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## INTERVENTIONS FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

### An evidence gap map

Sabina Singh, Martin Prowse, Howard White, Asha Warsame, Ratheebhai Vijayamma,  
Andreas Reumann, Jyotsna Puri, Vibhuti Mendiratta, Deborah Sun Kim, Naila Kabeer, Mir  
Shahriar Islam, Romina Cavatassi, Ndaya Beltchika, Aslihan Arslan



GREEN  
CLIMATE  
FUND

Independent  
Evaluation  
Unit





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© 2022 Green Climate Fund Independent Evaluation Unit  
175, Art center-daero  
Yeonsu-gu, Incheon 22004  
Republic of Korea  
Tel. (+82) 032-458-6450  
Email: [ieu@gcfund.org](mailto:ieu@gcfund.org)  
<https://ieu.greenclimate.fund>

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### **Credits**

*Head of the GCF Independent Evaluation Unit a.i.:* Andreas Reumann

*Task manager:* Martin Prowse, Evaluation Specialist, Independent Evaluation Unit

*Editing:* Beverley Mitchell

*Layout and design:* Giang Pham

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## About this IEU Learning Paper

This evidence gap map contains 423 studies with 288 impact evaluations, 105 process evaluations and 38 systematic reviews. Most of the evidence is from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. There is evidence on economic interventions and capacity-building interventions. Policy and institutional interventions appear to be an evidence gap area. Political empowerment outcome categories are much less populated than other outcome categories. Women's representation in political bodies, digital access and access to justice also appear as cells with very little evidence.



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## LIST OF AUTHORS

The authors of this evidence gap map are listed in reverse alphabetical order by last name, except for Sabina Singh (the lead from the Campbell Collaboration) and Martin Prowse (the task manager from the Independent Evaluation Unit of the Green Climate Fund).

FULL NAME	AFFILIATION
Sabina Singh	Campbell South Asia
Martin Prowse	Independent Evaluation Unit, Green Climate Fund
Howard White	Campbell Collaboration and Global Development Network
Asha Warsame	Independent Evaluation Unit, Green Climate Fund
Ratheebhai Vijayamma	Campbell Collaboration
Andreas Reumann	Independent Evaluation Unit, Green Climate Fund
Jyotsna Puri	International Fund for Agricultural Development
Vibhuti Mendiratta	International Fund for Agricultural Development
Deborah Sun Kim	Independent Evaluation Unit, Green Climate Fund
Naila Kabeer	London School of Economics
Mir Shahriar Islam	International Fund for Agricultural Development
Romina Cavatassi	International Fund for Agricultural Development
Ndaya Beltchika	International Fund for Agricultural Development
Aslihan Arslan	International Fund for Agricultural Development



## ABSTRACT

Gender inequality remains a pervasive challenge, not only from a development perspective but also from a human rights perspective. Recent years have seen a renewed interest in empowering girls and women across sectors, particularly due to the focus the Sustainable Development Goals have put on women's involvement and engagement as equal partners and on achieving gender equality.

There is a broad spectrum of interventions targeted at gender equality in developing countries. However, to our knowledge, there is no evidence gap map on the effectiveness of interventions to improve women's empowerment in developing countries. This evidence gap map (EGM) plots studies on the effectiveness of interventions for women's empowerment in developing countries (defined here as the list of countries defined by the Kyoto Protocol as non-Annex I countries).

This EGM is based on a comprehensive and systematic search of academic databases and grey literature sources, screening of selected academic journals published in the last five years and citation tracking of selected systematic reviews during February 2022. Though we were primarily interested in mapping effectiveness studies, we also included process evaluations that might be useful in understanding some of the implementation issues in the effectiveness of interventions.

The EGM thus comprises impact evaluations, process evaluations and systematic reviews of interventions for women's empowerment in developing countries. The eligible population for this map included girls and women of any age, although the intervention could also be targeted at boys and men of any age. A theory of change and an intervention–outcome framework were developed for this EGM, and the map followed the conventional Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes and Study (PICOS) framework. The EGM contains 423 studies, of which 288 are impact evaluations, 105 are process evaluations and 38 are systematic reviews (which totals 431 studies because a single study may be an impact evaluation as well as a process evaluation). Nearly 80 per cent of included systematic reviews are assessed to be low-confidence reviews.

Most of the evidence is from studies conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. There is a relatively large amount of evidence on economic interventions and capacity-building interventions, and both these categories in the map have a high number of impact evaluations and systematic reviews. There is a dearth of evidence on policy and institutional interventions.

In terms of outcomes, political empowerment outcome categories are far less populated than other outcome categories. Women's representation in political bodies, digital access and access to justice shows very little evidence. It appears that researchers frequently use the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index to measure women's empowerment. Variations of this index such as the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) and the Women's Empowerment in Livestock Index are also used to measure empowerment in a range of studies.

This EGM serves as a useful visual resource for the Green Climate Fund, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, practitioners, policymakers and researchers to understand the areas in which most research on the effectiveness of interventions for women's empowerment is concentrated. The map also highlights intervention–outcome combinations where a limited amount of research has been conducted. The highly populated combinations can be explored further to conduct systematic reviews if prior systematic reviews are not available. More primary research may be conducted where there is a scarcity of evidence. Overall, this EGM provides granular information on the specific intervention and outcome combinations where evidence exists and where evidence is lacking.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>EGM</b>	Evidence gap map
<b>GCF</b>	Green Climate Fund
<b>IEU</b>	Independent Evaluation Unit
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>NRSI</b>	Non-randomized studies of intervention
<b>PICOS</b>	Population, intervention, outcomes and study design
<b>PRISMA</b>	Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses
<b>pro-WEAI</b>	Project-level Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index
<b>RCT</b>	Randomized controlled trial
<b>RoB</b>	Risk of bias
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
<b>WEAI</b>	Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index





## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. BACKGROUND

Women's empowerment is often proposed as a solution to tackle gender inequality as well as other development outcomes. Over two decades ago, Kabeer (1999) noted that the inherent value in advocating for women's empowerment would often not be sufficient for policymakers unless it was linked to certain development outcomes, such as poverty reduction, improved child nutrition and health, family welfare or fertility decline (with this last point becoming particularly prominent after the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994).

Gender inequality remains a pervasive challenge, not only from an instrumental development perspective but also from an intrinsic human rights perspective. For this reason, recent years have seen a renewed interest in empowering girls and women across sectors, particularly due to the focus the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have put on achieving gender equality and on women's involvement and engagement as equal partners.

However, the path to female empowerment is beset with varied challenges. One of the most contested and debated issue is around the definition of empowerment itself. Kabeer (1999) noted that some feminists find this conceptual fuzziness useful as "it gives us a breathing space to work it out in action terms before we have to pin ourselves down to what it means" (Batliwala, 1993, p. 48, cited in Kabeer, 1999). We build on Kabeer's conceptualization of empowerment as a process that involves incremental steps involving interrelated dimensions of resources, agency and achievements of girls and women of all ages. Furthermore, empowerment can be at different levels, such as at the individual or community level, and covers social, political and economic spheres. In essence, Kabeer notes, empowerment "is inescapably bound up with the condition of disempowerment and refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability" (p. 437). It is about the "expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them" (p. 437.).

The recent interest in empowering girls and women is a welcome change, but at the same time it is important to ensure that empowerment is not merely a buzz word but translates as positive outcomes for girls and women of all ages. Moreover, we need to recognize and understand the economic determinism that has become associated with empowerment over the years. It is thus important to decode the variety of interventions that aim at empowering girls and women and whether they are effective. This evidence gap map (EGM) plots a variety of empowerment interventions in varied contexts in developing countries across a bespoke typology of interventions in this field.

Programmes or interventions that aim to promote the empowerment of girls and women of any age at any level and across any sphere are important. In addition to the intrinsic moral value of gender equality, empowerment of girls and women may also result in better climate and development outcomes, an added advantage. From the perspective of climate change, an equal society with men and women as equal partners can better adapt to adversities/shocks posed by climate change. Gender equality is at the heart of a more sustainable and just future.

### B. POLICY RELEVANCE

As indicated above, it is widely acknowledged that many of the SDGs cannot be achieved unless gender inequality is addressed. The SDGs for climate action (SDG 13), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), and the eradication of hunger (SDG 2) and poverty (SDG 1) are closely

linked to addressing gender inequality (SDG 5). Doss and others (2018) suggest that at least 11 of the 17 SDGs require indicators related to gender dynamics.

The rationale for this review is that there is no existing EGM on women's empowerment in developing countries.<sup>1</sup> There is an ongoing map from the World Bank's Gender Innovation Lab, but it is different in scope and geographically more restricted. In addition, there are many systematic reviews including a mixed-method systematic review on the effectiveness of self-help group programmes for improving women's empowerment. This found that self-help groups have positive effects on the economic, social and political empowerment of women (Brody and others, 2015). Another review suggests that vocational and business training had a small effect on women's employment, income and earnings in low- and middle-income countries (Chinen and others, 2017). Another review studied the effects of microcredit on women's control over household spending in developing countries (Vaessen and others, 2014). A further systematic review discussed women's empowerment and gender equality but is confined to fragile contexts (Lwamba and others, 2022). To summarize, as far as we are aware, there is no comparable EGM on women's empowerment across a wide range of interventions and outcome areas.

## C. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this collaboration is to produce an EGM that visually depicts what evidence exists regarding the effectiveness of interventions that seek to promote women's empowerment. Specifically, we have undertaken the following:

- 1) Developed a typology of interventions for women's empowerment, and anticipated outcomes from these interventions.
- 2) Created an EGM showing evaluations of interventions to increase women's empowerment.
- 3) Included filters on population, intervention and outcome characteristics.

The next section details the theory of change, intervention–outcome framework, search methods, data collection and analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> The developing countries in this EGM refer to countries as defined by the Kyoto protocol (non-Annex I) countries.

## II. METHODS

This section details the theory of change, intervention–outcome framework and inclusion/exclusion criteria. It details the eligibility criteria of studies to be included in this map under the conventional population, intervention, outcomes and study design (PICOS) framework. It also discusses the search methods used to develop EGMs, such as the systematic search of academic and other databases, websites, and hand searches of selected journals and citation tracking. The details of the screening at title and abstract stage, full-text stage, and data extraction, data collection and analysis are also described.

### A. THEORY OF CHANGE

Figure 1 presents the evidence review's theory of change. The theory of change illustrates the types of interventions in the EGM and the outcome areas. It also illustrates the enabling environment, filters in the EGM, feedback loops and agents for empowerment.

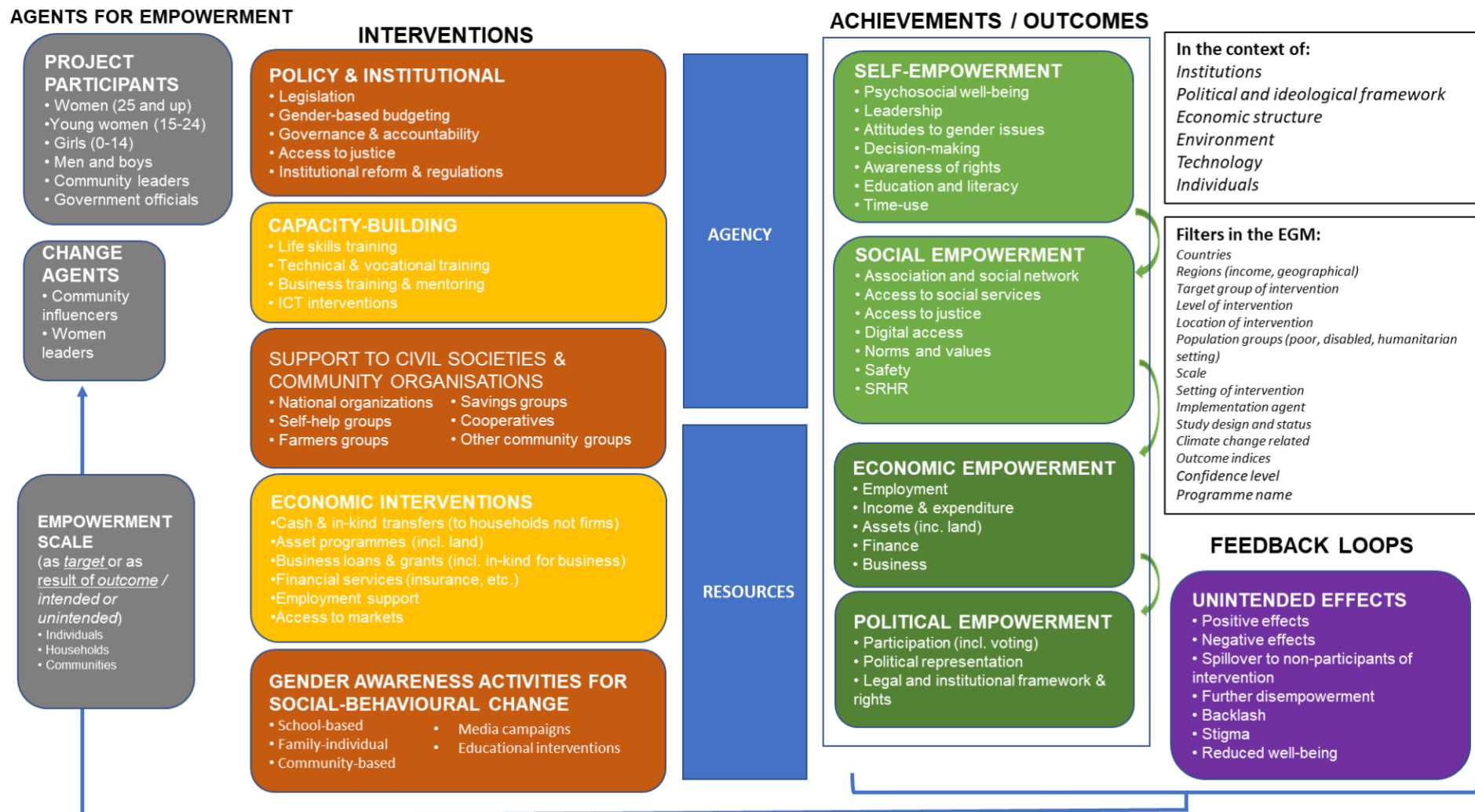
The EGM considers five broad pathways leading to women's empowerment – namely, policy and institutional, capacity-building, support to civil society and community organizations, economic interventions and gender awareness activities for social-behavioural change. All of these pathways, jointly, contribute to improved resources and agency (from Kabeer's framework), which directly or indirectly map onto one or multiple dimensions of women's empowerment, categorized as self, social, economic and political empowerment. These empowerment domains are the outcomes (or “achievements” in Kabeer's terms) the interventions are seeking to achieve.

The relative impact of these interventions is expected to hinge on several factors, including whether the intervention is implemented at the individual, household, community or society level and the institution or service provider responsible for its implementation. The urban or rural location of the intervention may also affect empowerment outcomes. Women's characteristics that are likely to influence the four dimensions of empowerment include age, race/ethnicity, caste, religion, migrant status, indigenous group, lifecycle status (pregnant, lactating, adolescent), civil status (widow, married, single, divorced), abilities (consider people with disabilities) and household status (whether the head of the household or a household member). Finally, the impact on sustainable empowerment will also be affected by the intervention being either stand-alone or combined with others.

Women, girls, men, boys, community leaders and/or government officials are expected to participate in empowerment programmes. Community influencers and women leaders could act as facilitators in promoting women's empowerment. Finally, it is important to highlight the unintended consequences of some interventions. These may include spillover effects to non-participants, disempowerment, backlash, stigmatization and reduced well-being.

For these interventions to yield the desired and expected outcomes, key assumptions need to hold. Some key assumptions relate to the political environment, government structures and macroeconomic stability. Other important assumptions relate to the availability of adequate financial resources and institutions and of service providers capable of effectively implementing interventions. Another set of assumptions relates to the interest and willingness of the target population to participate in, adopt and access various interventions. Yet another set of assumptions relates to the fact that interventions will build momentum for a change in norms, values or attitudes and scaling up. Specific interventions are also likely to be highly context-specific and thereby work only if certain assumptions hold in that context.

Figure 1. Theory of change for this evidence gap map



## B. INTERVENTION–OUTCOME FRAMEWORK

This EGM utilizes an intervention–outcome framework, with population, intervention and outcome characteristic filters. In an EGM of effectiveness studies, interventions and outcomes are referred to as primary dimensions, and various filters are called secondary dimensions. The categories of intervention and outcome domains along with their subcategories are given below. Detailed definitions of the intervention and outcome categories have ensured homogeneity in what each category conveys and are presented in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

### 1. INTERVENTION CATEGORIES

The classification of the intervention categories, as determined by the conceptual framework, has five broad categories with further subcategories. The five broad categories of interventions include policy and institutional interventions, capacity-building interventions, interventions supporting civil society and community organizations, economic interventions and socio-behaviour communication interventions. The list of intervention categories and subcategories is given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Intervention categories*

INTERVENTION CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES
1. Policy and institutional	Legislation Gender-based budgeting Governance & accountability Access to justice Institutional reform & regulations
2. Capacity-building	Life skills training Technical and vocational training Business training & mentoring Information and communication technology (interventions)
3. Support to civil society and community organizations	National organizations Self-help groups Farmers groups Savings groups Cooperatives Other community groups
4. Economic interventions	Cash and in-kind transfers (to households not firms) Asset programmes (including land) Business loans and grants (including in-kind for business) Financial services (insurance, etc.) Employment support Access to markets
5. Gender awareness activities for social-behavioural change	School-based Family/individual Community-based Media campaigns Educational interventions

## 2. OUTCOME CATEGORIES

The outcomes for this map are broadly classified as self-empowerment, social empowerment, political empowerment and economic empowerment, with further subcategories under each of the outcomes. The list of outcome categories is given in Table 2. Full definitions of both intrinsic and instrumental outcome categories and subcategories are given in Appendix 2.

**Table 2. Outcome categories\***

OUTCOME CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES
Self-empowerment	Psychosocial well-being Leadership Attitudes to gender issues Decision-making Awareness of rights Education and literacy Time-use
Social empowerment	Mobility Association and social network Access to social services Access to justice Digital access Norms and values Safety Sexual and reproductive health rights
Economic empowerment	Employment Income & expenditure Assets (incl. land) Finance Business
Political empowerment	Participation (incl. voting) Political representation Legal and institutional framework and rights

Note: \* As shown in the theory of change in Figure 1, the outcome categories are not mutually exclusive. As illustrated, they reinforce each other.

## C. INCLUSION/EXCLUSION CRITERIA

An evidence review often involves breaking down the scope of the work along the PICOS components, where P stands for population, I denotes intervention, C signifies the presence of a comparison or control group, O implies outcomes, and S is used for study design/setting as per the topic under investigation. All these components are discussed one after the other, along with the inclusion/exclusion criteria.

### 1. POPULATION

This evidence review focuses on developing countries, specifically countries defined by the Kyoto Protocol as non-Annex I countries. The target group of the eligible interventions could be women of any age and may also include men and boys of any age from the list of countries mentioned above.



All subgroups of the population in the eligible countries were included except for sexual minorities. The studies were included where these groups of population appeared along with the eligible population group.

## 2. INTERVENTION

The interventions included in the map are interventions intended to increase women's empowerment. One definitional issue the team confronted is that many interventions are now labelled as being empowerment interventions. For this reason, we had to choose between either solely including studies that explicitly label the intervention or outcomes as empowerment, or defining a set of empowerment outcomes and screening studies for those.

The first approach would have biased the included studies against older articles when the empowerment label was not so broadly used. However, the latter approach risks being very broad as a very wide range of interventions can be seen to contribute to gender empowerment. Including any study that includes gender disaggregated outcomes would include a very large proportion of development impact evaluations. After careful reflection we have used the second approach, but with a clearly defined set of eligible outcomes related to women's empowerment, strictly as per the intervention–outcome framework (excluding studies that focus on well-being).

Also, to keep the scope manageable, we have not included interventions that are targeted at women but intend to improve welfare rather than empowerment (e.g. maternal and child health programmes). This rule is easier to state than to apply as a broad range of activities claim to empower women. For example, it is claimed that improved water supply, such as a village water pump, is empowering because of the time savings. However, the map cannot include all studies of water, sanitation and hygiene (commonly known as WASH) interventions. Studies of such interventions reporting only child health outcomes were not included, but studies reporting time savings for women were included. The general rule that emerged was that the initiatives or intervention needed to aim at women specifically, regarding income/assets or voice or time burden.

## 3. COMPARISON OR CONTROL GROUP

For the effectiveness studies, eligible studies included those in which interventions for gender equality or women's empowerment had different intensities or that had a comparison or control group who were participants in the intervention. The condition of an explicit comparison or control group was not essential for process evaluations or studies that discussed the implementation issues of the interventions for women's empowerment.

## 4. OUTCOME

The outcome categories and subcategories defined as per the conceptual framework were eligible for inclusion. However, as mentioned above, the selection of eligible studies was mainly centred around outcome categories, primarily to tackle the challenge posed by only including studies with interventions using an empowerment label. For instance, a study of a microfinance programme targeted at women was not included if outcomes were restricted to business performance, but the study was included if it had an empowerment goal, including economic empowerment through women's income. Furthermore, mere disaggregated data on income was not considered as empowerment unless there was a specific reference to exercising choice regarding the use of income by women. Hence, to be included, the study with gender disaggregated outcomes was a necessary but not sufficient condition.

It is important to highlight the contribution qualitative studies make to this map. Qualitative studies often discuss barriers and facilitators to successful implementation, present participant and other

stakeholder perceptions or unpack causal processes. The EGM thus includes columns for “implementation issues”, “stakeholder perceptions” and “causal mechanisms” to capture such studies in the map.

Where a study reports a composite empowerment measure such as the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), then it is coded under each component of that study. We have also included a column for composite empowerment outcomes so the map can identify a list of such indices which are being used. The EGM also includes unintended effects of interventions, including potential negative effects (i.e. further disempowerment, backlash, trade-offs, stigma and reduced well-being) where studies capture these measures. All outcomes may be measured at the individual, household or community level (or a larger geographic level). The unit of measurement is coded as a filter.

## 5. STUDY DESIGN

The following eligible study designs are included in this EGM:

- Impact studies: study of the impact of an intervention using an experimental or non-experimental design, the latter either with a valid comparison group, or a regression-based approach using data on untreated observations that are adjusted for selection bias, such as through the use of instrumental variables.
- Other evaluations and qualitative studies of interventions are also included. Process evaluations are evaluations of implementation usually based on qualitative data. There are also qualitative studies of interventions – for example, ethnographic studies, often called “development anthropology”, which are not evaluations of the intervention in the conventional sense and were not eligible for this EGM.
- Systematic reviews of the above two categories of studies.

In addition to the PICOS framework, only studies published in the English language in academic journals or grey literature were eligible for inclusion. Commentaries, discussion papers, letter to editors or general reviews of the literature that did not specify search methods, as well as procedures used for data collection and extraction, were not included in this EGM. We excluded all studies published before the year 2000.

## D. SEARCH STRATEGY

This section details the methods used for the systematic search of academic and other databases, websites and other search methods, such as hand searches of selected journals and citation tracking. A protocol was developed with the list of databases to be searched, along with other sources such as organizational websites or databases that retrieve reports and other grey literature. The protocol also included a list of selected journals (likely to include eligible studies and that were approved by the advisory group members). These journals were screened, and any articles from the past five years were eligible for inclusion.

### 1. SYSTEMATIC SEARCH OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER DATABASES

The records in this EGM are from the systematic search of eight academic databases, as detailed in Table 3. The dates of searches and the number of hits for each database are also described in the table. The search strings for various databases were customized. In general, search terms included synonyms of population, intervention, outcome, study design and list of eligible countries as per the eligibility criteria of this EGM. The Boolean operators OR and AND were used, where possible. The list of countries as per the criteria of the map (countries defined as non-Annex 1 countries in the

Kyoto Protocol) was used as a filter for various databases. Some of the eligible programme names and outcome indices were also used to ensure a better coverage of eligible studies. The sample search string used with the Scopus database is given in 0. The records from all these databases were merged, deduplicated and imported to EPPI-Reviewer for screening and data extraction. The team members used the EPPI-Reviewer 4 and EPPI-Reviewer Web versions.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 3.** *List of databases searched with dates of searches and number of hits*

DATABASE	DATE OF SEARCH	NUMBER OF HITS
CAB Abstracts	21-02-2022	1,189
EconLit with full text, Political science complete, Soc-Index complete, Social science full text, Education source APA PSYC Articles (EBSCOhost platform)	24-02-2022	486
JSTOR	19-02-2022	102
ProQuest	22-02-2022	304
PubMed	24-02-2022	647
Sage Journals Database	25-02-2022	407
Scopus	18-02-2022	311
Web of Science	24-02-2022	1,996

Source: Authors

## 2. WEB SEARCHES AND OTHER SEARCH METHODS

In addition to the academic database searches, searches for other databases and websites were also conducted in a systematic manner. The dates of searches and the number of hits for each search source are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** *List of grey literature sources searched, dates of searches and number of hits*

WEBSITE/GREY LITERATURE SOURCES	DATE OF SEARCH	NUMBER OF HITS
Engender Impact	24-02-2022	64
EPPI systematic reviews, EPPI knowledge library	25-02-2022	14
International Centre for Research on Women	25-02-2022	12
IDEAS/REPEC	22-02-2022	150
National Bureau of Economic Research	22-02-2022	59
SSRN	23-02-2022	54
UNWomen	23-02-2022	42
USAID-DCE	26-02-2022	199

Source: Authors

The search terms used included the Boolean operator AND combined with women's empowerment and various study designs eligible for the EGM. The country filters were used where available. The

<sup>2</sup> EPPI-Reviewer 4 only works in Internet Explorer, and users need to install Microsoft Silverlight to be able to access the software. The web version or the beta version can be accessed using any modern browsers, such as Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge. The researchers used either of the two approaches because the features of both versions are similar, only the interface looks different.

Boolean operator AND was also used for women's empowerment combined with countries and study design. An example of search terms used on SSRN is given below.

**Box 1. Examples of search terms used with SSRN**

women empowerment\* AND “difference in difference”, women empowerment\* AND “developing countries”, women AND “propensity score”, women empowerment AND experimental, women empowerment\* AND “systematic review”, women empowerment\* AND “metaanalysis”, women empowerment\* AND rct, women empowerment\* AND effectiveness, women empowerment\* AND “impact evaluation”

The search terms used for IDEAS/REPEC are also given in 0. The records from the sources other than databases were double screened in Microsoft Excel or on-screen before being imported into EPPI-Reviewer. The deduplication of these records then took place. This EGM also included records from manual searches of key selected academic journals from the past five years. The list of all these journals is given in Appendix 4. Citations were also tracked from selected systematic reviews. Backward citation tracking was thus used in this EGM to identify impact evaluations from the systematic reviews.

## E. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The number of records searched from each of the academic databases and other sources, along with the dates of searches and search strings, were recorded in a spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel. Each record was screened by a set of two researchers independently using a screening tool and a third researcher resolved any disagreements. The screening at title, abstract and full-text stage ensured that each record was assessed by two researchers. The screening tool is given in Appendix 5. The number of includes and excludes at each stage were also logged in a spreadsheet. The data was extracted from the studies included at the full-text stage using a coding form/data extraction form in EPPI-Reviewer. The coding form used for data extraction is given in Appendix 6. The data was extracted from the studies found eligible at the full-text stage by two researchers. Disagreements were resolved by a third researcher as at the screening stage. For each of the stages that required the comparison of decisions of two researchers, comparison reports were generated in EPPI-Reviewer 4 for reconciliation of disagreements. Data was analysed by using the frequencies and cross tab features in EPPI-Reviewer 4 for primary and secondary dimensions of the map. The tables were exported to Microsoft Excel to plot graphs and bar diagrams. The map was generated using EPPI-Mapper. Some of the figures, such as creating the aggregate map, were plotted using EPPI-Visualiser.

### III. SEARCH RESULTS AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

This section first discusses the search results obtained at various stages, such as title and abstract stage, full-text screening and data extraction. The flow chart of the included studies in the EGM is given following the Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines. The section then deals with the descriptive statistics and gives a broad overview of the map regarding geographic distribution of included studies, study design and trends observed for the primary and secondary dimensions of the map.

#### A. SEARCH RESULTS

##### 1. SCREENING AT TITLE AND ABSTRACT

A total of 5,010 records were identified from the academic database searches. As many as 20 duplicate records were removed, resulting in 4,990 records to be screened at the title and abstract stage. The number of records excluded at this stage was 4,255. The full texts of 735 records were sought, and 25 of these articles could not be retrieved due to paywalls.

In all, 431 records were identified from sources other than academic databases. After removing 54 duplicate records, the remaining 377 records were screened at the title and abstract stage. In total, 128 records were excluded at this stage. The reports of 249 records were sought for screening at the full-text stage, and 19 of these records could not be retrieved. The full texts of the included records at title and abstract stage – from both academic databases and sources other than academic databases – were assessed for eligibility at the full-text stage.

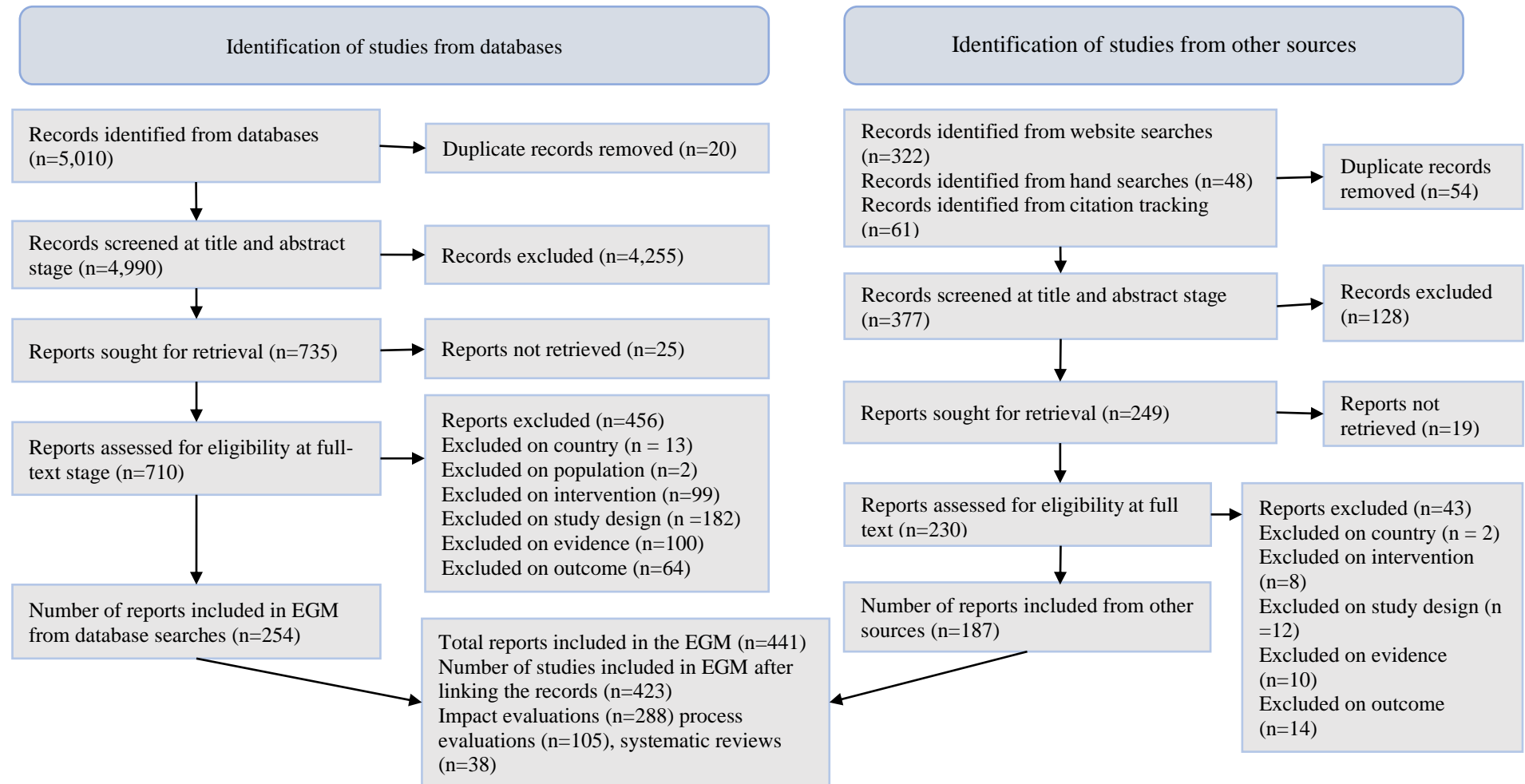
##### 2. SCREENING AT FULL-TEXT STAGE

The reports of the 710 and 230 records identified and found eligible from the academic databases and other sources, respectively, were assessed for eligibility by two researchers. A third researcher resolved any disagreements. In all, 456 records from academic databases were excluded at this stage. The number of records from other sources excluded at this stage was 43. The reasons for the exclusion of both the sets of reports are presented in the PRISMA flow chart (Figure 2).

##### 3. DATA EXTRACTION AND CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF INCLUDED SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS

This EGM includes the reports of a total of 441 records, with 254 records identified from academic databases and 187 records identified from other sources. The reports of records were linked if they referred to different versions of the same study, such as a protocol of a systematic review or baseline findings of a completed study. The most complete and latest version of the record appears as the primary record and appears in the EGM. After the records were linked, 423 studies were included in the EGM. The analysis as reflected in this report is based on these 423 studies. Critical appraisal of the included systematic reviews was undertaken using the Assessing the Methodological Quality of Systematic Reviews-2 (AMSTAR-2) checklist, and the confidence placed in the findings of the systematic reviews was made across the three categories of low, moderate and high.

**Figure 2. PRISMA flow chart of the studies searched, screened and found eligible for EGM at various stages**



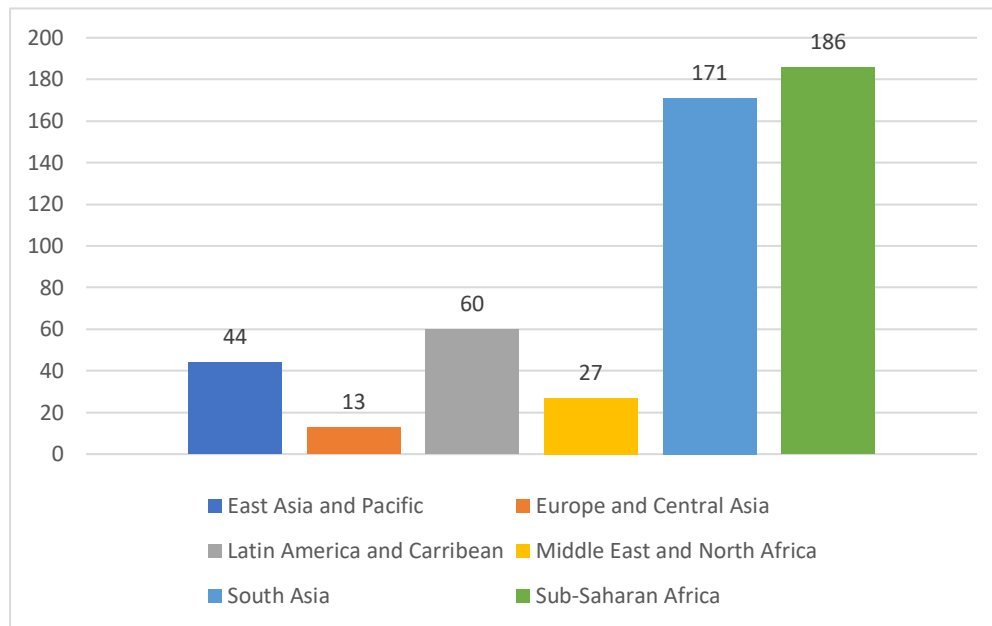


## B. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

### 1. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

The distribution of included studies by geographic region suggests that the highest number of studies are from Sub-Saharan Africa (186), followed by South Asia (171) (Figure 3). A total of 60 studies are from Latin America and the Caribbean. All the remaining regions have fewer than 50 studies. The East Asia and Pacific region has 44 studies, and the Middle East and North Africa region has 27 studies. Thirteen studies in this EGM are from countries from the Europe and Central Asia region and were eligible for inclusion as per the Kyoto Protocol non-Annex I country classification.

**Figure 3.** *Distribution of included studies by geographic region*

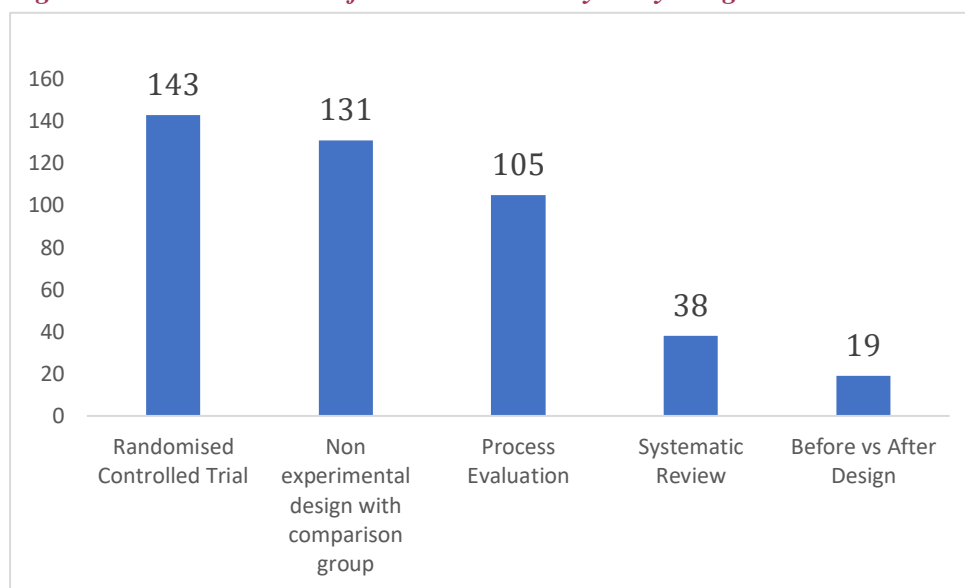


Source: Authors

### 2. STUDY DESIGN

This EGM has 38 systematic reviews of studies with interventions for the empowerment of women. The distribution of included studies by study design suggests that the number of impact evaluations (288) is the highest of all the study designs, followed by that of process evaluations (105). It may, however, be noted that the process evaluation category also includes qualitative research that might be based on stakeholders' experience of an intervention or a programme. Similarly, impact evaluations include randomized controlled trials (RCTs), non-experimental designs with comparison groups, and before-versus-after study designs. In all, 143 RCTs and 131 non-experimental designs with comparison groups are included in this EGM. In addition, these study types are not mutually exclusive, so a single study may be both an impact evaluation and a process evaluation (so the sum of study designs does not equal the number of studies). A breakdown of studies by study design is presented in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Distribution of included studies by study design**



Source: Authors

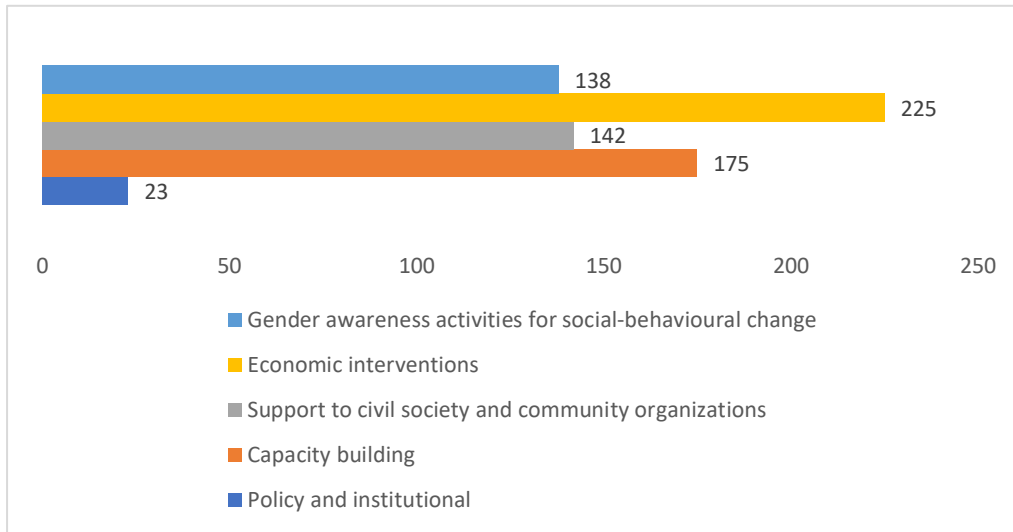
### 3. INTERVENTION

An analysis of the included 423 studies suggests that economic interventions form the largest group (225) among all the included intervention categories. They are followed by capacity-building interventions (142), support to civil society and community organizations (142) and interventions on gender awareness activities for socio-behavioural change (138). The smallest group of studies by intervention category is policy and institutional interventions (23) (Figure 5).

Included studies may have more than one intervention – for example, multicomponent interventions wherein one intervention may be accompanied by another set of interventions. One such example is that described in Cohen and others (2015) for “Shamba Maisha: an agricultural intervention for food security and HIV health outcomes in Kenya”, wherein the intervention included a microfinance loan (~\$150) to purchase farming commodities, along with training sessions in sustainable agricultural practices and financial literacy. This study was coded under the broader categories of economic interventions and capacity-building interventions.

This feature can be observed in this EGM as a norm rather than an exception. Also, of late, there has been an increase in the number of multicomponent interventions as there has been an increasing realization that sustainable and holistic development cannot be achieved unless the interaction of contextual and sociocultural factors is combined with economic factors.

**Figure 5. Distribution of included studies by intervention categories**



Source: Authors

#### 4. INTERVENTION BY STUDY DESIGN

The distribution of interventions by study design suggests that economic interventions have the highest number of impact evaluations among all the intervention categories (which shows that causal evidence exists, not that these interventions are most effective). Of these studies almost an equal number of studies have RCTs and non-experimental designs with comparison groups. Capacity-building interventions also have a good number of impact evaluations. The number of RCTs under this intervention are almost double compared to non-experimental design with comparison groups. As many as 55 studies under support to civil society and community organizations have non-experimental designs with comparison group, and the number of RCTs under this category of interventions is far lower than other categories (except for the policy and institutional interventions, which have lowest number of studies with RCT as a study design). Gender awareness activities for social behaviour change also have a high proportion of RCTs.

**Table 5. Studies by intervention and study design**

INTERVENTION CATEGORIES	STUDY DESIGN				
	Randomized controlled trial	Non-experimental design with comparison group	Before-versus-after design	Systematic review	Process evaluation
Policy and institutional	5	8	0	4	7
Capacity-building	76	36	11	20	40
Support to civil society and community organizations	23	55	7	18	42
Economic interventions	81	78	4	31	39
Gender awareness activities for social-behavioural change	60	21	10	21	35

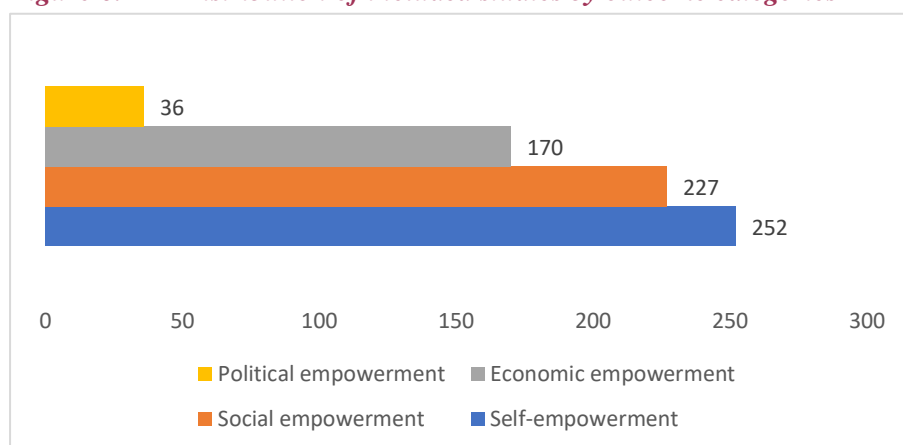
Source: Authors

The lowest number of systematic reviews (4) was observed under policy and institutional interventions. Systematic reviews of economic interventions were the highest in number (31) among all interventions, followed by gender awareness activities for social behaviour change (21) and capacity-building interventions (20). It is important to note here that due to studies with multicomponent interventions, it is very likely that a systematic review appears under more than one category of interventions.

## 5. OUTCOME CATEGORIES

The self-empowerment outcome category (252) is the most populated category in this EGM, followed by social empowerment (227) (Figure 6). The category of economic empowerment appears as an outcome category in 170 studies. Political empowerment as an outcome was observed in only 36 studies. As in the previous indicators, a single study may have more than one domain of empowerment outcomes.

**Figure 6. Distribution of included studies by outcome categories**



Source: Authors

## 6. INTERVENTION SUBCATEGORIES

Among all the intervention subcategories, life skills training interventions appeared in 130 studies followed by cash transfers interventions, which appeared in 125 studies. Interventions providing business loans and grants were observed in 92 studies. There were 81 studies with community-based gender awareness activities as social behaviour change. No studies were found under the subcategory governance and accountability, but this should not be interpreted to mean that interventions directed at governance and accountability are not used or are not useful (see Figure 7).

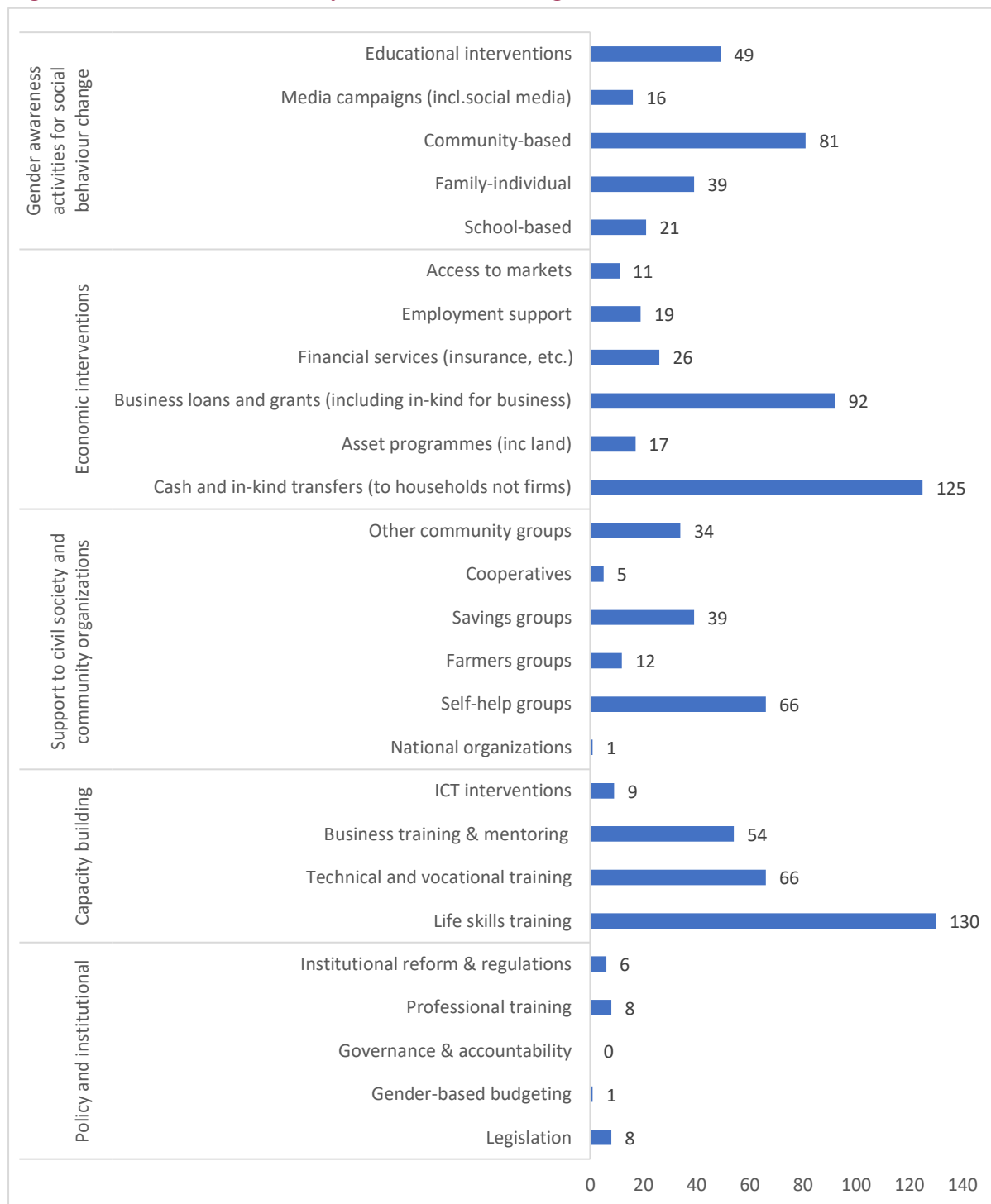
## 7. OUTCOME SUBCATEGORIES

The distribution of various outcome subcategories in the included studies is shown in Figure 8. Political empowerment outcome subcategories are the least represented on this map. Although there were 35 studies with women's political participation as outcome subcategory, there were only four studies that focused on women as representatives of a political body. Only three studies had legal and institutional framework and rights as an outcome subcategory. Among the economic empowerment outcome subcategories, the income/expenditure subcategory appeared very frequently (117), followed by assets and employment status as subcategories.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as an outcome subcategory was observed in 88 studies under the social empowerment outcome category. The safety outcomes (representing both positive and negative dimensions) were the second outcome subcategory and appeared in 81 studies. The remaining social outcome subcategories were observed in about 50 studies, except for digital access and access to justice, which appeared in only four studies and one study, respectively.

As regards self-empowerment subcategories, decision-making appeared in as many as 140 studies. Psychosocial well-being as well as education and literacy outcomes were also observed in 75 or more studies.

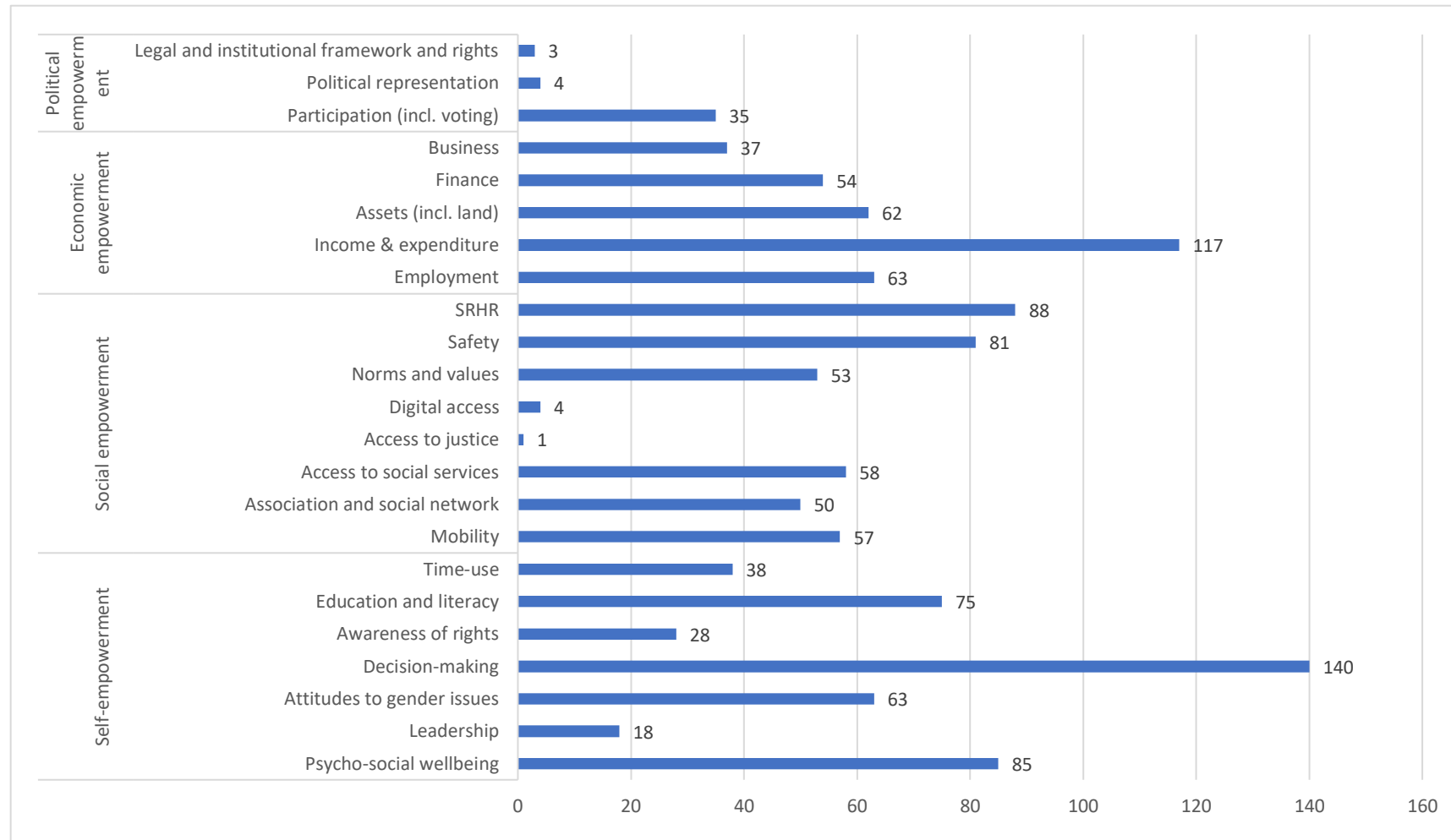
**Figure 7. Included studies by intervention subcategories**



Source: Authors



**Figure 8. Included studies by outcome subcategories**



Source: Authors

## 8. FILTERS (SECONDARY DIMENSIONS)

The map also includes data coded for several filters related to interventions, outcomes and programme characteristics (the regional distribution of studies is discussed above). Some other notable filters such as outcome indices and some programme names included in the EGM are discussed here.

### a. Outcome indices

The following outcome indices were observed in the included studies: the five domains of empowerment; the project-level WEAI (pro-WEAI); the Relative Autonomy Index; the Women's Empowerment in Livestock Index; the WEAI; the Women's Empowerment Index; and the Women's Intra-household Decision-making Power. Of all the studies with outcome indices, the WEAI appeared in the highest number of studies (11). An equal number of studies (5) measured women's empowerment using the pro-WEAI and the Women's Empowerment Index (Table 6).

**Table 6.** *Outcome indices in the included studies*

OUTCOME INDICES	NUMBER OF STUDIES
Five domains of empowerment	1
Project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index	5
Relative Autonomy Index	1
Women's Empowerment in Livestock Index	1
Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index	11
Women's Empowerment Index	5
Women's intrahousehold decision-making power	1

Source: Authors

### b. Programme names

When given, the names of the projects/programmes were indexed for all the included studies. A list of programmes that have at least three or more studies is presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** *List of selected programme names*

PROGRAMME NAME / BRANDED PROGRAMMES	FREQUENCY
Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity	7
Oportunidades	7
SASA!	5
Bono de Desarrollo Humano	4
Mahila Samakhya programme	4
Maisha	4
Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana	4
Women's Income Generating Support	4
Benazir Income Support Programme	3

PROGRAMME NAME / BRANDED PROGRAMMES	FREQUENCY
Empowerment and Livelihoods for Adolescents	3
Helen Keller International's Enhanced-Homestead Food Production (E-HFP) programme	3
Ishraq	3
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment	3
National Rural Livelihoods Mission	3
One Man Can	3
Stepping Stones	3

Source: Authors

## IV. EVIDENCE GAP MAP

An EGM is a systematic and visual presentation of the available evidence for a particular sector or research question. The evidence is usually depicted along a row and column matrix, which may be an intervention–outcome matrix for effectiveness studies. The rows and columns are the primary dimensions of the map. There may be several secondary dimensions of the map for included studies, and these are often referred to as filters.

This EGM primarily plots the evidence on the effectiveness of interventions promoting women's empowerment in developing countries. We have also plotted some of the causal processes in the included studies by adding an additional outcome column to depict the stakeholder perceptions, implementation issues and causal mechanisms.

The included studies for a particular intervention–outcome cell in this EGM are depicted via bubbles. The colour of bubbles indicates the three broad study designs used in the map (namely, impact evaluation, process evaluation and systematic reviews). The size of the bubble represents the volume of evidence available for a particular intervention subcategory and outcome subcategory.

Thus, a larger bubble size for specific cells indicates a greater number of studies exist, whereas smaller bubbles refer to a relative lack of studies for a specific intervention and outcome subcategory. It may, however, be noted that a single study might appear under more than one cell, as it may fall under more than one intervention and outcome combination.

This EGM includes several filters related to geographic location, population, intervention and outcome characteristics such as region (geographic), region (income-wise as per the World Bank classification), country, target group of intervention, population, study design, study status, level of intervention, location of intervention, scale, implementation agency, setting, programme name, climate change element and confidence in the findings of included systematic reviews. The users of the EGM may select one or more filters to see the corresponding studies along the intervention–outcome matrix.

For example, if one is interested in finding RCTs targeted at young women (15–24 years) and conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa in a rural location, the studies with these characteristics may be retrieved by selecting the required filters, such as Sub-Saharan Africa as the region (geographic), young women (15–24 years) as the target group of intervention, RCTs as the study design and rural as the location of the intervention. The user may then explore the area in depth, as per their interest and requirements, by clicking on individual studies. The map enables users to see the bibliographic information and provides links to studies, mostly via URLs or DOIs.

Readers are guided to the EGM at the following URL:

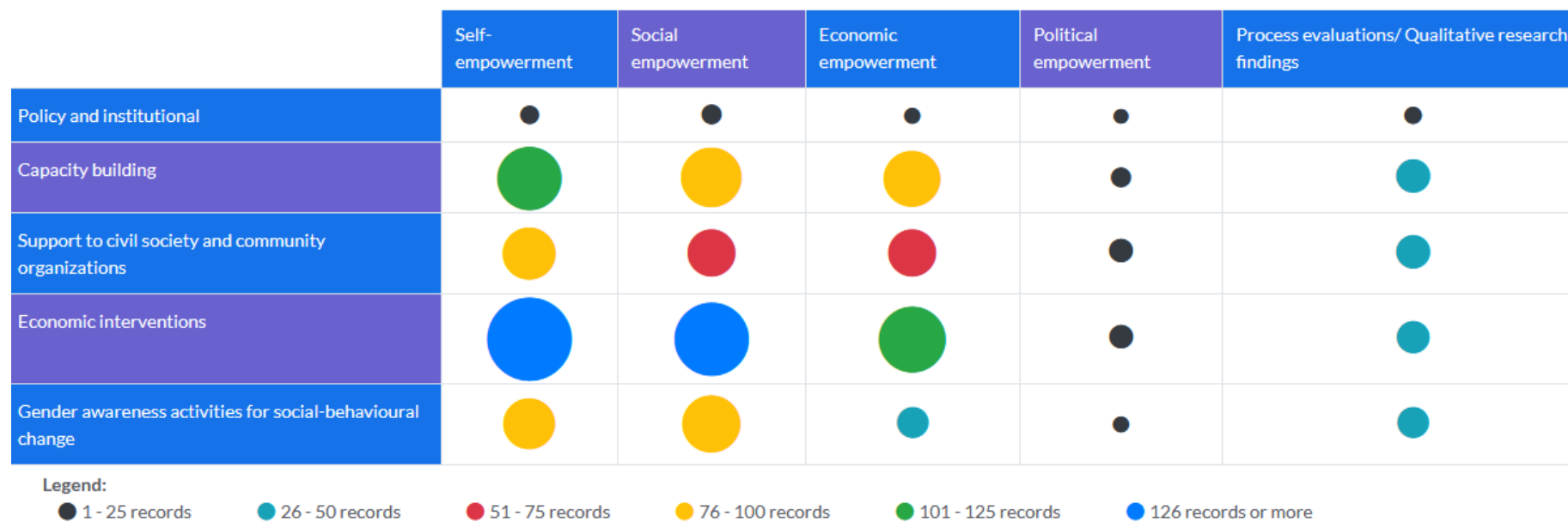
<https://ieugreenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/page/gcf-egm-gender-map-423.html>.

### A. AGGREGATE MAP

The aggregate map of intervention and outcome categories is given in Figure 9. In terms of outcome areas, political empowerment shows the lowest number of studies. Among intervention types, policy and institutional interventions are the least represented in this EGM. When placed against the corresponding outcomes, the policy and institutional interventions are most frequently combined with social empowerment outcomes and then self-empowerment outcomes, although still with a very limited number of studies. Gender awareness activities for socio-behavioural change interventions are most frequently populated with social empowerment outcomes and then self-empowerment outcomes. Capacity-building interventions, support to civil society and community

organizations as well as economic interventions are most frequently combined with self-empowerment outcomes, followed by social empowerment and economic empowerment outcomes. The interventions providing support to civil society and community organizations seem to have been studied more from a qualitative perspective when compared to other categories of interventions in the map. As stated previously, a single study may appear under multiple cells.

**Figure 9.** Aggregate map of intervention and outcome categories



Source: Authors

## B. ANALYSIS OF THE MAP FOR SELECTED INTERVENTION AND OUTCOME DOMAINS

This section discusses selected intervention and outcome domains and gives insights about the number of studies under various sub-intervention and outcome categories. In particular, the distribution of studies under capacity-building interventions is described. In addition, the distribution of studies under the self-empowerment and social empowerment domains are described.

### 1. CAPACITY-BUILDING INTERVENTIONS

The distribution of various sub-intervention categories for capacity-building interventions across various outcome subcategories is given in Table 8. Life skills training as an intervention subcategory is the most populated, and information and communication technologies interventions has the least number of studies.

Life skills training as an intervention subcategory has the highest frequency of studies under income and expenditure outcomes (43), followed by 38 each under psychosocial well-being and decision-making. Attitudes to gender issues, education and literacy as outcomes appear 31 times, and 32 studies reported SRHR as one of the outcome subcategories. Life skills training has fewer studies in relation to political empowerment (only 2 and 3 for political representation, and legal and institutional frameworks and rights respectively). The frequency of participation (including voting) for life skills training is 11, which is higher than other subcategories within the political empowerment category. There are very few studies for certain subcategories within social empowerment, such as access to justice and digital access.

Technical and vocational training interventions show a similar trend to life skills interventions, with the highest frequency for income and expenditure (29), followed by decision-making (19) and psychosocial well-being (18). The frequency for other outcome categories for technical and vocational training is lower compared to life skills interventions. The business training and mentoring intervention subcategory has the highest frequency in the income and expenditure outcome category (32), followed by decision-making (25) and psychosocial well-being (18). No study with access to justice as an outcome was observed for business training and mentoring interventions. Most outcome categories for information and communication technologies interventions have no studies, and only a few studies are present for some of the outcomes such as psychosocial well-being, decision-making, norms and values, income and expenditure, and business.

**Table 8.** *Distribution of studies falling under capacity-building interventions for various outcome domains*

		CAPACITY-BUILDING INTERVENTIONS			
Outcome domains	Outcome subcategories	Life skills training	Technical and vocational training	Business training and mentoring	ICT <sup>3</sup> interventions
Self-empowerment	Psychosocial well-being	38	18	18	3
	Leadership	9	6	5	0
	Attitudes to gender issues	31	14	11	0
	Decision-making	38	19	25	2
	Awareness of rights	7	6	5	0
	Education and literacy	31	12	11	0
	Time-use	9	9	7	0
Social empowerment	Mobility	21	13	6	0
	Association and social network	19	11	11	0
	Access to social services	26	11	8	1
	Access to justice	1	1	0	0
	Digital access	2	0	1	1
	Norms and values	16	15	8	2
	Safety	29	16	14	1
SRHR	32	15	6	1	
Economic empowerment	Employment	23	17	16	0
	Income & expenditure	43	29	32	2
	Assets (incl. land)	21	14	15	1
	Finance	29	15	14	1
	Business	16	7	19	2
Political empowerment	Participation (incl. voting)	11	7	2	1
	Political representation	2	0	2	0
	Legal and institutional framework and rights	3	1	1	0

Source: Authors

## 2. SELF-EMPOWERMENT OUTCOMES

Table 9 represents the distribution of various intervention subcategories across self-empowerment outcomes. Overall, decision-making power is the most frequent outcome, followed by psychosocial well-being, then education and literacy. The frequency of outcome indicators for leadership, awareness of rights and time-use is lower compared to the outcome domains mentioned above.

Across all the self-empowerment indicators, the highest frequencies were observed for economic interventions, especially cash and in-kind transfers to households and business loans/grants/in-kind transfers. These were followed by capacity-building (particularly life skills training and

<sup>3</sup> ICT stands for information and communications technology.



technical/vocational training) and gender awareness activities (with community-based approaches as the most frequent). A low number of self-empowerment indicators were observed for the policy and institutional intervention category, especially institutional reform and regulations, professional training and gender-based budgeting.

The frequency of self-empowerment outcome indicators within an intervention category is also very uneven. For instance, self-empowerment indicators appear very frequently under cash and in-kind transfers to households and business loans/grants/in-kind transfers, which are subcategories of economic interventions. However, their frequency is lower for the remaining subcategories of economic interventions such as asset programmes, financial services, employment support and access to markets.

Looking at each outcome indicator, psychosocial well-being is most frequently found in life skills training interventions, followed by cash and in-kind transfers to households, and business loans/grants/in-kind transfers. Leadership and time-use outcomes follow a similar trend, except in relation to community-based gender awareness activities. Attitudes to gender issues has the same trend as leadership, while gender awareness activities in educational settings is also frequently explored. The frequency of awareness of rights as an outcome indicator was highest for community-based gender activities for social behaviour change compared to other categories of intervention.

**Table 9. Distribution of studies by Intervention and self-empowerment indicators**

INTERVENTION CATEGORIES	INTERVENTION SUBCATEGORIES	SELF-EMPOWERMENT INDICATORS						
		Psychosocial well-being	Leadership	Attitudes to gender issues	Decision-making	Awareness of rights	Education and literacy	Time-use
Policy and institutional	Legislation	1	0	1	1	3	3	0
	Gender-based budgeting	1	1	0	1	0	0	1
	Professional training	1	0	0	0	0	2	0
	Institutional reform & regulations	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Capacity-building	Life skills training	38	9	31	38	7	31	9
	Technical and vocational training	18	6	14	19	6	12	9
	Business training & mentoring	18	5	11	25	5	11	7
	ICT interventions	3	0	0	2	0	0	0
Support to civil society and community organizations	Self-help groups	13	5	7	30	5	11	4
	Farmers groups	1	1	1	5	0	0	2
	Savings groups	11	3	4	21	1	7	5
	Cooperatives	0	0	1	3	0	1	1
	Other community groups	5	4	5	10	2	4	3
Economic interventions	Cash and in-kind transfers (to households not firms)	22	5	16	42	8	41	17
	Asset programmes (incl. land)	4	3	4	13	7	7	3

INTERVENTION CATEGORIES	INTERVENTION SUBCATEGORIES	SELF-EMPOWERMENT INDICATORS						
		Psychosocial well-being	Leadership	Attitudes to gender issues	Decision-making	Awareness of rights	Education and literacy	Time-use
	Business loans and grants (incl. in-kind for business)	20	5	14	51	8	18	10
	Financial services (insurance, etc.)	7	4	6	16	4	12	3
	Employment support	5	3	5	11	2	8	1
	Access to markets	2	1	2	5	0	4	2
Gender awareness activities for social behaviour change	School-based	4	1	10	4	4	8	1
	Family/individual	14	1	9	10	4	4	3
	Community-based	15	8	20	24	11	16	4
	Media campaigns (incl. social media)	2	1	5	2	5	3	0
	Educational interventions	13	2	15	9	5	9	3

Source: Authors

### 3. SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT OUTCOMES

The distribution of interventions across social empowerment outcomes is given in Table 10. In general, safety is the most studied outcome, followed by SRHR and access to social services. Access to justice outcomes and digital access as outcomes were observed far less compared to the outcomes mentioned above.

**Table 10. Distribution of studies by intervention and social empowerment indicators**

INTERVENTION CATEGORIES	INTERVENTION SUBCATEGORIES	SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT INDICATORS							
		Mobility	Associations & social network	Access to social services	Access to justice	Digital access	Norms and values	Safety	SRHR
Policy and institutional	Legislation	2	2	1	0	0	2	2	5
	Gender-based budgeting	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Professional training	0	0	3	1	0	2	1	0
	Institutional reform & regulations	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Capacity-building interventions	Life skills training	21	19	26	1	2	16	29	32
	Technical and vocational training	13	11	11	1	0	15	16	15
	Business training & mentoring	6	11	8	0	1	8	14	6
	ICT interventions	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	1
Support to civil	Self-help groups	17	9	10	1	0	9	7	10

INTERVENTION CATEGORIES	INTERVENTION SUBCATEGORIES	SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT INDICATORS							
		Mobility	Associations & social network	Access to social services	Access to justice	Digital access	Norms and values	Safety	SRHR
	Farmers groups	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
	Savings groups	5	9	11	1	2	6	6	5
	Cooperatives	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
	Other community groups	4	5	4	0	0	6	6	5
Economic interventions	Cash and in-kind transfers (to households not firms)	19	15	30	1	1	24	24	34
	Asset programmes (incl. land)	5	6	7	1	0	4	2	3
	Business loans and grants (including in-kind for business)	23	18	16	0	1	14	21	16
	Financial services (insurance, etc.)	9	9	10	0	1	9	8	12
	Employment support	3	2	4	0	0	6	5	3
	Access to markets	1	1	2	0	0	1	2	1
Gender awareness activities for social behaviour change	School-based	2	2	4	0	0	5	7	9
	Family/individual	3	5	5	0	1	9	19	10
	Community-based	12	13	17	1	0	23	31	24
	Media campaigns (incl. social media)	2	3	3	0	1	5	6	2
	Educational interventions	3	8	9	0	0	11	19	15

Source: Authors

As with self-empowerment indicators, social empowerment indicators are mostly observed for economic interventions, especially cash and in-kind transfers to households and business loans/grants/in-kind transfers. These are followed by gender awareness activities, community-based intervention and capacity-building (notably life skills and technical/vocational training). Social empowerment outcomes appeared less frequently for the policy and institutional intervention category (institutional reform and regulations, and gender-based budgeting).

Focusing on each outcome indicator, mobility as an outcome indicator is explored most frequently in business loans/grants intervention (23), life skills training (21) and cash/in-kind transfer to households (19). Association and networks, norms and values, SRHR, and access to social services show a similar trend, while these are also common in community-based gender awareness activities for social behaviour change.

Safety as an outcome indicator reflects a particular trend as it has the highest frequency for community-based gender awareness activities (31), followed by family/individual based gender awareness activities (19) and gender awareness activities conducted in educational settings (19). Interestingly, safety as an outcome also appears in life skills training (29), business loan and grants (21), and cash and in-kind transfer (24) interventions. Access to justice and digital access as social empowerment indicators were very rarely observed across various intervention categories.

## V. DISCUSSION

Women's empowerment encapsulates both intrinsic and instrumental goals. At the same time, women's empowerment contributes to a very wide range of desirable outcomes. Doss and others (2018) suggest that at least 11 of the 17 SDGs require indicators related to gender dynamics. The EGM is designed to serve as a visual resource for the Green Climate Fund, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, practitioners, policymakers and researchers to understand the areas in which most research on the effectiveness of interventions for women's empowerment is concentrated. In decision B.09/11, the Board of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) adopted the Gender Policy and Action Plan which was then revised in the Gender Equality Policy to move beyond a narrow understanding of gender to consider, respect and value the contribution of both women and men. The GCF's approach to mainstreaming gender requires a strong understanding of gender issues and gender capacity, which is not always immediately available in the entities accredited by the GCF. The GCF's gender equality policy sets out a commitment "to measure the outcomes and impacts of its activities on women and men's resilience to climate change." It offers the possibility for additional resources and support for countries and entities. For example, the GCF can organize gender training or provide technical and material support for gender resources as requested by the Board. And it can GCF may complement its own technical capacity within the Secretariat with gender consultants and/or through the establishment of a gender advisory group of experts.

Overall, the gender policy is applied to all GCF projects, and most projects include dimensions for supporting women's livelihoods. But the quality and depth of gender assessments vary significantly between projects, particularly in the extent that projects are designed to deliver transformative benefits to women and girls. On the shallow end, assessments disaggregate the number of women and men that participated in activities. On the deeper end, assessments indicate how women's lives, livelihoods and societal roles could be transformed through GCF interventions. This EGM highlights intervention and outcome combinations where there is evidence on women's empowerment, to support entities and the GCF in achieving this goal.

The map also highlights intervention–outcome combinations where a limited amount of research has been conducted. From a universe of 423 studies included in this EGM, and based on the PICOS for this study, we see that the majority utilize a causal design to estimate the effectiveness of the intervention. We also observe that most of the programmes and projects focus on economic interventions compared to other categories. It is unclear to what extent this reflects a greater focus on the instrumental aspects of women's empowerment highlighted by Kabeer (1999) – over and above the intrinsic goals of gender equality and equal partnerships – primarily because in this EGM we use specific designs as part of our inclusion criteria.

At this stage it is helpful to refer back to our conceptual framework from Kabeer (1999), which conceptualizes empowerment as a process that involves incremental steps involving interrelated dimensions of resources, agency and achievements of girls and women of all ages. The first part of this framework – resources – encapsulates material, social and human resources including social relationships, allocations, claims (whether in the present or in the future) and expectations. The second part – agency – refers to "the ability to define one's goals and act upon them" (Kabeer, 1999, p. 438). This ability to define one's life choices and pursue the goals one sets is broader than simple decision-making (including many forms of engagement, resistance, reaction and analysis) and can be utilized by individuals as well as collectives.

The third part – achievements – refers to the extent to which the combination of resources and agency (which can be seen to be capabilities and which we come to shortly) facilitates the realization of living the life an individual wishes. In other words, achievements refer to the extent to

which the potential for living the life one wants is achieved (see Kabeer, 1999, p. 15). The most straightforward operational of this approach for the purposes of this EGM is the rather simplistic mapping of achievements onto our outcome areas of self-, social, economic and political empowerment. The subcategories we utilize (such as those for self-empowerment, constituting psychosocial well-being, leadership, attitudes to gender issues, decision-making, awareness of rights, education and literacy, and time-use) can be seen to be outcomes that increase the likelihood of an individual being able to live the life they wish (see the definitions in Appendix 2).

The two further parts of the conceptual framework – resources and agency – are intertwined. To what extent can these components of the conceptual framework map simply onto the intervention types utilized in this EGM (of policy and institutional, capacity-building, support to civil society and community organizations, economic interventions and gender awareness activities for social-behavioural change)? Understanding the foundations on which Kabeer's approach is built offers some insights into how we can broadly apply Kabeer's schema to our intervention areas in this EGM.

Kabeer (1999) highlights how resources and agency make up people's capabilities as defined by Sen (1999). The starting point for Sen's approach was the distinction between the different entitlements a person has command over (including production entitlements and exchange entitlement). These entitlements, which can be defined as command over alternative sets of commodity bundles, are mediated by institutional factors such as customs, laws and welfare transfers that affect the ability of an individual to access goods. Sen extended this entitlement approach in subsequent work by asking the question "What is of intrinsic value in life?" This led to the development of a capabilities approach, which analyses the ability of an individual to do and be. This capability approach values not only the ability of an individual, but also the options and possibilities that individuals are able to choose from. Moreover, the approach also has an explicit focus on the conclusions and ends of that decision. Sen (1999, p.75) referred to the conversion of capabilities into realized actions (which he termed as "functionings") as concerned with both the possibilities and the end products, and therefore "the evaluative focus of this 'capability approach' can either be on the realized functionings (what a person is actually able to do) or on the capability set she has (her real opportunities)".

This explanation of the foundation of Kabeer's framework, along with the definitions above, helps us to recognize how we can apply the component of resources to our intervention categories of capacity-building (which encapsulates life skills training, technical and vocational training, business training and mentoring, as well as information and communication technologies interventions) and economic interventions (which includes cash and in-kind transfers to households, asset programmes, business loans and grants, financial services, employment support and access to markets). To reiterate, these intervention types fit closest with material, social and human resources, including social relationships, allocations, claims (whether in the present or in the future) and expectations (these two intervention areas are highlighted in yellow in our theory of change).

The further three intervention types can be seen to fit closer with agency, "the ability to define one's goals and act upon them" (Kabeer, 1999, p. 438). These categories include policy and institutional interventions (including legislation, gender-based budgeting, governance and accountability, access to justice, and institutional reform & regulations), support to civil society and community organizations (with the types of groups defined in Appendix 1) along with gender awareness activities for social-behavioural change (based at different levels and within the media and educational settings). To recall, agency refers to the ability to define one's life choices and pursue the goals one sets and is broader than simple decision-making (including many forms of engagement, resistance, reaction and analysis) and can be utilized by individuals as well as collectives (these three intervention areas are highlighted in orange in our theory of change).

When we reflect back to Figure 9 above, the aggregate map illustrates how the evidence in the EGM is clustered to the greatest extent for interventions that can be loosely categorized as supporting “resources” (that is capacity-building and economic interventions).

The amount of available causal evidence on resources, and especially capacity-building, helped to steer the selection of the cells of the EGM that have been selected for a systematic review (which is estimating the role of life skills interventions on the self- and social empowerment of women of any age in developing countries). Currently, systematic evidence to guide investments and programme design regarding the effectiveness of various life skills interventions in developing countries remain scarce because existing reviews are different in scope and/or geographical coverage. The associated systematic review will address four research questions:

- 1) What is the effect of the life skills interventions on the self-empowerment and social empowerment of women of any age in developing countries?
- 2) What is the effect of life skills education or training programmes on economic or political empowerment and intermediate outcomes such as skills measures on women of any age in developing countries?
- 3) How much confidence can be placed in the findings of included studies?
- 4) Which factors explain the variation effects, such as intervention setting, location and level of intervention, in improving empowerment outcomes of the recipients of the intervention?

The answers to these questions will provide important contributions to the literature on life skills interventions as well as the empowerment of (rural) women and girls to guide climate and development interventions, including the achievement of inclusive, resilient and sustainable food systems.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This EGM is based on a comprehensive and systematic search of academic databases, grey literature sources, screening of selected academic journals over the past five years and citation tracking of selected systematic reviews during February 2022. Though we were primarily interested in mapping effectiveness studies, we also included some process evaluations that might be useful in understanding some of the implementation issues in the effectiveness of interventions.

The EGM comprises impact evaluations, process evaluations and systematic reviews of interventions for women's empowerment in developing countries. The eligible population for this map included girls and women of any age, although the intervention could also be targeted at boys and men of any age. An intervention–outcome framework was developed for this EGM, and the map followed the conventional PICOS framework.

This EGM contains 423 studies with 288 impact evaluations, 105 process evaluations and 38 systematic reviews. Nearly 80 per cent of included systematic reviews are assessed to be low-confidence reviews.

Most of the evidence is from studies conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. There is evidence on economic interventions and capacity-building interventions, and both these categories in the map have a high number of impact evaluations and systematic reviews. Policy and institutional interventions appear to be an evidence gap area. Political empowerment outcome categories are much less populated than other outcome categories. Women's representation in political bodies, digital access and access to justice also appear as cells with very little evidence.

It appears that researchers frequently use the WEAI to measure women's empowerment. The variations of this index, such as the pro-WEAI and the Women's Empowerment in Livestock Index, are also used to measure empowerment in some of the studies.

This map serves as a useful visual resource for researchers, practitioners and policymakers alike to understand the areas where most research on effectiveness of interventions for women's empowerment is concentrated. The map also depicts areas corresponding to the intervention–outcome matrix where less research has been conducted. The highly populated areas along the intervention–outcome matrix can be explored further by conducting systematic reviews. More primary research and development of causal methodologies should be undertaken where there is scarcity of evidence.



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## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. DESCRIPTION OF INTERVENTION CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

INTERVENTION	SUB-INTERVENTION	DEFINITIONS
Policy and institutional	Legislation	Laws supporting women's rights, access to resources and options; advocacy for rights and legislation (Addae, 2015)
	Gender-based budgeting	A gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality (Quinn, 2009)
	Governance and accountability	Organizational systems, procedures and interventions by government bodies to provide information and accountability to non-government stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, and the general public
	Access to justice	Use of judicial system to redress rights violations; interventions to improve access to justice for women
	Institutional reform and regulations	Changes at the level of institutions in policies, rules, regulations and procedures to serve increased gender-sensitivity or gender transformation and gender equity
Capacity-building	Life skills training	Training to enhance life skills, which are defined as the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life
	Technical and vocational training	Non-traditional forms of training or learning training: may comprise "a series of courses on income generating activities" (Bandiera and others, 2012) or developing "soft skills" such as "interaction with customers, work in teams, acting professionally and properly representing themselves in job interviews" (Groh and others, 2012), with the aim of equipping participants to find employment in any sector or be self-employed.  Technical skills training: may relate to enhancing knowledge about the technical aspects of an occupation/vocation such as the use of certain machines or technology in agriculture, or seed management to enhance productivity.
	Business training and mentoring	Business coaching or mentoring programmes that provide participants with knowledge and skills to prepare for starting a business or "promote entrepreneurship by providing entrepreneurship training" (Pascaul, 2008) (e.g. financial management and marketing strategies)
	ICT interventions	Training or learning programmes on digital tools and software and other technologies
Support to civil society and community organizations	National organizations	Government or civil society national-level associations for women
	Self-help groups	Community groups of about 10–20 members that pool savings and are for circular credit; groups may or may not be supported by a formal lending institution such as a bank, and may undertake joint activities
	Farmers groups	Groups or associations among farmers for common activities such as training or input procurement

INTERVENTION	SUB-INTERVENTION	DEFINITIONS
	Savings groups	Groups or associations for saving and borrowing and in which a majority of members are women
	Cooperatives	Producer and consumer cooperatives for sales and purchases
	Other community groups	Any other associations within the community for women or supporting women
Economic	Cash and in-kind transfers (to households not firms)	Cash and in-kind or other goods and services given for free to households, either conditionally or unconditionally
	Asset programmes (incl. land)	Programmes that provide ownership or use rights to assets, including land
	Business loans and grants (incl. in-kind for business)	Cash loans and in-kind or other goods and services for business purposes or entrepreneurship
	Financial services (insurance, etc.)	Financial services provided by the finance sector other than loans (e.g. insurance and forex)
	Employment support	Interventions to provide employment through work placement, apprenticeships and internships, public works and job reservation
	Access to markets	Interventions that promote women's knowledge of and access to markets and participation in trade-related activities
Gender awareness activities for social-behavioural change	School-based	Interventions that may be delivered at a classroom level or follow a whole-school approach towards raising awareness among the students and staff about gender inequality and bias and enhance inclusive learning
	Family/individual	Interventions that are delivered on a one-to-one or family basis (including couples/significant others/partners) to reflect on gender norms, roles and relations to encourage joint decision-making and on aspects of sexual and reproductive health
	Community-based	Interventions that are delivered in a group setting among community members, who may or may not be influential, to reflect, discuss and debate the gender norms and roles to address gender inequalities
	Media campaigns	Interventions promoting gender awareness through print or electronic media; may be around sex-selective abortions, girls' education, immunization, nutrition and other related issues that address gender inequalities
	Educational interventions	Various educational materials/activities/programmes on gender awareness

## Appendix 2. DESCRIPTION OF OUTCOME CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

DOMAIN	INDICATORS	DEFINITIONS
Self-empowerment	Psychosocial well-being	Psychological well-being, self-esteem, self-efficacy, sense of inclusion and entitlement (Addae, 2015)
	Leadership	Ability to lead, manage and mobilize
	Attitudes to gender issues	Opinions in relation to gender norms, roles and relations
	Decision-making	Role in decision-making matters, such as allocation of household resources and sexual and reproductive health
	Awareness of rights	Knowledge of rights, exercising rights and rights awareness; collective awareness of injustice
	Education and literacy	Competence in educational matters; knowledge and know-how; women's literacy and access to broad range of educational options
	Time-use	Indicators that measure time spent by women in different activities and may indicate work hours of women and time spent on leisure activities, if any (recognizing multitasking)
Social empowerment	Mobility	Women's access or restriction to places and spaces
	Association and social network	Representation in associations, participation in social networks or groups outside family that support women
	Access to social services	Access to different public services including those that support women or particular vulnerable groups
	Access to justice	Access to legal services or legal advice and equality before the law
	Digital access	Access to and ability to use digital tools and services
	Norms and values	Beliefs and ideals about women's role in the community or society
	Safety	Refers to a safe environment, community or society for women
	SRHR	Women's control over their sexual identity and behaviour, and women's knowledge of sexual rights and information
Economic empowerment	Employment	Employment measures including job quality
	Income & expenditure	Earnings and expenditure
	Assets (inc. land)	Control and ownership of assets and land
	Finance	Access to credit/loan/finance
	Business	Any outcome of women owning or controlling a business
Political empowerment	Participation (incl. voting)	Political engagement and participation, exercise right to vote, knowledge/awareness of political system and means to navigate
	Political representation	Representation in local government and government bodies or agencies, including formal representation of women's interests or lobbying women's interests
	Legal and institutional framework and rights	Changes in rules, regulations, policies, contracts, laws and legislations of government and other agencies and organizations

### Appendix 3. SAMPLE SEARCH STRINGS

**Name of the database: Scopus**

**Date searched: 18-02-2022**

**Number of hits: 311**

(( (( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( women OR female\* OR girl OR gender OR mother\* OR “women empowerment” OR “women’s empowerment” ) ) AND ( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( “Sensitisation campaign\*” OR “Gender awareness” OR “Safer spaces” OR “Civic education” OR “Inclusive community” OR “Cash transfers” OR “job skills training” OR “Activelabour market” OR “Transport infrastructure” OR “public works program\*” OR “Self-help groups” OR “In-kind transfers” OR “group education” OR “PRADAN” OR “Kudumbasree” OR “NREGS” OR “Insurance” OR “kiosks” OR “Advocacy group” OR “small enterprises” OR “social-enterprises” OR “One-stop centers” OR “Media campaigns” OR “educational incentives” OR “microlending” OR “NGO” OR “microfinance” OR “Community mobilization“ OR “Community mobilization“ OR “arts-based approach\*” OR “Community radio” OR “mass media” ) ) ) AND ( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( “women empowerment index” OR “Self confidence” OR “Self esteem” OR “Self image” OR “Decision making” OR “Decision-making” OR bargaining OR “Freedom of mobility” OR “Freedom of movement” OR “Reduced age of marriage” OR “family size” OR “Women leader\*” OR “Women entrepreneurs” OR “Awareness of rights” OR “Gender transformation” OR education\* OR “inheritance of property” OR negotiations OR “Voting rights” OR “land rights” OR empowered OR capabilit\* OR autonomy OR “political empowerment” OR “Digital access” OR “Gender equality” OR “Political inclusion” OR “Political participation” ) ) ) AND ( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( “SYSTEMATIC REVIEW” OR “METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW” OR “OVERVIEW” OR “CRITICAL REVIEW” OR “RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL” OR “RANDOMLY OR RANDOM\* OR TRIAL OR RCT OR GROUPS” OR “BEFORE VS AFTER STUDIES” OR “EXPERIMENTAL” OR “QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES” OR “META-ANALYSIS” OR “PROPENSITY SCORE” OR “METAANALYSIS” OR “REGRESSION DISCONTINUITY” OR “DIFFERENCE INDIFFERENCE” OR “IMPACT EVALUATION” ) ) ) AND ( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( “DEVELOPING COUNTR\*” OR “LESS DEVELOPED” OR “LOW MIDDLE INCOME COUNTR\*” OR lmic OR india OR bangladesh OR africa OR “SOUTH ASIA” ) ) )

**Name of the source: IDEAS/REPEC**

**Date searched: 22-02-2022**

**Number of hits: 150**

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT\* AND “difference in difference”, women empowerment\* and “developing countries”, women AND “PROPENSITY SCORE”, Women empowerment AND experimental, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT\* AND “systematic review”, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT\* AND “meta-analysis”, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT\* AND rct, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT\* AND EFFECTIVENESS, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT\* AND “impact evaluation”

## Appendix 4. LIST OF HAND-SEARCHED JOURNALS

Asian Journal of Women's Studies  
Development and Change  
Development in Practice  
Economic Development and Cultural Change  
Feminist Economics  
Gender and Development  
Gender, Place and Culture  
Gender, Technology and Development  
International Journal of Educational Development  
Journal of Human Development and Capabilities  
Social Indicators Research  
Women's Studies International Forum  
World Development  
Journal of Development Studies  
Economic Development and Cultural Change  
Journal of Development Effectiveness  
World Bank Economic Review  
Oxford Development Studies  
Journal of Development Economics  
Journal of International Development  
European Journal of Development Research



## Appendix 5. SCREENING TOOL

1.	Is the study conducted in developing countries, as per the Kyoto Protocol classification of non-Annex-I countries? <a href="https://unfccc.int/process/parties-non-party-stakeholders/parties-convention-and-observer-states">https://unfccc.int/process/parties-non-party-stakeholders/parties-convention-and-observer-states</a>	Yes, screen on Q.2 No, Exclude on country
2.	Does the study target women/men (of any age, employment or landholding status or engaged in any sector of economy, be it formal/informal/self-employed) or programme staff and community-level influencers (youth/elderly) towards empowering women?	Yes, screen on Q.3 No, Exclude on population
3.	Is the intervention (policy, programme, project or practice) aimed at empowering women at any level, be it individual/household/community and may be led by women?	Yes, screen on Q.4 No, Exclude on intervention
4.	Does the study analyse the effect of the intervention on the empowerment of women resulting from economic or sociocultural or legal or political or familial or interpersonal or psychological outcomes? (Quantitative)	Yes, Include! No, Exclude on design
5.	Is the study an evaluation of an intervention? (Qualitative/Mixed Method)	Yes, Include! No, Exclude on design
Overall (Include if Yes to all the above)		

## Appendix 6. CODING TOOL

- Country
  - List of countries including not reported
- Region (geographic)
  - East Asia and Pacific
  - Europe and Central Asia
  - Latin America and the Caribbean
  - Middle East and North Africa
  - South Asia
  - Sub-Saharan Africa
  - Not reported
- Region (income)
  - Low-income
  - Lower-middle income
  - Upper-middle income
  - High-income
  - Not reported
- Target group of intervention
  - Women (25 and above)
  - Young women (15–24)
  - Girls
  - Men and boys
  - Community leaders
  - Government officials
  - NGO workers
  - Target not stated/reported
- Population
  - Poor and disadvantaged
  - People with disabilities
  - Humanitarian settings/conflict affected
  - Not reported
- Study design
  - Randomized controlled trial
  - Non-experimental design with comparison group
- Study status
  - Completed
  - Ongoing

- Level of intervention
  - Individual
  - Household
  - Firm
  - Community and community groups
  - Not stated/relevant
- Location of intervention
  - Rural incl. semi-rural
  - Urban incl. peri-urban
  - Both
  - Not stated or unclear
- Scale
  - Local
  - Regional
  - National
  - Not stated/not reported
- Implemented by
  - Government agency
  - Official development agency
  - International NGO
  - Local NGO
  - Private sector
  - Research team
  - Community or individual
  - Other
  - Not reported
- Setting of intervention
  - School and college
  - Training centre
  - Community (centres, public spaces, field, etc.)
  - Private sector organization
  - Other
  - Not stated/reported
- Intervention
  - Policy and institutional
    - + Legislation
    - + Gender-based budgeting
    - + Governance & accountability
    - + Professional training

- + Institutional reform & regulations
- Capacity-building
  - + Life skills training
  - + Technical and vocational training
  - + Business training & mentoring
  - + ICT interventions
- Support to civil society and community organizations
  - + National organizations
  - + Self-help groups
  - + Farmers groups
  - + Savings groups
  - + Cooperatives
  - + Other community groups
- Economic interventions
  - + Cash and in-kind transfers (to households not firms)
  - + Asset programmes (incl. land)
  - + Business loans and grants (including in-kind for business)
  - + Financial services (insurance, etc.)
  - + Employment support
  - + Access to markets
- Gender awareness activities for social-behavioural change
  - + School-based
  - + Family-individual
  - + Community-based
  - + Media campaigns (incl. Social media)
  - + Educational interventions
- Outcomes
  - Self-empowerment
    - + Psychosocial well-being
    - + Leadership
    - + Attitudes to gender issues
    - + Decision-making
    - + Awareness of rights
    - + Education and literacy
    - + Time-use
  - Social empowerment
    - + Mobility
    - + Association and social network
    - + Access to social services

- + Access to justice
- + Digital access
- + Norms and values
- + Safety
- + SRHR
- Economic empowerment
  - + Employment
  - + Income & expenditure
  - + Assets (incl. land)
  - + Finance
  - + Business
- Political empowerment
  - + Participation (incl. voting)
  - + Political representation
  - + Legal and institutional framework and rights
- Climate change element
  - Climate change focused
  - Climate change components MAY BE relevant
  - No climate change element
  - Not clear
- Programme name
- AMSTAR-2 checklist
  - 1. Did the research questions and inclusion criteria for the review include the components of PICO?
    - + Yes
      - ◆ Population
      - ◆ Intervention
      - ◆ Comparator group
      - ◆ Outcome
      - ◆ Time frame for follow-up (optional)
    - + No
  - 2\*. Did the report of the review contain an explicit statement that the review methods were established prior to the conduct of the review and did the report justify any significant deviations from the protocol?
    - + Yes: The authors state that they had a written protocol or guide that included ALL the following:
      - ◆ review question
      - ◆ search strategy
      - ◆ inclusion/exclusion criteria

- ◆ a risk of bias assessment
- ◆ a meta-analysis/synthesis plan, if appropriate
- ◆ a plan for investigating causes of heterogeneity
- ◆ justification for any deviations from the protocol
- + Partial Yes: The authors state that they had a written protocol or guide that included ALL the following:
  - ◆ review question(s)
  - ◆ a search strategy
  - ◆ inclusion/exclusion criteria
  - ◆ a risk of bias assessment
- + No
- 3. Did the review authors explain their selection of the study designs for inclusion in the review?
  - + Yes: If the review satisfies ONE of the following:
    - ◆ explanation for including only RCTs
    - ◆ OR explanation for including only non-randomized studies of intervention (NRSI)
    - ◆ OR explanation for including both RCTs and NRSI
  - + No
- 4\*. Did the review authors use a comprehensive literature search strategy?
  - + Yes: Should have all the following:
    - ◆ searched at least two databases (relevant to research question)
    - ◆ provided key word and/or search strategy
    - ◆ justified publication restrictions (e.g. language)
    - ◆ searched the reference lists / bibliographies of included studies
    - ◆ searched trial/study registries
    - ◆ included/consulted content experts in the field
    - ◆ where relevant, searched for grey literature
    - ◆ conducted search within 24 months of completion of the review
  - + Partial yes: All the following
    - ◆ searched at least two databases (relevant to research question)
    - ◆ provided key word and/or search strategy
    - ◆ justified publication restrictions (e.g. language)
  - + No
- 5. Did the review authors perform study selection in duplicate?
  - + Yes, either ONE of the following:
    - ◆ at least two reviewers independently agreed on selection of eligible studies and achieved consensus on which studies to include
    - ◆ two reviewers selected a sample of eligible studies and achieved good agreement (at least 80 per cent), with the remainder selected by one reviewer.

- + No
- 6. Did the review authors perform data extraction in duplicate?
  - + Yes: either ONE of the following:
    - ◆ at least two reviewers achieved consensus on which data to extract from included studies
    - ◆ two reviewers extracted data from a sample of eligible studies and achieved good agreement (at least 80 per cent), with the remainder extracted by one reviewer
  - + No
- 7\*. Did the review authors provide a list of excluded studies and justify the exclusions?
  - + Yes: if it includes the following:
    - ◆ provided a list of all potentially relevant studies that were read in full-text form but excluded from the review
    - ◆ justified the exclusion from the review of each potentially relevant study
  - + Partial Yes if:
    - ◆ provided a list of all potentially relevant studies that were read in full-text form but excluded from the review
  - + No
- 8. Did the review authors describe the included studies in adequate detail?
  - + Yes: should also have ALL the following:
    - ◆ described population in detail
    - ◆ described intervention in detail (including doses where relevant)
    - ◆ described comparator in detail (including doses where relevant)
    - ◆ described study's setting
    - ◆ time frame for follow-up
  - + Partial Yes: should have the following
    - ◆ described populations
    - ◆ described interventions
    - ◆ described comparators
    - ◆ described outcomes
    - ◆ described research designs
  - + No
- 9\*. Did the review authors use a satisfactory technique for assessing the risk of bias (RoB) in individual studies that were included in the review?
  - + RCTs
    - ◆ Yes: must have assessed RoB from
      - > allocation sequence that was not truly random, and
      - > selection of the reported result from among multiple measurements or analyses of a specified outcome
    - ◆ Partial Yes: must have assessed RoB from



- > unconcealed allocation, and
    - > lack of blinding of patients and assessors when assessing outcomes (unnecessary for objective outcomes such as all-cause mortality)
  - ◆ No
- + NRSI
  - ◆ Yes: must also have assessed RoB from
    - > methods used to ascertain exposures and outcomes, and
    - > selection of the reported result from among multiple measurements or analyses of a specified outcome
  - ◆ Partial Yes: must have assessed RoB
    - > from confounding, and
    - > from selection bias
  - ◆ No
- 10. Did the review authors report on the sources of funding for the studies included in the review?
  - + Yes: Must have reported on the sources of funding for individual studies included in the review. Note: Reporting that the reviewers looked for this information but it was not reported by study authors also qualifies.
  - + No
- 11\*. If meta-analysis was performed did the review authors use appropriate methods for statistical combination of results?
  - + RCTs
    - ◆ Yes if
      - > the authors justified combining the data in a meta-analysis
      - > AND they used an appropriate weighted technique to combine study results and adjusted for heterogeneity, if present
      - > AND investigated the causes of any heterogeneity
  - + For NRSI
    - ◆ Yes if
      - > the authors justified combining the data in a meta-analysis
      - > AND they used an appropriate weighted technique to combine study results, adjusting for heterogeneity if present
      - > AND they statistically combined effect estimates from NRSI that were adjusted for confounding, rather than combining raw data, or justified combining raw data when adjusted effect estimates were not available
      - > AND they reported separate summary estimates for RCTs and NRSI separately when both were included in the review
    - + No
    - + No meta-analysis conducted
- 12. If meta-analysis was performed, did the review authors assess the potential impact of RoB in individual studies on the results of the meta-analysis or other evidence synthesis?

- + Yes if
  - ◆ included only low RoB RCTs
  - ◆ OR, if the pooled estimate was based on RCTs and/or NRSI at variable RoB, the authors performed analyses to investigate possible impact of RoB on summary estimates of effect
- + No
- + No meta-analysis conducted
- 13\*. Did the review authors account for RoB in individual studies when interpreting/discussing the results of the review?
  - + Yes if
    - ◆ included only low RoB RCTs
    - ◆ OR, if RCTs with moderate or high RoB or NRSI were included, the review provided a discussion of the likely impact of RoB on the results
  - + No
- 14. Did the review authors provide a satisfactory explanation for, and discussion of, any heterogeneity observed in the results of the review?
  - + Yes if
    - ◆ there was no significant heterogeneity in the results
    - ◆ OR if heterogeneity was present the authors performed an investigation of sources of any heterogeneity in the results and discussed the impact of this on the results of the review
  - + No
- 15\*. If they performed quantitative synthesis did the review authors carry out an adequate investigation of publication bias (small study bias) and discuss its likely impact on the results of the review?
  - + Yes if
    - ◆ performed graphical or statistical tests for publication bias and discussed the likelihood and magnitude of impact of publication bias
  - + No
  - + No meta-analysis conducted
- 16. Did the review authors report any potential sources of conflict of interest, including any funding they received for conducting the review?
  - + Yes if
    - ◆ the authors reported no competing interests
    - ◆ OR the authors described their funding sources and how they managed potential conflicts of interest
  - + No
- Overall study quality
  - + High: no or one non-critical weakness the systematic review provides an accurate and comprehensive summary of the results of the available studies that address the question of interest
  - + Moderate: more than one non-critical weakness

- + Low: one critical flaw\* with or without non-critical weaknesses



Independent Evaluation Unit  
Green Climate Fund  
175 Art center-daero, Yeonsu-gu  
Incheon 22004, Republic of Korea  
Tel. (+82) 032-458-6450  
ieu@gcfund.org  
<https://ieu.greenclimate.fund>

International Fund for Agricultural Development  
Strategy and Knowledge Department  
Via Paolo di Dono, 44  
00142 Roma, Italy  
Tel.: (+39) 0654591  
ifadknowledge@ifad.org  
<https://www.ifad.org>