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Restorative outdoor qualities at workplaces promote increased well-being, cooperation and productivity

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Research has shown that restorative effects of nature decrease stress and increase empathy, cooperation, well-being and good health. Well-being promotes creativity and productivity. Swedish builders and property managers work with leading researchers in stress, rehabilitation, city planning and architecture to jointly develop methods, criteria and standards to make work environments more restorative and innovative, to profile Swedish know-how as leading and to implement findings among certification authorities. The expected effects are better profits for businesses renting from the involved real estate companies and increased export. Highly restorative workplaces lead to decreased illness absence and exclusion and improved well-being and social relations. Sweden is leading in garden therapy and rehabilitation for work-related stress illnesses. This project will allow us to apply our knowledge to promoting well-being even among the healthy. The project has now finished an initial study of the Karolinska Institute workplace/campus. Environmental analysis show differences among the staff categories PhD-students, post doc and senior researchers, and their feeling of stress associated between with window views and green outdoor qualities. 850 responded the questionnaire to the total staff 2.200 persons. A further step is to develop methods to improve outdoor qualities, and follow up effects. A final aim is to develop standards for certification authorities. The incitement for participating construction developers and real estate companies is to profile their competence in creating good work environments.

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The effects of economic self-help-group programs on women's empowerment: A systematic review

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Women bear an unequal share of the burden of poverty globally due to societal and structural barriers. One way that governments, development agencies, and grassroots women's groups have tried to address these inequalities is through women's economic self-help groups (SHGs). The primary objective of this review was to examine the impact of women's economic self-help groups on women's individual-level empowerment in low- and middle-income countries using evidence from rigorous quantitative evaluations. The secondary objective was to examine the perspectives of female participants on factors determining their participation in, and benefits from, economic self-help groups using evidence from high-quality qualitative evaluations. We conducted an integrated mixed-methods review that examines data generated through both quantitative and qualitative research methods. We then integrated the findings to develop a framework for assessing how economic self-help groups might impact women's empowerment. We included a total of 23 quantitative and 11 qualitative studies in the final analysis. We found that women's economic self-help groups have small but positive effects on various dimensions of women's empowerment, including economic, social and political empowerment. SHGs were more effective when the government or a community-based organization assisted in the formation of the group and when there were higher levels of social support in the form of training. Strong group leadership facilitated more effective self-help group programs. Self-help groups were most effective for women who were not the poorest of the poor but just above that level, because the poorest of the poor were not likely to join self-help groups and, if they did, were least likely to benefit from the self-help groups. Self-help groups were more effective when there was strong support from partners and/or other household members and no pushback from community members. Pushback from community members was most likely when self-help groups were less well established. Overall, we did not find evidence of negative effects of women's self-help groups.

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