

Newcomb Institute participates in National Academies report that guides future of women's empowerment, socioeconomic development research

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National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report looks at advancing the state of knowledge on the impact of women's empowerment, according to co-chair and co-editor Dr. Anita Raj.

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[Anita Raj, PhD](#), Executive Director of the Newcomb Institute at Tulane University, recently served as co-chair and co-editor of the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine \(NASEM\)](#) multidisciplinary committee to explore population dynamics and socioeconomic development as it relates to women's empowerment.

Women's empowerment, population dynamics, and socioeconomic development have been studied from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. However, attempts to reconcile these perspectives and apply a holistic view to the relationships among these concepts have been rare.

“Global development includes goals to advance women's empowerment, but evidence regarding how to advance women's empowerment and whether such advancement can improve socioeconomic development is not well-understood. We undertook this work to document the evidence base from across disciplines, which is actually quite robust regarding the value of women's empowerment for global health and development,” said Raj, who is also a professor in the [Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#).

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation originally commissioned NASEM to improve the knowledge base on these topics. As a result of this dynamic committee coming together, a comprehensive report was released in November 2024 that detailed a new conceptual framework to describe the relationship between women's empowerment and the role it plays in the economy, the family, and society.

The committee also provided recommendations on three key areas for research and data collection:

Improving Measurement: When researchers collect data about women's empowerment they should use "valid" measures that reflect multiple dimensions and consider broader factors like social norms and institutions that influence women's empowerment.

Enhancing Study Designs: When designing studies, researchers should prioritize experimental designs, such as randomized controlled trials, to establish causality and include large-scale implementation studies. They should also collect longitudinal and qualitative data in empowerment across a woman's life and highlight community perspectives.

Collaboration and Harmonization: Researchers across programs should prioritize developing and adopting standardized measures for empowerment so data can be compared across contexts and time.

"This report not only looks at advancing the state of knowledge on the impact of women's empowerment and associated population dynamics on socioeconomic development, but also sets an agenda for future policy-relevant research and data collection," said Raj. "We ultimately hope that this report can support continuing efforts to use evidence to advance gender equality and human development locally and globally."

To read the report and learn more about the findings, [visit here](#).