

WORLD BANK in collaboration with the PNG Institute of National Affairs

GENDER AND ECONOMIC CHOICE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

RESULTS FROM A RAPID QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT IN SIXTEEN DISTRICTS

MARJORIE ANDREW
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FOCUS OF THE STUDY

Because men and women perform different roles, they may have different experiences, knowledge, talents and needs. Gender analysis explores these differences so policies, programmes and projects can identify and meet the different needs of men and women.

The study was designed to explore the gender dimensions that surround economic decision-making processes, and whether and how they may be changing.

WHY ECONOMIC CHOICE?

Some qualitative data was collected. However, the main information gathering tool used in the survey was the Focus Group Discussions to obtain respondents views, and experiences:

- To deepen our understanding of trends by exploring women's, men's and youth's key choices about education, marriage and children, occupations, accumulation and protection of major productive assets.**
- To understand the choices that profoundly shape one's productivity, earning power, resilience to shocks, and social standing.**
- How might the gender norms surrounding these choices be shifting?**

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The FGD instrument had a total of 26 closed-ended questions, and 19 different topics with multiple probing open-ended questions. Local researchers convened 63 focus groups in 16 communities. A total of 589 females and males participated in the focus group discussions (FGDs), comprising 306 adults over 25 years of age and 279 youth aged 17-25 years

Fifty-one per cent (301 people) were female. Overall, the proportion of participants from rural communities was 94 per cent, with 6 per cent of participants from an urban community.

COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRES

The Community Questionnaire had a total of 147 closed-ended questions, and 22 open-ended questions.

One or two key informants were selected and interviewed in each survey site.

A total of 24 Community Questionnaires were administered. 28 informants were interviewed of which 11 were female.

THE SURVEY SITES

The survey sample was able to meet the following from the given list of criteria:

Urban:

a better-off neighbourhood near a high school or university: NCD.

Rural:

A village near an active market: North Bougainville District, Hagen District, Sinasina Yonggomugl District and Goroka District;

A prosperous village close to non-active market: Manus District and Rigo District,

A less prosperous area with primarily subsistence or local production: Huon Gulf District.

THE SURVEY SITES

An area producing commodities for export:

- **oil palm in Alotau District, Kavieng District, Talasea District, and Sohe District;**
- **tuna fisheries in Sumkar District and Wewak District;**
- **logging project in Vanimo Green District;**
- **coffee in Goroka District; and,**
- **mining in Middle Fly District.**

COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

Rural communities are highly vulnerable to natural disasters, as well as the rising cost of goods and services. Many people's livelihoods have been greatly affected by crippling events over the past ten years in the survey communities.

Despite these circumstances, seven communities were rated as being more prosperous now than ten years ago. No change was reported for four communities, and four were said to be less prosperous now than ten years ago.

Most informants did not perceive their communities as being poor, no matter how they defined that word. Only four communities were reported to have 75%-100% as poor in their community, the remainder of villages saw the share of poor people in the village being below 30%.

COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

Aspects that can be having a POSITIVE impact on gender equality and gender dynamics:

- There are local governance structures in place which women are starting to participate in, especially at ward level, village planning committee, and some on LLG council.
- Most men and women have access to use customary land to grow produce for own subsistence and for sale
- There are limited opportunities for women to get paid work, but there are possibilities in the public sector, and in urban centres, rural projects.
- Daily transportation is available all year round for most rural communities, to travel in to urban centres, to access services, commute to school, or to market
- Local authorities taking steps to improve management of markets, creating safe, orderly, clean places which can increase levels of trading
- Increased access to information, communication and networking through use of cell phones and radio

COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

Aspects that can be having a **POSITIVE** impact on gender equality and gender dynamics:

- **Improved access to Elementary and Primary education for rural communities**
- **Access to health facilities okay but erratic (eg. 5 new clinics while 3 closed over 10 year period)**
- **Some awareness about family laws**
- **Leadership provided by the village chiefs, elders, as well as women and youth leaders, was pointed out as a key to managing tensions and preventing violence at the community level or conflict with other communities or ethnic groups in the area, and prevent sale of drugs.**
- **Women's organisation identified in many communities as most important and active in the community. Many are church-based and interact outside of the community.**
- **In a handful of communities, church groups - mainly women run - provide assistance to help the elderly, disabled, widows, the sick and the poor in their village and sometimes in neighbouring villages.**

COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

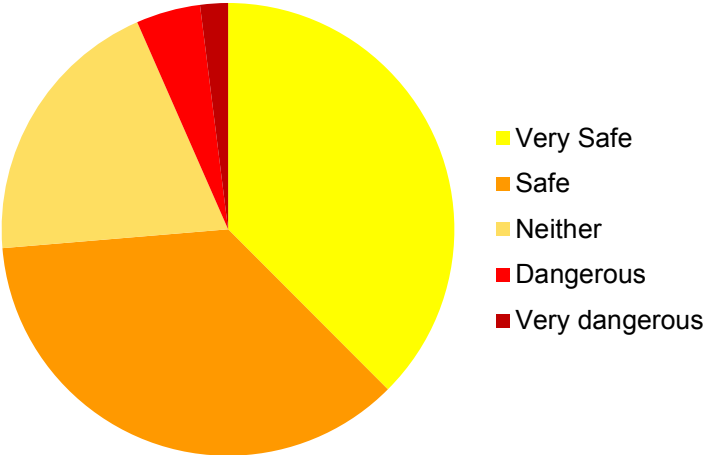
Aspects that can be having a **NEGATIVE** impact on gender equality and gender dynamics:

Community safety

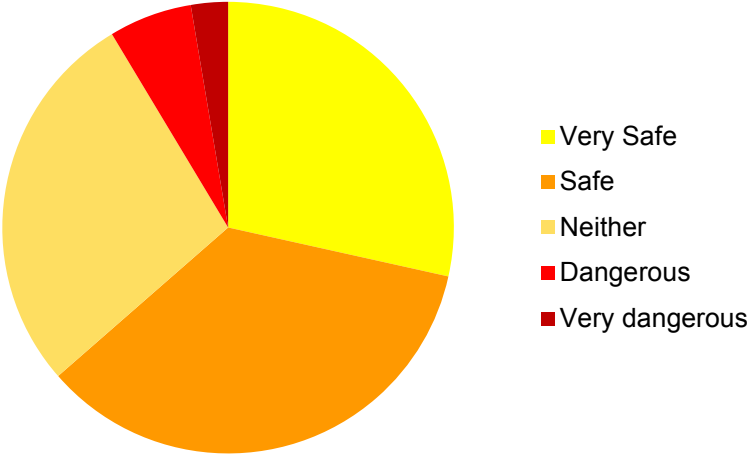
- The majority, **57%** of female adult respondents said that they felt very safe ten years ago. But now, only **22 %** of the same group felt very safe.
- **Eight per cent** of women rated their community as being now 'very dangerous' with frequent thefts and assaults at all times of the day, and **6%** of men said that their communities were dangerous.

COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

**Chart 1: Safety in the Community
10 years ago, Male Responses**

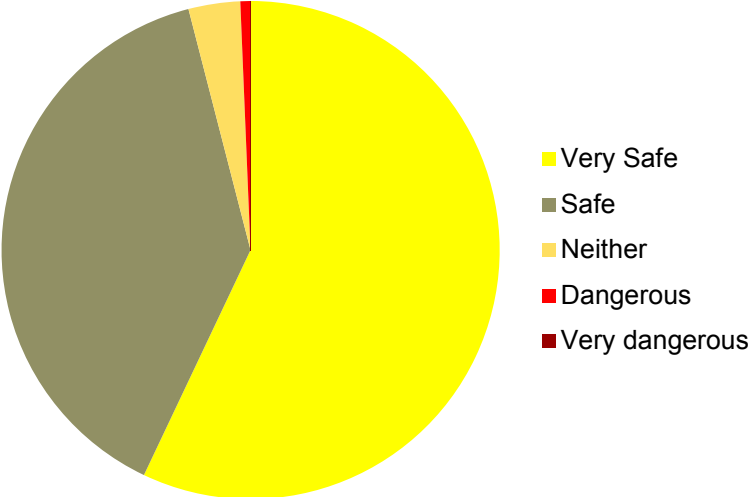


**Chart 2: Safety in the Community
now, Male Responses**

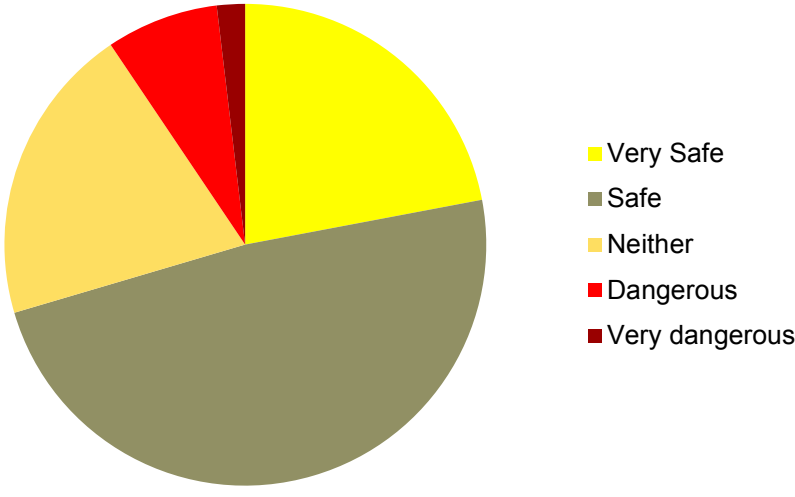


COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

**Chart 3: Safety in the Community
10 years ago, Female Responses**



**Chart 4: Safety in the Community now,
Female Responses**



COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

Aspects that can be having a **NEGATIVE** impact on gender equality and gender dynamics:

Community safety

- **The tensions around land disputes indicate that there are land shortages in these communities and or landlessness by the residents particularly in settlement areas within oil palm estates and those residing in areas bordering urban centres**
- **Youth's involvement in drugs and alcohol is another aspect of life in the community that parents see as changing for worse. All adults would like to see more awareness to change the mindset of their youths and mothers worry this is a bigger trouble brewing if nothing is done to deal with issue of youths' taking up drugs and alcohol. According to the men, people drank in moderation or did not drink at all in the past.**
- **Ten years ago, There was respect for others in the community; people did not steal and there was no crime in the community. But with increasing population numbers, and migration by outsiders, the men see these as contributing to decreasing standards of quality of life in the community.**

COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

Aspects that can be having a **NEGATIVE** impact on gender equality and gender dynamics:

- **Limited access to information about family planning, and reproductive health services.**
- **Ten of the fifteen communities do not have a lower secondary school (Grades 9 and 10), and for most this has been the situation for the last ten years.**
- **Fourteen of the survey communities had no upper secondary school (Grades 11 and 12) located nearby.**

COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

Aspects that can be having a **NEGATIVE** impact on gender equality and gender dynamics:

- **Very few households with access to piped water and almost all the rural villages had no access to public sewerage system – time and effort taken by females to fetch water, as well as issues of safe, clean water available.**
- **Most households in the rural communities did not have access to electricity.**
- **Eleven of the fifteen villages did not have any type of group that dealt with finance, credit or savings.**

CHOICES ABOUT EDUCATION

- **More than 60% of the survey respondents had left school early.**
- **A higher proportion of adult men had no formal education (14.3%) compared to adult women (8 %). A 6.3% difference.**
- **A higher proportion of male youth (9.4%) had not gone to school compared to the female youth (3.5%). A 5.9 % difference.**
- **Of those who completed school, 29% of adult females had reached grades 10-12, which was slightly higher than the adult male group at 22%.**
- **Much more female youth (48 %) had reached grades 10-12 than the male youth participants (35.5%).**
- **The youth are better educated than the adult group.**
- **Indication that females are staying longer in school (to Grades 10-12) than males.**

CHOICES ABOUT EDUCATION

- **The majority of respondents had decided largely on their own to leave school early.**
- **The key reason for the respondents leaving was due to inability to pay school fees.**
- **The second main reason given by youth was due to family problems. Parents had separated or died, resulting in the student being too upset, losing interest in continuing school, or the child having to look after the elderly, sick parent and siblings.**
- **Pregnancy and early marriage were given as the third most mentioned reason for not completing school by female youth.**

CHOICES ABOUT EDUCATION

- For male youth, the second most frequent reason given was mainly due to poor academic performance and an attitude of '*mi-less*', meaning he is tired, has given up and does not see any benefit to continuing school.
- Other significant reasons given were for boys, being expelled for misbehaviour and consumption of alcohol, illicit drugs, or homebrew. Similar levels of responses given indicating they lost interest in school.
- Students felt pressure or were urged to stay back home to help parents with either care, working in the garden, looking after land, cash crops or other business activities.

CHOICES ABOUT EDUCATION

- **Youth who have not been given the opportunity to complete their education, desire to go back to school. Even those who left school because of their own negative attitude regret later regret having left, or not completed their education.**
- **When asked what they would like to have them stay in school, they said they needed encouragement, better learning resources, besides financial support.**
- **When faced with constraints in paying school fees, preference is given to the eldest child and the male child over girls and younger siblings.**

DESIRED SKILLS

When participants were asked what skills are important these days, both male and female youth lean towards making money but in different ways:

- males see having technical trades such as mechanics, electricians, and plumbing, carpentry, agriculture, fishing and farming skills as essential,
- while females see having skills to run a business, office skills, cooking, sewing. Life skills and vocational training as essential for making a living in their community.
- Parents want relevant curriculum for their children:

“Our children must receive good education for community development.”

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

- **People's descriptions of what constituted a good wife in the past are largely similar to those of the present. The good wife in the past was pictured as the caretaker of the children, the home, as well as caring for relatives and others in the community. However, it is evident that for women to fulfil this role, she is now expected to find ways of making an income, to take care of the family.**
- **One of the findings of the survey is that immense pressure is now being placed on both women and men to provide income and food, and to manage money wisely. When these needs are not met, it leads to domestic violence, and to the community becoming less 'safe' through stealing from others.**

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

- **A significant number of survey responses show that people welcome gender equality as a good thing. To adults, it means reaching an understanding, sharing ideas together, solve problems and reach an agreement.**
- **The change is significant, as space is being given to women in the marriage relationship to negotiate a better partnership in terms of fulfilling responsibilities.**

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

- **Significant change has occurred with marriages no longer conducted in the same way as in the past. Many now choose their own partners and live together without the parents' approval. When people live together this is recognized as marriage.**
- **Most participants said that girls got pregnant at too early an age between 15 and 19 years old, and youth preferred to delay the time when they start having a family to the mid-twenties, and to have smaller number of children of 2-3, as it was expensive to pay for school fees, and the cost of living was too high.**
- **It was seen that men in the survey communities dominate women's decisions regarding use of family planning and number of children women should have. There is need therefore to understand men's behaviour and beliefs towards fertility and family planning, as this is crucial for the design of family planning policies and programmes must involve men.**

CHOICES ABOUT WORK

- **The reasons given as to what were good jobs in their community were: 1) it is easy to do, and we are close to the bush and land is available; 2) there is no need for certificates, we can use our own abilities; 3) we don't need to fear about breaking the law; 4) we can survive on the money they make from these kind of activities, we don't need to pay for expensive things like in the city.**
- **The other lesser mentioned jobs in the community seen as being good were semi-skilled and skilled occupations, which required a form of licence, certificate, or diploma, and these included: store keeper, PMV operator, teacher, electrician, brick layer. While these were jobs they aspired to, they thought they were good because they could provide a service to the community as well as benefit themselves.**

CHOICES ABOUT WORK BY WOMEN

- **For women, it was through the help of friends and relatives that they could find employment, but it was noted that more women worked for pay now than ten years ago.**
- **However, for most communities women found it difficult to find a private sector job, and for only four communities it was possible to get private sector employment with help from friends.**
- **It appeared a bit easier for women to get work in the public sector and urban areas.**
- **If there were relatives in another place, then families were prepared to let a female go to find work, or take up employment in another place.**
- **It is recognised that employers are interested in get those with grade 10-12 certificates.**
- **Male youth expressed that they feel that they were being discriminated against when employers prefer to recruit females than males for jobs.**
- **The three Highland districts, female youth said that they were encouraged to move around to find work and generate income, especially to help support their families. Other communities would only let them work in the same district.**

POWER AND FREEDOM

Top step

The women and men composing the top levels of the LOPF created by each community had similar characteristics: 1) they were wealthy, owning land and resources; 2) they were decision-makers; 3) they distributed their wealth and assisted others. Of all these characteristics, land ownership including resources, gardens and property — the accumulation of wealth and the ability to share and assist others — was the ultimate indicator of their placement on this rung of the ladder.

The value given to land and property ownership, and the ability to share and help others, are qualities that give a man or a woman status, respect and power in Papua New Guinea. An uneducated person, or someone who has lost their job, can still maintain their position as being powerful and having status on the top step as long as they have land and cash crop plantations/gardens (adult males, North Bougainville). In many of the communities it was emphasised that a man is expected to share his wealth with everyone.

POWER AND FREEDOM

Bottom Step – No wealth, no decision-making power, unskilled

- **Adults from all study communities described women and men at the bottom level of the LOPF as lacking everything that those on the top step had: wealth, decision-making capacity, education, skills and jobs.**
- **Male and female adults from most of the communities said that the women at the bottom of the ladder are widows, single mothers, divorced and deserted wives. The lowest levels consist of lazy men, fatherless children, drunks and unemployed, wives of drunks, landless and poor people and promiscuous women.**
- **This means that when women are completely dependent on their husbands for income, and when men die or depart from the home, or even when he moves to the bottom of the LOPF through unemployment, women's freedom and power changes from the top step to lower steps, unless she has another means of support, i.e. her own employment or business activities.**

MOVEMENT ALONG THE LOPF

- Overall, more survey communities have men to have moved up the ladder to the top step compared to women. A higher number of communities have a downward movement for women, than men. But where there was movement of women up the ladder, there was greater share of women able to make it to the top step, than men did, ten years ago and currently.
- This suggests that for men, there are a limited number of leadership positions available and perhaps power and wealth is controlled by a few, rather than shared with more men.
- Women's power seems to be measured differently from that of men. The emphasis for women is on their leadership roles, employment and income, not so much for the land and resources and redistribution of wealth, characteristics by which men are assessed by each other.
- More women are now seen to have money, they are in positions of leadership and can speak in public, and have the means to be mobile so that they can travel to places, become educated, and do what they want provided they have the husband's support.

MOVEMENT ALONG THE LOPF

The factors that caused women's and men's movement up the LOPF were almost the same. Overall, power, wealth, community contribution and education are common features of social mobility for all males across all survey sites.

Community contribution (actively giving, participating and leading and working), leadership responsibilities and some wealth enables women more upward social mobility. Some factors cause both men and women to move up and down; social standing that comes with wealth, leadership and contribution and giving to community, education, jobs and elections apply to both men and women.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- **Domestically, gender norms and cultural practices continue to largely determine the distinct roles men and women take on, but women are now expected to generate income to support the family in addition to carrying their domestic responsibilities.**
- **Economic cooperation between men and women is increasingly required in order to generate the wealth to maintain the family and its position in the community and clan.**
- **Women are generally perceived to be better managers of money, as they tend to save more, and spend the money on the family as a whole. However, while women take on responsibility of earning money in various ways, the survey revealed that in most cases women did not have complete say over how they managed their income and business decisions, but that a significant share of adult men interviewed would allow women to control financial matters, because they respected what women had worked hard to produce, and saw women as being better able to do this.**

CONCLUSION

- **Rural communities are experiencing many changes; youth hold different values, and need help to transition to the life of education, adulthood and work.**
- **It is apparent that more boys especially are dropping out of school, not seeking work, consuming alcohol and drugs, becoming teen parents, with few structured activities to be engaged productively.**
- **Serious questions about the approach used for educating male youth and the continuing failure to help boys develop positive attitudes to school and to apply themselves to complete their education.**
- **Indicators show that domestic violence and community safety are worsening, and are likely to continue to do so unless the issue of male youth dislocation is addressed.**
- **The costs to the society are high: literacy problems, undereducated population, low productivity, weak social cohesion.**

CONCLUSION

- **In general, there were few employment opportunities and everyone - youth and adults, men and women - find it difficult to get paid work. Benefits such as jobs and services from resource extraction or agricultural/forestry projects are not widespread across all districts.**
- **Customary owned land is the secure source of sustaining the livelihood of the majority of rural people in the survey communities, and the main source of 'happiness'. It is the basis upon which women and men work to produce the material products necessary for distribution to build social wealth in the society.**
- **Hence, new strategies to manage and develop customary land and use the natural resources need to have the full consent and participation of all involved, and ways of assisting women to own land should also be considered.**