3. Gender Dimensions of Triple Bottom Line Reporting in Rural Australia

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Introduction

Regional Sustainability has become a primary focus for governments addressing decline in regions variously dependent on agriculture. In their focus agencies have highlighted the triple bottom line of social, economic and environmental indicators as integral to any assessment of sustainability. However as Cocklin (2003: 3) notes contestation about the relative importance of economic growth, social justice and environmental protection have preoccupied policy makers and researchers and this has led to different priorities being given to social, economic and environmental resources and outcomes. In this paper I argue that this focus has distracted researchers and policymakers from the issue of gender as central to any appraisal of sustainability. My premise is that women and men experience rural life differently because of the prevalence of a dominant masculine hegemony and that any assessment of social, economic and environmental variables is deficient without a gender disaggregation. I further suggest that triple bottom line reporting can exacerbate and enhance gender inequity if data is not gender differentiated because of in-built ideologies and assumptions in policy documents and research that render masculine the ‘norm’ of rural life. The flip-side is that research and policy can enhance equity if gender consciousness is evident.

In this paper I will discuss gender in rural society. I provide some instances to illustrate this point as well as examples of resistance to the dominant paradigm. I suggest that rural policy and the research that informs it may in fact reinforce masculine hegemony unless a conscious attention to gender is enacted. Finally I make some recommendations to address this.

Triple Bottom Line Reporting

Triple Bottom Line reporting has been introduced by governments to ensure that future development is not solely shaped around economic indicators. It gives equal focus to the social and environmental factors as well as the economic, a process that is particularly important in a rural context where economic development is based on the use of natural resources such as land and rivers. Left unchallenged unrestrained economic development has the potential to seriously erode these natural resources placing restraints on the quality of life of rural people. At its narrowest conceptualisation, Triple Bottom Line reports against a number of indicators. At its more comprehensive, it refers to ways that companies/industries add social, economic and environmental value (SustainAbility, 2003). Triple Bottom Line reporting has gained credence because of a recognised need for sustainable development, an enhanced community consciousness about the value of non-renewable resources and a desire to ensure that the quality of life of rural people and communities is not adversely affected by economic development.

There is no doubt that the introduction of Triple Bottom Line reporting to policy documents is an important initiative. What is significant in the context of this paper is to recognise that the definitions of social, environmental and economic indicators are gendered and therefore that the value accorded to indicators must be transparently gender sensitive. To give one example research suggests that women in farming areas are particularly concerned about the impact of chemical overuse on the health of themselves and their families, and that they fear
potential birth defects, respiratory and skin problems (Alston, 1995). The economically successful cotton industry is one example of an expanding industry that uses significant amounts of chemicals. Cotton areas are also expanding bringing wealth to small towns, expanding job markets and bringing a general air of prosperity. In this instance there may be impetus to give priority to positive economic indicators and to social indicators such as employment. A gender-sensitive appraisal of Triple Bottom Line reporting would give equal weight to the health concerns of women.

Adding gender sensitivity to Triple Bottom Line reporting would acknowledge that women and men have different expectations and experiences of rural living and therefore different interpretations of social, environmental and economic value.

**Gender – What Is It?**

Critically gender is not biologically determined but rather is socially constructed through societal expectations placed on men and women. Gender is not static or ahistorical and is shaped by circumstances and locale. Importantly masculine and feminine behaviour occurs in a relational context and not independently of each other. Additionally gender is not fixed and actors are certainly not passive in the context of gender relations. Ample opportunities for resistance exist. Nevertheless I would argue that hierarchical, patriarchal gender relations dominate rural society endorsed by discourses, institutions and customs that act to ensure that women’s position in rural society is largely subordinated. Connell (2002) further argues that gender relations are actively reconstituted in everyday life through the assistance of the media, the churches and the market. The collective influence of these forces create the situation that when women step outside the norms of expected behaviour they may be targeted for censure or ostracism providing powerful constraints on women (Alston, 2000; Dempsey, 1992).

The acceptance of inequitable gender relations is evident in the fact that male dominance is largely unremarked despite men’s dominance of public positions of power (Alston, 2000). Further while there are many mediocre men in rural community leadership positions, there are very few mediocre women. To be a female leader is to be exceptional and is often noted in discourse surrounding the position. That the norm of leadership is male is evident in the need to classify women as ‘women leaders’ or ‘female managers’ or ‘women farmers’.

Connell (2002) further argues that men as a group have an investment in ensuring that inequitable gender relations endure. This he names as the patriarchal dividend (2002: 142) a dividend he argues that all men as a group to varying degrees benefit from. Connell is not alone in discussing the benefits of inequitable gender relations for men. Oakley (2002: 221) more irreverently refers to this as the ‘penis privilege’ a privilege accorded to men on the basis of their sex.

I therefore argue that policy makers and researchers who fail to understand the impact of gender in rural communities support the norms and customs that ensure male dominance and privilege. In order to understand the way inequitable relations endure the concept of masculine hegemony is instructive.

**Masculine Hegemony**

The impact of gender in rural communities is exposed not only by a focus on women but also on masculinities and the ideologies that privilege some men and associate them with particular forms of power (Ni Laoire, 2001). Masculine hegemony is defined by Connell
(1995: 74) as the ‘masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations’. It is important to appreciate that it is a certain type of masculinity that dominates in rural societies. It is therefore a certain view of the world not necessarily supported by all men but that is nevertheless superimposed on the subordinated – in this case the majority of rural women and some men. Critical to any understanding of gender relations is that power is central to masculine hegemony.

Brandth and Haugen (1997) declare that masculine hegemony is maintained through processes that differentiate it from what it is not – the feminine. Thus when shifts occur in the way men and women relate then divisions are reorganised and differentiated so that the work of men is privileged and viewed as superior. In their paper Brandth and Haugen refer to men in forestry work. However the processes they describes can be seen in the context of other agricultural industries. For example in research conducted in the early 1990s with rural women I noted that women were moving into farm work in greater numbers as farms laid off workers. What was intriguing was that tasks were being redefined as men’s or women’s jobs. Thus women might plough and scarify, but men would sew the crops. Women would muster and drench sheep but not necessarily truck them to market. As Brandth and Haugen notes through such strategies do men maintain their work as superior and maintain their distance from the feminine despite changing circumstances.

Additionally as I have noted in several research studies with women, their roles on farm and off have changed significantly as their greater economic cooperation is needed to ensure the family survives in farming (see for example Alston, 1995; 2000). Nevertheless men have resisted absorbing their share of domestic tasks preferring to define their own work as more critical and as excusing them from domestic responsibility. Their power gained through dominant ideologies and ownership of land and rural resources allows them to determine the division of labour in a way that suits their own purposes and often with little or no negotiation with women.

Yet masculine hegemony is constantly negotiated and reconstituted. Central to this process are the sites where the construction of masculine hegemony is facilitated. Campbell (2000) notes the importance of pub culture in rural areas in providing a site of masculine power and legitimacy. I would argue that agriculture is equally important in providing an arena where masculine hegemony and power is constructed and reinforced. Another significant site in rural areas is sport with football and cricket dominating media representations and taking a majority of the local government sports budget in many cases (Alston, 1996).

Because of their accumulated power and influence men dominate public positions of power in rural areas, own most of the agricultural land and the agricultural resources and are overwhelmingly the inheritors of land. Additionally professional and privileged positions such as the lawyers, doctors, bank managers and local government councillors are largely held by men. Women are more likely to hold subordinate roles such as administrative positions, retail workers and nurses. They are also more likely to be responsible for household tasks, child care and aged care. With the lack of services to assist with these roles women’s public lives are circumscribed, as is their ability to interact with the labour market. Masculine hegemony is so overwhelming in rural communities and women’s position so subordinated that I therefore argue that men and women experience rural living differently. That is not to say that I am reduced to arguing for biological essentialism. Rather I support the view that gender relations are so inequitable and women’s position so poorly challenged by policy makers and researchers that their subordinate position in the gender hierarchy is uncontested.
What is also disturbing is a developing new discourse fostered through policy initiatives in recent times of women as ‘heroic saviour’ (Grace & Lennie, 1998) appealing to women to be change agents and saviours of their communities through the contribution of large amounts of voluntary effort to community capacity building. While the expectations on women in these new roles are great the rewards are feeble and the public recognition through legitimate leadership roles are largely non-existent.

Leipins (2000: 604) provocatively declares that ‘Men are “made” in Australian and New Zealand agriculture’. That is discourses and media representations portray a certain view of men as ‘strong’ or ‘aggressive’ and therefore superior. Further, she describes two discourses of masculinity that dominate rural society (Leipins, 1998). These are that ‘tough men farm’ and that ‘strong men lead’. The dominance of these discourses leaves little room for women to enter farming or leadership positions without comment or struggle. Further we could speculate that other masculinities could just as easily be created and adopted. I would argue that a greater attempt at self-reflexivity (Gray & Lawrence, 2002) on the part of policymakers and researchers could act to unmake the dominant masculine hegemony. What is important to draw from this discussion is that masculine hegemony is unstable, constructed, contestable and built on sand. It should not be assumed, preferred or unanalysed. In particular policy and research can bolster or expose the flimsy tenets of its legitimacy.

Yet discourses are open to challenge. While there is no dispute that many inland rural communities are struggling as a result of globalisation, agricultural decline and commodity price uncertainty, Ni Laoire (2001) suggests that what has been termed the rural crisis is in fact a crisis of masculine hegemony. Changes in the certainties of rural life, or what Gray & Lawrence (2001) refer to as ‘de-traditionalisation’, together with changes in the status of women in wider society, have led to an intense scrutiny of masculine hegemony and to resistances on the part of women. However in order to fully understand the impact of gender and its significance for Triple Bottom Line reporting the next sections detail aspects of rural life and their implicit gendered underpinnings to indicate various ways that may lead to women and men experiencing rural life differently before moving to a discussion of resistances.

Social Issues

Population

Many inland areas of Australia are reliant on agriculture. Population decline or static/slow growth rates are increasing the differential between rural and urban areas. One of the causes of this is that immigrants tend to settle in the capital cities. Another is that young people from 15 years and beyond move to cities for greater access to education and employment leaving behind an aging population. In many of these areas populations are aging at a faster rate than more urban areas (Alston, 2002).

However of critical importance in the context of this paper is that the population loss is gendered. In research conducted for presentation at the ABARE conference in February 2002, I indicated that significantly more young women than young men are leaving inland rural areas (Alston, 2002). There are several significant implications of this trend. Like their urban counterparts young rural women are more ambitious in seeking higher education in greater numbers. For rural women there are a number of drivers for this trend. For example for the most part masculine hegemony ensures that young women are not viewed as future inheritors of farms or small businesses meaning they seek their futures elsewhere. Additionally in research conducted with young people in several small towns in NSW young women reported
that an additional driver was the ‘macho culture’ in their community (Alston & Kent, 2001). By this they were referring to the manifestations of masculine hegemony – the pub culture, the lack of sporting opportunities for young women, the lack of employment opportunities, and, in some cases, the level of domestic violence to which they were exposed. In further research conducted in 2001 (Wilkinson, Gray & Alston, 2001) we discovered that employment opportunities for young people when they existed at all were gendered. In one town surveyed over 90% of apprenticeships went to young men and all but one of those taken up by women was in hairdressing (Wilkinson, Gray & Alston, 2001). Young women have cast their gaze at the results of masculine hegemony and are voting with their feet. Policymakers and researchers ignore these realities at their peril. What we are seeing now emerging in particularly remote areas is community populations significantly male dominated. Tumbarumba, for example, has a population that is 46% female and 54% male (Wilkinson, Gray & Alston, 2001).

Nonetheless it is important to realise that a gender differential also exists in the older age groups. In many small rural communities the population aged over sixty-five is female dominated largely as a result of a longer life expectancy among women but also in some areas such as coastal regions because of retirees moving into the area (Alston, 2003). This gendering of the population has implications for aged care provision. However it is important to bear in mind that in many areas where we have conducted research older women and men continue to contribute to their communities until well into old age through their work with neighbourhood centres, meals on wheels and other voluntary organisations. In the absence of child care facilities they are also often called on to provide child care for their grandchildren. The rural aged are significant contributors but their profile is gendered.

In discussing the changes in the population profile it is important to note that the out-migration of young males has led to a loss of football and cricket teams in many communities destabilising one of the sites for the construction of masculine hegemony.

Health

The loss of health services and the difficulties some communities face attracting doctors and nurses are well known. Rural people experience higher morbidity and mortality rates generally and higher rates of mental illnesses (DPIE & CRSR, 1997). It is not the task of this paper to detail rural health statistics. Rather it is my intention to draw attention to the gendered impacts of loss of access to health services. A particularly urgent example is the loss of obstetric services in many rural communities caused either by the lack of doctors or the refusal of doctors to treat women in the face of insurance problems. For rural women the situation causes major family stress and dislocation as they must leave their families and communities to have their babies. Picking the right time is a result of a complex set of negotiations particularly if there are other children. This issue influences particularly younger women’s choices about living in rural areas and restricts the lives of those who do make that choice.

A further example of the gendered experience of rural life relates to violence in personal relationships. Violence against women in rural areas is a significant but under-reported factor in rural life. I would argue that it is directly related to masculine hegemony and the attitude of some men that women hold an inferior and subordinate position. The lack of refuges and the difficulties police face in policing apprehended violence orders in rural and remote areas results in many rural women living their lives in great fear (Alston, 1997).
Another gendered factor of rural health statistics worth reflecting on is the higher numbers of young rural men committing suicide by comparison with young women or urban males. The reasons for this are complex. However it is worth reflecting on the role of employment and the crisis in the ‘legitimation of patriarchy’ (Connell, 1995:226) or the extent to which one meets the expectations of society (Ni Laoire, 2001) might play in this.

**Employment**

There is no doubt that globalisation has had a major impact on employment right across Australia. Employment has become more precarious as tenure and employment conditions are eroded. Part-time work is increasing at faster rates than full-time work and those who are working full-time report working longer hours. In rural communities the changes wrought by globalisation and workplace conditions and the loss of government service jobs coupled with agricultural uncertainties have resulted in a destabilisation of traditional male dominated jobs but not necessarily a challenge to patriarchal power (Ni Laoire, 2001). Economic restructuring in many communities has resulted in the loss of significant numbers of jobs traditionally held by men. Examples are not hard to find. The closure of the steelworks in Newcastle, the loss of railway jobs, the loss of timber jobs in south east NSW, the loss of Telstra linesmen positions and the loss of fishing licences are just some examples of employment loss that have led to the destabilising of masculine gender roles. Ni Laoire (2001) notes that employment is central to masculine identity. The loss of employment or downgrading of conditions has led to disempowerment of men and particularly younger men who cannot find the same certainty in employment as their fathers did around which to construct their identity. Some rural men are facing long-term unemployment as a result of the loss of previously secure positions. That the loss of employment as a site for the construction of masculine identity may reflect in suicide figures, is worth considering.

By contrast women’s work in rural communities has been typified by part-time work, with insecure tenure and often in positions for which they are overqualified (Alston, 1995). Little (1994) suggests that their workplace attachment is as much to do with the lack of opportunities as with the inequitable gender relations in rural communities. Meanwhile labour market segmentation is a feature of rural life reinforced by male dominance.

Additionally women’s need to be available to work on farms and in family businesses restricts their ability to work in their own careers. The lack of childcare, aged-care and disability-care in rural communities and the expectations of women in the domestic sphere impacts on women’s employment. Halliday & Little (2001) for example record a link between rurality, low levels of services and the expectations on mothers.

**Economic Issues**

**On and Off-farm Work**

The changes in the fortunes of agriculture have led to renegotiations in families about gender roles. Since the 1980s women have undertaken more on-farm work often as a result of the farm’s inability to employ labour. Women are also establishing more on-farm enterprises of their own developing small to medium scale industries.

Of major significance since the 1980s has been the movement of women into the off-farm workforce. Initially this movement was driven by the need for cash income to support the
family in agriculture. Women also report the need to work in a sphere where their skills are valued and they have some autonomy in their lives. What we need to understand is that many farms are no longer sustainable without off-farm income. That 80% of this is done by women should alert policy makers and researchers interested in the triple bottom line to the dangers of ignoring gender. The Missed Opportunities Report (RIRDC & DPIE, 1998) notes that when all their work is tabulated women earn 48% of real farm income. The off-farm work of Australian farm women doubled between the 1980s and the late 1990s (Garnaut et al., 1999) when off-farm work realised 38% of the farm family income rising to a peak of 83% during 1991-2 (ABARE, 1999) and settling to 63% in 1994-5 (Garnaut & Lim-Applegate, 1998).

It is not only farm women who are working in paid employment. Like their urban counterparts rural women are moving into the workforce in large numbers when work is available. Yet the work of rural women has been largely overlooked in triple bottom line reporting and the impact of this work on gender relations in rural households is largely unanalysed.

Environmental Issues

Liepins' (1998; 2000) work alerts us to the discourses that shape and construct masculinity in rural life. It is arguable that the strong, aggressive model held up as the norm in agricultural material creates a climate where aggressive farming practices are fostered and protected. The heroic representations of Australia’s farm pioneers created a model of the conquering bushman. This model has facilitated the development of a rural masculine hegemony that is patriarchal, supportive of rugged individualism and fostering of the conquest of the landscape. A more nurturing approach is being developed through the Landcare movement a movement which has attracted a large number of women into its ranks. What I am suggesting is that an acceptance of masculine hegemony in agricultural and environmental policy has had environmental impacts in Australia. A more gender sensitive appraisal would acknowledge that there are ways of incorporating a more sensitive approach to environmental management. The Landcare initiative and funding is one example of this. Policy initiatives that expand opportunities for gender equity, challenge hegemonic (and destructive) approaches to land management and provide a more environmentally sensitive framework are possible using a gender sensitive triple bottom line approach. Policy initiatives that acknowledge and expand agency in relation to land management issues are powerful ways to expand capacity building and to counteract the impacts of well established, but corrosive forces.

Resistances

While I have articulated a number of areas that demonstrate that men and women in rural communities experience rural living differently and that a dominant masculine hegemony prevails, I want to note that women are not mindless victims locked into subordinate positions. Masculine hegemony is constantly under scrutiny and endlessly negotiated. It is also open to resistance. Rural women have demonstrated that they will resist in a number of ways. Significantly the large drift of young women to the cities is a prime example of the resistance of women to hegemonic ideologies. The greater flow of younger women into higher education also signals a resistance to traditional rural gender stereotypes.

Additionally the movement of women into paid employment signals a form of resistance to the expectation that they will be domestically centred. Further particularly younger farm women are also constructing ideologies of equality and sharing (Ni Laoire, 2001) that challenge existing hegemonic ideals. Their expectation that their lives and work roles will be equitable provides resistance to dominant masculine hegemony.
A further resistance, this time to the very idea of marrying farmers, has been noted across the western world (Alston, 2000). Young men who stay behind in rural communities have great difficulty finding partners leading, for example, in the case of Ireland (O’Hara, 1994) to the situation where one-third of farmers are unmarried.

Younger farm men also resist the dominant paradigm leading to what Ni Laoire (2001) calls the change from inheritance-as-duty to inheritance-as-choice, a change that indicates they are also choosing to resist established stereotypes for greater choices in a world where staying behind is devalued and mobility is highly valued. This suggests that a further challenge to masculine hegemony will come from alternative masculinities (Brandth & Haugen, 1997). However as Little and Jones (2000) note new forms of masculinity can be incorporated within patriarchal power. This is already happening to some extent in the movement of farmers towards a business model and women’s exclusion in large measure from this discourse.

Positive resistances are also being developed through the large number of female graduates moving into agricultural science and veterinary science positions in rural areas. These young women are providing powerful challenges to the dominant discourses and ways of working.

Policy – Reinforcing or Resisting Masculine Hegemony?

I want to draw this paper back to the Triple Bottom Line reporting and note that the dominance of masculine hegemony, the challenges to its certainties and its potential destabilisation must be considered by policy makers and researchers. Male power is highly resilient to challenge. If it is taken as a given then policy and research can bolster its tenets. Hegemonic masculinity is reflected in and shapes policy construction and implementation (Little & Jones, 2000). Triple Bottom Line reporting undifferentiated by gender has the ability to reinforce existing elites and to ignore those who are silenced or subordinated. Rural policy had traditionally maintained masculine hegemony and male power structures and therefore silenced or subordinated the position of women.

Little & Jones’ work in an English context has great relevance for Australian policy-makers. They note that the move to regional economic development policy relies heavily on male business elites in regional areas. Thus regional economic development has become increasingly male dominated and a gender division of labour is being facilitated through the process of regional economic development. The composition of the boards of Sustainable Regions areas is one example of a process where policy initiatives can support existing hegemonies.

To illustrate this point the writer examined the website of the Department of Transport and Regional services in May 2003. Chief sources of community consultation are through the Area Consultative Councils (ACCs) and the Sustainable Regions boards. Table 1 indicates the gender composition of these boards (excluding CEOs) as listed on the departmental website. It is evident that these boards are heavily weighted towards male priorities and advice.
Table 1: Gender composition of Sustainable Region boards and Area Consultative Councils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Regions Boards</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Consultative Councils</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>81 (74%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>28 (26%)</strong></td>
</tr>
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A further area where there is danger of departmental bias is within grant programs. Little & Jones point out that as grant programs get bigger requiring business plans and competitive tendering for grants, as in *Sustainable Regions* and other government programs, then those with greater resources are favoured. The large scale grants programs tend to favour masculine values and ways of working and to exclude women and their agendas from areas of influence.

The conclusion to be drawn from this male dominance of advice structures and program grants is that the department focusses its energy on economic development at the expense of economic and social issues. It is clear that the knowledge of successful businessmen is privileged at the expense of the views of women and minorities. Hartsock (1998b) reminds us that ‘truth’ is what dominant groups can make true and therefore that the position of the dominant group (in this case rural men) is the perspective under which all must live. The alternative understanding of rural life that women hold is the understanding of an oppressed group and is not prioritised by governments or industry. Further it could be argued that the concerns of women are viewed by government and industry as ‘special interests [that are] fundamentally irrelevant to the real questions raised by monopoly capital’ (Hartsock, 1998a: 34-5).

Yet it is also clear that the subject position of women could easily be turned into sites of resistance and could be used astutely in policy formulation to reconstruct gender relations. For example one of the key ways that departments have been able to challenge masculine hegemony is through the women’s units and the development of initiatives aimed at women. Change to the units and programs in recent times have been carried out under the banner of gender mainstreaming. It is therefore important that this idea is clearly articulated.

**Gender Mainstreaming**

Elsewhere (Alston, 2002) I have discussed mainstreaming in greater depth. For the purposes of this paper I want to point out the opportunities and pitfalls that gender mainstreaming provides. Gender mainstreaming is common in European Union policy backed by legislation that underpins equal opportunity. Gender mainstreaming refers to the ‘integration of women’s and men’s concern and experiences in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes to allow both women and men to benefit equally’ (OSW, 2002). In the EU policy environment there is a great deal of discussion about the most effective way to implement gender mainstreaming. The first is simply to include gender impact assessments on all programs and policy to assess the impacts on women (Rees, 2001). The second is a more thorough agenda-setting approach that shifts the focus of attention away from women to the institution itself asking how is this organisation/program/policy benefitting men? (Beveridge et al., 2000). The very structures, practices, policies and processes are scrutinised to determine bias.

My argument is that policy and programs relating to women are being removed from various departments with the rationale that gender mainstreaming will be implemented. However gender mainstreaming means a lot more than paying lip service to women’s programs. Are
women benefiting equally from policy and programs? Are they equitably represented in consultative processes and on decision making boards? Are they treated as equitable clients of departments? If the answer is no to any of these questions then gender mainstreaming is not being enacted.

Making Policy and Research more gender inclusive

I want to finish this paper by offering suggestions for ways the research and policy climate can address gender equity particularly in relation to Triple Bottom Line reporting.

- One of the most evident ways is to address issues of language within policy documents and research in order to incorporate women and other marginalised groups. Work should be checked to ensure that the masculine is not taken as the norm and that women are actively included.

- Material should be checked for overarching ideological content. Does it implicitly accept the masculine as the norm and enhance the operation of male power structures?

- I have pointed out a number of ways in which males and females might experience rural living differently because of complex structural and cultural constraints. Therefore it is important to ensure that data is disaggregated by gender. If statistics are male dominated, grants and resources are going largely to men and their organisations or advice is being sought exclusively from men’s groups then there is a problem with the data. As a result, the outcomes of the work on which it is based will be flawed.

- Further if policy is based on data such as employment statistics it needs to be unpacked to determine the gender composition of various categories such as part-time and full-time work or industry grouping.

- If research is conducted with farm families who is providing the data? If the research is confined to the so-called ‘operator’ there is potential for the ‘income provider’ who may well be working off-farm but may also be keeping everything going through their financial contribution to be overlooked.

- Ownership details must be dissected to understand the complexities of kinship groupings in agriculture.

- It is important to have a profile of local leaders when work is conducted in a community and to ensure that this group is gender inclusive. If the group is male dominated then the work is potentially providing support for the local elites and therefore for masculine hegemony.

- It is important to provide program support for women and to undertake research with women to ensure that women’s positions are incorporated into policy.

- It is equally important to look at the gender disaggregation of the recipients of funding. Who is benefiting from funding initiatives? What ideologies are being supported by the grant programs?

- It is important to note what values and practices being supported through research or program and who is missing out.

Finally I would suggest that policy makers, academics and researchers reflect on the importance of gender to Triple Bottom Line reporting. While gender mainstreaming properly applied provides a vehicle for achieving some measure of gender equity if it does not analyse the implications of policy it provides the props and pillars of legitimacy for patriarchal structures and hegemonies. It also denies the existence of alternative discourses and groups with alternative agendas and an equal right to be resourced and to have their views supported.
References

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