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Women's leadership: evidence review

Office of Development Effectiveness

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Abbreviations

AusAID	Australia Agency for International Development
DLP	Developmental Leadership Program
DFID	UK Department for International Development
NGO	non-government organisation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNIFEM	UN Development Fund for Women

Summary

In the three main areas and questions explored in this literature review, the following emerge as key findings.

Definition of women's leadership:

*How does Australian aid define women's leadership (in policies, strategies or programs)?
How does this compare to other donor approaches and international literature?*

There is no explicit definition for 'women's leadership' within the reviewed policy and strategy documents of AusAID. AusAID's Developmental Leadership Program defines 'leadership' broadly as:

A political process involving the skills of mobilising people and resources in pursuit of a set of shared and negotiated goals ... leadership is important for development in both the public and private sectors and in their relationships. It refers not only to national political leaders but equally to leadership at subnational levels and in all sectors of society—in businesses and business organisations, trades unions, NGOs [non-government organisations], professional associations, churches and the bureaucracy—and in the relations between them.¹

It is suggested that this definition is used as a starting point in thinking about a definition for women's leadership, recognising that women's leadership extends beyond women's participation in politics, to women's leadership in coalitions, networks, committees, groups, businesses, public sector agencies, non-government organisations, civil society organisations and faith-based organisations.

In conceptualising 'women's leadership', it is also critical to think about the theories of change underlying efforts to promote women's leadership. Drawing on the work of the World Bank, CARE and Oxfam, it is suggested that the theories of change for women's leadership should incorporate changes at multiple levels: **agency**, **relations** and **structures**.

This literature review finds that women's capacity, knowledge and skills (their '**agency**') is a necessary precondition for exercising leadership. Engagement at this level prepares women to take on leadership roles. Women's agency is often the primary focus of leadership programs (e.g. scholarship awards), but this level of change represents just one component contributing to women's leadership. At the **relations** level, women's leadership can be supported by promoting joint household decision-making including with men (in areas such as household spending, health and education), encouraging men and women to share in household tasks and care-giving, and facilitating links between women and coalitions and other types of collective action. This level of change is often neglected in women's leadership programs, yet it represents an essential precondition to ensure that gains at the agency and structures levels can be sustained. At the **structures** level, critical elements include challenging

¹ A Leftwich, *Bringing agency back in: politics and human agency in building institutions and states—synthesis and overview report*, research paper 06, Developmental Leadership Program, Canberra, 2009.

harmful cultural and social norms, advocating for policy change including quotas and political reservation and, importantly, encouraging men to use more inclusive means of decision-making in their own leadership roles.

This three-fold approach to women's leadership recognises that the root causes of gender inequality contributing to women's lack of leadership are complex. Promoting women's agency alone is not enough if sociocultural norms and practices reinforce inequality. The literature review highlights that change needs to take place at all three levels -in the capacities of individual women, in the households in which they live and in the social structures that influence expectations of women's behaviour. Engaging men is crucial at all levels of this change so that gains are sustained.

Data availability and quality:

Are there adequate data (in Australian aid and other donor contexts) to assess the effectiveness of women's leadership programs on gender equality outcomes and broader development outcomes? What is the quality of these data?

There are a growing number of published journal articles that document a causative relationship between women's leadership and other outcomes; however, it should be noted that these primarily relate to the impact of quotas or political reservation programs and tend to focus on India. These studies found that having women in political roles led to an increase in community services, such as health care, roads, child care, sanitation and water supply. The presence of women leaders was also found to change perceptions regarding the roles and aspirations of girls, and resulted in more girls attending school.

Several donors report anecdotally on the effectiveness of women's leadership programs. They cite results such as women taking on greater responsibility in committees and other decision-making bodies, women influencing policy, and women having increased confidence. It should be noted however, that these evaluations have not adequately verified the results of women's leadership (in contrast with the published journal articles that tracked the outcomes from political reservations and quotas). As such, the relationship between women's leadership programs and other outcomes reported by donors may be one of association rather than causation.

The literature highlights the need for more diverse monitoring and evaluation approaches to measuring women's leadership. Measurement should capture changes in all three dimensions of leadership and not only the changes in women's agency.

It is usually assumed that women leaders will act on behalf of women's interests and greater gender equality, but the literature suggests this is not necessarily the case. Measurement should therefore capture the extent to which women's leadership results in actions to improve the broader conditions of women's lives and promote greater gender equality.

Availability and quality of evidence:

Is there evidence to link women's economic empowerment and women's leadership outcomes? What does existing evidence say and what is the quality of this evidence?

In a review of more than 40 evaluations, studies and case studies focused on women's leadership, no verifiable data were found that could establish a direct link between women's leadership programs and concrete economic empowerment outcomes.

Some data were found linking women's economic empowerment and women's leadership outcomes. This includes findings that access to microfinance can increase women's roles in leading a business. Women's engagement in paid work was found to increase women's household decision-making, and

women's access to assets and microfinance was also found to increase their household decision-making. There is a need for a more detailed literature search, and analysis to establish the nature of this association.

Introduction

Purpose and scope of literature review

This literature review has been commissioned by the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) and is one of three components within an evaluability assessment of the Australian Aid Program's support for women's leadership and the links to economic empowerment.

The key areas and questions to be explored in this literature review are:

- › **Definition of women's leadership:** How does Australian aid define women's leadership (in policies, strategies or programs)? How does this compare to other donor approaches and international literature?
- › **Data availability and quality:** Are there adequate data (in Australian aid and other donor contexts) to assess the effectiveness of women's leadership programs on gender-equality outcomes and broader development outcomes? What is the quality of these data?
- › **Leadership and empowerment links:** Is there evidence to link women's economic empowerment and women's leadership outcomes? What does existing evidence say and what is the quality of this evidence?

Broader conclusions on these questions will be drawn after the program analysis (component B) of the evaluability assessment is conducted.

Methodology

The process for the review of academic and grey literature involved database searches, following reference lists from key articles, Google searches, wider reading and sourcing documents from ODE. Databases searched included the JSTOR, ProQuest 5000 and Academic Search Premier. Examples of search terms used included women's leadership, leadership, theory of change + leadership, women + coalition, women + leadership + evaluation, and women + decision-making. Key journals reviewed included *Development*, *Gender & Development*, *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin* and the *Feminist Review*.

AusAID documents reviewed included strategy and policy documents regarding gender and governance, as well as relevant documents from the Developmental Leadership Program (DLP). Policy and strategy documents for a range of other donors and governments were also reviewed.

Definition of women's leadership

How does Australian aid define women's leadership?

The term 'women's leadership' is mentioned within policy and strategy documents of AusAID; however, no explicit definition within the agency was found during this review.^{2,3}

Although AusAID's DLP has not explicitly defined 'women's leadership', it has done significant work in conceptualising 'leadership' in general.^{4,5} It emphasises the importance of collective action and points out the need to consider leadership broadly, beyond just the skills and capacities of individuals. The DLP defines leadership as:

A political process involving the skills of mobilising people and resources in pursuit of a set of shared and negotiated goals ... leadership is important for development in both the public and private sectors and in their relationships. It refers not only to national political leaders but equally to leadership at subnational levels and in all sectors of society—in businesses and business organisations, trades unions, NGOs, professional associations, churches and the bureaucracy—and in the relations between them.⁶

The DLP definition is useful for broadening the emphasis from individuals to coalitions and networks as agents of change. It also helpfully suggests the importance of considering additional spheres for leadership in general (and thus women's leadership), such as public sector agencies, businesses, trade unions, non-government organisations (NGOs), professional or occupational associations, and civil society organisations. Taken alone, though, the definition does not go far enough to help define and understand 'women's leadership' and how this might differ from men's leadership. The DLP has explored aspects of women's leadership, specifically women's coalitions, but these studies do not provide a conceptualisation of 'women's leadership' specifically; rather, they focus on mapping the factors that enable women's coalitions to mobilise.^{7,8}

² AusAID, *Promoting opportunities for all—gender equality and women's empowerment, thematic strategy*, AusAID, Canberra, 2011.

³ AusAID, *Effective governance, thematic strategy*, AusAID, Canberra, 2011.

⁴ Leftwich, 2009.

⁵ A Leftwich & C Wheeler, *Politics, leaders and coalitions in development—findings, insights and guidance from the DLP's First Research and Policy Workshop*. Frankfurt, 10–11 March 2011, Canberra, 2011.

⁶ Leftwich, 2009.

⁷ M Tadros, *Working politically behind red lines: structure and agency in a comparative study of women's coalitions in Egypt and Jordan*, research paper 12, Developmental Leadership Program, AusAID, Canberra, 2011.

⁸ R Hodes, J Thorpe & O Stern, *Structure and agency in the politics of a women's rights coalition in South Africa: the making of the South African Sexual Offences Act, 2007*, research paper 13, Developmental Leadership Program, AusAID, Canberra, 2011.

DLP's work is useful because few donor policy and strategy documents actually define leadership,⁹ but it should be noted that the DLP's conceptualisation of leadership is not a broader policy within AusAID adopted by other parts of the agency—rather, it is program-linked.

Based on this literature review, it is suggested that the DLP's definition could be one approach that is built upon to more explicitly define 'women's leadership'.

How do others define women's leadership?

In a review of 67 leadership programs, Lyne de Ver & Kennedy note that only nine programs actually expressed their conceptualisation of leadership and only 10 had some kind of theory of change. The nine programs that conceptualised leadership are Abshire Inamori Leadership Academy, African Leadership Initiative, Ashoka, Association for Women's Rights in Development, AVINA, LEAD, LEAP Africa, Mandela Rhodes Foundation and Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy. Lyne de Ver & Kennedy highlight a handful of these, specifically the following definitions:¹⁰

- › 'By leadership, we mean the will and capacity to use one's own personality and abilities to guide, inspire, and develop fellow human beings to achieve excellence in any area of endeavour' (Mandela Rhodes Foundation).
- › 'Leadership is a collective process involving voice, impact and influence' (Association for Women's Rights in Development).
- › Leadership is 'rooted in the principle of ubuntu/botho which encompasses the ideas of humanity, compassion and service to others' (Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy).
- › Leadership is being a 'change agent' (LEAP Africa).

In the literature on women's leadership, women's political participation and representation is one of the more common ways in which women's leadership is defined (see *Women's political representation* in this chapter). One reason for this may be the Millennium Development Goal 3 indicator that seeks measurement of the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament. This indicator provides helpful quantitative information about women's representation in political office; however, it represents just one sphere for women's leadership. Other spheres for women's leadership typically relate to women's involvement in coalitions and other types of collective action, as well as less formal groups like committees, associations and women's groups (see *Developing an*

⁹ Policy and strategy documents that were reviewed are: AusAID, *Promoting opportunities for all—gender equality and women's empowerment, thematic strategy*, AusAID, Canberra, 2011; AusAID, *Effective governance, thematic strategy*, AusAID, Canberra, 2011; DFID, *A new strategic vision for girls and women: stopping poverty before it starts*, Department for International Development, London, 2011; World Bank, *World development report 2012: gender equality and development*, World Bank, Washington, 2012; CIDA, *Gender equality policy and tools*, Canadian International Development Agency, Quebec, 2010; SIDA, *Policy promoting gender equality in development cooperation*, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Stockholm, 2005; USAID, *Gender equality and female empowerment policy*, United States Agency for International Development, Washington, 2012; EC, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: gender equality and women empowerment in development cooperation*, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 2007.

¹⁰ Cited in H Lyne de Ver & F Kennedy, *An analysis of leadership development programmes working in the context of development*, research paper 11, Developmental Leadership Program, AusAID, Canberra, 2011.

enabling environment in this chapter). What are the theories of change, strategies or approaches for how to support women's leadership?

In defining women's leadership, it is also important to understand the theories of change underlying efforts to support women's leadership.

Approaches in Australia

Although AusAID has not explicitly defined 'women's leadership', Pillar Two of the agency's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment thematic strategy describes AusAID's approach to increasing women's voice in decision-making, leadership and peace building. This approach aims to:¹¹

- › develop women's leadership abilities in communities—for example, through participation in water supply management committees, school management committees, village health committees and village development committees
- › strengthen women's groups and organisations in civil society, including at subnational level, and help them to build coalitions (including with men), and influence policies and developments
- › build the capacities of women to participate in democratic processes as candidates and voters, and to hold governments and service providers to account
- › work with governments and civil society in partner countries to establish an enabling environment for women to participate in democratic processes and administrative decision-making
- › support the participation of women in peace-building processes by promoting the implementation of United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325.¹²

The approach of Pillar 2 is useful for recognising that women's voices can be supported within a range of spheres beyond political representation including communities, organisations, community structures, government and peace-building processes. This links to the DLP's conceptualisation, because it takes a broad approach and is not confined to political representation. Linking leadership with peace building is also significant, and reflects Australian aid's ongoing support for activities related to women, peace and security.¹³ This focus on peace building is also evident in agencies like UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, now UN Women), which documents the need to ensure women's participation in peace processes, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1325. These decision-making arenas 'determine power and wealth-sharing patterns, social development priorities and approaches to reparations and justice for atrocities';¹⁴ therefore, it is critical for women to be involved. The World Bank suggests quotas to ensure women's engagement in peace and postconflict processes, as well as the creation of thematic units to deal with gender issues.¹⁵ The strategy also acknowledges the importance of the broader enabling environment in influencing women's voice—for example, through improved policies.^{16,17,18,19,20}

¹¹ AusAID, *Promoting opportunities for all*, 2011.

¹² Resolution 1325 focuses on including a gender perspective in postconflict reconstruction, rehabilitation, reintegration, repatriation and resettlement.

¹³ AusAID, *Women, peace and security. AusAID's implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, AusAID, Canberra, 2010.

¹⁴ UNIFEM, *Guidance note: identifying women's peace and security priorities: building voice and influence*, United Nations Development Fund for Women, New York, 2010.

¹⁵ World Bank, *World development report 2012: gender equality and development*, World Bank, Washington, 2012.

¹⁶ AusAID, *Promoting opportunities for all*, 2011.

Lyne de Ver & Kennedy noted that most programs surveyed implicitly defined 'leadership' as relating to the skills of individual leaders rather than as a shared process between leaders and groups.²¹ The range of dimensions for women's voice mentioned in Pillar 2 are also helpful in supporting the theory that women's leadership relates not only to individuals, but can and should incorporate collective action.

Women's political representation

Donor support for increasing women's political representation typically focuses on increasing the number of women elected; however, there is some recognition of the need to look beyond merely increasing the numbers of women in parliament. In an analysis of women's leadership in Bangladesh, Nazneen & Tasneem write:

*If we want politics to change, entry of women into formal politics is a necessary but not sufficient condition. We need to work on changing the patriarchal structure and culture within the political parties and systems.*²²

A common criticism regarding efforts to promote women's leadership is that programs tend to focus solely or predominantly on political leadership. A range of documents and policies reflect on the need to reconceptualise women's leadership more broadly.^{23,24,25} In proposing an 'upside-down' view to women's political empowerment, Tadros writes:

*The current policy focus on improving the count of women in parliament and local councils may have inadvertently led to a narrowing of the scope of possibilities to support women to engage politically. There are many ... other spaces which provide critical junctures for women to assume leadership. These include nongovernmental organisations, clubs and community centres, universities and schools as well as in the workforce.*²⁶

In Malawi, a qualitative study on women's participation in politics identified the need to 'challenge underlying attitudes and beliefs about women's role in society'.²⁷ In an evaluation of an Oxfam Women in Leadership project in Sierra Leone, a similar finding emerges: 'This finding suggests that

¹⁷ AusAID, *Effective governance*, 2011.

¹⁸ DFID, *A new strategic vision for girls and women: stopping poverty before it starts*, Department for International Development, London, 2011.

¹⁹ Oxfam Great Britain, *Women's leadership and participation: overview, programme insights*, Oxfam Great Britain, Oxford, 2008.

²⁰ World Bank, 2012.

²¹ Lyne de Ver & Kennedy, 2011.

²² S Nazneen & S Tasneem, A silver lining: women in reserved seats in local government in Bangladesh. *IDS Bulletin* 41(5):35-42, 2010.

²³ M Waring, *Women in politics and aid effectiveness: an aid to evaluation of MDG3—a think piece by Marilyn Waring*, Office of Development Effectiveness, AusAID, Canberra, 2011.

²⁴ M Tadros, *Women engaging politically: beyond magic bullets and motorways*, Pathways policy paper, Brighton, October 2011.

²⁵ K Gill, A Warner, E Weiss & GR Gupta, From beneficiaries to change agents: the rise of women's leadership in international development. *SAIS Review* 29(2), 2009.

²⁶ Tadros, *Women engaging politically*, 2011, 10.

²⁷ AP Kamlongera, Malawian women's participation in state politics: what are the constraints? *Gender & Development* 16(3):471-480, 2008, 479.

simply increasing women's numerical representation on national and decentralised decision-making bodies will not, alone, be sufficient'. It describes how the 'chiefdom system of governance' (a structural constraint) marginalises women and stresses the need for broader change.²⁸

Women's 'agency'

What emerges across the bulk of the literature is that women's leadership is equated to strengthening women's capacity, skills and knowledge—what is termed in the literature as 'agency'. Tadros explains it like this:

*Many programmes aiming to empower women politically share the same approach: the extension of short training modules to individual women on how to be effective leaders and run campaigns. This reductionist approach to capacity support demonstrates weak conceptualisations of how women engage politically and the reasons behind their inequitable participation in politics. Conceptually, it suggests that women rise to power exclusively on account of their individual capacities and practically, that it is their lack of know-how that is preventing them from engaging politically.*²⁹

Similarly, while identifying a list of potential indicators focused on 'empowerment' for women, CARE noticed a strong focus on agency: 'Over half of these indicators of empowerment require women to do more, be better, change their attitudes and practices, and make more use of knowledge'.³⁰

In practical terms, agency is about women having capacity, knowledge and skills to exercise leadership. Engagement at this level prepares women with the confidence to take on leadership roles. Women's agency is often the primary focus of leadership programs (e.g. scholarship awards), but this level of change represents just one component contributing to women's leadership.

Agency in the cultural context

Leftwich (, in analysing three reports focusing on the importance of leadership for growth and development, observed that 'leadership' in these documents 'appears as a free-standing virtue or variable, unrelated to any institutional context shaped by varied systems of power, authority and culture'.³¹

CARE argues that—while not explicitly stated—the way programs are designed implies that changing women's capacity and knowledge changes the situation, but this type of messaging neglects to recognise that cultural, religious, familial, social and relational factors also play a role.

In an analysis by the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), in partnership with UNIFEM (now UN Women), a key lesson from Cambodia was the need to think more broadly about change in multiple dimensions:

Increasing space for women to have a voice depends on actions in the political, cultural, social and administrative arenas, all of which offer different leverage points. Involving

²⁸ CM Roseveare, *Evaluation of Oxfam Women in Leadership (WIL) Project in Sierra Leone—full report*, Oxfam Great Britain, London, 2006, 26.

²⁹ Tadros, *Women engaging politically*, 2011, 9.

³⁰ E Martinez, *The courage to change: confronting the limits and unleashing the potential of CARE's programming for women*, synthesis report: phase 2 CARE International Strategic Impact Inquiry on Women's Empowerment, CARE International, 2006, 21.

³¹ Leftwich, 2009, 9.

*people at many different levels recognizes that the position of women in society needs to be dealt with from the household up to national politics.*³²

Work by CARE, Oxfam and the World Bank provide useful frameworks for a broader conception of women's leadership beyond agency. Oxfam emphasises the need for a transformative approach to supporting women's leadership, which is defined as:

*A social change strategy which focuses on providing an enabling environment for the actualisation of the leadership potential of individuals; influencing others to bring about fundamental change and facilitating the empowerment of others ... it includes every act of leadership identified in all arenas, including the home, formal and informal milieus, among others.*³³

This latter definition is particularly interesting for the broad approach it takes to women's leadership, its explicit recognition of the 'enabling environment' and the fact that it specifically references the 'home'.³⁴ This approach emphasises the need to address not just the individual empowerment of women to enable them to lead in political spheres, but also the relationships and surrounding environment that impacts on the lives of women.

CARE's framework for women's empowerment is also useful for understanding women's leadership (empowerment and women's leadership are two different concepts, but there is some overlap—for example, empowerment may be a step necessary for women's leadership).³⁵ CARE defines women's empowerment as 'the sum total of changes needed for a woman to realize her full human rights—the interplay of changes in her own aspirations and capabilities (agency), in the environment that surrounds and conditions her choices (structure), and in the power relations through which she must negotiate her path (relations)'.³⁶ This is described in more depth in the following box.

Box 1: Elements of CARE's framework for women's empowerment³⁷

Agency reflects the aspirations, resources, actions and achievements of women themselves. Every woman has agency, and analyses, decides, and acts without CARE being involved. Sometimes she does so in ways that challenge gendered power inequities; sometimes, in ways that reinforce them. Empowerment entails a journey through which she increasingly uses her agency to expand options and challenge inequities.

Structures are the accepted rules, norms and institutions that condition women's choices and chances. Structures can be both tangible and intangible; behaviours and ideologies. Examples include kinship, economic markets, religion, caste and other social hierarchies, educational systems, political culture, forms of organization, and many, many more.

Relations are the vehicle through which women negotiate their needs and rights. Empowerment, in part, relies on individual women building relationships, joint efforts, coalitions, and mutual support, in order to claim and expand agency, alter inequitable structures, and so realize rights and livelihood security.

³² UNIFEM & UNDEF, *Democracy with women, for women*, United Nations Fund for Women & United Nations Democracy Fund, New York, 2010, 10.

³³ Oxfam Novib, *Women leading change. Experiences promoting women's empowerment, leadership, and gender justice. Case studies of five Asian organizations*, Oxfam Novib, The Hague, 2011.

³⁴ Oxfam Novib, 2011.

³⁵ Oxfam Novib, 2011.

³⁶ Martinez, 2006, v–vi.

³⁷ Martinez, 2006.

Developing an enabling environment

The CARE framework is a theory of change for ‘empowerment’, but is important for thinking about women’s leadership because the dimensions it refers to (i.e. agency, structures and relations) form what is often termed as the ‘enabling environment’ for women’s leadership and other gender-equality issues. For ‘women’s leadership’, this type of framework draws attention to the changes that need to take place at multiple levels—the factors that are conducive to facilitating women’s leadership.

The rationale for this framework is that ‘agency is constantly shaped—advanced and undermined—by the structures and power relations that shape women’s choices’.³⁸ The logic here is that strengthening women’s capacity, knowledge and leadership skills, and even instituting affirmative action steps like quotas, is not enough. Unless issues like culture, women’s position within the household and norms regarding masculinity are considered, an unfair onus will be placed on women to take on leadership roles, while the structures that reinforce inequality remain unchanged.

At the relations level, women’s leadership can be supported by promoting joint household decision-making with men (in areas such as household spending, health and education), encouraging men and women to share in household tasks and care-giving, and enabling women to make links with others through coalitions and other forms of collective action. As well as collective action, the household-level changes at the relations level are often neglected in women’s leadership programs, but represent a critical precondition to ensure that gains at the agency and structures level can be sustained.

At the structures level, critical elements include challenging harmful cultural and social norms, advocating for policy change (including quotas and political reservation) and, importantly, encouraging men to use more inclusive means of decision-making in their own leadership roles.

This three-fold approach (agency, relations and structures) is not unique to CARE; the World Bank’s 2012 *World development report*³⁹ takes an almost identical approach to framing ‘female empowerment’ and the Oxfam International Youth Partnerships domains of change echoes this type of framing.⁴⁰ It also has similarities to the ‘ecological’ approach, which recognises the other influences—like relationships, family, community and culture—that impact upon an individual.⁴¹ The three-fold approach is helpful for understanding change across a range of gender-equality issues where root causes are more complex, because it emphasises the need for change in all three levels.

Challenges to agency

Programs that focus on women ‘realising their potential’ in fact risk ‘calling forth heroic levels of agency without challenging an unfriendly terrain of structures and relations’.⁴² Women who are selected for participation in leadership programs, or who fill a quota in a government ministry or local council, take up these roles often at risk to their own wellbeing. In Pacific contexts, for example, where leadership is usually constructed in terms of ‘big man leadership’ or ‘chiefly leadership’ (both forms that are dominated by men), thrusting women into positions of leadership without spending sufficient time on changing the surrounding environment (the structures and relations) creates

³⁸ Martinez, 2006, 6.

³⁹ World Bank, 2012, 95.

⁴⁰ OIYP, *Assessing our impact*, Oxfam International Youth Partnerships, <http://oiyp.oxfam.org.au/about-oiyp/assessing-our-impact>, 2013.

⁴¹ Plan International, *The state of the world’s girls 2011: so, what about boys?* Plan International, 2011.

⁴² Plan International, 2011, 21.

problems for women.⁴³ Women seeking political office in this context have experienced backlash in the form of violence.⁴⁴ This is not unique to the Pacific: Waring explores how in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, where traditional assumptions regarding the role and position of women restrict their mobility, women involved in politics risk rape and physical abuse.⁴⁵ Women operating in these spheres also report experiencing sexual harassment (including solicitations for sexual favours), negative attitudes from male counterparts, and name-calling and other inappropriate language.^{46,47,48}

Insufficient change in structures relates not just to cultural attitudes, but also to general ways of working that may explicitly or implicitly discriminate against women. Tinker finds that in a range of countries, women elected to parliaments experienced challenges with existing parliamentary practices, including having sessions scheduled late in the day, which clashed with family responsibilities.⁴⁹ In Fiji, women faced multiple challenges in participating in council meetings, such as meetings being held after dark (raising security concerns), in distant locations (causing problems related to transport access and cost) and during hours where women have other responsibilities (e.g. caring for children or cooking dinner).⁵⁰

There is a need to respond to some of this backlash, and to avoid further misunderstandings about women's leadership in contexts where the idea of women being leaders is still quite new. The literature emphasises greater focus on challenging the cultural and social systems that perpetuate inequality: engaging in the area of structures and relations. Leadership is therefore not an isolated jump from an individual whose capacity has been built to parliamentary representation, but leadership in the public sphere starts with leadership at home,⁵¹ and small steps create the space for leadership in other spheres.

Changes at the household level

In the World Bank's *World development report*, analysis of slow progress related to women's agency mentions factors associated with other areas of change, specifically household power dynamics and an enabling environment for political participation.⁵² The literature review shows that engaging at the household level is not a commonly identified entry point when organisations are thinking about a theory of change for women's leadership. For example, AusAID's *Pacific women shaping Pacific*

⁴³ A McLeod, *Literature review of leadership models in the Pacific—prepared For AusAID Pacific Leadership Program: building demand for better governance initiative*, Australian National University, Canberra, 2007.

⁴⁴ Cited in McLeod, 2007.

⁴⁵ Waring, *Women in politics and aid effectiveness*, 2011, 10.

⁴⁶ Waring, *Women in politics and aid effectiveness*, 2011, 9–13.

⁴⁷ Kamlongera, 2008, 471–480.

⁴⁸ I Tinker, Quotas for women in elected legislatures: do they really empower women? *Women's Studies International Forum* 27(5–6):531–46, 2004.

⁴⁹ Tinker, 2004.

⁵⁰ IWDA, *Local government: servicing whom? Creating space on the mat*, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Pacific Project & International Women's Development Agency, Suva, 2010.

⁵¹ Oxfam Novib, 2011.

⁵² World Bank, 2012.

development delivery strategy mentions indicators for household dynamics, but it does not include the relationships and decision-making at the household level within its theory of change.⁵³

For example, research conducted by Jad in the Occupied Palestinian Territories shows that, in most cases, ‘family serves as a crucial medium for women’s entrance into public offices’. Family members here provided female candidates with logistical and moral support, and also helped women to mobilise.⁵⁴ Findings from a study in Bangladesh similarly highlight the importance of familial relationships. In this study of 18 women in local government institutions, it was found that nearly all of them either had immediate family members or other relatives in politics as well. It was these relationships with other family members that inspired the women to enter politics.⁵⁵ Despite the importance of families in supporting women’s entry into political positions, Tadros observes ‘the family never feature in any of the capacity development programmes’.⁵⁶

In summary, women’s leadership seems to be perceived as divorced from the other aspects of women’s lives, although as this literature review shows, it is these dimensions that often shape the ability of women to lead. Engaging solely in the agency space is not enough because a woman may not be able to exercise her agency within her home or in public spaces. Installing a quota that now requires a woman to take on a leadership role in addition to her other roles risks doing harm. Failing to engage with the structural forces that perpetuate inequality—culture, tradition, laws, norms—means changes will not be sustainable. Most importantly, leaving ‘men’ out of efforts to promote women’s leadership could hamper efforts to promote gender equality even further.

The need to work with men

The literature shows there is a very limited focus on working with men to promote women’s leadership. This section emphasises that, as critical players in influencing not just relations but the dimension of structures as well, men are vital to efforts that aim to promote women’s leadership.

Working with men to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment has been growing in importance for several years through the work of MenEngage and others.⁵⁷ For example, in 2009, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women recognised ‘the capacity of men and boys in bringing about change in attitudes, relationships, and access to resources and decision-making which are critical for the promotion of gender equality and the full enjoyment of all human rights by women’.⁵⁸ In outlining policy approaches to involving men and boys in achieving gender equality and health equity, the World Health Organization observes that men and masculinities play a direct role in maintaining gender inequalities. It explains:

Some men play a crucial role as ‘gatekeepers’ of the current gender order through their responsibilities as decision-makers and leaders within their families and communities. They may participate in sexist practices and maintain unjust gender relations by

⁵³ AusAID, *Delivery strategy: Pacific women shaping Pacific development 2012–2022*, AusAID, Canberra, 2012.

⁵⁴ Jad, 2010, cited in Tadros, *Women engaging politically*, 2011, 9.

⁵⁵ Islam, 2001, cited in M Mukhopadhyay, *Decentralisation and gender equity in South Asia—an issues paper*, International Development Research Center, Ottawa, 2005.

⁵⁶ Tadros, *Women engaging politically*, 2011, 9.

⁵⁷ See MenEngage website: www.menengage.org.

⁵⁸ United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, *Agreed conclusions on the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS*, United Nations, 2009.

*perpetrating violence against women (and subordinate men), controlling women's reproductive and familial decision-making, limiting women's access to and control over family and community resources and political power, or espousing patriarchal beliefs and norms that allow other men to engage in such actions. More broadly, patterns of gender injustice are tied to social constructions of masculinity—to the meanings given in any particular society to being a 'man', the identities and social relations associated with these, and the social organization of men's lives and relations.*⁵⁹

In presenting a case for the need to engage men and boys in promoting gender equality, Plan International traces the evolution of gender work. It notes that—despite the transition from WID (women in development) to GAD (gender and development), which was supposed to shift the focus from woman-centred programming to challenging the structural causes of inequality—in reality 'programmes generally continued to work with women'. It argues that this perpetuated the belief that programming related to gender was for 'women only'.⁶⁰ This echoes the findings by Wendoh & Wallace across NGOs in The Gambia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia. They argue that gender in these contexts is 'seen as an external and imported concept, divorced from people's own analysis and understanding of gender in their communities and organisations. Men, and many women, felt alienated by the rather confrontational approach taken, and as a result many were hostile to the messages of gender equity'.⁶¹

The benefits of engaging with men and boys to promote gender equality are becoming increasingly evident in the literature (e.g. WHO⁶² and Promundo⁶³). Within women's leadership programs, however, few have an explicit emphasis on working with men. But when men are involved, the results can be significant. For example, an employment promotion program for women in Vietnam (funded by the International Labor Organization) found that involving men in discussions about women's roles resulted in shifts in division of labour at the household level, joint household decision-making, better communication between men and women, and a better understanding of family violence. This was in addition to the main focus of promoting women's participation and leadership in villages and communes.⁶⁴

The literature is still emerging in this area, but there is an increasing awareness of the need to engage men in promoting women's leadership. For example, Chhoeun et al. discuss how a local Cambodian NGO, Banteay Srei, recognised that, although skills trainings were essential to increase women's leadership capacity, there was 'a corresponding need to increase awareness within male commune council and village authority membership of the need and value of female participation'.⁶⁵ Here,

⁵⁹ WHO, *Men and gender policy brief: policy approaches to involving men and boys in achieving gender equality and health equity*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2010, 11.

⁶⁰ Plan International, 2011, 15.

⁶¹ S Wendoh & T Wallace, *Living gender in African organizations and communities: stories from The Gambia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia*, Transform Africa, London, 2006, 15.

⁶² WHO, 2010.

⁶³ Promundo, *Engaging men to prevent gender-based violence: a multi-country intervention and impact evaluation study*, Promundo, Rio de Janeiro, 2012.

⁶⁴ N Van Hung, *ILO/Japan Asian Regional Programme on Expansion of Employment Opportunities for Women (EEOW), Vietnam chapter: report of independent final evaluation*, International Labour Organization, Hanoi, 2007.

⁶⁵ T Chhoeun, P Sok & C Byrne, 'Citadel of women': strengthening female leadership in rural Cambodia. *Gender & Development* 16(3):535–547, 2008, 540.

promoting women's leadership did not occur in a vacuum of capacity building—it extended to engagement of male commune council members on good governance and gender equality.

The thinking behind engaging men in the area of women's leadership is that men represent a crucial actor within the structure and relations levels. In many contexts, dominant forms of masculinity influence decision-making and leadership in government as well as other entities, and men are the ones who are in power. If part of the rationale for women's leadership is that women are able to bring something different to the leadership arena in terms of articulating their own needs and interests, as well as using different ways to influence change, then it follows that men could also exhibit these types of attributes if focus was placed on allowing these to develop. The focus on strengthening women's capacity, encouraging them to express their opinions and be confident and assertive, are all skills and techniques that would also help men to be more effective and inclusive leaders. Building the capacity of men then represents steps towards changing the structure and relations that govern behaviour. This creates the enabling environment within which women's leadership will be viewed more favourably. It can result in less resistance from men and it could improve the way leadership is understood and practised.

Engaging men must extend beyond the public sphere. Kamlongera, for example, argues that women's role in political institutions would change if men shared in household responsibilities that are usually carried out by women. Her research underscores the need for a 'supportive environment' at home that enables women to engage in the political arena.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ AP Kamlongera, Malawian women's participation in state politics: what are the constraints? *Gender & Development* 16(3):471–480, 2008.

Data availability and quality

Are there adequate data to assess the effectiveness of women's leadership programs?

Despite strong rhetoric regarding the benefits of women's leadership programs, Gill et al. note that there is 'surprisingly little existing research or analysis on the impact of women's leadership'.⁶⁷ Most of the published journal articles that exist tend to focus on the area of women's political representation; specifically, the impact of quota or political reservation systems. Among these studies, results are mixed (see below) and nearly all the studies are set in India. Evaluations from donors and NGOs document the impacts of women's leadership programs more broadly, but most of this evidence is anecdotal. This literature review strongly suggests a need for not just more evidence, but also deeper analysis on what happens when women are involved in leadership—for example, how active they are in committees or what kinds of legislation they support.⁶⁸

What is the reported relationship between women in politics and change?

A brief overview of some of the findings in published journals is below, and reveals correlations between having women in political roles and increased community services like health care, roads, child care and water supply. Findings also show that having women in these positions changes perceptions regarding the roles and aspirations of girls, and results in more girls attending school:

- › In a study in India, Beaman et al. found that having leadership positions in councils reserved for women had a positive ripple effect in the community, resulting in girls spending less time on household chores and changes in parents' aspirations for girls. In this study, the rationale for the results was that the policy of reserving council positions made it easier for women to succeed, changed perceptions about what girls could achieve and provided girls with successful female role models.⁶⁹
- › The World Bank cites studies by Htun & Weldon across 70 countries that show the combined influence of women's collective movements, women in politics and democracy since 1975 upon changes in gender policies—specifically, violence against women policies. The studies highlight that these movements promote more egalitarian family laws and address violence against women.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Gill et al, 2009, 25.

⁶⁸ See GSDRC, *Helpdesk research report: measuring and evaluating women's leadership*, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, London, 2012.

⁶⁹ L Beaman, E Duflo, R Pande & P Topalova, Female leadership raises aspirations and educational attainment for girls: a policy experiment in India. *Science* 335:582–586, 2012.

⁷⁰ Htun & Weldon, 2012, cited in World Bank, 2012.

- › Another study by Beaman et al. found that the likelihood of a woman speaking in a village meeting in India increases by 25 per cent when a local leadership position is reserved for a woman.⁷¹
- › In India and Nepal, Agarwal tested and expanded the theory that around one-third of women is the critical mass for women's influence. The study found that the proportion of women required in decision-making bodies is between one-quarter and one-third. It also emphasised that women's participation in meetings is 'a necessary intermediate step' for influencing decisions.⁷²
- › In India, Beaman et al. found that being exposed to a female in a leadership role as chief councillor improved perceptions of the effectiveness of female leaders in general. Female leaders were rated as less effective when community members were exposed to them the first time, but this reduced as exposure increased. Although the study did not reveal a reduction in public preference for male leaders, it did reveal that teenage girls exposed to female leaders wanted to marry later, have fewer children and obtain jobs that required higher education.⁷³
- › Another study by Beaman et al. found that, in villages reserved for female leaders, preschool children were more likely to be immunised, and the disparity between school attendance of girls and boys was lesser than in villages where leadership positions were not reserved.⁷⁴
- › Chattopadhyay & Duflo found women leaders in two states in India were better able to prioritise resources to benefit women compared to men. In this study, one-third of all council seats and one-third of council heads were reserved for women. In both states, women were more likely to make requests and complaints concerning water resources compared to men. Additionally, there were 60 per cent more drinking water projects in female-led councils than male-led panchayats. In West Bengal, where jobs building roads are more likely to go to women, there were more road projects in panchayat councils led by women.⁷⁵
- › In a study by Bratton & Ray in Norway, a direct causal effect was established between the proportion of municipal seats held by women from the 1970s to the 1990s and the level of child care offered within the municipalities.⁷⁶

A help desk research report from the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre on the relationship between political quotas and women's leadership outlines the mixed findings of additional published journal articles regarding quotas and political reservations. These include findings from India by Bardhan et al. that political reservations for women may result in positive outcomes only after a time lag, as women increase in confidence and as the public becomes more open to women's leadership.⁷⁷ In the Latin America region, studies have found that quotas do not necessarily increase women's participation or political engagement.⁷⁸ In Bangladesh, Panday, after

⁷¹ Cited in GSDRC, *Effects of political quotas for women*, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, London, 2011.

⁷² B Agarwal, Does women's proportional strength affect their participation? Governing local forests in South Asia. *World Development* 38(1):98–112, 2010.

⁷³ L Beaman, R Chattopadhyay, E Duflo, R Pande & P Topalova, Powerful women: does exposure reduce bias? *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 124(4):1497–540, 2009.

⁷⁴ L Beaman, E Duflo, R Pande & P Topalova, *Women politicians, gender bias, and policy-making in rural India*, The state of the world's children, background paper, UNICEF, 2006.

⁷⁵ R Chattopadhyay & E Duflo, Women as policy makers: evidence from a randomized policy experiment in India. *Econometrica* 72(5):1409–1443, 2004.

⁷⁶ Cited in UNIFEM, *Progress of the world's women 2008–2009—who answers to women? Gender and accountability*, United Nations Fund for Women, New York, 2009.

⁷⁷ Cited in GSDRC, *Effects of political quotas for women*, 2011.

⁷⁸ Zetterberg, 2011, cited in GSDRC, *Effects of political quotas for women*, 2011.

reviewing existing studies on women's decision-making in political spheres, found that having more women involved in political processes as a result of quotas did not necessarily mean these women were able to meaningfully engage in decision-making processes. Culture and religion were found to be key factors restricting women's participation.⁷⁹ In contrast, in India, a study by Iyer et al. revealed:

*Having female political representation at the local government level induces strong positive and significant effects on reporting of crimes by women. It also induces greater responsiveness of law enforcement officials to crimes against women, as measured by the number of arrests as well as the quality of women's interactions with police.*⁸⁰

A study by Jayasuriya & Burke used a fixed-effects estimator to suggest that countries with more women in parliament have faster growing economies; however, the authors note that the economic growth may be a benefit arising from 'fairer societies'. Some effort was made to control for this by including primary school enrolment ratios as a 'measure of gender equality',⁸¹ but this may not necessarily account for other factors.

The findings above mainly show strong evidence from India but mixed results in other contexts. There is a need for more research on the benefits of having women in politics, especially in countries other than India.

What are the reported broader outcomes from women's leadership programs?

Reports from donors and NGOs also point to other positive results from increasing women's leadership. It should be noted that these findings tend to be anecdotal (e.g. accounts of direct personal experience, testimonials or generalisations that have been selected for inclusion into a report), and may be unrepresentative or biased. Key findings include that when women play greater roles in committees and other decision-making bodies, and have increased confidence to voice their opinions, they have greater influence on policy. This literature review shows that these results relate to development outcomes more generally, rather than economic outcomes.

In AusAID's *Women leading change* document, one example stated is the support of the Thailand Burma Border Consortium, which has implemented programs (including child care programs) to enable women's involvement in management committees. The document anecdotally reports that women's roles are changing, and women refugees have taken up leadership roles in the camps and are able to control aspects like food distribution: 'The changing role of women is shifting attitudes. Women's capabilities are now recognised as critical to improving the running of these refugee camps'.⁸² In some cases, promoting women's leadership may be an unintended outcome, as in AusAID's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Project in Vanuatu, where the requirement of women's representation on water management committees led to women being able to participate in decision-making in additional forums.⁸³

⁷⁹ PK Panday, Representation without participation: quotas for women in Bangladesh. *International Political Science Review* 29(4):489-512, 2008.

⁸⁰ Cited in GSDRC, *Effects of political quotas for women*, 2011.

⁸¹ D Jayasuriya & PJ Burke, *Female parliamentarians and economic growth: evidence from a large panel*, Development Policy Centre discussion paper 18, Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University, Canberra, 2012.

⁸² AusAID, *Women leading change—AusAID's support for women's leadership and decision-making*, AusAID, Canberra, 2011.

⁸³ AusAID, *Promoting opportunities for all*, 2011.

A Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) evaluation of programs in Kenya and Ethiopia reports that women's forums and associations that were established in Ethiopia gave women experience and confidence in leadership, enabling them to progress to higher levels of responsibility in public roles.⁸⁴ The evaluation notes that, although women's participation in decision-making bodies was monitored, there is a need for greater analysis on how women's participation impacts the kinds of decisions that are made by these bodies.⁸⁵

In Cambodia, Oxfam reported that its partner organisation, Women for Prosperity, established forums for female councillors to gain experience in public speaking and to learn from other female councillors. Oxfam reports that participants in this program now are able to stand up to discrimination, contribute to council debates and take on extra responsibilities such as leading committees.⁸⁶

It is important to note that women in formal leadership positions may not necessarily act in the best interests of other women or marginalised groups.⁸⁷ Further, women in positions of power may even reinforce inequalities: their personal views may not reflect a consideration for gender equality, or they may feel the need to limit the extent to which they voice their concerns to remain in power or to be respected by men in leadership positions. For example, Hassim describes how women in the African National Congress in South Africa ended up following the party line to approve the Communal Land Rights Act 2004, despite the fact that the act failed to provide land ownership and control rights to women, due to the political threat presented by a constituency that was antagonistic towards women's interests.⁸⁸ In other cases, women's leadership may merely entrench the positions of elite or more powerful women.^{89,90} In Costa Rica, Sagot observes:

*The passing of the quota legislation has also meant the arrival into power of many conservative women, closely connected to political and economic elites, who do not have any progressive agendas and who, in fact, act as strong opponents of the feminist movement, particularly on those issues related to sexual and reproductive rights.*⁹¹

There are additional issues related to the abilities of female leaders to act in the interests of women in general. Duflo writes 'even if we thought women leaders did a better job of understanding women's needs, it would not necessarily follow that policies designed to guarantee greater representation by women would be an effective way to achieve this representation'.⁹² She gives the example that

⁸⁴ G Byron & C Örnemark, *Gender equality in Swedish Development Cooperation—final report*, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Stockholm, 2010.

⁸⁵ Byron & Örnemark, 2010.

⁸⁶ Oxfam Great Britain, *Women's leadership and participation: overview*, Oxfam Great Britain, London, 2008.

⁸⁷ Oxfam Great Britain, 2008.

⁸⁸ Cited in World Bank, 2012.

⁸⁹ MJ Kantengwa, The will to political power: Rwandan women in leadership. *IDS Bulletin* 41(5):72–80, 2010, 79.

⁹⁰ R Waterhouse & S Neville, *Evaluation of DFID development assistance: gender equality and women's empowerment—Phase II thematic evaluation: voice and accountability*, Department for International Development, London, 2005, 27.

⁹¹ Sagot, 2010, cited in M Tadros, *Women engaging politically*, 2011, 6.

⁹² E Duflo, Women empowerment and economic development. *Journal of Economic Literature* 50(4):1071, 2012.

women may be in leadership roles, but if they are politically weak, they may not actually be able to influence decisions.

There is also evidence to show the results of women not being in leadership. The World Bank's 2012 report stated that when women cannot participate in the labour force, are excluded from management roles, or are unable to enter certain occupations because of law or customs, gross domestic product growth can drop by as much as two per cent.⁹³ Making the case for the importance of women's role in peace building, a study by International Alert argued that decreasing the proportion of women in parliament by five per cent means that a country is nearly five times as likely to use military violence in resolving international disputes.⁹⁴ In the Solomon Islands, another study similarly concluded that states with a lower proportion of women in parliament were more likely to settle conflicts using violence.⁹⁵

Focusing resources on promoting women's representation does not always automatically result in better outcomes. In Rwanda, where the proportion of women in the lower house of parliament was 56.3 per cent in 2008, political repression, corruption and distrust continues to increase.⁹⁶ Longman argues that Rwanda's lack of political freedom affects women's capacity to influence in political spheres. He draws on data from informant interviews to assert that women were placed in the National Assembly because the Rwandan Patriotic Front knew that women would not challenge them due to cultural norms.⁹⁷

Women becoming involved in leadership may not always benefit the individual women themselves, especially if systems and relations that prescribe women's roles and responsibilities do not also shift. Douglas argues that women's lives are already overburdened: 'In Melanesia, as elsewhere, many women evidently avoid public leadership as a further burden'.⁹⁸ A SIDA study points out that overburdening women with additional leadership responsibilities may result in serious pressure being placed on family coping strategies, including 'negative spillover'⁹⁹ into family nutritional status.

There is a need for deeper consideration of what leadership actually means for women's time and workloads. If women in leadership roles are still expected to fulfil their other roles, then leadership responsibilities can actually become another burden rather than a benefit.

⁹³ World Bank, 2012.

⁹⁴ M Caprioli, Gendered conflict. *Journal of Peace Research* 37(1):51–68, 2000.

⁹⁵ A Moser, *Monitoring peace and conflict in the Solomon Islands*, gendered early warning report no. 1, United Nations Fund for Women, 2005.

⁹⁶ Cited in M Waring, *Women in politics and aid effectiveness*, 2011, 6; see also Human Rights Watch, *Human rights in Rwanda*, www.hrw.org/africa/rwanda.

⁹⁷ Cited in G Bauer, Fifty/fifty by 2020: electoral gender quotas for parliament in east and southern Africa. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 10(3):348–368, 2008.

⁹⁸ Cited in McLeod, 2007, 18.

⁹⁹ Cited in Byron & Örnemark, 2010.

What can be measured?

One question is whether it is possible to accurately document the outcomes that result from women's leadership. Batliwala & Pittman explore the challenges inherent in measuring change in areas like women's rights and women's empowerment. In analysing more than 50 monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks and tools that are widely used by NGOs and other organisations, they found that:

*Very few M&E frameworks actually enable us to understand how change happens or how gender relations have been altered—of locating the most effective interventions for shifting the complex social power relations that mediate women's access to resources and rights, security and autonomy.*¹⁰⁰

Despite the challenges around capturing this type of change, in practice, there are few examples of how to recognise this complexity. Although most of the literature acknowledges a need to go beyond the simplistic Millennium Development Goal 3 route of promoting women's leadership through political representation, this area still remains a common focus within the M&E of leadership programs. For instance, AusAID's Governance Strategy makes reference to the fact that 'simply incorporating women, for example, into existing discriminatory structures, fails to address the underlying power inequalities that kept them out in the first place'. Despite this acknowledgment, the only two indicators that focus on women's leadership are 'increased women's participation in democratic processes at all levels' and 'number of women leaders and/or CSOs [civil society organisations] identified and supported to play a role in policy dialogue'.¹⁰¹ Both indicators here narrowly construct women's leadership in terms of political participation of individuals.

It may be relatively easy to use and measure women's political participation according to representation, but as this literature review shows, these indicators are a narrow way of measuring women's leadership. If the definition of women's leadership extends more broadly towards multiple dimensions, and includes both the public and private spheres, this creates considerable challenges for monitoring and evaluating change.

There is a need for greater analysis and thinking into M&E indicators and approaches that will capture changes across agency, relations and structures. Analysis must challenge the existing focus on measuring participation and capacity, and move towards more nuanced approaches that see change as multidimensional.

There is also a strong need to test assumptions (there appear to be many in this area) and to look at the influence of contextual differences, and how to best accommodate these in program design.

¹⁰⁰ S Batliwala & A Pittman, *Capturing change in women's realities: a critical overview of current monitoring & evaluation frameworks and approaches*, Association For Women's Rights in Development, 2010, 5.

¹⁰¹ AusAID, *Effective governance*, 2011.

Leadership and empowerment links

Does women's economic empowerment provide opportunities for women's leadership?

Although women's leadership is rarely defined and programs often lack a theory of change, the discourse of donors and international agencies is very positive regarding the perceived impacts of women's leadership. For example, the World Bank's *World development report 2012* states that increasing women's individual and collective agency produces better outcomes, institutions and policy choices:

*Working together, women can influence policies on gender equality and women's empowerment so other women benefit, and when women are politically active as voters or politicians, policies that improve the welfare of the nation are more likely to be implemented.*¹⁰²

According to Oxfam, women's leadership programs have 'benefits far beyond the individual women themselves and women tend to plough back benefits into their families'.¹⁰³

However, the evidence linking women's economic empowerment and women's leadership outcomes is less persuasive. This review found that access to microfinance increases women's roles in leading a business. It also finds a relationship between women's engagement in paid work and household decision-making. Women's access to economic assets and microfinance was also found to increase women's household decision-making.

There are some studies pointing to the association between economic empowerment and women's leadership. For example, Dollar & Gatti found that increasing per capita income also increased the number of women in parliament.¹⁰⁴ In researching women's political participation in Asia and the Pacific, True et al. noted that, as well as access to political networks, money is a critical factor for women wanting to enter politics. They describe how personal skills and capacity are not the only factors, but clan-based exchange and material accumulation are critical for anyone entering politics in Melanesia.¹⁰⁵ In this way, economic status and access to wealth can be seen as preconditions for involvement in politics in some contexts.

A study on the microfinance work of BRAC (formerly Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) in Bangladesh found ownership of businesses increased from 37 per cent to 93 per cent after access to

¹⁰² World Bank, 2012, 6.

¹⁰³ Oxfam Novib, 2011, 8

¹⁰⁴ Cited in N Kabeer & L Natali, *Gender equality and economic growth: is there a win-win?* IDS working paper 417, Institute of Development Studies, London, 2013.

¹⁰⁵ J True, S Niner, S Parashar & N George, *Women's political participation in Asia-Pacific—report for United Nations Department of Political Affairs*, Social Science Research Council Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum, New York, 2013.

microfinance.¹⁰⁶ Recognising that nearly all of BRAC's loans are given to women, this represents a concrete relationship between economic empowerment and a leadership outcome. This is echoed by findings in Vanuatu, where microfinance helped women or 'mamas to wake up' and open their minds to the possibility of owning a business. In this impact assessment, it was found that the majority of members did not own a business before the access to microfinance.¹⁰⁷

A study by Kabeer in Bangladesh, Egypt and Ghana draws a correlation between women's engagement in work and women's decision-making. In all three countries, women who were engaged in either formal or semiformal forms of paid work were generally more likely than women not involved in paid work to report positive outcomes regarding a variety of indicators, including decision-making roles and political participation.¹⁰⁸ In particular, the Bangladesh findings from this study show that women in paid work, especially those who engaged in paid work outside their homes, were more likely than other women to make decisions about their health, to decide to invest in a major asset using the income and to choose their own clothes.¹⁰⁹

In studying microfinance programs in Bangladesh, the Philippines and Uzbekistan, the Asian Development Bank has tracked similar changes at the household level, reporting that microfinance programs across these three countries resulted in women having an increased role in decision-making regarding household spending, and increased sharing of household responsibilities between women and men.¹¹⁰ Other microfinance evaluations show an increase in women's role as fund managers in their households, from 33 per cent to 51 per cent in the Philippines.¹¹¹

A 2012 Oxfam report from Ethiopia describes women experiencing greater respect from their husbands, an increase in women's social status and a greater capacity to influence household decision-making that was 'partly attributable to their increased contributions to household expenditures'.¹¹²

A study in Ecuador found that, in the flower industry, more than 80 per cent of women managed their own wages. In many cases, this resulted in greater independence in household decision-making.¹¹³ In northwestern Uganda, women having access to livelihood assets, such as land, poultry and bicycles,

¹⁰⁶ M Hossain, Measuring the impact of BRAC microfinance operations: a case study of a village. *International Business Research* 5(4):112–123, 2012.

¹⁰⁷ V Suen & P Fred, *VANWODS microfinance impact assessment*, VANWODS Microfinance, 2010.

¹⁰⁸ N Kabeer, *Contextualising the economic pathways of women's empowerment—findings from a multi-country research programme*, Pathways policy paper, Brighton, 2011.

¹⁰⁹ N Kabeer, S Mahmud & S Tasneem, *Does paid work provide a pathway to women's empowerment? Empirical findings from Bangladesh*, IDS working paper 375, Institute of Development Studies, London, 2011.

¹¹⁰ Asian Development Bank, *Effect of microfinance operations on poor rural households and the status of women*, Operations Evaluation Development, 2007.

¹¹¹ V Kulkarni, *Women's empowerment and microfinance: an Asian perspective*, International Fund for Agricultural Development, Rome, 2011.

¹¹² Oxfam Great Britain, *Women's collective action in agricultural markets—synthesis of findings*, Oxfam Great Britain, Oxford, 2012, 33.

¹¹³ N Kabeer, Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the Third Millennium Development Goal. *Gender & Development*, 13(1):13–24, 2005.

resulted in women's involvement in committees that supervised local projects, as well as increased household decision-making.¹¹⁴

These household-level changes are not insignificant, as they represent the changes at the relations level that are critical components to women's leadership. These data suggest that access to economic resources can be a key factor in improving women's household decision-making.

It is important to note that the positive impacts of women's economic empowerment are not always evident. A randomised evaluation by Banerjee et al. in India found no evidence that microcredit results in changes in household decision-making or social outcomes.¹¹⁵ In Pakistan, access to loans resulted in women having less decision-making power and, in another study, loans given to women were actually used by their spouses, increasing tensions in the household.¹¹⁶

Is it important to move beyond an economic focus?

SIDA's project evaluation in Kenya and Ethiopia (mentioned previously), suggested that promoting women's economic empowerment through 'a single, economic strategy' may be 'hit and miss' and that 'generally access to more income without other interventions is unlikely to change deep seated inequalities'.¹¹⁷ It is important to consider what a women's economic empowerment program consists of, as it may sometimes be assumed that any economic intervention directed at women, whether providing alternative livelihoods, developing business skills or linking producers to markets, by default results in women's economic empowerment. In reality, although some benefit may result from participation in new economic activities, unless a woman is able to control the income she earns, the degree to which she has been economically empowered will be limited. Again, this points to the need for a coherent theory of change that addresses the dimensions of not just agency, but also structures and relations. The World Bank puts it like this:

*Economic growth can improve the material conditions for exercising agency, with women generally having more voice in wealthier households. But higher household incomes alone are not enough to eliminate the lower capacity of women to exercise agency. What matters are a woman's own income and assets as well as her ability to leave the household; all of which increase her bargaining power and ability to influence household choices.*¹¹⁸

The International Center for Research on Women defines women's economic empowerment in a way that acknowledges power and agency: 'A woman is economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions'.¹¹⁹ Its framework to measure women's economic empowerment incorporates changes in agency, relations and structures. For example, 'increased self-efficacy, ability to make decisions' relates to changes in agency, because the focus is on increasing a women's capacity. The reference

¹¹⁴ A Lakwo, *Microfinance, rural livelihoods, and women's empowerment in Uganda*, research report 85, African Studies Centre, Leiden, 2006.

¹¹⁵ A Banerjee, E Duflo, R Glennerster & C Kinnan, *The miracle of microfinance? Evidence from a randomized evaluation*, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, 2013.

¹¹⁶ Cited in V Kulkarni, 2011.

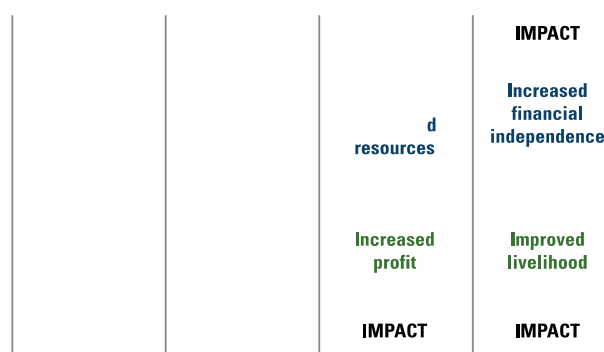
¹¹⁷ Byron & Örnemark, 2010, 68.

¹¹⁸ World Bank, 2012, 21.

¹¹⁹ ICRW, *Understanding and measuring women's economic empowerment—definition, framework and indicators*, International Center for Research on Women, Washington, 2011, 4.

to ‘increased control of household resources’ represents a change in relations, because in order for women to have increased control of these resources, existing gender relations at the household level need to shift. The reference to ‘access to new markets’ represents changes primarily at the structures level, because this requires a change in economic systems and market forces (Figure A).

Figure A A framework to measure women’s economic empowerment



Source: AM Golla, A Malhorta, P Nanda & R Mehra, *Understanding and measuring women’s economic empowerment: definition, framework and indicators*, International Center for Research on Women, 2011.

In an UNDEF–UNIFEM review in Cambodia, a lesson that emerged was:

Women’s economic empowerment needs to be promoted in tandem with political participation. This would encourage more equality at home, empower women to have a greater say in private and public, and provide access to the resources required for political contests.¹²⁰

Overall, there is both anecdotal and empirical evidence documenting the relationship between women’s economic empowerment and women’s leadership. There are correlations between economic empowerment programs and women’s decision-making at the household level, which is one aspect of change outlined in the suggested definition for women’s leadership. This suggests that promoting women’s leadership through economic empowerment can contribute to women’s leadership. While recognising the links between women’s economic empowerment and increased opportunities for women’s leadership in households, businesses, committees, coalitions, government and other spaces, it is important to acknowledge that the local context also shapes the change process. Changes need to happen at multiple levels and needs to go beyond an economic focus to be sustained over time. This literature review found no verifiable evidence that leadership programs necessarily lead to economic empowerment outcomes. Analysis of program documents may reveal more data.

¹²⁰ UNIFEM & UNDEF, 2010, 10.

What is the impact of scholarship programs upon leadership and economic outcomes?

The literature review also examined the way scholarship programs can affect leadership and economic outcomes for women. The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom found that 44 per cent of scholarship recipients from the Asia–Pacific region reported they were now making an impact by influencing government, including shaping policy. The majority of the alumni reported being able to find work in their home countries: 100 per cent of Pacific Islanders, 75 per cent of Australians and New Zealanders, and 97 per cent of those from South-East Asia found work in their home country. In the Asia–Pacific region, it was found that, in the past decade, 52 per cent of these awards went to women and 48 per cent were given to men.¹²¹ The World Bank has conducted tracer studies on scholarship recipients four years after their studies are completed and has found that many scholars attain leadership roles in their chosen career. It also found that 95.1 per cent of scholars who returned to their home countries were able to find employment (36 per cent of scholarships went to women).¹²² Other research by the World Bank highlights other kinds of benefits of scholarship programs—for example, in Cambodia, scholarships increased school enrolment and attendance of girls by 30 per cent, up to 43 per cent.¹²³

The program analysis of AusAID’s scholarships program may reveal more trends regarding the impact of scholarships.

¹²¹ CSC, *Evaluating Commonwealth scholarships in the United Kingdom: assessing impact in the Asia–Pacific region*, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, London, 2011.

¹²² JJ/WBGSP, *Tracer Study VIII*, Joint Japan/World Bank Graduate Scholarship Program, World Bank, 2010.

¹²³ N Schady & D Filmer, *Getting girls into school: evidence from a scholarship program in Cambodia*, World Bank policy research working paper 3910, 2006.

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