

Summary

Background information

This tool explores expansion in women's empowerment projects examining The Santiago Partnership, an Ecuador-based non-profit. The Santiago Partnership is a nonprofit working alongside the local church through a holistic approach aiming for transformed families. Through opportunities and education in artisan crafts, women from vulnerable conditions empower themselves and their communities. The projects offered by The Santiago Partnership have fostered a supportive and encouraging community among the women involved.

The Santiago Partnership has beautifully executed its programming of a children's home, prevention and intervention programs in cases of domestic violence or negligence, and in education and Sumak, the artisan craft studio for women. The success of The Santiago Partnership in Cayambe, Ecuador requires dedicated staff working in various capacities. The leaders and staff have ideas and dreams of expanding and are intentionally examining the needs of a community before entering and establishing programming.

Amartya Sen proposed the idea that poverty can be viewed or measured by unfreedoms or lack of capabilities. Factors such as low income or lack of education provide limitations in peoples' lives, as does lack of freedom in the form of restrictions on political and civil liberties and participation. Therefore, according to Sen, development can be seen as a movement towards individuals having more choice and more freedom, removing major sources of unfreedom.

While Sen refrains from providing specific capabilities as indicators of increased freedom, Martha Nussbaum draws on Sen's theory by defining ten central capabilities that may be broadly applied for human flourishing. Nussbaum proposes the fourth capability category as 'senses, imagination, and thought.' This includes basic education, such as literacy, as well as the use of imagination and thought to interpret experiences and to produce something.

The worksheet presented is a tool to assist in the process of moving from unfreedoms, as defined by Sen, to action and women's empowerment in community development. The table provided is space to reflect on unfreedoms present in a community and how to implement action steps to move towards increasing freedoms using Nussbaum's capacities as possible indicators.

Learning Outcome(s)

1. Understanding of the capabilities approach
2. Understanding and identifying unfreedoms across household, community and broader arena levels

3. Understanding and identifying relevant indicators of freedoms
4. Challenges associated with moving from unfreedoms to action
5. Overlapping complexities within women's empowerment

How it Works

The Evaluation Tool for Women's Empowerment in Community Development was created to help think through the process of moving from unfreedoms to action through women's empowerment in community development. The table provides space to identify the freedoms and their functionings observed as present or missing within a community at the household, community, and broader arena levels. The following column provides space to identify functionings your organization aspires to help in order to expand and develop. Finally, the last column invites action, providing space to identify specific next steps.

Table 1 is a tool provided by The World Bank. This provides commonly used capabilities and functionings across the household, community, and broader arena levels. Where these functionings are obviously lacking, unfreedoms can be identified. Finally, Table 2 from the United Nations Development Programme provides clear examples of functionings related to women's empowerment across different categories. This can support the identification of functionings relevant to the identified unfreedoms.

Suggested Uses:

1. Expansion of projects / programs under way.
2. Expansion to new areas or locations.

Estimated Time: 90 Minutes

Discussion Questions:

1. Where are individuals and the community involved at each stage of the process?
2. Transformational development takes a holistic approach, including supporting spiritual well-being. While this is more challenging to discern through a needs assessment, what might you add to a spiritual (un)freedoms category at the household, community and broader levels?
3. How do the various categories intersect and inform each other?
4. What existing policies, cultural, or environmental factors impact your action steps?
5. How might these factors support or hinder women in the exercise of expanded freedoms through your programs? In other words, how does society and community affect what women are able to achieve?



Talking Points:

- The Santiago Partnership began by intentionally seeking out needs in Cayambe as well as what was already happening in the local churches and community. They looked for what the church was already doing and how they could partner in that effort. They want to do the same in expansion.
- Importance of learning from national employees about their hopes and vision for the Santiago Partnership.
- A holistic approach impacts every aspect of life, and through access to education, women empower themselves and others. Education and women's empowerment affect varied aspects of life because of this holistic approach.
- Functionings are not the end goal themselves, but functionings are evidence of increased empowerment.
- Significance of asset framing and including women of the community in the assessment.