

March 2016



GrOW Newsletter

Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women Program

On March 8, we celebrate International Women's Day, a chance to reflect on the progress made towards women's empowerment and the lingering challenges. The second edition of the newsletter features resources and updates on the work GrOW grantees are doing to address these challenges through evidence in 50 countries, as well as contributions from partners across the globe.

NEWS & EVENTS



Reaching social and economic change in India through women's action groups

On January 16, GrOW-supported researchers from the Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (CBPS) and the Education Resource Unit (ERU) in India, held a workshop to

discuss the impact of the Mahila Samakhya (MS) Program on social and economic change in India. Over 26 years, MS has mobilised around 1.2 million poor to organize in action groups, participate in learning programs, and lead community projects of their choice.

Alongside the Indian Institute of Management from Ahmedabad and Bangalore, GrOW-supported researchers presented consolidated evidence showing a positive impact of the program. Overall, the age of marriage and education level of women in districts where MS operates is higher than those where the program is not active. This is particularly true for poor women from disadvantaged groups. A national evaluation in 2014 stated that MS has helped improve women's mobility, boosted their participation in public activities, and helped communities challenge caste relationships and gender violence.

GrOW grantees engaged Shri DP Tripathy, Honourable Member of Parliament in the discussion, generated a [policy brief](#), and attracted media coverage—Rajya Sabha TV and the Hindustan Dainik—as part of their efforts to promote research uptake.

Learn more about this project and MS's impact in India [here](#).

Above: CBPS Director Jyostna Jha discusses the impact of the Mahila Samakhya Program in India at a high level workshop.



International Women's Day

On March 8, the International Development Research Centre will be hosting the event ***Knowledge to Action: Improving Women's Lives***. This event will bring together IDRC-supported researchers from around the world to discuss the state of evidence on women's empowerment

around key policy priorities like childcare and violence against women.

GrOW grantees Shelley Clark, Arijit Nandi, and Stella Muthuri, alongside Daniel Weinstock, Director of the Institute for Health and Social Policy at McGill University, will lead the first panel titled, ***The Link Between Childcare and Women's Empowerment***. They will present the current childcare landscape, sharing their experiences working in Nairobi, Rajasthan and Quebec, and highlight the links between affordable, high-quality childcare and women's enhanced decision-making, health, income, and job participation as well as children's well-being.

A second panel will explore various strategies for ensuring that women who are victims of violence access justice. Speakers Adelle Blackett, Donny Meertens, and Veronica Martinez will discuss gender violence in the contexts of armed conflict in Colombia, organized crime in Mexico, and unregulated domestic work in Africa.

To join the event live, RSVP at grow@idrc.ca. A recording of the event will be available on the [IDRC Youtube channel](#) post event.



UN's 60th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60)

CSW60 will take place at the UN Headquarters in New York from 14 to 24 March 2016 with the priority theme: women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development. As part of the **NGO-led events**,

researchers Deepta Chopra and Jenipher Musoke will lead a panel to discuss the evidence on balancing childcare with paid work, stemming from their GrOW-funded project in India, Nepal, Rwanda, and Tanzania.

The project, titled ***Balancing unpaid care work and paid work in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa***, kicked off two rounds of data collection in tribal villages in Udaipur and Durgapur, India, in November 2015. Through surveys with 100 women and participatory activities with groups of women, men and children, researchers were able to gather data on the biased gender roles that primarily assign responsibilities, like water and wood collection, to women. Early results indicated that for women engaged in paid work, even through the government's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), there were no proper facilities at work sites to support their care responsibilities, which led to acute time poverty and drudgery for women.

Learn more about the project through **Interactions**, and online platform for research and analysis on women's economic empowerment hosted by the Institute of Development Studies and partners.

RESOURCES



UN Women Policy Brief Series

UN Women has launched a policy brief series, synthesizing research findings, analysis and policy recommendations on gender equality and women's rights in a concise and accessible format. The series, addressing themes like social protection, can serve as a good resource to help bridge the research and policy divide. Each brief undergoes an internal and external review process led by the UN Women's Policy Division.

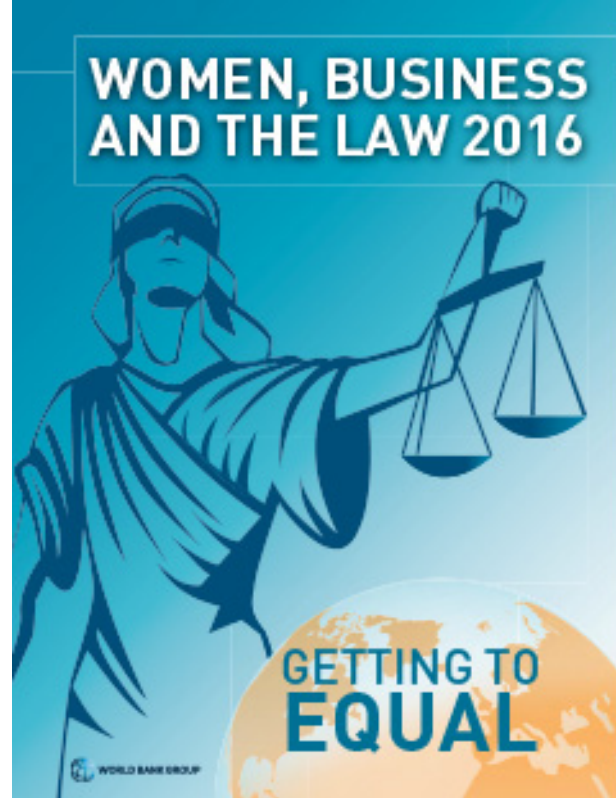
The four policy briefs released are available [here](#).

Figure 3 Briefs address critical issues like social protection and child development



Call for proposals 10th Global Youth Economic Opportunities Summit —March 25

The **GYEO** Summit in Washington, D.C., brings together over 450 key decision makers from 50 countries with the end goal of increasing the impact, scale, and sustainability of youth economic opportunities programming, policies, and partnerships. Key technical tracks include gender, workforce development, financial services, and enterprise development. GrOW encourages partners interested in leading a panel to discuss their research to submit an application by March 25, 2016. Visit www.YouthEOSummit.org to learn more and access the proposal form.



World Bank's Women, Business and the Law 2016 Report

Legal barriers to the economic advancement of women are widespread, shutting them out of certain jobs, limiting their access to credit, and leaving them unprotected against violence in many economies around the world. The WB monitored 173 economies alongside 7 key indicators to examine how laws and regulation can impede or boost women's economic lives, and that of their children.

On February 24, the GrOW program organized a discussion with Sarah Iqbal, Manager of the Women, Business and the Law project to discuss the data and the policy implications. Read the report [here](#).

SPOTLIGHT



Meet Stephan Klasen

What first attracted you to research on women's economic empowerment? I have been

interested in gender issues since my Ph.D. at Harvard in the early 1990s. There, I examined gender inequality in mortality. This choice was partly related to my long-standing interest in inequality issues in developing countries, but also related to my thesis

supervisor, Amartya Sen, who had suggested that I consider working on this subject which was of great policy interest.

What is your research about? I work on issues of poverty and inequality in developing countries. I try to find ways to adequately measure these phenomena, understand their drivers, and help think about policy approaches to reduce them. In that context, I work on gender inequality issues, ranging from measurement of gender inequality, to studying the determinants of gender gaps in various dimensions (e.g., health, education, employment, and pay) and to examining the consequences of these gender gaps for overall development outcomes.

What does policy influence mean to you and how will you aim to achieve it? Policy influence for me first means that one helps elevate a particular issue to greater prominence on the policy agenda. An example related to my research has been my work on the impact of gender inequality

in education on economic growth. While there was an existing policy agenda focusing on reducing gender gaps in education (for equity reasons), my research helped contribute to additionally make an efficiency case for promoting female education which has now been commonly accepted in the development policy community. The basis of policy relevance must be high quality academic research that has passed the peer review and peer discussion. In addition, engagement with the policy community is essential. This can happen by presenting the work at policy conferences, participating in research reports on this subject by knowledge-producing agencies (such as the World Bank or flagship publications in the UN system), and engaging with policy-makers at the national level to make the case in the particular context.

What are the main knowledge constraints or challenges to women's empowerment and where do you think research has the potential to make a difference?

There are many knowledge constraints in this field. First, constraints to women's empowerment are very country and issue-specific. While 50 years ago it was safe to say that women's empowerment was constrained virtually everywhere in all dimensions, this is no longer the case. In some parts of the world, gender gaps in key aspects of empowerment have shrunk and sometimes entirely disappeared, while in other regions and issues they are very persistent. Thus, it is critical to investigate these issues at the country level, determine the main constraints, and investigate possible solutions. A second challenge is that the way empowerment affects development can be very complicated and may often be very indirect. Thus, it is critical to investigate the key transmission channels.

What books can you recommend for 2016? The first is Amartya Sen's new collection of essays "A country of first boys". What unites the essays is a strong commitment to a pluralistic and tolerant society that must do more to promote education, tolerance, and respect.

I have been reading the Don Winslow's thriller "The cartel". It is so close to the reality of the drug war in Latin America and the many problems in its wake that it is often hard to tell fact from the fiction. It also shows how this issue is tearing at the social fabric of societies and that current approaches to dealing with it are clearly inadequate.

The GrOW newsletter is meant to encourage learning, knowledge sharing, and network development among partners working on women's empowerment. To make the information contextual and useful, please reach out to grow@idrc.ca and let us know about your work at the local, regional, and international level. We want to hear from you!

Subscribe to the newsletter [here](#).





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