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Empowerment and Gender Rebalancing

Empowerment & gender equality

- Enables transformation of gender roles.
- Rebalancing of the gender power dynamics.
- Bargaining of interests @ home and the workplace.
- Prerequisite for gender equality.
- Gender equality is outcome of empowerment.
- Gender equality can be measured (for example, World Economic Forum, the Gender equality index).

Gender Equality Global Index, (World Economic Forum, 2007)

- Sub-indexes:
 - economic participation and opportunity.
 - educational attainment.
 - political empowerment.
 - health and survival.
- For each of them, gender ratios for a total of 14 variables (such as female labor force participation over male value, wage equality between women and men for similar work (converted to female over male ratio), or female net secondary level of enrolment over male).
 - Global index was calculated for 128 countries.
 - Top ten countries showing the least gender gap are (in top down ranking order), Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, New Zealand, Philippines, Germany, Denmark, Ireland, and Spain.
 - Bottom ten countries are Oman, Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, Benin, Saudi Arabia, Nepal, Pakistan, Chad, and Yemen (see tables 3 to 5).

Impetus for global initiatives

- Feminist approaches:
 - The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.
 - Platform for Action that includes commitments to attain global gender equality and the empowerment of women.
 - The Beijing +15 review (2010) and new challenges: climate change, food crisis, violence against old women, the 2008 financial crisis.
- Human-rights based development (types of capital, changes in norms @ policy actions).
- Women empowerment through development of capabilities.
- The 2009 Stiglitz, Sen & Fitoussi report on economic progress and social de-

velopment.

- But, 2008-9 stimulus public expenditures and absence of gender sensitive spending (credit and training programs, technical assistance, income policies, social protection interventions).

Steps toward empowerment

- Women's human capital: education and health care.
- Women's rights to social protection: from social insurance and social assistance to ending violence against women.
- Women's economic and financial capital: property rights – right to use, usufruct, rent, sell, inherit, transfer; access to financial resources and being eligible for credit.
- Women's social capital: networking, integrating, community support mechanisms for care giving and to work, self-confidence.
- Women's political capital: voice, participation, right to vote, right to stand for election, right to lobby for gender equity.
- Finding common ground among a diversity of women.

Demographic trends in Latin America and the Caribbean

- Fertility rates have fallen by approximately two thirds in sixty years, from 5.9 in 1955-60 to 4.47 in 1975-80, 2.7 in 1995-2000, and 2.09 in 2010-2015 (see table
- The gap between rural and urban women is still high.
- Drop in fertility rates, increase in life expectancy, outmigration are increasing aging.
- Increase in female participation rates in labor market.
- Increase reproductive rights' awareness and greater push for women's autonomy.

Fertility, 2005-2010,
selected countries, ECLAC 2008

Cuba, Barbados	1.5
Trinidad and Tobago	1.6
Brasil, Chile	1.9
Costa Rica, Bahamas	2.0
Uruguay	2.1
México	2.2
Argentina	2.3
El Salvador, Jamaica	2.4
Colombia	2.5
Venezuela, Ecuador	2.6
Honduras	3.3
Bolivia, Haiti	3.5
Guatemala	4.2
Latin America & the Caribbean	2.3

Evidence from microfinance field work

- FINCA: Honduras and Peru.
- Pro Mujer.
- Micro Enterprise Program in Nepal.
- Major findings:
 - Greater living standards and lower vulnerability.
 - Greater financial autonomy.
 - Greater self-confidence.
 - Greater opportunities for social networking.
 - Development of entrepreneurship skills and leadership.
 - Need for additional institutional wide programs to reinforce women empowerment.

Basic components for empowerment

- Access to high quality education and health care.
- Renegotiating power and bargaining relationships at home/household/co-residence.
- Access to financial resources and technical assistance.
- Support in the house.

- Networking.
- Social protection.
- Running for office.

Role of government and civil society

Government:

- Affirmative action policies.
- Family support programs.
- Reform public education curricula.
- Universal health care, good quality education at all levels.
- Social protection with women's empowerment lenses.

Civil society:

- Women's associations.
- Women in civic leadership positions.
- Women running for office.
- Vision of gender equality as requirement for socio-economic development.

Role of the private sector

Private sector:

- Affirmative action: hiring and retention.
- Increases education and training of women.
- Opportunities for the upper mobility of women.
- Leadership in senior level positions.
- Family friendly practices.
- Microfinance and banking facilities for women.
- Greater pooling, greater insurance coverage.
- Women's participation in larger business organizations.
- Newspapers and independent press coverage.
- Research and assessment.

Role of NGOs and families

NGOs:

- Technical advise.
- Advocating and activism for women's issues.
- Microfinance.
- Education, health care, responsible parenting, youth, intergenerational programming.
- Community work.
- Assessment, define/redefine agenda.

Families:

- Train men to take on care giving at home.
- Train men to promote gender equality to foster socio-economic development.

Conclusions

- Women empowerment is a necessary condition for removal of barriers to gender equality.
- Through their economic autonomy, self confidence, and rebalancing of gender power at home and in the work place, women can become a leading social force.
- Microfinance can enhance the standard of living of women and their families by introducing more financial stability in their households and reducing vulnerabilities such as sickness and social fragmentation.
- But fragmented initiatives alone will not bring about the transformations that are needed.
- Empowerment should become a strategy with clearly defined components and both top-down and bottom-up impetus.