

Roadmap to Women's Economic Empowerment

In 2013, the UN Foundation and ExxonMobil Foundation published the 'Roadmap to Women's Economic Empowerment'. The Roadmap was developed by 18 research commissions, which investigated 4 themes - entrepreneurship, farming, wage employment and women's employment - to answer the research question: 'What works best to increase women's productivity and earnings in developing countries?' The objective was to provide evidence on how social contexts determine the success of interventions and, consequently, how interventions should be designed for specific areas and populations. The final report can be found [here](#) and a summary of the highlights [here](#). This one-pager outlines the main findings of the Roadmap and the indicators of women's empowerment identified in the 'Measurement Companion' that supplements the Roadmap, as well as several reviews of the Roadmap and other materials on women's economic empowerment.

What increases women's productivity and earnings?

The roadmap identified 'proven, promising and high-potential interventions that increase women's productivity and earnings in different economic and country contexts'. The most important findings regard employment rates and earnings and are as follows:

- Capital transfers, in the forms of loans, cash transfers or other assets, do not necessarily increase the productivity and earnings of **women entrepreneurs**. They work mostly for relatively successful business women with large businesses. For others, capital transfers need to be substantial and complemented by customized training that is of good quality and sufficient duration. Savings interventions, on the other hand, increase women's earnings.
- Although formal land entitlements are generally beneficial to **women in agriculture**, the success of interventions is highly dependent on the social context. For small-scale farmers, an integrated set of interventions that help them to access markets and improve production and marketing is important. Large-scale farmers benefit more from single agricultural services.
- Important conditions for **both women entrepreneurs and women in agriculture** are autonomy from social pressures (i.e., the ability to make their own decisions), mobile phones that provide financial services and market information, and access to electricity through targeted loans or subsidies.
- Although they do not increase wages, skills training, job search assistance, internships and wage subsidies (to assist with economic shocks) increase employment levels. Access to childcare can increase both **(wage) employment** and earnings, depending on the design and delivery of the services.
- Specific skills trainings, wage subsidies, (conditional and unconditional) cash grants and livelihood programmes improve the employment and earnings of **young women entrepreneurs**. The extent of the success of such interventions depends on social factors including social restrictions on the hiring of women.

How can we measure impact?

It is difficult to measure the impact of women's empowerment programmes, because, for example, social and economic progress may hinder each other, or be interdependent. Furthermore, women are part of households, which makes it difficult to measure the impact of interventions for their empowerment in isolation. Five research experts were commissioned to write a '[Measurement Companion](#)' to the Roadmap, to identify

indicators of women's economic empowerment. The Measurement Companion distinguishes between direct, intermediate and final outcome indicators and between urban women (entrepreneurs and business leaders) and rural women (entrepreneurs and farmers):

- **Direct outcome indicators** are linked to the program and consist of: acquisition of information and concepts, training attendance and proper use of technology - these indicators provide information for monitoring and evaluation (M&E).
- **Intermediate outcome indicators** are causally related to final outcomes and may take more time to materialize than the duration of the intervention. These indicators consist of: changes in practices, gender roles, mobile phone use and perceived value of trainings - these indicators measure intervention processes and can be useful in examining results and M&E.
- **Final outcomes** are the results of the program. These consist of general indicators, which include household income, savings, the wellbeing of women, and increased decision-making and choice within the family and in public life; indicators for urban women are improved profits, revenue and employment; and indicators for rural women are ownership and amount of assets (both at the individual and household level), investments and employment.

Web publications

There are several online publications regarding the Roadmap and the Measurement Companion:

- **Buvinic, M. (2014) '[A roadmap for promoting women's economic empowerment.](#)' *Double X Economy*, 29 May 2014.**
Mayra Buvinic, senior fellow at the UN Foundation and one of the authors of the Roadmap, elaborates on the need for and usefulness of the report. Among other things, she distinguishes between the potential of the 24 interventions suggested.
- **Buvinic, M. & Furst-Nicholls, R. (2014) [Promoting women's economic empowerment: what works?](#) Policy Research Working Paper 7087, World Bank.**
This working paper follows up on the publication of the Roadmap one year earlier. It provides more and reviewed evidence on the success of the interventions recommended in the Roadmap.
- **Goldstein, M. (2014) [Building the evidence-based roadmap for women's economic empowerment.](#) World Bank Blog, 18 September 2013.**
Markus Goldstein, lead economist at the Africa Region and Research Group of the World Bank, argues that the Roadmap is of high quality, both because of the amount of evidence it provides and the ranking of potential interventions as proven, promising, high-potential and unproven.
- **Mohiuddin, S. & Porth, M. (2015) [UN Foundation seeks private sector involvement on development goals.](#) US Chamber Foundation, 22 July 2015.**
This blog contains an interview with Dr Daniela Ligeiro, vice president of Women and Girls Strategy at the UN Foundation. She discusses how the Roadmap can be useful in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5: 'Achieve gender equality and empowering women and girls'.

Related publications

- **UNCTAD (2014) [Empowering women entrepreneurs through information and communication technology: a practical guide.](#) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.**
- **Dworking, S., Dunbar, M., Murthy, P. & Pascoe, L. (2013) [The effects of economic self-help group programs on women's empowerment: a systematic review protocol.](#) International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3IE), Campbell Collaboration Library of Systematic Reviews.**

- **UN Women & ILO (2012) [Decent work and women's economic empowerment: good policy and practice](#). Policy Brief. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and International Labour Organization.**
- **Glennerster, R. & Takavarasha, K. (2010) [Empowering young women: what do we know?](#) Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, MIT.**
- **Buskens, I., & Webb, A. (2014) *Women and ICT in Africa and the Middle East: changing selves, changing societies*. London: Zed Books.**
- **Jennings, J.E., Breitzkreuz, R.S. & James, A.E. (2013) 'When family members are also business owners: Is entrepreneurship good for families?' *Family Relations*, 62(3): 472-489.**

Other resources

- [Slides](#) of Myra Buvinic's presentation on the Roadmap to the World Bank
- The UN Foundation [video](#) of the panel discussion about the implications of the Roadmap.
- Videos of the panels on [wage employment and financial services](#) and [entrepreneurship and farming](#)
- A [webinar](#) of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) on the measurement of women's empowerment through qualitative methods
- A [presentation](#) of Halima Hima, one of Africa's emerging young leaders, on a different approach to empowering women and girls in rural areas
- In September 2015 the ILO hosted the [event](#) 'What in entrepreneurship development helps women entrepreneurs to succeed? What the evidence is telling us'.

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Weblink: <http://includeplatform.net/one-pager-on-the-roadmap-to-womens-economic-empowerment/>