



Promoting women's economic empowerment:
Emerging insights from a
5-year policy research program

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The Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) program is a multi-funder partnership between the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, the Hewlett Foundation, and the International Development Research Centre. GrOW aims to fill the knowledge gap by providing evidence to inform social and economic policies that improve poor women's lives while promoting economic growth. GrOW also promotes the use of research by decision-makers and seeks to enhance the research capacity of young and Southern-based researchers.

This GrOW Program Report summarises research findings of 14 projects in 50 countries, which will be articulated in greater depth in the program syntheses. These focus on measurement of women's economic empowerment, links between gender equality and growth, the care economy, and constraints to labour market participation.

Opinions stated in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, the Hewlett Foundation, and the International Development Research Centre.

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1. Introduction

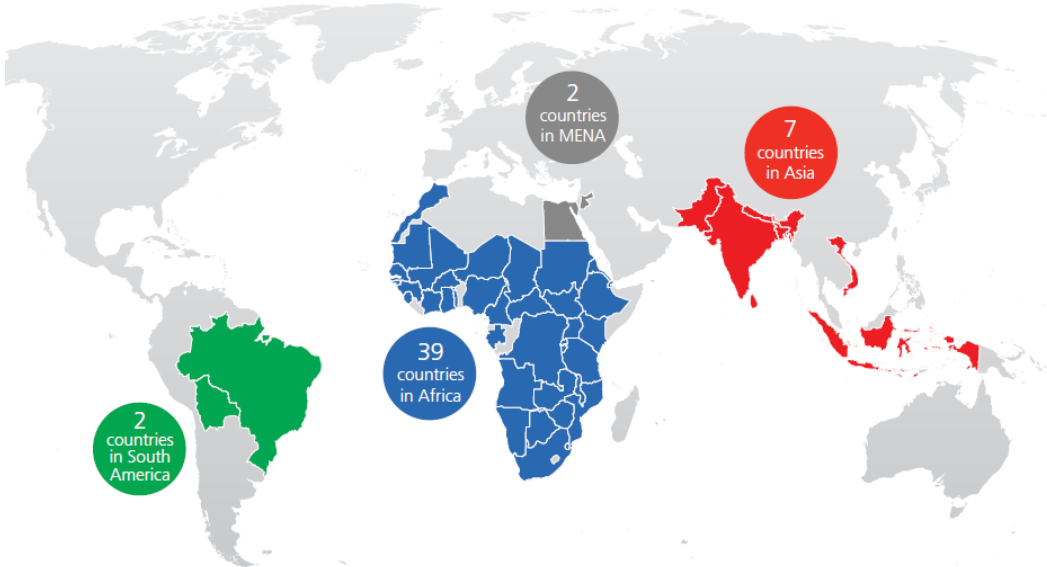
IDRC, in partnership with the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) and the Hewlett Foundation, implemented a five-year research program on women’s economic empowerment. The program focused on the barriers that women face in low-income contexts, how economic growth promotes or hinders women’s empowerment, and how women’s empowerment can promote growth. This thematic was informed by the background paper by Naila Kabeer (2017), and by the relative lack of knowledge on the economic dimensions of gender inequalities (Grown et al. 2016; Buvinic and Furst-Nichols 2014).

The Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) program has promoted, simultaneously, a strengthened evidence base on women’s economic barriers and relationship with growth, local capacities for innovative analysis on women’s empowerment, and the uptake

of that research in policy and practice, at national and international levels. It has done so through supporting 14 projects in 50 countries, with primary research conducted in 18 countries, initiated through global calls for proposal. GrOW has supported over 85 southern-based policy-oriented researchers, 60 per cent being women. We expect some 60 high quality working papers, many of which will eventually be published, policy briefs, and over 30 recorded cases of impactful policy engagement. GrOW provided both financial and technical support to each of the country studies, and we are currently producing four syntheses that draw out lessons beyond the case studies.

This note summarises research findings so far, which will be articulated in greater depth in the syntheses. These focus on measurement of women’s economic empowerment, links between gender equality and growth, the care economy, constraints to labour market participation, and the role of social norms.

Figure 1: GrOW research on empowerment in 50 countries



2. Continued relevance of GrOW findings

The international development commitment to gender equality, including women's economic empowerment, has increased significantly over the last few years. In the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030 gender equality has a prominent place, both in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 and in the recognition that gender equality is important for all development goals. The UN High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment (2017) provided action-oriented recommendations to enhance women's contribution to, and participation in economic growth; DFID Economic Development Strategy (2017) committed to building on the recommendations of the Panel.

Recently, the Canadian Government formulated its Feminist International Assistance Policy – GrOW intensively engages with this in both public debate (de Haan, 2017) and informing Canada's G7 agenda. How to measure women's economic empowerment, and assess impact of policies, has emerged as a key concern; Section 2 below elaborates on this. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has shown increased commitment to promoting gender equality in macro-economic policies; GrOW research as summarised in Section 3 can complement this.

In the first half of 2018, DFID (2018) announced a new strategic vision for gender equality, the Gates Foundation (2018) its first-ever gender equality strategy, committing US\$170 million to women's economic empowerment, and the Hewlett Foundation announced a new fund for new ideas in economic policy



Photo credit : IDRC/Tom Pilston

making to address inequalities more broadly (New Funds for New Ideas, 2018). The World Bank continues to show leadership through for example the Gender Innovation Lab, and the Women, Business and the Law initiative. The Doing Business report recently added a gender dimension to its measures.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) is taking on gender equality in the care economy through their recent Tackling Childcare report (2017); GrOW research in this area as discussed in Section 4 complements this.

Progress in reducing gender inequalities is stalling, economic inequalities increased.

These commitments are made against continued, and new challenges. Global political changes threaten the progress made towards gender equality. The last gender report by the World Economic Forum (2017) indicates that actual progress in reducing gender inequalities is stalling: measured by the composite index

in the Gender Gap Report in the last year inequalities, including in economic participation, slightly increased.

At an IDRC seminar, Stephanie Seguino, Professor of Economics at the University of Vermont, highlighted that global inequalities are closely interlinked with women's economic opportunities. Globally, economic growth may not create sufficient jobs, and according to Seguino increased gender equality in that context may be 'gender conflictive', i.e. where female workers replace male workers, there may be a backlash.

Conclusions in GrOW on women's economic progress particularly in labour markets as summarised in Section 5 indicate that the upward trend in female labour force participation may have levelled off (while many of the jobs women have remain distress participation). Good evidence on these trends, including with technological change, remains a key priority, as does finding innovative ways to reverse these concerning trends.

3. Measuring women’s economic empowerment: relevance for policy

GrOW defined women’s economic empowerment, drawing on definitions adopted by the international development community as: the “capacity of women to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contribution, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth” (OECD DAC Gender Equality Network, 2011).

The program commissioned scholars at McGill University to take stock of the definitions used in the 14 research projects. This produced an inventory of measures, and a literature review that put the GrOW experience in the international development context (Laszlo and Grantham, 2017; Laszlo *et al.*, 2017). The synthesis highlighted the heterogeneity in definitions of women’s economic empowerment. In 25 papers, 40 different measures were used, tailored to the research problem and data availability. Figure 2 represents an example of a multi-dimensional measure.

The review stressed the need for more clearly-defined conceptual frameworks. There is no singular correct approach to measuring women’s economic empowerment, but frameworks and context-specific operationalisation need to be clear. It is also essential to clearly distinguish subjective (or direct) measures that reflect whether women are and feel empowered and are able to exercise agency, from outcome (or indirect)

Figure 2: Measurement women’s economic empowerment in evaluation Mahila Samakhya



Source: Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, India

measures such as education levels or labour force participation that may or may not be empowering.

These conclusions are relevant for a number of reasons. Analyses of the impact of gender equality on economic growth rely largely on indirect measures; as we highlight later in this note, particularly indicators of female labour force participation need to be interpreted with care. Also, the SDGs rely heavily on indirect measures of empowerment; while this reflects availability of comparable data, these also need to be treated with care and we believe that further work with subjective/perception indicators in Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data would be valuable. Finally, there is a need to ensure these findings inform policy guidance and practice: we believe it would be worth investing in policy experimentation to embed subjective indicators of empowerment within aggregate and comparable measures used in development interventions and aggregate frameworks.

4. Links between economic growth and women's economic empowerment

GrOW, through separate calls, supported research on the bi-directional links between women's economic empowerment and economic growth.

Does gender inequality hinder economic growth?



Photo credit : IDRC / Minzayar Oo

Through a set of [systematic reviews](#), the University of Gottingen's team led by Stephan Klasen is assessing the merit of the argument that reducing gender inequality can promote growth – based on the premise that there is merit in combining the intrinsic with an instrumental argument for gender equality.

Klasen's (2018) paper is the clearest articulation of results so far. It reviews the literature that emerged since the 1990s that has argued that gender gaps are not only inequitable, but also reduce economic performance. Klasen (2018) expresses doubts about the validity of 'accounting studies' that estimate how much larger

gross domestic product (GDP) would be if gender gaps in employment disappeared, and concludes they vastly overestimate likely effects. He also stresses the methodological difficulties to determine reliable effects of gender gaps on economic performance. The theoretical literature has enhanced insights into the mechanisms linking gender gaps to economic performance.

Klasen (2018) concludes that the empirical evidence on the links of gender inequality to growth is mixed, and depends on the indicators of empowerment. Systematic review of the cross-country evidence robustly show that lowering gender gaps in education leads to higher economic performance. The literature on the impact of other gaps, including related to employment, is much more limited.

Lowering gender gaps in education leads to higher economic performance.

Klasen (2018) finally highlights the context-specific (micro) evidence on the impact of reducing particular gender gaps at the level of households, farms, or firms on economic performance: this shows robust results in some areas, and less clear evidence in others.

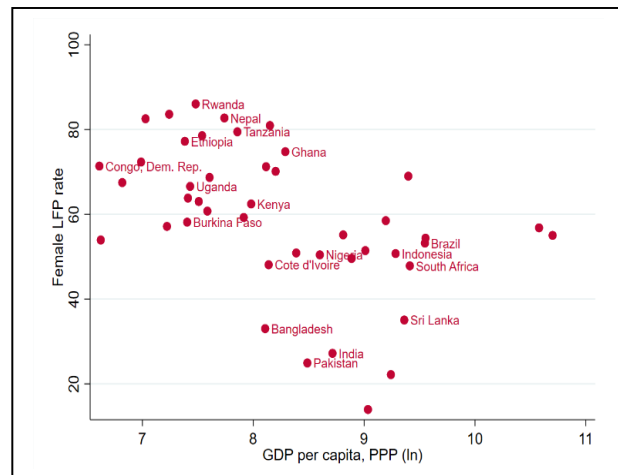
Does growth – and what patterns of growth – promote gender equality?

Klasen and colleagues are reviewing the evidence produced within GrOW on the question whether and how growth leads to empowerment, and what patterns of growth contribute (Kan and Klasen 2018). Four main areas are emerging.

First, overall, economic growth does not have a robust effect on female employment, possibly indicating a break in the trends witnessed in the 1980s and 1990s (for illustrative purposes, the graph plots the female labour force participation rates against GDP for the countries GrOW carried out research in). Moreover, economic growth does little to reduce occupational and sectoral segregation. For other aspects of empowerment, little evidence was generated, but there is some indication that growth is correlated more with some aspects empowerment (decision making) than others (e.g., attitudes to violence).

Second, patterns of growth matter. Growth in natural resources does little to increase female employment, with for example mining creating few formal sector jobs, and mostly for men (in fact, large numbers of informal jobs are created, which we discuss below). Export manufacturing and services have created opportunities for women. However, there is evidence that the export job creation in export manufacturing may have reached a peak.

Figure 3: Is female labour force participation related to GDP?



Source: data analysis by Gabriela Galassi for GrOW

The service sector is a very heterogeneous category, with women also often concentrated in the lowest-paid opportunities.

Third, because of the persistent sectoral segregation, trade dynamics and trade policy matter, and are case-specific. In Indonesia trade policy promoted female-intensive sectors and thus enhanced women's economic opportunities and promoted their empowerment. In other cases liberalization led to job losses – though often more for men than for women.

Fourth, the synthesis of GrOW research highlights ways in which women's barriers to economic opportunities, jobs and well as training, can be promoted in the short term. These include childcare opportunities and safe and reliable transport systems (discussed below).

5. Care economy

GrOW developed innovative policy analysis on the links between women's economic participation and the care economy, with a focus on unpaid care tasks. It supported three studies, in five countries (Kenya, India, Nepal, Tanzania and Rwanda), to shed light on three questions. How do women balance unpaid care work and income-earning activities? What helps women achieve better balance between income-generating and caring roles? Can the provision of daycare unlock the full potential of women at work?



Photo credit: IDRC / Tommy Trenchard

The studies used a mix of approaches, including experimental, non-experimental, and qualitative. This proved to be a key strength of the research. Results from the qualitative study where researchers immersed themselves in local communities added to the richness and depth of findings. Combined, these provide a very rich texture of the interplay between women's paid and unpaid work. In Kenya and India, researchers carried out Randomized Control Trials (RCTs) to test whether the provision of daycare can unlock the full potential of women at work in contexts where women spend

significant amount of time caring for children.

In India, Nepal, Tanzania and Rwanda, researchers combined survey and in-depth case studies to assess how women and families in low-income households balance unpaid care work with income-earning activities and how women's economic empowerment programmes and policies can be improved to help women achieve better balance between income-generating and caring roles.

Does paid work lead to empowerment?

A four-country study carried out by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS-Sussex) questions conventional measures of women's empowerment. It highlights that advancing gender equity and women's economic empowerment need to go beyond getting women into paid labour.

The research reviewed public and private sector women's economic empowerment interventions and revealed the drudgery of women's paid and unpaid care work, and the detrimental impact of this on their physical and psychological wellbeing. Besides child care, the distance poor women have to travel to fetch water and collect firewood stretch women, particularly when they try to balance this with paid work. As the title of the flagship report highlights, the combination of poorly paid and precarious jobs and the drudgery of unpaid care work leaves poor women with "no time to rest".

There is a strong evidence of intergenerational transmission of gendered patterns of unpaid work, mostly to the girl child. Children are disadvantaged by lack of parental time as they are pulled out of school or spend less time, which affects their future earning potential. GrOW research underscored the continued disproportionate burden of unpaid work on women. There is some – albeit limited – evidence of shifting norms. The study in Rwanda suggests that boys are taking an active role in unpaid care work. We do not know enough about where these shifts are happening and what accounts for this.

Women's economic empowerment programs must be accompanied by measures to reduce their care burden.

Interventions that focus only on getting women into the labour market without taking into account women's disproportionate role in unpaid care have limitations. Public works and other women's economic empowerment programs may increase women's earning power, but can inadvertently contribute to women's physical and psychological depletion if they are not accompanied by measures to reduce the care burden and the drudgery of their work. This has cast doubt on conventional measures economic empowerment that focus on getting women in paid work.

The findings also lend support to calls for infrastructure investments, in roads, water, electricity, to reduce the drudgery of women's work.

Can subsidised daycare be a solution?



Photo credit: IDRC / Sylvain Cherkaoui

Results from RCTs in Kenya and India found that affordable childcare can be a key enabler to women's participation in paid employment. Subsidized daycare can be a cost-effective public policy in low-income contexts. It can increase women's economic contribution, and help women balance paid and unpaid care tasks, which yields economic and social returns to society.

In Kenya mothers who received day care vouchers for their children were 8.5 percentage points more likely to be working than those who did not. A similar study in Udaipur, India also showed an increase, though of a much lesser magnitude.

The studies also showed that providing subsidized childcare can improve women's earning potential. In the Kenya study, mothers who received day care vouchers worked on average five hours less per week, without affecting their total earnings.

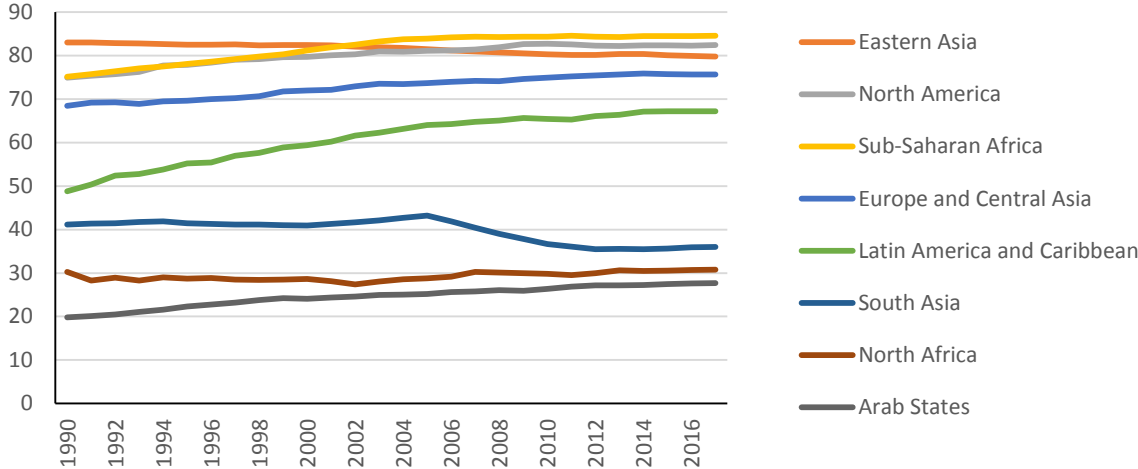
This suggests that providing subsidized day care for working mothers can enable them to curtail working excessively long hours without significantly reducing their earnings, thus giving them more time to spend on their own.

Differences in magnitude of impact and take up of daycare vouchers across the two countries studied suggests that context matters much, and lend support to testing out what works and doesn't in other contexts as well as tracking changes over long term.

Provision of affordable daycare is part of possible solutions to reducing women's care burden. Also, the findings about the drudgery of women's paid and unpaid work suggest that general public investments that are not necessarily targeted at women – such as roads and electrification – can have a significant positive spillovers for women. The key would be to identify these and explore how the benefits for women can be amplified.

6. Labour markets

Figure 4: Rate of female labor force participation by region (%) - Population age 15+



Source : ILO data

As indicated in the section on macro and gender, the evidence that growth is translating into women’s economic empowerment (particularly female employment) is not abundant. This *may* imply a trend break compared to the 1980s and 1990s.¹ Moreover, the gains in gender equality in health and education may not be translating into economic gains, and may not be meeting targets set under SDGs (see the synthesis by Heintz, forthcoming).

Labour force participation

Female labour force participation is one of the key indicators used in the cross-country GrOW analysis. Three observations are emerging.² First, rates of

female labour force participation are extremely diverse across regions, as the figure shows (these seem unrelated to levels of development). Rates in female labour force participation in Sub-Sahara Africa are very high, probably related to the dominance of farm work, but they remain very low in South Asia (with significant heterogeneity within the region).

Second, as shown in the figure as well, trends have been diverse, and there is little sign of convergence. While female labour force participation in Africa remains high and if anything increased, in South Asia – and particularly in India, female labour force participation has actually been decreasing, faster than men’s.³

¹ The trend observed in GrOW studies – on labour force participation - appears to contradict the observation at the start of the GrOW program of increasing women’s economic opportunities. Importantly, in many cases men’s opportunities are also not increasing.

² Some of these also are discussed in the [IPC collection Women at Work](#), which contains GrOW contributions alongside papers on Latin America.

³ A GrOW-related (IDRC-funded) study led by Sonalde Desai analyses this trend in detail.

Third, trends in female labour force participation can hide important dimensions of women's empowerment. In some cases, increased participation of women can be accompanied by declines for men – a trend labelled as 'gender conflictive'. Moreover, much labour force participation remains distress participation, even in the context of women empowerment programs: while necessary, these are not empowering, and indeed withdrawal may be to enhance well-being (reduce ill-being).⁴

Labour market segmentation is not decreasing

Cross-country analysis supported by GrOW is showing that job segregation has been remarkably stable over time. Occupational and sectoral segregation has grown in more countries than the number of countries where it has fallen, and income levels appear to have no impact on occupational or sectoral segregation (Borrowman and Klasen, 2017). This means that women's opportunities for advancement remain limited. It also means, as mentioned above, that impact of trade dynamics and policy vary by context.

Three GrOW studies – with different research methodologies – illustrate the nature and operation of this segregation, including the role of social norms.

- Study of employment in the natural resources sector in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire using national surveys shows the limited number of jobs created, the under-representation of women in better jobs, and women's over-representation in informal jobs in the sector. Qualitative evidence shows the beliefs and social norms that accompany this segregation.
- In-depth study of artisanal mining – an activity that employs 20-30 million people globally – in Central and East Africa illustrates how segregation operates at the lowest levels of occupational hierarchies (Buss *et. Al.*, 2017). Women tend to be excluded from the somewhat better jobs, with some trailblazers defying the trend. This is deeply embedded in social norms and hierarchical structures.
- GrOW-supported research on female headed households in Sri Lanka, defies expectations that the conflict and rising share of female-headed households would lead to weakening gender norms. Prevailing norms continue to limit the ability of widowed or separated women to participate in labor markets in the absence of an adult male family member (Lakshman, 2017; Kandanearachichi and Ratnayake, 2017).

⁴ As the GrOW IDS research mentioned above describes in detail; also Field et al (2018).

Women's barriers to access decent jobs



Photo credit: IDRC / Tommy Trenchard

GrOW projects highlight the specific barriers women face to access jobs. The six-country study in Africa, in contexts of high (youth) unemployment and informality, highlights the interaction between demographic, education, and employment (McKay, A., O'Neill, M., Vargas, A., Melesse, M., 2017).

Data and technical difficulties continue to hamper clear insights, but the data does indicate that demographic variables negatively impact girls' education chances, and this in turn impacts their employment chances. While enhancing demand for labour remains Africa's key priority, supply factors do matter for women's chances.

GrOW projects describe experiences of how such intricate and often deep-rooted constraints can be addressed.

- The research on Mahila Samakhyia, which promotes collectivisation

among marginalised rural women, using a mix of methods, shows the beneficial (though varied) impact of these collectives on a range of empowerment indicators including livelihoods (Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, 2017).

- An RCT assessing a skills training programme for women in rural Punjab in Pakistan highlighted the challenge for rural women to travel across village
- boundaries for vocational training, and significant increase in participation in the training programs if the training was either offered at the village level or provided participants with group transport.
- A GrOW-supported study in six sub-districts in Bangladesh found that a financial incentive to families to delay girls' marriage could make a difference (Buchmann, Glennerster, O'Neill, Vargas, 2017). Girls whose families received cooking oil worth US\$16 per year for two years were 22% less likely to have married before the age of 18. The research suggest this can lead to better livelihood opportunities (final research results are not yet published).

7. Social norms

Social norms are key to most of the gender gaps GrOW has identified, and synthesis of how these are analysed across the portfolio is in progress. While referred to in many of the GrOW outputs, social norms are often not clearly conceptualised or measured. More generally, it seems, while social norms have been widely studied in social sciences, this has been less the case in development research. They have received little attention in (development) economics, partly because of difficulties to separate social norms from individual preferences and from actions.

We understand social norms to be the informal understandings (or institutions) that govern the behavior of members of a society, the customary rules that govern behavior in groups and societies. We define gender norms as a form of social norms, and they tend to interact with other types of social norms, and expect them to vary across social groups for example. In the field of women's economic empowerment, social norms play a key role on both demand and supply sides.

Compared to other development dimensions, the measurement of social norms at the global level is relatively-under-developed. The OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index is making major advances in this respect; Klasen (2017) uses this to show the large regional differences in gender inequality in social institutions. As mentioned earlier, one GrOW paper correlates GDP data with evidence from

the DHS, suggesting that social norms around violence against women do not change much alongside economic growth (Lazlo & Grantham, 2017).

Women's labour force participation is deeply influenced by social norms. GrOW research, as described in the forthcoming GrOW synthesis by Kan and Klasen, highlights continued regional diversity in female labour force participation. Economic growth alone has no robust effect on female employment in developing countries. Rising incomes draws some women into the labor force, while others to leave distress employment. The role that social norms play in this, in their view, is hard to assess, according to Kan and Klasen.

Women's labour force participation, gaps in employment, and wages, are deeply influenced by social norms.

Similarly, gender gaps in employment and wages are thought to be influenced by social norms. Study of the mining sector in Ghana (Baah-Boateng *et. al* 2017) shows how they influence sectoral segregation in Ghana: women comprise only about 19% of extractive sector workers, and ideas about women bringing bad luck are cited as reasons for this. In the accompanying study in Côte d'Ivoire (Konan 2017), the gender pay gap was attributed to cultural norms and social barriers related to distance and safety.

Both studies use survey data combined with interviews to better understand social norms. The multi-disciplinary research by Buss *et al.* (2017) on small-scale mining – and the accompanying videos – allows for a deeper understanding of social norms surrounding women’s work. This highlights stereotypes about women who work in mines (being immoral, prostitutes), and the violence against women that constrains their choices.

The research in Sri Lanka highlights the persistence of gender norms. The conflict in Sri Lanka led to an increase in female-headed households, but social norms continued to limit the ability of widowed or separated women to participate in labor markets in the absence of an adult male family member (Lakshman, 2017).

Gender-based violence, including in the workplace, was another barrier to labor force participation outside of the home (Kandaneerachchi and Ratnayake, 2017).

Research in Pakistan, a country marked by even lower female labour force participation than Sri Lanka (de Haan, 2018), suggests how social norms can impact the outcomes of policy and development interventions (Cheema *et al.*, 2017). Women’s participation in the skills and vocational training was low, and this was attributed to a combination of norms around men’s role in paid employment, men’s earning potentials, and women’s responsibilities for household duties. Norms around women’s primary responsibilities also came out very strongly in the IDS research (Lazlo & Grantham, 2017).



Photo credit: IDRC / Bartay

The study by the Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (2017) in two states in India, on the impact of the Mahila Samakhya women’s education and empowerment program, addresses the question of norms change. The program creates women’s groups as an avenue for collectivization, allowing women to engage actively with others outside the home. Social norms, particularly around gender, are challenged within the group. The research suggests this can contribute to women’s increased agency within groups, leadership and work opportunities, decision making responsibilities within the household, higher status, and investing in daughters’ education and health.

8. Concluding, forward looking thoughts

GrOW set out to analyze the constraints that women face, and how these link to economic growth more broadly. It focused on low-income contexts, and the research shows that gender constraints are often compounded by the broader low-income context.

At the end of the program, these questions remain as relevant as they were before. While the global commitment to address gender equality has increased, new challenges have emerged, and progress remains slow.

Economic growth is not being accompanied by sufficient job opportunities for women.

The research found that links between economic growth and empowerment are not very strong – and hence the importance of continued advocacy for gender equality as right and intrinsic value. Progress in reducing gender inequality in human capital is also not necessarily translating into women’s economic opportunities. In particular, economic growth is not being accompanied by sufficient job opportunities for women (or indeed for men), and perhaps decreasingly so.

While the GrOW portfolio did not include analyses of macro-economic (monetary, exchange) policies, it did continue to

highlight the importance to articulate that gender is a (macro-) economic issue, and the importance of evidence to unlock stronger links between growth and empowerment. For example, whether investment in gender equality is regarding as consumptive or productive spending – and GrOW research on care economy shows it is also the latter – it can impact public finance decisions. And taking into account women’s specific roles, in productive and reproductive spheres can influence decision on types of public spending, including in infrastructure investments.

The GrOW research highlights the multi-dimensional and mutually reinforcing constraints women face (which is reflected in the heterogeneity in definitions used across the GrOW portfolio). Women’s double burden of unpaid work and – often - low-quality jobs reduces their and families’ well-being and opportunities to explore better economic opportunities. Women face specific constraints, particularly in tight labour market conditions, and the limitations young women face are particularly important. In the African context, urbanisation alongside continued growth of youth population make these issues particularly pertinent. There is little strong evidence on the role social norms play, but they seem critical in constraining women’s opportunities at both demand and supply side of the labour markets.



Photo credit: IDRC / Bartay

The weak links between women's economic empowerment and progress more generally, and the evidence on mutually reinforcing constraints (according to Grown *et al.* (2016), one of the reasons behind limited success in mainstreaming gender), have important policy implications. The findings particularly regarding a decrease in growth of job opportunities – for women but also for men – should focus research and policy on better understanding potentials for job growth, and the differential access of men and women.

The findings also point to a need for comprehensive interventions. This includes addressing the conundrum of unpaid work burden and low quality jobs, and the specific constraints young women face (again, including particularly in the tight situation of Africa's labour markets). GrOW findings on the effectiveness of public investments in child care are encouraging, and should be further explored and tested.

At the same time, other interventions – notably in public infrastructure that can help reduce particularly women's burdens – can be equally important, depending on context. Social norms play an important role across those barriers and interventions, and the role of norms, their impact on women's empowerment, and whether policy can and should try to change these needs further consideration.

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