

ISSN 0976-6634

JOURNAL OF

SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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J Sociology Soc Anth, 8(4): 193-198 (2017)
DOI: 10.31901/24566764.2017/08.04.04

Incomes Disparity along Gender Lines: The Plight of Women in the Informal Sector

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KEYWORDS Cross Border Trade. Inequality. Poverty Reduction

ABSTRACT The contributions to development of informal sector activities have received mixed views both in literature and in various policy discourses. This paper examined the gender dimension of incomes in the informal sector, focusing on individuals who were involved in buying and selling across national borders, referred to as Informal Cross Border Traders (ICBT). From a comparative gender perspective, focus was on whether the stated activities were raising incomes of those participating above the poverty datum line. Poverty reduction was considered to have occurred when the informal sector activities had improved their incomes. Surveys were conducted using the questionnaire to collect primary data. Secondary information was obtained from documentary searches at institutions and the internet. While the paper showed that ICBT improved incomes of participants, however men financially benefited more than women. Thus, the analysis revealed a gender bias in favour of men, which needs to be recognised by development practitioners.