986) documented, in his MS thesis, that in Tanzania women were not receiving much extension information or visits from extension officers. Mollé found that, under the Training and Visit (T & V) system, contact farmers had larger acreages of crops than non-contact farmers or female-headed households (which now make up 25 to 30% of smallholder farmers); contact farmers were visited much more often than the other two groups; only 16% of contact farmers compared with 56% of non-contact and 72% of female-headed households received no visits by extension agents. With less information, non-contact farmers and female-headed households were less able to try the recommended practices of improved seed, early planting, spacing, weeding, and fertilizer application.

Magayane, also in his MS thesis (1989), compared acreages in crops and net incomes of female-headed households with joint-headed households (often referred to as male-headed households) and found that, with fewer adult persons in the households, female-headed households could not plant equivalent acreages, thus had less production per family, consumed more of the total production (leaving less for the market) and, therefore, had substantially less net cash income than joint-headed households. His study also confirmed that women were not receiving extension information. Thus women, even if they had the necessary resources to purchase new technology, did not have the knowledge of its potential contributions. Scholars in *Women in International Development* recommended to Ministries of Agriculture that female extension officers be hired to work directly with women so that agricultural production would be

increased. Some World Bank personnel also joined in this recommendation in two excellent discussion papers (Saito and Weidemann, 1990; Saito, 1994). The employment has happened and now one-third of the village extension officers in Tanzania are women.

In spite of the fact that in Tanzania currently one-third of extension officers are female, only one other person (to our knowledge) had returned to ascertain the farmers' views of the agents by gender. Rutachokozibwa (1993), in a study of 330 women farmers in Morogoro region, Tanzania, found that 70% preferred a female village extension officer (VEO). Due, Magayane and Temu (1996) interviewed 240 smallholder farmers (male and female) living in villages grouped so as to have a male and female extension officer in two villages in close proximity and with the same crops and soils; each of the extension officers had the same training, and approximately the same years of experience. Villages were chosen at three levels of potential—low, medium and high. Farmers were asked if they preferred a male or female extension officer and the reasons for their preferences. The villages were in Morogoro region; financial constraints precluded sampling in other regions of the country.

What did the researchers ascertain? They found that of the 119 male farmers who had had village extension officers, 35% preferred a male, 30% preferred a female, and 35% were neutral in their choices. Of the 114 female farmers who had had a village extension agent, 40% preferred a woman, 26% preferred a man, and 34% were neutral in their choices. Of the total sample reporting, 31% preferred males, 35% preferred females, and 34% were neutral. These preferences for female extension agents (30% by men and 40% by women farmers), and of farmers who were neutral as to gender (35% by both men and women), are surprising in a predominantly Moslem area. Smallholder farmers often stated that what was important was an extension agent who had information to assist them and not the gender of the agent. A district extension officer said, "Character is more important than gender in assisting farmers".

When farmers were asked the reasons for their preferences, 22% of the men stated their choice was because the VEO was very welcoming and responsive, 34% because of no cultural bias (if males work with males no assumptions are made regarding sexual liaisons), 21% found their choice gave good advice regarding crops and agriculture, 17% stated the VEOs had the same training, therefore farmers had no preference by gender, and a small number (6%) stated other reasons—that the female extension officer would have children and not have time for her duties, that some officers gave better advice on livestock, etc. These responses reflect characteristics farmers desired in their extension officers.

The women farmers gave similar reasons for their preferences by gender; 12% found officers welcoming and responsive, 38% reported no cultural bias, 23% gave good advice on crops and agriculture, and 24% were neutral as the officers had the same training. Two women stated that their husbands would not share information with them. Women farmers often reported that they preferred female agents as they could share experiences with them more easily. The predominant reason for the choice of both male and female farmers—no cultural bias—is surprising but this is a predominantly Moslem area.

Since the extension agents receive the same training, sampled farmers were asked which gender would give better advice on a list of topics. Farmers who responded thought female extension officers presented better information than males (39% to 24% with 34% neutral) on the total list of items, and on some individual items, came better prepared (35% to 29%), presented more useful information (especially on crops and livestock, 34% to 25%), on credit (37% to 18%), and on nutrition (60 to 7%). Following from the foregoing the following policy suggestions and conclusions can be made;

- (a) The Ministry of Agriculture should employ more female extension agents to assist both men and women farmers. Farmers know the value of extension; they want agents who will get out of their offices and provide information which will assist them.
- (b) Male farmers preferences are reassuring since 34% realized the VEOs had the same training and, therefore farmers were neutral as to which gender of agent they preferred.
- (c) With the many demands on farm women's time, extension officers should ask the women the best times for extension meetings; the district extension officer stated that women prefer different meeting times from the men.
- (d) Many women prefer to meet in women's groups as they are freer to share their feelings in women's groups than in mixed groups; they also find that many others have the same problems.

The study by Due, Magayane and Temu (1996) also found that in the villages in the low potential areas, farm

families were unable to produce enough food to last throughout the year. The Policy implication of this finding is that research needs to be undertaken which will allow farmers to increase production or improve storage and to recommend crops which can be grown for the hungry season so that family food supply and nutrition can be increased. These families had very low cash incomes to supplement home produced food and purchase other consumer items. A new research/extension effort would provide greater food security for farm families.

Another recent development in extension has been the use of "participatory research"; this is the involvement of farmers in the research being conducted to ascertain their views as the research is underway. For example, in the Bean/Cowpea CRSP farmers (male and female) were asked if they wanted beans which grew close to the ground or had stems/leaves off the ground; the color of the beans preferred [color choices varied by area of the country], flavor, cooking time, and hardness of shell of the beans preferred (Due et al., 1987). If the shell is hard, it deters insects and improves storage; if the shell is softer, beans cook more quickly. Mollel and Butler's (1994) participatory research in the Bean/Cowpea CRSP have documented farmers' preferences of bean varieties. Use of this participatory research makes sense in development of new varieties of beans. The policy implication here is clear that this type of research should be extended to other crops.

3.2 Gender Research on Food Security and Other Issues

Michigan State University has, with USAID funding, undertaken significant research on food security at the macro level in selected tropical African countries. But if food security is not provided at the micro (household) level, there will not be surplus food from which to provide security at the macro level. Kurwijila, in her PhD dissertation research in Tanzania, looked at food security at the farm level (Kurwijila, 1994). She found women make the daily decisions as to food used for family consumption and jointly with husbands in decisions as to the amount of production to be sold or stored for future use. Recently the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has published a monograph, *Women: The Key to Food Security (1995)* arguing that

"Women in developing countries play significant roles in maintaining the three pillars of food security: food production, economic access to available food, and nutritional security. But they play these roles in the face of enormous social, cultural, and economic constraints." In the IFPRI monograph it is also argued "that women account for 70 to 80% of food production in Sub-Saharan Africa, 65% in Asia, and 45% in Latin America and the Caribbean. They achieve this despite unequal access to land, to inputs such as improved seeds and fertilizer, and to information. Given equal access to resources and human capital, women farmers can achieve yields equal to or even, as some studies show, significantly higher than those of men. They found that women, relative to men, tend to spend their income disproportionately on food for the family. Moreover, women's incomes are more strongly associated with improvements in children's health and nutritional status than are men's incomes."

The authors conclude that "to allow women to fulfill their potential in generating food security, national governments and international organizations must take policy steps in three broad areas: First, they must increase women's physical and human capital; second, they must increase women's ability to generate income to maximize the benefits of women's incomes for household food security and nutrition; and thirdly, they must protect women's health and nutritional status to allow women to fulfill their productive and reproductive roles." (IFPRI, 1995, No. 21, pp. 1 & 2).

Lazaro, in her recently completed PhD dissertation, has looked at women in sugar and sisal plantations in Tanzania. Most of the labourers in the plantations are males, except for office staff and casual labourers. Lazaro (1995) compared the mean total hours worked per day between married males and females in the plantations. She found that men, on average, worked 11.5 hours whereas women worked 13.5 hours per day. Men worked an average of 8.1 hours in plantation employment, 1.7 in food production (families could grow food on the plantations), 1.3 in domestic work and 0.4 in commercial activities. This compared to women who worked on average 1.8 hours in plantation employment, 4.4 in food production, 5.2 in domestic work, and 2.1 in commercial activities—brewing and selling beer, selling mats, trading, and so forth. This was an important new contribution to the literature on the plantation economy.

Lazaro also found that children aged 5 and under in her sample were better nourished than the average for the region. Families living on the plantations often find it difficult to obtain the land necessary for the important factor of food production. Policy recommendations included negotiations with plantation owners to make more land available to the workers and their families on which to grow food, as this food is an important addition to their total food supply,

and to build larger houses in future so that storage of home-produced food was possible. Currently houses consist of two rooms—which does not allow space for the families let alone storage and other needs.

4. General Assessment of Gender Research at SUA

Faculty at SUA has changed materially in the last 10 years as senior faculty has been attracted outside of Tanzania, due to better incentives and working conditions; but a good young faculty remains and the high quality of training has been sustained. Several of the younger faculty are attracting donor funding for research as university funding has decreased. Also the younger faculty have joined with colleagues outside Tanzania to undertake research on gender issues. An example is Due and Kurwijila (1989), who, with funding from the Australian government, evaluated a program of loans made to Tanzanian women for increased income generation. Faculty members have been involved in other kinds of program evaluations and in writing monographs on gender issues in the country (Temu, Chove and Duma, 1995; Maeda-Machang'u et al., 1995)

In addition, contacts with scholars outside Tanzania have enabled the faculty to report and publish their research at international meetings. Examples are *Impacts of Structural Adjustment Policies on African Women Farmers* (Gladwin [ed.] 1991), and *Gender Issues in Farming Systems Research and Extension* (Poats et al. (eds.), 1988. These opportunities build the competency of Tanzanian faculty.

Finally, the senior student paper competition, while the papers are not published, has sensitized both students and faculty to gender issues. Examples of the authors of these student papers include Duma (1990), Magili (1991), Nyanga (1993), Rwezaula (1994), Akaro (1994), and Minga (1995).

5. Conclusion

These examples highlight the significant volume of research on gender issues which has been undertaken at SUA in the last fifteen years after a very un auspicious beginning. Course content is also being changed to reflect gender issues. Similar research is occurring all across the region. Both local and international scholars will benefit if the research is better documented and results published. Policy recommendations also will be implemented more quickly if results are known and discussed.

The direction of future research may be in the critique of results of current economic policies, analysis of planned policies, and improvement in communication and dissemination of gender research results to other institutions within Tanzania (University of Dar es Salaam, Institute of Development Management, Cooperative College, donors, NGOs [Non-governmental Organizations], Banks, and government departments) and abroad. Has the time arrived for an annual two day seminar on gender research which would include the organizations above? This would allow participants to know their colleagues in different areas of the country and the research in which they are engaged. Finally, some departments/faculties within SUA in which interest has not yet developed, might join the effort. The authors doubt that the gender genie at SUA or in the region can ever be put back in the bottle!

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