

# The Invisibility of Women's Work

## *The Economics of Local and Global "Bullshit"*

by Marilyn Waring

*L'auteure dénonce le fait que les femmes et leur travail productif soient exclus des politiques économiques et suggère que toute nouvelle politique devrait se faire dans une perspective non-sexiste.*

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I have watched women in many parts of the world following herds of animals to scoop up steaming dung in their bare hands, placing it in woven baskets which they then hoist onto their heads and carry. The loads they bend for, lift, and carry are very heavy, and the work is very tiring. In the context of the lives of these women, access to dung is a matter of daily survival. In addition to providing fertilizer, it is a primary source of cooking fuel and is also used as a building material and plaster.

When used as organic manure, the dung must be dried for several months and then carried to the households' farming plots. These are seldom contiguous, and may be several kilometres from the household. I recall images of women walking bare-footed along rough narrow paths on the sides of steep hills, for example, in Indonesia or Nepal. Entire days are spent carrying on their heads baskets full of fertilizer for the small family plots before ploughing.

In many places in the developing world, livestock are held in a small enclosure immediately next to the home, since the pressure on land use means that, with a few seasonal and agro-ecological exceptions, fewer livestock are allowed to wander freely or are herded. Gathering fodder for the animals and then bringing them water become more arduous tasks for women and children, with longer and longer walks. At least the dung is closer to the household.

In parts of Africa and Asia, dung is also used as a basic material for building construction, maintenance, and decoration. Adobe houses are covered with a mixture of mud, dung, and straw and replastered several times a year. The mixture is spread by hand, and only women do this work. In some villages, the plaster is mixed with coloured pigments, and spectacular decorative patterns often adorn the outside of the houses.

As a result of forest depletion, women increasingly need dung to burn as an alternative to wood fuel. After collection, they mix it with straw and water and make it into flat cakes. Then it is dried, usually in the sun, and the women need to turn each cake several times in this process before it is dry enough for storing. Making dung cakes can take up to two hours a day and, when the cakes are stacked, there is the further process of thatching and sealing the pile to keep out the rain.

Making dung cakes to be used as fuel appears to me to be an entire manufacturing process, with clear inputs and outputs of an economic nature. In mining or gas extraction, for example, paid workers harvest the primary resource. Machines transport it to processing plants. The raw material is refined, the product manufactured. It is sold, then consumed. The traditional economic model is followed: workers process raw materials for the market. This counts. But when dung, the "non-product," is carried as a "service" by "housewives," to sustain land, dwellings, and households, then, according to the economic model, nothing happens. There is no economic activity. But dungwork is only women's work, so it is a safe assumption that in the official definitions of productive work it will be invisible.

The area of human activity generally excluded from economic measurement is household activities, the products of which are seldom or never marketed, i.e. the unpaid services of housewives and other family members, household maintenance, subsistence agriculture performed by children or "housewives," voluntary work, and reproductive work: most of the work that most of the people do most of the time.

"Growth" figures register "market" activities, i.e. cash-generating activities, whatever the nature of that activity and regardless of its legal status. In New Zealand, companies dry dung products and sell them in pelletized form for the home gardener. The process is called manufacturing. The results are marketed. The workers are paid. When the rural women of the developing world recycle dung, nothing in the process, the production, or the labour has an economic value.

The value of this most primary of all forms of production, and its links with women's unpaid work, raise crucial policy questions which have seldom, if ever, been contemplated by the arbiters of what does and does not count. As a consequence, much of the rhetoric intended to ensure continuing exclusion of these activities, and large amounts of women's other work, from measurement is made on the basis that all this has little or no effect on most micro and all macro economic activity.

Yet the consequences for micro and macro policy planning are immense. While dung can be a replacement fuel for scarce wood, and therefore ease the rate of deforestation, this use is a major loss in terms of soil conservation and fertility. For example, it is estimated that in Nepal eight million tonnes of dung are now burnt each year, equivalent to one million tonnes of foregone grain production (World Bank). At the same time, the use of dung as a fuel is a major instance of import substitution, and is a national saving in terms of the debts that would be incurred through the importation of fuel if resourceful women had not processed the alternative.



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### The rules on work

Any economic report of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations (UN) agencies, or national governments, is based on national account statistics. The UN uses these figures to assess annual contributions, and to appraise the success of regional development programs. Aid donors use the United Nations System of National Accounts (UNSNA) to identify deserving cases, "need" being determined by "per capita gross domestic product" (GDP). While the most in "need" would tend to register low growth figures, donors prefer to invest in countries showing high rates of growth, paving the way for their own exports and investment opportunities. In the same way, the World Bank uses these figures to

identify nations that most urgently need economic assistance, but prefers those with higher rates of growth, making it easier for multinational corporations to use the same figures to locate new areas for overseas investments. The availability of IMF loans and loan rollovers comes with contingencies to force changes in government economic policies to increase growth rates based on these figures. Companies in turn use these national accounts projections to project the markets for their goods and to plan their investment, personnel, and other internal policies.

Resources are mined, skies are polluted, forests are devastated, watercourses are turned into open sewers and

drains, whole populations are relocated as valleys are flooded and dammed, and labour is exploited in chronically inhumane working conditions. The statistics record economic growth.

It is claimed that national accounting provides factual information. As I have demonstrated, dung cakes are a manufactured product that requires hours of labour. And that is a fact. But not according to the UNSNA, where facts are carefully selected in a way that predetermines public policy.

Cooking, according to the UNSNA is "active labour" when cooked food is sold and "economically inactive labour" when it is not. Housework is "productive" when performed by a paid domestic servant and "nonproductive" when no payment is involved. Those who care for children in an orphanage are occupied; mothers who care for their children at home are "unoccupied."

The authors of the UNSNA boast that per capita GDP in any country is a measurement of the well-being of its citizens. A major reason that only cash-generating activities are taken into account is to ensure that countries can determine balance of payments and loan requirements—not as a comparative exercise, but as a controlling exercise. Those to whom money is owed (first world governments, multinational banks, and multilateral agencies) are primarily

interested in gauging the *cash generating* capacity of the debtor countries, not their *productive* capacity.

Women have argued against this myopic approach to production for decades. In 1900, Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote: "the labour of women in the house, certainly, enables men to produce more wealth than they otherwise could; and in this way women are economic factors in society."

Following the calls made by women at their successive United Nations world conferences in Mexico City and Copenhagen, the final document of the End of Decade Conference for the United Nations Decade for Women, held in Nairobi in 1985, included this paragraph:

The remunerated and in particular the unremuner-

ated contributions of women to all aspects and sectors of development should be recognized, and appropriate efforts should be made to measure and reflect these contributions in the national accounts and economics statistics and in the Gross Domestic Product. Concrete steps should be taken to quantify the unremunerated contributions of women to agriculture, food production, reproduction, and household activities.

Dung, whether as a fertilizer, cooking fuel, or building material, should be quantified. But, in official statistics, women's contribution to both productive and subsistence<sup>1</sup> agricultural production anywhere has been poorly estimated or ignored. Where women's contribution has been noted, arbitrary demarcations between formal and subsistence production have been imposed, never reflecting the blurring of such distinctions in the working day of the hundreds of millions of women concerned.

Because definitions used in national surveys and censuses have relentlessly excluded the great bulk of work performed by women, women's productivity has been assumed to be pitifully low. This is especially so in agriculture and in work in rural areas, where the majority of women on the planet are to be found.

#### **A gendered perspective case study**

I had the opportunity to observe at close quarters how women are left out when I spent some months working in Nepal in 1993. This will serve as a case study to examine the practice of exclusion.

The Agriculture Perspective Plan (APP) began in a paper entitled "Nepal in 25 Years: the Agriculture Perspective Plan—An Optimistic Vision and Guide" by John Mellor. An academic at Cornell University with significant development-project experience, Mellor had been described to me as "the man behind the green revolution in Asia." I had thought that the bent bodies of women planting, weeding, harvesting, and storing were the human forces behind that particular change, but I suppose that too depends on your perspective.

Studies demonstrate that, in most communities throughout Nepal, much of the agricultural work and in many cases much of the trading and many of the cottage industries are carried out by women. Rice, maize, millet, barley, and potatoes are major crops in Nepal. All these crops require intensive care and weeding, and these activities are mostly the responsibility of women. Statistics on the cost of rice production in selected places in the Terai show that, for the entire production process from land preparation to harvesting, from 87 to 93 per cent of the labour involved is spent on planting, weeding, and harvesting. Likewise, the labour required for weeding and harvesting maize and potato (almost exclusively a female undertaking) constitutes the bulk of the total labour requirement for these crops. Kitchen gardening, which

supplies the most necessary vitamins to the family, is another female undertaking (Asian Development Bank).

The APP was developed at a time when comprehensive data demonstrated conclusively that women worked longer hours, and at a greater variety of tasks and with a greater simultaneity of tasks than men in the agriculture sector in Nepal. In all age groups, women's total work burden exceeded that of men.

The APP also appeared in a political context in which His Majesty's Government of Nepal had guaranteed women the right to equality in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal (Part 3, Paragraph 11). It was conceived at a time when the government had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) without reservations. It was drafted in the period of the eighth five-year plan, in which, in the Women in Development Sector, taking "necessary measures to amend laws and acts that hinder women's development" was recognized as a priority.

In addition, almost without exception, all donor governments involved with the APP had published their own policy guidelines on the full integration of women in development projects (see World Bank; Asian Development Bank). The rhetoric of these statements makes it abundantly clear that, operationally, these policies can be fulfilled not by a few women's income-generating activities, nor by ghetto-ized or token "women's components" in major projects, but by the consistent technical targeting, in conception, operation, delivery, monitoring, evaluation—and distribution of benefits—of half the human resource component in the country.

But the rhetoric is the easy part. It was no surprise to find in the APP terms of reference this Paragraph 6, headed "Poverty Reduction and Gender Analysis":

(i) Within the framework of a plan designed mainly to generate output and income growth within agriculture, develop mechanisms and approaches which ensure that the poor including poor women participate in the growth process and share in its benefits; and

(ii) Evaluate the impact of the plan in terms of income increases for the poor and participation of women in national development. This should be done partly as one measure of the plan's objectives, but mainly during the planning process to assist in guiding the selection among alternative courses of action; and

(iii) Carry out gender analysis as the plan is developed and analyze the impact of agricultural policy choices and recommendations on women.

In mid-March 1994, having been appraised of the importance of the APP, I visited the office of the project consultants. I asked about the progress made in implementing the gender analysis paragraph above. None of its provisions had been met and, I was told, it was too late to

commission an expert paper, or to have oversight of all draft chapters to mainstream the development interests of women farmers. To be fair, this state of affairs did not appear to have been the objective of the plan's principal consultant. In a draft paper dated February 28 1994, entitled "A Strategic View of the APP," John Mellor wrote:

Because of the tendency for women to be left out of the development of modern institutional structures, specific attention is given in each chapter to the means by which women can fully participate in the key activities. Particular note is given to women's participation in institutions such as those for credit that are critical to the development process.

At our meeting, Mellor admitted that he had no idea that Nepali women had no effective access to land ownership. He had not asked. He had not read the Nepal constitution. He was not aware of the ratification of CEDAW. He submitted that to obey the constitutional guarantees given to women, or to insist that the APP was doomed without access to land on behalf of the majority of the country's agricultural producers, would be to "interfere in Nepal's domestic politics!" (Personal interview).

In my experience there was nothing unusual in all of this. But it was too late in the century to call it oversight, too late to claim forgetfulness, too late for those of us who constantly receive platitudinous and patronizing excuses to be polite any more. The APP ignored constitutional guarantees, five-year plan priorities, and multilateral and donor policy guidelines. It was illogical, and defied balanced economic analysis. If the great plan had perspective, it was chronically imperceptive.

Why does this happen? Certain men are threatened by policies which give women any form of access to independence. Data gaps are enormous, but there is a more than substantial literature in Nepal to meet all requirements of the APP.

Isn't it time it was acknowledged that the strategic perspectives of gender analysis require expert skills, comparable with the expertise required to be a doctor or an engineer. Isn't it time it was recognized that such analysis is a disciplined skill requiring years of study, field work, experience, and application, and that few men anywhere have this? Isn't it time the gentlemen asked for help?

The singular glaring omission in the APP was the lack of women's right to property. In any business expansion which presupposes access to income, or collateral with which to gain credit, in which 60 per cent of those expected to participate had little, if any, access to either, and particularly if those 60 per cent were male, the proposals would be recognized as at best elitist, and at worst doomed to failure. This was economic nonsense.

In the draft paper "Institutional Arrangements to Implement the APP," the lack of access to land by more than half the human resource component in agriculture was not identified in the long list of constraints. In the category of

policies the government was not pursuing and should adopt, legal impediments to full participation by women farmers were not mentioned, despite the statement in the Women in Development Sector of the eighth five-year plan. While user-group participation, people's participation programmers, and farming systems research were identified in this category, there was no suggestion that these specifically target women users, women participants, and women's farming systems. Women's participation in agriculture, and the major data problems associated with this, was not mentioned as a concern. Well, I thought, perhaps this is not highlighted as a concern here because they've got it on board in all their other papers. Silly ever-optimistic me!

In the draft paper, "Rural Financial Markets," while it was noted that "a number of legal issues have constrained the supply of and demand for credit," the legal reforms suggested no reference to the major impediment to access to credit for the majority of farmers: the lack of women's access to property as collateral. This made Mellor's claims in his strategic view paper most embarrassing for him.

If land ownership were denied for even the 40 per cent of farmers who are men, it would be perceived as an economic nightmare to project a 25-year vision on this basis. No perception of the myriad problems associated with databases was evident in the draft paper entitled "Measuring Growth: First Step to Increasing Efficiency." The prospect for "the needed comprehensive and reliable agricultural statistics" for planning would be incomplete without women's visibility, but this was not considered.

While poor management, a lack of inter-ministry horizontal linkages, time wastage, and other logistical inefficiencies detailed in many project evaluation reports had led to an understandable reluctance by donors to pursue multi-sectoral projects, to ignore the linkages was grossly irresponsible. It was acknowledged, for example, that "in the absence of an effective program to slow population growth, all other poverty alleviation measures [and, I might add, most project goals] will be meaningless" (World Bank). The international experience now is that the fundamental key to slowing population growth is female literacy. In Nepal, 83 per cent of the economically active female population are pre-literate. In 1991, at the primary school level, girl enrollees were only 37 per cent of the total enrollment figure, and the percentages declined at lower secondary and secondary schools. The numbers were considerably lower in rural areas.

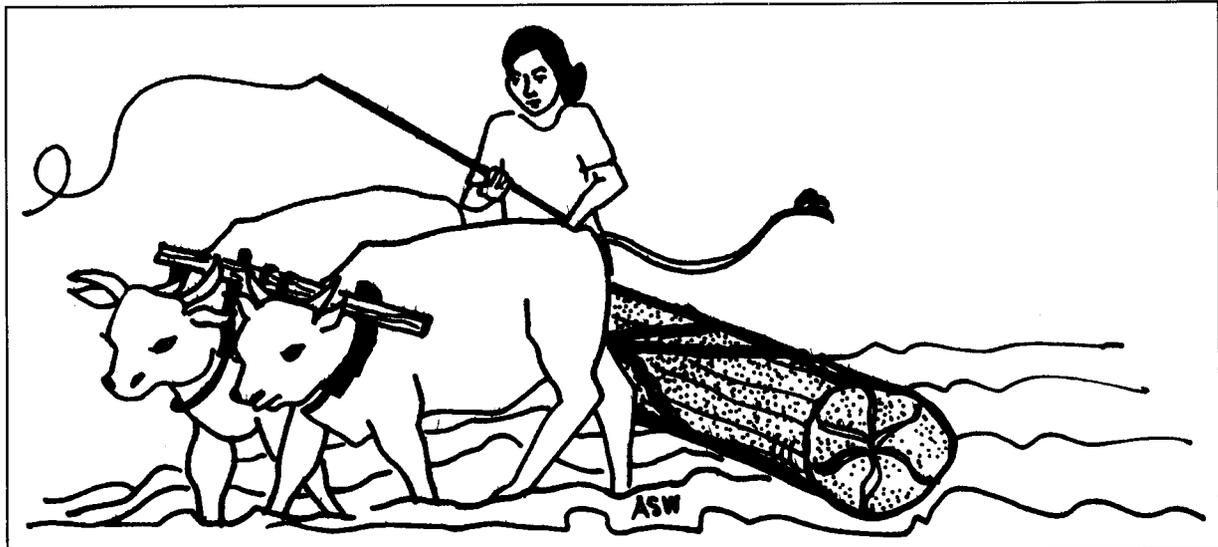
So what relevance did this have to the APP? Simply, that if this plan mimicked the policies pursued to increase production in the rest of the region, forcing anaemic overworked women to double their farming workload, neither men nor boys increased their hours per day to assist. Mothers-in-law, sisters, and, overwhelmingly, daughters are required to assist with the additional workload. For this they are withdrawn from school, and the cycle of non-literacy, overwork, poverty, and anaemia is regenerated.

The strategic policy response would be to ensure, as the priority, that improvements in technology were intended specifically to relieve the time burden of women in their endless repetitive round of household and agricultural work. No reference to this key priority was found in the draft APP paper on technology.

The attitudes and opinions in the draft APP papers were not significantly different from the rhetoric of donors with whom I had the opportunity to talk. Let me emphasize that the candour and honesty with which we communicated on such occasions were enlightening, refreshing, and most helpful. But some of the approaches were

to the agricultural sector. You do wonder, in the end, just what can possibly make a difference to male resistance. In more than 20 years of political experience and policy development, I have encountered only the occasional exception to the attitudes demonstrated in Nepal. I found one in a Muslim country in Asia.

The Secretary of the Department of National Planning was responsible for the mission to mainstream women into the five-year plan. He was in his last year before retirement. He did not see this activity as a thing some middle-ranking bureaucrat on the "women's desk" should take care of. He was totally supportive, interested, and



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brehtaking. One major donor advised me: "agricultural extension just doesn't work, I think it should be dropped altogether until it is managed and operated efficiently." "Well, thank you very much," I said, "but the other half—women as extension officers, women as junior technical assistants, women as farmer clients, haven't had a slice of cake yet. They're written off because of male failure to perform."

In the course of my investigations I called on the Nepal representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), another donor participant in the APP. He had been in the FAO for many years, and at his post in Nepal for 18 months. "I know why you're here," he said, "but I'm familiar with your point of view. I have three daughters, and I've been to a two-day gender awareness training course." And how was he coping, I asked, in a country where the majority of food producers could not own land? "Is that right?" he replied. "I didn't know that." No one had told him this, he had never asked, and obviously had never read any of the substantial number of available documents, including FAO publications, which contained that information.

The saga of Nepal's APP is a very typical example of development planning everywhere, and it is not peculiar

determined that all assistance would be given. He had sharp words for the western-educated, neoclassical, male economists of his department, who were patronizing and offhand about the mission's proposals. He wasn't interested in banal chatter about "integrating women into development." He had briefed himself on the international literature. He wanted strategic concrete proposals.

He might have been unique, but his Minister of National Planning was equally assiduous and attentive. He missed a Ravi Shankar concert, attended by the rest of the cabinet, in order to read the mission's final report the evening before chairing the meeting to receive it. He quickly silenced the ill-informed male critics at the meeting. He announced that, while the criticisms in the report were harsh, they were true. He accepted and endorsed the findings and the recommendations. The male United Nations Development Program resident representative was amazed. "He seldom comes to these meetings," he said. "I can't understand it."

I might not have understood either, if I had not spent some time earlier in the month talking to the wife of the secretary of the department. The couple had three daughters and had worked hard to give them the best possible education, all culminating in university degrees in the

United Kingdom or the U.S. Now each daughter refused to return home. "They refuse to be treated as second-class citizens," the secretary's wife told me. The secretary was doing all he could in his last months at the post to change the government's approach to the treatment of all women.

The minister's wife, she said, had interests in a substantial cattle farm, and she personally planned and oversaw the genetic improvement program, in a society where women of her class would not normally play such a role. Their only daughter had recently returned home. Just a few months into an arranged marriage, she had been subjected to habitual domestic violence in a country where

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laws offered her no protection. "They are interested," the secretary's wife explained, "because the inequities have come home. They cannot ignore them any more."

In yet another developing country where I worked, the official in charge of agriculture in the Department of Planning cancelled four appointments with my mission team designing a project on women in agriculture. While I had been advised that the official liked to be taken to lunch at expensive hotels by women diplomats, I was not about to participate in that game. The official met with us only on the presentation of the project report, when the man from the headquarters of the donor UN agency arrived.

This man was as ignorant of the complexities of the issues as he was arrogant. (He had no daughters.) When his attention was drawn to information that rural women in his country worked longer days and at many more tasks than men did, he scoffed. His mother (from a family with significant estate holdings) was a farmer, he declared, and this was not true of her. The inference, therefore, was that it was not true of any rural women. Then he attacked the research in question, implying it was western, biased, and not about "our women," at the same time making a mistaken assumption about my nationality. He looked particularly foolish, and the well-qualified national consultants whose own field work had provided the research findings were deeply embarrassed. Such episodes have no effect on international consultants like me, but they are very costly to economic progress, and to the official's reputation in his own country.

Now, why bother with such stories? What relevance do they have to this argument? Because, whether we like it or not, these are typical stories of the basis for policy decisions in key economic sectors. These are illustrations of the political approach, by men, to major economic questions

concerning the roles and status of half a country's population. Women in government bureaucracies have begun to leak similar findings in official documents. The initial report of the Republic of Korea on CEDAW acknowledges,

In spite of the above mentioned advances, we cannot deny that it is difficult and thus time-consuming to eliminate completely the entrenched traditions of discrimination against women and also to realize fully the equal participation of women in every field.

In Western Samoa, the Ministry of Women's Affairs notes in project plans that, "while women's unpaid work is a priority for ... Women's Affairs, the topic may well be sensitive and its value questioned by others."

### **Non-organic daily bullshit**

As we see, it is impossible to talk about women without talking about the processes occurring throughout an economy. Yet planners usually talk about the economy without talking about the specific effects on women. The direct discrimination against women is both overt and covert and exacts major economic costs. There are the opportunity costs, of ignoring constraints women face and of failing to provide women with improved opportunities to participate fully in the development process. There are the costs of gender stereotyping in major labour-market and home-maintenance activities. There are the costs of refusing to recognize women by claiming that the household is the unit of economic analysis, but then failing to analyze the household as a business enterprise of interdependent workers, contributing to two sub-systems of production with different skills, potentials, knowledge bases, and rights to resources. There is the inefficient use of resources, poor targetting, and mal-investment by men's deliberate obstruction of women's access to land titles, credit, knowledge, extension services, appropriate technology, and a wide range of other services, all of which hinder a nation's development and growth statistics. And all the above accumulatively contribute to the inter-generational costs incurred through poor nutrition, overpopulation, and poverty.

In such a context, women are not just another category to be met in macro-economic policy (though they are seldom considered in that context). Trade, transnational corporations, commercial lending, and aid are the four dominant channels through which international economic relations manifest themselves and affect national macro-economic policies. Usually, the policy strategy mix advocated to generate a high growth rate in the GDP increases poverty, inequality, and unemployment. Low-income groups suffer the most, and women suffer more than men. When powerful macro forces are working against the poor, special micro measures such as a few income-generating projects will not bring about any significant improvement in the well-being of women.

Equity and efficiency are not mutually exclusive outcomes. Women are not a problem for the economy. On the contrary, meeting the challenges of survival depends more than ever before on women's organizational, management, ecological, and productive skills. That women have been, through direct discrimination, denied both opportunities to influence the adjustment process and their share of benefits brought by structural change means that they are the least-dependent resource in the community. They are, therefore, the group most likely to respond to inputs leading to self-reliance.

It does not require years as a policy planner or a degree

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in economics to observe that an extremely effective way to increase the time women have available for income-generating or productive activity is to introduce appropriate technology to save their time spent in hours of repetitive drudgery necessary for the survival of the household. Simone de Beauvoir wrote in *The Second Sex*, "Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition: the clean becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day." In fact, technology inputs in the name of economic progress, overwhelmingly directed at males, have frequently had the effect of increasing the working day of women even more. Studies by the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines demonstrate conclusively that the increase in rice production in Asia increased the work traditionally done by women twofold, while the money from the twice-yearly harvests went to the men because the land was in male names. Labour-saving technology was applied to men's tasks (land clearing, ploughing), while women's planting, weeding, harvesting, and storage work doubled with increases in crops and production.

It should be noted that the female activities in this production arrangement constitute the bulk of the labour requirement for these crops. Regardless of such evidence, throughout the region men have higher levels of input in the early stages of agricultural production, such as field preparation, and monopolize most mechanical-technical inputs. Ploughing or threshing, by either animal- or fuel-powered machines, is done by men, while hand threshing is a female, labour-intensive activity. Driving tractors is reserved for men, and all the menial agricultural tasks of the region—seed preparation, weeding crops, transplanting rice, picking cotton or tea, raising silk worms, and cocoon reeling—are overwhelmingly women's work, and have the fewest technological inputs.

In a comprehensive study of farming women in New Zealand, Deirdre Shaw found that 88 per cent view themselves as being in the farming profession, seeing their role as physical, decisional, administrative, economic, supportive, and organizational. Ninety-nine per cent were involved in horticultural or stock work, yet felt that little was done to enable them to participate in discussion groups, field days, and farm visits, due both to lack of child care and, at times, to attitudes.

Women who have the opportunity or flexibility to make choices about their treatment by governments change their votes. And, in the marketplace, they deliver their judgements in an equally appropriate way. Forty-one per cent of the women in the study make it clear that companies in the rural service industry will, and do, lose their business if women are not treated as equal and knowledgeable partners. At the same time, interviews with people in the rural service industry revealed that 82.5 per cent first thought of a farmer as being male. Less than half felt that a woman's role on the farm was a partnership, with one-third seeing women in a "farmer's wife/support" role. It also revealed that, while the majority of men interviewed saw women as being in a partnership, they also considered women to be farmers only when farming on their own.

The market is as tardy as governments to respond. The New Zealand Agricultural Field Day is held annually in the middle of winter at Mystery Creek, Hamilton. Billed as the largest single annual event in the country and attracting 140,000 people, it is seen by the suppliers of equipment, information, and services to the industry as "the window for our products for the year." One-hundred and twenty-six million dollars is reported to have been spent in four days on the product lines on display in 1994, and millions more is spent subsequently as a direct result of the visits of farmers to the event. For a number of years I lived directly across the road from the site, which was in my constituency, so I have had the opportunity to observe its growth and its shortcomings.

In New Zealand, women play an increasing role in the financial administration of farms. They are frequently the bookkeepers, planners, data-entry specialists. There is evidence that they generally, in Australia perhaps more markedly than in New Zealand, have higher educational qualifications than their husbands. They furnish the accountants with the materials for taxation returns, pay the accounts, and are active partners in designing the cropping or breeding policies for the year and in setting the production targets. But all of this seems lost on the marketeers at this biggest event of the year. There is no provision of on-site quality child care facilities. Equity questions aside, I consider this a major marketing blunder. No one can concentrate on making decisions about equipment worth thousands of dollars with a toddler demanding attention.

Whether markets or governments dominated by men can face it, the fact is that an increasing proportion of agricultural production, food security, environmental pro-

tection, nutrition, and animal health depends on the efforts of women, who work the longest days, at the most activities, with the least financial rewards and minimal economic recognition.

The role and work of women on the planet are intimately related to the goal of comprehensive socio-economic and political development. This work is vital for the development of all societies and for the quality of life on our planet. The manner in which high growth-rate activities are pursued increasingly sees escalating import volumes, environmental plundering, repatriation of profits, and little evidence that skills and technology are transferred, especially to rural women. In the key issue of agricultural trade in the Uruguay round leading to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) agreement, Asian members of the Cairns group, which included Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, had assiduously pursued the policy of restoring free trade to agriculture, with no evidence that any planning had been done to assess the socio-economic impact on the majority of the rural population, namely women and children.

The textbook World Bank and IMF formula for structural adjustment is argued frequently in the context of "political stability." The emphasis is on the deregulation of finance, capital, and labour, and a reorientation towards exports, along with a downward adjustment of exchange rates. Throughout this period, the developed countries have manipulated the system of exchange rates in order to maintain favourable terms of trade for themselves.

These policies for "political stability" have been policies for corruption, for unfair taxes, and for food shortages. They have seen rural revolts over expropriation of land. They have threatened food security and in their concentration on mono-cropping for export, have inflated basic food prices in the developing countries and vitally affected basic nutrition with the loss of land and resources for subsistence agriculture. A poor crop or harvest failure has not infrequently provoked armed conflict on a national or international level. Not only does food become a weapon of war, but the conflict causes extensive environmental degradation and population displacement—a most unstable situation.

Throughout the world there are political movements of people concerned about their own impoverishment, social disadvantages, and the misuse of national resources. It is a conscious struggle by women from all classes, castes, and nations against their inequitable burdens, their exclusion from political power, the lack of autonomy over their own bodies and, for too many rural women, a struggle for the lives of themselves and their children. And it has not escaped the observation of these women that their subordination is continually imposed on them, willingly and unwillingly, by men in a multitude of guises and in a multitude of ways. Women understand "agency," that they do not live as passive victims: that men have complicity and explicitly denied their options.

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<sup>1</sup>To be pedantic, a subsistence household or unit is one that does not carry out economic transactions with other units but exists completely on what it produces. To be realistic, exchange activities with the rest of the economy do occur, but they are infrequent and do not represent the basic elements of the unit's or person's economic life. In practice, where most production is intended for own use, the term used to describe this is subsistence.

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