

TOPIC: The IFIs: Their rationale for and consequences of not using feminist gendered macroeconomic policies

Conceptual rating: [BASIC to INTERMEDIATE level](#)

Suggested module objectives:

Note to instructors: This module can go in two different directions, depending on the audience and whether any other modules have come before.

- **OPTION 1:** Module 13 can go well beyond Module 3 and offer a more systematic, rigorous gendered examination of the shortcomings of standard macroeconomic theory and policies. In this case, the suggested objectives are:
 1. Deepen participants' appreciation of the power and scope of a gendered approach to macroeconomics by drilling into the assumptions of both approaches and the outcomes arising from these differences.
 2. More clearly expose the ideological bias in the analysis and policy prescriptions used by the IMF and World Bank.

OR

- **OPTION 2:** Module 13 can trace the intellectual history of the World Bank (in particular) and its acknowledgement of Women in Development and gender equality through some of its key research/analytical publications. The main objective using this focus would be objective #2 listed above. The ultimate outcome is to illustrate the analytical "glass ceiling" utilized by the IFIs (the World Bank in particular) which coops "women's concerns" rather than addressing a more systemic critique challenging the very foundations of the "Washington Consensus". One way this "glass ceiling" exists practically, involves how the Bank cultivates women's voices and participation within certain boundaries.

In either case, the focus of this module would be on the analytical perspectives of the IFIs with respect to gender, while Module 14 would focus more on organizational structure and practical aspects of how the IFIs (primarily the WB) work with respect to gender.

Key concepts:

- Washington Consensus and neo-liberal paradigms

- Gender critiques of behavioral assumptions in the paradigm as well as the identification and depiction of economic actors; what lies “inside” and “outside” the model
- Women In Development vs. Gender and Development approaches
- “efficiency” and “instrumentalist” treatments of women as economic actors and as the rationale for including women in the IFI analysis

Cross references:

- ***Link to Module 1:*** Basics of neo-classical macroeconomic policy
- ***Link to Module 2:*** Basic elements of a gender analysis
- ***Link to Module 3:*** Basic elements of a gendered critique of macroeconomic policy
- ***Link to Module 14:*** A critical examination of gender policies and operational structure at the World Bank Group and IMF

Time required: 90 minutes

Suggested methodology: SKIT. Large and small group DISCUSSION. VISUAL MAPPING/MURAL.

Relevant readings:

- AWID, “The World Bank and Women’s Rights in Development”, No. 5, October 2002.
- Broad, Robin, “Research, Knowledge, and ‘Paradigm Maintenance’”, *Review of International Political Economy*. 2006
- Braunstein, Elissa, “*The Efficiency of Gender Equity in Economic Growth: Neoclassical and Feminist Approaches*”, GEM paper, 2007.
- Cagatay, Nilufer and Elson, Diane, “The Social Content of Macroeconomic Policies”, *World Development*, vol. 28, No. 7, Elsevier Science. Ltd.
- Callan, Eoin, “World Bank uses doubtful evidence to push policies”, *Financial Times*, 2006.
- Goodwin, .N, Harris, JM, and Nelson, J., “Macroeconomic Measurement: Environmental and Social Dimensions”, Tufts University, 2007. (especially the section on the social dimensions).
- International Poverty Center, “Analyzing and Achieving Pro-Poor Growth”, *Poverty In Focus*, March 2007. *See especially pages 5-7.*
- Lopez, Cecelia, Alma Espino, Rosalla Todaro, Norma Sanchis, “Latin America, A Pending Debate – Contributions in Economics and Politics from a Gender Perspective”, REPEM/DAWN/IFC, Uruguay 2007.

- Seguino, Stephanie, “Gender Inequality in a Globalizing World”, The Levy Economics Institute, Working Paper No. 426,
- Stotsky, Janet Gale, “Gender and its Relevance to Macroeconomic Policy: A Survey”, IMF Working Paper 06/233.
- Wichterich, Christa, “The New ‘Smarties’ of the World Bank: Competitive Women”, Women In Development Europe, December 2006.

The following are recommended publications from the World Bank website (www.worldbank.org/gender). They may be particularly useful in developing an intellectual history of WID and GAD from the World Bank’s point of view:

- “Gender and Macroeconomic Policy”, 2008.
- “Gender Equality as Smart Economics. A World Bank Gender Action Plan”, 2007.
- “Gender and Economic Growth in Kenya: Unleashing the Power of Women”, 2007.
- “Gender and Economic Growth in Uganda: Unleashing the Power of Women”, 2005.
- “Evaluating a Decade of World Bank Gender Policy, 1990-1999”, 2005.
- “Engendering Development through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice,” 2001. (Available in multiple languages)
- “Mainstreaming Gender and Development in the World Bank: Progress and Recommendations”, 1999.
- “Gender, Growth and Poverty Reduction, a 1998 Status Report on Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa”
- “Mainstreaming Gender in World Bank Lending: An Update”, 1997. Also recommend looking at the original 1994 study – for which this is an update.
- “Enhancing Women’s Participation in Economic Development”, 1995.

Preparation and supplies needed:

- Newsprint pad/flip chart paper and markers to record certain parts of the discussion; extra paper and markers for the small groups and tape (if they want to tape it together to make a larger sheet to work on). Tape or pins to use to display the newsprint pictures on the wall.
- 2 distinctively different pairs of glasses (ideally with different colored lenses but different frames would work too). The more outlandish the better.
- Review suggested reading material.
- Find one or two people to perform the short intro skit. (You will need only one if you want to be in it.) Rehearse in advance and decide if you want any

props or special clothing to wear appropriate for your roles. Each of you will wear one of the aforementioned pairs of glasses.

- Decide whether the small groups will need to do any reading during the session in order to help them answer the questions. If so, select appropriate segments of different pieces and duplicate as needed.

Note to Instructors: Ideally, participants would be given some reading to do in advance. The Financial Times article, Cagatay and Elson, Goodwin and Nelson, and Stotsky pieces would be especially relevant for option 1 for the suggested objectives.

Suggested content to be covered – Option 1:

- Neo-classical and feminist macroeconomic definitions of “economic life”
- Neo-classical and feminist macroeconomic assumptions related to the units of analysis (key economic actors in the model); their motivations; goals of economic life; goals of specific macroeconomic policies?
- Examples of some of the assumptions in neo-classical economics (micro and macro) – e.g. efficiency in production as goal; definition of efficiency; notion of unified household as unit of analysis (household composition and relations taken for granted); ahistorical; “value neutral”; social relations, politics, environment exogenous to the model; fully monetized economy; individuals maximize consumption as goal; assumes competition produces best outcome. The emphasis on “get prices right” is an example of the confusion of technical solutions (e.g. an “appropriate” interest rate and inflation rate) with the social good.
- Examples of some of the assumptions in feminist models of economy: efficiency is not supreme goal; household needs to be deconstructed; incorporate social relations, power dynamics within the model; unpaid work key to the economy, equity and ecological sustainability as goals of economic policy.

Suggested content to be covered – Option 2:

- If audience is familiar with above points, offer only a short review of key assumptions and approaches in traditional macroeconomic models.
- Focus on the intellectual evolution of neo-classical economic development theory from women in development models to “gender and development”. The selection of World Bank readings listed above will provide a good background to trace this from the Bank’s point of view. Focus on “efficiency” and “instrumentalist” arguments for including women in the analysis and the limitations of these perspectives. Trace the evolution of “add women and stir” approaches which do not involve any changes to the theory or policies to the unfolding of more fundamental criticisms and the Bank’s response.

Description of how to conduct the session:

1. Welcome by host group(s) and introduction of facilitator(s); provide any needed logistical information; outline goals for session.
2. Depending on size of group, invite participants to introduce themselves, share an expectation or question they bring. (Record expectations or questions on newsprint, if you are doing this step, and refer to them throughout the session.) If this is part of a larger series of workshops, this step may be shortened or eliminated, if not necessary.
3. **SKIT.** Begin with a very short skit. One character is a World Bank economist, another is a feminist activist from your country. Each is wearing a wild pair of glasses. The activist is haranguing the economist – stating that so many women have been harmed, etc. etc. The WB economist interrupts her/him by saying something to the effect of: “You must first get prices right as a precondition for growth and development. Then we can focus on social policy.” The activist sputters, not knowing what to say, and then just turns and walks away in frustration.
4. **Small group DISCUSSION – MURAL/VISUAL MAPPING.** Introduce this next section by talking about the fact that the two people in the skit were wearing 2 different glasses. They were literally seeing the world through very different lenses. They found it difficult or impossible to engage because they had not thought through the assumptions and logic of the other person’s viewpoint. In this session, we will explore that, in order to enable advocates to be more effective and sophisticated in advancing alternatives, a gendered macroeconomic model and policies. Break the group up into small groups of about 4-5 people. Assign each group a role: either the WB economist or the feminist economist. Give each group some blank newsprint and markers. Ask them to sketch the person wearing glasses whose viewpoint they will examine. Draw a big circle around that person, leaving substantial room both inside and outside the circle to draw more. Ask the group to discuss the following questions and to draw their answers on the paper.
 1. How does this person define “the economy”. What is inside the circle of analysis? What is outside?
 2. What are the assumptions (explicit or implicit) of the theory of how that economy works – such as who the actors are, what the actors’ motivations are? What is the goal of economic life? (Illustrate the answers to the assumptions inside the circle.) Is there anything major missing that is outside the circle?
 3. What are the chief goals of economic policy? (Goals should go inside the circle).

If participants are not that knowledgeable about neo-classical economics and gendered macroeconomic theory, and have not read any articles in advance, allow extra time for the groups to do some reading while they are together.

5. **Large group DISCUSSION.** Ask someone from each group who analyzed the WB economist to bring their picture up and tape it to the wall. Work your way through each of the questions, getting reports from all the groups (without much duplication) about what they drew. Probe, correct any misimpressions, amplify as needed. Then, invite everyone to tape their feminist economist pictures to the wall and repeat the process of analysis. Before proceeding to de-brief each question, make sure the distinctions between the two paradigms are clear. Once this is done, ask the group to talk about “so what?” – what are the consequences of these differences? What have been the outcomes of the policies adopted, the models used by the IFIs? So how does the feminist economist and activist effectively engage in the debate?
6. Conclude by summarizing the main points of the discussion. Talk about the fact that economics is not a “hard science” as it is often portrayed. It is a “social science”. Moreover, the theories and policies are based on certain assumptions of human behavior that arise out of a particular culture, time in history, philosophy, and worldview. They reflect certain values. The debate about appropriate policies and models takes place at two levels: the accuracy and effectiveness of the models and the policy prescriptions as well as at the political level – what values and goals do we want to prioritize? One does not need to be a PhD economist to participate in the debate about values and goals. That is a debate for everyone to engage in.
7. If this is part of a larger economic literacy effort, link this session to the next one. Provide logistical details related to the next session, as appropriate. Thank the audience for their participation.

Ideas for alternative methodologies/modification of the level of discussion:

- **For a more basic audience:** If it is not possible for people to do advance reading, and participants do not have much previous exposure to this material, small group work is not advised. You will need to rely more on a lecture format. However, doing the skit and drawing of the two worldviews as part of the lecture is advised because it makes the presentation more lively and easier to follow.
- **For a more advanced audience or one that is more advocacy-inclined:** Choose the second option involving tracing the intellectual history of the Bank’s approach to gender issues. If possible, assign some reading in advance from the suggested reading list with a few key questions to guide people. If not, then provide excerpts from a few documents for people to read and analyze in small groups during the session. Assign each small group a different document to read and discuss. Regather in a large group and chronologically have the groups report. Together assess “What’s the same?” and “What’s different, what has changed?” in looking at the evolution of the Bank’s analysis. Look at theoretical assumptions and the implications of those assumptions for how the Bank does its work. For a more activist

group, you might also want to trace how different key NGO actors and government agencies have mirrored or differed from the Bank in their approach to gender issues over the years. What does this mean for advocacy today in your country?

Some useful organizations or websites related to this topic:

- www.bicusa.org
- www.dawnnet.org
- www.essex.ac.uk/sociology/people/staff/elson.shtm This website lists recent publications by Professor Diane Elson, one of the leading feminists contributing to the literature on gender and macroeconomic policy.
- www.genderaction.org
- www.genderandmacro.org Another key figure in developing the gender and macroeconomic literature is Dr. Nilufer Cagatay, who teaches at the University of Utah. Dr. Cagatay sponsors an ongoing summer training program in this area for interested persons from around the world, in addition to her work with University of Utah students.
- www.bridge.uds.ac.uk The Institute of Development Studies in England is a leading source of excellent gender and development research. This is a user-friendly place to delve into the material.
- www.siyanda.org Comprehensive on-line database of gender and development materials for activists, policy-makers, development professionals. Recommend to search “gender analysis” and “men and masculinity”. This is a sister site to BRIDGE.
- www.socialwatch.org
- www.unifem.org The primary body within the UN system advancing gender analysis and development practice.
- www.unrisd.org-- UN Research Institute for Social Development. A great resource of academic research, applying gender analysis to various topics.
- www.worldbank.org/gender Gender and Development sub-site of the World Bank main website.