



GrOW Newsletter

Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women Program

Hey GrOW Newsletter Readers! So much has happened in the past few months, with [International Women's Day](#), the [62nd United Nations Commission for the Status of Women](#) and GrOW events in [Uganda](#) and the [UK](#).

Over the past 5 years, the [Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women \(GrOW\) program](#) has made great strides in its objective to improve the lives of poor women in low-income countries. As the program winds down to an end in May, we'd like to extend a big thank you to all those who were involved in the program and everyone that has followed GrOW's progress up to now.

In this final issue, we'll give you an inside look into some engaging outputs from the program and the many fascinating ways the research teams are using evidence to drive change at the policy level. This newsletter includes media, publications and event updates from our projects and external partners, and testimonials from GrOW researchers. To take <http://womensempowerment.lab.mcgill.ca/> a look back at previous GrOW newsletters from over the years, visit www.idrc.ca/grow.

IN THIS ISSUE

Featured
Events
Media
GrOW Publications
Researcher Testimonials

FEATURED

Women's Empowerment in Development Lab!

The Institute for the Study of International Development at McGill University announced the launch of its brand-new Women's Empowerment in Development (WED) Lab! This Lab aims to bridge the gap between academics, practitioners and policy makers in Canada and globally on issues related to women's empowerment in developing countries. Among the research highlighted in the lab is evidence from GrOW program.

Learn more by visiting: <http://womensempowerment.lab.mcgill.ca/>.



Documentary Film Series: “Conversation Among Equals”



In January 2018, GrOW partners from the [Centre for Budget and Policy Studies \(CBPS\)](#) published a series of 10 short films that capture the stories of Mahila Samakhya called ‘[Conversation Among Equals](#)’—in English, Hindi and Kannada (forthcoming). The films focus on the activities promoted by Mahila Samakhya (i.e., political participation, women’s courts, collective action etc.), highlights several sanghas (collective action groups) and profiles the stories of women involved in the initiative (hear from [Rabita Devi](#), [Savitri, Sulochana Devi](#), [Julie Kumari](#), and [Nusrat Jahan](#)). You can access all the videos [here](#).

CBPS is based in India and leads the GrOW project [“Together We Can: Assessing the Impact of Women’s Action Groups on Social Change in India.”](#)

EVENTS



Gender Speaker Series Event with Naila Kabeer

Last month, GrOW hosted Professor Naila Kabeer to present on themes related to women’s economic empowerment as part of IDRC’s Gender Speaker Series. In this presentation, Kabeer brought together key findings from evaluations of policies and programmes seeking to promote women’s livelihood capabilities at different stages of their life course: old age, prime working age, and adolescence. The rationale for this focus is the growing body of evidence that says access to secure and productive livelihoods not only improves women’s practical capacity to look after themselves and their

families, but can also provide a strategic pathway for change in other spheres of their lives. Kabeer argued that many of the material dependencies and deficits that women experience as adults and in their old age might have been reduced if there had been greater investment in their capabilities earlier on in their lives. You can watch the whole presentation [here](#).



McGill Conference on “Unpacking Women’s Empowerment”

Over 150 international development researchers, practitioners and policymakers gathered at McGill University in Montreal on March 15-16 for the 2018 Annual Conference of the Institute for the Study of International Development (ISID). The theme of this year’s conference was “Unpacking Women’s Empowerment: Implications for International Development Research, Policy and Practice.” The event featured two very special keynote speakers: The Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau, Canada’s Minister of International

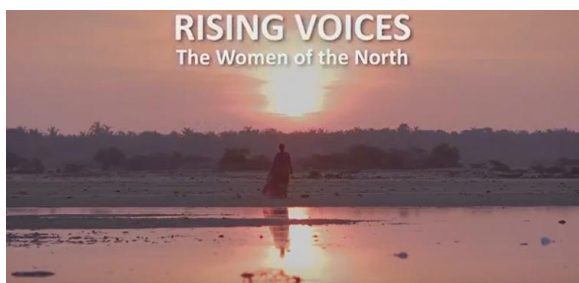
Development, and Dr. Naila Kabeer of the London School of Economics and Political Science.



Over the course of two days, conference participants ‘unpacked’ the agenda of women’s empowerment in global development with an interdisciplinary group of experts who discussed contemporary challenges and opportunities for research, policy and practice, as well as examined some of the recent evidence on empowerment initiatives in resource-poor settings. The conference also provided an opportunity to highlight ISID’s current partnership with IDRC on the Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) program and the [GrOW Research Series](#).

A recording of the conference proceedings will be available for viewing soon on [ISID’s YouTube page](#). Read more about the conference and interviews with panellists in the [GrOW Research Bulletin](#).

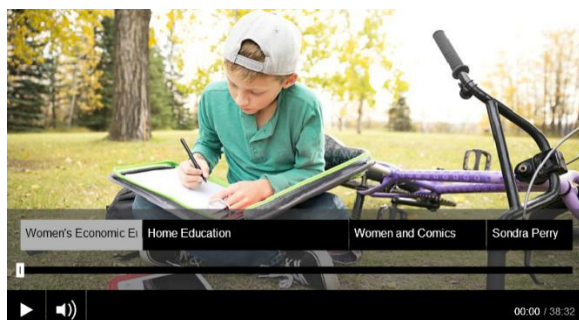
MEDIA



Documentary: Rising Voices

In February 2018, GrOW partners from the [International Centre for Ethnic Studies \(ICES\)](#) published a documentary titled, [“Rising Voices: Women of the North”](#). The film explores the personal stories of a number of women who experienced the war and its aftermath, and how they manage various sociocultural and economic issues at various levels.

ICES is based in Sri Lanka and leads the GrOW project “Identifying Post-War Growth and ICES is based in Sri Lanka and leads the GrOW project [“Identifying Post-War Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women in Sri Lanka”](#).



BBC 4 Radio Interview with Deepta Chopra

In this interview with BBC Radio 4, GrOW supported researcher, Deepta Chopra discusses the implications of women’s paid and unpaid care work responsibilities across India, Nepal, Rwanda and Tanzania. Deepta reports on findings from research carried out with the Institute of Development Studies and discussed the policy changes that need to be made if global gender equality is to be achieved. Listen to the full interview [here](#).

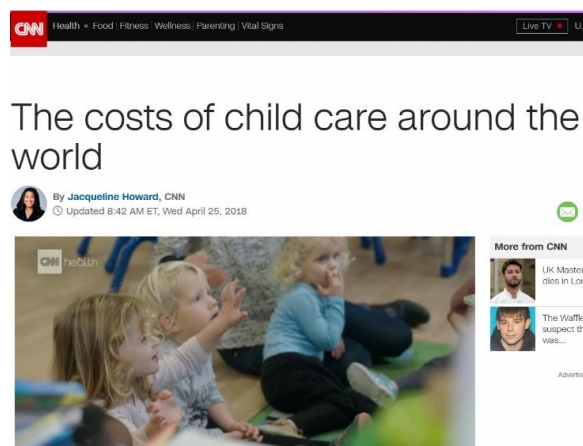


IDS Video Stories

The Institute for Development Studies (IDS) has developed short videos based on real women’s experiences performing paid work and care responsibilities and the adverse effects it has on their own wellbeing and that of their families. The stories come from multiple women and are consolidated to provide a single story from one country. One story [“No Time for My Children: The Struggle to Balance](#)

[Care and Work](#)” takes place in Rwanda while the other [“Barely Time to Sleep: The Struggle to Balance Care and Work”](#) takes place in India.

You can watch both video stories [here](#).



CNN News: “The Costs of Child Care Around the World”

Evidence from the GrOW project [“Improving Childcare Options to Create Better Economic Opportunities for Women in Nairobi Slums”](#) was recently featured in a news article by CNN journalist Jacqueline Howard. In the article, [“The Costs of Child Care Around the World”](#), GrOW-supported researcher Shelley Clark speaks to the global need for adequate access to childcare, particularly in low-income countries. In the GrOW program, Clark, with a team from McGill University and the [African Population and Health Research Center \(APHRC\)](#), looked at the role of high-quality, affordable daycare in allowing mothers to work in paid employment in the Korogocho slum in Nairobi, Kenya.

GrOW PUBLICATIONS

The GrOW program is constantly releasing new findings on women’s economic empowerment and in this section you can read some of the latest publications from the program. You can find more publications on our [website](#).

OECD Policy Dialogue on Women’s Economic Empowerment and SDG5

20 February 2018

Efficient action for women’s economic empowerment is about mainstreaming gender concerns within specific investments and projects, as well as taking a cross-sectoral perspective to promote responses to women’s priorities. In this blog, IDRC’s [Arjan de Haan](#) reflects on his recent attendance of the OECD Policy Dialogue on Women’s Economic Empowerment and findings from the IDS-led [Balancing Unpaid Care Work and Paid Work](#) project.



Op-Ed: [OECD Policy Dialogue on Women’s Economic Empowerment and SDG5](#)

—[Arjan de Haan](#), IDRC

In this opinion piece for the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Arjan de Haan reflects on findings from the IDS-led GrOW [project](#) and discussions at the [OECD Policy Dialogue on Women’s Economic Empowerment](#) in January 2018. The meeting demonstrated the enhanced commitment to address gender equality as well as need to look beyond— while recognizing the key contribution of this work on measurement— unpaid and paid work.

GrOW
G2E

Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women
Pathways for Shared Prosperity

GENDER SEGREGATION IN EMPLOYMENT - VERY PERSISTENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Occupational and sectoral segregation does not fall with rising incomes or more trade; higher female labor force participation and rising female education is associated with more occupational segregation.

**EQUAL WORK
DESERVES
EQUAL PAY!**

Overview
Considerable progress has been made over the past few decades to decrease the gender gap in education in developing countries. Despite the progress made in education, gender gaps in labor force participation and employment have persisted. Moreover, occupational and sectoral segregation remains pervasive, with women working disproportionately in agriculture, some service sectors, and lower occupations. This segregation is a major determinant of pervasive gender wage gaps. A paper by Borrowman and Klasen (2017) analyzes the trends and determinants in occupational and sectoral segregation by gender using data for 69 developing countries between 1980 and 2011.

Policy Brief: [Gender Segregation in Employment—Very Persistent in Developing Countries \(#9\)](#)

—[Mary Borrowman](#) and [Stephan Klasen](#), University of Göttingen

Despite the progress made in education, gender gaps in labour force participation and employment have persisted. Moreover, occupational and sectoral segregation remains pervasive. What accounts for this segregation? In this policy brief, Borrowman and Klasen argue that higher female labour force participation and rising female education is associated with more occupational segregation. Read more from the University of Göttingen [here](#).

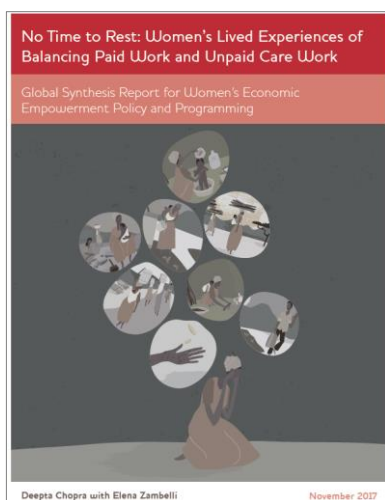


Policy Brief: [Persistent Gender Gaps in Employment in Developing Countries \(#10\)](#)

—Stephan Klasen, University of Göttingen

This brief looks at puzzling trends in female labour force participation around the world. Despite favorable conditions—rapid decline in fertility, greater education among women, and favorable economic conditions—female labour force participation is stagnating or declining in many regions.

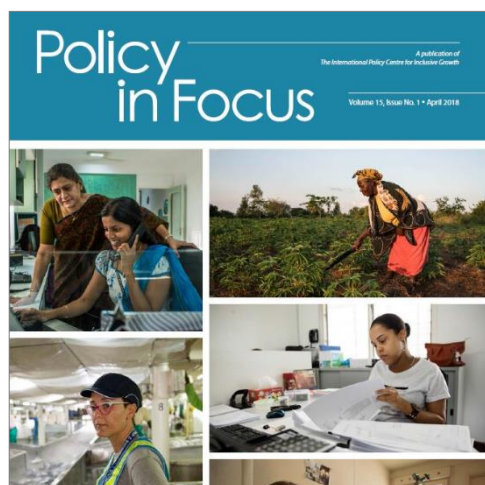
To read more on the work of the University of Göttingen in the GrOW program, click [here](#).



Synthesis Report: [No Time to Rest: Women's Lived Experiences of Balancing Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work](#)

—Deeptha Chopra, and Elena Zambelli

This report, written by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), provides evidence on the lived experiences of women in low-income families, as they strive to balance their paid work and unpaid care work responsibilities. It presents the findings of a mixed-methods research project in the GrOW program carried out in India, Nepal, Rwanda, and Tanzania during 2015–2017. To read more on the work of IDS in the GrOW program click [here](#).



Article: [Policy in Focus – Volume 15, Issue No. 1](#)

—The International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth

This special publication in Policy in Focus focuses specifically on women's economic empowerment. It was released on International Women's Day this year and features articles by researchers in the GrOW program ("Economic empowerment of young women in Bangladesh: barriers and strategies" and "The impact of subsidised early childcare on women's labour force participation in an African slum") and from the Program Leader of the Employment and Growth Program at IDRC, Arjan de Haan ("Women's labour force Leader of the Employment and Growth Program at IDRC, Arjan de Haan ("Women's labour force participation in South Asia"). One of the specialist guest editors for this special issue is IDRC's Senior Program Officer, Carolina Robino.

RESEARCHER TESTIMONIALS

GrOW recently sat down with several researchers from the program to speak about their experiences in the program and lessons learned. Below are excerpts from these conversations.



Jane Mariara, Executive Director of the Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP)

Jane was co-principal investigator and country lead of the Kenya team on the GrOW project [“Women's Early Labour Market Transitions in Sub-Saharan Africa”](#).

When asked about her motivation to work on research pertaining to women's economic empowerment, Jane spoke of her realization of the widening gaps in the empowerment of young women and a personal connection to the subject area:

“It was the realization of actual existing and widening gaps in the empowerment of youth, particularly young women. When you compare young women with young men they tend to be disadvantaged in many ways in terms of education (i.e., enrollment, attendance, attainment) and labour market opportunities. Women have to spend a lot of time in domestic work which affects their schooling and their prospects for the labour market. Those are actual gaps and they are widening.

You'd expect that through development, they are declining but this is not necessarily the case. This is really what motivated us to look at the broader issues of the young women, and sometimes men, so we can compare their experiences in terms of labour market outcomes, education attainment, marriage and fertility.

Personally, I've grown up in this country (Kenya), in the rural areas. When I look back and think about my peers, some dropped out and got married in primary school. There are those who finish primary school and go to high school but cannot go to tertiary college or university and you find that where they end up in terms of labour market outcomes, marriage and fertility are at completely different trajectories than those who could attain tertiary education. This was a broader motivation.

The question is, what really can be done for such women, especially the vulnerable women? For this you need research and evidence based interventions/policies.”



Andy McKay, Professor of Development Economics at the University of Sussex, UK

Andy was co-principal investigator on the GrOW project [“Women's Early Labour Market Transitions in Sub-Saharan Africa”](#).

When asked about when and how his team built relationships with policy makers, Andy spoke about the value of engaging with policy makers from the outset of the project and mobilizing policy networks in different countries through local researchers:

“We began engaging with policy makers from the beginning of the project but it's not that easy when you don't have something to say. But I think getting them interested and engaged with the ideas of the project in the beginning and in

helping to shape it, is important. As well as having dialogue throughout. It doesn't mean you see them every month but at the beginning of the process you tell them what you're doing. The policy briefs are one way to engage with policy makers.

Most of our researchers had some experience engaging with policy makers in the past and I think drew quite a lot on their previous experience and expertise. The risk of building on the past experience of researchers is that you might miss important contacts but at least you have somewhere to start from. Different countries in the study had more policy engagement activities than others, some researchers were more advanced and regularly in contact with policy makers than others.

For international engagement we had a meeting at the ECA in Addis in September where we presented our work. It was a great way to give visibility to our project and I think it had impact at that level. Jane Mariara presented at the meeting at the World Bank in October where there were policy makers in attendance."



William Baah-Boateng, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics of the University of Ghana

William was co-principal investigator on the GrOW project ["Bringing to Light the Role of the Extractive Industry on Women's Economic Empowerment in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana"](#).

When asked about how the program impacted the research capacity of his team (i.e. research skills, access to networks and journals and paper writing quality), William spoke of opportunities afforded to the PhD and Masters candidates that collected research in the project:

"We had three or four PhD students and one Masters student that were involved in the project. One was involved from the very beginning and learned how to write the proposal for the project. After the inception workshop, these students were deeply involved in the field work (i.e. taking notes, asking questions, etc.). For the PhD students in Ghana, they had to carry out what we call "experiential learning", in order to attain their degree. This means being involved in projects where they conduct research from the beginning up to the end of it. The GrOW project provided that and they gained this experience through it. Students in Côte d'Ivoire received similar experience.

We also had three workshops in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire and there were academics at each workshop which offered the students opportunities to network. In terms of journal articles, the project is looking at publishing a couple of our papers and of course they will benefit as they took part in them. We are also supporting them in their thesis writing.

Many of the students are happy with their experience, especially going into the field and seeing things on the ground. Now they can tell the story as it is, rather than through reading books and articles. They were part of interviews, so they can tell you what's going on, in terms of gender discrimination in the mining sector in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana."



Abbi Kedir, Associate Professor & Senior Lecturer at the University of Sheffield, UK

Abbi was country lead for the Ethiopia team on the GrOW project ["Women's Early Labour Market Transitions in Sub-Saharan Africa"](#).

When asked about the obstacles faced by his team in implementing their research uptake strategy, Abbi spoke of issues with using overly technical language to express the findings of the project to stakeholders:

“Technical language by economists is a huge barrier. As an economist, I am aware of this and I try not to be paralyzed by it. In the past, I was the victim of my own professional ego and was not good at communicating my ideas. Over the last 8 years, I have worked in policy and academic circles and I am working hard to speak about my findings in non-technical, understandable and practical language of the policy makers that I’d like to inform. This is a work in progress. Research briefs, policy brief, etc., help and we have used them in our GrOW project.

I am due to travel to Ethiopia in the summer of 2018. Even if the IDRC project is finished, I continue to do research in the area of women empowerment and continue sharing my findings to build on what has been done already.”

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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Questions or comments? Send us your feedback at grow@idrc.ca.

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