

# Teaching Development Economics from a Gender Perspective

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**RUNNING HEADER:** Teaching Development Economics from a Gender Perspective

**ABSTRACT:** An undergraduate course in development economics presents an ideal opportunity to introduce students to the importance of gender differences in economic outcomes. This article argues that a systematic integration of gender into development economics courses based on standard textbooks is feasible and desirable. We provide a gendered narrative of how to engender a development economics course using as examples topics that are commonly taught, and we show how gender-aware scholarly articles, classroom activities, and assignments can complement a course based on a standard textbook or set of articles. We engender three main sections of a prototype development economics course: meanings and measures of economic development; strategies for economic development; and salient issues in development; and we add a forward-looking section on creating equitable development.

**KEY WORDS:** Development economics, gender, women, curriculum, history of thought

**JEL CODES:** A2, J1, O1

An undergraduate course in development economics presents an ideal opportunity to introduce students to the importance of gender differences in economic outcomes, while at the same time helping them to gain in-depth understanding of economic development processes and to critically evaluate key economic concepts. However, integrating gender into an undergraduate development class entails a pedagogical challenge. Not only do most economics students in the Global North have a limited awareness of conditions in low-income countries, but they also lack scholarly grounding in gender inequality. They typically do not take courses in gender studies; the economic agent in the standard micro theory course is genderless and raceless; and macro theory remains at the level of aggregates. In a semester-long course, choices have to be made in how much preparatory background can be incorporated while covering traditional topics in development economics.

The standard economic development textbooks seek to meet this challenge largely through the “add gender and stir” approach, which usually entails discussing gender inequality in the context of poverty, farm productivity, labor market status, health, and education, and the demographic transition (Cypher 2021; Todaro and Smith 2020). These issues mostly are presented in a Box, Focus, Case Study, or brief sub-section that elaborates on gender dimensions of an issue, without altering the main narrative of the chapters. We argue that a more systematic integration is feasible and desirable—it is feasible, if new gender content complements existing development economics texts in a semester-long course, and it is desirable, as only through a systematic engagement with gender content can a development economics course truly convey the meaning and relevance of development processes in people’s lives. Specifically, a gender-aware development course has to highlight how development processes differentially affect women and men (also differentiated by class, ethnicity, and race) and how gender inequality at the household

or market level affects country performance and well-being. We propose that course content on gender be included in nearly every topic and assignment of a semester-long development economics course. This article provides a gendered narrative of how to engender a development economics course using as examples topics that are commonly taught and highlighting the extent to which gender inequality is covered in standard texts. Our online Appendix, in turn, elaborates on the gaps in coverage based on our review of two representative textbooks.<sup>1</sup> We also discuss how gender gaps in analysis may be remedied by incorporating feminist scholarship and related assignments and classroom exercises that allow students to reflect on questions of economic development using a gender lens.

Our article builds on earlier work in Mukherjee (2018), who designed a course that combines economic development topics with issues covered in labor economics and public policy courses. In this course, relevant gender concepts are introduced at the outset, followed by applications to selected topics in development economics. To relate the global to local development questions, Mukherjee complements the course texts with news articles on the US economy, examines US gender and race inequality statistics, and assigns country study diaries that include the US. We differ from this approach as we leave out the focus on the US and we propose integrating gender-awareness into every aspect of the course.

Incorporating gender into development economics courses has taken on even greater importance since the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc to people's health and livelihoods around the globe. The pandemic has laid bare and exacerbated gender (and other) inequities in the labor market and in the work of caring for children, the sick, and elderly. Emerging evidence indicates that women have experienced greater job losses than men in numerous countries, given their overrepresentation in industries that faced the most widespread business closures (Wenham

*et al.* 2020; ILO 2020). Evidence also shows that global lockdowns, school closures, and stay-at-home orders have resulted in increased care work that has fallen disproportionately on the shoulders of women (Bahn *et al.* 2020). In addition, large numbers of people contracted the virus and required care at home. Unless development economics courses include gender awareness of economic development processes, students will have an incomplete understanding of the full scale of the pandemic in low-income countries.

In what follows we first introduce frameworks of a typical development economics course and key features of a gender-aware scholarly analysis that can be useful for thoroughly engendering a development economics course. We use these frameworks in discussing three main sections of a typical development economics course: meanings and measures of economic development; strategies for economic development; and salient issues in development; and we propose a forward-looking section on creating equitable development. The readings we highlight in each section are illustrative of the gender-aware scholarship and of the potential topics that could complement standard texts. We also refer to sample resources, exercises, and assignments that instructors may find helpful in adding gender to their development economics course.

## **FRAMEWORKS OF DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS**

Development economics studies the economies of low- and middle-income countries by situating them in the context of the global economy that shapes the particularities, policy constraints, and options facing them. The field of development economics emerged in the post-World War II era as former colonies were becoming politically independent and Germany became a natural experiment in reconstruction of its ravaged economy by a large infusion of international funds. The context was the Cold War, where the US and USSR were vying to attract former colonies, shape their development paths, and showcase their successes. The main focus of the first

group of development economists in the 1950s and 1960s was how to put former colonies on a growth track by launching or restarting the industrialization process through large-scale public investment and import substitution. These economists operated within the Keynesian framework in the sense of the state having an important role in the economy. During this period, some development economists also highlighted the constraints posed by international trade and investment patterns, the ongoing hold of affluent countries on their former colonies, and the rising influence of the US as the hegemonic economic power. Regardless of perspective, the main unit of analysis in the field of development economics was the national economy, key sectors, or global regions.

It was not until the 1970s that scholars and practitioners in development economics turned their attention to questions of poverty, inequality, and rural development, largely in response to the perceived failure of industrialization to address these problems. Mounting empirical evidence pointed to increasing poverty and income inequality in the face of positive economic growth in numerous low-income countries. Development scholars and practitioners thus began to turn away from a paradigm of trickle-down growth toward a focus on directly tackling poverty and income inequality. The lens thus shifted from the workings of the macro economy to the micro (household) level and brought attention to rural populations.

By the end of the 1970s the import-substituting industrialization itself had reached its limits in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa due to constraints of external debt and the inability of many low-income countries to finance continued industrial development. The debt crisis that erupted in the early 1980s marked the beginning of a shift from inward-looking to outward-oriented production structures across countries. Governments adopted a new policy framework that prioritized paying down external debts, sought to eliminate domestic and international debt

burdens, privatize public goods and services, and open economies to foreign investment and financial flows. The new policy regime – neoliberalism – resulted in what is widely referred to as the “lost decade” in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa due to the policy-induced macroeconomic contractions. East Asian economies were spared this predicament as they pursued industrial policies that restructured their economies to create dynamic comparative advantage (Amsden 1989). Key elements of the neoliberal agenda remain to this day even as the meaning of development has evolved.

Much of the current gender-aware scholarship in economics originates in studies of low-income countries. Ester Boserup was among the first to provide the impetus to study gender inequality and to draw attention to the role of women as producers in her pioneering book, *Woman’s Role in Economic Development* (1970). Up to that point women were solely seen in their childbearing role and as the source of rapid population growth, while Boserup provided evidence for women’s economic contributions and how these were adversely affected by the development process. Boserup’s book opened up a research agenda that generated a substantial body of gender-aware scholarship on a wide range of topics in development economics.

Attention to gender inequality accelerated in the 1980s as gender-aware research showed that men and women were affected differently by macroeconomic policy reforms, and that gender inequality affected the macroeconomic outcomes of reforms, resulting in inefficiencies. The 1980s were also characterized by attention to the household as a site of both cooperation and conflict. Since then, the concerns about inefficiency and unfairness of gender inequality have combined to sustain attention to gender in development economics research. Contemporary undergraduate development economics texts now mention, albeit briefly, how gender inequality may impede overall well-being, and their chapters on the agricultural sector explore how women’s contribution

to development is hampered by their relative lack of land ownership and access to key agricultural inputs (Cypher 2021, Todaro and Smith 2020).

These concerns about gender inequality contributed to the emergence of feminist economics as a field of economic inquiry, with a focus on using economic theory and policy to promote gender equality and shared prosperity rather than simply achieve economic growth (Berik *et al.* 2009). Feminist economists have also critiqued narrowly defined views of economic activity as market-oriented production. Such views neglect the harmful effects of relentless market activity on the environment and the social fabric, and they also undervalue and render invisible unpaid care work (e.g. Folbre 1994; Power 2004; Benería *et al.* 2016). Feminist scholarship brought attention to motivations beyond self-interest and sought to understand the household and realms where prices do not hold and where transactions do not involve money or assets. Feminist scholars emphasized the interdependence of market and non-market activities in generating people's livelihoods and reproducing societies. They argued in favor of redefining the economy as a set of provisioning activities, rather than optimizing behaviors, and they demonstrated the centrality of gender in shaping macroeconomic outcomes.

Based on an evaluation of disparate bodies of gender-aware scholarship, Marilyn Power (2004) identified this emerging consensus in the practice of feminist economists. Power's pathbreaking article characterized five main characteristics of feminist economics: (1) a broader concept of the economy as provisioning activities that encompasses consideration of unpaid care work as a critical economic activity; (2) human well-being as a yardstick of economic progress and success of economic policies; (3) broadening of economic analysis to include political and social processes, power relations, and people's efforts in improving conditions of their lives through individual and collective agency; (4) recognition of ethical objectives in economic



frameworks; and (5) attention to inter-group differences by gender, class and race/ethnicity that constrain and shape economic opportunity and outcomes.

We propose the use of this perspective in the systematic integration of gender in a development economics course. The gender-aware readings we propose to complement standard development economics texts are illustrative of a number of these features of feminist economics. In addition, many of these readings rely on a broader set of research methods. The conventional practice among development economists in their empirical research is to develop a testable model and use an econometric method to test that model. The data for the statistical tests are mostly generated by census or survey questionnaires with pre-coded categories, and are most frequently collected and processed by others, often national governments or statistical agencies. While economists differ in the methods used to analyze the data, they share a lack of awareness of the problems of data-gathering and a common faith in the superiority of official data sets.

If we are to incorporate insights on how agency and power relations shape development outcomes, then a development course has to showcase the insights to be gained by broadening research methods. An important topic to teach in a gender-aware development course is the potential pitfalls associated with the research culture around large official data sets (Berik 1997). Students in an engendered development class can be taught to challenge this stance, even as they are learning to use quantitative methods applied to customary data sets in their economics courses. They should be exposed to data generated on the basis of researcher surveys and qualitative methods, which include unstructured interviews, focus groups, participant observation, as part of fieldwork, and archival work. Introducing students to the pros and cons of experimental methods, especially randomized control trials, will also help to put traditional survey-based methods into perspective. Over the last two decades, randomized controlled trials have gained a “gold standard”

reputation in development economics and are viewed as necessary to establish casual relationships in empirical investigations. However, they have also drawn criticism, especially for their small scale, limited timeliness and potential to tackle major development problems, external and even internal validity, implementation costs, ethical oversights, and technocratic orientation (Rodgers *et al.* 2020). Overall, students would gain additional insights from combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Qualitative methods not only help generate more reliable quantitative data by delineating the meanings of concepts which are to be measured, but also provide detailed information about the processes underlying economic outcomes without which our understanding would be incomplete.

As made clear in the remaining sections, engendering a development economics course can be achieved not only through incorporating gender-aware literature into the syllabus, but also through pedagogical tools such as statistical exercises, videos, and classroom activities with an explicit gender focus. The remainder of our article offers numerous suggestions for specific exercises, discussion questions, and videos, all of which are summarized in Table 1 and are organized by the key areas covered in our paper. In addition, Table 2 presents a list of sources for finding a broader set of pedagogical tools. Table 2 offers two useful websites for finding syllabi for courses on gender and economics, including development economics, as well as two websites with suggestions for documentaries and other types of films about gender and economics. The table also points to a comprehensive archive from UN Women containing teaching and training modules on various topics related to gender and development. Another UN agency, UNESCO, has also developed a comprehensive and extremely helpful catalog of various kinds of pedagogical resources related to gender equality. Finally, Table 2 provides five suggested websites that contain

gender-disaggregated data that students can use in statistical projects and assignments, including data on COVID-19 related indicators.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

[Insert Table 2 about here]

## **ENGENDERING KEY SECTIONS OF A DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS COURSE**

### ***Meanings and Measures of Economic Development***

At the outset of a development course it is useful to teach students that the meaning of economic development has evolved over time, and economists have offered alternative perspectives on its definition. The conventional wisdom equates economic development with economic growth, and assumes that growth is both necessary and sufficient for achieving overall prosperity. According to this view, every country follows the same path, experiencing structural change from an agricultural to an industrial economy and the eventual growth of the service sector. In the new millennium, this vision of economic development has been situated in international development frameworks for governing foreign assistance, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a blueprint for global development formulated at the UN's Millennium Summit in 2000, and since 2015 in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which frame the international development policy agenda until 2030.

The MDGs (and subsequently the SDGs) were built on assumptions of synergies between development and growth that do not always hold. In an application of these synergies, Sachs (2006) emphasized the crucial role of moving countries up the development ladder by relying on export growth based on low-wage jobs, unfettered by regulations. To make his case for these policies, Sachs highlighted the positive changes in Bangladesh in terms of women having access to an export job and having fewer children compared to the previous generations. He argued that

as a country moves up the growth ladder, working conditions will improve just as they did in the contemporary affluent economies. This instrumental use of gender equality to make an economic-growth argument has become commonplace in the new millennium as key international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, took interest in gender inequality. Such arguments tend to overlook dimensions of gender equality that may not necessarily be synergistically associated with growth.

In contrast to this well-traveled path, Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2003) defined development as the process of expanding people's capabilities—the non-monetary opportunities and outcomes that people seek to attain. They argued that success of economic development should be assessed according to the extent to which people have the capabilities to lead the kind of lives they want to lead and to be the person they want to be, which entails the ability to be healthy, to be safe from violence, and to seek education. According to the capability approach, income at the individual or national level is the means to enable the expansion of capabilities, which are the ends of economic development. Both the level of resources (attained through interconnected paid labor and unpaid care activities and entitlements from the state or community) and the capabilities that can be achieved, based on access to resources, are shaped by social institutions. Thus, while high national income level is positively correlated with high levels of basic capabilities across countries – such as the ability to live a long and healthy life – the crucial ingredient explaining this correlation is the set of institutional arrangements that shape the utilization of the proceeds of economic growth (Sen 1999). The capability approach is central to the practice of feminist economists as it emphasizes well-being as the yardstick of policy success, rather than income, and makes explicit the ethical concerns in the study of economic development. Development textbooks have also

begun to cover the capability approach in considering well-being and gender equality as objectives of development economics (Cypher 2021; Todaro and Smith 2020).

The formulation and regular reporting of the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) after 1990 rendered the HDI as the main contender to GDP per capita. The new millennium has also seen the introduction of alternative measures of aggregate economic performance and quality of life, including the Happy Planet Index (HPI), Happiness, and the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) (Brown 2017). Among these new indicators, the GPI is the only composite indicator that incorporates both the value of unpaid household and community work and the environment as contributors to economic well-being, and deducts the environmental and social costs of economic growth. The downside of the GPI is that due to its high data demands, it has mostly been estimated for high-income countries.

New composite gender indices estimated for numerous countries have also gained traction (Van Staveren 2013). A suite of gender-related indices was introduced within the HDI framework—specifically, the Gender Inequality Index (GII) and the Gender Development Index (GDI). Along with the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) by the World Economic Forum and the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) of the OECD, the UNDP indices facilitate tracking gender-differentiated capabilities and the resources and institutional inputs that enable these capabilities.

Students in an engendered development course can flesh out the relationship between meanings and measures of development in terms of both the aggregate and gender inequality measures. The standard texts introduce HDI and GII. We propose to add as assignment a critique of GDP per capita as a development measure in light of the Marilyn Waring documentary that continues to be relevant to contemporary debates on the meaning of well-being (Nash 1995).

Another assignment would invite interpretation of country performance on a selection of these composite indicators, asking students to examine how well the concepts are translated into measures, and how discrepancies in country performance may be explained. It is particularly useful to ask students to track and compare the performance of a high-income country with that of a low-income country and a country of the student's choice. Assignments could include using cross-country data from the UNDP, OECD, and WEF websites to explore relationships between the indicator of choice and its correlates.

### *Policy Strategies for Economic Development*

**Industrialization.** Development economists in the 1940s and 1950s emphasized the importance of industrialization, spearheaded by government policies, in fueling economic growth and structural transformation. Scholarly discourse on this earlier macroeconomic policy regime did not pay much attention to gender since countries embarked on import-substitution strategies well before gender awareness in development economics was commonplace. However, gender may be incorporated into course content on industrialization strategies, with assignments focusing on country case studies. A small number of case studies (of Chile, Uruguay, Malaysia) indicates that import substitution mostly generated jobs for men (Berik *et al.* 2008). The small share of women employed in manufacturing predominantly held “secondary-earner” jobs in simple manufactured goods such as garments and processed foods, while “breadwinner” jobs, found in heavy industries such as machinery and fabricated metals, were held predominantly by men.

**Stabilization and Structural Adjustment.** Since the early 1980s development scholars and policymakers have promoted market solutions, privatization, deregulation, and an outward-oriented strategy in improving economic performance. Neoliberal macroeconomic policies were adopted in the form of structural adjustment programs in the heavily indebted countries of the

Global South and supply-side policies in the Global North. Key policy objectives in the neoliberal agenda are price stability and foreign sector balance, which are often pursued through a set of stabilization and structural adjustment packages imposed by the major multilateral agencies in exchange for loans. Typically, these packages encompass an initial macroeconomic stabilization component (currency devaluation to reduce the balance of payments deficit and an austerity program to curb the domestic debt). Stabilization policies are followed by structural adjustment to prevent the recurrence of macroeconomic imbalances.

Structural adjustment most commonly includes removal of government price regulations and subsidies, privatization of public services and state-owned enterprises, the liberalization of trade and financial flows, and export promotion. However, the standard macroeconomic models upon which these policies are based do not consider gender as a dimension of analysis, thereby implicitly presuming that macroeconomic policies have gender-neutral effects. However, the disproportionate adverse impact of the neoliberal policy packages on the livelihoods of the poor, and poor women in particular, initiated research on the link between macroeconomic policies and micro-level outcomes through a gender and social class lens.

Because gender inequalities are embedded in social institutions, macroeconomic policies will affect men and women differently. Due to the constraints women and girls face in the household and in society, these policies entail additional drawbacks, especially for women in low-income groups (Elson and Çağatay 2000). Adverse impacts include disproportionate job losses for women in public sector contractions and increasing work burdens as women and girls have needed to cope with decline in the availability and quality of public services and the expenses of privatized education, healthcare, and water services. Thus, when analyses incorporate rather than ignore gender and class—the “social content” of macroeconomic policies—they show that neoliberal

reforms do not promote well-being in a broad-based manner. For example, Senegal borrowed heavily from the World Bank to construct irrigation systems to promote rice farming and improve food security, only to find itself on the brink of default in the late 1970s. The ensuing trade liberalization undermined domestic food production, and thereby the livelihoods of women producers, as local markets were flooded by cheap food imports (Koopman 2009). Yet gender-unaware analyses of these structural reform episodes will record the outcomes as success stories in terms of the aggregate metrics of budget deficit reduction and economic growth.

**Export-Led Industrialization and Growth.** In the 1970s and 1980s, the East and Southeast Asian high-growth economies relied extensively on labor-intensive, export-oriented manufacturing. These economies mostly defied neoliberal policy prescriptions as they pursued industrial policy and selective government intervention to move out of labor-intensive export niches. A relatively small but prominent group of economists, sometimes referred to as new developmentalists (Amsden 1989, Chang 2002), used the East Asian experience to conceptualize development as a transformation of the productive structures in a low-income economy. They argue that the state must play an active role in creating dynamic comparative advantage in low-income countries and defying the international rules that confine countries to production according to their colonial specialization.

Although East Asian economies moved out of this pattern of export specialization, many other low-income and middle-income countries continue on their low value-added, low-wage export-promotion paths and neglect development of local demand. This pattern is especially pronounced in garments, textiles, and electronics industries that are subject to intense price competition and downward pressure on wages. A gender-aware approach to industrialization strategy emphasizes the contribution of women workers to the “feminization of foreign currency



earnings” and to macroeconomic success (Samarasinghe 1998). As women’s share of manufacturing employment rose during these countries’ early export promotion drives, women remained clustered in low-paying occupations in export sectors due to gender norms that defined women as secondary earners. Discriminatory public- and private-sector hiring and promotion practices, as well as the exclusion of women from on-the-job training opportunities, also contributed to employment segregation. As a result, despite the strong demand for women’s labor and their increasing educational levels, the clustering of women in a few industries left women in a relatively weak position to bargain for wage increases to match their productivity gains (Seguino 1997).

Proponents of export-oriented growth policies have viewed the rise in women’s share of the labor force as a positive indicator of a win-win strategy—as a source of women’s empowerment and economic growth. However, critics have turned to a large body of evidence documenting poor working conditions, worker abuses, lack of union rights and discrimination by sex as firms face pressure in international markets to keep production costs low (e.g. Barrientos 2019). In addition, several studies have challenged the neoclassical view that discrimination is eliminated in competitive markets by demonstrating that gender wage gaps actually increased as a result of trade openness in several Asian economies, including South Korea, Taiwan, and India (Berik *et al.* 2004, Menon and Rodgers 2009). These gender-aware analyses highlight that high economic growth rates in countries that rely on exports of labor-intensive manufactures are fueled by low wages and gender wage inequality.

**Agriculture and Development.** Many agricultural economies are characterized by relatively low agricultural productivity of women farmers, which is linked to women’s limited access to agricultural inputs and their insecure land rights. For example, the value of agricultural output lost

due to the gender gap in productivity of farmers is estimated to be \$100 million in Malawi, \$105 million in Tanzania, and \$67 million in Uganda per year (UN Women *et al.* 2015). Studies across low-income regions have documented that the main explanation for the gender gap in agricultural productivity is not that women are less efficient cultivators; rather, there is an inefficient allocation of land, labor and fertilizer among household members (e.g. Doss and Morris 2000). Although access to land in particular may not always be a constraint that binds, it has implications for the scale of farming women can engage in and how productive they can be. This, in turn, affects their ability to generate a marketable surplus. Hence, as standard development texts also mention, greater gender equality in land ownership and in access to agricultural inputs could possibly increase women's engagement in agricultural markets, boost agricultural productivity, and contribute to overall economic growth (UN Women *et al.* 2015).

A growing body of evidence also shows that improving women's control over land can have powerful consequences for women's autonomy and household well-being (Quisumbing *et al.* 2014; Deere and León 2003). The availability of assets as collateral facilitates borrowing, which, among other things, gives women the capital required to finance home-based self-employment. In addition to facilitating greater access to credit, land rights can also strengthen the incentive for women to undertake long-term agricultural investments such as planting perennial crops, which, in turn, may free up women's labor for non-agricultural activities. Each of these changes helps to boost women's income-generating capacities, which in turn contributes to greater economic security of households. In practice, greater control over land in low-income countries has come primarily through land titling programs. A growing number of studies have documented beneficial effects of women's land rights on the capabilities of women and their families, including less

domestic violence and improvements in children's health status (Panda and Agarwal 2005; Menon *et al.* 2014).

### *Salient Issues in Development from a Gender Perspective*

**Poverty and income inequality.** The development economics textbooks we reviewed have some engagement with gender inequality, largely in their chapters and sections on poverty, population growth, education and health (Cypher 2021; Todaro and Smith 2020). Much of the development research on poverty and inequality relied on metrics that were based on household income data, such as the Gini coefficient, top-to-bottom income ratios, and Foster-Greer-Thorbecke measures of poverty. This research remained gender-unaware until a number of studies began to challenge the unitary household model and the assumption that resources and tasks are distributed equitably within a household (Koopman 1992; Sen 1999). Bina Agarwal's (1997) contribution on household bargaining also broke new ground in drawing explicit attention to the role of norms in governing the division of roles, responsibilities, and resources between household members along gender lines. It thus became clear that tracking income inequality with income data collected at the household level does not permit assessment of intra-household welfare, making it difficult to accurately measure income poverty at the individual level and to show how income poverty differs between men and women.

Women's relative deprivations extend to capabilities, especially in contexts where social norms and societal preferences devalue women and girls, and these measures are more insightful in assessing individual well-being. A well-known case is the "missing women" problem, taken up in development texts, which occurs in countries with strong cultural preferences for sons and is reflected in discrimination against girls and women in decisions about health care, schooling, and access to food. Sen (1989) drew attention to this missing women problem with evidence of

unusually high male-to-female population ratios in Asia and North Africa. This topic allows discussion in greater depth of the role of formal and informal institutions in shaping economic incentives and the behavior of parents to discriminate against daughters, and how these practices may persist even as country prosperity rises. The absence of social protection institutions for old age, relatively few employment opportunities for women, the relative cost of marrying off daughters, and strict family planning policies can reinforce the lower social value of women and the cultural preference for having sons. Discussion of women's health deprivations should go beyond the missing women problem. For example, poverty conditions and racist assumptions that permeate health policy in Sub-Saharan Africa combine with gender norms and the gender division of work to create higher HIV-risk for women compared to men (Stillwaggon 2008).

Another idea for the classroom related to individual poverty is to have students explore the idea of time poverty, which disproportionately impacts women in low-income countries owing to their heavy burdens of unpaid care work. Growing evidence from time-use surveys shows that women in low-income countries work more hours in a day as compared to men, but these working hours are primarily in unpaid household maintenance and subsistence activities rather than paid market work (Charmes 2019). As briefly mentioned in the textbooks we reviewed, the gender disparity in unpaid burden serves as a constraint on women's earnings and productivity in agriculture. Moreover, differences between men and women are largest during the prime child-bearing and child-rearing ages. Even when women engage in paid work, a large part of their time is spent in uncompensated labor. The absence of infrastructure, especially in rural areas, is an important determinant of the relatively high burden of household tasks borne by women.

Students may examine the concept of time poverty via a comparative assignment on time-use statistics by gender in selected countries. These assignments may be complemented by

readings that provide evidence on the correlates, consequences, and policy implications of time poverty. In rural Mozambique for example, being female is the main predictor of the probability of being time poor (Arora 2015). Women's heavier unpaid workloads can serve as a major constraint on their labor force participation and may not increase their decision-making power in the household. In addition, Gammage (2010) uses data from Guatemala to show how time-poverty measures may be used to ensure that popular income-poverty reduction programs such as conditional cash transfers do not exacerbate time poverty of women recipients.

A number of anti-poverty strategies have emerged in recent decades that draw on gender-differentiated research in development economics and explicitly incorporate women as key agents in the strategy. Well known among these strategies are microcredit and conditional cash transfer programs, both of which receive attention in development textbooks. These strategies are promoted with the twin goals of reducing poverty and gender inequality. A large body of work suggests that the targeted provision of small-scale loans through microfinance initiatives can support and incentivize women's labor market activities and promote economic welfare (de Aghion and Morduch 2005). However, there is evidence that microloans put poor women at high financial risk, fray social relations in rural areas, and the proliferation of microloans has shifted the burden of poverty reduction away from governments to the poor themselves (Banerjee and Duflo 2011; Karim 2011).

In their role as mothers, women have also become central to the implementation of conditional cash transfer (CCT) and other types of cash-grant programs. CCTs are prevalent across low-income regions and are used as a poverty reduction tool in which cash disbursements are made conditional on households undertaking certain actions, usually related to children's school enrollment and visits to healthcare providers for checkups and vaccinations. The programs aim to

reduce both current income poverty (and the associated child labor) through the cash transfer and intergenerational poverty through promoting health and education outcomes of children. Some programs have included support for women's education, training, and employment. Examples include Chile's *Solidario* program, Mexico's *Progresa* (now *Oportunidades*), and Brazil's *Bolsa Familia*, which have been linked to positive effects for women's decision-making power and schooling of girls (de Brauw *et al.* 2014). However, applying a time-use lens has also shown the increase in CCT-recipient women's overall workloads as they can no longer rely on their children's unpaid work in the household (Gammage 2010).

**Migration.** Teaching the topic of migration can also benefit from gender-aware scholarship (Benería *et al.* 2012). The new millennium has seen enormous waves of migration as higher-income countries with aging populations outsource more of their unpaid care work to migrant workers, especially women, from lower-income countries. This substitution of paid for unpaid care work typically performed by women applies not only to child care, but also to the care of elderly, sick, and disabled family members, and enables women's (former unpaid caregivers') paid employment. Foreign domestic care workers have become an increasingly important alternative to institutional care. Arlie Hochschild (2000), one of the first researchers to conceptualize and explore "global care chains" in the context of the feminization of migration flows, used the framing of "global value chains" of international trade analysis. A care chain describes "a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring" (Hochschild 2000: 131), whereby paid and unpaid care givers substitute for the lack of care and ensure that care needs are met. Women migrants, nurses in particular, have also been prominent among skilled health and welfare professionals taking up employment in care services sector in the Global North (Yeates 2009). These different streams of care workers contribute to a "care drain" and a "brain

drain” respectively from the Global South to the Global North, as global integration of care markets proceeds, with a mixture of costs and benefits to migrant care workers and their families.

Another gendered flow is that of construction workers – almost all male – from the Global South to the Gulf states and the Global North. A particularly useful documentary that traces the causes and impacts of men’s international migration is *Letters from the Other Side* (Courtney 2006), which depicts issues in the contemporary migration debate, including rising rural poverty under agricultural trade liberalization and the impact of migration on the families left behind. Migration has again gained the spotlight as Covid-19 lockdowns restricted migrants’ movement across and within borders, a topic that students can explore with the extensive reports published in the grey literature and news media on Covid-19 impacts. During the pandemic, migrant women working in the Global North were often considered to be essential workers employed in paid care jobs with insufficient social protection and precarious terms of employment that were already poor before the pandemic started (Khanal and Todorova 2021).

Global remittances have risen substantially in the past four decades both in levels and as a share of GDP, just as women have become a larger proportion of international migration flows (Le Goff and Salomone 2016). International financial organizations have hailed remittances as a potential source of funding for economic development, though the extent to which remittances actually contribute to development is not clear as remittances tend to be used for household consumption rather than investment. Rising international migration has occurred in a context of cuts in public budgets and privatization. Thus reliance on remittances represents a shift in the responsibility for poverty reduction, social security, and economic development away from governments toward individuals and their families. Women transfer about half of all remittances (Lopez-Ekra *et al.* 2011), so given that women on average earn less than men, this implies that

women are remitting a higher portion of their income than men. Remittance flows further differ by gender in that women migrants remit to a larger number of family members than men, and the duration of their remittances tends to outlast that of men (Petrozziello 2011). Proponents of the “remittances for development” approach overlook the underlying processes that generate high levels of remittance flows—women’s high propensity to remit, often under patriarchal obligations, and the temporariness of their migration (based on temporary work permits) that leaves them vulnerable to exploitative working conditions (Rosewarne 2012).

People migrate not only across international borders but also within countries. Numerous low-income countries have been experiencing rapid rural-to-urban migration and urbanization, driven by agricultural restructuring, loss of land and livelihoods, and often resulting in urban infrastructures unable to keep up with the influx of new people. Governments have attempted varying programs and schemes to limit the risks of economic hardship and poor health for migrant workers and their families and to deter rural-to-urban migration. India’s government stands out among these efforts with its National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) of 2005, a good example of a program that addresses both poverty and gender inequality. The program was specifically designed to encourage households to remain in rural areas by guaranteeing rural employment in public works. NREGA – which assures adults in all rural households at least one hundred days of paid work per year at the statutory minimum wage – has increased female labor force participation rates since a specific percentage of the work across locations is reserved for women. Although this policy reform addresses gender inequality in employment, students can be challenged to think about what does not get taken into account, including women’s unpaid work burdens (Chopra 2019).



**The Environment and Sustainable Development.** Sustainable development generally refers to economic development while protecting the environment, preventing the depletion of natural resources, supporting social life, and sustaining livable communities. As Kates *et al.* (2005) emphasize, sustainable development has economic, social, and environmental dimensions that were initially articulated in the Brundtland Commission Report of 1987 (WCED 1987). It encompasses intergenerational equity, current social equity, and limits on use of natural resources, given the current state of technology and social organization. Sustainable development gained formal recognition at the United Nations' Millennium Summit in 2000 that launched the MDGs and is thoroughly integrated in the SDGs.

The SDGs incorporate a more comprehensive goal on gender equality relative to the earlier MDGs (which framed gender equality only in terms of education), and they are attentive to promoting gender equality across most of the other 16 goals. A few SDGs also recognize the overlaps between environmental sustainability and gender equality, essentially acknowledging that sustainable development is not possible without attention to gender equality. Each SDG has several targets and appropriate statistics to track progress in attaining the targets (See the list of SDG targets and indicators at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>). Several components of the UNDP's gender indices, including the maternal mortality ratio and gender equality in secondary education, are also SDG targets that are being tracked.

The environmental consequences of economic activity are a central development issue for low-income countries as they seek to fuel growth through industrialization drives, engage in strip mining or import hazardous wastes to secure foreign exchange earnings. These economies are resource poor, either do not have environmental protections in place or do not enforce existing regulations. Environmental damages and climate change as a transnational issue adversely affect

low-income countries and the low-income groups within them. While the topic is vast (as covered in a chapter of Todaro and Smith (2020)), there is opportunity to impart gender awareness in a development course in a number of environmental issues. The Waring documentary, which called out counting environmental damage as contributing to growth, could be re-discussed (Nash 1995). Recent studies suggest that women are more susceptible than men to the adverse health effects of climate change, in terms of mortality in climate disasters, climate-driven food insecurity, and increased risk of physical, sexual, domestic violence in the aftermath of climate disasters (Neumayer and Plümper 2007; Sorensen *et al.* 2018). Given women's greater responsibility for daily provisioning, water scarcity and degradation of common property resources make them more vulnerable to health, nutrition, and income deprivations (Agarwal 2009).

Women's collective agency has been instrumental for environmentally sustaining equitable development. An early example to make this point in the classroom is India's Chipko movement, a systematic effort led predominantly by women to block commercial logging operations in the country's Himalayan regions. Their non-violent protest methods in the 1970s ultimately led the government to impose a ban on logging in the area. Another model for environmental movements around the globe is the Green Belt Movement, a broad-based, grassroots organization that emphasized planting of trees by women's groups in order to conserve the environment and improve women's livelihoods (Maathai 2004). Another case shows that in India and Nepal, community forest organizations that had proportionately more women on their executive committees were able to maintain healthier forests (Agarwal 2009). More broadly, integrating gender-awareness and ecological-awareness into conceptual and policy frameworks can have sweeping effects for sustainable development in all its dimensions.

## **LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE: CREATING EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Equitable development entails moving away from austere macroeconomic policies and structural adjustment to policies that strengthen domestic demand to fuel growth and improve capabilities. A course in development economics ideally ends with a section on strategies for more equitable development, over and above policies targeting the specific issues already discussed. This section would also provide examples of collective agency to remove institutional constraints that maintain gender and other inequalities in capabilities. As delineated by Power (2004), feminist economic analyses are attentive to both resource and capability inequalities and the power structures that maintain these inequalities or individual and collective action that removes them.

Feminist economists are attentive to how individual or collective agency is used to bring about improvements in capabilities. Feminists have taken up the capabilities analysis to explore how women exercise strategic forms of agency in relation to their own lives and in relation to the larger structures of constraint that position them as subordinate to men (Kabeer 1999). In Kabeer's framework, empowerment is characterized by an increase in people's ability to make important life decisions in cases when this ability had been constrained. Kabeer suggests that efforts to measure empowerment focus on changes in access to important public goods and resources (including health, education, assets, and employment), which are easier to measure than informal processes (such as power relations that are renegotiated in private spheres).

Investing in basic physical infrastructure, health, and education is a key component of an equitable development strategy, which can grow employment in ways to reduce unpaid work burdens, meet basic service needs, and reallocate women's time from unpaid to remunerated work. In a growing number of countries, participatory processes are put in place to ensure that government expenditures and tax policies are gender equitable, and there is preliminary evidence that this kind of fiscal policy promotes gender equality (Chakraborty *et al.* 2019). Gender-

responsive budgets illustrate the importance of participatory action in shaping and supporting policies and keeping the public's attention on implementation. Gender-equitable policy priorities may also be shaped by having women in decision-making positions (including trade unions, co-operatives, and political office). Evidence suggests that, as government officials, women often support decentralized service delivery, advocate for the needs of their constituents, spend more on education and health than their male counterparts, and engage less in corruption and graft. Gender-based quotas in public-sector leadership positions may contribute to different political processes that yield more favorable economic outcomes (Gammage *et al.* 2016).

This lesson has taken on even greater relevance during the COVID-19 pandemic with emerging evidence that countries that prioritized social spending before the crisis, especially spending on healthcare capacity and social security, did better in terms of limiting the number of cases and deaths. Women's agency (or potential to exercise agency to improve well-being) in the public domain is often proxied by decision-making power indicators, such as women's share of legislative seats at national or local governing bodies, managerial/administrative positions. A fruitful exercise in a development course would be for students to explore the sex-disaggregated data sources on COVID-19 summarized in Kabeer *et al.* (2021) and track whether countries led by women (or countries that had higher representation of women in elected office or countries that followed gender-responsive budget practices) had better outcomes during and after the pandemic.

We also recommend that instructors remind students that the enactment of innovative policies is necessary but not sufficient for achieving the desired ends. Enforcement also matters. There are too many countries with comprehensive legal codes but insufficient means or will to enforce them, which contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequalities. This point is particularly true of low-income country labor markets that still exhibit widespread violations of core labor

standards, gender discrimination in pay and employment, and large numbers of workers with no labor law coverage. Viable enforcement structures remain a top policy priority, with the ultimate goal of generating self-sufficient monitoring programs and sufficient resources for governments to protect as many workers as possible. Collective agency is crucial to ensure that enforcement efforts are funded.

The gap between laws and norms is one way in which change may be blocked. States may pass legislation in favor of gender equality, but its enforcement will be difficult in the absence of normative change (Gammage *et al.* 2016). Norms operate not only in the marketplace but also in the household, governing the division of roles, responsibilities and resources between household members. Changing social norms can thus be effective in achieving gender-equitable development. Gender norms can change as part of larger processes associated with the structural transformation of economies, democratization, labor migration, and technological advances. Gender norms can also be renegotiated through the collective agency of social movements and by civil society action (Benería *et al.* 2016).

## **CONCLUSION**

Systematic integration of gender awareness in a development economics class can have far-reaching effects on students' understanding of the processes of economic development. This teaching goal can be achieved not only through incorporating gender-aware literature into the syllabus, but also through pedagogical tools such as statistical exercises, videos, and classroom activities with an explicit gender focus. Students will leave such a course appreciating the vital importance of gender equality and women's well-being in the development process. They will also have a more intuitive grasp of the mediating factors through which communities, governments, and markets impact the well-being of individuals as countries grow.

This paper's proposed modification to the traditional teaching of development economics focuses attention on gender content. Teaching a standard development economics course from a gender perspective addresses the important issue of how economics can break away from gender unawareness. There are still persistent gender gaps in the economics profession, some of which are perpetuated through a curriculum that is not gender aware. A large literature, much of it in this journal, has documented the relatively low representation of women among students choosing to take economics courses and major in economics (e.g. Jensen and Owen 2001; Emerson et al. 2012). These issues at the undergraduate level are symptomatic of additional problems with the persistently low representation of women among economics faculty members and the chilly climate that women economists continue to face (Lundberg and Stearns 2019). Offering a development economics course with an explicit gender dimension could potentially attract additional students – women and men – who otherwise might find economics to have little relevance. With this innovation, prospective economists will gain gender awareness that could make the profession and policymaking more welcoming to women.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> The online appendix is available at:  
[https://figshare.com/articles/online\\_resource/Online\\_Appendix\\_for\\_Teaching\\_Development\\_Economics\\_from\\_a\\_Gender\\_Perspective\\_/16992607](https://figshare.com/articles/online_resource/Online_Appendix_for_Teaching_Development_Economics_from_a_Gender_Perspective_/16992607).

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TABLE 1: Classroom Discussion Questions, Exercises, and Assignments by Section of Prototype Course

<b>Questions/Exercises/Assignments for Each Section</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<i>Meanings and Measures of Economic Development</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write or present a critique of GDP per capita as a development measure in light of Marilyn Waring’s documentary.</li> <li>2a. Interpret a country’s performance in gender equality using one composite gender index. Compare with a high-income and a low-income country.</li> <li>2b. Discuss in class: what are the similarities and differences between these four composite indicators?</li> <li>3. Monthly ‘Shining Star’ in-class tribute to a feminist scholar in development economics usually ignored in mainstream courses. For this section of the course: Naila Kabeer’s work on women’s empowerment.</li> </ol>	<p>Show film: <a href="#"><i>Who’s Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies and Global Economics</i></a>  <a href="#">UN Gender Inequality Index (GII)</a>  <a href="#">UN Gender Development Index (GDI)</a>  <a href="#">WEF Global Gender Gap</a>  <a href="#">OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index</a>            Show film: <a href="#"><i>Naila Kabeer: Breaking the Wall of Gender Inequality</i></a>.</p>
<i>Policy Strategies for Economic Development</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct case study of export-led growth strategy and implications for women workers, in light of documentary on blue jeans factory in China and/or Maquiladora factories in Mexico.</li> <li>2. Assign a country case study on gender equality and macroeconomic policy. Students focus on a particular policy regime and time period, such as import substitution or stabilization and structural adjustment, and show the differential impacts by gender using a literature review and some descriptive statistics.</li> <li>3. Monthly ‘Shining Star’ tribute. For this section of the course: Stephanie Seguino’s work on inequality and economic growth.</li> </ol>	<p>Show film. Possibilities include <a href="#"><i>China Blue; Maquilapolis</i></a>; and <a href="#"><i>Pins and Needles</i></a>.</p> <p>EconLit, Scholar.Google.</p> <p>Show film: <a href="#"><i>Who Gets the Bad News of Capitalism?</i></a></p>
<i>Salient Issues in Development from a Gender Perspective</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete a comparative assignment on time poverty for men and women using time use data for the U.S. and another country. Students can also create their own time use diary and impute value of their unpaid time.</li> <li>2. Focus on a topic (such as health or education) and examine cross country data on a component indicator in one of the above composite indices.</li> <li>3. Discuss gendered dimensions of migration in light of documentary on migration of men from Mexico and women from the Philippines.</li> </ol>	<p><a href="#">Multinational Time Use Study</a>  <a href="#">Levy Institute Project on Time Poverty</a></p> <p>GII, GDI, GGGI, SIGI described in text.</p> <p>Show film: <a href="#"><i>Letters from the Other Side, paired with Chain of Love</i></a>.</p>

4. Discuss pros and cons of randomized control trials and assign a specific RCT that examines gender impacts to evaluate these pros and cons.
5. Monthly 'Shining Star' tribute. For this section of the course: Bina Agarwal's work on bargaining within the household.

*Looking toward the Future: Creating Equitable Development*

1. Explore sex-disaggregated data on COVID-19 and track whether countries led by women had better outcomes during the pandemic
  2. In-class activity: ask students questions on gender norms from World Values Survey questionnaire and compare their responses with country results
  3. Students create a final video project on creating equitable development and all videos are shown in an end-of-semester mini film festival.
  4. Monthly 'Shining Star' tribute. For this section of the course: Nancy Folbre's work on caring labor.
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Review in Rodgers *et al.* (2020). RCT case study: [microcredit and gender](#).

Show film: [Prof Bina Agarwal on the challenge of gender inequality](#).

Sex-disaggregated data sources in Table 1

[World Values Survey database](#)

[Google Docs Sample Assignment by Jacqueline Strenio](#)

Show film: [The Economics of Care](#).



TABLE 2: Helpful Resources for Teaching Gender and Development Economics

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<b>Sample Syllabi</b>	
International Association for Feminist Economics, Course Syllabus Catalog	<a href="http://www.iaffe.org/pages/resources/syllabus/">http://www.iaffe.org/pages/resources/syllabus/</a>
Exploring Economics: Syllabi and Other Resources	<a href="https://www.exploring-economics.org/en/discover/syllabus-gender-relations-and-economics/">https://www.exploring-economics.org/en/discover/syllabus-gender-relations-and-economics/</a>
<b>Online Modules</b>	
UN Women Training Courses on Topics in Gender and Development	<a href="https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/portal/">https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/portal/</a>
<b>Film Catalog</b>	
Women Make Movies	<a href="https://www.wmm.com/">https://www.wmm.com/</a>
Gender and Globalization Film Suggestions	<a href="http://www.iaffe.org/weblog/2013/04/02/gender-and-globalization-film-suggestions/">http://www.iaffe.org/weblog/2013/04/02/gender-and-globalization-film-suggestions/</a>
<b>Classroom Activities and Pedagogical Resources</b>	
UNESCO Resources for Educators – Classroom Activities on Gender Equality (Sustainable Development Goal #5)	<a href="https://en.unesco.org/themes/education/sdgs/material/05">https://en.unesco.org/themes/education/sdgs/material/05</a>
<b>Gender-Disaggregated Data for Statistical Exercises</b>	
Data2x COVID-19 Resources: Gender Data	<a href="https://data2x.org/resource-center/gender-and-data-resources-related-to-covid-19/">https://data2x.org/resource-center/gender-and-data-resources-related-to-covid-19/</a>
UN Women’s Women Count Data Hub	<a href="https://data.unwomen.org/">https://data.unwomen.org/</a>
World Bank, World Development Indicators	<a href="https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/world-development-indicators">https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/world-development-indicators</a>
Demographic and Health Survey Program STATcompiler	<a href="https://www.statcompiler.com/en/">https://www.statcompiler.com/en/</a>
International Labour Organization ILOSTAT	<a href="https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/">https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/</a>

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