ROLE OF GENDER EQUALITY: CHALLENGES AND CURES

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the economic literature that touches the role of gender in the economy, with specific focus on issues that might be expected to be the most critical for overall development. It is an attempt to review economics literature on the relationship between gender equality-its causes, challenges and cure. We define what gender equality means; present stylized facts about the current relative status of women and men as stylized facts indicate that women’s roles are, although restricted, in the midst of quite dramatic change, both in developing and in developed countries. It is an attempt to explore forces that challenge and facilitate greater equality. The literature covers issues in gender inequality as they relate to: values and religion, cultural restrictions and roles, legal and inheritance laws and practices, education of girls, resource allocation within marriage patterns, labour market access, education, fertility, gender specific market failures in finance, and power in the political decision making. We suggest that the findings in the literature are compatible with the long term trends in women’s roles in the society that stem from technological improvement, as industrialization has made extensive home-based production obsolete, and reduced the demand for children. In this case, greater gender equality would be rather a consequence than a cause of development. However, gender equality does not seem to follow automatically from development, but there is a need for active policies.

KEYWORDS: Gender Equality, Challenges, Cures.

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