



CHRISTOPHER HERWIG: UN PHOTO

## MULTI-FUNDER INITIATIVE

## Generating and using research to improve women's economic opportunities

Women around the world increasingly participate in economic activities, but they continue to face significant challenges in pursuing better paid, productive jobs, and in accumulating assets. These include deeply rooted social norms that limit their choices and access to opportunities, and the lack of recognition and value given to their dual roles as caregivers and breadwinners.

There is insufficient knowledge about how to overcome these challenges. The Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) program aims to fill that gap, providing new evidence that can inform social and economic policies to improve poor women's lives, while promoting economic growth.

GrOW is a five-year, multi-funder partnership with the UK's Department for International Development, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and Canada's International Development Research Centre. The program launched in June 2013 with a budget of CA\$17 million.

- GrOW will generate new evidence on women's economic empowerment and economic growth in low-income countries.
- GrOW will foster peer-exchange and promote research use by decision-makers.
- GrOW funds 14 innovative research projects working in 50 countries around the world.

## OUR PROGRAM

The GrOW program focuses on three inter-related themes:



Identifying the barriers to closing gender gaps in earnings and productivity, and ways to overcome them.



Analyzing how specific patterns of economic growth impact women's economic empowerment, such as their ability to find quality jobs and succeed as entrepreneurs.



Understanding how women's economic empowerment can contribute to economic growth.

## OUR APPROACH

GrOW aims to strengthen the evidence base on women's economic empowerment, gender equality and economic growth. Simultaneously the program works to enhance the capacity of younger and southern-based researchers to produce high-quality work and promote research use by decision-makers.

To achieve these goals the program will:

**Generate new and rigorous evidence:** GrOW is funding 14 innovative research projects working in 50 countries in South Asia, East Asia and Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and South America. These projects were selected through open competitive calls.

In addition to funding, GrOW works with research teams to ensure that their work is methodologically sound and innovative, combining multi-method and inter-disciplinary approaches. Results are validated by a community of peers, including through publication in peer-reviewed journals.

**Foster learning and policy outreach:** GrOW promotes peer learning and knowledge exchange between research partners to ensure cross-pollination of best practices to strengthen capacities. The goal is to cultivate a network of individuals who are well equipped to produce high-quality research that can effectively contribute to policy change.

The program also stimulates policy dialogue, by helping researchers develop strategies for engaging with relevant policymakers and practitioners, and facilitating these interactions through efforts like conferences, workshops, and webinars. A key objective of the program is to ensure the use of research for policy development at the local, regional and international levels.

**Undertake synthesis and dissemination:** GrOW will synthesise and disseminate evidence on what works and does not to economically empower women and promote growth. The program will use cross-country comparisons, draw out policy implications, and highlight methodological innovations in research through working papers and other communication strategies. GrOW aims to ignite a global debate on the transformative roles of women in the economy and society.

## OUR FUNDED PROJECTS BY REGION

### Cross-regional

#### Balancing unpaid care work and paid work in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa

Time-use surveys show that women are the principal caregivers in the household and receive no compensation. Yet, we do not know how unpaid care work is reorganised when women take up paid work. This and other socio-economic factors can have a significant effect on women's decisions about their unpaid care work responsibilities and paid work. This study will analyze how women's economic empowerment programs and policies in India, Nepal, Rwanda, and Tanzania could benefit women and families across generations by generating a double boon: access to paid work that empowers women and support for their unpaid care work responsibilities.

*Institutions:* Institute for Development Studies; Institute of Social Studies Trust; BRAC East Africa Research and Evaluation Unit

#### Making growth work for women in low-income countries

There is some evidence on the links between economic growth and women's economic empowerment. Yet, little is known about the social, cultural, and institutional factors that encourage or hinder women from having more access to economic opportunities and control of their economic lives in developing countries. Working in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria and Pakistan, this project aims to generate new knowledge on how economic growth can best foster women's economic empowerment, and inform local and national policies in developing countries.

*Institutions:* The Urban Institute; LEAD Pakistan; Egerton University Institute of Women Gender and Development; Center for Public Policy Alternatives.

#### Pathways for shared prosperity: Understanding the links between women's economic empowerment and growth.

This project seeks to expand our understanding of the relationship between women's economic empowerment and economic growth. It will conduct a review of evidence of how women's economic empowerment interventions can contribute to economic growth.

The project will unpack the complex ways in which growth and structural change can have different impacts on women's employment and economic outcomes, with an aim to influence policies that can benefit women across the globe. Research is underway in 14 countries: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, and Vietnam.

*Institutions:* Georg-August-University Göttingen Public Law Foundation, Delhi School of Economics; Stellenbosch University; University of Cape Town; Wageningen University.

### Asia

#### The effect of skills training on women's economic opportunities in Pakistan

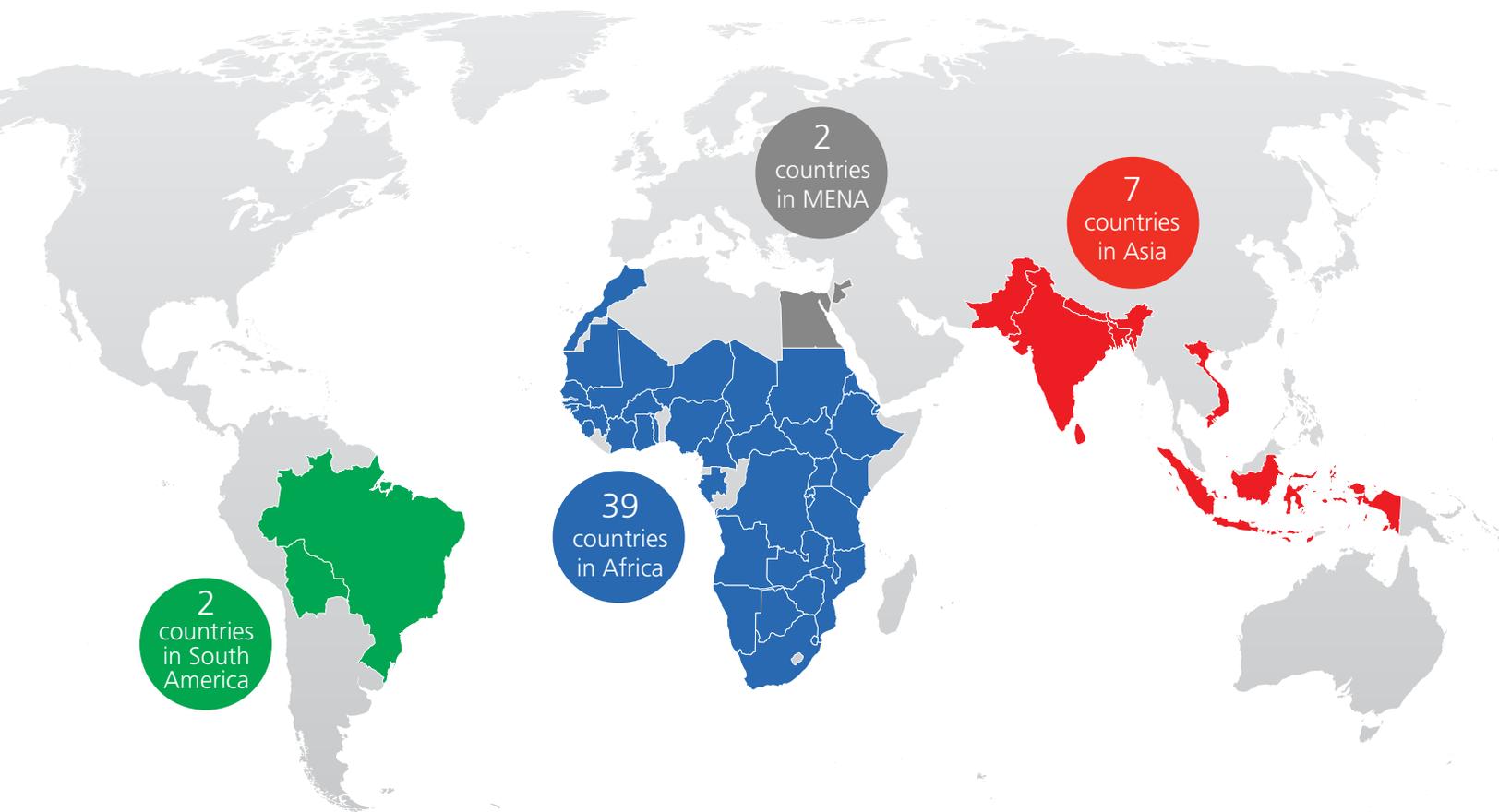
Evidence is lacking about the barriers to women's entrepreneurship and employment opportunities in developing countries. This project will evaluate a skills training program for women in rural Punjab, Pakistan, to uncover the most binding constraints faced by rural women, estimate the benefits of the training, and understand the effect of linking students directly to jobs. Researchers aim to inform national and international policy debates and contribute to scaling up effective interventions across Punjab.

*Institutions:* Harvard University; Center for Economic Research in Pakistan; Princeton University

#### Together we can: The role of women's action groups as agents of social and economic change in India

The Mahila Samakhya program in India aims to empower rural women at the grassroots by supporting the creation of local women's groups who self-determine their needs and priorities, including training on education, entitlements, and jobs. This study will evaluate the impacts of this program on rural women's economic and social development in the two Indian states of Karnataka and Bihar. The project aims to influence practitioners and policymakers at the federal and local levels across India and other countries with similar contexts.

*Institutions:* Centre for Budget and Policy Studies; Centre for Microfinance at the Institute for Financial Management and Research Education Resource Unit.



### Addressing the barriers to young women's economic empowerment in Bangladesh

Preliminary research shows that girls who marry before the age of 18 have less education, more children, poorer health, less mobility, and more unequal relations within the household. These are all constraints to entrepreneurial success and economic gain. This project will collect data from more than 10,000 girls from rural Bangladesh. Some received an incentive to delay marriage and/or life-skills training, and benefited from increased schooling and knowledge of contraception. Researchers will follow these girls as they marry, have children, and start work. The aim is to identify the barriers that are most binding for young women, and the policies and interventions that can best overcome these.

*Institutions:* Innovations for Poverty Action; Duke University

### Identifying post-war growth and economic opportunities for women in Sri Lanka

After three decades of war in Sri Lanka, large numbers of women have become de facto head of households, disabled, or displaced. While the government, private sector, NGOs and the diaspora have invested in initiatives to support livelihoods and economic growth, there is little rigorous evidence on what has worked. This study seeks to understand the impact of post-war recovery initiatives on women in Sri Lanka's Northern Province, where poverty levels among women are among the highest in the country, and to identify best practices to empower women emerging out of conflict.

*Institution:* International Centre for Ethnic Studies

## The influence of affordable day-care on women's empowerment in India

Access to adequate day-care services for children likely reduces barriers for mothers to go to school, and successfully enter and thrive in the job market. However, evidence on the effects of childcare programs in low-and-middle-income countries is scarce. This study will evaluate how a day-care program run by Seva Mandir, a local non-governmental organization in Rajasthan, India, has impacted mothers' decision-making, mobility, control over resources, employment status, income, and health. The goal is to improve the day-care options available to poor households in India.

*Institutions:* McGill University; Centre for Microfinance at the Institute for Financial Management and Research; Seva Mandir

## Africa

### Examining women's early labour market transitions in sub-Saharan Africa

The path that young women follow when transitioning from school to work can greatly influence their economic future. This project studies factors like the age when women leave school, their choice of first job, and the time when they first give birth to determine what truly influences women's future job opportunities and outcomes. The findings will inform education and employment policies in Kenya, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda.

*Institutions:* University of Sussex; University of Nairobi

### Assessing the impact of cash transfer programs on women's empowerment in Tanzania

Conditional cash transfer programs provide cash payments to eligible low-income households to reduce vulnerability and boost their economic growth. By evaluating one such program from the Tanzania Action Fund, researchers are assessing the impact on women's long-term economic empowerment and decision-making skills when the cash is provided directly to them, instead of men. This study aims to examine the potential benefits of conditional cash transfers for the whole family unit and share results with policymakers.

*Institution:* REPOA



ALEJANDRA VARGAS GARCIA: IDRC

*Balwadis, day care centers in India, provide food and education to children. Researchers study their impact for women's income and jobs.*

### Uncovering women's experiences in small-scale mining in Central and East Africa

Women participate in high-numbers in artisanal and small-scale mining in Africa, yet little is known about their role in increased mining activity and the impact of heightened regulation in their lives. This project aims to fill these knowledge gaps, by studying women's activities in mining gold, tin, tantalum and tungsten in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda. Research will inform policies on the barriers to women miners' economic empowerment, ways to overcome these, and the role mining reforms play on gender equality.

*Institutions:* Carleton University; Partnership Africa Canada; Development Research and Social Policy Analysis Centre

### Improving childcare options to create better economic opportunities for women in Nairobi slums

Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, women's ability to achieve economic autonomy is often limited by their responsibility to care for young children. This project will assess whether the lack of affordable child care constrains the economic empowerment of women living in the Korogocho slum in Nairobi, Kenya. With a lens to influence policy, researchers will evaluate the impact of subsidizing and improving the quality of local daycares on mothers' paid employment and household income.

*Institutions:* McGill University; African Population and Health Research Center, Centre on Population Dynamics.

### Bringing to light the role of the extractive industry on women's economic opportunities in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire have an active extractive industry that greatly contributes to their economy. Yet in this sector, women are likely to earn less and hold lower-skill jobs. This project will examine the legal and regulatory frameworks that govern the extractive industry in these two countries, particularly employment practices, to assess their implications for women's labor participation, access to quality jobs, and earnings. Researchers aim to influence national and regional policies to enhance quality jobs for women and address their vulnerability in the sector.

*Institutions:* International Institute for the Advanced Studies of Cultures, Institutions and Economic Enterprise; Centre Ivoirien de Recherches Economiques et Sociales.

### The impact of women's political representation on economic growth and women's economic empowerment in Africa

Research suggests the quality and inclusiveness of economic and political institutions in a country has a critical impact on its long-term economic development. Economic growth is more likely to have a positive effect on women's economic empowerment if women play a direct role in political institutions. Yet, little is known about women's roles in both traditional and modern political institutions across Africa. This research will generate new evidence on the variation in traditional and modern political representation by women across 38 African countries. Results will aid inform policymakers on the relative position of women in societies and how political representation could help amplify the positive effect of economic growth on women's economic empowerment.

*Institutions:* University of Chicago; Vancouver School of Economics; Tufts University; Stellenbosch University.

---

*GrOW is a multi-funder partnership with the UK Government's Department for International Development, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and Canada's International Development Research Centre.*



### **Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW)**

International Development  
Research Centre  
PO Box 8500, Ottawa, ON  
Canada K1G 3H9  
Phone: +1 613 2366163  
Fax: +1 613 657 7749  
Email: [grow@idrc.ca](mailto:grow@idrc.ca)  
[www.idrc.ca/grow](http://www.idrc.ca/grow)

