



The International Centre for
Evaluation and Development

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

*GENDER EQUITY AND
GOVERNANCE PROJECT*

**Gender-Responsive Macro-Level
Policies and Women's Economic
Empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa:
An Evidence and Gap Map**

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

Gender-Responsive Macro-Level Policies and Women's Economic Empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Evidence and Gap Map

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The Evidence and Gap Map (EGM) on gender-responsive macro-level policies and women's economic empowerment revealed studies that were disproportionately concentrated in sub-Saharan African countries. Additionally, the existing reviews were generally of moderate quality.

The EGM in brief

This EGM examines and discusses the evidence on macro-level policy interventions that are gender-responsive and designed to promote women's economic empowerment. It emphasizes that much of the existing evidence centers on social protection policies, particularly childcare policies, and their impact on physical well-being outcomes. Most of this evidence comes from Southern Africa.

What is this EGM about?

Women in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, are often confined to informal and low-quality jobs because of structural, legal, and macroeconomic barriers that cannot be overcome by economic growth alone. This intervention aims to tackle these constraints by synthesizing evidence on gender-responsive macro-level policies that foster inclusive labor markets and promote sustainable economic empowerment for women.

What is the aim of this EGM?

To provide evidence from studies on macro-level policy interventions that are gender-responsive and aimed at promoting women's economic empowerment in sub-Saharan Africa.

What studies are included?

The EGM included 245 studies, consisting of 224 primary studies and 21 review studies, all evaluating macro-level policy interventions designed to promote women's economic empowerment. These studies specifically targeted gender-responsive interventions in sub-Saharan Africa.

What are the main findings of this gap map?

The evidence presented in this EGM underscores the importance of macroeconomic and social protection policies in promoting women's economic empowerment. Specifically, it highlights clusters of evidence related to fiscal, childcare, and healthcare policies. Additionally, there is significant evidence concerning decent work and unpaid care work policies within the informal economy.

Most of the evidence is drawn from Southern African countries, including South Africa, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The systematic reviews included in this EGM are primarily of moderate quality, with fewer than 30% classified as high quality.

Over 45% of the studies reported outcomes related to well-being. Furthermore, there were 29 studies evaluating policy interventions on women's employment opportunities and 48 studies focusing on income-related interventions.

While all regions of sub-Saharan Africa were represented, the majority of studies originated from Southern Africa (37%), with only a small percentage coming from Central Africa (2.7%). Most interventions in Eastern and Western Africa concentrated on social protection policies, with fewer studies addressing advocacy initiatives for women's economic empowerment.

What do the findings of the map mean?

This EGM aims to identify gender-responsive macro-level policy interventions that promote women's economic empowerment. The EGM is limited by uneven evidence across geographies, and it is overrepresented in terms of interventions related to social protection and macroeconomic interventions compared to other interventions, such as advocacy. Evidence is more represented in Southern Africa, with a notable number of studies also available from Western and Eastern Africa. This map helps establish an evidence base in the field, allowing funders and researchers to identify existing gaps and prioritize future research efforts.

How up-to-date is this EGM?

We conducted a search for relevant studies up to September 25, 2024.