

**WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP
Program Initiative**

Description of the Program for 2006-11

**International Development Research Centre
Ottawa, Canada**

Contents

Executive summary	2
Background and context	4
Areas of interest	4
Citizenship, rights, and gender: a conceptual framework	5
The development context	7
IDRC's niche.....	10
Vision, mission, objectives, and entry points	12
Vision.....	12
Mission.....	12
Objectives.....	12
Programming strategy	13
Research entry points	13
<i>Women's citizenship and governance</i>	14
<i>Access to justice</i>	17
<i>Economic rights</i>	20
<i>Sexual and reproductive rights</i>	23
<i>Migration and women's rights</i>	25
References	29
Acronyms	34

Executive summary

Despite global improvements for women in the last few decades, gender inequality and gender-based inequities continue to impinge on girls' and women's ability to claim their rights and realize their full potential as citizens and equal partners in the development of their communities. A variety of legal instruments commit the international community and individual states to uphold women's rights, but they are not adequately acknowledged in national laws or practice. States often lack the will or the knowledge to implement international legal instruments and, even where basic human rights are included in domestic laws, many women lack the freedom and the means to claim them. As a result, for every right that has been established, there are millions of women who do not enjoy it.

This document outlines a 5-year plan of work for a new program on Women's Rights and Citizenship (WRC). The establishment of WRC is part of IDRC's two-pronged strategy on gender: commitment to sound gender analysis in all initiatives in tandem with research that is specifically focused on gender and social inequities. The WRC program initiative builds on knowledge generated by IDRC's Gender Unit over the past 5 years and acquired through consultations and specially commissioned background papers.

WRC will support research and research-supporting activities to meet the following objectives:

1. WRC-supported researchers will generate methodologically sound data on and analysis of concrete issues of concern in the field of women's rights, citizenship, and development.
2. WRC support for research projects and related activities and initiatives will expand the capacity of individuals and groups working on women's rights and citizenship in the South to conceptualize and conduct research and to disseminate results with a view to influencing policy.
3. Women's organizations, civil society organizations, partners within the state, and researchers will use evidence generated by WRC-supported research and the opportunities and capacity created by WRC-supported activities to expose and challenge gender discriminatory structures, policies, programs, institutions, and practices and to formulate concrete recommendations for policy and social change.

The consultations and background papers prepared to inform the development of this new program, as well as our recent programming experience, all stressed the need for social science research to investigate why, where, and how the implementation of formal gains in gender equality and equity in development have fallen short of expectations and commitments and to propose concrete steps to redress this situation. Although priority issues vary among and within regions, the program will concentrate on the following thematic entry points:

- *Women's citizenship and governance*, or how institutions of governance should be organized to guarantee women's rights and facilitate women's full citizenship
- *Access to justice*, or how, concretely, women can claim their rights or challenge states' failure to provide gender equitable justice
- *Sexual and reproductive rights*, a continued key area for gender equity and for women to organize to claim their rights
- *Economic rights*, a priority issue for most women in the South
- *Migration* as a phenomenon of growing importance that presents new challenges in the area of women's rights, development, and citizenship

The common thread linking these areas of research is the concept of *citizenship*, understood not only as a status or identity, but also, and importantly, as a practice and a process through the exercise and claiming of rights and through participation in governance and civil society.

The WRC program works across the developing world, managed by a team based at IDRC's head office and in several of its regional offices. It will support a mix of single-country studies, regional networks, and cross-regional comparative work. Particular emphasis will be placed on research capacity-building, recognizing that the intersection of women's rights, citizenship, and development is a fairly recent field of enquiry that this program will help to build and strengthen.

At the same time, the program will promote concrete changes in policies, institutions, and practices — both by working with civil society groups and researchers to provide opportunities for public discussion and, where feasible, by supporting our partners to engage directly with national ministries for the promotion of women and other state agencies and ministries to advocate change.

Background and context

Evolution of the WRC

This document outlines the proposed 5-year plan of work for a new program initiative on Women's Rights and Citizenship (WRC). The establishment of WRC is part of IDRC's two-pronged strategy on gender — commitment to sound gender analysis in all the centre's initiatives and support for research that is specifically focused on gender and social inequities. The WRC program initiative builds on knowledge generated by the Gender Unit over the past 5 years, as well as on consultations and commissioned background papers.

Established in 1989, IDRC's Gender Unit supported development of the capacity for gender analysis — both internally and externally — on one hand, and managed a small program of research specifically concerned with gender equity and equality, on the other hand. The unit ensured that a “gender perspective” was present in all IDRC research programs and projects by developing an internal constituency on the issue; funding gender analysis training for staff and partners; housing professional development awardees who were gaining expertise in feminist research and project management; and supporting networking and knowledge-sharing among staff by organizing such events as talks, briefings, and book launches.

Starting in 2001, the unit's own research program focused on gender, citizenship, and entitlement. It supported collaborative relations among researchers, policymakers, and advocacy groups. That year, it launched a noted international competition on “Gender, Globalization and Land Tenure,” through which research projects in Latin America, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa were funded. The Gender Unit funded several other research projects as well, and abstracts are available on IDRC's web site.

Areas of interest

As the WRC program was developed, we tried to identify an area of work that would add value to the activities of existing IDRC programs — creating synergy rather than duplication — while situating it within the Social and Economic Policy program.

Although there have been notable gains for women globally in the last few decades, gender inequality and gender-based inequities continue to affect girls' and women's ability to realize their rights and their full potential as citizens and equal partners in the development of their communities.

One area of steady progress has been the field of international law, where the equality of women and men is a well-established principle. Beginning in 1948 with the adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and continuing in many legal instruments that followed it, the international community and individual states have recognized that discrimination impoverishes women and their families and prevents their full

participation in the life of their communities and nations. However, the pledge to respect, protect, and fulfill women's rights is far from realized. For every right that has been established, there are millions of women who do not enjoy it. The commitments made to them internationally are not adequately acknowledged in national laws or practice. States often lack the will or the knowledge to implement them and, where basic human rights do exist in domestic laws, many women lack the freedom and the means to claim them.

The consultations and papers prepared during development of this new program, as well as our recent programming experience, all stressed the need for social science research to investigate why, where, and how the implementation of formal gains in gender equality and equity in development has fallen short of expectations and commitments and to propose concrete steps to redress this situation. Although priority issues vary between and within regions, research is needed on *women's citizenship and governance* (or how institutions of governance should be organized to guarantee women's rights and facilitate women's full citizenship) as well as on *access to justice* (or how, concretely, women can claim their rights or challenge states' failure to provide gender equitable justice). WRC also proposes to support research on *sexual and reproductive rights*, a continuing key area in which women need to organize to claim their rights, as well as on some *economic rights*, another priority issue for most women in the South. Finally, the proposed plan of work acknowledges *migration* as a phenomenon of growing importance that raises new challenges in the area of women's rights, development, and citizenship.

The common thread linking these areas of research is the concept of *citizenship*, not only as status or identity, but also as a practice and a process of claiming rights and participating in governance and civil society. It is this practice and process that WRC initiatives will investigate and support. Supporting research on *citizenship* complements the work that IDRC is doing in other areas of *governance*,¹ — health (Governance, Equity and Health [GEH] program), economics (Globalization, Growth and Poverty program), building or rebuilding institutions for peace and development (Peace, Conflict and Development program), state and community management of natural resources (Environment and Natural Resource Management program), communications (Information and Communications Technologies program), and new and emerging technologies (Innovation Policy and Science program). After all, “governance and citizenship are intimately connected and mutually dependent” (Meer and Sever 2004: 13).

Citizenship, rights, and gender: a conceptual framework

“Citizenship” as a concept began to interest researchers and practitioners in the field of international development in the 1990s, a decade marked by democratization — notably in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa — and the rise of the international rights movement, reflected in a series of United Nations (UN) world conferences and the adoption of rights-based approaches by a number of influential development organizations.

¹ “The institutions, processes and traditions which determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens have their say” (Institute on Governance 1997).

The interest in the focus on citizenship in development is that it is “a way of defining personhood which links rights and agency” (Kabeer 2002). In other words, by viewing people of the South primarily as citizens, this framework recognizes that people without rights are unlikely to gain them unless they speak up and are able to have informed input into policy and other decisions affecting their lives and livelihoods (Mukhopadhyay and Meer 2004).

A citizenship framework also focuses attention on the state and on the relation of individuals to institutions of governance. Although that relation is mediated by other social institutions, such as family, kinship, ethnicity, and other forms of association (which may well be more meaningful in several cases [see Charrad 2003; Yuval-Davis 1997]), we define citizenship as a form of belonging to a national state to distinguish it from other forms of belonging and also to “anchor the claim for equal rights in specific institutions” (Mukhopadhyay 2004: 3). Such anchoring will increase the likelihood that the work we support will have a policy impact, as states play a key role as duty bearers and protectors of human rights.

As Naila Kabeer (2002: 12) points out, in the South, “the history of citizenship has been one of terrible exclusions, stemming from the denial of respect, rights, dignity and even humanity by some groups to others.” Although the social exclusions of citizenship are numerous and interrelated, this program will focus on investigating and addressing some of the ways in which poor and marginalized women are prevented from fully realizing their rights and their citizenship. Such a focus will continue to be anchored in social and gender analysis. For example, WRC will support initiatives that recognize women’s differences, as gender is crosscut by other social categories such as ethnicity, race, caste, class, and (dis)ability. Gender inequities and inequalities do not affect all girls and women in the same ways. Also, gender norms are embodied; in other words, constructs of femininity and masculinity, while often resisted and contested, are internalized to a significant degree and become a central part of a person’s identity. Finally, we recognize that gender affects social relations in ways that go beyond the relationships between women and men. Indeed, gender norms affect how women interact among themselves and how adults treat children. Frequently, for example, older women reinforce girls’ compliance with gender norms, even when they are in contradiction with their rights and freedoms.

The WRC program will also contribute to current debates in the international gender and development field, such as how to integrate gender analysis into current thinking on citizenship, governance, and development (Meer and Sever 2004). For instance, asserting that so-called “private” matters, such as sexual and reproductive rights and intra-household power dynamics, are matters for policy attention, and public accountability is an important part of reframing citizenship from a women’s rights perspective.

It is also important to investigate how state and parastatal institutions perpetuate the exclusion of some categories of citizens (and those denied citizenship altogether), with a view to recommending how institutions can be made more inclusive. The outright denial of rights to girls and women in a society is the most visible example of exclusion. For example, some legal codes and institutional rules and practices still contain blatant biases that discriminate against women in matters of rights and entitlements. Other forms of

exclusion that are less obvious but equally discriminatory relate to the consequences of apparently gender-neutral rights standards — for example, in “the subtle institutionalization of male ‘bias’ in the systems for adjudicating disputes or punishing offenders” (Goetz 2003:11) and, broadly speaking, in the interpretation and implementation of laws as well as in the workings of institutions of governance. Further, equality in the substance of the law (formal equality) can have the perverse effect of reproducing inequality by erasing differences between women and men (such as childbearing and nursing roles) or failing to take into account the special needs of disabled women. Thus, WRC envisions supporting work that investigates how states and societies can achieve substantive equality (or equality of results).

Even where institutions of governance and laws have been made more inclusive, poverty and social inequality can undermine substantive participation and voice. “Without a secure livelihood (economic and social rights), members of subordinate groups are unable to have a say in wider decisions affecting their lives” (Mukhopadhyay 2004). The failure of most postcolonial states to provide social and economic rights and to effect fair redistribution of resources has made their populations even more dependent on ascribed relationships (such as kinship or caste) that had already been exacerbated under colonial rule and that erode inclusive citizenship. WRC recognizes this reality by including economic rights as an entry point and focusing its support on the self-perceived needs of poor and otherwise marginalized women and girls.

The World Bank (2001) and others have argued that gender inequality is inefficient and undermines the effectiveness of development policies. Although this is substantiated in some respects, WRC proposes to operate within a human development framework, in which women’s rights and freedoms are seen as goals of development in and of themselves, not just as a means to an end (Sen 1999). That this principle has been adopted by most countries in the UN family is reflected in the fact that the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women have been identified as one of the Millennium Development Goals.

The development context

Reviewing 10 years of progress since the Beijing Declaration in 1995, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD 2005) points to notable but uneven gains for women globally. Among the improvements are increased visibility in elected assemblies and state institutions; some closing of gender gaps in primary and, to a lesser extent, secondary school enrolment; a larger female presence in the labour market and in labour flows that cross international borders; and lower fertility rates.

However, women continue to constitute the majority of the poor, the illiterate, and the disenfranchised. “Worldwide, outside of the agricultural sector, in both developed and developing countries, women are still averaging slightly less than 78% of the wages given to men for the same work, a gap which refuses to close in even the most developed countries” (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi 2005: 3). Gender disparities in secondary and tertiary education persist, limiting women’s access to new employment opportunities.

Other indicators of continued gender-based discrimination are found in data on health and violence. In reproductive health, in particular, “the differences... between the rich and the poor — both between and within countries — are larger than in any other area of health care” and, worldwide, reproductive health problems are the leading cause of mortality and morbidity among women (UNFPA 2005: 33). Every year, more than half a million women die in pregnancy or childbirth, and 99% of those cases are in developing countries (UN 2005a). Although data on domestic violence are notoriously tricky to interpret, given the universal problem of underreporting, in surveys conducted in various countries, between 10% and 69% of women reported having experienced domestic violence (UN Task Force on Education and Gender Equality 2005). The same project concluded that violence against women is a more common cause of ill health among women than traffic accidents and malaria combined.

Although continuing gender inequality is a worldwide phenomenon, significant differences exist at regional and country levels. Indeed, “debates over women’s rights have become more intensely regionalized in recent years, demanding closer scrutiny to the particular context within which they are framed and fought for” (Molyneux 2004: 115). Thus, in preparation for the development of the WRC program, the Gender Unit commissioned regionally focused papers, undertook regional consultations, and participated in the 2003 consultation on Social Innovation for Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean held by IDRC’s regional office in Uruguay. Regional and country-specific contextual analyses helped us choose points of entry and will continue to inform our programming.

Table 1 provides an overview of some of the most visible regional differences. In terms of women’s participation in the economy, for instance, rates are significantly higher in sub-Saharan Africa and East and Southeast Asia than the other three regions, although for different reasons. In sub-Saharan Africa, the participation of women in subsistence agriculture and trade has long been noted. It has also been high in East and Southeast Asia, but in the past three decades more and more women have found employment in the growing industrial export sectors there, despite some decline since the 1997 Asian economic crisis. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), among other factors, occupational sex segregation based on cultural attitudes about Arab women’s limited role in the public sphere continues to marginalize women in the paid labour force. Patriarchal norms that largely restrict women to the private sphere are buttressed by family law codes that require male guardians’ approval for women’s employment and travel outside the home. These norms are also reflected in the fact that women in MENA hold the lowest percentage of national parliamentary seats compared with the other regions.

Differences in women’s access to education and reproductive health services are also notable. Here, more progress has been made in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and in East and Southeast Asia than in the other three regions. It is possible to link the high adult female literacy rate in LAC with the strength of women’s political participation in that region in general, particularly at the level of women’s struggles for citizenship rights through participation in civil society, but this also has to do with the political history of the region. LAC feminists have often been at the forefront of international campaigns for women’s rights, and remarkable progress has been made in

norm-setting and legislative reform for gender equality, despite continued problems with implementation and enforcement (Molyneux 2003).

Another important regional difference (although not highlighted in Table 1) is the variation in the degree of feminization of HIV/AIDS across the developing world. Although this issue is of concern everywhere, it is most marked in sub-Saharan Africa and in the Caribbean. Women make up 58% of those infected with the virus in sub-Saharan Africa, where it is mainly spread heterosexually and where power imbalances between men and women increase women's risk of contracting the disease — particularly young women (Ashford 2005: 4). The situation is similar in the Caribbean, where women represented 52% of HIV-positive adults in 2002, compared with 35% in 2000 (UNAIDS 2004).

Finally, the South Asian region demonstrates peculiar paradoxes. Although it scores low on all the indicators listed in Table 1, it also has the largest number of women heads of governments or states and one of the most vibrant women's movements in the world. Of special note in that region, and in Asia more broadly, is the special situation of women migrants. Asian women are moving more than ever before, to the extent that in some countries, female outnumber male migrants — 21:1 in the Philippines and 8:1 in Sri Lanka, for example. A related issue, trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation, remains a serious problem in the region, especially in the large cities.

Table 1: Gender equality indicators for various regions

Indicator	East Asia and Pacific	Latin America and the Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	South Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa
Female population, 2003 (% of total)	49.0	50.4	48.6	48.5	50.1
Adult female literacy rate, 2003 (% of population ≥15 years)	86.2	88.9	53.1 ^a	46.6	52.6
Female economic activity rate, 2003 (% of population ≥15 years)	68.9	42.7	33.3 ^a	44.1	62.3
Life expectancy at birth, 2000 (years)					
M	67	67	66	62	46
F	71	74	69	63	47
Pregnant	80	75	58	55	65

women receiving prenatal care, 1996 (%)					
Maternal mortality rate, 2000 (no. per 100 000 live births)	117	193	179	568	917
National parliamentary seats held by women, 2005 (%) ^b	19.4	19.0	6.8 ^c	8.3	14.2

^a Arab states only.

^b Single or lower house only.

^c Average for North Africa and West Asia.

Sources: World Bank 2002, UNDP 2005, UN 2005b.

IDRC's niche

There are several other players in the field of women's rights and development, as all major donors, UN agencies, and Southern governments address gender issues to varying degrees. Also active in this field are women's rights advocacy organizations, at all levels from village women's self-help groups to transnational networks and organizations. Finally, women's and gender studies programs are now commonly found in Southern universities and are a standard feature at Canadian and other Western universities.

However, our program development consultations confirmed that IDRC has an opportunity to make a significant contribution to the field for several reasons. First, IDRC's general niche is research for development. Most other donor agencies fund development interventions, while university-based work on gender, rights, and citizenship issues tends to be concerned with theory, cultural studies, discourse analysis, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues, political philosophy, etc., and rarely with applied research for development. There is also a gap in national and civil society research and policy capacity, as women's national machineries tend to be under-resourced and marginalized, and the work of national and even regional Southern advocacy organizations is rarely informed by solid evidence-based research (with important exceptions, notably in Latin America and parts of Asia).

Second, due to the adoption of "gender mainstreaming" by states, donors, and UN agencies since this approach was endorsed at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, funds for research on women's or gender and development issues in and of themselves are becoming rare or are buried within other programs, forcing partners to reorient their work. A recent study assessing the role of donors in the promotion of women's rights — partly funded by IDRC's Gender Unit — concluded: "Mainstreaming... has not had the desired consequence of strengthening action in respect of women's rights — we see instead cases where mainstreaming has led to cutting of gender equality specialists and women-specific programs" (Clark et al. 2005). In 2003, only 0.6% of the net disbursement of official development assistance worldwide went to projects with gender equality as a principal objective, or approximately USD 400 million

out of USD 69 billion. In the same year, only USD 2.5 million (0.04%) out of a total of USD 6.8 billion in European Commission aid went to women-specific projects. Thus, we expect that IDRC's launching of a new program on women's rights and citizenship will be noted on the world scene and, in our preliminary consultations, the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

In addition, demand for support of such work is evidenced by the regular flow of unsolicited proposals received by the Gender Unit, the voluminous response to our calls for proposals in the last three Gender Unit competitions, and the large number of applications for internships and other awards on gender issues at IDRC.

Finally, the particular combination of work on citizenship and women's rights for development distinguishes IDRC's approach from others.

Vision, mission, objectives, and entry points

Vision

The WRC vision is that of a just world where women in the South have a sense of self that includes citizenship and the right to have rights; where all individuals have equitable access to justice and the opportunity to participate meaningfully in democratic decision-making; and where there is no discrimination based on gender in realizing the full range of one's rights and freedoms, including economic rights and sexual and reproductive rights.

Mission

To contribute to this broad vision, the WRC's mission is to support research on women's rights and citizenship that uses gender and social analysis and focuses on the needs of poor and marginalized women in the South; that uses methods that are empowering to participants; and that engages meaningfully with decision-makers and enters policy debates with a view to effecting change. We will work with research institutes, women's groups, academics, civil society organizations, and progressive elements of the state and we will strive to ensure that research results influence policymaking and debates on the conceptualization and achievement of equitable and sustainable development. Finally, WRC-supported initiatives will contribute to the development of the relatively new field of applied research on citizenship, gender, and human rights in developing countries, investing in the training of the new generation of researchers and in institutional support for increased capacity to participate in global, regional, and local policy and societal debates.

Objectives

For the next 5 years, working toward its vision and mission, WRC will support research and research-supporting activities to meet the following objectives:

1. WRC-supported researchers will generate methodologically sound data on and analysis of concrete issues of concern in the field of women's rights, citizenship, and development.
2. WRC support for research projects and related activities and initiatives will expand the capacity of individuals and groups working on women's rights and citizenship in the South to conceptualize and conduct research and to disseminate results with a view to influencing policy.
3. Women's organizations, civil society organizations, partners within the state, and researchers will use evidence generated by WRC-supported research, and the opportunities and capacity created by WRC-supported activities, to expose and challenge gender discriminatory structures, policies, programs, institutions, and practices and to formulate concrete recommendations for policy and social change.

Programming strategy

WRC's strategy for achieving its mission and objectives includes the identification and pursuit of policy windows; serious investment in strengthening and expanding capacity for research and policymaking support of South–South and South–North exchanges; the creation or support of various types of networks; as well as support for individual research projects. In light of the analysis showing that priority issues vary from region to region and recognizing that policy windows tend to be found at the national level, WRC will continue to organize its team primarily according to regional areas of expertise. In other words, program officers in charge of a certain regional coverage will be responsible for advising the team on short-, medium-, and long-term regional priorities, including country selection, in collaboration with IDRC's regional offices. Program officers, with support from the team leader, research officer, and other team members, will work to develop clusters of projects and other activities in the five chosen research entry points outlined below.

Research entry points

Based on the contextual analysis and to achieve its mission and objectives, in the next 5 years WRC proposes five research entry points:

1. Women's citizenship and governance
2. Access to justice
3. Economic rights
4. Sexual and reproductive rights
5. Migration and women's rights

These were chosen from a narrow selection of possible entry points identified by experts in the field in the literature, as well as in papers and consultations specially commissioned for the development of WRC. The choice was based on the following considerations:

- Identification of areas where WRC has a competitive advantage due to existing Gender Unit investments in research (such as the series on decentralization²) or declining support from the donor community (sexual and reproductive rights)
- Recognition that researcher-activists in the area of women's rights in the South rarely conceive of their work as being *on* citizenship, but rather engage in specific struggles that represent citizenship in action, such as fighting for economic rights and efforts to obtain justice
- The finding that migration is an important and underresearched emerging issue related to women's rights in the developing world
- Identification of areas where research can make a difference and where there is a need to build capacity

² “Decentralization may be defined as referring to political and administrative reforms that transfer varying amounts and combinations of function, responsibility, resources, and political and fiscal autonomy to lower tiers of the state (e.g., regional, district, or municipal governments, or decentralized units of the central government)” (MacLean 2003: 2).

These entry points will help guide WRC in soliciting research proposals; selecting research support activities and related initiatives (such as institutional support to networks or other entities); screening the sizable number of unsolicited research proposals received annually; and generally setting priorities to make the best use of finite financial and human resources. Although the entry points are presented here as bounded wholes for ease of understanding, we know from experience that a large number of projects and activities will touch on more than one of these areas. The entry points are intended to serve as conceptual “pegs” rather than thematic “silos.” It is also important to emphasize that not all entry points will be given equal priority in each fiscal year or the same priority in each region. Decisions on what to focus on will be made annually at team meetings and presented to IDRC’s Board of Governors for approval through the Program of Work and Budget.

Women’s citizenship and governance

Although research in the field of gender, governance, and development has already produced a significant body of descriptive work on women in political office, a recent global overview of the situation of women in politics and public life concluded, “The full dimensions of how political processes affect gender equality and ongoing efforts to achieve it are not yet well studied or understood” (UNRISD 2005: 145). The identification of such a gap in terms of the gendered impact of decentralization reforms was the motivation for a series of three Gender Unit competitions on decentralization and women’s rights, held in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean (see Box 1) starting in 2003.

This entry point is situated at the convergence of *citizenship* and *governance*. On one hand, “the ability of citizens to participate in the life and shaping of their communities is dependent on the commitment and ability of decision-makers to seek, understand and act upon their views” (Meer and Sever 2004). On the other hand, such commitment and ability is rarely present without an active citizenry demanding accountability and creating and using opportunities for democratic participation. Preliminary results from our series on decentralization confirm that, even in theoretically accessible spaces such as village or municipal politics, “participation and associational life is deeply gendered in that women have fewer opportunities to participate in public life” (Mukhopadhyay 2004: 23). Notably, such barriers are less and less formal, but rather result from gendered access to resources (including social capital), the sexual division of labour, the embodiment of gender constructs (for instance making it uncomfortable for women to speak in public, in some places, while giving men the responsibility to lead), and other factors.

Box 1: Global series on women's rights and decentralization

In recent years, decentralization reforms have become pivotal to the development plans of most countries in the South. Decentralization is being promoted as a way to foster economic development and democracy, effectiveness, and inclusiveness. In the contemporary context, it is frequently associated with privatization in such areas as service provision.

Although decentralization is usually presented as beneficial for women, there is a significant gap in research and knowledge on the impact of decentralization on women and their rights. The Gender Unit's series of regional research competitions on this theme was launched at the end of 2003 to address this gap (IDRC projects 102076, 102927, and 103574), and five projects in sub-Saharan Africa were selected for funding in 2004. A further five have just been selected in South Asia, and a third competition, this time in the LAC region, has just been launched in collaboration with Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), Argentina. A global workshop, planned for July 2006, will bring together the grant recipients from all three competitions to enable South-South knowledge exchanges and the creation of an informal network on gender and decentralization.

Nigeria's Obafemi Awolowo University is one of the five recipients in sub-Saharan Africa. Researchers from the university's Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies conducted surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions involving local government employees, elected women representatives, and households. These were designed to find out whether women in positions of authority behave differently than men, how the delegation of power to local authorities affects women, and whether planning and budgeting takes gender into account. The researchers concluded that, so far, government commitment to the empowerment of women is weak and the women's constituency is too frail in structure and internal cohesiveness to engage in the collective practice required for a feminist transformation of the present political system. Researchers will propose and implement action plans to strengthen women's roles as leaders and change agents.

WRC also recognizes that analyses of, and prescriptions for, the participation of women in democratic processes tend to rely, to greater or lesser degrees, on models of political life that take for granted the freedom of individuals to form or join voluntary associations and press for their rights. Such models rarely consider important contextual realities in the South, such as the ongoing importance of ascribed identities (of caste, clan, ethnicity, religious community, etc.). In several countries, the salience of these forms of hereditary belonging was exacerbated under colonialism (Mamdani 1996; Kabeer 2002). The strength of these forms of societal organization continues, among other factors, to undermine democratic reforms and nation-building, and to inhibit women's capacity to organize and voice gender-specific concerns across differences.

WRC initiatives funded under this entry point will contribute to building the accountability of states, political parties, and social movements to achieve women's rights. Research will examine state institutions, political processes, and state-society relations, paying attention to how they are sites of patriarchal power, male bias, and resistance, with a view to making policy recommendations.

Research will also address how various identities based on race, class, sexuality, etc., shape women's political choices and citizenship struggles and can hinder the formation of strong constituencies for feminist change, thereby contributing answers to practical questions of how women can best organize to press for their rights.

More specifically, WRC-supported research will lead to a better understanding of how the situation in particular states resulting from their history and local forms of social organization helps or hinders the realization of women's rights. Such research can investigate, for example, how states attempt to balance commitments of universal citizenship while recognizing women's differences within their political institutions. Primarily in MENA, but also in other regions, WRC-supported work can also contribute to a better understanding of how the state engages with kin-based social organizations and how kinship affects women's access to their entitlements as citizens (Charrad 2003).

Another area of investigation under this entry point is the operation of state "gender regimes," meaning the whole range of laws that are in place, including international commitments, as well as how the government, its institutions of governance, and its bureaucracy are organized. For instance, how is the implementation of international commitments monitored? How are national gender policies and programs coordinated and monitored? How can public administration be reformed to promote gender equality? Here, we plan to continue to support work to determine what kinds of administrative reforms, including specific types of decentralization reforms, lead to greater accountability in serving women's interests.

Given the notable increase in the number of women in politics — often due to the establishment of affirmative action policies and programs such as quotas — it is also important to investigate the effect of this increased women's representation on gender equality and women's rights. Is there a correlation between an increase in the number of women serving at various levels of political institutions and the prevalence of substantive policies that favour women?

The role that political parties play in these processes is underexplored. WRC is interested in supporting in-depth studies on the relation between women candidates and representatives and political parties, their agendas, and political cultures, for instance. State innovations in the form of deliberation, consultation, and mobilization are also useful to examine in terms of their actual impact on improving women's lives.

Finally, even where women have gained formal access to political institutions, evidence suggests that sociocultural norms can continue to block their access to the real sites of political power. It is such questions that a recently approved Gender Unit action-research project in West Africa seeks to address (see Box 2).

Box 2: Culture and women's access to decision-making in West Africa

The idea for this research project (IDRC project 103575) came from observing a paradox with regard to women's citizenship in francophone West Africa. On one hand, a large number of national and international legal instruments and institutions recognize women's right to full participation in economic, political, and social decision-making, and indeed promote such participation. On the other hand, the political participation of women at the local, national, and regional levels continues to be weak.

Most of the research that has been carried out on this subject in West Africa simply attests to this fact, while the deeper explanatory factors rooted in cultural determinants (habits and customs) are largely unexplored. This grant will allow the women's rights and citizenship coalitions of Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal to investigate the interplay between the private and the public spheres and identify cultural and customary obstacles to the full participation of women in decision-making. The research results will provide a basis for advocacy instruments aimed at overcoming these obstacles and facilitating the inclusion of women in decision-making.

A final area of sponsored research under this theme is the relation between elected women representatives and civil society organizations, especially women's groups. It is important to investigate whether alliances exist between elected women representatives, feminists in government ("femocrats"), and gender equality advocates in civil society; how those alliances are cultivated and nourished; and under what circumstances and organizational modalities they contribute to advancing the women's rights agenda. This area of investigation was highlighted as crucial by several of the top applicants for our South Asia decentralization research grants.

Access to justice

Although this might appear to be a subsection of our first entry point, as the legal apparatus is a state institution, we have chosen to address the field of justice separately for practical as well as conceptual reasons. The first entry point deals with how the governmental element of the state should be fashioned and organized to guarantee women their rights and to ensure that, as citizens, they are fully a part of the process. This entry point deals with how those rights, once established, can be claimed independently by women or how the state's failure to establish them can be challenged in law. Finally, treating the field of justice separately emphasizes its importance to women's rights and the fact that, in practice, women take various paths to pursue justice in different contexts.

Recognition of the existence of these various paths requires looking at national and international justice systems but also, beyond and below, to other institutions such as the family, the church or religion, the security sector, legal aid offices, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, social welfare departments, housing agencies, residents' associations, etc. — in other words, moving beyond a formal, legalistic approach to an examination of the range of "justice delivery institutions" that engage in the regulation of women's lives (Nyamu-Musembi 2004: 17). Under this entry point, WRC will support research on such issues as gender bias in the administration and performance of justice, legal pluralism, and law-making and legal reform.

Gender bias in the legal system “describes the leakage of patriarchal norms into purportedly impartial law and policy so as to ensure that women’s access to justice systems, or to public resources, does not challenge male prerogatives or undermine women’s domestic roles.... In the legal system, there are all manner of biases in the design and interpretation of the law — for instance, in the defences and standards of proof that privilege typically masculine behavioural preferences” (Goetz 2003: 26–27).

Gender bias can be seen to operate at three levels within legal systems (Goetz 2003: 27–28):

- *Substantive level:* This refers to gender bias within the laws themselves, including the failure to criminalize gender-based violence (e.g., marital rape), family laws of marriage, custody and divorce, property rights, and inheritance and citizenship laws that prejudice women’s rights and entitlements.
- *Structural level:* This refers to the organizations, institutions, and systems that interpret and enforce the law (the judiciary, the courts, the police, the prison system, and other correctional mechanisms). Language, education, geographic distance, and financial constraints limit the availability of these institutions to women and other marginalized groups. Other procedures within the administration of legal systems are more proactively constitutive of gender injustices, including inadequate protection of witnesses or victims, impunity for those who abuse their power, lack of appropriate reporting procedures, etc. Gender injustice is also inherent in the difficulties or outright barriers to female attainment of positions of power or decision-making ability within these institutions, which are predominantly male.
- *Cultural level:* This refers to the beliefs and attitudes of those within the legal system that favour male perspectives and prerogatives in judicial proceedings, including interpretation of the law, administration of justice, and other institutionalized practices.

The Gender Unit’s ongoing research project on Child Support, Poverty and Gender Equality in the Caribbean provides a concrete example of how such issues can be usefully addressed in a case study (see Box 3). This project also testifies to the interlinkages between research entry points, as it is also very much concerned with the economic rights of women.

Box 3: Child support, poverty, and gender equality in the Caribbean

Child support proceedings are arguably the most significant component of the administration of family justice in the Caribbean. This project (IDRC project 102617) aims to strengthen empirical knowledge of the operation of the legal system in child support matters. Researchers are examining and assessing the criteria and legal principles applied in resolving child support proceedings; ascertaining the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in child support matters; and investigating how gender influences and informs the legal resolution of child support claims. They will produce policy guidance for improving the administration of justice in child support matters. The method involves examining court records and conducting in-depth interviews with a range of users and providers of court services. The project is being carried out in phases in Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and Grenada — countries that reflect the social and cultural diversity of the Caribbean. The overall goal is to reduce women’s vulnerability to poverty, advance gender equality, and promote the idea of shared family responsibility within the court system.

In supporting research on legal pluralism, WRC recognizes that the legal reality anywhere is “a collage of obligatory practices and norms emanating from both governmental and non-governmental sources” (Griffiths 1986: 39). In most postcolonial states, there are “plural and overlapping legal systems and multiple social authorities — clan or tribe elders, religious leaders, rural feudal elites — who command loyalty and services from members of their communities and who make determinations about what is fair and right in human interactions” (Goetz 2003: 13).

In some cases, legal pluralism can advance gender equity and equality by improving access to judicial institutions for women, making justice delivery mechanisms more culturally appropriate (and therefore more legitimate), and tolerating multiple and diverse notions of justice and judicial procedures. However, alternative sources of legal authority outside formal state law can also perpetuate patriarchal privilege, which inhibits gender justice and active citizenship.

WRC-supported research in this area will, therefore, encourage analysis of the gendered implications, both positive and negative, of legal pluralism within specific contexts and the conditions under which change is effected within both formal and traditional systems to achieve greater gender equality and equity.

Finally, although law-making and legal reform are already the subject of much feminist research and activism (and donor attention), especially in the area of securing formal equal rights for women and addressing violence against women (Kapur 2003: 38–39), WRC seeks to encourage a critical examination of the actual implementation of legal reforms (i.e., law in action). Rather than assuming that all legal reforms are progressive, WRC encourages the examination of how “legal interventions play a role in either facilitating or undermining gender justice projects” (Kapur 2003: 52).

Research here would help illuminate women’s varied experiences in challenging power-holders — their *legal empowerment* — and promote a deeper understanding of reasons for the continuing gaps between formal equality rights and substantive justice for women.

Economic rights

Economic rights are a crucial aspect of gendered citizenship, recognized in international law. Article 11 of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW; UN 1979), for instance, commits state parties to

take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

- (a) the right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;
- (b) the right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;
- (c) the right to the free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service...;
- (d) the right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value...;
- (e) the right to social security...;
- (f) the right to protection of health and safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

Contemporary feminist scholarship has demonstrated that, for women to be empowered to claim their rights, economic independence and security of livelihood have to be addressed in tandem with political and social empowerment and rights (see, for example, Kabeer 2002, 2003; Mukhopadhyay 2004; Chen et al. 2005; Rao 2005).³ At the same time, this is an area that has not been addressed sufficiently in applied research and policy. The recent UNRISD (2005) document on gender equality, for example, states very clearly that development policy aimed at women and livelihoods has thus far not been informed by gender analyses, and questions of gendered citizenship remain unaddressed.

To improve understanding of and support processes to further women's economic rights, we have chosen from a broad range of possible issues to support research on work and employment-related rights and laws; social protection; and women's access to assets, resources, and economic opportunities.

Building on IDRC's and the Gender Unit's long partnership with Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO; see Box 4), particular attention in all three areas will be paid to the case of women working in the informal sector. This is important not only because women are overrepresented in informal employment, but also because this very fact demonstrates the connection between the economic status of women and their inferior social citizenship and lack of political voice. Women enter the labour market, not as free agents ready to sell their labour, but as bearers of their gender identity, which often marks them as dependent daughters, wives, or mothers. As a result, even when they are the primary household earners, their incomes are often seen as supplementary, as they are assumed to be supported by male kin. Further reducing women's ability to compete for formal (or higher-paying) jobs is the fact that in virtually all countries, they still bear the primary responsibility for taking care of children, the ill, the elderly, and the physical household, limiting the time and energy they have to obtain

the education and experience necessary to compete in today's increasingly skilled labour markets and to organize to press for their economic rights.

Box 4: WIEGO

Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) is a global research-policy network that seeks to improve the status of the poor working in the informal economy, especially women. WIEGO endeavours to do this by gathering statistics and conducting research on informal workers; formulating programs and policies for informal workers; and organizing and representing informal workers. A joint Trade, Employment and Competitiveness/Gender Unit grant (IDRC project 103186) is providing core support for WIEGO's research and analysis program over the period 2005–07. It will also allow WIEGO to publish a volume on informal employment in the garment sector, based in part on research funded by IDRC.

Support for research on *rights and laws relating to work and employment* starts from the recognition that over the past three decades, although women's economic activity rates have been rising in most parts of the world, labour markets continue to be segmented by gender. While in many developing countries expanding labour markets have facilitated women's entry into paid employment, the terms under which they are entering the labour market and their rights in the workplace have deteriorated. For most women in the South, the right to work and rights in the workplace are alien concepts because realizing rights is made impossible by gender inequalities in capacities, social policies, and labour and credit markets. Specific policies and interventions to promote mobilization, as well as social and economic measures to provide a "voice" that will articulate demands for rights, are needed to address this problem.

Of concern also is the quality of women's economic involvement, beyond their mere presence as workers. This is a particularly serious problem where women's employment is concentrated in poorly paid or unskilled job "ghettos," characterized by the absence of upward mobility and opportunities. This is most commonly the result of gender bias, obstructive attitudes, and legal and social systems that use maternity laws and benefits to penalize women economically for childbirth and childcare responsibilities and discourage or actively prevent men from sharing family responsibilities.

Some of the questions around which the WRC research agenda on these issues will be built include: Who has access to labour markets, both nationally and internationally? On what terms and how can the terms be changed to empower women? How is women's labour understood in state policy discourse and with what implications for women's identity as workers? What kinds of labour reforms and policy changes can truly enhance working women's rights? What kinds of legal and policy provisions will strengthen women's bargaining power within the household and in the labour market?

Related to employment policies is the question of *social protection*. With economic restructuring, significant numbers of workers are losing access to their rights to social benefits (such as pensions, maternity benefits, and compensation for work-related accidents and diseases) through the workplace. In poorer developing countries, conditions of work are hazardous and precarious, with little regulation of the working environment and very little social protection — and that confined to the formal sector. A history of the impact of various social protection interventions shows that women are more likely to be excluded from these, as they are underrepresented in formal-sector employment. Therefore, the interests of poor, working women can only be served by improving access to social protection in the labour market and extending social insurance to informal workers.

The poor are largely dependent on support systems provided by non-state institutions including family and kin, “community,” religious bodies, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Women receive much less assistance and have fewer opportunities than men. Many poverty-reduction and social development programs are focused on households and do not consider intrahousehold inequities in assets and labour distribution between men and women or between boys and girls. Unless particular attention is paid to women’s specific needs when social protection policies and programs are developed, approaches that might appear to be gender-neutral may actually disadvantage women.

Some of the unexplored areas where WRC will encourage research include gender analyses of various state mechanisms for social protection and rights and social security legislation; the investigation of how gender-related vulnerabilities are experienced in relation to the location in which workers find themselves in the labour market; and the identification and documentation of innovative approaches to providing social protection to informal workers, especially women, including extending the coverage of existing social protection schemes or developing new ones. Discussions will be conducted with the Globalization, Growth and Poverty program to create synergy between its work on social protection and this WRC interest.

A final area of support to research within this entry point is the issue of persisting *gender inequality in access to economic assets*, such as land, property, and natural resources. Although globally there has been a push for women’s property and inheritance rights since the Second Women’s Conference in Copenhagen in 1980, following the CEDAW commitment to equal access to land and other property (UN 1979: articles 14–16), progress in this regard has been slow.

Exploring reasons for the lack of action and implementation of property rights for women, Nitya Rao (2004) argues that a major reason is the social embeddedness of land. Land inheritance is a key element of family and kinship relations and a way of structuring social relations on the ground. Land is valued not only for material reasons or as a productive resource, but also for symbolic reasons in terms of identity, status, and hierarchy within a given social context and, hence, conflict cannot be ruled out. In many cases, even though there is legal provision for ownership of land by women, customary practices do not allow women to have effective control over land. To be practicable, legal

rights have to take into account the cultural context of communities and address the underlying justification for the custom they seek to replace.

In the present context, one also needs to locate the discussion of assets within the macroeconomic reality, in terms of identifying the sorts of assets that would actually help to empower women. In many places, with a decline in public investment in agriculture, land may no longer be the best resource to ensure livelihood. Thus, other livelihood options are increasingly sought, and education and skills are becoming key assets for the rural poor. In the urban context, important assets for livelihood include not just easily measurable resources such as labour, land, and real estate, but also health status, skills, education, household relations, and social capital (Moser 1998).

Where women's rights and citizenship issues are concerned, there is clearly a need to explore how to strengthen women's decision-making power over the distribution of intrahousehold and "family"⁴ assets and resources and also how to secure women's alternative entitlements.

Sexual and reproductive rights

Sexual and reproductive rights continue to be a key preoccupation of both women's movements and gender researchers. It was women's movements in the South that succeeded in putting feminist analyses of reproductive and sexual health and rights on the broader human development agenda (Petchesky 2000; Delahanty 2005). These efforts culminated in a major conceptual shift from the older "population and development" framework to the sexual and reproductive health and rights approach at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, building on the achievements of the 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.

Two key principles underlie sexual and reproductive rights: the right to reproductive health care and the right to make decisions about one's own sexual and reproductive life (Centre for Reproductive Rights 2005). As recognized in both the ICPD (1994) and the *Programme of Action* and the *Beijing Platform for Action* (UN 1995), reproductive and sexual rights are integral to basic human rights guaranteed by international law, and a recent analysis referenced 10 related internationally recognized human rights enshrined in treaties and other consensus documents (CRLP and U of T 2002: 14–15).

The current agenda for sexual and reproductive health and rights has broadened further since Cairo to encompass such issues as access to good-quality pre- and postnatal care and to emergency obstetric services; access to family planning and sex education for both girls and boys; men's responsibilities in the prevention of unwanted pregnancies; unequal power relations in negotiating sex (especially safe sex); the feminization of HIV/AIDS; access to safe and legal abortion; the trade in sexualized bodies (mostly women and children) in pornography, sex work, "sex tourism," and trafficking; and violence against women (Harcourt 2005).

⁴ "Family" here is meant in the broadest possible sense, to include locally relevant individuals ranging from the nuclear family to large lineages and other kin-based solidarity groups that operate as corporate entities. At issue is the delineation of the group within which resources and assets are collectively managed.

Research for development in the area of sexual and reproductive health must take into account the fact that societies tend to be heavily invested in the regulation and control of sexuality and that sexuality and reproduction are areas where gender and moral norms tend to be strictest. This is part of the reason why sexual and reproductive health and rights are a contentious political issue and why work in this area must be informed by thorough contextual analyses that are cognizant of cultural and political specificity.

Thus, during our regional consultations, we found that although sexual and reproductive health and rights are significant areas of work in feminist research and advocacy in both Latin America and South Asia, the issues and priorities are different in the two regions. Women's movements in Latin America tend to concentrate on sexual autonomy and the legalization of abortion and contraception. In South Asia, contraception is widely available and abortion is legal. Women's rights proponents in Asia have rather been concerned with coercive population and family planning policies and with the use of reproductive technologies for sex-selective abortion, resulting in a recent increase in the sex ratio imbalance in favour of boys in countries such as India. ActionAid India's project Addressing the Adverse Sex Ratio in Selected Districts of India, which was funded by the Gender Unit, is concerned specifically with this problem (see Box 5). In sub-Saharan Africa, those working in this field have been more preoccupied with the lack of basic services, resulting in shockingly high maternal and infant mortality rates, and with the gendered aspects of HIV/AIDS. Finally for MENA, a recent overview concluded that "the discussion of reproductive health and rights is made very complex by the growing hard-line religious fundamentalism and is embedded in economic and political shifts that are built on deep gender biases that make it difficult to introduce a rights-based discussion" (Harcourt 2003). Nevertheless, research, policy, and advocacy work in the region for legal reform in the area of women's basic personal rights touches on several linked issues, such as minimum legal age for marriage, consent for marriage, women's rights in polygyny, and custody of children (Charrad 2003).

In supporting work in these important areas of women's rights and citizenship, the program will build on past and ongoing work, such as the Indian sex ratio project; support for the 10th International Women and Health Meeting (New Delhi, September 2005); and contribution to a GEH small grant to Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), to support research on Health Sector Reform, Maternal Mortality and Abortion (project 100443-011) in selected countries in the South.

Box 5: Addressing the adverse sex ratio in selected districts of India

The 2001 census indicated that there were over 35 million fewer females than males in India and that the ratio of males to females had dramatically increased in northern India, especially in the 0–6 year age group. A comparison between the 1991 and 2001 censuses reveals an increasing “masculinization” of the sex ratio (i.e., a disproportionately large number of males).

A project supported by the Gender Unit (IDRC project 101429) is documenting factors that contribute to this trend in selected districts of five Indian states (Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Haryana). While previous studies concentrated on biologic–demographic factors (higher male sex ratios at birth, son preference, sex-selective abortion, and migration), this project takes a closer look at qualitative data on the multiple interrelated factors that contribute to the phenomenon. More specifically, it seeks to understand the formal and informal social, cultural, economic, and political processes, institutions, and agencies that shape gender relations and influence the skewed sex ratio.

The project is being carried out by the gender unit of ActionAid India, a not-for-profit NGO, in collaboration with local women’s organizations and researchers from leading Indian universities. The results are also expected to inform ActionAid’s and other organizations’ health and education programs aimed at correcting the sex ratio imbalance at the local community level.

Under this entry point, WRC will set a priority on work on such cutting-edge and regionally important issues as gender roles and power in sexual relations (particularly with regard to negotiating safe sex and the number and spacing of children); access to legal and safe abortion; policy regulation of reproductive technologies (a joint area of interest with the new Innovation Policy and Science program area); and women’s rights in marriage, including in polygamous unions.

We will also support areas of work that intersect with other entry points, such as access to reproductive health services under the impact of macroeconomic policies and trade agreements, notably the General Agreement on Trade in Services (Delahanty 2005) and under decentralization (an interest shared by GEH); and the rightlessness of female migrants in various sex industries, whether “trafficked” or willingly performing this work in the face of limited livelihood options.

Finally, where such research can be shown to have potential tangible impacts on the realization of women’s rights, we will support research that investigates how the process of claiming sexual and reproductive rights can empower women to exercise their citizenship more fully.

Although we recognize the importance of research and advocacy on gender-based violence and the element or threat of violence in several of the areas of research just highlighted, we have decided to discontinue support for work on gender-based violence in and of itself, as our background program development work showed that this area is better funded by other donors and a significant body of research findings already exists.

Migration and women’s rights

The final entry point for WRC is an exploration of the women’s rights dimensions of migration. The global reorganization of labour markets has had an important impact on migration, both international and internal. Questions of how migration can be made to work for the poor and ways in which policy can shape and respond to migration are increasingly being raised in the development field. However, the complex relations

among migration, development, and social change are only partly understood. If policy interventions are to enhance the positive impacts of migration, they have to be informed by more evidence-based research.

Women constitute an increasing proportion of international migrants; it is estimated that half of the world's migrants are now women (IOM 2005). The term "feminization" of migration has emerged to refer to the increasing numbers of women who are migrating independently as principle wage earners rather than because of marriage or under the authority of older relatives and men. UNRISD (2005: 110) recently noted, "The out-migration of women workers is most evident from Asia, with the majority migrating as domestics, workers in the entertainment industry, and to a lesser extent as nurses and teachers." Many reasons underlie the movement of women and girls, including conflict, persecution, environmental degradation, natural disasters, and other situations that affect their habitat, livelihood, and security (UN 2005c). However, gender disaggregated statistics on migration are scarce and data are uneven across countries. The BRIDGE Cutting Edge Pack on *Gender and Migration* notes, "Migration among African countries is possibly the least well-documented migration flow globally" (Jolly and Reeves 2005: 8).

Investigating migration from a gender perspective is essential for understanding both the causes and consequences of international and internal migration. The need for an approach that addresses the gendered dimensions of migration is necessary as men, women, and children are presented with different sets of opportunities, threats, and barriers as they move through formal and informal migration channels (Piper 2004). Migration may provide new opportunities to improve the lives of women and challenge unequal gender and other relations. However, it can also solidify gender inequality and expose women to new vulnerabilities (Jolly and Reeves 2005; Murison 2005).

The issue of migration relates strongly to rights, citizenship, and livelihoods. A great majority of migrants are unskilled and, consequently, are overrepresented in marginal, unregulated, and poorly paid jobs where they suffer poor working conditions and have few or no workers' rights. Migrants often constitute one of the more vulnerable social groups in any country and, among them, women are especially vulnerable to underpayment, sexual abuse, and heavy workloads (Deshingkar 2005). In addition, "the poor value accorded to domestic work, the lack of protection in informal and irregular occupations, especially those dominating the entertainment and hospitality industries, and involvement in [illegal] commercial sex," leave migrant women extremely vulnerable to exploitation. Female voluntary migrants are often harmed by national laws on emigration and immigration that include discriminatory provisions. For example, some laws make it difficult for female migrants to bring their husbands and children to join them, mandate pregnancy tests, bar emigration of women without their guardian's permission, and impose age limits on immigration or emigration of women and girls.

This is only an indication of some of the issues in the migration and development field that warrant attention from a gender and women's rights perspective. As this is a new area for IDRC, WRC will initially carry out exploratory work, investigating how women's rights and citizenship are affected by both international and internal migration. In collaboration with the Regional Office for Southeast and East Asia, we are currently

planning an experts' meeting to advise us on key areas for research on migration, citizenship, and women's rights in Asia, building on a commissioned paper on this theme, which will be available in spring 2006. We are currently reviewing or expecting research proposals on gendered experiences of migration in West and North Africa; migrant workers in Southeast Asia; and migration, mobility, and social change in India and China. Tentatively, the issue of remittances is an area where we see scope for collaboration with GGP (see Box 6). On the other hand, while migration in the context of conflict and its impact on women's rights is an extremely important area for further research, it will not constitute part of the WRC's work as we feel that this area is already aptly covered by the Peace, Conflict and Development program.

Box 6: Migrant remittances, development, and gender

Understanding of the gendered dimension of remittances and development is grossly limited. There is a dominant assumption in the literature and the field that women generally send home a larger share of their earnings than men and also tend to be better savers. Women in control of remittances are also believed to channel financial transfers into better health, nutrition, and education for the entire family. A study by Semyonov and Gorodzeisky (2005) of male and female overseas workers from the Philippines, however, challenges such assumptions (Ramirez et al. 2005).

Research on the gendered dimensions of remittances must adopt a multidimensional approach to understand the gendered constellation of remitters, receivers, and mediating institutions; the gendered norms and logics that regulate remittances; the various uses of remittances; and the social and political meaning of remittances (Sorenson 2005).

Understanding the complex linkages between migrant remittances, gender, and development requires studies at the macro level using cross-country data and at the micro level focusing on households and individuals.

One obvious area for WRC research support is "trafficking," defined as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation" (UN 2000). Despite this concretely articulated definition, the term "trafficking" is not used in a consistent manner in the literature and there is much debate over how it should be defined and studied. The definition of trafficking in some cases encompasses all sex workers as trafficked persons, the underlying assumption being that no individual would willingly choose sex work as a livelihood option. In other cases, a distinction is drawn between voluntary and forced prostitution. The question of where to draw that line raises methodological challenges for researchers.

Although the "field" of trafficking is largely preoccupied with combating it, WRC proposes to investigate a "rights-based approach that seeks to support and provide sustainable incomes" (Jolly and Reeves 2005: 33). Such an approach would include paying attention to structural problems that explain the root cause of trafficking "such as 'insecurity' brought about by ill health, violence, lack of employment opportunities and

homelessness” (Jolly and Reeves 2005). Supported research would highlight gender differences in experiencing trafficking, i.e., how women and men “are recruited; how they relate to clients, social services and law enforcement while in countries of destination; how they get away from a situation of exploitation and how they are rehabilitated” (Laczko 2005).

Important questions for research include the links between internal and international trafficking, as well as those between the countries of origin and destination. Other gaps in knowledge include trafficking for forced labour (the emphasis has been on trafficking for sexual exploitation); research on the traffickers, clients, and law enforcement agencies that are implicit in the phenomenon; and studies of stakeholders involved in combating trafficking, such as service providers, law enforcement agencies, and NGOs (Laczko 2005). Most existing studies focus on Europe and Asia; relatively less research has been conducted in the Americas, Africa, and the Middle East — areas where WRC could make a contribution.

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Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
GEH	Governance, Equity and Health (program initiative)
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
HIV/AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	nongovernmental organization
UN	United Nations
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing
WRC	Women's Rights and Citizenship