

GEM Digest of the Month for April 2011



Forty female scientists from the National Institute for Soils and Fertilizer (NISF) Branch of the Vietnam Society of Soil Science (VSSS) participated in a cultural tour and professional networking opportunity in honour of International Women's Day 2011. They travelled to Nam Dinh province, located about 80 kilometres from the institute. Photo courtesy of VSSS.

The Gender Equality Mainstreaming (GEM) Working Group of the Agricultural Institute of Canada (AIC) gathers information and articles on an ongoing basis on gender equality mainstreaming within agriculture, scientific research, rural development, climate change and organizational development. Information is shared with members, partners, scientific societies and member organizations. The views and opinions presented are not necessarily representative of AIC.

If you have information to share, please send it to me at dinah.ceplis@gmail.com and I will compile it to re-distribute once a month.

Regards,
Dinah Ceplis, GEM Committee Member

Calendar

April 22, Earth Day

Coming Up...

May 9 – 10, World Migratory Bird Day

June 05, World Environment Day

June 17, World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

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Opportunities

Call for FSN Network Gender Task Force Members

<http://genderfoodpolicy.wordpress.com/2011/03/04/call-for-fsn-network-gender-task-force-members/>

The Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network has been forming a number of task forces in key technical areas to foster cross-organizational collaboration, knowledge sharing around best practices, and innovation. To-date, task forces have coalesced around agriculture, social and behaviour change, nutrition and monitoring and evaluation. The FSN Network task forces are strongly implementation- and field-focused, seeking to set the agenda in their technical areas, respond to implementation challenges, and develop, validate or improve upon existing methods, tools, or approaches.

There is growing interest in a task force on gender integration as well. Please let Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network know if you're interested in joining. RSVP to Melissa Teuber@savechildren.org or John Russell@mercycorpsdc.org.

As with other task forces, the focus will be on seeking to improve implementation of interventions designed to increase gender equity in food security programming. It is envisioned that the initial work of this task force will look at documenting implementation needs, and setting an agenda for gender integration from a field focus, including cataloguing known best practices and approaches, identifying gaps and priority needs, and defining core competencies.

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Event: Catalyst Canada Honours

<http://www.catalyst.org/page/368/the-catalyst-canada-honours>

The Catalyst Canada Honours dinner is being held on October 18th, 2011 at the Fairmont Royal York in Toronto. The Catalyst Canada Honours celebrates individual champions of women in business. Recognizing that what's good for women is good for business, these exceptional leaders are personally and visibly committed to the advancement of women and serve as powerful role models for Canadian corporate leaders. The Catalyst Canada Honours recognizes a Company/Firm Leader, a Business Leader and a Human Resources/Diversity Leader whose careers exhibit exceptional leadership around advancing women in their organization, industry and community. The three categories of champions reflect the unique and critical roles played by different types of leaders in championing diversity and will be announced in June.

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Career: Principal Scientist, Empower Women

<http://www.icrisat.org/careers/Principal-Scientist-Empower-Women.htm>

ICRISAT invites applications for a Principal Scientist to lead a new research initiative to investigate the innovations and approaches to empower women in smallholder households to better participate in agricultural growth. The position will be based at its Headquarters in Patancheru, near Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India or in Africa and will be housed in one of the research programs but will provide support to all the research programs.

Responsibilities

- Initiate a research program focus on empowering women in smallholder households of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa to engage and benefit from inclusive market-oriented development;

- Ensure that ICRISAT’s major projects and initiatives are gender-sensitive;
- Develop a knowledge base on the roles, constraints and opportunities of women in smallholder households in the dryland tropics of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa;
- Help determine gender sensitive technologies/interventions that improve the lives of women;
- Identify institutional and social platforms that can catalyze innovations and empower women;
- Study how agro-enterprises can best improve women’s livelihoods and the availability of safe and nutritious foods;
- Aid in enhancing the capacity of ICRISAT scientists and partners to engage in participatory research for development to empower women.

Please send applications by email by **30 April 2011**.

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This Month’s Articles:

Report: The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–11: Women in agriculture: closing the gender gap for development

The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–11: Women in agriculture: closing the gender gap for development

<http://www.fao.org/publications/sofa/en/>

The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) report 2010–11, launched on March 7th 2011, provides comprehensive data and analysis documenting and assessing the costs of the gender gap in access to land, livestock, education, financial services, extension, fertilizers, tools and employment opportunities. It presents sex-disaggregated statistics on a range of socio-economic indicators and compelling empirical estimates of the production and food security gains of closing the gender gap in agricultural input use, and evaluates policies and interventions that have proven successful in promoting gender equality and empowering women in agriculture and rural employment.

Closing the gender gap in agriculture

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/52011/icode/>

7 March 2011, Rome - If women in rural areas had the same access to land, technology, financial services, education and markets as men, agricultural production could be increased and the number of hungry people reduced by 100-150 million, FAO said today in its 2010-11 edition of The State of Food and Agriculture report.

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Resource: Improving Opportunities for Women in Smallholder-based Supply Chains

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/learning/Documents/gender-value-chain-exec-summary.pdf>

Recent research commissioned by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation shows that by increasing women’s participation in smallholder sourcing and support programs, many international food companies can improve crop productivity and quality, grow the smallholder supply base, and improve access to high-value markets.

The guide *Improving Opportunities for Women in Smallholder-based Supply Chains: Business case and practical guidance for international food companies* presents the results of this research in a practical format. It sets out the business case arguments and evidence for increasing women’s participation, and provides practical guidance and case studies about what

companies can do to realize these benefits. This summary distils the key business case arguments and recommendations for action, and points the reader to relevant sections of the full guide for further guidance.

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Gates Blog: The Importance of Investing in Women Farmers

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/foundationnotes/Pages/haven-ley-110314-women-farmers.aspx>

Last week was an exciting time to be working for women farmers as they contribute to poverty reduction and agriculture development. Two new reports articulated the business case why we should all be targeting our efforts and resources to getting women farmers the tools and resources they need to manage productive farms and control the benefits they receive from their labour.

First, on International Women’s Day, FAO launched their annual report on the State of Food and Agriculture on Closing the Gender Gap for Development (PDF). Through new data and analysis the report affirms the core hypothesis that the Agricultural Development team has focused our Agricultural Development Strategy on; that women farmers across the world are underleveraged key agents for achieving productivity growth, poverty reduction and nutritional improvement.

Today, these women produce 5-20 percent less per their land and labor than their husbands and neighbors, not because they are less capable farmers, but because they do not have the same access to key assets like quality land, seed, mechanical tools or knowledge as their counterparts. This “gender gap” has massive implications for poverty reduction and nutrition.

According to the FAO report, the impact of closing this resource gap is substantial; equal access to key assets could raise total agricultural production in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent, which could in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17 percent, or 100 to 150 million people. Without targeting all our collective resources on closing that critical gap, poverty reduction’s best asset – women – will be left underutilized and her productive potential, unrealized.

Second, the foundation recently commissioned a report to investigate the business case for investing in women farmers in supply chains of large food companies. The report, “Improving Opportunities for Women in Small-holder Based Supply Chains” (PDF), unearthed some surprising results. First, field managers recognize that women disproportionately contribute to maintaining and improving the quality of commodities. Research found that women smallholders, as compared to men, typically pay greater attention to crop quality, both in production and in post-harvest activities, and deliver better-quality products.

Further, that the scale and sustainability of the supply was largely driven by women’s participation. Farm managers reported that women were more skilled at growing the supply base and that many managers dialed into women’s social networks as a means to recruit new members to producer groups. And that contracting with women directly ensured a sustainable source for many companies. Several managers suggested that male migration, illness and other demographic trends mandated that contracting with women – in their own right – ensured a long lasting relationship with a sourcing community.

Please see the reports posted to the foundation website under “What we’re learning” for more of the business case.

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Discussion: Women in agriculture and food security: How can we turn rhetoric into reality?

<http://km.fao.org/fsn/discussions/women-in-agriculture/en/>

Achieving gender equality and empowering women in agriculture is not only the right thing to do. It is also crucial for agricultural development and food security, as strongly stated by FAO's latest SOFA report on Women in Agriculture.

To identify practical measures that work in closing the gender gap, the Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition invites everyone interested to join its new online discussion, "Women in agriculture and food security: How can we turn rhetoric into reality?", and share their views and experiences on policies, programmes and projects that have unleashed rural women's potential for agriculture, enhancing this livelihood and food security and contributing to their empowerment.

Join Jennie Dey de Pryck, the facilitator, in looking at practical experiences and lessons learnt, to see what could be scaled up or replicated in the same or other countries. The full topic is available on the Forum's webpage.

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Resource: Bibliography of Gender and Ag Resources

http://kdid.org/sites/kdid/files/resource/files/Gender_Agriculture_Bibliography.pdf

The bibliography includes 33 tools and resources from the gender advocacy community that represent best practices for gender integration for policymakers and programming practitioners. There are four sections:

1. policy and programming gender information;
2. policy-specific gender information;
3. program-specific gender information,;
4. gender analysis, audit, and assessment tools.

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Resource: The World's Women and Girls 2011 Data Sheet

<http://www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2011/worlds-women-and-girls.aspx>

In which country do 72 percent of women marry before age 18? Worldwide, what percent of girls complete primary school? What is the average number of lifetime births per woman in Niger?

A rich store of data and analysis, including the answers to these questions, is available in the Population Reference Bureau's new publication, *The World's Women and Girls 2011 Data Sheet*.

The situation of women and girls around the world is gaining increased attention in a number of national and international policy commitments such as the U.S. Global Health Initiative and the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals. *The World's Women and Girls 2011 Data Sheet* has the latest data on a wide variety of indicators on the socioeconomic status of women and girls in more than 180 countries, with a focus on demography, reproductive health, education, work, and public life. A special section on overcoming barriers to gender equality is also featured.

Indicators include:

- Percent of women married by age 18.
- Primary school completion rate (female/male).
- Percent enrolled in secondary school (female/male).
- Percent economically active ages 15+ (female/male).
- Women as percent of parliament.

This PRB publication is funded by USAID through the IDEA project (Informing **DE**cisionmakers to **Act**).

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Gender Equality in Access to Rural Service Delivery

Gender Equality in Access to Rural Service Delivery: Reflections from India, Ghana and Ethiopia on Governance at the Local Level

<http://www.slideshare.net/IFPRIGender/unifem-workshop-final>

A PowerPoint from the International Food Policy Research Institute on promising strategies to offer gender responsive rural services, including agricultural extension.

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Publication: Gender Disparity in Access to Information: Do Spouses Share What They Know?

[doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2010.12.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2010.12.014)

http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6VC6-528974Y-2&_user=10&_coverDate=02%2F26%2F2011&_rdoc=1&_fmt=high&_orig=gateway&_origin=gateway&_sort=d&_docanchor=&_view=c&_searchStrId=1691589111&_rerunOrigin=google&_acct=C000050221&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=10&_d5=25980815a95f5a93cae534e921eea0b6&searchtype=a

Summary: The United Nations (UN) has declared lack of access to information to be the third major challenge confronting women in developing countries, after poverty and violence. Analyzing a unique dataset of husbands and wives in rural Paraguay, we identify systematic differences between women and men’s knowledge of financial markets and find that the factors that help predict individuals’ knowledge of these markets vary by gender.

Specifically, women are less likely than men to be informed about the financial institutions operating in their communities. Women are more likely to know what is required to obtain loans from financial institutions if they are more educated, live with other adult women, belong to wealthier households, are in a stronger bargaining position vis-à-vis their spouses, or have their husbands’ approval to take out entrepreneurial loans.

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Women's role in food safety crucial

<http://vietnamnews.vnagency.com.vn/Social-Issues/208963/Womens-role-in-food-safety-crucial.html>

HA NOI — Women held key roles in agricultural production, from manufacturing and processing to trading, but many still lacked information on food quality and safety, experts said here yesterday (March 2).

A representative of the Viet Nam Women's Union, Nguyen Thi Tuyet Mai, said a recent survey in northern Hung Yen Province showed of those involved in spraying pesticides, 60.4 per cent were women but only 24 per cent were men.

Of those involved in harvesting and selling farm products, almost 80 per cent were women while only about 6 per cent were men. The rest were children or the elderly.

In 2008, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) hosted a five-year programme titled *Role of Women in Producing and Trading Safe Agricultural Products* to promote women's awareness.

Deputy Minister of MARD Vu Van Tam said that as overseas trade was a crucial part of Vietnamese agriculture and exports now faced many strict regulations, the project had come at the right time to help improve Vietnamese products.

In the first three years, the programme provided training for a total of 614 farmers and producers of farm products. It also organised many campaigns to promote food safety and hygiene in the community.

Some women, however, do not believe in the power of mass media campaigns for food safety and hygiene.

Nguyen Thi Minh Ly from the Ministry of Science and Technology said: "We (women) don't have much time to watch TV. When there are community meetings in the commune, it's often our husbands who go there. So if we have to change how we carry out our campaigns, we shouldn't do it on TV or at meetings that only men attend."

Ly said that in the past there had been many programmes sponsored by foreign organisations to provide certificates of hygiene to farmers and producers.

But after the programmes ended, many who had attended refused to use the qualify process.

"It's the Government's responsibility to make everyone aware that food hygiene and safety is a must. We haven't been able to do that, but farmers and producers still request an unreal high price for safe products that should be hygienic anyway," Ly said. — VNS

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Equal Voice

<http://equalvoice.ca/index.cfm>

Canada is falling behind in women's representation in politics: it ranks 50th out of 189 countries in the number of women elected to national parliament. Canada has fewer women elected to federal government than Rwanda, Iraq and Afghanistan. Equal Voice is an organization dedicated to promoting the election of more women to all levels of government.

- Female population of Canada = 52%
- Members of Canadian House of Commons who are women = 22%
- Canadian municipal, provincial and federal elected representatives who are women = 21%

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Inter American Network of Academies of Sciences (IANAS)

http://www.ianas.org/wfswg/women_en.asp

Traditionally, women have been and are underrepresented in most scientific and engineering disciplines. With the exception of biological and medical sciences - where in some countries women are at or near 50% - they are generally represented at below 30% in most disciplines, and often make up less than 20% in areas such as engineering and physics. Even when women participate in greater numbers, their percentage decreases at the higher, decision-making levels. In particular their membership in national science academies in the region is very low - nowhere is it above 30%, and in most countries it is under 20%.

Science and technology (S&T) capacity building in the region will require the full engagement and participation of women from the top decision-making levels all the way down to the grassroots. Moreover, a greater diversity of life experience and points of view will enrich the S&T enterprise as well as the societies it serves.

Barriers to women's participation may vary somewhat from country to country, but share many common features: absence of role models - especially in the higher ranks of the hierarchy, isolation as minorities in a traditionally male discipline, the omitting or undervaluing of the contributions of women in science, and traditional cultural perceptions about the role of women.

Under the sponsorship of IAP, the Global Network of Science Academies, IANAS established the Women for Science Working Group (WfS-WG) in June 2010. The IANAS WfS-WG has the mandate to advise IANAS and its member academies on fostering a climate in the sciences that is welcoming to women, and to alert and advise IANAS on gender issues in its programmes and initiatives, through activities such as providing links to resources. It develops actions that increase the visibility of the contributions of women scientists and engineers in the region and provides these women with opportunities for networking by means of the WfS-WG web site. WfS-WG will also work closely with North American, Latin American and worldwide organizations that focus on engaging and empowering women in S&T.

Resources are available at the website on gender and water and gender and science education.

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Resources from USAID

http://kdid.org/agrilinks/feed-future-cso-stakeholder-meetinggender-integration-agriculture-food-security?utm_source=USAID+Bureau+for+Food+Security&utm_campaign=8d4a374d0d-March_1_2011_BFS_Resource_Update3_1_2011&utm_medium=email

In follow-up to the February FTF CSO Stakeholder Meeting focused on Gender Integration into Agriculture and Food Security Programs, multimedia event resources are now available.

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Report: Injustice on Our Plates- Immigrant Women in the U.S. Food Industry

<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/injustice-on-our-plates>

The Southern Poverty Law Center of the USA has published a report based on recent research findings. SPLC researchers interviewed approximately 150 women who are either currently undocumented or have spent time in the U.S. as undocumented immigrants. The women all have worked in the U.S. food industry in Arkansas, California, Florida, Iowa, New York or North Carolina. A few have now obtained legal status. The interviews took place from January through March of 2010. Researchers also interviewed a number of advocates who work with immigrant women and farm workers.

The interviews were conducted almost exclusively in Spanish, and recordings were transcribed and translated into English. The women were first asked questions from a standard survey and then, based on their answers, asked by a researcher to elaborate on their experiences.

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Rural Women Making Change

<http://www.rwmc.uoguelph.ca/index.php>

Rural Women Making Change (RWMC) is a Community University Research Alliance (CURA) funded in 2005 by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The five year program supports rural women's projects for change in many settings of their living and working. RWMC researchers include women working in the National Farmers' Union Women's Committee (Saskatoon), Canadian Auto Workers Local 88 Women's Committee (Ingersoll), Women Today of Huron (Goderich), the Women's Employment Resources Centre (Woodstock), academics at five Canadian universities and women working in policy processes in different areas of government.

Eight research teams are engaging partners and collaborators in three areas:

1. **Rural women's organizations' day to day work** - Rural women's organizations everywhere, link rural women's everyday issues to the web of institutions and policies that directly and indirectly affect their work and the lives of rural women.
2. **Rural women's and girls' everyday experience** - In their everyday living and working rural women and girls experience difficulties with jobs and opportunities, un- and underemployment, education and training, transportation, and a variety of governing and corporate business practices that affect them.
3. **Gender and rural policy in trans-local arenas** - Policies and ways of representing and analyzing rural issues often fail to grasp just how policies and implementation practices operate, and as a result fail to identify how to change policies and procedures so that they recognize and support women. We aim to address issues of gender and rural policy across local, provincial, national and international levels.

While the eight RWMC projects within these domains utilize a range of methods, particular projects are designed to investigate the trans-local processes of political and economic change that are profoundly affecting rural communities and rural women's lives and work. Institutional ethnography begins in rural women's organizations work in order to 'map' policy processes and work with policy makers in a way that will complement and link up the work of all the teams.

RWMC projects span policy fields as well as several geographical areas and regions in Canada. Collaboration is underway with rural women's organizations in Britain, Europe, Australia, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, and elsewhere. The goal is to assist rural women's organizations operating in the local, national and international policy fields in effective forms of change, including policy change.

Women still scarce in top ranks at Canada's biggest companies

<http://www.ctv.ca/generic/generated/static/business/article1927418.html>

The number of women in the top ranks of Canada's largest companies has climbed by less than one percentage point over the past two years, a glacial pace of change that means many firms are vastly underutilizing talented women.

A review of almost 500 of the country's largest companies by women's advocacy group Catalyst found that 17.7 per cent of senior officer positions were held by women in 2010, a modest increase from 16.9 per cent in 2008.

"It's pretty hard to celebrate that pace of change," said Catalyst senior vice-president Deborah Gillis. "If we look at the pace ... between 2008 and 2010, it's less than one percentage point in two years."

The study found that Crown corporations lead the pack for women in leadership, with 27 per cent of top jobs filled by women in 2010. Women held 20 per cent of senior officer positions at privately owned companies, including Canadian-based subsidiaries of foreign companies.

The worst sector was publicly traded companies, where women held only 14.3 per cent of senior officer jobs last year, up from 13.9 per cent in 2008.

Ms. Gillis said she does not know why publicly traded companies are slower to promote women. She said the numbers are "really disappointing," especially considering other Catalyst research has found that U.S. companies with the most women in leadership have financially outperformed those with the fewest women in leadership positions.

The percentage of publicly traded Canadian companies with no women in senior officer roles fell to 30.3 per cent in 2010, from 32 per cent in 2008, marking a slow pace of improvement.

The study also found that women accounted for more than a quarter of senior officer positions at nearly 23 per cent of the 258 publicly traded companies studied, an increase from 15.2 per cent in 2008. Ms. Gillis says it is a sign that "the good are getting better."

Nonetheless, the study's authors said the findings show that women are not flooding into top jobs as the years pass, despite expectations the numbers would improve as women increasingly graduate from university and move into the work force.

"What's really clear is that [the idea of] 'This will take care of itself, give it time,' has failed, and what we really need is action and attention," Ms. Gillis said.

Catalyst, a not-for-profit organization with offices in Canada, the United States and Europe, urges executives to make a priority of promoting women, including setting and communicating goals to increase their numbers in senior roles and tracking progress on the issue to ensure it is seen as a key goal.

Other advocates are asking the federal government to support legislation tabled in the Senate by Liberal Céline Hervieux-Payette that would require publicly traded companies in Canada to have gender parity on their boards of directors. So far, the Conservatives are opposing the proposal, which means it is unlikely to be adopted.

Ms. Hervieux-Payette said she has been disappointed by the slow pace of progress for women, and believes legislation is a reasonable solution, as other countries are adopting or considering quotas for boards. This week, European Union Justice

Commissioner Viviane Reding told European companies they have a year to voluntarily commit to fill 30 per cent of board seats with women by 2015 or they could face imposed quotas.

"We're missing an opportunity to have talented people representing me as a shareholder, whether I invest through a mutual fund or a big pension fund," Ms. Hervieux-Payette said in an interview. "For me, the first item is the business case, and the second is fairness."

The Catalyst study looked at 468 of Canada's 500 largest companies where data were available on senior officer positions, including 258 publicly traded firms, 161 private companies, 42 Crown corporations and seven co-operatives.

It found the three industry groups with the most women in senior officer roles were accommodation and food services, public administration and "other services." The bottom sector was a group labelled "administrative and support, waste management and remediation services," followed by "agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting."

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Women & the Economy Website

<http://www.unpac.ca/economy/index.html>

News Release: Manitoba Women Still Economically Unequal

UNPAC is launching updated research on Women & The Economy this International Women's Day, Tuesday March 8, 2011.

"Unfortunately, not much has changed," states Bre Woligroski, Interim Coordinator for UNPAC. "Since our initial research released in 2006, many of the statistics regarding women's participation in the economy have stayed the same. Women continue to be economically unequal in Manitoba, as well as nation-wide." Much of the information from the 2006 report was based on the 1996 census.

In 2006, women in Manitoba earned only 72 cents for every dollar that men make, and women performed 2/3rds of unpaid care giving work in Canada. These statistics and inequalities have not changed since the last report.

"Though the overall message is discouraging, there have been some small positive shifts," says Woligroski. For example, she cites the update that the number of women providing over 15 hours of unpaid housework per week has decreased since the last report from 52% to just 13%.

The research, which can be accessed online at www.unpac.ca, outlines 11 ways that governments can promote women's economic equality, including raising the minimum wage, implementing a national child care program, and using gender-based analysis in programs, policies, and services.

"It is time to remove these barriers to women's economic participation," says Woligroski. "This is a fixable problem."

UNPAC's website on Women & the Economy is unique and is commonly cited by educators and students across North America. The updated research was made possible by a grant from the National Council of Women of Canada Development Organization.

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Female Scientists Abound in Brazil - But Not at Senior Levels

<http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=54716>

RIO DE JANEIRO, Mar 4, 2011 (IPS) - There are nearly as many female as male scientists in Brazil. But in academia or in private laboratories, women face subtle barriers to career advancement and equal salaries. According to the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPQ), women represent 49 percent of the country's scientific researchers, up from 39 percent in 1993. But among laboratory heads, the proportion is 45 percent, and even lower in higher-level positions. "Overall, the number of women in science is growing steadily in Brazil," Jacqueline Leta, an expert on gender in science at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), told IPS. Citing data from the 2008 census, the study reports that there were 60,291 men and 57,662 women in laboratories in this country of 194 million people. But the situation varies by area, said Leta, who is part of the education and management of sciences programme at the UFRJ's Institute of Medical Biochemistry. In the areas of health and biology, for example, the proportion of women is especially high, and there are renowned experts like geneticist Mayana Zatz, head of the University of São Paulo (USP) Human Genome Research Centre. And in the field of genetics, women are a majority, according to the CNPQ, with 1,049 women researchers against 976 men.

But in engineering research, there are just 4,151 women, compared to 15,203 men. "No one chooses a career 10 days before the university entrance exam," said Leta. She attributed the decision to "years of cultural influence, from a student's father and mother, from the clubs they belong to, from what they see on the Internet and in the news," where the white robe and microscope are generally associated with men. "There is a complex and diverse range of influences that begin with long-ago memories of little girls playing with dolls or toy sewing kits and boys playing with toy cars, videogames or science kits," she said.

Physicist Belita Koiller said that what is needed is a cultural change, brought about partly by the media showing more women scientists and encouraging girls to take an interest in laboratories. "Many girls who come here on school field trips are fascinated but also surprised at seeing women in the laboratories," she told IPS. Sexist stereotypes must be broken down at home, as well as in school, the experts say.

Refer to the link for the full article.

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Flawed Study Dismissing Job Bias Thrills Media

<http://www.womensenews.org/story/women-in-science/110218/flawed-study-dismissing-job-bias-thrills-media>

Is discrimination against women in the sciences a thing of the past? Do women do less well than men because of choices they themselves make, rather than bias and structural barriers in the workplace? Yes, says a new paper that's getting a lot of media attention.

Researchers Stephen J. Ceci and Wendy M. Williams say women's underrepresentation is mostly a matter of career preferences and fertility and lifestyle choices. Seeking time with family, caring for children or elderly parents, following a spouse or preference for working part time are the real reasons they say women lag behind men in good jobs in math and science.

Their paper, "Understanding Current Causes of Women's Underrepresentation in Science," was published in the prestigious Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences on Feb. 7.

The news media loves it. "Goodbye glass ceiling; so long old-boys club," said Nature news. The Washington Post called the article a "stunning critique of research on bias against women." John Tierney of the New York Times featured the article in a column in the paper's science section and the Guardian asked, "When it comes to worrying about the underrepresentation of women in science, especially at higher levels, are we stuck in the past?" Afraid not.

This rosy scenario about the decline of sex discrimination is very flawed. Ceci and Williams dispense with any data to the contrary as "aberrant, of small magnitude" and "superseded by larger, more sophisticated analyses showing no bias." What's the basis for this conclusion? The authors don't tell us. At the same time, they brush aside a huge trove of contradictory evidence.

Refer to the link for the full article.

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Understanding current causes of women's underrepresentation in science

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences study

<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2011/02/02/1014871108.abstract>

Abstract

Explanations for women's underrepresentation in math-intensive fields of science often focus on sex discrimination in grant and manuscript reviewing, interviewing, and hiring. Claims that women scientists suffer discrimination in these arenas rest on a set of studies undergirding policies and programs aimed at remediation. More recent and robust empiricism, however, fails to support assertions of discrimination in these domains. To better understand women's underrepresentation in math-intensive fields and its causes, we reprise claims of discrimination and their evidentiary bases. Based on a review of the past 20 y of data, we suggest that some of these claims are no longer valid and, if uncritically accepted as current causes of women's lack of progress, can delay or prevent understanding of contemporary determinants of women's underrepresentation. We conclude that differential gendered outcomes in the real world result from differences in resources attributable to choices, whether free or constrained, and that such choices could be influenced and better informed through education if resources were so directed. Thus, the ongoing focus on sex discrimination in reviewing, interviewing, and hiring represents costly, misplaced effort: Society is engaged in the present in solving problems of the past, rather than in addressing meaningful limitations deterring women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics careers today. Addressing today's causes of underrepresentation requires focusing on education and policy changes that will make institutions responsive to differing biological realities of the sexes. Finally, we suggest potential avenues of intervention to increase gender fairness that accord with current, as opposed to historical, findings.

The paper referred to in the article above is located at

<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2011/02/02/1014871108.full.pdf>.

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People-centred science will attract more women to field

<http://www.vancouversun.com/technology/People+centred+science+will+attract+more+women+field/4440092/story.html>

People-centred science will draw more women to discipline, says SFU dean: In an op-ed piece published in March 15 edition of the Vancouver Sun, Claire Cupples, dean of science at Simon Fraser University and professor of molecular biology and biochemistry, writes that the young women in her research lab and science lectures who express disinterest in a career in

science believe the field does not offer them the opportunity to work with people. The image of a solitary scientist is no longer accurate, says Cupples -- university scientists are particularly fortunate to have the opportunity to meet and mentor thousands of students over their careers. She suspects it is the culture of science -- the research priority, intense competition, and level of self-promotion -- that makes the field unappealing to many women. "The culture of university science is changing as teaching, a people-centred activity, regains some of its status," which may result in more women building careers in the field, Cupples writes.

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Obama stresses need to fight for women's equality

<http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2011/03/12/obama-stresses-need-to-fight-for-womens-equality/>

US President Barack Obama urged Americans Saturday to keep fighting for women's equality, despite progress made in this area over recent decades. "Women are still more likely to live in poverty in this country," the president said in his weekly radio address.

He said that there were areas like mathematics and engineering where women were vastly outnumbered by their male counterparts. "This is especially troubling, for we know that to compete with nations around the world, these are the fields in which we need to harness the talents of all our people," Obama said. "That's how we'll win the future."

The president's comments were timed to Women's History Month that is celebrated in the United States in March.

Obama reminded that one of my first acts as president was to sign a law allowing women who believe that they have been discriminated against in their salaries to have their day in court. He also said he was disappointed that a bill aimed at giving women more power to stop pay disparities -- the Paycheck Fairness Act -- had been blocked by just two votes in the Senate and promised to keep up the fight to enact reforms that were contained in that bill.

"Achieving equality and opportunity for women isn't just important to me as president," Obama said. "It's something I care about deeply as the father of two daughters who wants to see his girls grow up in a world where there are no limits to what they can achieve."

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Opinion: Needed - A True World Bank Development Report on Gender Equality

<http://www.boell.org/web/147-737.html>

The World Bank's series of World Development Reports (WDR) is special: conceived as the "flagship publication" of the international development bank, whose self-declared primary mission is poverty reduction, WDRs are meant to showcase the most advanced thinking from within the World Bank, detailing — and suggesting ways to overcome — major political, social and economic obstacles to global development targeted at development policy makers and practitioners. Given this premise, and the world's acknowledgment of gender equality as critical for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), one might wonder why it has taken the World Bank research staff that long to zoom in on gender equality (the Bank has published 32 WDRs so far since 1978) as the topic for a WDR, with "Gender Equality and Development" now being the official focus of the upcoming WDR 2012 to be released in late 2011.

But if a first 65-page draft outline of the possible several hundred pages long final report is any indication, the World Bank's staff, despite its stated intention to use the WDR to take a look at the "various dimensions" of gender equality, will not be able to overcome its own parochial view of women and gender equality. Missing most prominently: an understanding of development in the context of sustainability, which – in the day and age of persistently high poverty rates, food insecurity, gender inequalities, environmental destruction and climate change globally – should be redefined as low-carbon, climate-resilient, livelihood focused, gender equitable development. After all, almost 20 years after the Earth Summit, next year a serious reconsideration and refocusing of the concept in the context of Rio+20 seems unavoidable.

The draft outline of the WDR on Gender and Development does nothing in this respect; instead it approaches the subject by solely attempting to make 'a business' case for giving men and women equal opportunities. Its narrow focus on women as entrepreneurs and economic actors and gender equality as "smart economics" (the descriptive title of the World Bank's Gender Action Plan as the Bank's primary effort in the recent past in integrating gender into its operations) allows for an analytical framework for gender equality based on economic costs and efficiency only. Its sole way to conceive of environmental concerns or the global systemic threat of climate change is as a "risk" or "shock" to economic and particularly income growth. The dominant growth paradigm with unsustainable production and consumption patterns, which the World Bank continues to subscribe to, is never questioned in this outline. No apparent readjustment is made in World Bank thinking to the kind of development that would be needed to allow for the equitable (across gender and generations) and sustainable use of the world's natural resources, which acknowledges both the human rights of individuals as well as collective, common rights.

Refer to the link for the full article.

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ILC on Women and Land

<http://www.landcoalition.org/news/ilc-launches-reports-action-oriented-research-2011-international-womens-day>

Over the last three years, the International Land Coalition (ILC) has carried out a project entitled "Securing Women's Access to Land: Linking Research and Action" in Eastern and Southern Africa with support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The project aimed at learning from grassroots women and promoting a transformative agenda for women's land rights and at its core, more than 20 partners in 7 countries undertook action-oriented research with the support of two partner institutions, the Makerere Institute for Social Research (MISR) in Uganda and the Institute of Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) in South Africa.

Crucial to this project was the idea that research processes and outputs are not ends in themselves, but used for advocacy, including locally with traditional authorities and nationally with policy-makers - and this advocacy is continuing beyond this project.

The project has generated reports for each action-oriented research project, synthesis reports and policy briefs, the first set of which are now available for download. More research reports and policy briefs will be uploaded in the coming weeks.

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Government of Canada Announces \$12.5M in Support for Women and Girls in Canada

<http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/med/news-nouvelles/2011/0324-eng.html>

On March 24, 2011 the Honourable Rona Ambrose, Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, highlighted the success of the innovative *Blueprint Projects* of the Women's Program of Status of Women Canada.

Eligible community-based organizations from across Canada will carry out the 65 selected projects.

"Our Government is committed to supporting grassroots projects that improve the lives of women and girls across Canada," said Minister Ambrose. "We're proud to work with community organizations across Canada to help end violence against women, improve their economic prosperity and promote women in leadership roles."

Status of Women Canada launched the *Blueprint Projects* to help organizations address priority areas. These projects aim to achieve results in the three priority areas of Status of Women Canada:

1. eliminating violence against women and girls;
2. promoting women's access to leadership decision-making roles; and
3. improving women's economic security and prosperity.

Each project falls into one of the following themes:

- engaging youth in preventing violence against girls and women;
- increasing women's involvement as decision-makers in community-based organizations;
- improving access to second-stage services for women who have experienced abuse;
- improving community safety for women and girls;
- improving financial and growth opportunities for women business owners; and
- increasing the recruitment of women into non-traditional work, and retaining and promoting women in non-traditional and under-represented sectors.

See the press release at the link for the list of organizations which will be receiving funding.