

Redressing the gender gap

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Propositions

Redressing the Gender Gap: Conditional cash transfers and women's experiences of empowerment in Brazil and Mexico

by Ana Patricia Silva Vara

1. "There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women." (Kofi Annan)
2. In some cases, CCTs substitute income for the beneficiaries, and they stop working in order to provide childcare. This effect is not negative, as beneficiaries perceive it as an actual improve in their welfare.
3. Most women see work as a source of pride and have strong motivations to work. However, they are not always able to work given the constraints in their time – they need to use it for childcare.
4. There is a persistence of traditional gender norms that disempower women in intra-household decision-making, especially women who lack formal education, despite CCT receipt.
5. Three kind of scenarios relate to women's economic and educational status: In households where the women have more education or where husbands work further away, women manage to make more decisions on their own; in households where both women and men have the same education or economic level, most decisions are made together; and in households where women have a lower education level, men seem to make most decisions on their own.
6. CCTs contribute to the creation of a "personal empowerment awareness." This process shows a real gain of agency, when women realise they could have more options and choices if their conditions were different.
7. The most important individual barrier for empowerment is a lack of human capital – lack of education and skills.

8. If the monetary transfers are paired with access to knowledge, the empowerment level of women in extreme poverty seems to rise more than in contexts where transfers are given without information. This suggests that structural policies that provide economic support together with education can create the seed for an empowerment process and improved well-being for this very vulnerable population.
9. The inclusion of men in the CCTs and men's education could help to start changing the patriarchal gender norms and to create more gender-equal values.
10. CCTs have a more positive effect on women's beneficiaries when they provide a link to income-generating options and formal labour market participation as exit strategies from the programmes.