

# Alternative frameworks: how do they relate to econ

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# Definition of women's empowerment

*“Women's empowerment is about the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability.”*

Kabeer 1999

# What is women's empowerment?

## Girl's and Woman's Empowerment

Meaningful choice

### Resources (preconditions)

Examples:

- Human capital
- Financial capital
- Social capital
- Physical capital

### Agency (process)

Examples:

- Voice
- Participation
- Decision making

### Achievements (outcomes)

Examples:

- Education
- Health & nutrition
- (Income generation)
- Contraception

### Norms & Institutions

Note: Areas where choice previously denied may vary

Resources may also be outcomes

## Example: quotas for women

- Chattopadhyay and Duflo fits gender literature criteria for empowerment measurement well
- What is important and consequential for women in that environment? May be different in different contexts
  - Ask about women care most about compare these to men
  - Isolate what is important for women but not men (ie denied the ability to make these choices when men make these choices)
- Measures the process and whether women are involved in meaningful way in achieving change
  - Speaking up more in meetings, registering complaints
- Measures outcomes—did water quality improve as result

# Challenges: econ vs other disciplines

- ➔ • Going from abstract constructs (eg “ability to choose”) to measurable indicators
  - This is always a challenge in measurement
  - Harder for empowerment as not just about final outcomes, but about woman’s agency in achieving those outcomes, and about preferences that may change
- ➔ • Empowerment a process: how do we measure a process rather than an outcome?
- ➔ • Social desirability bias
  - Little focus in the empowerment literature
- ➔ • Barriers vary by context, so must measurement (priority of impact evals)
- ➔ • Having a global standard to relate to
- ➔ • Realistic chance of change: if focus on ability to make “strategic life choices” then hard to measure incremental change: do we care about ability to make more choices, even if not major ones?
- Empowerment covers many aspects of life, which to focus on?

# Discussion Questions

- Does this conceptual model reflect the key concepts you use in your own research and how you define empowerment?
- How well do we think our current indicators measure these concepts?
- What can public health and social and behavioral sciences learn from economics about these measures? What can economics learn from these disciplines?
- What's the value in seeking common ground in how and what we measure when trying to capture empowerment?