EMERGE LEARNINGS REPORT
FINDINGS FROM INTERNATIONAL SCOPING MEETINGS ON
QUANTITATIVE MEASUREMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT
NOVEMBER 2016

Background
Growing interest and investments in gender equality and empowerment to improve global health and development are weighted by lagging science around the quantitative measurement needed for valid population level estimates and program evaluation outcomes. UN Women reports that 80% of indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality and Empowering All Women and Girls have no corresponding quantitative measures. *For recognition and impact on gender equality and empowerment, we must have better data. Good data require good measures, the absence of which compromises the demonstrated value of this goal for key decision-makers.*

EMERGE [Evidence-based Measures of Empowerment for Research on Gender Equality] is a new project focused on measurement of gender equality and empowerment for development and health. To better understand how to advance the field of GE/E measurement, the EMERGE research team at the Center on Gender Equity and Health, UC San Diego, convened a series of scoping meetings with global experts in GE/E measurement, policy and evaluation.

Scoping Meetings
Scoping meetings were conducted with field experts in the United States working cross-nationally to determine perspectives on the state of the science on GE/E measures for health and development, the value of improving recognition of existing science and expanding upon it via development of new measures, and what efforts to their knowledge support global south development of innovative new measures on gender equality and empowerment broadly in the field. Experts were identified based on a review of the literature and discussions with key donor organizations including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and USAID. We also reached out to UN Women and the World Health Organization to meet with their experts on gender measures. The following meetings were conducted from the period of October 2016 to February 2017:

- October 17, 2016, USAID WEA: Meeting with experts on gender equality and agriculture
- October 26, 2016, San Diego, CA: Meeting with UN Women representatives including Deputy Director Lakshmi Puri at an Economic Empowerment Summit. (in person)
- November 3, 2016, Washington, D.C: Multi-agency workshop with both academic and non-governmental organizational researchers, as well as with donors supporting measures review work. (in person)
- December 13, 2016, Together for Girls: Meeting with CEO on research on violence against children (on phone)
- December 19, 2016, UN Women, New York, NY: Meeting with researchers and data scientists with UN Women headquarters, including experts on statistics, political spheres, environment, and violence. (in person)
- December 20, 2016, UNICEF C4D, New York, NY: Meeting with communication experts (in person)
- January 5, 2016, World Health Organization: Meeting with key researchers in adolescent health. (on phone)
- February 6, 2017, World Health Organization: Meeting with key researchers in gender-based violence (on phone)
- February 9, 2017: UN Women Office for India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka: Meeting about Safe Cities and Ending Violence Against Women programs (on phone)

Additionally, we participated in the following relevant gender equality and empowerment measurement forums.
- October 26, 2016, Helsinki, Finland: 6th Global Forum on Gender Statistics. United Nations.
- December 15-16, 2017, New York, NY: UNICEF Social Norms meeting. UNICEF.
- January 17-18, 2017, Pelotas, Brazil: Equity Working Group, Countdown to 2030. Pelotas University.
- February 2-3, 2017, Palo Alto, CA: Gender and Social Norms meeting. Stanford Medical School.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We Have a Sound Foundation from which to Build the Science of GE/E Measurement

- The opportunity to move measures work forward is substantial, as *there is simultaneously collective investment among researchers and funders* to create better measures, definitions, and conceptual frameworks, *and strong capacities for large-scale cross-national operational research* efforts to adapt and test new measures in the field.

- *Good measures (e.g., self-efficacy, partner violence) which have been tested cross-nationally are available*. Promising measures exist on bodily integrity, reproductive autonomy and coercion, freedom of movement, coercive sexual environments, and quality of education. There is strong emerging work on gender role norms and other social norms.

- *Growing work in cross-national measures* development is being conducted and builds on sound theory, formative research, piloting, feedback and refinement, with support from large donor organizations and government sectors. This is creating measures in the area of women's equality in agricultural production, early adolescent development of gender roles and gender norms, and intimate partner violence against women.

- *There is recognized value to having harmonized measures to build evidence cross-nationally* regarding GE/E and its impact. This may not be possible for all issues, due to population, context and cultural variations on GE/E.

There are Frustrations with Existing Measures and Measurement Gaps in Multiple Domains

- Decision-making control is theoretically and qualitatively recognized as central to GE/E, but the existing measures have proven problematic because lack of control is only an issue if the control is desired, decision-making control is not generalizable across issues for the same person, and there is not consistency whether shared or unilateral decision-making should be the goal. *Research to assess decision-making for specific issues and in context is needed.*

- *Further research is needed to develop measures that remove the need for participants to disclose abuse* or to label their experience or partner as abusive, but still capture relationship violence. This can help validate self-report measures of violence and may give greater opportunity for research to capture abuse more accurately.

- The domain of environment and sustainability is lacking in much of the work on gender equality and empowerment, though women may get greater toxin exposure at home. *More research is needed on environmental factors (e.g. energy, exposure indoor air pollution)* that affect the role of the women, and are rooted in household or community power structures, and how sustainable consumption patterns can affect gender equality.

- Gender-based violence research is largely limited to intimate partner violence, and *more forms of gender-based violence should have valid measures*. Measurement of what makes women feel safe should be developed. With regard to safety in public spaces and effects on mobility, measures are being developed but consensus has not been reached on best ways to word questions in different contexts. A new issue arising as women gain political leadership is gender-based violence against or abuse of women in political leadership roles. In terms of intimate partner violence, there is recognition that current measures are not strong in terms of sexual and psychological partner violence, and new work is generating in that area.

GE/E Measurement is Conceptually Complex and Requires Consensus on Concept Definitions

- *GE/E concepts are not well or consistently defined*, which can lead to imprecise measurement. Theoretical clarity on the distinction and overlap between equity and empowerment, and their distinguishing concepts is needed.

- *Measures can be purpose-specific.* Because GE/E is broadly encompassing and can be approached from many disciplines, there is a recognition that different purposes of the research or field work (e.g., rigorous intervention research, operations research, program monitoring) may require different sets of measures.

- Empowerment is a process rather than a norm or behavior, and can be context specific. *Measurement of the process can be lengthy and not easily understood*, compromising feasibility of use of such measures. Further clarification on the components of the empowerment process is needed. In some contexts, researchers and practitioners may be interested in empowerment as an outcome of program evaluation, and measures that can serve as indicators for empowerment at a state or national scale should also be considered

- A shared conceptual framework would be helpful to guide measurement development, but many experts were concerned whether consensus on a framework could be achieved, particularly if it is needed for different goals- for monitoring and evaluation, for tracking country/state indicators, or even for funders tracking grant funding. Nonetheless, *a shared language on measureable GE/E domains and constructs* could and should be achieved to undertake this work.

- *Indicators should also be developed with enough complexity and nuance to reasonably measure potential incidence and prevalence, particularly in the case of gender-based violence*. If a global indicator is too broadly defined for more nuanced issues of GE/E, we may not be able to detect incidence or change as a consequence of program or policy. Further, in the case of gender-based violence, reliance on self-report can mean that improved services or awareness may result in an increase rather than a decrease in reporting, due to increased recognition and reduced stigma.

GE/E Measurement Includes Constructs that are Culture or Context Specific

- *Participatory processes are needed to ensure affected voices influence the development of measures* and interpretation of findings from those measures. Participatory processes are time consuming, which will slow down measures development. However, measures developed using a participatory approach are more likely to demonstrate feasibility and be meaningful to the populations with whom we work. Funders, researchers, and systems need to be prepared for the time and resources required to conduct this work. One of our experts stated: "It is important that researchers not pre-assume what women in particular communities need."

- *Indicators of measurable constructs may often be culture or nation-specific*. In the case of gender-based violence, for example, it is important for researchers to think in terms of the breadth of violence and how conceptions and manifestations of violence may differ between regions. Sexual violence, particularly in the context of relationships, is not easily recognized and reported in many national or cultural contexts.

- *Accurate assessment of a given GE/E construct requires a shared definition of and shared language* on that construct. This can be a disconnect between the researcher and the participant, particularly if the participant is from a lower education and less resourced context.

New Research to Create Innovative and Scientifically Valid GE/E Measures is Needed

- *Innovations in measurement approaches are needed*. We are over-reliant on self-report survey measures. Likert scales are difficult and visualizations may be more helpful in low literacy contexts. Vignettes, implicit assessment testing, list randomization and random response methods, polling groups, observations, and verbal autopsy show promise. Research will likely require a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

- Notable in our review was that most all of the identified measures had roots in the United States or the United Kingdom. This may in part be due to our outreach to experts being more effective in English speaking nations, but generally behavioral measures are created in North America or Europe and then taken to the Global South. *There is a need to support more measures development in the Global South* and particularly from nations working to address

GE/E at scale. Support with dissemination of measures that have been developed by these nations would also be important.

- Funders must be willing to invest in the resources needed to develop high quality surveys with validated measures including time for formative research and pilot testing of survey instruments. *For creation of new measures, use of formative research, stake holder engagement, pilot testing, and analysis of psychometrics should be the standard*

Research Must Assess Beyond Individual Women and Girls, and Include Collectives, Institutions, and Men and Boys

- *Research using systems theory frameworks may help assess GE/E at multiple levels* including in social systems and organizations, and through concepts of collective empowerment and agency. Research is almost exclusively assessed at the individual level or as an aggregate of individuals.

- More research is needed on the role or engagement of those enabling or disabling empowerment (e.g. role of men and boys), the capacity of communities and institutions to influence social environments, and societal power structures, mobility, and/or notions of justice.

Dissemination Must Be a Focus of Newly Generated Scientific Research on GE/E Measures
- *Recommended and shared "gold standard" measures* can help ensure their use, both among those who may not otherwise include these in their efforts and among those invested in these issues but with less access to scientific papers on these topics. *A web-accessible living repository of measures is needed.*

- *Building of science includes peer reviewed publications* which can take time but builds credibility. Special issues of journals focused on GE/E measurement will be important, as well as publication of null findings, which can help researchers recognize which measures are useful, in which contexts, and in association with which outcomes.

- The prioritization of publication should not be conducted at the cost of compromising widespread dissemination and potentially use of a promising measure and its adaptation to new contexts. Greater focus on publication in parallel with other more rapid dissemination efforts, such as policy briefs and working papers, would be valuable. Partnerships across those in research, practice and policy would facilitate this approach.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this scoping work documents important strengths of existing research in the area of GE/E measurement including broad interdisciplinary multi-country research, but it also demonstrates ample opportunity to improve and expand the science of this work. More rigorous but participatory approaches to research are needed for measures development, led by nations in the Global South who are seeking to improve their own situation with regard to GE/E. Use of theory and inclusion of diverse populations with measures at multiple levels are important, but equally important is expansion of our methods beyond individual surveys and system-level data (e.g., school or health records or facility indicators).

Participants in Scoping Meetings

Name*	Title	Organization
Amy Pennington	Program Officer, WGCD	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Anna Coates	Chief, Gender and Cultural Diversity	Pan American Health Organization
Anju Pandey	Program Lead	Ending Violence Against Women team, UN Women Unit for India, Bhutan, the Maldives and Sri Lanka
Avni Amin[2]	Technical Officer	Department of Reproductive Health and Research, World Health Organization
Carolina Mejia	M&E/Gender Advisor	MEASURE Evaluation
Venkatraman Chandra-Mouil	Scientist, Adolescents and At-Risk Populations Team	Department of Reproductive Health and Research, World Health Organization
Charlotte Feldman-Jacobs	Associate Vice Presidentn	Population Reference Bureau
Claudia García-Moreno	Lead Specialist, Gender, Reproductive Rights, Sexual Health and Adolescence Team	Department of Reproductive Health and Research, World Health Organization
Daniela Ligiero	CEO	Together for Girls
Farzana Ramzan	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist	USAID, Food Security
Gabriella Borovsky	Policy Specialist	UN Women, Team on Political Participation
Gary Darmstadt	Professor	Stanford University Medical School
Giovanna Lauro	Deputy Director	Promundo
Jeff Edmeades	Senior Social Demographer	ICRW
Jeni Klugman	Research Professor	Harvard Kennedy School, Women and Public Policy Program
Jennifer Martin	Senior Director	UC San Diego
Jennifer Yore	Program Manager	Center on Gender Equity and Health, UC San Diego
Jessamyn Encarnacion	Specialist	UN Women, Statistics Team
Joan Kraft	Scientist	USAID, Office of Population and Reproductive Health; CDC
Juncal Castano	Policy Specialist, Violence Against Women	UN Women
Julie Newton	Senior Advisor	Royal Tropical Institute (KIT)
Katherine Hay	Deputy Director, Monitoring, Learning, and Evaluation	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, India
Ketan Chitnis	Specialist	UNICEF, Communication for Development (C4D)
Margaret Greene	President	GreeneWorks
Matt Morton	Young Professional	World Bank Group
Michal Avni	Senior Gender Advisor	USAID, Office of Population and Reproductive Health
Myra Betron	Director	JHPIEGO
Nicole Haberland	Senior Associate	Population Council
Niyati Shah	Senior Gender Advisor and Team Leader	USAID, Office of Maternal and Child Health and Nbatrituion, Office of Infectious Diseases
Papa Seck	Statistics Specialist	UN Women, Research and Data Section
Patricia Cortes	Special Assistant to Deputy Director Lakshmi Puri	UN Women
Rafael Obregon	Chief	UNICEF, Communication for Development (C4D)
Sabrina Boyce	Research Program Manager	Center on Gender Equity and Health, UC San Diego
Sarah Baird	Associate Professor	George Washington University
Sarah Eckhoff	Senior Gender and Empowerment Impact Measurement Advisor	CARE
Shawn Malarcher	Senior UtilizationAdvisor	USAID, Office of Population and Reproductive Health
Tim Shand	Deputy Director	Passages Project
Venge Nyirongo	Policy Specialist, Sustainable Development	UN Women

*Experts listed alphabetically by first name.