

# What works for female economic empowerment?

**What evidence exists in the international literature on “what works” and what doesn’t work, and why, in programmes addressing female economic empowerment? What pathways to empowerment are relevant for these programmes?**

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## Overview

A number of recent comprehensive reviews of FEE programmes, and of empowerment more generally, indicate that most programmes target young women and girls at an individual level. Most work through the two main routes of wage employment or (small scale) business development, but several strategies are in common.

There is broad consensus that combined/bundled interventions work better than single-intervention programmes. Successful programmes often include a component addressing FEE directly alongside others addressing constraints to FEE, such as childcare support, strategies addressing transport and safety issues, and interventions tackling social norms with, for example, communication and conflict resolution skills or SRH training. Both wage employment and businesses development routes have been effective alongside these types of intervention, but employment programmes must be linked to real market needs and opportunities, and should enlist employer’s commitments to employ programme graduates. Where wage employment is limited, a combination of business skills and job skills enhancement can be effective. For entrepreneurs, building business networks can be effective, as are mentors and role models. Financial education must be age appropriate.

The evidence on (micro) finance is mixed, but most experience suggests it should be accompanied by other more intensive interventions, especially with poorer women. Discussion spaces alongside microfinance, for example, have been shown to reduce the risk of VAWG. Girls’ safe spaces are increasingly used and have been successful in increasing girls’ self-confidence, agency, knowledge and networks. However, reviews suggest that they work best when accompanied by rights awareness communications promoting gender egalitarian values; economic opportunities and legal changes, and when they use a participatory learning style. Special efforts are needed to accommodate the most vulnerable girls in safe spaces and to value their contributions.

Reaching groups with special constraints can also be enhanced with strategies to circumvent family control over women’s income, and which reduce the costs of looking for work – such as providing financial information, savings reminders or job information by mobile phone.

Few programmes address the enabling environment for FEE, despite evidence that addressing structural barriers can enhance long-term impact on empowerment. Finding ways to build collective voice and capacity for advocacy among women’s groups has been one effective strategy for addressing formal and informal barriers in the enabling environment. In addition, working with men and boys and opinion ‘gatekeepers’ such as traditional leaders also show potential – work at this level has been shown, variously, to lead to change related to violence, marriage, reproduction, household gender roles and attitudes to women in public life. Targeting labour market segregation is another method for working at this level, and may only require providing information on relative returns in different trades and supporting women who take on non-traditional sectors.

Little programme work connects change at the formal institutional level with FEE, but women's capacity for collective voice and action have been identified as having a pivotal role in promoting policy and legal reform to address their disadvantaged position in the labour market.

Not much can be gleaned from the literature on empowerment 'pathways' or sequencing, although there is good information on associations between different interventions and outcomes. This is partly because favoured impact evaluation methods reveal strong information on associations but little on how or why an intervention worked. Associations often spill over into outcomes in other dimensions of empowerment – but most often, these are dimensions which are targeted by other components of the intervention.

## Gaps in the programme literature

It is clear in the literature that most programme interventions are focused at the individual level, with a disconnect in particular from literature dealing more broadly with the (formal) institutional environment – such as the legal and policy environment for informal sector workers, and the role of trade unions and other organisations in supporting women in paid or own-account work to establish better conditions. Greater focus on the possible relation between individual and institutional levels in Mozambique may be fruitful.

Similarly, there is little regard to the role of collective action, either as activism, or in terms of personal transformation. Collective action was a central idea in much of the early conceptual literature on women's empowerment (e.g. Batliwala 1993; Kabeer 1994) and also in more conceptual contemporary studies (Klugman *et al* 2014; Kabeer 2012), but contemporary programme literature does not really explore this.

The programme literature is engaged with the idea of groups in two forms – for microfinance and savings, and for Safe Space type discursive intervention. The role of the group, however, is not discussed in much detail beyond how it increases social networks, although some studies hint at the transformative effects of 'good' groups (Marcus and Brodbeck 2015). The step from these groups to identifying injustice – for instance in work conditions – and to local activism to address these, is not taken, thereby missing the 'collective empowerment' effect referred to in the older literature.

The absence of any very systematic literature assessing the role of groups may also be related to the gap identified on the details of empowerment pathways. This gap is partly caused by RCTs/experimental approaches having become the favoured approach to evaluation, even though the inference basis of their logic cannot give a very detailed picture of direction of causation, sequencing, or synergies between interventions or their effects. Building in monitoring and evaluation which explicitly seeks detail on causal pathways may benefit programme learning.

## 1 What is the evidence on what works for FEE?

A number of comprehensive reviews have been undertaken in recent years of programmes targeting the economic empowerment of women, especially young women (Fewer *et al.* 2013; Diaz Soto *et al.* n.d; Quisumbing and Kovarik 2013; Dickson and Bangpan 2012; Buvinic and Furst-Nichols 2014; Mejia *et al.* 2014). Other reviews investigate empowerment more generally and include information relevant to economic empowerment (Glennerster and Takavarasha 2010; Dekker 2013; Rakodi 2014; Marcus and Page 2014; Marcus and Brodbeck 2015). The detail available in these reviews cannot be replicated here. This brief summarises parts of this material and attempts to identify some gaps in the literature, possibly indicating gaps in programme approaches.

### 1.1 Targeting individuals: adolescent girls and young women

In the broadest sense, two main pathways to the economic empowerment of women are envisaged in programme approaches: via (small scale) business/microenterprise/livelihoods routes; or via wage employment routes. However, the strategies associated with these two types are often common to both, and approaches are sometimes combined. A large part of this literature focuses on women and young women at the individual level, targeting interventions at them and focusing on them to observe change.

### Bundled interventions

There is broad consensus that combined/bundled interventions work better than single-intervention programmes (Kabeer 2012 for India; Bandiera *et al* 2013 for Uganda; Fewer *et al.* for multi-country evidence; Edmeades *et al.*, 2014 for Ethiopia; Jewkes *et al* 2014 for South Africa; Marcus and Brodbeck 2015). The majority of bundled programmes target different components at the individual level, and reviews show these can be effective, though it is unclear whether certain combinations work better than others.

Examples in the 'wage work' stream include Glennerster and Takavarasha (2010) who find in a Latin American vocational training programme that combining training with work placement and a childcare stipend were considered important components contributing to results. Research conducted by the World Bank for the Adolescent Girls' Initiative and the experience of Biruh Tesfa in Ethiopia both indicate that any skills development or training for livelihoods, formal or informal employment, must be complemented with a job placement or support component, and also that transport and safety issues need addressing (ActionAid 2012; World Bank 2012).

The transition to productive paid work can be difficult (ActionAid 2012), and conclusions from EPAG programme in Liberia suggest that business skills training should be provided alongside job skills training in contexts where wage employment is limited. This programme specifically set out to measure effectiveness in the two streams of business development and wage employment, with two groups receiving some common components, and some separate. It finds that both were effective in increasing employment rates at midterm, but the business skills development was more so – 76% employment against 52% (World Bank 2012). Buvinic and Furst-Nichols and Pryor (n.d.) review different types of FEE interventions promoting wage work and business, and for wage work list 'high potential interventions' as: job information for young women; firm certification programs, and non-traditionally female skills training for women wage workers. For young women's employment programmes, they assess demand-oriented skills training, combined with on-the-job training and wage subsidies, as able to increase earning if social restrictions against hiring young women are not binding.

Fewer *et al.* (2013), in a review of 11 programmes globally including seven in SSA, conclude that employment programmes must be linked to real market needs and opportunities, so vocational training should match market needs and opportunities. This requires designing quality training that builds girls' technical and soft skills, and enlists the commitment of employers to hire programme participants. In Ethiopia, the Tesfa programme targeting married adolescent girls found that those receiving the economic empowerment and the SRH intervention had the greatest increase in proportion engaged in work for pay at the end of the programme; but there was an increase also in the single intervention separate Economic Empowerment and SRH groups – even though the SRH group did not receive financial training (Edmeades *et al* 2014).

For businesses and entrepreneurs, Buvinic, Furst-Nichols and Pryor (n.d.) find building business associations and networks for entrepreneurs to be effective, as well as mentors and role models for young women. For young women, they conclude that livelihood programs that combine reproductive health education with income and asset-building show promising results, especially in low-income, socially conservative settings. Programmes promoting financial education and services for young people/women emphasise that financial services must be age appropriate, recognising different needs and capacity at different ages (Fewer *et al.* 2013), and that combined interventions are more effective at changing behaviour (Diaz Soto, *et al* n.d.).

***There is broad consensus that bundled interventions work better than single interventions.***

***Combinations addressing FEE directly and adding interventions to address constraints have been effective – such as a childcare stipend; safety and transport issues.***

***Employment programmes must be linked to real market needs and opportunities and enlists the commitment of employers.***

***Where wage employment is limited, a combination of business skills and job skills training can be effective.***

***Building business associations and networks can be effective, as are mentors and role models for young women, and age appropriate financial education.***

Among promising new approaches are programs that tackle social norms and include social support alongside providing young women with new information, opportunities, financial services and/or employment (Fewer *et al.* 2013). These include programmes combining training in vocational business or trade-related skills with programmatic elements to increase aspirations and confidence, social networks, freedom from violence, and more equal gender relations in the household. A review by Mejia *et al.* (2014) finds that providing social support through mentoring and skills such as communication and critical thinking to women and girls is key to ensuring they can navigate through the backlash that may result from participation in an FEE programme. Effective components for combining include financial literacy training, conflict resolution skills, savings and SRH training.

'One-stop shops' that support economic empowerment as well as broader agency-related objectives are also showing promise – in El Salvador, for example, Ciudad Mujer establishes community-based one-stop centers for women that provide vocational training, access to microfinance, child care services, crisis support for victims of violence, and community education about gender norms and women's health (Klugman *et al.* 2014).

### The role of (micro) finance

Microfinance is frequently a part of business development interventions, and sometimes offered as a single intervention, but the evidence on its success is mixed. For example, Glennerster and Takavarasha (2010) find emerging evidence suggesting that microfinance does help women start new businesses, but that the impact on their economic position may not be as large as hoped. Buvinic and Furst-Nichols (2014) find that a cash loan or grant is not sufficient to grow women-owned subsistence-level firms but can work if it is delivered in-kind to more successful women micro entrepreneurs, and should boost the performance of women's larger-sized SMEs. They conclude that very poor women need a more intensive package of services to break out of subsistence production and grow their businesses.

**The evidence on (micro) finance is mixed, though it may be an important component of a bundle. Poorer women need a more intensive package to grow their businesses. Discussion sessions have been shown to reduce risk of violence alongside microfinance.**

On the other hand, there is some evidence of success with grants in simple, single intervention programmes – such as the Youth Opportunities Programme in northern Uganda, which provided cash transfers to self-organised groups for skills training and self-employment capital and yielded an increase in employment outside the home of 25% by men and 50% by women (Dekker 2013). Buvinic, Furst-Nichols and Pryor (n.d.) also find that cash grants with no conditions may increase young women's employment and income and have sizeable social benefits.

Microfinance alongside other interventions seems to have a more consistent track record. For example, Iyengar and Ferrari's (2011) review of interventions in Burundi and South Africa find that discussion sessions in conjunction with microcredit participation improves financial decision making authority for women, reduces exposure to violence, reduces acceptance of violence, and increases consumption of household goods relative to luxury goods such as alcohol. However, the South African programme – which was intended specifically to reduce household violence, appears to have had only limited impact on enhancing the role of women in decision making authority in the household – in other words, its impact was greatest on targeted issues.

### The role of Safe Spaces/girls' clubs

Safe spaces have become a common component of programming for adolescent girls in general, including in FEE interventions. Marcus and Brodbeck's (2015) overview of work in Uganda, Ethiopia, Nepal and Vietnam notes that these groups give girls opportunity to learn about issues that affect their lives, enabling them to expand their social networks and, in some cases, to learn vocational and life skills. They are often successful in increasing girls' self-confidence, encouraging them to express their views, and giving them access to role models who often also act as mentors.

**Safe spaces are often successful in increasing girls' self-confidence, agency, knowledge and networks. But they work best when accompanied by broader gender equality awareness communications, economic opportunities and legal changes, and when they use a participatory life style.**

However, girls' clubs are not enough by themselves to lead to empowerment, but are one of several 'ingredients' of empowerment. Safe spaces are most effective when accompanied by complementary interventions such as universal education, broader behaviour change and rights awareness communications that promote gender-egalitarian values, economic opportunities for educated women, and legal changes to prohibit discriminatory practices. In other words, accompanying interventions should target not only the individual but also the enabling environment, such as by engaging adolescent boys in gender equality work (see below). Marcus and Brodbeck (2015) also find that learning style matters: a participatory style, rather than a didactic teacher-student dynamic, with opportunities for reflection and discussion, is particularly important if clubs are to be engaging (Marcus and Page, 2014); and to generate a learning process that can be transformative. Teachers may need careful training to deliver this kind of approach.

### Targeting particular groups

Several studies note that special efforts are needed to target and include the most vulnerable girls and women (Diaz Soto *et al.* n.d; Marcus and Brodbeck 2015). This is not always convenient as they are often harder to reach. Safe spaces in schools, for example, are administratively easier, but miss the large numbers of disadvantaged adolescent girls who either never attended school or dropped out. Reaching vulnerable groups may involve holding clubs at times convenient to this group, and ensuring activities are appropriate to participants' age and context. Also for safe space approaches, it is important to pay detailed attention to exclusion and self-exclusion based on inequalities within groups: girls with the heaviest workloads are often least likely to take part in a club, and girls may self-exclude if they feel the space is not emotionally safe – if their contributions are not valued, for example. Sometimes, girls chosen to participate are 'star' students, unrepresentative of the girls facing the most complex disadvantages (Marcus and Brodbeck 2015).

**Special efforts are needed to include the most vulnerable girls and women in safe spaces, and to value their contributions.**

With special strategies combined with persistence, girls in particularly difficult or isolating circumstances can be reached: the TESFA programme in Ethiopia, for example, aimed to bring married adolescent girls into wage work. Recognising the potential isolation and powerlessness of young wives within households, the programme built interaction within and between groups into its design. Similarly, ActionAid (2012) records that the Biruh Tesfa programme – which targeted other isolated young women, mainly domestic workers – needed a detailed and determined strategy to identify and reach these.

Adjustments in programme design can often help to include groups with constraints, and can be helpful for many women. Buvinic and Furst-Nichols (2014) find that strategies circumventing family control over women's income have been effective, such as providing capital in-kind or trans-acted through the privacy of a mobile phone, and providing secure savings accounts to nudge women to keep the money in the business rather than to divert it to non-business uses. Reminders to save via mobile and information on prices and jobs, rather than having to travel to get information, ease both mobility issues and transport expenses. They also note that minor design adjustments in business and skills training programs, class schedules and locations can increase women's uptake, retention, and training effectiveness. The potential for technology to support FEE is also supported from non-programme related change in rural South Africa: a study found that infrastructure such as mobile phone towers which reduced the costs of job searches led to a 15% increase in employment, with most of the effect due to increased employment by women (Klonner and Nolen 2008, quoted in Kabeer 2012a).

**Strategies that circumvent family control over women's income can be helpful to address difficult circumstances, such as providing financial or job information by mobile phone.**

In general, targeting particular groups means adjusting to the particular difficulties of that group. But on the other hand, there is some evidence that targeting specific groups may also be a route to quick wins in FEE: in studies quoted by Buvinic and Furst-Nichols (2014), female headship was found to be a characteristic trait of women farmers in Malawi and urban entrepreneurs in Uganda who successfully crossed over from lower-value to high-value production (Dimova and Gang 2013; Campos *et al.* 2012).



## 1.2 Targeting informal institutions and reference groups

A smaller body of literature investigates the role of interventions in informal institutions/the enabling environment to support FEE. USAID (2014), for instance, argues that global case studies show a more significant long-term impact on empowerment from interventions that combine both change in structural barriers and bottom-up change from individuals themselves. Structural transformation in this analysis is the process by which the embedded rules in the institutions of household, community, workplace, support institutions and enabling environment in general are changed to promote or restrict woman's opportunities and choices.

Using the example of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India, the study illustrates that bottom-up change focuses on the individual and their networks within a market system, creating the "power to" accomplish goals and the ability to be or connect with change makers or local role models. SEWA works simultaneously at creating local advocacy systems to fight for legal inclusion alongside building services such as microfinance and childcare. SEWA members have themselves fought for legal status and official recognition under labour laws; and SEWA offers leadership training for women to learn how to be effective advocates. Kabeer *et al* (2013) document strategies of organisations working with women workers in the informal sector in India, Thailand, South Africa and Brazil, and conclude that organisations successful in gaining concessions from formal institutions for women workers usually differ from traditional trade unions in significant ways – often using flexibility, a focus on women's particular constraints, and finding ways to build collective voice.

**Fewer programmes address the enabling environment for FEE, but there is evidence that combining individual change with change in structural barriers can bring long term impact.**

**Finding ways to build collective voice and has been effective in addressing structural barriers.**

### Working with men and boys

A number of studies emphasise the importance of engaging with men and boys in FEE programmes (Mejia 2014, Klugman *et al* 2014) in order to address gender norms in the wider community and note that this can lead to change related to violence, marriage, reproduction, household gender roles and the roles of women in public life. Some also note the time commitment that is necessary to achieve successful interventions of this kind (Klugman *et al* 2014, Slegh *et al* 2013).

**Working with men and boys, and with traditional authorities to change norms can lead to change related to violence, marriage, reproduction, household gender roles, and the roles of women in public life.**

A few studies also highlight the potential of working with traditional authorities to change norms (Klugman *et al* 2014), but the more common approach in practice is to address partners, rather than men and boys generally. For example, Jewkes *et al* (2014) report on a programme in South Africa combining Stepping Stones – a participatory intervention for HIV prevention and strengthening relationship skills – and a broad economic empowerment intervention, which showed good success using this strategy. The evaluation found dramatic increases in earnings – men's in the last month increasing by 247% and women's by 278%, a significant reduction in women's experience of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in the three months previously from 30.3% to 18.9%; better scores for men and women on gender attitude, and men significantly reduced their controlling practices in their relationship.

Similarly, Marcus and Brodbeck (2015) argue, following research in four countries, that Safe Space interventions should engage with girls' families to influence girls' lives so that they can pursue their rights within a supportive environment. It can be particularly fruitful to engage with men (fathers, grandfathers, uncles and older brothers) who have the greatest decision-making power over girls' lives.

In a detailed study of engagement with men in a microfinance intervention for women in Rwanda, Slegh *et al* (2013) describe CARE Rwanda's Village Savings and Loans (VSL) programme, which included a number of discussion sessions with men only, as well as with couples. Results included men's collaboration with their wives to repay loans; changing patterns of sharing care work; and a reduction in conflict between partners. Part of these changes they attribute to the programme's ability to maintain a focus on women's empowerment while also taking into account men's expressed needs, such as their health needs – men were more attracted to discussions when issues they saw as interesting to them were included, such as their relationships with their children, better relationships with their partners (including sexual relationships) etc. But the study also notes limitations: in general, the husband remained the boss – and concludes that change to gender relations is a long-term project.

### Targeting labour market segregation

A few programmes have also specifically tackled structural aspects of the labour market which tend to place women in lower earning sectors. Providing information to girls and women on the relative profitability of different sectors appears to be a key strategy here. For example, a programme in Kenya providing young people with vouchers to attend a trade school of their choice to complete a course in a trade of their choice found in a randomised evaluation that providing simple, actionable information to girls on the relative returns to female-dominated trade (e.g. beauty and tailoring) and male-dominated trade (e.g. construction, mechanics and computers) led to a 10 percentage point increase in girls' enrolment in higher return, traditionally male-dominated courses (Hicks *et al.* 2013). Glennerster and Takavarasha (2010) report similar findings in Latin America: informing girls of the relative returns to training in male- relative to female-dominated trades increased girls' enrolment in higher return vocational training courses, such as construction, mechanics, driving, and computers.

Other factors may also be involved in accessing male-dominated sectors. A study seeking detail on these factors among female entrepreneurs who succeed in a male-dominated sectors in Ethiopia – termed 'crossovers' – (Alibhai *et al* 2015) confirmed that women who work in more male-dominated sectors earn significantly more than those who do not and their businesses are just as profitable as businesses owned by men. Support from parents/husband is a common feature identified by these women as significant in their success. Crossover women are also more likely to be married, live in bigger households, have more children and live in households with a higher asset wealth status. The husband of a crossover is 25% more likely to work in a business, and the father having a wage job is also positively correlated.

The study also identified disadvantages faced by crossover women: they face more discrimination from customers and employees, especially male employees, and several report that clients prefer to deal with male business owners. They are also significantly more likely to face difficulty building networks in their area of operation. The study concludes by recommending support to women in building business networks.

### 1.3 Reform in formal institutions

Little programme work connects the effects of changes in formal institutions with FEE, but broader commentaries regarding institutional change supporting FEE report on some issues. Voluntary regulation of working conditions in the manufacturing sector, for example, have mixed outcomes on women's work – with the greatest successes reported in contexts where organisations representing workers' interests have been involved in the construction of codes which meet the gendered priorities of women workers (Pearson, 2007). Kabeer (2012a) concludes that women's capacity for collective voice and action has emerged as having a vital role to play in addressing the multiplicity of constraints that underpin their disadvantaged position in the labour market (see also Kabeer *et al* 2013). Klugman *et al* (2014) also note that women's collective action and autonomous women's movements play a pivotal role in building the momentum for progressive policy and legal reform.

**Specifically targeting labour market segregation can work to increase the wages/income of some women. This may only require providing information on relative returns in different trades.**

**Supporting women moving into non-traditional sectors can help address their particular challenges.**

**Little programme work connects change at the formal institutional level with FEE. But women's capacity for collective voice and action have been identified as having a pivotal role in promoting policy and legal reform to address their disadvantaged position in the labour market.**

Programme gaps at this level of intervention have also been identified as reducing effectiveness. As observed by a systematic review by Coles and Mitchell (2010), Hinds (2015) notes that when institutional factors limiting women's access to markets are not addressed alongside household factors, programmes can be disappointing.

## 2 What are the empowerment pathways in programmes that 'work'?

Although a central message resulting from the Pathways to Women's Empowerment research programme (see e.g. Cornwall 2014) was that empowerment pathways are often complex and winding, little in the programme literature

reviewed here offers insights into either the sequencing of interventions or the sequencing of empowerment outcomes. One discussion of programmes opening up paid opportunities for young women notes that having control over one's reproductive health and sexuality can go a long way in removing barriers to women's participation in the labour market, but does not translate this into programme sequencing. The nature of women's participation in work is also found to be significant to available empowerment pathways: the nature of the paid work affects how much women value paid employment. Levels and regularity of income, work conditions and hours; security, fulfilment and how far the work opens up new horizons are all important (ActionAid 2012).

One reason for an absence of focus on 'pathways' or how one type of change leads to another is the emphasis in results measurement and programme impact evaluation on experimental or quasi experimental methods that rely on the inference basis for understanding causation – the

counterfactual logic of the difference between two otherwise identical cases (Stern *et al.* 2012). These studies can give clear evidence that a result happened because of an input, but give little or no information on how or why or in what order. Perhaps for this reason, much more commentary is apparent on associations between different kinds of empowerment, without setting these associations out in 'pathways'.

***The programme literature does not give much insight into empowerment 'pathways' or the sequencing of programme interventions/outcomes.***

***Most impact evaluations use experimental methods (RCTs) which do not reveal much about how or why an intervention worked.***

### 2.1 Links between economic empowerment and other dimensions of empowerment

Interventions promoting FEE are often associated with empowerment effects in other parts of an individual's life. Glennerster and Takavarasha (2010) for example find evidence that communities treat girls differently when they have higher economic (earning) potential. In India, there is evidence that only those members of a vocational training programme who had also attended training courses promoting their capacity for longer-term planning and providing practical skills reported impacts both on intra-household relations and on participation in the community (Kabeer and Noponen, 2004). Another FEE intervention in peri-urban India, discussed in Dekker (2013), reported that young women in the villages where a recruitment programme was placed for three years were significantly less likely to get married or have children during this period. They choose to enter the labour market or obtain more post-school training. They also reported wanting to have fewer children and to work more after marriage and child birth. For school-aged girls, there were increases in both enrolment and BMI, both suggesting significant effects on intra-household resource allocation (Jensen 2012).

***There are often associations between economic empowerment and other dimensions of empowerment – such as participation in the community, fertility, school enrolment and girls' nutritional status.***



Other programmes – usually those which include a safe space type component on SRH – also report connections between different types of FEE activities and effects on marriage and fertility. For example, life-skills training and provision of safe spaces for girls to discuss their future, along with the development of support networks, have reduced the risk of early marriage in Ethiopia (Klugman *et al* 2014). In Uganda, the BRAC Empowerment and Livelihoods for Adolescent program consists of a social space where girls and women receive life-skills training and local market-informed vocational training. This was found to significantly improve adolescent girls' ability to make choices around SRH and marriage, with a 26% reduction in rates of early childbearing and a 58% reduction in rates of marriage and cohabitation. A 50% increase in condom use among the sexually active was also reported. The share of girls reporting sex against their will dropped from 14% to 7% (Bandiera *et al.* 2014). Klugman *et al* (2014) also find a connection between jobs strategies that pay attention to gender equality issues, addressing disparities in access to skills, training, and credit, and increasing women's agency in general terms.

There is some evidence, however, that these associations do not usually happen by accident. Iyengar and Ferrari (2011) conclude from their study in Burundi and South Africa that targeted programs tend to impact the areas in which they are targeted, whether that target is violence or economic decisions or both. Spillover effects to related areas appear to be insignificant. They conclude that policy makers should be careful in assuming that limited programs will have broad effects across other areas of decision making.

And where links are not made programmatically, other dimensions of empowerment may show few effects. The WINGS programme in Uganda, for example, was a short business training, a start-up grant, and optional additional trainings on communication and gender relations – at midline this showed very good results for increases in cash earning and savings but no effects on women's independence, status or freedom from partner violence (Blattman 2013).

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