Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW)

GrOW focuses on women’s economic empowerment — in labour markets, entrepreneurship, and the care economy — and the connections between women’s economic empowerment, gender equality, and patterns of economic growth in low-income contexts. With an initial focus on sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the program aims to generate rigorous empirical evidence and new, cutting-edge knowledge that addresses the following questions:

- **Theme 1**: What are the nature and magnitude of barriers to women’s economic empowerment and to closing gender gaps in earnings and productivity? How can these barriers be overcome?
- **Theme 2**: How do specific patterns of economic growth and types of structural change affect women’s economic empowerment and gender equality?
- **Theme 3**: How do women’s economic empowerment and gender equality affect economic growth?

GrOW will support researchers from around the world to work collaboratively in producing robust evidence. It will support a variety of research methodologies and approaches, aiming to bridge academic divides, with an emphasis on inter- and multi-disciplinarity.

The approach

To meet these objectives, GrOW will:

- **Fund 15-20 research projects** under Themes 1 and 2 — with a value of CA$300,000 - CA$1 million each — to generate new high quality, policy-relevant evidence. These will be selected following a three-stage competitive call.
• **Commission syntheses of existing evidence** (approximately 8 studies) under Theme 3 to assess whether and how women’s economic empowerment and gender equality affect economic growth. This will be coordinated by a research consortium selected through a competitive process.

• **Convene a series of learning events** to strengthen research quality, foster peer learning and information exchange, draw out cross-country comparisons, and engage potential users of research.

• **Undertake program-level synthesis of evidence**, drawing out policy implications, identifying what works and what does not work in various contexts, and highlighting methodological innovations in research.

• **Engage in the translation of research into action** at national, regional, and international levels to inform policy discussions, debates, and the design of interventions.

**Expected results**

At the end of five years, GrOW will have shown how high quality, evidence-based research on women’s economic empowerment, coupled with enduring partnerships between researchers and with policymakers, can have a greater influence on public policies and programs. In particular, the program will have achieved:

1) **A strengthened evidence base** that tests assumptions and delivers robust evidence on the barriers that exclude women from economic opportunities and, crucially, what actions work to remove these constraints. It will also generate new evidence on how specific types and patterns of growth and structural changes affect women’s economic participation and gender equality, and synthesise evidence on the extent to which women’s increased economic participation and gender equality contribute to economic growth.

2) **Uptake of research by decision-makers**. The program will strengthen research-to-policy linkages, and will facilitate policy dialogue informed by high-quality evidence. This will include public discussions and debates informed by the evidence generated by the program. The program will assist the funded research teams to develop strategies for engaging with relevant policymakers and practitioners. Research findings will be widely disseminated and made accessible to key audiences at national, regional, and global levels disseminated in various formats including working papers, peer-reviewed articles, policy briefs, newspaper articles, social media, and synthesis reports.

3) **Strengthened research capacities** to develop and/or use research methods and designs that are methodologically sound and innovative. It is anticipated that the program will cultivate a cadre of researchers bridging a wide range of disciplines who are well equipped to produce high-quality research and able to contribute to policy discussions and debates.

**Program governance**

IDRC will create a governance structure with an Executive Committee composed of donor representatives and a lean Program Implementation Unit. An advisory group consisting of a diverse pool of scholars, practitioners, and policy analysts will support the program to ensure research quality, assist in strengthening research capacity, and translate research into action.