Women’s Economic Empowerment: Advances and Breakthroughs

It is estimated that more than one billion women could enter the workforce in the next decade dramatically changing the global economy. The implications of this prediction for the sustainable development of South Asia are vast.

The links between gender equality, women’s economic empowerment and poverty reduction have been well documented. Ensuring that access to capital, markets and skills training are accessible to underserved and isolated populations, particularly women and girls in South Asia, is critical for sustained economic growth. Support to enable women to access economic resources is essential in countries working to achieve higher levels of economic growth to help fight poverty. A focus on investing and building capacity of women to participate in remunerative activities and improve the enabling environment for women’s formal and informal employment will contribute to sustainable economic growth.

The panel will refer to a range of successful models that have shown results in women’s economic empowerment in South Asia. New models that various organisations have implemented in South Asia will be discussed with concrete examples from Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. It will also refer to advances concerned with some of the necessary incremental change needed for women’s economic empowerment. With an overview of current methodology in women’s economic empowerment focusing on improving capacities of women for remunerative activity and improving policies, legislation and enabling environment for women’s formal and informal employment, the panel will showcase specific research and resulting policy implications emanating from linking women entrepreneurs to value chains and market systems, to working with women in isolated communities to build markets, to providing financial literacy and access to business services, addressing the legislative environment for women’s employment, as well as address some of the tangible barriers that inhibit women’s full participation in society such as mobility.

Building on analysis of lessons learned, new solutions will be put forward leading to breakthroughs in women’s economic empowerment and consequently, sustainable economic growth in South Asia. Panelists will address the following key questions:

- What are the structural issues that hinder the economic empowerment of women in the region?
- What are the lessons learned out of the approaches implemented in South Asia?
- What are the key policy implications and policy reforms necessary across the board?

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