

GENDER ACTIONS



April 2012

Gender and Agency – Peru

Why?

The World Bank's WDR 2012 focused on gender and corporate requirements were created which called for the operationalization of gender equality into country programming. The WDR also highlighted *agency* – the freedom to live a life of one's own choosing.

Agency matters not only for individuals to have the freedom to live a life of one's own choosing, but also as a facilitator of other development outcomes. Agency can be a vehicle to arrive at other development outcomes in a more effective and efficient manner, yet it is rarely used, even when there is a growing base of literature confirming its positive effects. As a consequence, agency enhancing interventions are underutilized despite their potential to improve welfare directly and through positive externalities.

In Peru, the last decade showed outstanding economic performance and impressive poverty reduction. However, data reveal that there are excluded groups that did not benefit from the big increases in GDP growth. Downward mobility remains a problem, as consumption dropped below the poverty line during periods of record growth and income disparities between certain groups – urban/ rural education level – increased. In several dimensions of gender equality, Peru lags behind other countries in LAC. Peru has not yet closed the gender gap in adult schooling or school attendance which is more pronounced according to income. Among indigenous children, girls lag behind boys. Evidence shows that females in vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are more likely to suffer from high levels of exclusion.

“Agency - the freedom to live a life of one's own choosing.”

What?

Exclusion manifests itself in every dimension of gender equality proposed in the WDR framework – endowments, economic opportunities and agency. Women suffering from economic and social exclusion in Peru are likely to possess lower endowments, have fewer economic opportunities, and lack agency.

In order to address a knowledge gap in agency among policy makers in Peru, this study will: 1) Demonstrate the potential of agency to improve interventions and facilitate policies aimed at other development outcomes; and 2) Provide relevant and applicable lessons in enhancing agency through the analysis of existing policies and programs.

How?

This study explores how agency manifests itself and it will make recommendations on how to strengthen agency via different policies and programs. This will help operationalize agency by showcasing existing home-grown policies and programs. The study will evaluate 4-5 public and private initiatives including: the CCT program JUNTOS, a TB prevention and treatment project ISEAT, cellular expansion in rural areas, and the financial literacy campaign in Sierra Sur.

Another potential aspect of the project is a potential video which will be based on lessons learned from the study. Unlike the report which will target policy makers, the audience for the video is vulnerable and excluded groups in Peru.

The aim is to increase the agency of those marginalized groups through information sharing.