Initial Findings from the Bhutan Gender Policy Note

SAGE BBL Series

November 26, 2012
Objectives of the BBL

- Share initial findings
- Gather comments and suggestions as well as experience from other countries regarding interventions
Outline

1. Gender gaps in Bhutan
   - Country context
2. Findings
   - Institutions
     - Land inheritance
     - Gender role and time use
   - Outcomes
     - Endowment: tertiary education
     - Economic opportunity
       - Female youth unemployment
       - Job quality: earnings, occupations, …
3. Possible policy actions
Country context

- Small but culturally diverse, due to mountainous geography
- Unique culture: matrilineal inheritance
- Hugh progress in HD sectors over the past 30 years
Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate

Source: The World Bank database
Maternal Mortality ratio, modeled estimates (per 100,000 live births)

Source: The World Bank database
### MDG Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality & Empower Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target 4:</strong> Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education by 2015</td>
<td>Ratio of girls to boys in primary education (%)</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>99.5%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>99.4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>On track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education (%)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
<td>101.6</td>
<td>103.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>On track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ratio of females to males in tertiary institutes (%)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Need attention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNDP Report, 2010
Country context

- Bhutan is quite gender equal, but there are still gender gaps to address
  - Perception of equality $\Rightarrow$ there has been little effort
  - More openness to talk about gender issues in the recent years
- Great potential for development solutions and impacts on gender equality
Gender gaps in Bhutan

- (i) agricultural land holding and inheritance practice,
- (ii) gender gaps in tertiary level education,
- (iii) unemployment among young adult female,
- (iv) gender gaps in employment quality,
Methodology

- Combine both quantitative and qualitative methods

1. Quantitative data analysis
   (a) Bhutan Living Standard Survey 2007 (BLSS).
   (b) Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey
   (c) Labor Force Surveys (LFS)
Methodology

2. Qualitative analysis

- Two qualitative surveys in December 2010 and September 2012
- The first survey was the Rapid Qualitative Assessment for the WDR
- The second survey covered areas that could not answer by quantitative data analysis
  - the same four communities/survey sites
Qualitative Assessments

1. RQA: conducted in Dec 2010 – Jan 2011
   - 3 focus group discussions of a) adults for ladder of power and freedom; b) youth for making economic choices; and c) adolescence for reaching for success and family and community life; health and safety
   - 216 participants

2. Supplementary Qualitative Assessment (SQA) in September 2012
   - Focus group discussions with three different age groups:
     - Youth Group (age 18 to 24 years – both male and female);
     - Adult Group (age 25 to 55 years – both male and female);
     - Elderly Group (over 55 years old – both male and female);
   - A total of 217 participants
Qualitative survey sites

Qualitative Assessment: District Map

Survey Sites
- Mongar: Urban, Econ -
- Paro: Rural, Econ +
- Samtse: Rural, Econ -
- Thimphu: Urban, Econ +

- geographical representation
- economically vibrant or less vibrant communities
Initial Findings
Time use and gender role: qualitative survey

- On gender roles: traditional gender roles regarding housework have largely remained unchanged.
  - Men are minimally engaged or not at all engaged in household and childcare responsibilities
  - unwillingness to trade activities that they typically do with those of their female counterparts
Time use and gender role: qualitative survey

- Across all communities surveyed, there is a growing expectation on women from their husbands to work in order to supplement family income in the face of the rising cost of living.

- More women participate in paid employment sector, but face the double burden of earning an income as well as taking care of family and home
  - Educated women in urban areas desire that men take more responsibility in household chores
Agricultural land holding and inheritance

- Bhutan’s matrilineal inheritance practice appears to be favorable to women land is usually inherited through the mother (but not all regions)
  - Patrilineal: the south.
  - Matrilineal: western and central
- The Inheritance Act (1980) is gender neutral and provides equal rights and entitlements
Land inheritance

- Does land inheritance practice constrain women’s economic opportunity?
  - A consequence of the matrilineal inheritance patterns is an increased responsibility for women in caring for their parents.
  - Qual surveys: more difficult for women to migrate for work because of inheriting land and ancestral home (in all other areas except the capital)
  - Men on the other hand are not reported to be tied down to the land that they inherit.
Agricultural land holding and inheritance

- Migration data (LFS 2011)
  - Same overall migration rates between men and women
  - The chart shows distribution of reasons for migration among youth (15-25) living in urban areas
  - Women are less likely to move to urban areas for work or studies
Land inheritance and decision making power

- The qualitative study shows that inheriting land does not necessarily empower women to make economic decisions.
  - Women tend to be the legal owners of property (land and house)
- FGD results
  - Men: men do consult their wife and family when making decisions regarding land,
  - Women: men are normally the ultimate decision-makers in the household
Changing practices

• The practice of dividing the property equally among all children is also gaining popularity,
  • especially in urban communities
  • because of the Inheritance Act and more people are aware of the laws surrounding property inheritance.
• Still depend on (a) parents’s education and (b) children’s awareness of the laws
Gender Gap in Tertiary Education

• Parity in primary and secondary education, but there is still a gap at the tertiary level.
  • Women = 50-60 % of men at university level,
  • lower than the South Asian average (70 %)
• Answers from Youth FGDs (ranked)
  1. Burden of household chores among female youths
  2. Teenage pregnancy and early marriage
  3. Financial constraints and the need to work
Qualitative evidence: Time use

- There is also more parental expectation on young women to help with these responsibilities than on young men.
  - Female youths spend about 50 percent more than male youths—6.5 hours per day for female vs. only 4.2 hours per day for female.
  - Girls have less time to study at home and therefore perform poorer than boys in school.
Gender Gap in Tertiary Education

- As a result...
  - Girls are less likely to qualify for the government subsidized higher education
  - Girls opt for Arts and Humanities majors at the tertiary levels of education because they are easier to be accepted to
Gender Gap in Tertiary Education: Pregnancy and early marriage

- Adolescent fertility rate (number of births per 1,000 of women ages 15-19) in Bhutan is higher than other comparable countries in 2010
  - Bhutan: 47, Thailand: 40, East Asia: 20, SAR: 73

- Poor performance at school is often correlated with early marriage
Unemployment among female youths

- Large gap but not alarming
- Often, this is a queuing problem.

Unemployment rate in 2011 (%): by age group
Factors explaining female youth unemployment

Female youth have longer job search => higher unemployment rate because

- Looking for jobs that are close to home (RQA)
- Limited mobility – migration
  - Among youth (15-24 y/o) in urban areas who migrated within the past year, 23% of male said they migrated to look for jobs vs. 16% of female (LSF, 2011)
Factors explaining female youth unemployment

- Mobility restriction for women – findings from FGDs
- More difficult for young women to migrate or commute long distance for work
  - Parental concern for young girl’s safety or
  - Women’s responsibility at home as a mother, wife or a daughter
- Particularly in rural areas or less economically vibrant areas
Factors explaining female youth unemployment

- Lack of education, required skill (youth FGDs)
  - Women = ¼ of all vocational trainees
  - However, the trend is changing. % of people trained are quite similar in age group 15-24 years old (LFS 2011)

- Negative attitude toward TVET programs

Other factors

- Lack of confidence to seek employment
Gender gap in employment quality

• Female labor force participation in Bhutan is high, but there is a gap in employment quality

What are aspects of employment quality?
• Wages and earnings
• Occupations
Gender gap in employment quality

- There is a significant earnings gap between men and women
  - Gap exists only in urban areas: women earn 34% less than men
  - Gap largest in private-non agri sector (38%), while the gap in public sector is 15%
- Public sector jobs are always described as the ideal jobs
  - In the public sector, women account for 32% of all civil servants, but only 4.76% of executive-level positions
Gender gap in employment quality

• What explains these gaps?
  • Earnings determinant regression: age, education level, TVET, and job type
  • There is still a significant gender gap after controlling for workers’ characteristics

• Other factors
  • Men’s jobs vs. women’s jobs: Employment segregation by gender
  • Perception of gender role, occupational choice
  • Household chores and child care
Employment segregation

- Women are concentrated in some occupations
- Female occupations tend to be *inferior*: lower-skilled, lower-paying jobs, usually with less decision-making authority
- For example, in the education sector
  - Men: 73% of higher ed. and 61% of secondary school teachers
  - Women: 69% “other teaching professionals”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Share of F labor force</th>
<th>%F in each occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nursing &amp; midwifery</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hand weavers, knitters &amp; other hand textile</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>93.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home based personal care workers</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>83.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>receptionists &amp; information clerks</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>74.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other teaching professionals</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shop salespersons &amp; demonstrators</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>68.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment segregation

- Is there any societal pressure for women to take “preferred” or “suitable” jobs?
- In general, there are no rigid structures when it comes to white-collar jobs.
  - Doctors and engineers are “best” jobs for both men and women.
- A common response from all groups is that jobs that require physical strength are for men.
- Traditional perceptions are slowly changing: more women enter traditionally male occupations.
Perception of working women

Evidence from Qual Surveys

• women are expected to work to *supplement* family income;

• however, if they are seen to neglect their children in the process, it is not viewed positively.
  • “Some people say bad things about working mothers, especially if the working mother has to go to office dinner/gatherings frequently and come home late. People feel that the mother is not taking care of her children and neglecting her responsibility at home.”

• Perception affects women’s career advancement
Gender gap in employment quality

Possible cause: Childcare and household chores

- Perceptions of childcare
  - Participants view childcare as expensive and not convenient
    - Only admit children older than 3 years old
    - Close in the early afternoon
Discussion and Comments
Possible policy actions

- Affordable and convenient childcare
- Sufficient study time for female youth