

Do Small Changes Lead to Big Impact?



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What works to empower women and girls?

- **Measurement: What do we mean by empowerment?**
- Economic Empowerment: Two Examples
- Way Forward

What do we mean by empowerment?

- Kabeer (1999) defines empowerment as “the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ... ability”.

Resources and Agency  Functioning

- Multiple domains: Psychological, social, economic, legal and political
- We can likely think of this framework as universal, but how we measure things may need to be country or program specific?

What do we mean by empowerment?

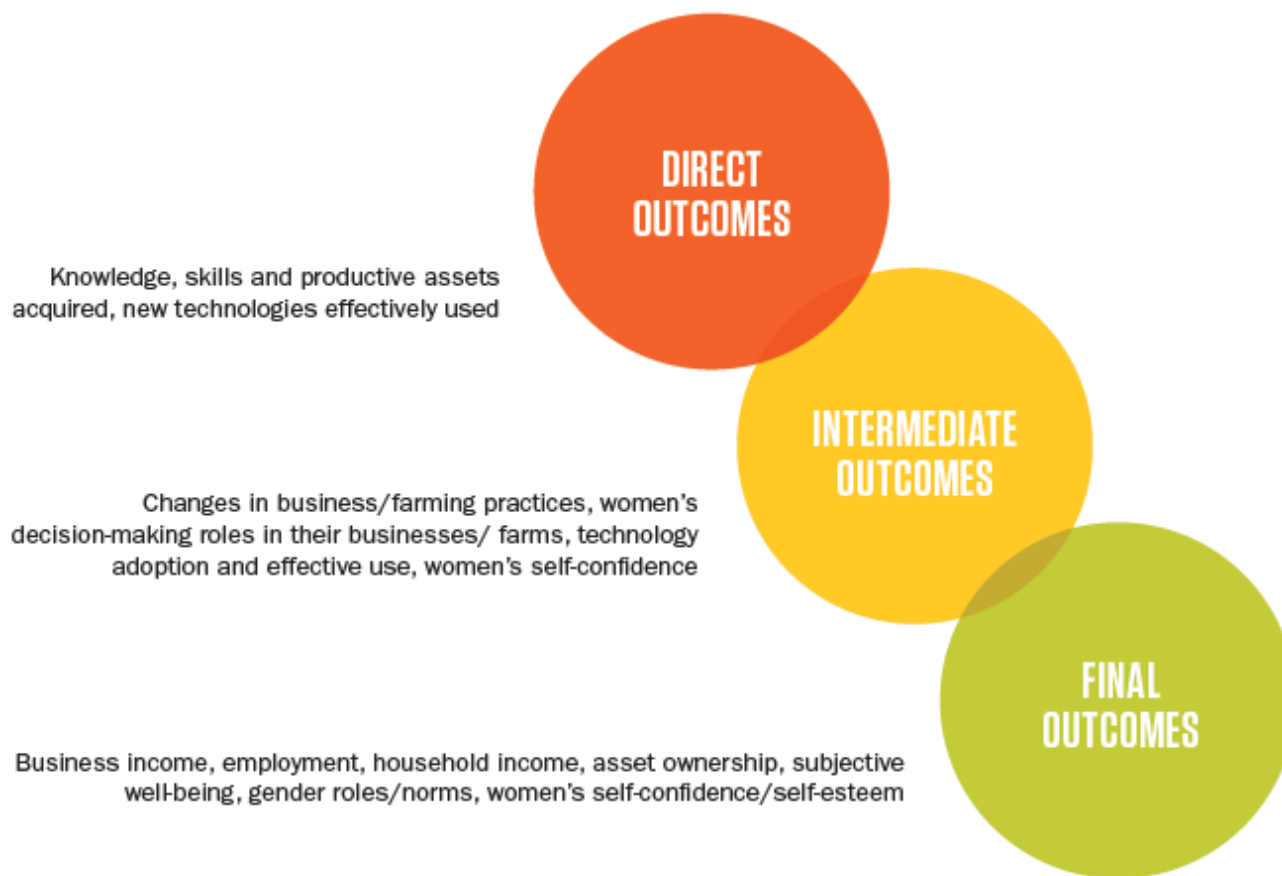
- A few additional points on measurement:
 - Should we think of measuring empowerment differently for young never-married women vs. married women?
 - Which target group leads to the biggest impact?
 - How do we avoid social-desirability bias when we are measuring outcomes the intervention framed as “bad”?
 - e.g. Messaging around risky sexual behaviour → self-reported decline in risky sexual behaviour.
 - Are there more creative ways we can sensitive topics such as domestic violence?
 - Combine quantitative and qualitative data?
 - How do we draw conclusions when two interventions improve different aspects of women’s empowerment?

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Economic Empowerment

FIGURE 1. EXAMPLES OF DIRECT, INTERMEDIATE, AND FINAL OUTCOMES



Example 1: School-Based Mass Deworming

- Soil-transmitted helminth (STH) and schistosomiasis infections affect over one billion people, mainly in low income countries, and school-age children in particular
 - Light infections may be fairly asymptomatic
 - Severe infections can have significant health effects
- Safe, low-cost drugs are available to treat worm infections and are the standard of medical care among those known to be infected~US\$0.35 per treatment (including delivery cost)

Example 1: School-Based Mass Deworming

- Ten years after deworming treatment:
 - Men who were eligible as boys stay enrolled for more years of primary school, work 17% more hours each week, spend more time in entrepreneurship, are more likely to hold manufacturing jobs, and miss one fewer meal per week.
 - Women who were eligible as girls are 25% more likely to have attended secondary school, halving the gender gap. They reallocate time from traditional agriculture into cash (1.9pp) crops and entrepreneurship (1.86 more hours)—significant but small
 - Consistent with Pitt, Rosenzweig and Hasan (2012) “brawn-based economies”

Example 2: Cash Transfers for Adolescents

- Does a short (two-year) intervention at a key period of transition from adolescence to adulthood have lasting impacts?
- For baseline dropouts who received CCTs, there are large sustained impacts on:
 - **Education:** 8.1pp increase in passing primary leaving school exam
 - **Marriage:** 10pp less likely to be married; married about half a year later
 - **Fertility:** 4pp less likely to be ever pregnant; desired fertility declined by 0.172
- These results are important, BUT....

Example 2: Cash Transfers for Adolescents

- We find no sustained impact on empowerment:
 - Self-Efficacy, Aspirations, Social Participation, Preferences for Child Education among entire sample
 - Autonomy and Non-Abuse among married respondents.
- We find no impact on any measure of employment
 - Not surprising, in settings like Malawi, there are few labor market prospects (6% formal employment rate).
 - Among baseline dropouts, exactly 6% of the control group are involved in any sort of formal employment

Bottom Line: Without changes in opportunities for women or changes in the cultural norms related to the role of women, it is hard for small changes to have a big impact!

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Way Forward

- Need to think about both demand and supply:
 - You can't influence economic empowerment if there is no female labor market.
- Need to think about connection between direct and final outcomes
 - Improving women's education is not going to automatically leads to improved bargaining power in the household.
- Need clearer set of outcomes that are consistently measured across programs.
 - Qualitative data may be particularly useful in understanding why/why not a program improved empowerment from the point of view of the recipient.

Way Forward

- Need more coordinated efforts to evaluate programs, at scale, over much longer periods of time.
 - We need to move beyond small pilot evaluations being conducted by individual researchers, to larger multi-country/multi-PI evaluations efforts.
- Global Girls Research Initiative (GGRI): 9-year funded DFID-project (possible 5 year extension)

*“The **GGRI** is a multi-country longitudinal research programme that will ultimately aim to help adolescent girls maximise their capabilities and move into the future as purposive actors in their own right, by finding out what works, where and why.”*

THANK YOU!