

Practical measures to enable the economic empowerment of chronically poor women

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International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

Overseas Development Institute

17 October 2017



Why specific interventions for chronically poor women?

- Intersecting inequalities
 - gender, poverty, ethnicity, religion, remoteness, disability, marginalised/ discriminated against
- Poorly engaged to fragmented markets
- Income poor
- Low asset holdings
- Limited capabilities (including education, health)
- Poorly represented by political parties, social movements

- WEE interventions often have poor traction with/ exclude chronically poor women and girls
- Tailored interventions are needed – what are they?



The Challenge

- Designing programmes and policies for gender equity is notoriously difficult
 - Contestation
 - Backlashes and reversals
- WEE = just one strand
- Multi-sectoral efforts needed to create a more equal world
- Our suggestions draw on the international literature and accumulated experience – but are they right?



What Practical Measures?

- Comprehensive package
 - Enabling policies
 - Specific and carefully targeted interventions
 - Build individual assets and capabilities
 - Develop agency and political voice
- Multi-level focus
 - Individual, household, community, society
 - Building power and agency in individuals
 - Changing norms and institutions (in households, communities, through regulation of labour and credit markets)
 - Constitutional and legal reform



Focus?

- Land
- Education
- Decent work



Why land ownership and control?

Land ownership:

- Increases income (and control of income?)
- Increases access to investment capital
- Improves status within household and community
- Greater political voice & inclusion in community level decision-making
- Shifts women's 'backstop position' in the conjugal contract, increasing their decision-making power and autonomy

Highly contested, progress requires....

- high level political support
- engagement from grass-roots social movements
- buy-in from 'street level bureaucrats' and the judiciary.
- long timeline often spanning decades
- constitutional change & legislative reform
- changes to gendered norms and institutions around land markets and titling, inheritance and marital settlements.



Land: what to do?

- Women's legal rights to buy, rent and inherit land must be established
- It must also be socially acceptable
- Co-titling of land helps provide women with security (on widowhood and divorce)
- Reform customary law and practice - to support gender equity
- Reform marital and divorce laws – to protect women's rights
- Constitutional reform (gender equity, primacy of legal over customary systems)
- Marriage registration

- Complex, slow.
- Parallel work building other assets is needed.



Capability development through education

- Flexible, portable asset
- Helps transform gender relations
- Increases status, agency, opportunities and equity

- Improve girls' enrolment and retention
- Local: bring schools closer to girls' homes
- Safe: Make schools less hostile for girls (sanitation, reduced SGBV)
- Accessible: quotas, reduced entry requirements and supporting alternative basic education, mother tongue, women teachers, lower costs, social protection



Decent work and labour rights

- Government support of Decent Work principles
- Decent wage, maternity leave, sick pay and social protection
- Legal status and recognition for domestic workers and homeworkers
- Enable the informal sector
 - extend financial services to the poorest (regulation)
 - provide business development services for MSEs
- Governments to improve labour regulation and inspection including for informal sector and domestic workers.
- Social protection can support decent work and labour rights
- Reduce child labour through conditional cash transfers for education



The role of the Chronic Poverty Advisory Network (CPAN) is to increase awareness of chronic poverty, ensuring that chronically poor people are not forgotten by policy makers, and to use evidence to improve the effectiveness of policies and programmes at reducing chronic poverty.

The views presented here are those of the speaker, and do not necessarily represent the views of ODI or our partners.

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