

## Topic One: Goal Five: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

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In the first few months of my internship here in Dar es Salaam, I've had the great honour to participate in gender-focused development at a local level. By working for Equality for Growth (EfG), I've gained insight into the informal markets of Dar Es Salaam and the largest sector of the Tanzanian economy where gender dynamics are a pervasive force. Based on this experience, I'd suggest women in the informal sector as a crucial entry point by which to achieve the SDG #5 in countries like Tanzania.

The informal sector employs more than 80% of the over 4 million population of Dar es Salaam. Approximately 38% of whom are women. Drawing from EfG research, I now know that women who work in this sector are largely relegated to low-capital, low-growth, and low-profit types of businesses within these markets, and ones that are largely related to domestic pursuits. Most women don't have access to capital to grow their business, or purchase their own market space and save on rental fees. Mothers still have to carry the weight of 23+ hours per week of domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, and child rearing, on top of their already long hours at the markets 6 days a week. Furthermore, women in the informal sector suffer from astoundingly high rates of verbal abuse, sexual harassment, and petty crime or abuse of business. They are often targeted by local officials and police, fined unnecessarily, and even administered corporal or sexual punishment for any perceived misdoings.

Perpetuating these challenges is women's lack of access to information or knowledge about their rights both in the marketplace and at home. By offering opportunities such as leadership, business, and human rights training, EFG has empowered women in the informal sector to organize, support each other, and speak up against gender inequality and abuse. As a result, women are forming action networks that provide both a platform for advocacy for rights and women's leadership, but also an opportunity to save, gain capital, and grow and expand their businesses. Thus allowing women a better livelihood and greater ability to support their families and children. With the simple spark of knowledge and a little guidance, EfG is rapidly enabling women to work towards and achieve their own self-development, in a truly sustainable way.

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In Canada, I think there are similar challenges for women in the workforce that are not so far removed from the struggles of women here in Tanzania. Women at home continue to carry the large majority of double burden duties such as cooking, cleaning, and caretaking. Perhaps not to the same duration as women in Tanzania, maybe not 23+ hours a week, but the principle of added responsibilities still stands. In Tanzania, women often rely on relatives and family friends to help support their caretaking efforts on a regular basis. In Canada, not all women are lucky enough to have freely accessible family support. The many duties of motherhood cannot help but distract and potentially detract from a woman's professional career. Pregnancy and maternity leave can often prevent women from gaining the positions or promotions they desire, and contribute to workplace stereotypes, and prejudice, or harassment. Whether

women should prioritize their profession or their motherhood is a controversial and taboo debate, such as we've seen in the debate surrounding Cheryl Sandberg's recent book "*Lean In*". The ability for women to carry leadership positions and influence decision-making processes is a universal challenge that knows no borders.

The extent of our knowledge of a woman's fundamental human rights is a question that can also be posed in the Canadian context. Do women, mothers or not, truly know their legal binding rights in the workplace environment? Do we know what constitutes verbal abuse, or sexual discrimination? Are we ever subjected to inappropriate treatment or punishment on account of gender or physical appearance? Do we have easy access to legal support and feel the freedom to use it if we are victim to gender abuse of any kind? My guess is not likely.

How many women have accepted or tolerated inappropriate comments, looks, or behaviours based on how we look, dress, act, or speak? How many of us have felt disempowered by a male authority in a position of power? Although the context between Tanzania and Canada may be worlds apart, these questions can still be applied and should be. Let them serve as a foundation for action networks of women all over the world to speak up and act out against violence against women in all forms and all places. Let them unify us, to bring strength and empowerment to all. Just as EfG does in Dar Es Salaam.

What recommendations would I make for achieving this goal? Below are a few brief strategies to be considered, based on my experience so far with EfG.

- 1) Formation of women's networks for action, advocacy, and support. These can be formed in workplaces, or communities of any kind. By sharing our experiences, combining our voices, and supporting each other, we become a positive force for change and development.
- 2) Rights Education for all. Education and awareness of women's rights, and the signs and symptoms of gender-based violence is a power we cannot underestimate. This training should be applied to both men and women equally in any workplace.
- 3) Women's Rights and GBV Campaigns. Global participation in activities such as the *16 Days of Activism* Campaign against Violence against Women will help to support and spread the momentum behind our actions. Individuals all over the world need to speak out against GBV and share messages of equality and fair treatment for all. Until it becomes a worldwide effort, we will continue to experience limits on our potential for change.
- 4) Greater support for mothers and families. Legal, policy, and institutional support for family caretaking and child rearing must be recognized as beneficial for all society. Access to affordable childcare, basic necessities such as food and shelter, and education for youth are all absolute minimums we cannot ignore. Support programs should be entrenched in the politics of our nations, workplaces, and communities.