

The existing structure of the division of labour between men and women and the changing roles of women in Kenya are at once rooted in cultural norms and institutions and reinforced by structural arrangements. The Kenyan economy is primarily dependent on the agricultural sector. The great majority of the small farms are worked by family labour, and women provide the bulk of the labour force. Differences in male and female labour contributions to production and reproduction and the rewards associated with such roles constitute a basis for gender inequality. Changes in the historical processes and in the structure of the division of labour have conjointly led to the expansion of female roles, intensification of women's workload, and their economic and social marginality. The ways in which cultural and structural forces interact to define and perpetuate the role and subordinate status of women in Western Kenya is discussed.