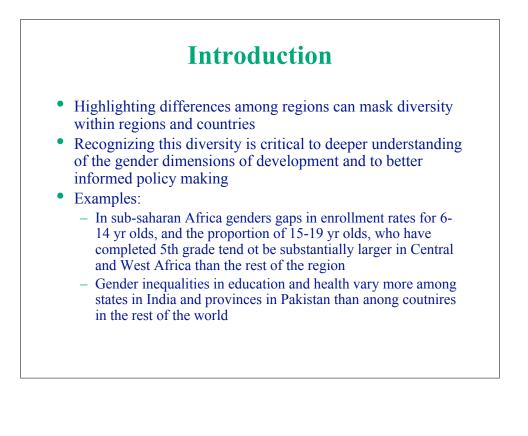


# **Patterns of Gender Inequality within Regions and Countries**

**January 30, 2003** 



## **Gender and Poverty**

- To what extent are gender inequalities associated with poverty?
- Are gender inequalities more severe among the poor than the non-poor?
- Do persistent inequalities in rights, resources, and participation translate into gender differences in poverty?
- Are particular groups of women (or men) more likely to be poor?

# Gender inequalities tend to be greater among the poor

- This is particularly true for household investments in education and health
  - Gender disparities in school enrollment rates tend to be greater among the poor than among the rich
  - Also true for mortality of children under five
  - The tendency to favor boys is stronger among the poor than the rich
- Higher income does not always imply greater equality. In some countries, gender disparity confers status on the family.
  - For example: higher a family's socioeconomic status, the greater the investment in female modesty and seclusion - symbols of status

#### Are Women Poorer than Men?

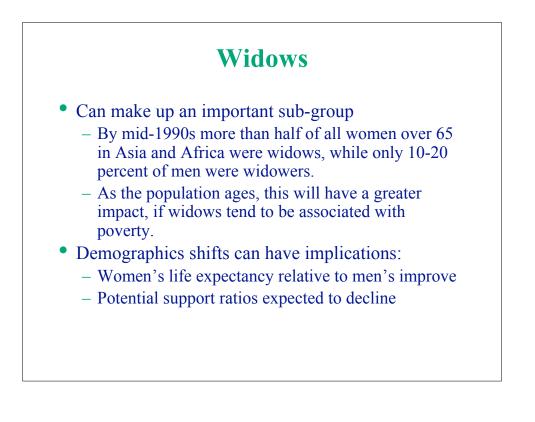
- Little in known abou the relative numbers of women and men in poverty (as measured by income or consumption).
- An estimate, widely quoted, is that 70 percent of the world's poor are now women
  - This implies a ratio of 2.3 poor females to every poor male - a sex imbalance among the world's poor of 900 million women and girls to 400 million men and boys. (Population data does not support this.)
- Why is estimating difficult?
  - Most data is based on household data
  - So compare female-headed households to maleheaded households - evidence mixed

# Are women "time poor" relative to men?

- Worldwide women perform bulk of child care and household maintenance
- Women in most setting combine household work with market or non-market work to generate income or raise household consumption -work often not captured in traditional labor force statistics
- Gender differences in time spent working vary across developing countries
  - Women commonly work an hour or more a day than me
  - In rural Kenya women work nearly three hours more a day than men
  - Some evidence this is more true in poorer households

### **Groups at Risk**

- Widows and women living along
  - At the bottom of the income distribution
  - Lower levels of consumption
  - Why?
    - Poorer access to education and other productive assets, weaker property rights, fewer savings than men
    - Older women less likely to have marriage support or a pension
    - Some societies widows face cultural constraints that limite their ability to ensure a basic stand of living in an old age (restrictions on remarriage, place of residence, inheritance, etc.)



### **Summary**

- Gender disparities have narrowed in the past several decades, but they have done so unevenly over time and across geographic regions and socio-economic divides
- Still gender challenges: Systematic disadvantages in rights, resources, and voice in almost all parts of the developing world
- Gender is also a development issue examples:
  - When low investment in female education translates into poorer health and nutritional practices by mothers, all children will be impacted
  - Limits on participation means a large part of the country's talent, skill, and energy remains untapped