What will work?
Empowering women economically

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Female disadvantage begins early and persists over time...

- By the time Kalyani is 18, she will be married.
- Her access to and ownership of resources will be limited, if at all.
- She will lose her existing social network and kinships post marriage.
- Within 2 years of marriage she will give birth to her first child.
Wither economic opportunities?

- In 2011, only 20% of rural married women in age 15-60 were in the labor force, 30 percentage points lower than for unmarried women.

- While workforce participation rates amongst urban unmarried women went up by 11 ppt between 1999-2011, it has been stagnant for married women at 20% for the past thirty years.

- For married and unmarried men, the participation rates are high (around 95%) and constant over time. If anything, married men have a slightly higher rate of labor force attachment than unmarried men.
Wither economic opportunities?

- Lack of ownership of productive assets by women limits their entrepreneurial ability.

- Low human capital investments in girls, both in terms of quality and quantity, restricts labor market access.

- Absence of a strong social network, limits information about job and market opportunities.

- Gendered division of time use within the household confines women to within homes.
Supply side constraints

Cultural norms underlying the traditional role of men and women in the Indian households lead to

• higher elasticity of women’s relative to men’s labor supply, due to lack of job market skills and low education.

• non-substitutability between male and female labor in home production

• absence of child care services coupled with the shift towards more nuclear families may have exacerbated the burden of domestic work on women.
Demand side constraints

- lack of (good) jobs which women with relatively low levels of education can engage in (e.g. manufacturing)

- absence of flexible work hours

- safe and easier physical access to work

- persistent gender gap in wages and earnings
Identifying and alleviating constraints

• Macro economic framework with a life cycle approach
  
  • What constraints women’s access to economic opportunities at various stages of her life?
  
  • Which sectors of the economy have shrinking opportunities for women?
  
  • Which sectors are more likely to engage women productively with ‘good’ jobs?
Women’s Labor Force Participation (Rural)

Source: NSS various years (own calculations)
Women's Labor Force Participation (Rural)

LFPR (UPSS): Age 25-65

Source: NSS various years (own calculations)
Identifying and alleviating constraints

• Microeconomic and sectoral analysis

  • Agriculture:
    • reducing unpaid work, adopting new technology on the farm, access to markets

  • Manufacturing:
    • skill training, child care services

• Services:
  • safety
What works?

• The constraints women face in achieving economic empowerment are multifaceted.

• We need evidence on the relative effectiveness of interventions and policies that address the multidimensionality of this issue.