Overview

- What is the connection between economic development and gender equality?
- How do cultural norms limit women’s employment and equality?
- What policies can help dismantle barriers to women’s employment?
Women earn less than men around the world

US data

$40,742 \div \$51,212 = 80\%$
Economic progress can narrow gender gaps in the labor market
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Scope for public policies and programs to speed up progress

- Piped water, electrification, affordable appliances
- Expansion of pre-primary education
- Subsidized child care
- Affordable family planning services
But female employment rate falls over some range of economic development.
Attitudes about female employment appear worse in poor countries
Gender norms differ across cultures and matter for female employment
Low participation of women in the workforce in South Asia and MENA

![World map showing women's participation in the workforce globally with a focus on India at 27%](image-url)
Very few women
Ways to promote female employment in India: 3 attempts

1. Strengthen the peer networks of women entrepreneurs
2. Tell family members about the benefits and dispel myths about the costs of letting young women work
3. Change the deep-seated gender attitudes of adolescents
Example 1: Strengthen women’s business networks

- Female-owned businesses often stay small and not-too-profitable
- Women face disadvantages due to less formal training + sparse network of peers
Randomized experiments

Population is randomly split into two groups

Outcomes for both groups are measured

= Struggling business

= Successful business
Example 1: Strengthen women’s business networks

Self-employed women in Ahmedabad, India

- Offered business training course
- Offered business training course + could invite a peer to attend
- Control group
Example 1: Strengthen women’s business networks

Self-employed women in Ahmedabad, India

Offered business training course

Offered business training course + could invite a peer to attend

Control group

Women in India Who Trained with a Friend Were More Likely to Take Out a Loan

PERCENT OF WOMEN WHO TOOK OUT A SEWA LOAN

- Not invited to training: 6%
- Invited to training alone: 8%
- Invited to training with friend: 15%

SOURCE “FRIENDS AT WORK: CAN PEER SUPPORT STIMULATE FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP?” ERICA FIELD ET AL., 2014
Two-fold objective of research

- “Applied research”: Measure the impact that a specific policy has on outcome of interest
- “Basic research”: Understand the economic and cultural forces that underlie the problem → New ideas for potential policies
Example 2: Change family members’ views

- Men often discourage or prevent their daughters or wives from working
- Women discourage female employment too
- Concerns about personal safety and “purity”
- Also might under-appreciate the positive effects, e.g., self-efficacy, of working
Testimonials from teachers & family members
Example 2: Change male family members’ views

Kindergarten teachers in rural India

Family members shown video about safety and/or self-realization benefits of women working

Prompted conversation among family members about risks and benefits of working

Control group
Results

- No impacts on attitudes or outcomes related to female employment
Example 3: Change adolescents’ attitudes

- Belief that women are ill-suited for employment or that it is wrong for women to work is embedded in the culture
- Transformative change requires reshaping those attitudes and social norms
Example 3: Change adolescents’ attitudes

High school students

Class discussions about gender discrimination

Control group
Session on household chores

- Students asked to identify who does various chores in their house, e.g., cooking
- Share their answers with class and notice pattern that women/girls do more chores
- Discuss why that is and whether it is fair
- Who does similar tasks outside the home, e.g., cooks in restaurants?
- Does society value both activities equally?
Results: More support for gender equality

Classroom Discussions of Gender Equality Led to More Progressive Gender Attitudes

STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF ATTITUDE DISTRIBUTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment effect</th>
<th>Parent attitude gap</th>
<th>Girl-boy attitude gap</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0,25</td>
<td>0,14</td>
<td>0,69</td>
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SOURCE: "RESHAPING ADOLESCENTS’ GENDER ATTITUDES: EVIDENCE FROM A SCHOOL-BASED EXPERIMENT IN INDIA,” DHAR ET AL., 2018
Next steps: Further testing and scaling up

- Breakthrough has trained other non-profits to implement the curriculum
- Government could hire special-purpose government teachers
- Textbooks + standardized assignments
Next steps: Measuring long-term effects

- More female employment?
- Equal investment in sons & daughters?
- More daughters to begin with, i.e., less sex-selective abortion?
Examples of other policies to promote women’s employment

- Bicycles for girls to use to travel to school
- Women’s subway cars or buses for safer commutes
- Women’s police stations
Other norms besides safety and “purity” need to be addressed

- Control over household finances
  - Bank accounts for women increased female participation in workfare program
- Backlash by men if their wives are the breadwinners
  - Role of interventions to prevent IPV
- Men’s role in child care and housework
Closing these gaps matters

› Not using women’s talents leaves money on the table

› When women earn more – and hence have more say in the household – evidence suggests children’s outcomes improve

› Equity is important in and of itself
Thank you
But there has been progress over time.
Many important gender gaps are larger in poorer countries.