

## **GENDER, LABOR AND POLITICS: How women's labor participation affects their access to political power**

**Albertson, Ginger**

Community Organizer, Indivisible Brooklyn, United States, [gingeralbertson@gmail.com](mailto:gingeralbertson@gmail.com)

With a growing awareness of persistent gender gaps and their effect on the status of women and nations' economic development, there is currently extensive strategic planning and investment in women's economic empowerment. However there is a growing body of research that challenges the implicit assumption that women's economic empowerment is helpful in improving the status of women. This literature, though, has conflicting arguments in the degree to which economic investment in women contributes to their overall empowerment and this body of literature is small. There are also data and knowledge gaps regarding the positive effects of women's economic empowerment on social and political participation, though it seems an implicit assumption in country-based strategic planning and investments. This area of study is ripe for an in depth analysis as women's empowerment is the current logical underpinning of development planning and policies.

To add to growing knowledge in this area, this research focuses on women's status and empowerment specifically through women's participation in labor and politics, examining their level of participation in each, . I will attempt to identify some economic and political mechanisms that influence women, and also their families, communities and nations, to change their perspectives that presently allow for or perpetuate norms and practices that are harmful to women.

Cambodian women have almost 80% participation in the labor market but a 20% participation as political leaders. To better understand development work being done in-country to empower women, and related challenges, I conducted interviews with development leaders in Cambodia. I also interviewed Cambodian women regarding how their work participation affected their community status and access to decision making power, and political access and influence.

Women must be proactive agents of change in their status and to do so must be have access to the knowledge and tools that will assist them. In Cambodia this process has been partially organic, through grassroots women's political leadership organizations, land rights and labor advocacy, and partially through the active participation of the Royal Government of Cambodia in partnership with various nongovernmental organizations. In this blog I further explore how labor and political participation, both direct and indirect, influence women's empowerment and will use this blog as a platform to publish my findings in a case study of Cambodia.