

Unpacking **Socio-Emotional Skills** for Women's Economic Empowerment

Socio-emotional skills (SES) have recently attracted attention from policymakers for their potential to yield high economic returns, especially in developing countries. The World Bank's Africa Region Gender Innovation Lab (GIL) has launched a program to identify (i) which SES are most critical to economic empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), (ii) the extent to which programs aimed at increasing beneficiaries' levels of socio-emotional skills are effective in doing so, and at impacting their economic outcomes, (iii) how beneficiaries' baseline levels of socio-emotional skills affect the returns to entrepreneurship and employment support programs. With regards to all of these, GIL is looking at how socio-emotional skills matter differently for women and men, and how the answers to these questions interact with gender norms.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND HOW SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS CAN SUPPORT WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT?

- The promise of SES-focused interventions is immense, with recent evidence from Togo showing such training has three times the impact of traditional business training on female entrepreneurs' profits (Campos et al., 2018).
- However, there has been relatively little research focused on understanding which socio-emotional skills matter most for economic empowerment, how to effectively deliver these skills, whether SES training can be leveraged to improve take-up of other programs, which skills may benefit women in particular and how societal conditions affect the uptake and economic impact of socio-emotional programs.

WHAT ARE THE CORE PILLARS OF THIS PROGRAM?

In order to examine which SES matter most for women's economic empowerment, the research design includes three main pillars: (i) a meta-analysis of studies that include measures of SES in order to examine gender differences in levels of measured SES and returns to SES, (ii) understanding the measurement of SES and adapting/developing measures to utilize for future research, and (iii) a series of four randomized control trials (RCTs) that compare the impact of curricula focusing on particular skills. The pillars are designed to be complementary and take advantage of existing resources.

GENDER INNOVATION LAB

The Gender Innovation Lab (GIL) conducts impact evaluations of development interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa, seeking to generate evidence on how to close gender gaps in earnings, productivity, assets, and agency. The GIL team is currently working on over 70 impact evaluations in more than 25 countries with the aim of building an evidence base with lessons for the region.

The impact objective of GIL is increasing take-up of effective policies by governments, development organizations, and the private sector to address the underlying causes of gender inequality in Africa, particularly in terms of women's economic and social empowerment. The Lab aims to do this by producing and delivering a new body of evidence and developing a compelling narrative, geared towards policymakers, on what works and what does not work in promoting gender equality.

WHICH SKILLS ARE BEING STUDIED?

We developed a list of 14 SES designed to (i) capture skills that may be key to the labor force, based on literature from psychology, management, and economics, (ii) tease out gender differences, (iii) span the range of SES while mapping to existing framework, with a clear differentiation between interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, (iv) focus on skills that are mutable and exclude attitudes or preferences.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Literature on gender differences and economic empowerment
- Spanning range of SES
- Overlap (categorization exercise) & expected dependencies
- Skills discussed in focus group discussions
- Mapping to other frameworks
 - » CASEL
 - » YouthPower
 - » Big 5

	INTRAPERSONAL	INTERPERSONAL
AWARENESS	<p>Emotional Awareness: identifying and accepting one's emotions</p> <p>Self Awareness: identifying and interpreting one's own thoughts and behaviors and to evaluate one's strengths and weaknesses</p>	<p>Listening: attending to what other people are saying, taking time to understand other's point of view, asking clarifying questions and not interrupting at inappropriate times</p> <p>Empathy: understand another's viewpoint or thoughts and have emotional concern for another's situation or experience</p>
MANAGEMENT	<p>Emotional Regulation: maintaining or changing one's own emotions by controlling one's thoughts and behavioral response</p> <p>Self Control: focusing one's attention, staying on task, breaking habits, restraining impulses and keeping good self-discipline</p> <p>Personal Initiative: developing long-term goals, to seek opportunities to improve one's self and to be motivated to put these plans and goals into action</p> <p>Perseverance: sustaining effort despite setbacks</p> <p>Problem Solving: approaching a problem by gathering information, generating a number of solutions and evaluating the consequences of these solutions before acting</p>	<p>Expressiveness: explaining ideas in a way that others will understand and openly expressing one's opinion</p> <p>Interpersonal Relatedness: taking actions intended to build trust and benefit others, initiating and maintaining relationships and being respectful, encouraging and caring for others</p> <p>Interpersonal Influence: communicating in a manner that changes other's perspectives and adapting one's behavior in situationally appropriate ways to influence others</p> <p>Negotiation: the ability to identify one's own and other's interests during a disagreement and to change one's own behaviors, thoughts and feelings as a strategy for resolving interpersonal problems and achieving one's goals</p> <p>Collaboration: considering different perspectives, listening and communicating in groups of two or more people, identifying situations involving group problem-solving and decision-making, and organizing and coordinating team members to create shared plans and goals</p>

HOW WERE THE SES MEASURES DEVELOPED?

- The SES measures for these studies required an instrument with low literacy and computer literacy requirements, that could be administered by an enumerator with an offline tablet in household surveys, with limited time.
- The instrument needed to be contextually relevant, with limited game-ability and bias.
- In the context of the planned randomized control trials, the team was particularly concerned about reference bias, and the growth and comparison properties of the instrument. To address this, the team has worked to develop one self-reported measure and at least one alternative measure for each of the 14 skills. Alternative measures include tasks, household informant interviews, and situational judgment tests. The self-reports themselves also require extensive adaptation and several rounds of translation in order to capture each skill.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- The team conducted cognitive interviews and pilots in culturally disparate areas, including several measures of the same skill to allow for comparability. Consistent measures are being used for RCTs in Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal and Tanzania. This data is being leveraged to examine reliability, factor structure, predictive validity, and bias. The team is also running various survey experiments on the order in which questions are asked, the gender of individuals in situational judgment tests, the gender of the household informant, and response scales.