

EGYPT

Gender equity model, Egypt:

Promoting women's economic empowerment and fighting gender-based violence

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BACKGROUND

Gender based violence (GBV) is a major issue for Egyptian women. According to the 2014 Egypt Demographic and Health Survey [EDHS], 30% of ever-married women aged between 15 and 49 have experienced inter-spousal violence. In addition, one third of ever-married women believe that a husband can be justified in beating his wife. There is however evidence that married women's economic and social independence in Egypt is associated with rejection of wife beating. Whether a protective or a risk factor, wage work is not easily accessible for women in Egypt. Labor force participation rate for population aged 15+ was 24% for Egyptian females in 2014 compared to 75% for Egyptian males. Barriers to entry for women into the private sector are due to a number of factors, including stereotypes and restricted mobility. Egypt's recent economic crisis is expected to impact women harder than men because the labor market in Egypt favors men in employment and tends to push women outside the labor force in times of employment squeeze. Promoting women's economic empowerment and preventing gender-based violence are much in need in Egypt.

The proposed project aims at examining the effectiveness of an intervention addressing the two simultaneously. Economic empowerment of women is targeted through an innovative intervention, the Gender Equity Model Egypt [GEME], which builds on a previous partnership between the Social Research Center [SRC] of the American University in Cairo and Egypt's Ministry of Manpower [MoM].

GEME aims at promoting women's economic empowerment through enhancing gender equality in access to and retaining employment in the private sector. The proposed project will develop the intervention with a focus on preventing gender-based violence domestically and in the work-place. Through monitoring and evaluation, the effectiveness of the intervention will be assessed and data gathered will be used to inform the national expansion of GEME.

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop the specifics of an intervention for gender equity in private firms incorporating a focus on GBV prevention, to be piloted in selected urban communities in Egypt. The intervention will target women economic empowerment while mitigating the risk of increasing domestic violence and employee backlash.
2. Assess the effectiveness of the developed intervention, with regard to increasing women's access to employment, improving their working conditions, changing community attitudes towards women's work and GBV, and preventing domestic and on-job violence.
3. Based on the lessons learnt, modify the intervention in preparation of its eventual national expansion.

METHODS

The project has two components: (1) developing and implementing an intervention; and (2) monitoring the implementation and evaluating the impact of the intervention.

The GEME Intervention

The intervention adopts two modes of targeting. It targets selected urban communities in addition to targeting private firms that employ, or could employ, from within the targeted communities. It hence works on both the supply and demand sides of labor.

Private firms targeted by the intervention will be helped to recognize gender equity in employment and to guarantee a women-friendly productive and protective working environment. Activities to achieve this target include:

- a) Performing baseline gender audit within participating firms, to identify gender equity issues and possible entry points for change.
- b) Establishing gender equity taskforce within participating firms, with the mandate of developing a gender equity policy and monitoring its implementation.
- c) Establishing offices of ombudsman within participating firms, with the mandate of mainstreaming responses to gender-based harassment and discrimination complaints.

d) Providing tailored training to the members of the established gender equity taskforces and the ombudsman offices to help them build a supportive working environment with zero tolerance of sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination and which supports women in access to employment, promotion and participation in decision making.

e) Holding awareness sessions, targeting men and women working in the participating firms, on promoting gender equity and prevention of gender-based violence.

f) Raising the capacity of the Ministry of Manpower staff to monitor and evaluate gender-related changes in firms applying for the Gender Equity Seal.

Parallel to working with the private firms, targeted communities will be helped to benefit the most from the firm-based changes. Activities in this regard include:

g) Performing a baseline in-depth study of the gender role dynamics and the attitudes towards gender-based violence in the selected communities.

h) Holding awareness sessions to address misconceptions regarding gender roles, domestic violence and sexual harassment, with support and participation from religious and social leaders.

i) Building, or benefitting from existing, community-based networks to match employment seekers and available posts in the participating private firms.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Study

A controlled quasi-experiment design will be used in order to monitor and evaluate the impact of the proposed GEME intervention. Matched communities and matched firms are to be selected and divided into treatment and control units. Pre- and post-intervention data will be collected to test for baseline equivalence between the two groups and to assess the impact of the intervention through a difference-in-differences approach. Main outcomes to be investigated are: Attitudes towards gender equality in access to employment and women's role in decision-making; Women's access to employment; Gender bias in employment and promotion; Attitude towards wife beating; Incidence of inter-spousal violence; Attitude towards sexual harassment in the work-place; Incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace; Employees' perception of the working environment and whether it is women-friendly and gender sensitive.

- Before field work starts, the data collection instruments and protocols will be reviewed and approved by American University in Cairo Institutional Review Board (IRB) on Human Subjects.

TIMELINE

Months 1-4: Developing the detailed design of the intervention and detailed M&E plan

Month 5: Selecting the intervention and control communities and firms

Month 6-7: Carrying out the pre-intervention baseline survey

Months 8-18: Implementing the intervention, and its monitoring

Months 19-20: Carrying out the post-intervention survey

Months 21-22: Data analysis and report writing

Months 23-24: Dissemination of results

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The results of the monitoring and evaluation study and the lessons learnt through the pilot stage will inform an evidence-based redesign of the intervention for further expansion. Globally, the data provided by the study will contribute to the literature on the interlinkage between women economic empowerment and GBV in low and middle income settings.

References available on request.

