Editorial

Development practitioners have struggled for decades to effectively incorporate women into programming approaches. In the 1970s, Women in Development (WID) emerged as a best practice approach to women's development – an approach where the development of women involves separate interventions without reference to gender relations or mainstreaming. Although by the late 1970s, some development practitioners were already questioning the appropriateness of targeting women in isolation, WID continued to be widely applied to women's development through the 1970s and 1980s and beyond (and we still see evidence of this approach today).

The shift to Gender and Development (GAD) in development circles began in the mid-1980s and was marked by the publication of Caroline Moser's gender planning framework. According to Moser, analysis and interventions needed to be designed and conducted taking gender roles into account, and not considering women in isolation. For example, Moser examines the triple burden of women's work (productive, reproductive, community) and their inequality to men in terms of access to resources, services, opportunities and so on. However, until recently, a GAD approach was often not fully understood or incorporated into programming frameworks and practice – a reflection of the systems in which we live and the perspectives that we all bring to our work.

The achievements in the area of women's economic empowerment are statistically bleak. According to the 2011 UN Progress Report, only 53 per cent of the world's women participate in the labour force. Further, the work is often informal, hazardous and at a much lower pay than their male counterparts. In fact, of the 186 countries reviewed in the report, less than a third reported on wage parity. In those countries that did report on earnings, women typically earned between 25 per cent and 50 per cent less than men. Nevertheless, innovative programmes in some of the world's most challenging environments for women have led to economic growth *and* social empowerment.

As one who has focused much of her work on women's economic empowerment, I believe that the conceptual shift has happened, and now the pragmatic shift is emerging. Institutions such as the World Bank are advocating that development can only move forward in countries that embrace women's advancement, donors are re-visiting their mainstreaming approaches and programmes, and many countries enshrine equality and women's rights in their laws and constitutions.

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doi: 10.3362/1755-1986.2012.027, ISSN: 1755-1978 (print) 1755-1986 (online)

The papers in this issue of *EDM* provide evidence of the shift for women – microfinance has often led the way with its strong focus on women as borrowers and savers. Enterprise development (here as value chain and market development) has followed more slowly perhaps, but now there is a movement to rethink approaches, rework frameworks and provide practical tools to field teams.

A lively *Crossfire* between Murray and Everdene argues whether, despite the rhetoric, women's programming is still in the 'pink ghetto' of development. Interestingly, while they approach the debate from divergent perspectives, they both come round to the point that women and men working together will overcome the gender divide.

Kirsten provides evidence from the rural South African context that suggests that microfinance, delivered according to a particular methodology, improves the livelihood security and well-being of recipients. The methodology is based on the belief that access to microfinance alone is not enough. Therefore, the examined lending methodology is designed to assist clients in using their access to small loans to improve their livelihoods and strengthen their ability to negotiate both intra-household and marketplace dynamics.

In a study on savings groups in Malawi, Rasmussen demonstrates how they enable some of the poorest Africans (72.5 per cent women in his study) to earn not 30 per cent but 60 per cent interest on their savings. Rasmussen achieves this by applying the most widely used financial calculation of interest rates to panel data on 204 savings groups with 3,544 members. There, he found the median interest on savings was 62 per cent per year, or 3.8 per cent per month, benefiting savings group members even more than has been previously asserted.

Mayoux discusses experiences utilizing a community-led methodology – Gender Action Learning System (GALS) – with producers and traders in coffee, maize, fruits (avocados, pineapples and passion fruit), and beans in Kasese District, Western Uganda. Mayoux describes how this community-led value chain development methodology has brought about profound changes for significant numbers of women and men on sensitive issues such as gender-based violence and land ownership, as well as decision-making, division of labour, and women's access to health and education.

Strengthening women's economic empowerment within the M4P – Making Markets Work for the Poor – framework is the focus of the paper by Jones and Oakeley. M4P has become a widespread approach to pro-poor economic integration, and this article examines how gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment can be achieved more effectively within the framework.

These papers collectively illustrate that gains are being made in the realm of women's economic advancement, and even overall empowerment.

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