



Development Impact Evaluation (DIME)

Gender Equality for Development



TWEET



SHARE



SHARE



A woman in Benin

Gender equality for development is a core theme of i2i work and cuts across all thematic areas. We identify two areas of growth for the current i2i gender analytical agenda: design and test gender strategies in areas where gender-specific constraints have been identified; and build the evidence on gender-specific market failures in underserved areas of impact-evaluation practice. The thematic

coverage of the i2i gender program seeks to fill the gaps in four areas identified in the 2012 World Development Report, "Gender Equality and Development": (i) human capital, (ii) economic productivity, (iii) access to finance, and (iv) empowerment. Overall, over half of the current i2i portfolio is planning a gender-disaggregated analysis, while 19 percent of i2i-supported IEs are testing interventions tailored to address gender issues.

i2i supports rigorous evaluations of policy actions that look to relax supply-side constraints (for example, improving service delivery for clean water, sanitation, and maternal care) as well as market and institutional constraints (for example, reducing systematic differences in earnings). In underserved IE research areas, the i2i program places emphasis on documenting gender constraints in the context of infrastructure investments and governance, with special focus on transport, electoral participation, and women's labor market participation in FCV settings. The research agenda evolves with i2i's portfolio, fueling iterative learning. i2i operationalizes this vision by providing technical and financial assistance to policymakers to identify relevant gender issues, designing appropriate policy action, and testing their impact to motivate scale-up, scale-down and, new testing.

Addressing Human Capital Gender Gaps through the Lifecycle

Gender gaps in human capital are well-documented, but there is little evidence on how best to close those gaps. The i2i research agenda focuses on how to design interventions that address women's access to and use of health services and education, and reduce women's vulnerability to shocks that disrupt human-capital acquisition. An IE of a vocational training program in Malawi (Cho et al, 2015) found that family obligations limited participation and resulting skills development for young women. Another IE testing the impact of a business literacy course for female micro-entrepreneurs with relatively low education in five different states in Mexico, finds significant improvements of managerial skills (Iacovone et al., forthcoming). As a result, nine new states in Mexico have submitted proposals to expand the program to their states.

New IEs in Nigeria are testing supply and demand-side interventions to increase women's access and use of medical antenatal and birth services, and community-level interventions to increase uptake of malaria-prevention technologies and increase accessibility of anti-malarial drugs. One specific study in Nigeria, measuring the impact of entertainment education through soap operas on attitudes and behaviors about safe sex and HIV testing, finds positive impact on both outcomes (Orozco et al., forthcoming). The study also shows that, given the popularity of soap operas among poorer and less educated households, they can be used to positively alter attitudes and behaviors of millions of individuals at very low costs around many development issues.

Economic Opportunities

Women's access to economic opportunities is undermined by their lower access to production inputs. Female farmers have less access to information, as agricultural extension networks are dominated by men. In Malawi (BenYishay et al, 2016) and Mozambique (Florence Kondylis et al., 2014), i2i IEs showed that women can make effective extension partners: they are at least as good as men at encouraging adoption of improved technologies.

Throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, women are disproportionately limited in their land ownership and transfer rights. An IE in Benin showed that land demarcation increases soil fertility investment in female-managed landholdings, shifts household decision-making, and reduces spousal conflict (Goldstein et al, 2015). An IE in Kenya tested a recent policy innovation, known as “microfranchising”, which provides unemployed participants with a proven business model and the specific capital and business linkages based on the hypothesis that many unemployed youth would like to be generating income, but lack both experience to be competitive and the financial and human capital (Owen Ozier et al., forthcoming). Early results from the study found that, for young women, the program increased self-employment. This is an important finding considering around 55 percent of urban women in Kenya aged 15 to 25 are unemployed.

Another IE in Afghanistan is measuring the impact of a program aimed at lifting the poorest out of extreme poverty by providing a way to transition into sustainable and profitable economic activities and linking them with microfinance programs (Aidan Coville et al., forthcoming). It applies the program in a setting where female labor force participation is among the lowest in the world (15 percent) and has a strong focus on supporting female-headed households, tackling multiple constraints simultaneously to provide households with a big push out of extreme poverty.

Further, large parts of population in developing countries do not have access to essential social services. In Comoros Island, for example, an i2i IE is testing the effects of temporary employment cash-for-work program on social and economic outcomes of poor households, and whether they vary according to gender within household (Mvukiyehé et al., forthcoming).

Access to Finance

Access to productive assets constrains women's economic opportunities, whether women farmers or micro-entrepreneurs. An i2i IE in Rwanda tested introduced targeted and pre-commitment savings accounts. Initial findings show that women are more likely to earmark their savings to buy durable goods, relative to men who invest in agricultural inputs, suggesting that intra-household bargaining over resources plays an important role in women's investment decisions (Jones et al, forthcoming).

In India, an IE showed that women that participated in a women's empowerment and rural livelihoods program had improved access to loans, accumulated assets, and invested in education, which further made them feel more empowered (Shah et al., forthcoming). Early results from an ongoing IE in Benin examining several incentive mechanisms to attempt to get business owners to formalize found that male business-owners formalized much more than female business-owners (McKenzie et al., forthcoming). Ongoing analysis is exploring the reasons for lower formalization amongst female-owned firms.

In Dominican Republic, an ongoing IE is studying the impact of financial literacy and job skills, especially benefiting women, on household-finances management, savings, credit, use of formal-sector financial products, ability to search for, obtain, and retain formal employment, management of small businesses, new businesses opened, and income levels (Xavier Gine et al., forthcoming). An ongoing IE in Malawi on identification and fingerprinting, a topic that is at the heart of the development agenda, is testing whether requiring fingerprint authentication for transactions alleviates access to credit more for females and improves repayment more for those that borrow (Gine et al., forthcoming). This is also important because it would make it impossible for male relatives to seize control of women's assets on the death of the husband, as is common in Malawi.

Promoting Women's Empowerment and Agency for Economic Development

A growing body of evidence shows that placing women in the center of the development agenda can increase efficiency in the management of institutions and resources. Also, female leaders can have beneficial impacts on social norms. The i2i research agenda focuses on using gender empowerment to combat domestic violence, testing interventions such as cash transfers and active labor-market policies to economically empower women, and role of law and justice in achieving gender equality, among others.

An ongoing IE in Azerbaijan, for example, tests the extent to which free legal aid leads to greater legal empowerment, improved dispute resolution, and higher welfare from reclaimed income and benefits, more stable household settings, productivity gains, and a gradual move away from discriminatory norms and practices (Bilal Siddiqi et al., forthcoming). In Pakistan, an IE is evaluating the impact of women-inclusion mandates and ratification in village-level grant management, which imposes an inclusion mandate that 50 percent of individuals organized in a village have to be women (Gine et al., forthcoming). As results come in, we will know whether having more women in these village-level bodies changes the composition of projects that are funded and leads to a better overall allocation of resources. Another IE in India is testing whether privately-run kiosks offering access to government

services under the Right to Public Services Act allow women greater access to basic services, and whether this changes their attitude (Daniel Rogger et al., forthcoming).

Gender in Underserved Research Areas

A notable opportunity for the i2i portfolio is to make a dent in understanding gender issues in underserved areas. Recent progress on this front includes the transport sector, and economic and electoral participation in fragile settings.

Transport

Reducing transaction costs by improving transport infrastructure has the potential to change the way women access markets. In Ethiopia, a large expressway construction is combined with the development of a large industrial zone. Since the large majority of employment in the industrial zone will be of young women, this will be an opportunity to study the effect of a large labor market shock (60,000+ jobs over a period of several years) on young women's economic and social outcomes in the vicinity of the zone. A complementary intervention will be set up to experimentally study the role of skills, information, and access to employment opportunities.

In Peru, an intervention to promote women's access to health services and education is being evaluated in the context of a rural road-rehabilitation project. In Brazil, a new IE on gender-segregated public transport tests the extent to which gender segregation is beneficial for women (Kondylis et al., forthcoming). Harassment in public transport, and sometimes even risk of rape, limits women's movements, activities, and employment in many developing countries. Results from this study are expected to inform policies going forward on public transport-systems in cities worldwide.

Electoral Participation in FCV Settings

Despite recent policy efforts to increase women's participation and representation in politics, significant gender gaps remain. Less than 10 percent of the world's countries have a female head of state and fewer than 30 countries have reached the target of 30 percent female representation in parliament. Further, women continue to have lower electoral participation rates than men and their voting choices are often influenced by powerbrokers or household heads (Giné and Mansuri 2011; Tripp 2001; Geisler 1995).^[1] Gender gaps in political participation are especially pronounced in war-torn settings, where women tend to disproportionately bear the consequences of conflict (Buvinic et al. 2013; Sow 2012; Rehn and Sirleaf 2002). While there are individual country cases where women's representation in governing bodies have increased in the aftermath of civil war, such representation has not necessary translated into their efficacy in voicing policy preference or interest (O'Connell 2011; Tadros 2011; Hogg 2009).

What explains gender gaps in political participation? A growing number of DIME IEs investigate the effects of information-provision interventions and a variety of delivery mechanisms designed to remove or circumvent these constraints. The underlying premise of these interventions is that since information provision can occur relatively quickly and at lower cost, interventions designed to provide information can potentially address the lack of awareness, thereby promoting political participation (Gine and Mansuri 2010; Kumar 2001).

Consistent with this intuition, a DIME impact evaluation in Liberia investigates the positive effects on the political attitudes and voting behaviors of rural women when they are provided access to United Nations elections-related radio programs. The results point to significant effects of the intervention on women's political participation, both on national and local levels. Worryingly, though, the study finds no evidence of effects on women's political efficacy and empowerment outside of the electoral context, suggesting the need to complement such brief interventions with more sustained interventions that tackle slow-to-change constraints (on supply and demand sides) that might be embedded in prevailing social structures and norms.

DIME is evaluating a number of interventions that do just that. In Zimbabwe, for example, a DIME IE tests the effects of an intervention designed to reform village-level governance via horizontal pressure on gender inclusion and empowerment. Likewise, in Liberia, another DIME IE investigates the extent to which a nine-month civic education intervention that provides men and women a forum for monthly deliberation on governance, rights, and gender-equality issues, helps narrow gender gaps in political participation.

Economic Participation in FCV Settings

Women's access to productive assets and agency over the household's economic decisions is even lower in fragile contexts. Yet, women's access to resources is particularly impactful on human-capital investments that can help poor children in tough places get out of poverty (Duflo 2003). i2i is supporting a number of studies that aim to provide economic opportunities to poor women in fragile states.

In DRC and Indonesia, i2i is supporting the evaluation of unconditional 'business grants' to women for the creation of sustainable livelihoods and for long-term poverty alleviation. A social-network treatment will also be tested, in which participants join a series of workshops from female mentors that focus on building links between individual business-owners. The relative impact and complementarities across these interventions will be captured by the experimental design. In Tunisia, an IE is testing the effect of capital injections to complement a more traditional income-support program that supports the unemployed through short-term employment opportunities. Focusing on vulnerable women, the impact of this additional intervention on long-run consumption and labor-market outcomes will be compared to the outcomes of those who merely participate in short-term labor-intensive works (Mvukiyehe et al., forthcoming).

In Liberia, activities will be centered on developing diagnostic studies, designing materials and micro-interventions, and testing these materials and micro-interventions as part of the Liberia Youth Opportunities Project (LYOP). The diagnostic studies will focus on understanding the concrete actions, behaviors, and decisions that influence women's access to male-dominated trades and explore the underlying preferences, information, and assumptions (conscious or otherwise). The goal is to step back and research actual needs and obstacles on the ground before jumping to conclusions about solutions. It will pay special attention to considering prevention and mitigation strategies for potential unintended consequences of supporting females in non-traditional or male-dominated fields.

Once the diagnoses have been carried out, the next step will be to design and develop materials and interventions to address the identified constraints and safely support vulnerable females in these sectors. A critical last step will be test and refine the material and interventions before taking them to scale in the project, including in the impact evaluations each project intends to undertake.

[1] Evidence from recent public opinion surveys across African countries suggests that 36 percent of female respondents are not interested in politics and that 39 percent never discuss politics. 22 percent and 24 percent were reported for men, respectively (Afrobarometer, 2008, reported in Bleck and Michelitch 2011).

BRIEFS

- » Cash-Based Transfers and Gender Window: Pre-Analysis Plan
- » Safety Technology to Improve Training Opportunities and Labor Force Participation for Women: Experimental Evidence from India
- » Demand for "Safe Spaces": Avoiding Harassment and Stigma

RELATED

BLOG

Appointing a gender equal cabinet is good for Canada – but not for the reason you think

BRIEF

Gender Program

WORKING PAPERS

Seeing is believing ? evidence from an extension network experiment (English)

WORKING PAPERS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

Women's empowerment and socio-economic outcomes : impacts of the Andhra Pradesh rural poverty reduction program

Mozambique Gender Brief

Program Results

EXPERTS



Florence Kondylis

Senior Economist, Economic Transformation & Growth Research Program Manager, Development Impact Evaluation (DIME)



Maria Ruth Jones

Survey Specialist

[About](#)

[Data](#)

[Research and Publications](#)

[Learning](#)

[News](#)

[Projects and Operations](#)

[Countries](#)

[Topics](#)

FOLLOW US



NEWSLETTER

[SUBSCRIBE HERE >](#)

This Site in: [ENGLISH](#)

[Legal](#) [Privacy Notice](#) [Site Accessibility](#) [Access to Information](#) [Jobs](#) [Contact](#)

- [SCAM ALERTS](#) [REPORT FRAUD OR CORRUPTION](#)

[IBRD](#) [IDA](#) [IFC](#) [MIGA](#) [ICSID](#)

© 2022 The World Bank Group, All Rights Reserved.

Welcome