



EVIDENCE SUMMARY: ADVANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

GOVERNMENT LAWS AND REGULATIONS AND BUSINESS POLICIES

This document summarizes evidence and recommended actions from a USAID landscaping study on Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and Government Laws and Regulations and Business Policies.

- Proven Evidence** = clear beneficial effect and strength of evidence
- Promising Evidence** = promising beneficial effect and strength of evidence

Proven Interventions to Reform Family Law:

- Legal reform to family law (such as removing legal mobility restrictions) increases women's access to finance. Boost awareness of existing gender discriminatory laws and take action to change them.
- Legal reform to family law is associated with higher levels of women's business ownership and/or women's labor supply. Work with local, regional, and international organizations with successful track records to achieve legal reform and effective implementation of laws advancing gender equality.

Promising Interventions to Reform Family Law:

- Digital ID systems accompanied by reforms increase women's agency. Reform legal and policy requirements and restrictions for women to obtain ID cards.
- Utilizing international conventions to advocate for strengthening legal protections against gender-based violence and reforming discriminatory family laws that reduce women's economic agency.

Proven Interventions to Equalize Land Rights:

- Formalizing women's land rights through joint-titling increases women's decision-making and use of land. Adopt strategies to increase joint land titling.
- Formalizing women's land rights through documenting and demarcating land increases women's land tenure. Provide easy access to formal land demarcation services to strengthen women's landholder rights.
- Reforming inheritance laws increases women's investment in land, wealth accumulation, and bargaining power within the household. Remove legal restrictions to inheritance laws that discriminate against women.



Promising Interventions to Equalize Land Rights:

- Ensuring equal access to justice and legal assistance to support the protection of women's and girls' rights, including on issues related to property, in particular land tenure, in rural and urban areas, inheritance and financial services.
- Offering subsidies and targeted informational videos can increase joint land titling. Provide additional information and offer subsidies to encourage joint titling of land for married couples.



Proven Interventions to Increase Labor Force Participation:

- 💡 Greater gender equality under the law is linked to increased women's labor force participation rate. Remove discriminatory legal restrictions that limit women's participation in the workforce, such as mobility restrictions, and women's inability to independently open a bank account, sign a contract, obtain a job, and head a household.
- 💡 Improved property rights for women increase female labor supply. Equal property rights improve women's standing and autonomy within the household, which results in increased female labor supply. Adopt equal property and inheritance rights for women and men to increase women's engagement in the formal labor market.

Promising Interventions to Increase Labor Force Participation:

- 🔍 Access to universal childcare is likely to increase female labor supply. Low-cost and high-quality childcare provides mothers and female caretakers the choice to engage in paid work in both low-income and high-income settings. Provide universal low-cost and high-quality childcare options to support women's labor force participation.
- 🔍 For women working in the informal sector, collective organizing can be an effective strategy for improving working conditions and providing social and economic benefits to informal women workers.

Proven Interventions for Enhancing Organizational and Business Policies:

There is strong evidence supporting the business case for gender equality in the workplace; more research is required to validate proven interventions.

Promising Interventions for Enhancing Organizational and Business Policies:

- 🔍 Gender-equal and family-friendly policies, programs, and practices support women's employment. Introduce policies that support WEE for female employees such as greater workplace flexibility, paid maternity and paternity leave, equal pay, protection from gender-based violence, equal access to leadership positions, and greater work-life integration.
- 🔍 Workplace childcare provisions provide significant business and social returns that benefit women. Provide childcare options to employees with children.



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, only

47%

of all women aged 15 and older participated in the labor force

Proven Interventions to Improve Fiscal Policy:

- 💡 Individual tax filing increases women's labor force participation. Increasing marginal tax rates incurred by married couples that file taxes jointly discourage women, who tend to be the secondary earners in a household, from engaging in paid employment. Adopt individual tax filing for married couples.
- 💡 Policies that increase the transparency of the gender wage gap can increase female earnings. Introduce a government mandate for private sector employers to report on the gender wage gap of their workforce on an annual basis.

Promising Interventions to Improve Fiscal Policy:

- 🔍 Pension reform that partially compensates women for their unpaid childcare absences is effective in reducing gender inequalities. Adopt pension systems that mitigate gender differences in paid formal employment, earnings, and caretaking responsibilities.
- 🔍 Government cash transfers to married women in poor households can have wide-ranging WEE benefits, such as increased mobility, decision-making within the household, and control over how the cash transfer is spent. Introduce cash transfer programs for women to reduce restrictive social and cultural norms that limit WEE.
- 🔍 Political quotas that increase women's political participation in national and local government can have a positive impact on WEE initiatives supporting female constituents. Legislate quotas to increase women's political representation and impact on policymaking that may benefit female constituents.