A BRIEFER: GENDER INEQUALITY CAUSES POVERTY[1]

INTRODUCTION

Since at least 2006, major world institutions have published reports showing that greater economic inclusion of women fuels growth in national income.[2] There is a strong causal relationship between gender equality and prosperity—and we have learned a great deal about how and why that is true. These lessons learned, however, also signal the need to turn the question around: if gender equality causes prosperity, then is it equally true that gender inequality causes poverty?[3]

In international rankings, such as the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report*, the countries where women have the fewest freedoms, including economic rights, are also shown to be the poorest and most conflict-ridden in the world.[4] And in the past decade, the literature on gender inequality and poverty has mushroomed in its size, scope, and variety, going well beyond mere correlations. The evidence all points in the same direction: **that unequal conditions for women and girls are a causal contributor to poverty and suffering around the world.**

If we are to eliminate poverty in emerging economies, we will have to resolve gender inequality first, with a focus on economic inclusion. Women are barred from full economic participation by specifically gendered systemic constraints that vary little from place to place.[5] These barriers are long-standing and structural. The assumption that efforts to broadly stimulate growth will automatically "lift all ships" is unjustified, in the face of these historical and persistent barriers.

ESTABLISHING CAUSATION

There is no one-size-fits-all test for causality in economics or in other disciplines. Instead, causal inference depends on method and philosophy. The particular economic philosophy determines the appropriate method for making the inference, and, conversely, particular methods are rooted in different philosophies.

The research on gender inequality in emerging markets comes from several different disciplines and policy areas, using methods ranging from econometrics to ethnography, from focus groups to geospatial analysis, from interviews to participant observation, from surveys to randomized controlled trials, and so on. These varying disciplines take differing approaches to causal inference, including constant regularities, conditional probabilities, counterfactuals, and experiments.[6, 7] Importantly, in any one area or even on any single question—such as the impact of gender-based violence on girls' education—it is common to find many studies, many methods, and many notions of causality within that particular topic of research.

Taken as a whole, however, the literature converges on a clear conclusion: **gender inequality is not a symptom of poverty, but a fundamental cause of poverty.** No one claims that gender inequality is the only cause of impoverishment, but rather that the mechanisms enforcing gender inequality are similar across nations and have similarly negative economic impact. We can legitimately infer that gender inequality is a major factor in poverty, along with other variables such as conflict or famine. Gender disparities are both more consistently present in impoverished societies and more widespread than most other factors.

WHY GENDER EQUALITY AFFECTS NATIONAL ECONOMIES

A misleading assumption that women have limited—even trivial—impact on the world economy often stands in the way of understanding why and how women's marginalization can produce wide-ranging detrimental economic effects. Women constitute half the world's population—nearly 4 billion people. They produce about 37 percent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and more than half the world's food supply.[8] In some countries, women constitute nearly half the labor force. Therefore, broadscale restrictions on this group's economic participation would necessarily have a massive effect on national (and global) prosperity. Figures 1 and 2 show the correlation between women's economic empowerment and a country's economic success.

Women's economic marginalization is enforced in various ways, ranging from workforce exclusion to prohibitions against property ownership. As a result, key economic factors like labor, education, and entrepreneurship manifest in distinctive ways among women than men, resulting in differential outcomes with large-scale, national impact.

Nations are poorest where the limits on women's economic engagement are strongest. This is true in part because excluding half the population from the economy is an inefficient use of resources, but also because women's subordination results in costly damage to households and communities. These two effects are discussed below.

FIGURE 1. WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

FIGURE 2. WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND GDP

Sources: World Bank Database for GDP at purchasing power parity; Economist Intelligence Unit of the Women's Economic Opportunity Index; World Economic Forum for the National Competitiveness Index.

Figures 1 and 2. Each dot on the two graphs shown here represents a country's Women's Economic Opportunity Index score as related to either readiness for growth (Figure 1) or GDP (Figure 2). There are approximately one hundred nations shown in each graph; all those for which the data was available were included. In the top graph, the upward-right direction of the dots indicates that more economic freedom for women corresponds positively to national competitiveness, a measure of a country's readiness for growth. On the bottom graph, there is a similar pattern between GDP per capita and women's economic empowerment. These two graphs taken together, showing the "before" and "after" of rising GDP, imply that women's freedoms have a positive effect on national wealth. Other data has converged to reach the same conclusion.

INEFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES

Gender inequality has the most obvious economic impact on female labor force participation (FLFP). Over the past 50 years, GDP growth in the developed nations has tracked closely with a steady rise in female labor force participation, particularly evident among married women. Increasing FLFP in those countries resulted from the abolition of gender-specific restrictions on women's employment—for example, the dismantling of "marriage bars" that kept wives out of the workplace in the Western nations through the 1960s, and the related laws and court rulings of the 1970s favorable to women's equal participation in employment.[9] Even today, persisting labor constraints on women show room for growth in wealthy nations. For instance, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimates that a 50-percent reduction in the gender labor gap would result in a 6-percent global increase in GDP, with a further 6-percent gain if women were brought into the workforce in equal numbers to men.[10]

In many emerging economies, however, restrictions and outright prohibitions prevent women from performing work outside the home, especially if they are married; FLFP is accordingly generally lower in those countries. Eliminating gender restrictions on paid work would have the most favorable impact on growth in areas where gender equality is at its lowest levels. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that bringing women into the workforce in numbers comparable to men would increase GDP in developed nations by 10 percent, and by 35 percent in South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa.[11]

Women's economic inequality is also evident in enterprise. Most countries have many fewer female than male entrepreneurs; increasing the base of enterprise by including women therefore should have positive economic implications.[12] A study of 146 countries conducted by the World Bank in 2017 found that, while women's entrepreneurship is less than men's in all countries, it is especially underdeveloped in poor countries.[13] Systemic factors, such as insufficient access to capital, impede the development of enterprise among females, especially in poor nations.[14] Resolving those systemic limits would grow the enterprise base; failing to do so would not only continue to be a drag on growth, but would also constrain household livelihoods.

National economic potential is strongly linked to the quality of human capital, which is largely a function of investment in education. Women, all over the world, were refused education for centuries; one of the biggest global achievements in the past 50 years has been the steep rise in education among females. Women in the developed countries now have educational achievements equal to or greater than men.[15] However, in the poorest countries, girls are still excluded from education, especially at the secondary level, which has follow-on effects on both the size of the labor force and its quality. The World Bank estimates that the continuing failure to educate females costs emerging economies $15 to $30 trillion in lost earnings and productivity.[16]

COSTLY DAMAGE

In addition to lost opportunities for growth, gender inequality affects economies by incurring systemwide costs. For example, research carried out by the Copenhagen Consensus Center showed that the economic costs associated with intimate partner violence against women, such as those incurred by police calls, lost workdays, and emergency room visits, average 5 percent of GDP—about the same amount that countries typically spend on primary education.[17] More gender-unequal countries show a higher incidence of domestic violence—and they are also poorer.[18]

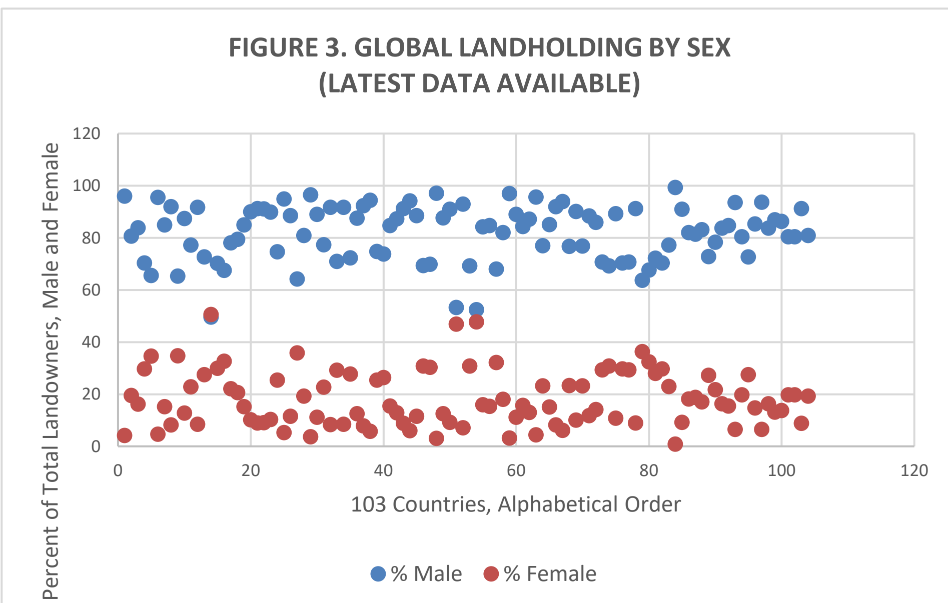
Data on these and other economic factors together suggest strongly that **gender inequality negatively affects the economic success of poor nations, to a significant degree**. The following section will investigate the mechanisms that keep women from productive economic engagement—and that produce poverty in the process.

HOW GENDER RESTRICTIONS CAUSE POVERTY

The specific barriers to gender equality are not discrete factors, but rather form part of a complex, interlocking system of traditional exclusions and burdens that keep women dependent—and that lead directly to an array of undesirable outcomes. These mechanisms are present, to varying degrees, all over the world and create a recognizable pattern of negative economic after-effects.

UNEQUAL LAND OWNERSHIP

The most basic building block of economic gender inequality is not exclusion from paid work, but unequal ownership of real property. Figure 3 shows landholders by gender, drawn from the Food and Agricultural Organization's Gender and Land Rights Database.[19] It is clear at a glance that about 80 percent of the world's landowners today are male. This pattern of inequality is too dramatic to be dismissed as random. Since real property has been the key to wealth and power for many centuries all over the world, it is implausible that women everywhere would "self-select" into landlessness. Instead, the pattern points to some structural blockage as a more realistic explanation.



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization, "Gender and Land Rights Database," http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/data-map/statistics/en/

Figure 3. This scatterplot illustrates the vast gap between male and female ownership of land in a regionally balanced sample of about half the countries in the world. The black dots show that 70 to 90 percent of landholders in most countries, rich and poor, are men. Countries are shown alphabetically, starting with Algeria and ending with Zambia.

For many hundreds of years, in fact, prohibitions against female inheritance, especially of land, were commonplace across the world—including in the rich nations—as were laws or customs that gave total control over family assets to males. These rules are still in place in many emerging economies, whether by law or custom.[20] The implications of such widespread exclusion for women's economic status are profound. In particular, the lack of real property ownership severely limits their access to other forms of capital. Banks in poor countries, for instance, normally require that a loan be secured by real property.[21]

The restriction on landholding, and its follow-on impact on credit availability, also means that investment in equipment and technology is less possible for women than men, another systematic exclusion leading to poverty. Research shows that when women in rural areas have equal access to credit, equipment, new technology, and such inputs as fertilizer, their agricultural yields are the same as men; without such access, they produce 10 to 12 percent less. For an agricultural economy, putting women on a level playing field would produce 3 to 4 percent higher GDP, while also reducing hunger and increasing food security.[22] The United Nations estimates that levelling the playing field for women in land ownership would, by itself, reduce the world's chronically hungry by 150 million people.[23]

This systemic inequality also directly contributes to poverty at the household level. Perhaps the most dramatic and widespread example is the sudden impoverishment of widows and their children when the male head of household dies, and his assets are redistributed to his male kin rather than to his wife.[24] In some countries, such as India, customary practice is simply to cast out widows, leaving them destitute and condemning their children to long-term poverty.[25] There are 40 million such women in India alone.[26] It is easy to see that when such practices are routine across a whole country, the sum of all widows and children who fall victim is large—contributing massively to the population of the poor.

LIMITS ON LABOR PARTICIPATION

Restrictions on female labor force participation, especially for married women, are commonplace in emerging economies. Over recent decades, the laws requiring women to get permission from their husbands before working have gradually disappeared,[27] but this customary restriction still prevails in some countries and may be enforced by violence.[28]

If married women are not allowed to work, family well-being will be dependent on one earner; in regions where this is customary, it will affect most households. That practice not only limits the funds available for basic necessities like food, healthcare, and education, but it puts families—and communities—at increased risk during economic downturns or other emergencies.

In traditionally male-dominant cultures, men have the right to keep and control all family income regardless of who earned it. Research shows, however, that when women have money, and the freedom to decide how it is spent, the funds are more likely to go to better family nutrition, education, and other expenditures known to reduce poverty.[29] Men who control family income are likely to expend a significant portion for personal indulgences, including liquor.[30] Such spending behavior not only jeopardizes household financial conditions, but also contributes to social problems like alcoholism and violence. Indeed, the importance of keeping women's earnings in their own hands, in order to assure expenditures for education, food, and health, is by now well-recognized in the development community.

Not all the restrictions on FLFP arise from the home, however. In the poorest countries, formal labor regulations restrict the industries where women may work and the hours they keep (see Table 1).[31] The regulations or practices are often justified as necessary for women's protection, though the fact that these countries seldom have rules against sexual assault in the workplace undercuts such claims. Working single women may be subject to violence in the workplace as well as on their commute, by men who want to "keep them in their place"—further discouraging female labor force participation.[32]

TABLE 1. MAIN RESTRICTIONS ON WOMEN'S LABOR ACTIVITY

PERCENT OF COUNTRIES IN EACH REGION WITH GENDERED RESTRICTIONS

REGION	JOBS DEEMED ARDUOUS, HAZARDOUS, OR MORALLY INAPPROPRIATE	INDUSTRIES WITH GENDER-SPECIFIC REGULATIONS	RESTRICTIONS ON WORKING DURING NIGHT HOURS
Middle East and North Africa	65	55	55
South Asia	50	63	63
Sub-Saharan Africa	43	51	9
Europe and Central Asia	36	56	20
Latin America & Caribbean	19	16	6
East Asia and Pacific	8	32	8
OECD High Income	8	9	0

Source: Women Business and the Law database, World Bank 2018

Table 1. The regions in the table with the most restrictions also have the lowest GDP as well as the lowest female labor force participation. Though the rationale for these restrictions would be "protecting" women, these nations also have the fewest protections against sexual assault and harassment.

Labor restrictions on pregnant women and mothers also have a noticeable impact on female representation in the workforce. For example, women are often forced to stop working when they become pregnant; they lose seniority when they return to work, effectively wiping out any progress toward advancement and reducing their incentive to take up employment again.[33] Constant interruptions in their working careers mean that females are less likely to have sufficient savings or pensions to protect them in old age; aging women are much more likely to be poor than men.[34] The consistent practice of forcing a hiatus on mothers thus serves as a systemic contributor to poverty.

EXCLUSIONARY FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

There have also been historical prohibitions against women engaging with the financial sector. For instance, women in the Western countries were not able to open bank accounts without their husbands' permission nor to take out credit in their own names until after 1960. Similar restrictions persist in emerging economies, though many countries have enacted legal changes to allow more equitable access to financial services. Studies show that when women are given access to simple financial services like bank accounts, they are more likely to save than men.[35] The benefits are visible, as poverty is reduced by the increase in savings. Accordingly, many efforts have been made to test the economic effect of opening banking, savings, and mobile money accounts for women.

Women who have to hide their earnings from male family members in order to maintain control over their money find it very difficult to collect and keep savings. Women may hide their money under their beds or in holes in the wall, where it is easily discovered and taken. Because household provisioning and paying school fees often falls to women, this "tax" on women's savings keeps households from making positive investments in everything from children's education to small businesses and home improvements. Moreover, when women have less savings, the whole community is less able to cope with the inevitable crises that affect agricultural and impoverished societies.

The power of financial inclusion for women was dramatically demonstrated by the microcredit innovations of the 2000s. Microcredit did not make loans available to the poor for the first time—loan sharks have made loans to the poor for hundreds of years. Rather, microfinance institutions gave *women* access to credit that they did not have previously.[36] However, microcredit only allows very small loans (a few hundred dollars at most), and the loans are both high-interest and short-term, which makes them a poor vehicle for the kind of capital investment needed to cultivate land or grow a business. In order to address the need for larger or longer-term amounts, steps are being taken by international institutions like the World Bank to address the gender biases in the formal financial system, particularly the banks.

Large-scale studies have long established that women are systematically under-served by the formal financial sector overall, especially with regard to credit.[37] The latest figures, from the World Bank, estimate that the gender credit gap in emerging economies is $1.46 trillion.[38] This gap obviously reduces productivity and GDP in those countries, but the studies also show that there is a negative impact on household livelihoods: that is to say, women's insufficient access to credit means households are poorer.[39]

Better credit reporting also gives women better access to loans. Overall, the financial sector tends to evaluate women in general as poor risks, even though evidence shows they are more likely to repay loans than men. Several efforts have been made to deal with this problem by creating risk-sharing instruments for banks to use as funds for women.[40] Other innovations are in development, including expansion of underutilized forms of finance such as factoring and movable property lending, and new credit assessment tools like personality tests. The next frontier is equity investment, where the existing bias is at least equally severe.

CONSTRAINTS ON SMALL BUSINESS

Just like those owned by men, successful businesses owned by women create jobs; women's entrepreneurship clearly contributes at least indirectly to fighting poverty. For married women among the rural poor, starting up a small business may be the only way to have an income, particularly if they are not allowed to work for pay. This is why charities and international development organizations have invested a great deal of time and money to help poor women in rural areas begin small businesses as a way to generate income.

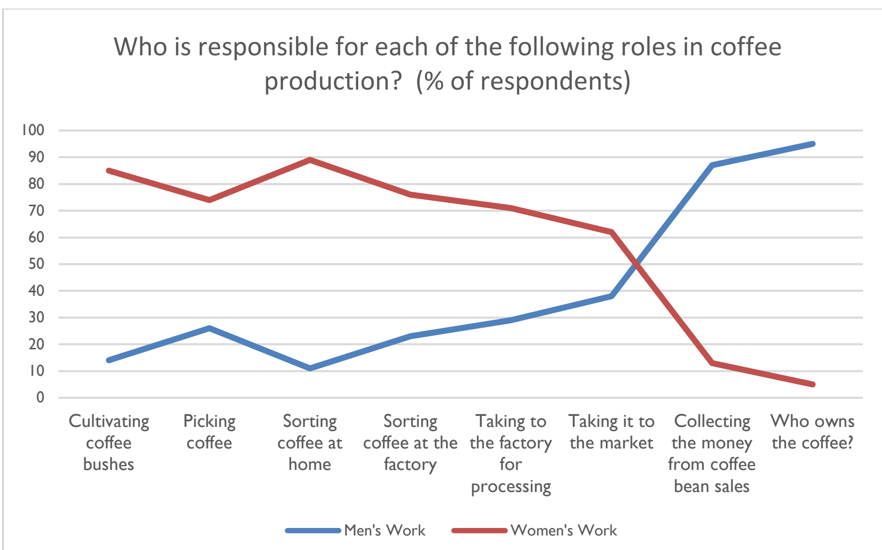
Several factors keep women-owned businesses from achieving the growth that others do, including family pressures and time poverty. But the most impactful hindrance is their lack of access to capital. Women also frequently have less access to technology and less command over labor and materials. Female entrepreneurs are often reluctant to formally register and engage in export: a contributing factor to this reluctance is government corruption, which falls more heavily on women.[41] Registration clerks, customs agents, and tax inspectors are more likely to extort bribes from women, to cheat them, or to refuse to service their businesses at all.[42]

UNPAID WORK

The expectation that women will fulfill unpaid responsibilities for care, housework, and farm labor further limits women's earning power. In poor countries, women spend many more hours than men do on housework.[43] For instance, while women in Sweden do 1.3 times as much housework as men, and women in Britain do 1.8 times as much, women in Turkey do 3.6 times as much—while in India women do a staggering 7 times as much housework as men. The result of such unpaid work expectations is that **most women, and especially those trying to work or run a business, suffer from *time poverty***.

There is clearly a tradeoff between gender inequality in household work and women's economic viability. Across nations, the correlation is clear: in countries where women do more of the housework, they are less likely to work; their countries' GDP per capita (PPP) suffers, as do their families' livelihoods. Women also do unpaid household production and family farming. The Food and Agriculture Organization notes that female farmworkers are undercounted simply because many women who spend hours each day farming their husband's plot without pay do not think of themselves as farmworkers.[44] Throughout history, women who produce textiles, handicrafts, and food products—to be marketed by their husbands—have gone uncompensated. A study by the International Women's Coffee Alliance illustrates the phenomenon well. A sample of adults engaged in coffee production in Kenya were asked which sex did the work at each step along the chain, from coffee plants to market sale; they were then asked who owned the coffee—and therefore the proceeds from it (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4. KENYAN COFFEE PRODUCERS: WORK AND OWNERSHIP (BY SEX)



Source: Mary Johnstone-Louis (2013), "International Women's Coffee Alliance," Power Shift Case Study (Said Business School, University of Oxford).

Figure 4. The International Women's Coffee Alliance surveyed Kenyan women and men about the division of labor in coffee production. This line graph shows the results. On the horizontal axis are the steps taken to grow coffee, from planting to harvest to selling the yield. The vertical axis shows what percentage of men or women do the work in each step. The line from the beginning of the process to the end demonstrates that women do nearly all the work up until the product is taken to market, but they have very little participation in actually selling the coffee. The last measure shows that the men are deemed to own the coffee, even though women do most of the work to grow it.

The data showed that women did most of the work through the phases of cultivating, harvesting, sorting, and even transporting the coffee. At that point, the men began to take over—and finally, collecting the money was "men's work." Importantly, the respondents agreed that the men owned the coffee, even though the women did substantially *all* of the work to produce it. Since the men own the land, the community sees the land's produce as the property of males.[45]

UNEQUAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION

In agricultural societies, men's near-monopoly on land renders women and children dependent on the male head of household for basic necessities like food and shelter: their diet, as well as their whereabouts, are matters subject to men's control. Archeological evidence reveals the pervasive practice of feeding females less than males (shown in prehistoric bones and teeth); similar evidence shows typically unequal access to nutrition in hunter-gatherer groups. In emerging economies today, it is still common to feed females "last and least," and even to withhold food as a form of domestic violence.[46]

The effects of unequal food distribution by gender are discernible globally. A comparative medical study proved that, in countries with high gender inequality, withholding food from females was leading to lower birth weights and thus higher infant mortality, as well as increased birth defects and disease. Indeed, it is now increasingly understood that poor treatment of females can have epigenetic consequences, such as heritable birth defects that impact subsequent generations.[47] These effects were shown to result from inadequate shares of food over the whole course of females' lives, not just during pregnancy.

Also discernible is the greater prevalence of malnutrition among females, including female children, which leads to stunted development of both bones and brains to such a degree that **agricultural experts have begun calling for a Gender Nutrition Index**.[48] Here, too, we see a direct connection between gender inequality and poverty, especially hunger, with effects that are perpetuated from one generation to the next.[49]

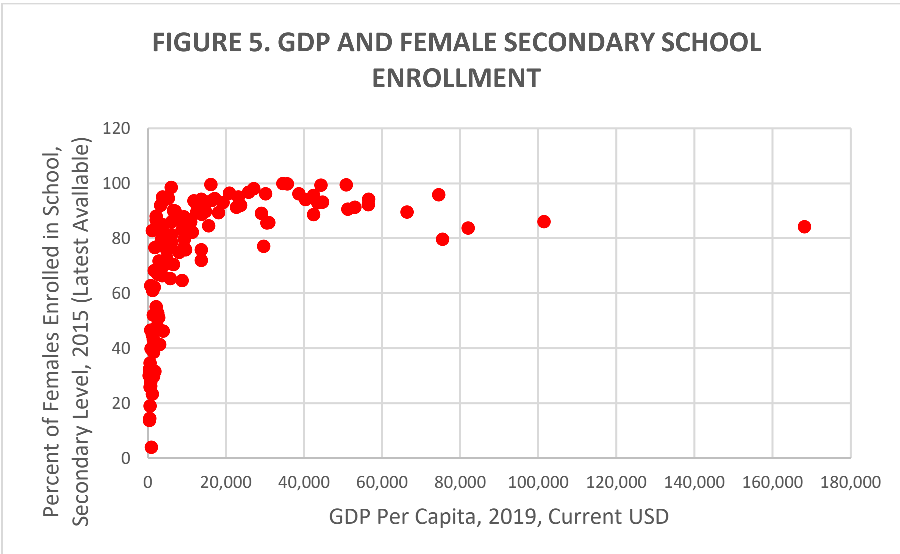
UNEQUAL EDUCATION

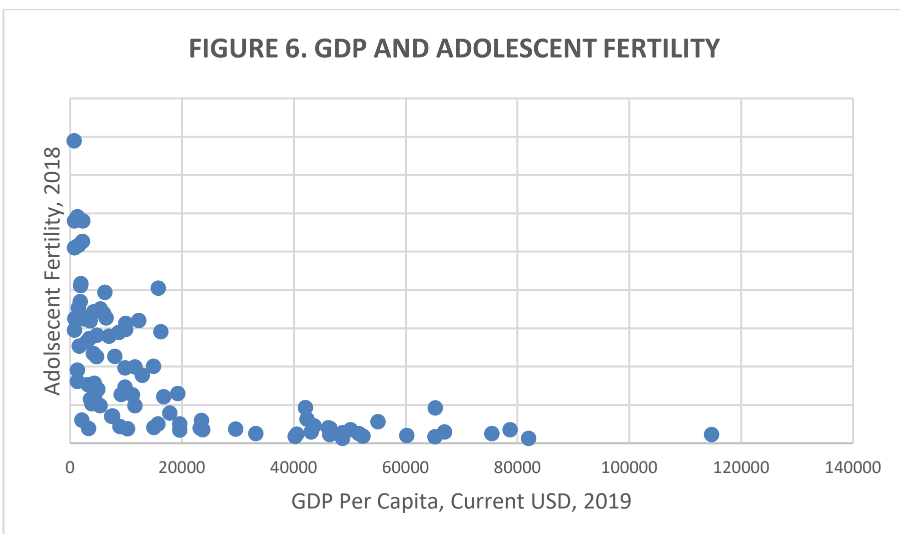
Despite years of progress, women and girls are still substantially less likely to be literate and educated. Sexual pressures constitute the main reason girls leave school.[50] In emerging economies, families may remove girls from school after puberty, to be traded in marriage. Child marriage is common among poor communities, costing emerging economies at least 1.7 percent of GDP, according to the World Bank and the International Council for Research on Women.[51] In addition, sexual attack on the way to and from school is prevalent (which is called "eve-teasing"), and parents may take their daughters out of school to protect them from rape.

The practices that force girls out of school have a follow-on effect that contributes significantly to poverty. Girls who are married (or otherwise forced into motherhood) early in life are less likely to have a voice in their own households or sovereignty over their own bodies. It is commonplace in poor countries for husbands to have the right to force sex on their wives.[52] The men may also refuse to wear condoms, and they face little censure for philandering. These practices fuel excessive fertility and spread disease, contributing further to poverty.

Girls who stay in school have greater earning power, and they also tend to have fewer children because they begin families later. As mothers, they are more likely than women with less education to ensure their children are educated, well-fed, and kept healthy.

The economic impact of girls' education and fertility outcomes, in combination, is evident at the national level. The longer girls stay in school, the more GDP rises; the more adolescents get pregnant, the lower national GDP (see Figures 5 and 6). These forces work in opposite directions: keeping girls in school increases and improves labor supply, while having them leave school incurs steep costs in fertility, health, and incomes. In short, **allowing girls to go uneducated causes poverty**.





Source: World Bank Database

Figure 5 and 6. The graph in Figure 5 shows that GDP increases as more teen-age girls remain in school. Notice that the benefit is attached to enrollment, not graduation. Every year a girl is in school helps her and her country. The graph at the bottom shows that GDP also goes up when fewer teens get pregnant. So, as enrollment goes up, teen pregnancy goes down, and GDP goes up in both cases.

INADEQUATE HEALTH[53]

Gender inequality's impact on health outcomes in poor countries is now well established by research: the negative effects are serious, widespread, and long-lasting. Gender inequality in social norms and practices, including women's economic exclusion, is a key variable that results in significantly disparate health outcomes for males and females—and these outcomes, too, have effects on poverty.

Gender differences in access to health appear early in life and may affect lifetime outcomes. For instance, a large study in Ethiopia used geospatial analysis to measure parents' care-seeking behavior for male versus female children up to age five. The findings: in communities with strong son preference, female children had lower access to health care.

Unequal access to care means that women and girls are not only less likely to get treatment for illness but are also less likely to be given preventative methods such as vaccines. Women in poor countries who are economically dependent on men (as is often the case) must seek funds from husbands and fathers in order to seek health services. Since men are more likely to spend on their own care, women often fail to seek health services, or they resort to informal healers and use lower-cost medicines. Women frequently cannot make their own choices about seeking care, but must first have permission from males, in-laws, or older family members who act as gate-keepers. In many cases, women must get permission even to leave the home, and they must rely on males for transportation to clinics (or for the money to get there). Research has demonstrated that improvement in gender equality positively affects women's use of healthcare services.

Unequal access to healthcare also results in higher maternal mortality due to inadequate obstetric care, as well as negative results such as fistula that have broad and lasting effects on health. **Both infant and maternal mortality are highest where gender equality is lowest.**

Women may suffer from negative reproductive health outcomes due to physical assault and rape, child marriage, and intimate partner violence, as well as practices that reflect male sexual preferences, such as female genital mutilation or refusal to use condoms. In a cross-national study, researchers identified that the enormous impact of sexual aggression on female adolescents, ranging from child marriage to rape, had long-lasting negative health consequences. Where women do not have the right to refuse sex to a husband, have few opportunities to earn money other than prostitution, and are subject to sexual violence, the incidence of HIV-AIDs has been very high, leading to intransigent poverty for extended families and communities who struggle to replace lost income and to care for the needs of orphans.

Work at home brings its own physical consequences for health. For instance, a study of national surveys of 61 countries found that water collection was the responsibility of women in 73.5 percent of households. Water and fuel collection (also a gender-specific job) lead to physical injuries, exposure to contagion, and vulnerability to physical, especially sexual, violence. Women in emerging economies commonly carry heavy loads of water, fuel, and other necessities on their heads, a practice linked with chronic musculoskeletal problems, risk of injury, negative energy balance, pain, and undesirable reproductive outcomes. Because women in poor communities are usually the cooks, they have a higher incidence of respiratory illnesses as well.

Poor health reduces an individual's ability to earn income, and the increased care burden also affects the ability of other family members to earn income. Illness interferes with education, as well as with the provision of household goods and services necessary to family survival, such as cooking, childcare, and water collection. In addition, negative health outcomes incur additional costs when expensive medicines, transportation to care, surgeries, and other health care expenditures are required. All these impacts obviously contribute to family poverty; by extension, poor health weakens the economic strength of communities as well.

LACK OF SAFETY

Gender inequality is in many cases enforced by the threat of male violence. Male hostility is directly germane to the economic exclusion women experience; it is not incidental, and it cannot be ignored if we are to find lasting solutions. Globally, about one-third of women experience gender-based violence (GBV) in their lifetimes.[54] Since gender inequality is often enforced with violence, and particularly sexual assault, it follows that places where women's freedoms are most limited are also places where women have the least sovereignty over their own bodies.

Estimates of the economic cost of GBV vary according to what is included in the calculation, but it is clear that the damage is significant.[55] Violence is used to enforce a number of economically-significant constraints on females: GBV discourages labor force participation, keeps girls out of school, increases fertility beyond what can be supported, and produces tragic and costly health outcomes. The total cost of gender-based violence would need to take into account (among other factors) all the jobs not taken, all the years in school sacrificed, and all the physical consequences and child neglect entailed in extreme (coerced) fertility levels.

Ironically, limitations on the movement of women and girls that are imposed for their own "protection" are in many cases enforced by violence from a husband or father.[56] In patriarchal cultures, husbands and fathers may forbid women to leave home—except in unusual circumstances and in the company of guardians—as a way of protecting them from sexual assault. The most extreme form of restricted movement is "purdah" (a combination of seclusion, veiling, and segregation of women), common among both Muslim and Hindu populations in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, as well as in Malaysia and North Africa.[57] Some women in Africa are subject to an equivalent practice in which they are not allowed to leave home or the village without the permission of the male head of household.[58] Nevertheless, females are often no more safe at home: 38 percent of femicides worldwide are perpetrated by the intimate partner.[59]

These barriers to mobility impede women's ability to take on paid work or get training. They also hinder women from starting and growing small businesses.[60] Without the ability to move freely, women cannot go to markets, banks, and suppliers, or make other forays into the world essential to small business operations. The damper on women's earning ability limits their spending on poverty-reducing goods and increases household vulnerability. **By restricting job creation and local circulation of money, barriers to women's mobility also keep communities poor**

RAPE IN CONFLICT

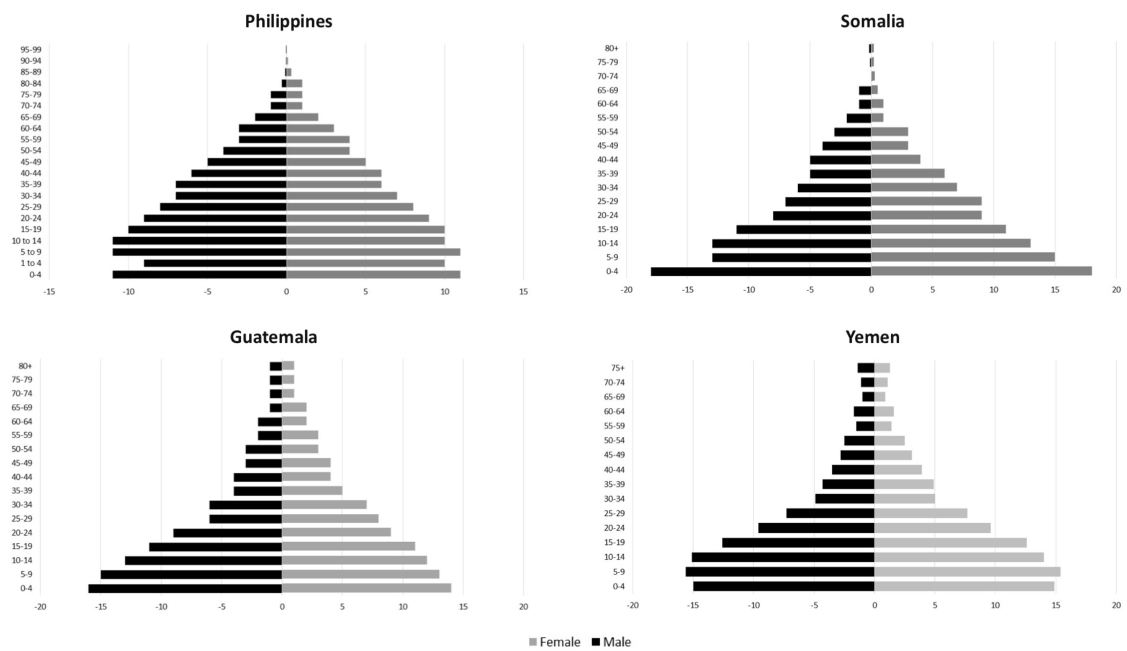
Gender inequality plays a role in both the causes of conflict and its consequences. There is now substantial evidence demonstrating the connection between excessive male dominance in society and higher levels of conflict.[61] The norms of masculinity may cause leaders to choose violence as the first response to any challenge; thus, violence escalates quickly after an initial incident of perceived insult.

Some men equate their social standing and self-respect with their ability to control the sexual activity (and other activities) of females. In conflict, men may even rape the enemies' women as a way of dishonoring them, leading to an endless circle of retribution—and producing ever-escalating fertility, as well as a growing number of orphans, in a context of scarce resources.

The higher the fertility rate climbs, the greater the pressure on food and other necessities—and the more fragile the economy of the poor. High fertility produces a pyramid-shaped age structure, a phenomenon that can be observed in the statistics of virtually *all* nations in conflict. The pyramid-shaped age structure increases pressure on resources, as adults struggle to provide for the young. The loss of older males to violence, combined with the growing number of young males due to higher fertility, further increases the probability of violence, with fewer older men to help keep the volatility and anger of the younger males in check.[62]

Countries with the most gender inequality are not only the poorest, but also the most conflict-ridden, unstable, and autocratic nations on earth.[63] Demographers and international affairs analysts have argued for a direct connection between the pyramid-shaped age structure (where fertility is high) and the incidence of conflict and war.[64] (See Figure 7 for four representative cases.) When conflict occurs, many necessities are jeopardized: food becomes insecure, education interrupted, safety reduced, and resources destroyed. The twin forces of war and population growth can crush economies, maiming poor communities and perpetuating their economic distress.

FIGURE 7: AGE STRUCTURE IN FOUR CONFLICT COUNTRIES (2018)



Source: United Nations Statistics Database.

Figure 7. The bars on the left of each graph represent the men, and those on the right the women. Young people are represented at the bottom, with the age increasing as you go up the pyramid. In conflict countries, the number of children and adolescents is significantly larger than any adult group, with the numbers in each successive age band getting smaller, thus forming the pyramid shape.

PREVALENCE OF SLAVERY

The world's 40 million victims of human trafficking have one thing in common: they are economically vulnerable. More than 70 percent of the world's slaves are female.[65] Trafficking, especially sex slavery, is a huge underground business that contributes to crime and instability, incurring costs to governments in addition to causing unquantifiable human suffering.

CONCLUSION

Many practices enforcing gender inequality have been identified as causing and perpetuating poverty. The systemic nature of women's economic inequality is evident in widespread structures, ranging from inheritance laws to lending practices. The few examples cited here make it clear that the various factors holding women back and keeping them vulnerable are mutually reinforcing; taken together, they form an almost impenetrable wall keeping women from full economic participation, thus making impoverishment in gender-unequal nations an inevitable and self-perpetuating scourge.

None of the practices and phenomena outlined here are idiosyncratic cultural norms, but instead constitute country-wide, region-wide, or even worldwide patterns applied to women as a class, wherever they are in force. **The aggregate effect of gender inequality is globally massive.** Women are, after all, half the species—how could the global impact of women's poverty and deprivation be considered a minor concern?

Gender inequality is often underpinned by statute and policed by violence. Facile explanations that invoke "self-selection" and "free choice" ignore these structural realities. No one *chooses* to live a life of dependency and vulnerability, subject to coercion, violence, and poverty.

The global economy continues to be compromised by a structural inequity that directly affects half the world's population, causing great harm especially to the poorest. Economic development and international policy approaches can no longer treat gender inequality as a symptom of poverty but must begin to address it as a significant underlying cause.

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[2] The World Economic Forum published its first *Global Gender Gap Report* in 2006, in which it argued that gender equality led to national prosperity, and that countries not pursuing gender equality would experience negative economic effects. Between 2006 and 2012 (and beyond), several important reports reporting similar findings were released. Examples are: UNICEF, *State of the World's Children: Women and Children – The Double Dividend of Gender Equality* (New York: UNICEF, 2007); Jonathan Woetzel et al., *The Power of Parity* (New York: McKinsey Global Markets Institute, 2015); World Bank, *Gender, Equality and Development* (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2012); DeAnne Aguirre et al., *Empowering the Third Billion: Women and the World of Work* (New York: Booz and Company, 2012); Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now!* (Paris: OECD, 2011); Food and Agriculture Organization, *Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development* (Rome: FAO, 2011); Katrin Elborgh-Woytek et al., *Women, Work and the Economy: Macroeconomic Gains from Gender Equity* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2013). Currently, similar or related reports are released by major institutions every year.

[3] Though there are differences in the way poverty is defined in the works cited, poverty can generally be understood to refer an average income of US$2 a day or less.

[4] World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2006-2018).

[5] Linda Scott, *The Double X Economy* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2020).

[6] Mariusz Maziarz, *The Philosophy of Causality in Economics* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

[7] Ibid. Maziarz explains in detail all these approaches, the methods that go with them, and the various justifications of causality.

[8] Statista, Percentage of GDP Contributed by Women, as of 2015, By Region (Hamburg: Statista, 2015), https://www.statista.com/statistics/523838/women-share-of-gdp-region/; Food and Agriculture Organization (2011), *Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development.*

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[10] Mari Kiviniemi, "Why a Push for Gender Equality Makes Sound Economic Sense" (OECD Forum, 2015), http://www.oecd.org/social/push-gender-equality-economic-sense.htm

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[17] Anke Hoeffler and James Fearon, *Conflict and Violence Assessment Paper* (Copenhagen Consensus Center, 2014); Bjørn Lomborg and Michelle A. Williams, "The Cost of Domestic Violence Is Astonishing," *Washington Post,* (2017). [18] Fernanda Ewerling, Claudia García-Moreno and Franciele Hellwig, "Intimate Partner Violence in 46 Low-income and Middle-income Countries: An Appraisal of the Most Vulnerable Groups of Women Using National Health Surveys," *BMJ Global Health* 2020; 5(1): e002208.

[19] FAO Gender and Land Rights database: http://www.fao.org/land-water/land/land-governance/land-resources-planning-toolbox/category/details/en/c/1047633/

[20] A documented history of female exclusion from property ownership and control can be found in Scott, *Double X Economy*.

[21] Food and Agriculture Organization, *Women in Agriculture*.

[22] Ibid.

[23] World Food Programme, "Women and Hunger Facts." https://www.worldhunger.org/women-and-hunger-facts/

[24] Uganda's treatment of widows has been most studied, but the practices are common throughout East Africa, as well as other regions. See: Constitute Project (2017), "Uganda's Constitution of 1995 with Amendments Through 2005" (Constitute Project, 2017, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Uganda_2005.pdf?lang =en); Rachel Loftspring, "Inheritance Rights in Uganda: How Equal Inheritance Rights in Uganda Would Reduce Poverty and Decrease the Spread of HIV/AIDS in Uganda," *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law* 29, no. 1(2014); Valerie Bennett, Ginger Faulk, Anna Kovina, and Tatjana Eres, "Report: The Inheritance Law in Uganda; The Plight of Widows and Children," *Georgetown Journal of Gender and Law* 7 (December, 2006): 451.

[25] Ibid. The Food and Agriculture Organization Gender and Land Rights Database is supplemented by 84 country profiles that show the current legal status of women regarding property and inheritance. Similarly, the Women Business and the Law series, issued by the World Bank, gives country-by-country reports on inheritance rights for widows and daughters.

[26] https://www.bbc.com/news/business-24490252; https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/27/world/asia/india-women-widows.html; http://edition.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/asiapcf/07/05/damon.india.widows/; https://www.hindustantimes.com/columns/why-do-widows-still-live-in-deprivation-on-the-fringes-of-our-conciousness/story-bwjJd0aCBzgmH5qk2VormL.html

[27] World Bank, *Women Business and the Law* (World Bank Group, 2020).

[28] Seema Jayachandran, "Social Norms as a Barrier to Women's Employment in Developing Countries," *NBER Working Paper Series, Working Paper 27449* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2020): http://www.nber.org/papers/w27449

[29] UNICEF, *State of the World's Children*.

[30] Studies showing the poor do not "waste" money on alcohol are often based on data from cash transfer programs that fail to break out the spending by males versus females and do not acknowledge its gendered nature. Many cash transfer programs nevertheless allocate cash to women in the expectation that they are more likely to spend the money on education, health, and other pro-development needs. Many authoritative sources in fact publish data showing that men drink substantially more than women. There are a few empirical studies showing that men in poor communities in emerging economies have significant drinking problems, as well as at least one showing that men hide their income from women and then spend it on alcohol, leaving the family to meet basic needs out of greatly reduced resources. There is also substantial qualitative and observational data documenting men spending money on alcohol, even though their children are out of school because they lack money to pay fees. See: David Evans and Ana Popova, "Do the Poor Waste Transfers on Booze and Cigarettes? No" (World Bank Blog, May 27, 2014, https://blogs.worldbank.org/impactevaluations/do-poor-waste-transfers-booze-and-cigarettes-no); Hannah Richie and Max Roser, "Alcohol Consumption," *Our World in Data* (Oxford: Global Change Data Lab, 2019 (https://ourworldindata.org/alcohol-consumption); World Health Organization, Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2018, https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241565639); Nicholas Kristof, "Moonshine or the Kids?" *New York Times*, May 22, 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/23/opinion/23kristof.html?ref=opinion%20; Kim Bao Giang, Hoang Van Minh and Peter Allebeck, "Alcohol Consumption and Household Expenditure on Alcohol in a Rural District in Vietnam," *Global Health Action*, 2013 (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3557352/); Linda Scott, "Digital Subwallets and Household Counseling: A Multimethod Randomized Controlled Trial on Household Financial Management in Uganda," A Report for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, in partnership with CARE International and CARE Uganda, 2020 (https://www.doublexeconomy.com/post/money-and-gender-in-uganda).

[31] *Women Business and the Law* (Washington: World Bank Group, 2018).

[32] Jayachandran, "Social Norms as a Barrier."

[33] Regulations that force pregnant women to quit work are common enough that they are tracked by *Women Business and the Law*, a biannual publication of the World Bank Group.

[34] OECD, *Closing the Gender Gap* (OECD, 2011).

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[37] Anna Stupnytska et al., *Giving Credit Where It Is Due* (New York: Goldman Sachs Market Institute, 2014).

[38] International Finance Corporation, *MSME Finance Gap: Assessment of the Shortfalls and Opportunities in Financing Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Emerging Markets* (Washington, DC: International Finance Corporation, 2017), https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28881

[39] Stupnytska et al., *Giving Credit*.

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https://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/bank-lebanon-case-study.pdf/

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[44] Food and Agriculture Organization, *Women in Agriculture*.

[45] Mary Johnstone-Louis, "International Women's Coffee Alliance, Power Shift Case Study" (University of Oxford Said Business School, 2013).

[46] Scott, *Double X Economy*, 69-72, 84-86.

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