

Evaluating skills and capital transfers programs targeted to women not in stable employment (young and/or ultrapoor)

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I. Facts

Poor women in low-income countries are disempowered both economically and socially. On the economic front, they have low skills and are typically out of the labour force, unemployed or at most engaged in casual jobs that provides irregular and unpredictable earnings. On the social front, they typically marry and have several children at a young age, and are entirely in charge of household chores, childcare and elderly care. The combination of these factors enforces dependence on men and further limits empowerment.

II. Twin challenges of women empowerment

Any program that aims to provide skills or capital to improve employment outcomes must take into account that economic and social empowerment are intertwined so that barriers on either dimension also prevent progress on the other. Social norms that put men in charge of household finances and lack of future labour market opportunities reduce young women's incentives to make the human capital investments that are necessary to achieve stable employment either in paid labour or small enterprises; this in turn leads them to early marriage and high fertility, which reinforce dependence on men and further limits labour market opportunities. This vicious circle affects women of all ages, because even older women whose fertility cycle is complete have no incentives to participate in training programs or start new enterprises if their earnings will eventually be controlled by men or taxed by other relatives. These observations should inform the design of the evaluation strategies to measure the effectiveness of skills and capital transfers programs, both for young women who are about to enter the labour market and older women who are not in stable employment.

III. Two ingredients of an effective program evaluation.

1. A valid counterfactual or comparison group.

Evaluation requires assessing whether and how the program changed outcomes for the treated (i.e. the women who received the program) For this we need to compare their outcomes under treatment to what their outcomes would have been *had they not been treated*. Obviously we can only observe the treated women's outcomes under treatment, so we need a comparison group to assess what would have happened without treatment. Table 1 lists a set of commonly used comparison groups, with notes on their validity.

2. Measured outcomes at each step of the causal chain.

The aim of an effective evaluation is to show both whether the program had the desired effect on its intended outcomes and the mechanisms through which program effects materialise (or not). The latter is key to inform scale up and further program design. This requires a model of the causal chain that incorporates the interdependence of social and economic empowerment discussed above.

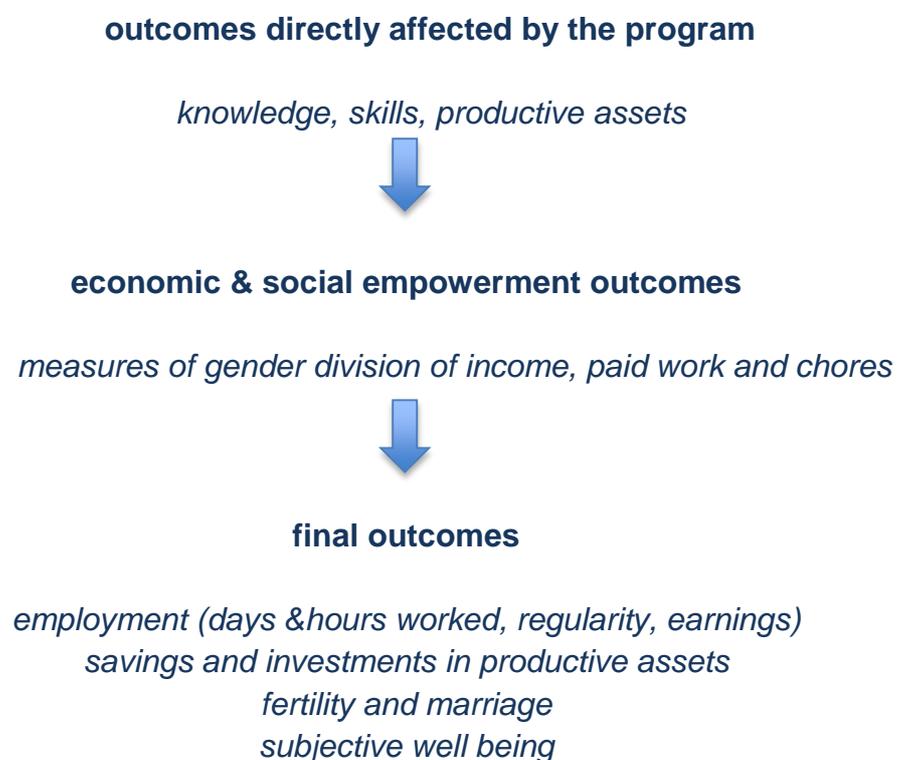


Table 2 lists a series of commonly used measures at each step.

IV. Five principles of outcome measurement by means of survey

1. Keep it numerical

Quantitative measures with comparable units allow interpersonal comparisons that are key for evaluation. For instance “how many hours do you work per week?” yields comparable answers; “do you work full-time or part-time” does not as the definition of full-time and part-time might differ for different people

2. Keep it easy.

Most respondents are low skilled, and this raise challenges for the measurement of concepts requiring probabilities or percentages. Visual and manual instruments can often help reduce noise. Two examples that are known to work well are ‘smiley scales’ to measure satisfaction and ‘bag of beans’ to elicit the allocation of scarce resources –e.g. time devoted to different activities, or earnings by month.¹

3. Keep it short

As fatigue sets in noise increases. Order survey modules so that fun/easy sections alternate with long/tedious sections. Piloting allows to identify which sections respondents like to answer.

4. Keep it consistent

Use the same unit of measure whenever possible (e.g. in a time use survey always ask about hours, or minutes), refer to the same time interval when asking recall questions and make sure multiple choice options are mutually exclusive and the list is complete.

5. Give a way out

Always include “don't know” and “refuse to answer” ‘options.

¹ Respondents are given a set of cards representing different activities (e.g. in a time use survey these would be “work” “taking care of children” “cooking” etc.) and a bag of beans that they are asked to allocate to the different cards in proportion to the time they devote to each activity.

Table 1: Alternative Evaluation Strategies

Comparison group	Threats to validity	Counterfactual quality
Treated women before the treatment	Comparison polluted by other factors that change with time	Very low
Women who refused treatment or didn't apply or weren't eligible	Comparison polluted by factors that determine the choice to apply/accept	Very low
Women who didn't apply but have similar traits those who did (propensity score matching)	Comparison polluted by unobservable factors that determine the application decision	Somewhat low
Women who "almost" met the eligibility threshold (regression discontinuity design)	Only allows measuring the effect on those barely included vs. those barely excluded. Might not be representative of effects on others further from the eligibility threshold.	Somewhat low
Women in the same communities who did apply but were randomly chosen to receive treatment at a later date or not at all	Random allocation guarantees that the decision to give treatment does not depend on individual characteristics although: (i) if sample is small treatment and control might differ "by chance" (ii) controls might be contaminated (e.g. change their behaviour because they were not treated)	High
Women in the different communities who are eligible but communities were randomly chosen to receive treatment at a later date or not at all	Random allocation as above limits the risk of contamination (as women in control communities need not know about treatment) but increases costs and reduce power.	High

Table 2a. Outcomes directly affected by the program

Knowledge	Program specific. For programs with a training component respondents should be tested on the material taught at training.
Skills	Also program specific. Respondents should be tested on the skills the program is meant to develop, e.g. financial literacy, legal awareness, etc.

Table 2b Economic & social empowerment outcomes

Gender roles-labour markets	<p>Respondents are asked to indicate whether the following tasks should be performed by the "Male", "Female" or "Both/Same": 1. "Who should earn money for the family?", 2. "Who should have a higher level of education in the family?"</p> <p>Respondents are asked who in the family should decide how any income from the following sources is spent, choosing from "Male", "Female" or "Both/Same": 1. "Woman's work earnings" 2. "man's work earnings" 3. "government transfers" 4. "NGO transfers" 5."donation/loan from man's relatives" 6."donation/loan by man's relatives"</p> <p>For each asset operated jointly by both partners (eg land, livestock) respondents are asked who of "Male", "Female" or "Both/Same" makes the following choices; 1. "assets purchases and sales" 2. Daily management 3."investments & maintenance" (eg insemination) 4."sales of produce"</p>
Gender roles-household chores	<p>Respondents are asked to indicate whether the following tasks should be performed by the "Male", "Female" or "Both/Same": 1."Who should be responsible for washing, cleaning and cooking?", 2. "If there is no water pump or tap, who should fetch water?", 3. "Who should be responsible for feeding and bathing children?", 4. "Who should help the children in their studies at home?" 5."Who should be responsible for looking after the ill persons?" 6."Who should decide how many children to have"</p>

Table 2c Final outcomes

Employment	Are you engaged in any income generating activity (IGA)?	Yes/No
	How many months of the year are you engage in this IGA?	
	In the typical month, how many days do you work?	
	In the typical day, how many hours do you work?	
	Are you	Working for an employer Self-employed
	If working for an employer, is this a	individual small firm (2-10employees) medium firm (11-50) large firm (50+)
	If working for an employer, are you paid	Daily Weekly Monthly
	Are you paid	Cash/in kind/both
	What was the value of your last pay?	
	How much does this job usually pay?	
	If you were offered more work at the same daily rate, would you accept?	
	If self-employed, do you work	Alone With female hh members With both gender hh members With hired workers
	What were your revenues between (state 12 months before survey)?	
	What were your costs between (state 12 months before survey)?	
	Would you like to expand this business?	Yes/No
	If yes, what are you lacking?	credit trustworthy workers childcare time other
Savings, investment	List all productive assets (livestock, land) with the market value and purchase date of each	
	List all savings whether at home or elsewhere (MFI, ROSCAs, banks)	
Consumption	List of consumed foods in the last three days, with price paid (or market value if not purchased)	
	List of all purchases of durables (clothes, appliances, furniture) in the past year	

Fertility and marriage	Are you married or cohabiting?	Yes/No
	Since when?	
	How many children do you have?	
	How many children would you ideally have?	
	Have you had sex unwillingly in the last year?	
	Suitable age for marriage for a woman	
	Suitable age for marriage for a man	
	Suitable age for women to have the first baby	
	Preferred age at which daughter(s) should get married	
	Preferred age at which son(s) should get married	
Subjective Well Being	Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time? (ladder-present) On which step do you think you will stand about five years from now? (ladder-future)	Ask with graphical representation of ladder
	In general, how satisfied are you with your life?	Very satisfied Satisfied Dissatisfied Very dissatisfied