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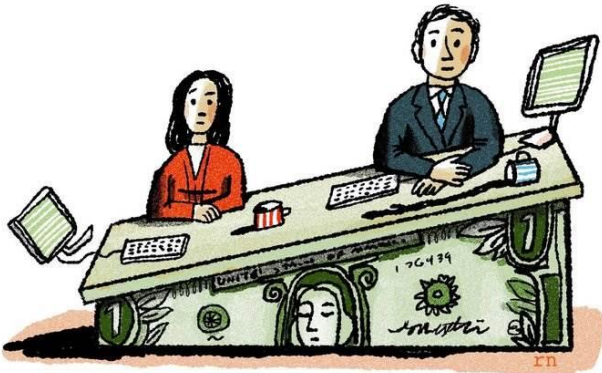
September 2019

Dismantling Barriers
to
Women's Employment
in
Developing Countries

Overview

- ▶ What is the connection between economic development and gender equality?
- ▶ How do cultural norms limit women's employment and equality?
- ▶ What policies can help dismantle barriers to women's employment?

Women earn less than men around the world



\$40,742 WOMEN'S
2015 MEDIAN
EARNINGS

\$51,212 MEN'S
2015 MEDIAN
EARNINGS

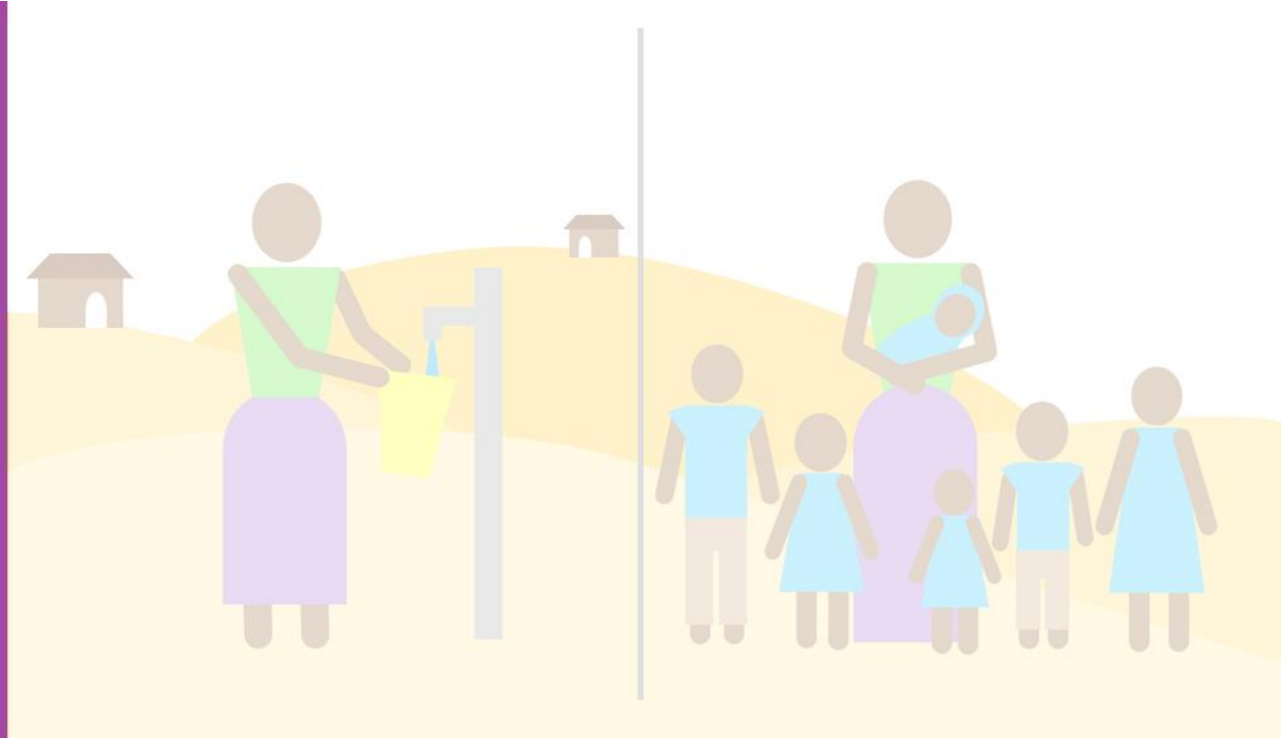
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TO THE
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US data

Economic progress can narrow gender gaps in the labor market



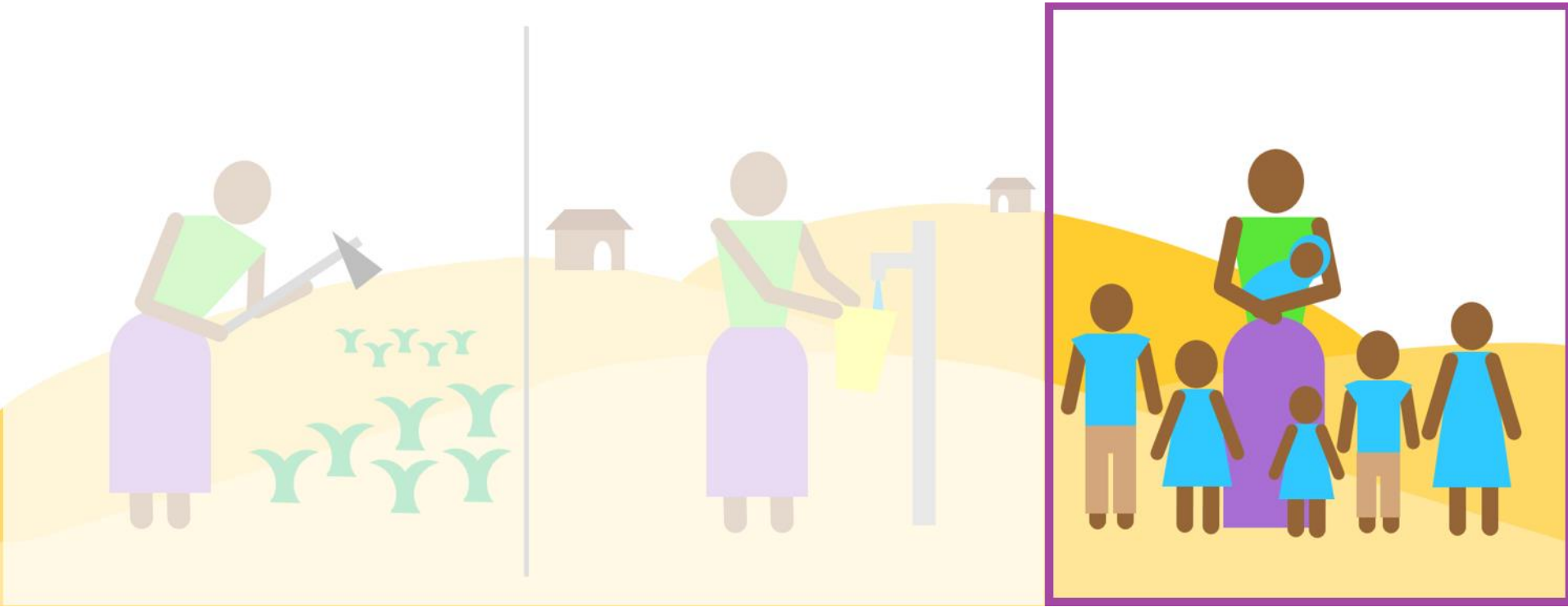
Economic progress can narrow gender gaps in the labor market



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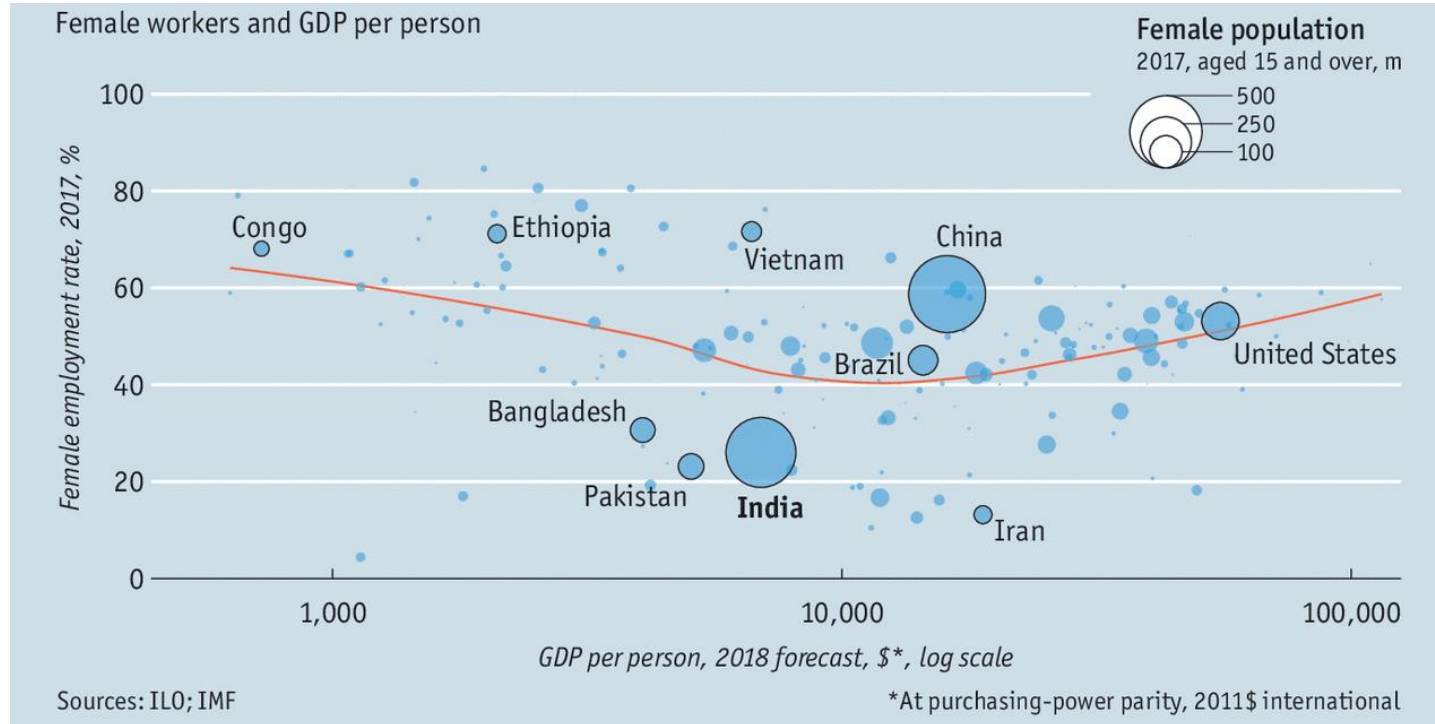
Economic progress can narrow gender gaps in the labor market



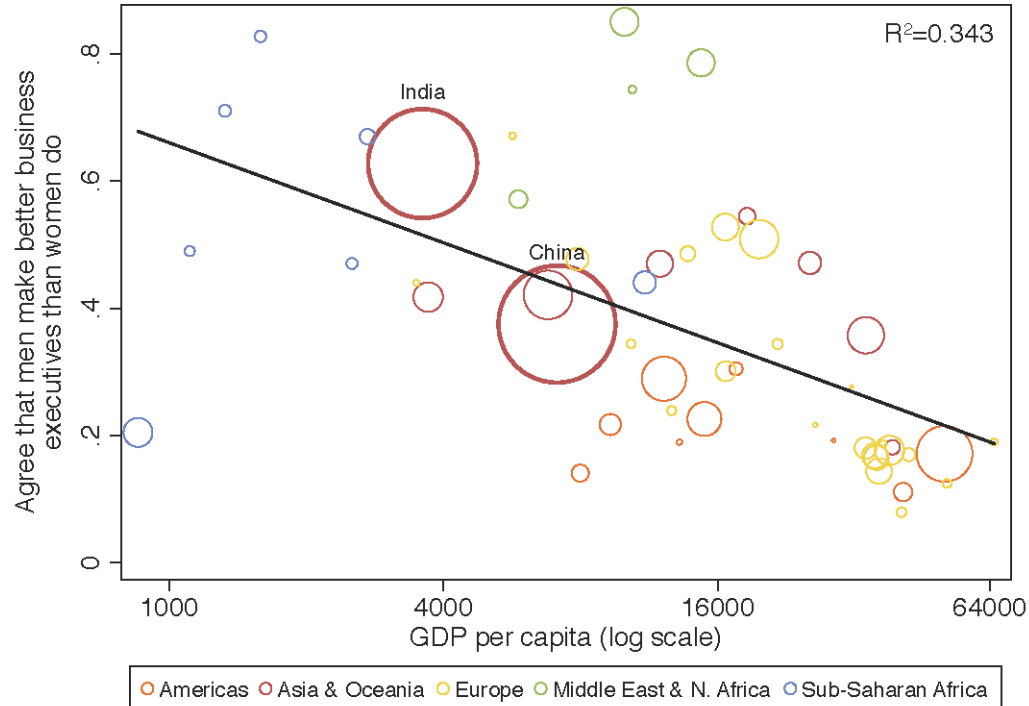
Scope for public policies and programs to speed up progress

- Piped water, electrification, affordable appliances
- Expansion of pre-primary education
- Subsidized child care
- Affordable family planning services

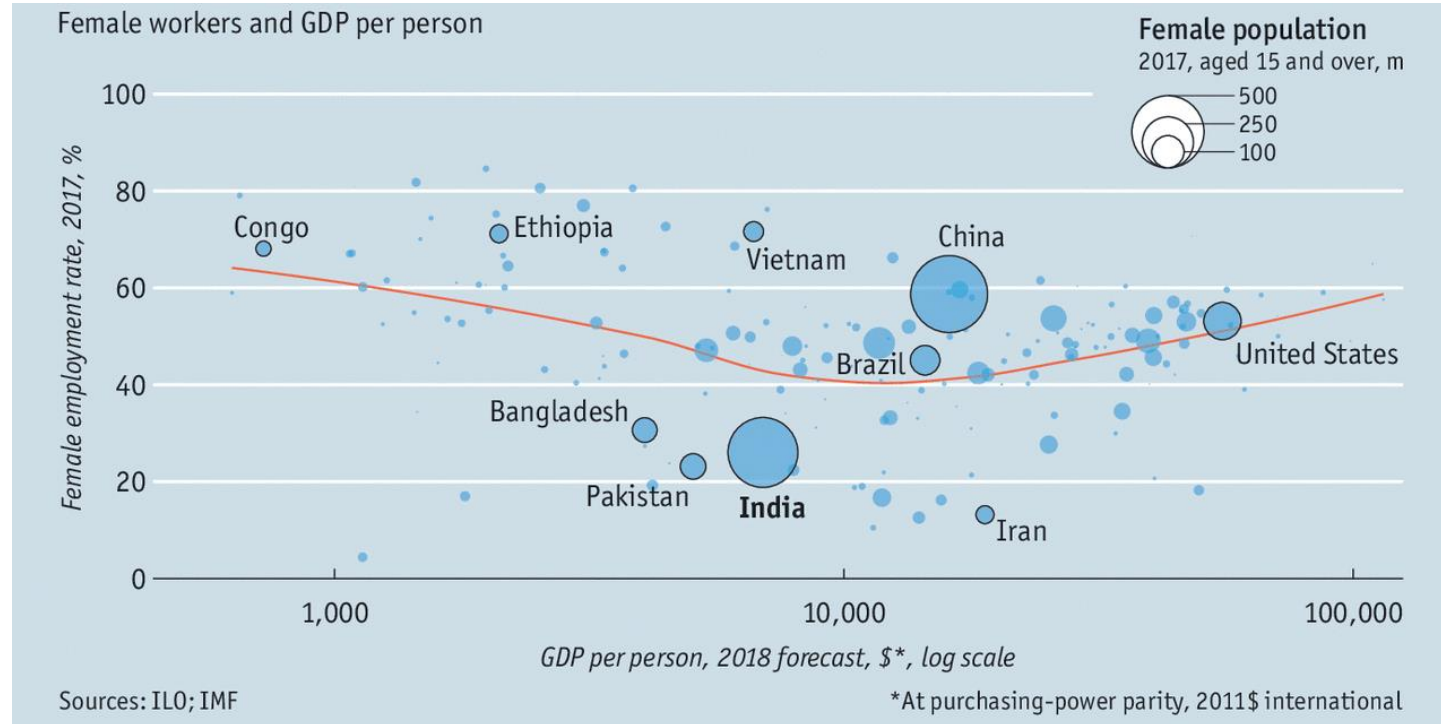
But female employment rate falls over some range of economic development



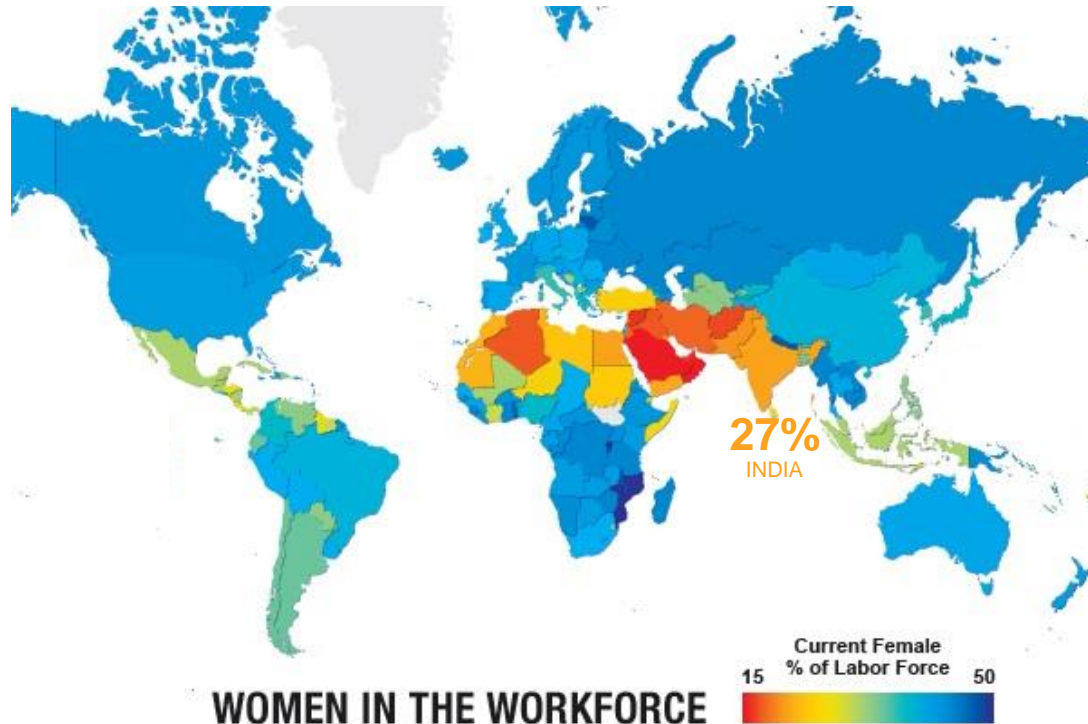
Attitudes about female employment appear worse in poor countries



Gender norms differ across cultures and matter for female employment



Low participation of women in the workforce in South Asia and MENA



New Delhi,
India



Very few
women



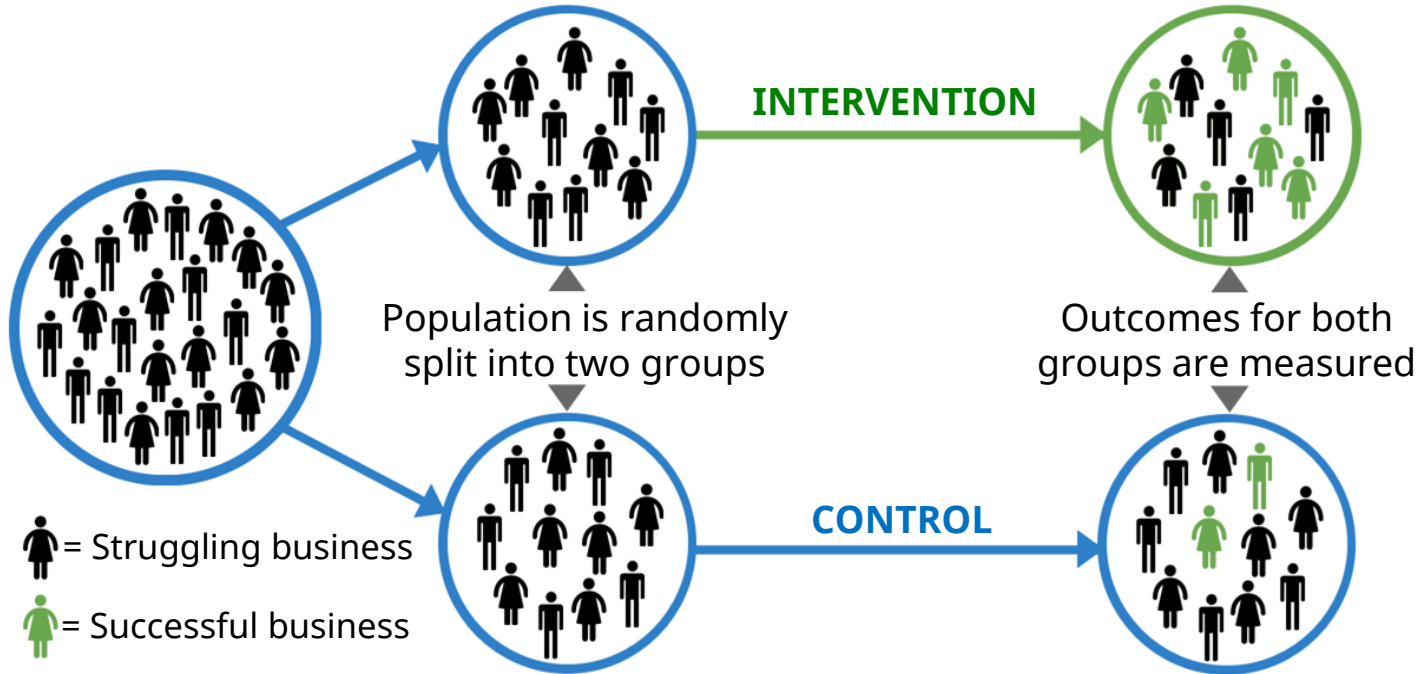
Ways to promote female employment in India: 3 attempts

1. Strengthen the peer networks of women entrepreneurs
2. Tell family members about the benefits and dispel myths about the costs of letting young women work
3. Change the deep-seated gender attitudes of adolescents

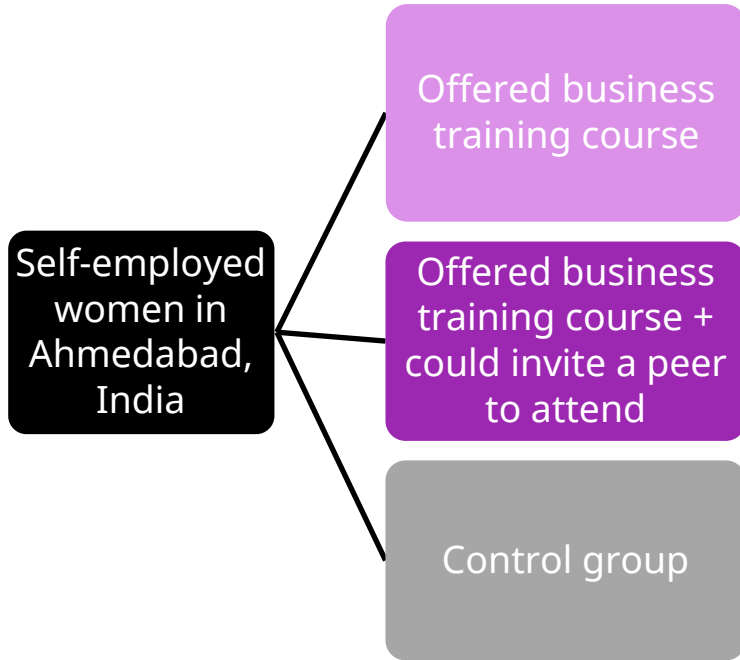
Example 1: Strengthen women's business networks

- ▶ Female-owned businesses often stay small and not-too-profitable
- ▶ Women face disadvantages due to less formal training + sparse network of peers

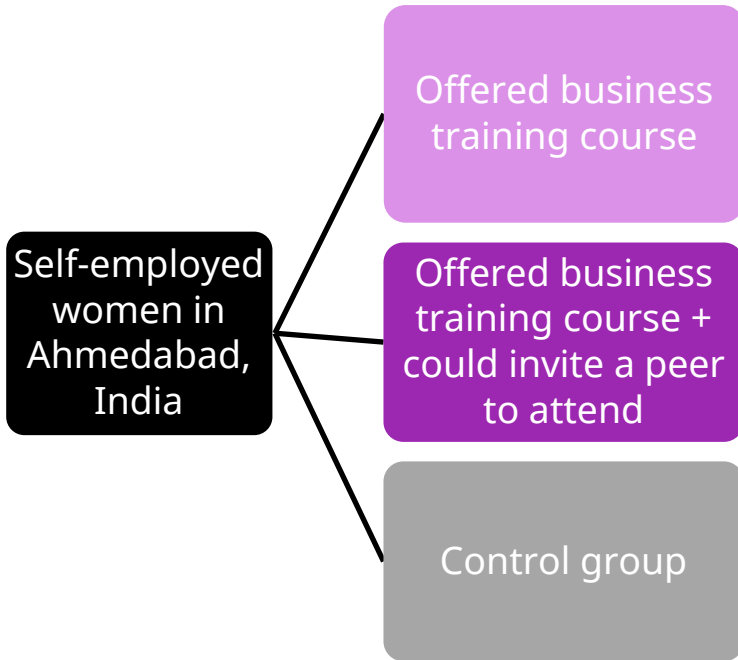
Randomized experiments



Example 1: Strengthen women's business networks

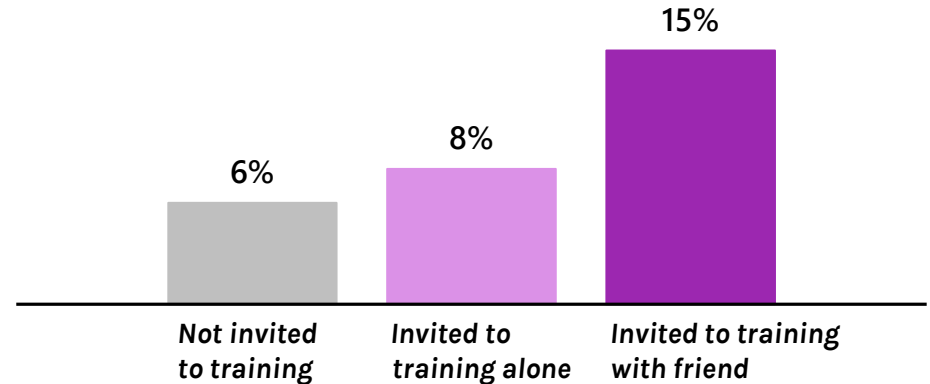


Example 1: Strengthen women's business networks



Women in India Who Trained with a Friend Were More Likely to Take Out a Loan

PERCENT OF WOMEN WHO TOOK OUT A SEWA LOAN



SOURCE "FRIENDS AT WORK: CAN PEER SUPPORT STIMULATE FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP?" ERICA FIELD ET AL., 2014

Two-fold objective of research

- “Applied research”: Measure the impact that a specific policy has on outcome of interest
- “Basic research”: Understand the economic and cultural forces that underlie the problem
→ New ideas for potential policies

Example 2: Change family members' views

- Men often discourage or prevent their daughters or wives from working
- Women discourage female employment too
- Concerns about personal safety and “purity”
- Also might under-appreciate the positive effects, e.g., self-efficacy, of working

**Testimonials
from teachers &
family members**



Example 2: Change male family members' views

Kindergarten
teachers in
rural India

Family members shown
video about safety and/or
self-realization benefits of
women working

Prompted conversation
among family members
about risks and benefits of
working

Control group



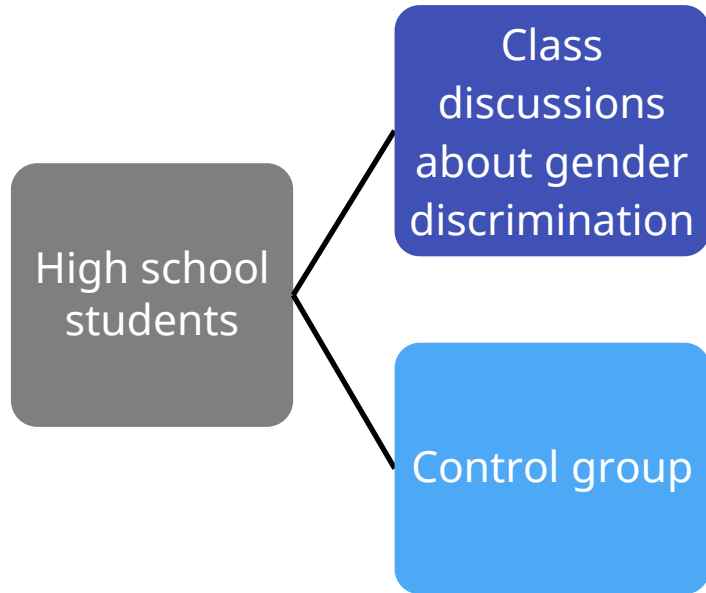
Results

- No impacts on attitudes or outcomes related to female employment

Example 3: Change adolescents' attitudes

- Belief that women are ill-suited for employment or that it is wrong for women to work is embedded in the culture
- Transformative change requires reshaping those attitudes and social norms

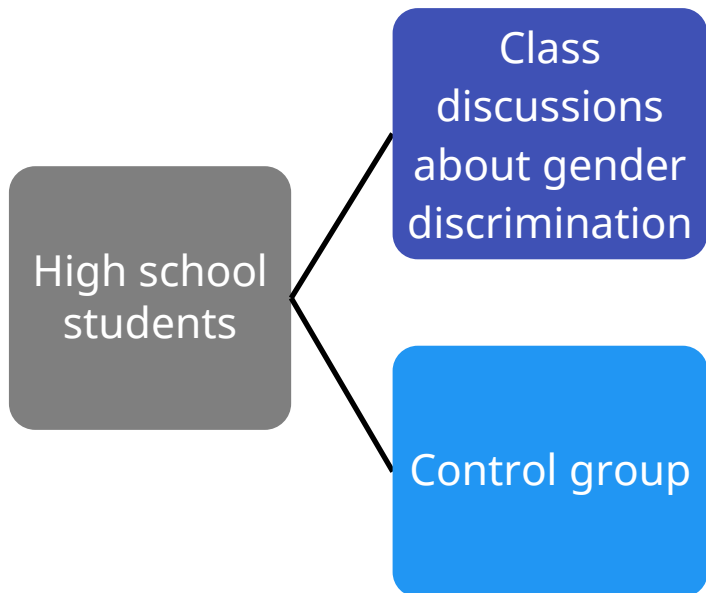
Example 3: Change adolescents' attitudes



Session on household chores

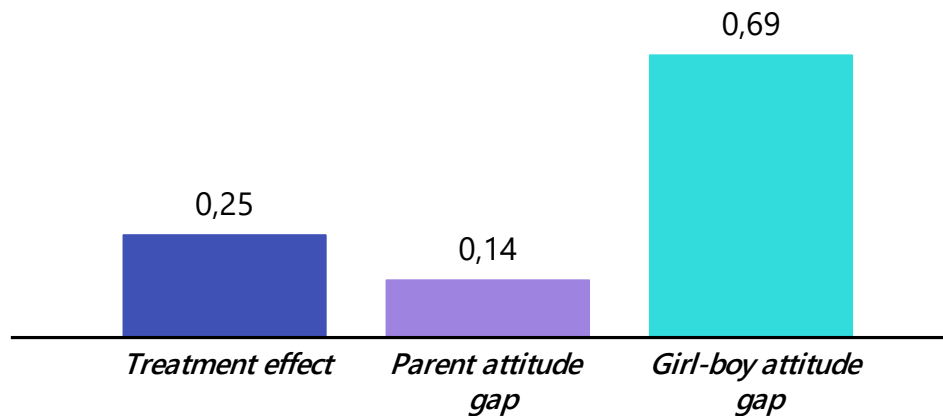
- Students asked to identify who does various chores in their house, e.g., cooking
- Share their answers with class and notice pattern that women/girls do more chores
- Discuss why that is and whether it is fair
- Who does similar tasks outside the home, e.g., cooks in restaurants?
- Does society value both activities equally?

Results: More support for gender equality



Classroom Discussions of Gender Equality Led to More Progressive Gender Attitudes

STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF ATTITUDE DISTRIBUTION



SOURCE "RESHAPING ADOLESCENTS' GENDER ATTITUDES: EVIDENCE FROM A SCHOOL-BASED EXPERIMENT IN INDIA," DHAR ET AL., 2018

Next steps: Further testing and scaling up

- Breakthrough has trained other non-profits to implement the curriculum
- Government could hire special-purpose government teachers
- Textbooks + standardized assignments

Next steps: Measuring long-term effects

- More female employment?
- Equal investment in sons & daughters?
- More daughters to begin with, i.e., less sex-selective abortion?

Examples of other policies to promote women's employment

- ▶ Bicycles for girls to use to travel to school
- ▶ Women's subway cars or buses for safer commutes
- ▶ Women's police stations

Other norms besides safety and “purity” need to be addressed

- ▶ Control over household finances
 - ▶ Bank accounts for women increased female participation in workfare program
- ▶ Backlash by men if their wives are the breadwinners
 - ▶ Role of interventions to prevent IPV
- ▶ Men’s role in child care and housework

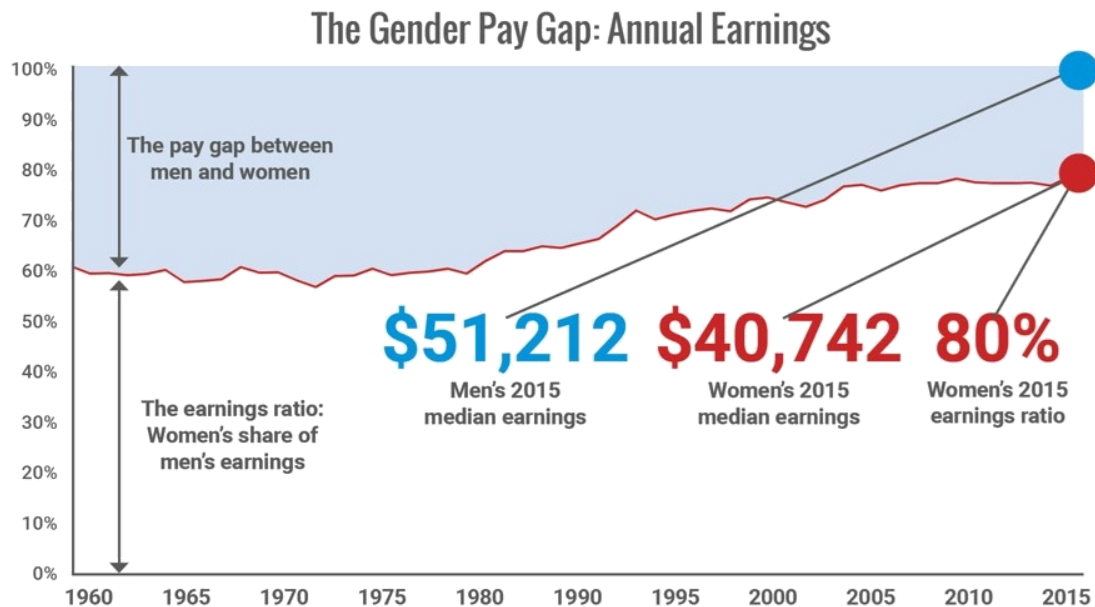
Closing these gaps matters

- ▶ Not using women's talents leaves money on the table
- ▶ When women earn more – and hence have more say in the household – evidence suggests children's outcomes improve
- ▶ Equity is important in and of itself

Thank you

A large, solid orange shape is located in the top right corner of the slide, extending diagonally from the top edge towards the bottom right corner.

But there has been progress over time



Note: Figures refer to annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers over 15.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Income and Poverty in the United States: 2014," Table A-4

