

ENDLINE EVALUATION

Women for
Women
International's
"Stronger
Women,
Stronger
Afghanistan"
Programme

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ABOUT HUMAN DIGNITY FOUNDATION

Human Dignity Foundation (HDF) is a private, Swiss foundation established in 2004 and governed by a Board of Directors. The foundation has a limited lifespan and will end its grantmaking in 2021. HDF's vision is a world where all children and young people are living with dignity. Guided by its vision, HDF supports relevant organisations to expand and improve their work with children and young people in Africa and Asia.

ABOUT WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL

Women for Women International (WfWI) opened their doors in 1993 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and now also works directly with women in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Kosovo, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Sudan. In countries affected by conflict and war, WfWI's mission is to support the most marginalized women to earn and save money, improve health and well-being, influence decisions in their home and community, and connect to networks for support. WfWI has provided social and economic empowerment training to marginalized women in Afghanistan since 2002.

ABOUT THOUSAND PLATEAUS

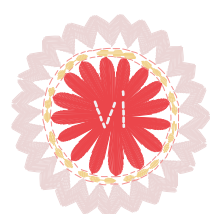
Thousand Plateaus is a full-service research consulting company creating innovative solutions for applying research to the development field. Thousand Plateaus was founded in 2014 by two female researchers specializing in gender and development with several years of experience in Afghanistan. Thousand Plateaus believes in holistic approaches to research and development and drawing on transdisciplinary knowledge and experience to produce comprehensive, panoptic insights and results. Thousand Plateaus' co-founders and lead consultants Mateja Zupancic and Marie S. Huber have over ten years of experience in analytical research, including over five years of on-the-ground experience conducting research, trainings, assessments and evaluations in Afghanistan. Mateja Zupancic holds Masters degrees in Globalisation and Development and History of the Arts and Conservation of Cultural Heritage, and Marie S. Huber holds a Master of Philosophy in International Peace Studies.

ACRONYMS

ACCI	Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries
AFN	Afghani (currency)
AGO	Attorney General's Office
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
CDC	Community Development Council
DoWA	Department of Women's Affairs
ELCS	Economic Locus of Control Scale
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FRU	Family Resolution Unit
GAD	Gender and Development
GRAS	Gender Roles Attitude Scale
GSES	Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale
HDF	Human Dignity Foundation
HITS	Hurt, Insult, Threaten and Scream
HLOC	Health Locus of Control
IFB	IForm-BUILDER
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practice
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
MLP	Men's Leadership Programme
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
NSP	National Solidarity Program
REM-Y	Restrictiveness Evaluation Measure for Youth (REM-Y)
SEA	Scale of Economic Abuse
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
ToT	Training of Trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USD	United States Dollar (currency)
VAW	Violence Against Women
VfM	Value for Money
WAD	Women and Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WfWI	Women for Women International
WID	Women in Development
WPC	Women's Protection Center

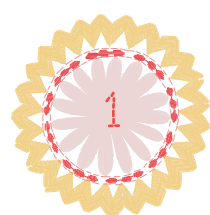
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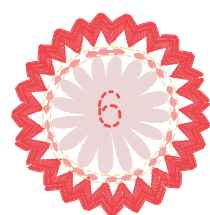
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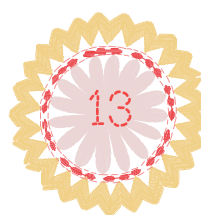
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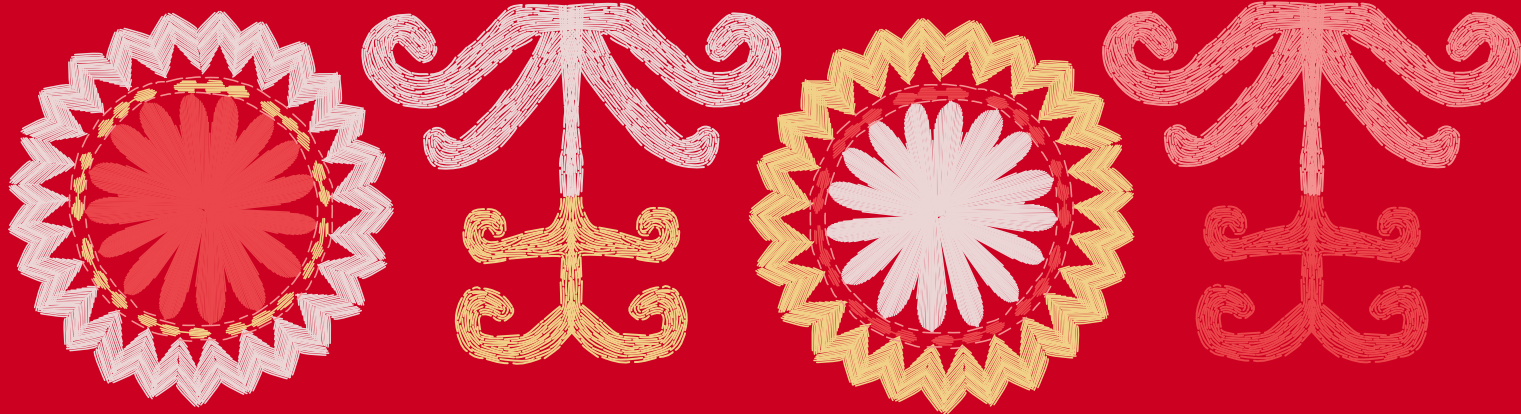
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2011, Women for Women International (WfWI) received a three-year grant of 900,000 USD from Human Dignity Foundation (HDF) for its programme, “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan.” The overall goal of WfWI’s Afghanistan programme is to improve the lives of socially excluded women and their families by building self-reliance and access to sustainable livelihood opportunities. With the HDF grant, WfWI planned to work with 5,200 new women in Afghanistan each year, reaching 16,000 women over three years. The specific objectives of the programme are to: (1) Provide life-skills and vocational training to 5,200 socially-excluded women each year to improve their understanding of health and hygiene, increase their participation in family decision-making, and enable them to earn an income; (2) Sensitize and engage 450 male community religious leaders, over the next three years, to increase their support for women’s rights in three provinces.

The main purpose of the present evaluation is to assess the impact of the intervention on women, families and communities in the programme locations. The evaluation focuses on seven criteria: (1) effectiveness, (2) impact, (3) efficiency, (4) relevance, (5) coverage, (6) coherence, and (7) sustainability. This evaluation takes a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both primary and secondary quantitative and qualitative data. In the first stage, a quantitative individual survey was conducted with a representative sample of female project participants administered by female facilitators. From these surveys, approximately 80 female participants were selected to take part in qualitative focus group discussions and for in-depth individual interviews. Additionally, focus group discussions (FGDs) were also conducted with 24 men who participated in the Men’s Leadership Programme (MLP). These men also completed a short self-administered survey questionnaire. The evaluation is based on a survey that is representative of the 11,605 female participants in the project for the period covered by the HDF grant with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, totalling 374 survey participants.

This evaluation found that while the programme had a number of positive achievements it generally fell short of its target objectives. Fewer than one in four programme participants are earning an income, and of those, more than two thirds were earning an income prior to participating

in the programme, suggesting that the programme had little success in empowering non-income earning women to become economically active. Additionally, less than one in ten participants earn more than 1 USD per day, though approximately 1 out of every 2 income earning women saves at least a portion of their income. The programme appears to have facilitated business development to some extent, with approximately one out of every seven participants reporting that they have their own business, though of these, 67% earn less than 1000 AFN (16 USD) per month, which would amount to less than 1 USD per day. Women demonstrated low levels of knowledge in many areas in which they were trained, including business knowledge, financial literacy, rights, and reproductive health. However, women demonstrated higher levels of knowledge regarding nutrition and hygiene. In addition, women appear to be more politically active and somewhat involved in their communities, with a few limitations. This latter success should be considered a notable achievement, considering that women traditionally have limited access to public and social spaces and limited access to extra-familial social networks in Afghanistan.

Generally, based on the results of the different measurements of women’s empowerment as presented above, it could be concluded that women are somewhat empowered in the political, psychological, and physical domains of empowerment, but less so in terms of the socio-cultural beliefs and visibility, economic, familial/interpersonal and legal dimensions. The findings of this evaluation furthermore concluded that it is unlikely that the overall approach and rationale that women’s economic engagement can facilitate empowerment is well founded, as women’s income generation had no relationship to women’s social inclusion, physical and psychological well-being, or even economic empowerment. Women’s income generation was not significantly related to social well-being, experiences of physical and psychological abuse, public values, self-esteem, psychological well-being, internal health locus of control, family planning practices, internal economic locus of control, and experiences of economic abuse.

The dominant shortcomings in programme activities that emerged throughout this evaluation were a lack of follow-up support from WfWI, especially in taking what women had learned and translating it into income generating

activities, which would require investment, access to markets, business skills and financial literacy, logistic and legal support. Additionally, the programme does not undertake activities that address the social and structural barriers that women face in their families, households, and daily lives. The overall approach of the programme was found to be largely in line with the Women in Development (WID) and the “smart economics” approach, both of which have been found to be limited in terms of actual impact. The programme focuses on women’s productive roles and income generation as a means of status improvement for women, incorporating training and vocational skills and specific income generating activities typical of WID such as skills and crafts, while also incorporating some elements of welfare-centric topics such as hygiene and literacy. The programme generally addresses women’s economic engagement and empowerment in a vacuum, similar to the WID approach that generally focused on existing social structures and how to integrate women into them through promoting equal participation. This approach does not address the multitude of structural barriers—such as culture, religion, laws, and social norms—that are also important factors influencing women’s empowerment.

The programme rationale is largely in line with WID and the “smart economics” approach, though some of the programme’s activities show an attempt to align it with a GAD approach. The “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme aims to address practical gender needs by training women in business and other skills in order to enable them to earn an income and sustain a living. However, this evaluation found that these components of the programme have had limited success, where few women were actually able to use their skills to address practical gender needs in terms of inadequacies in living conditions such as water provision, food, and health care. The programme attempts to address strategic gender needs by raising women’s awareness through training and through the MLP programme. However, this component appears to be a surface-level attempt to establish gender equality, based on a largely unsubstantiated theory of a trickle-down effect from community leadership. This is an especially problematic theory when considering that only 13% of participants surveyed said that they would advise a woman experiencing physical abuse to turn to community elders, shuras or jirgas, and 20% to a religious leader. Structural barriers are not addressed at the very root of the problem, inside the family, or at the macro level and through institutions and legal mechanisms.

Essentially, the programme rests on the assumption that if women are aware of their practical and strategic gender needs, paired with an increased capacity to become economically productive, they will naturally become empowered. Similarly, it assumes that if community leadership’s awareness is raised regarding women’s rights, the rest will naturally follow, with men actively intervening in situations of abuse and supporting women’s participation in the community. However, the programme stops at awareness raising and does not undertake activities or provide any actual support in tackling the multitude of remaining structural barriers they face. The

findings of this evaluation highlight the limitations to the awareness raising approach in terms of engendering meaningful change and empowering women.

The programme rationale itself utilizes language directly derived from WID, which assumes that access to income will sufficiently empower women and gender relations will change on their own as women become economically viable members of society,¹ in stating that “when women earn an income in a deeply patriarchal society like Afghanistan – they begin to shift the narrow lens through which they are viewed, as male relatives start to see them as ‘contributing’ family members.”² The “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme provides further evidence that primary emphasis on access to income does not sufficiently empower women, and social structures and gender relations do not change on their own as women become economically active members of society.

KEY FINDINGS

Effectiveness

- Less than one out of every four programme participants is earning an income (23%). Of those who are earning an income, 67% were already personally earning income prior to participating in the programme, indicating that though 23% of participants were earning an income at the time of the evaluation, only 8% of these were newly earning income after participating in the WfWI programme. 7.5% of programme participants self-reported earning more than 1 USD per day, compared to the target of 80% set for the programme.
- Fewer than one out of every five programme participants reported that they are using what they learned in the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” training to earn an income (16%), compared to the target of 60% set for the programme.
- Approximately half of the women who are earning an income save a portion of their income, compared to the target of 80% set for the programme.
- On average, participants were only able to answer approximately 2 out of 7 questions correctly regarding business knowledge based on the contents of the programme’s business skills training curriculum, indicating a low number of participants with the basic knowledge to apply the skills they were meant to learn in building and operating their own business or cooperative.
- 70% of married participants are practicing at least one type of family planning, surpassing the target of 50% set for the programme. However, considerably less than the proposed target of 80% have a basic knowledge on reproductive health, with approximately half aware of recommended birth spacing intervals and fewer than one out of every five participants (16%) aware of when she is most likely to become pregnant.
- Participants had a considerably low level of awareness of their rights, with the average participant answering

1 Eva M. Rathgeber, “WID, WAD, GAD: Trends in Research and Practice,” *The Journal of Developing Areas* 24, no. 4 (1990): 489-502.

2 “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” proposal

less than two out of five questions correctly regarding women's basic rights in Afghanistan related to civil documentation, mobility, inheritance, child marriage, and violence against women. 15% of participants demonstrated a basic level (three out of five questions correct) of rights awareness.

- Less than half (41%) were involved in at least half of the financial decisions listed in the survey, which is less than the proposed target of 80%. On average, respondents reported that female household members are involved in 58% of the areas of household financial decision-making listed in the survey. 56% of programme participants contribute to the household decision of whether boys and girls will attend school, falling short of the target of 80% set for the programme.
- Participation in community activities was high among women and the target set at 30% was met and surpassed based on answers on different community activities. 30% of respondents had participated in a community shura in the past six months. The bulk of community participation was in family-related or private gatherings, where 90% had attended a wedding, funeral or other family-related gathering and 76% had participated in a private female gathering in someone's home. 53% had participated in a gathering in a public space. Overall, 75% of respondents had participated in at least half of the activities listed.
- Men who participated in the MLP programme demonstrated generally high levels of belief in the efficacy of violence prevention, and a generally average level of self-efficacy regarding the prevention of VAW. However, these men seemed less willing to actually take actions to reduce gender-based violence in their communities. Only approximately one out every three participants surveyed did not feel it would be too hard to confront a man who is abusing his wife, indicating that the programme fell short of the target that 60% of MLP participants would take action to reduce gender-based violence in their communities.
- On a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 would indicate extremely positive attitudes towards gender roles and 5 extremely negative attitudes, the average score among MLP participants surveyed was 3.23, indicating somewhat neutral to negative gender role attitudes. Only 31% of the men surveyed had scores above 3, which would indicate neutral to positive gender role attitudes, falling short of the target of 90% of MLP participants articulating a changing in knowledge and attitude regarding women's rights and recognizing the value of women's roles, accomplishments, and contributions.

Impact

- Based on the results of the different measurements of women's empowerment included in this evaluation, it could be concluded that women are somewhat empowered in the political, psychological, and physical domains of empowerment, but less so in terms of the socio-cultural beliefs and visibility, economic, familial/interpersonal and legal dimensions.
- Respondents demonstrated a generally strong sense of community and social integration, with 87% reporting

that they feel close to other people in their community, and 80% reporting that their community is a source of comfort. However, respondents did not demonstrate very high levels of perceived social contribution, with only 42% believing they have something valuable to give to the world, 21% believing that their daily activities do not produce anything worthwhile for their community, and only 35% believing they have something important to contribute to society.

- Participants in the programme on average had moderately negative gender role attitudes. 65% believed a woman should only consult a woman doctor; 49% felt that the final decision regarding the choice of a woman's husband should be made by her father; 84% believe a man should marry again if his wife is unable to deliver a child; and 82% that a woman should remain silent instead of arguing if she disagrees with her husband.
- On average, participants in the programme live in reasonably unrestricted living environments. 60% said their household allows them to move freely within their community or freely with one or two restrictions, and 47% have no limitations in choosing their friends (non-family members). However, 17% said they are not allowed to seek employment, and 7% that they are only allowed to pursue employment opportunities within the home setting.
- The average project participant is experiencing psychological and/or physical abuse. Approximately 1 out of every 2 participants experiences verbal abuse, approximately 4 out of 10 threats, and approximately 4 out of 10 physical abuse.
- Women had a low level of understanding of their legal rights. Only 6% of women knew about the legal documents needed for protecting their rights to *mahr*, inheritance, or divorce. Just over half (59%) are aware that slapping or shoving a woman, even in the absence of injury, constitutes a crime in Afghan law.
- Participants demonstrated a moderately high level of public values. However, women do not necessarily have control over their own political participation, as 82% of respondents who had voted in the 2014 election listed at least one or more person or party that attempted to decide who they should vote for on their behalf.
- Participants had a generally healthy level of self-esteem. 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are a person of worth, and 89% that they have a number of good qualities. 75% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they feel useless at times, 71% that they sometimes think they are no good at all, and 69% that they are inclined to feel like a failure.
- Participants also had a generally high sense of self-efficacy. 83% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they can always manage to solve difficult problems if they try hard enough, 53% that it is easy for them to stick to their aims and accomplish their goals, and 42% that no matter what comes their way they are usually able to handle it.
- The average participant generally has a degree of psychological distress, but does not exhibit depressive symptoms. 59% of respondents reported that in the past month, they were a happy person all or most of the time.

- On average, respondents answered only about 1 out of the 4 questions correctly on the scale measuring financial literacy, indicating a generally low level of financial literacy. That participants were generally unable to make decisions and calculations regarding credit options, income diversification, loan repayment, and purchasing, can be viewed as a factor that would considerably undermine their ability to fulfil the project objectives.
- Participants experience generally low levels of economic abuse. 51% reported that their husband and/or male household members never do things to keep them from going to their job or earning money. 68% said their husband and/or male household members never keep them from having the money they need to buy food, clothes, or other necessities. 65% reported that their husband and/or male family members never or hardly ever take the money they earn, savings, or other money from them, and 56% the same regarding deciding how she could spend money rather than letting her spend it how she saw fit.

Efficiency

- Generally, the value for money (VfM) of the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” appears to be low, with large financial inputs resulting in only minimal improvements in women’s income generation, and the programme outputs appearing to have limited impact in terms of supporting the project’s overall goal of empowering women.
- In terms of monitoring and evaluation, the structure and content of the questionnaires that WfWI uses have a limited ability to actually measure change, as they very often include questions that ask women to assess their own knowledge, rather than assessing their actual level of knowledge.
- Problems with attendance and completion were a challenge for the programme. A WfWI staff member estimated that each month, around 1.5-1.7% of participants are dismissed from the programme, and around 10% of participants to do not complete the programme due to attendance requirements.
- The programme fell short of the number of target participants registered each year of the programme by nearly 4,000 participants. This could indicate, among other things, that the timeframe of three years for providing life skills and vocational training to 15,600 women (5,200 per year) was overly ambitious.

Coverage

- The programme appears to have been generally successful in targeting marginalized women as outlined in the proposal. 20% of women have a long-standing illness, disability, or infirmity. In 7% of cases the head of the household is a woman. 48% of women reported a household history of displacement, where 16% define their household as being currently displaced. However, only 6% of project participants were widowed, which could be considered low in a context where approximately 19% of women in Afghanistan between the ages of 15 and 64 are widowed. The programme also

appeared successful in targeting illiterate women and women lacking formal education, which can contribute to vulnerability.

- Referral from elders was the most common way that women heard about the programme. Though relying on elders and community leadership can sometimes have risks in terms of elite capture if not managed successfully, elite capture appears to have been successfully avoided by the programme.
- Inclusivity appears to have been effectively considered in the outreach and recruitment phase of programming.

Relevance

- The initial project proposal asserted that women’s income generation could facilitate more educational opportunities, access to healthcare, and improved family nutrition. However, the findings of this evaluation do not support this assumption, where household spending on health was actually higher among women who were not earning income, and women’s income generation was not significantly related to spending on food or education.
- Few of the measures used to assess women’s empowerment varied significantly according to whether women were personally earning income. This would suggest that the overall approach and rationale that women’s economic engagement can facilitate empowerment does not seem to hold true in a number of key components of the programme, including promoting women’s participation in their communities and social inclusion, promoting their physical and psychological well-being, and economic empowerment.
- Many dimensions of empowerment varied according to whether or not the woman’s household was living in severe poverty, especially related to abuse and control. Particularly in the context of the focus of the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme, these findings suggest that women’s income generation has limited impacts on the various dimensions of empowerment, unless women’s income is to the level that it considerably impacts the overall household financial situation.
- Throughout the findings related to the impact of the programme, a recurring theme was the apparent relationship between attitudes, perceptions, and practices in the household and women’s empowerment, which would indicate that a programme like “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” would have limited impact if it does not engage family members and address structural barriers at the household level.
- The inter-relatedness of all the various dimensions of empowerment demonstrated by the findings in this section indicate that the various dimensions of empowerment are inextricably connected, and cannot be effectively addressed in isolation.
- The “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme is a one-size-fits-all package, both internationally and within Afghanistan. Consequently, the manuals can lack local specificity and cultural appropriateness, and the relevance of materials is considerably weak in consideration of this. This limitation is easily observed in the results of this

evaluation, which found that women have little knowledge or understanding of laws and institutions in place in Afghanistan to support them and promote their rights.

- Considering the high levels of illiteracy among women (75% of respondents), the approach to training is also not context-specific. The curriculum is entirely text-based, with no audio-visual materials such as infographics, diagrams, videos, or audio recordings provided, which is highly inconsistent with the needs of largely illiterate trainees.
- Additionally, based on the materials provided and findings of this evaluation, once women graduate they are not provided with refresher trainings or materials to ensure they are able to refresh their knowledge on what they have learned.
- The approach to building social safety nets appears to have generally been quite successful, and relevant in consideration of the sociocultural context. Other research suggests that a programme aiming to bring women together around vocational training and income generation would likely be successful and met by social and family support, which is substantiated by the findings regarding women's continued meeting after graduating from the WfWI programme.
- There is a discrepancy between the type of trainings that women attended and the areas where women actually derived their personal incomes.
- The programme appears to have been somewhat inconsistent with the realities of women's situation regarding decision-making and access to inputs and resources, which in turn would limit their ability to take the skills they had learned and translate them into income generating activities. Few women reported that female household members would be involved in decision-making related to property and land, including the buying and selling of land (36%), renting or sharecropping land (27%), and buying and selling of property (33%).
- A high sense of ownership was developed among women, as a high percentage (65%) continue to meet with the women from the programme after graduation.

Coherence

- At the local level WfWI staff seem to have positive relationships and productive coordination with government actors and influential local leaders such as elders and mullahs. However, staff members did not describe any efforts to coordinate at the macro level or with actors such as DoWA, AIHRC, the police, or justice actors at the local level.
- The programme also does not adequately consider its alignment with Afghanistan's laws and broader support for rule of law in Afghanistan, which is a critical prerequisite for the full realization of women's rights and gender equality. The WfWI training programme does not provide formal training or information on Afghanistan's laws and legal system regarding both rights and business.
- The programme established connections with other organizations present in Afghanistan, particularly Zardozi and Harakat, who provided some trainings to a small number of women who participated in the

"Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme. However, there is room for further engagement, particularly with Afghan women's organizations and civil society.

Sustainability

- Only 28% of respondents reported that they had received follow-up support from WfWI since they graduated from the training programme. Of those who had received follow-up support, 76% had received support in the form of a follow-up interview, 35% for establishing self-help groups, and 36% for facilitating self-help group meetings. Only 13% of those who had received support received help in accessing markets and 13% support to a business or cooperative, and 7% marketing support.
- No cooperatives were established as a part of the programme, but 10 self-help groups with 20-25 women each were established with programme participants funded under the HDF grant.
- The programme has been successful in establishing sustainable social networks among programme participants, with 65% of participants continuing to meet with other women from the programme after graduation, half of whom do so on their own initiative with no financial, logistical, or other support from WfWI or an external party.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are issued based on the findings of this evaluation:

To Women for Women International

Effectiveness

- **Set reasonable, informed targets:** The number of women targeted for the programme was beyond the scope of the capacity of the organization, as evidenced by falling short of target enrolment in each year of the project. Additionally, targets regarding number of women earning income, saving, and a number of other indicators were not achieved. A shift in programme focus that measures impact in terms of outcomes rather than outputs would help to support more reasonable goals, better value for money, and an overall more effective, efficient, and impactful programme base around reasonable, achievable goals.
- **Provide and/or develop appropriate, accessible savings vehicles for women:** Considerably few women in the programme are saving income. Other research has found that promoting savings requires having actual savings vehicles that women have access to, can, and will utilize, which furthermore serves to help promote financial autonomy by promoting mechanisms over which women have more control as compared to simply having cash in hand or tangible assets in the home as savings. Mobile banking, which has developed considerably in Afghanistan over the past few years, should be considered.



- **Address women's need for investment, credit, and capital:** The stipend of 10 USD per month provided to programme participants is likely insufficient to allow women to save for investing in the resources and capital required to begin undertaking income generating activities after covering their expenses related to the training such as transportation and in the context of households that are often living in severe or extreme poverty. There are several options available for addressing women's need for the actual financial and capital resources, though in-kind capital contributions have been found to be effective in other contexts, as well as unconditional cash transfers coupled with training and follow-up technical support.
- **Undertake more rigorous training needs and market assessments:** This evaluation found that few women who were earning income were actually earning income in the area in which they had received training. Fewer than half of the women earning income in each area (agriculture, livestock, tailoring, weaving and handicrafts) reported that they had received training in this area through the programme. This would generally indicate that the training topics selected for the women are not aligned with local markets, or that the training areas are not accompanied by sufficient financial and technical support to actually allow women to begin undertaking income generating activities in their area of training. A more rigorous market assessment, as well as needs assessments that consider the resources and skills women will need would likely help to more effectively select training topics and improve the returns on the vocational trainings.
- **Slow the learning pace:** It was also mentioned that the time allocated for trainings in terms of days per month and hours per week is not enough. Considering the expedited level at which these are delivered to an illiterate audience, a slower learning pace should be adopted.
- **Incorporate audio-visual materials such as infographics, diagrams, videos, and/or audio recordings into training materials:** One out of every four participants in the programme was illiterate, but the training materials utilized for the programme are almost entirely text-based. Developing materials that are accessible for illiterate trainees is critical for the programme.

Impact

- **Develop a working definition of 'empowerment':** In order to effectively develop activities and approaches that facilitate women's empowerment, it is critical to first have a clear vision of what this will mean.
- **All dimensions of women's empowerment should be addressed:** As this evaluation found, the various dimensions of empowerment appear to be strongly interrelated. Leaving one dimension out can negatively influence other dimensions of women's empowerment.
- **Critically reassess the theoretical foundations of the programmatic approach:** The programme's logic and rationale were found to be closely aligned with the WID approach, which has long been concluded ineffective as a means of promoting women's empowerment. The programme includes some activities poorly

aligned with GAD concepts such as the MLP, which has long been concluded ineffective as a means of promoting women's empowerment, a conclusion supported by this evaluation. It is critical to continue to follow developments in the quickly evolving field of knowledge and practice regarding the promotion of women's empowerment and to utilize this as a resource for ensuring that approaches employed have high potential and have not already been proven ineffective or counterintuitive.

- **Realign project objectives and activities to also address the social and structural barriers that women face in their households and daily lives:** It is too much to assume that given knowledge and training, women can transform their entire worlds and the perceptions of their entire families and communities. While engaging male leaders is positive, it is critical to also engage family members—both male and female—at home, who determine whether the programme participant has an enabling environment to implement what she has learned every day. A further study specifically on the most effective means of engaging with family members would be beneficial.
- **Go beyond awareness raising:** Addressing the structural barriers that women face in their daily lives requires more than just awareness raising, and requires direct engagement with the parties, institutions, and norms that present obstacles for women. This should include advocacy, direct provision of support, and empowering training participants to be their own advocates—both as individuals and as a collective.
- **Develop a formal policy and procedures for assisting participants who are victims of abuse:** At present, the system for supporting participants who approach WfWI when they are experiencing physical abuse was described as ad hoc, and no provision of support to women in seeking out the various mechanisms available for them for physical protection and for protecting their rights. It is critical that WfWI develops a formal policy and procedure to follow that is sensitive to both the traditional and formal mechanisms available to women, and that all staff are aware and trained on the support they should provide in such instances.
- **Consider household, rather than only individual, economic well-being:** This evaluation found that whether women are earning income or not does not appear to have a considerable impact on a number of the dimensions of empowerment, but the overall economic situation of the household seems to be more relevant. This should be considered in attempting to develop a programme that actually impacts women's empowerment, which could be achieved through a number of options. For example, the programme could focus more on households rather than individuals, or it could set a higher target for increase in women's income and provide more comprehensive support to fewer women to try to develop income generation that lifts entire households out of poverty. The programme could invite male household members to specific training sessions such as numeracy and business skills, to provide not only women but also their entire households with the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate increased income generation. Undertaking a

study on the feasibility and potential of various means of targeting household rather than individual economic well-being and its comparative returns would be beneficial.

- **Invest in more professional support and training services:** Women demonstrated low levels of knowledge and understanding in a number of areas in the training curriculum, which would generally suggest that the curriculum as it is developed and delivered at present is not adequate for achieving the desired objectives of the programme. WfWI should consider investing in external parties with more specific expertise on not only the training topics, but also pedagogy and training methodologies to determine why the training is not as effective as it could possibly be at present and to revise training materials and approaches accordingly. It should consider, at minimum: training content; timeframe of the project in terms of the overall project, frequency of trainings, and duration of training sessions; trainer capacity; training materials; trainee demographics with regards to literacy, occupation, schedules and availability; and training delivery.

Efficiency

- **Undertake a proper VFM assessment:** Based on the findings of this evaluation, it would be worthwhile to conduct a proper VFM assessment of Afghanistan programming to determine how the finances allocated to the programme could be better spent in support of overall desired project impacts.
- **Ensure indicators are aligned with the context:** Though the figure of 1 USD per day has been commonly used in development, the blanket use of this indicator across the countries in which WfWI operates as a benchmark of women's well-being does not account for the variety of contexts. For example, purchasing power parity (PPP) GDP (the gross domestic product converted to international dollars using purchasing power parity rates) is 1,967 in Afghanistan, compared to 9,904 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, another country in which WfWI delivers their programming. Targets and indicators should be aligned with local context, and the target for what constitutes an economically viable individual should consider local factors.
- **Revise the baseline, endline, and graduate follow-up surveys for measuring changes in knowledge and practices:** The present baseline, endline, and follow-up surveys utilized are inadequate for measuring the actual objectives of the programme, and should be revised to measure knowledge, attitudes, and practice (KAP) in addition to self-report measures. For example, asking someone whether they practice good nutrition is a highly biased indicator, which would be better measured by developing a simple set of KAP questions directly addressing the objectives of the nutrition component of the programme. The same applies to rights, reproductive health, business skills, financial literacy, and all aspects of the life skills training.
- **Ensure that monitoring tools are context-specific:** Though the general objectives of the programme delivered by WfWI is consistent across geographic areas of operation, the monitoring surveys should be specific

to each context based on the specific challenges and focus of the programme in that country. For example, asking about pig ownership in Afghanistan, a country where pork and pig products are illegal, is irrelevant. Additionally, it may be beneficial to include measures regarding beliefs on Islam and women's rights in Afghanistan, whereas such a question would be largely irrelevant in Rwanda. Utilizing the same questionnaires across all contexts does not yield results that allow for a more nuanced understanding of what does and does not work, where, and why within the programme.

- **Revise the baseline, endline, and graduate follow-up surveys to actually measure empowerment:** As this evaluation and much additional research has found, women earning income does not necessarily mean that they are empowered. Empowerment is complex, and spans a number of various dimensions, which are currently not reflected in any of the surveys administered by WfWI, aside from some self-report variables regarding involvement in decision-making and community activities. Upon developing a working definition of what "empowerment" means in the context of the programme, it would be beneficial to revise these surveys to allow for the continual measurement of whether the programme is achieving what it intends to in terms of empowerment. There are a wealth of more subjective measures than singular self-report variables, as this evaluation has shown, that should be utilized for a more nuanced understanding of what is and is not working in the programme, who does and does not benefit, and why.
- **Adequately utilize monitoring data:** The present system utilized for accessing and analysing the wealth of monitoring data collected throughout the project appears to be insufficient for utilizing the data to its full potential. The process of running basic cross tabulations of variables across provinces and other dimensions was lengthy and overly complicated, and though longitudinal data is collected as the forms track participants by their identification number, the M&E team was unable to conduct longitudinal analysis of a number of variables within the five week period given for the data request, which would indicate that the capacity to continuously utilize data to look not only at whether targets have been met, but actually whether the programme is working, is low within the current framework and system.

Coverage

- **Develop a more context-specific framework for identifying vulnerable women, and which vulnerable groups have priority in the programme:** Generally, this evaluation found the programme to have adequate coverage and inclusivity. However, there are some under-represented vulnerable groups, such as widows, within the programme. Despite including a high percentage of women (20%) who self-reported having a long-standing illness, disability, or infirmity, WfWI informed the evaluators that severely disabled women are ineligible for the programme. While the rationale that women with severe disabilities may have larger issues with attendance and may be unable to undertake

certain types of vocational activities, women who are severely disabled represent a considerably vulnerable group within Afghanistan and this should be considered and carefully addressed within the programme. Similar to the training materials and M&E system, the criteria for vulnerability appears to be somewhat universal across the various geographic areas in which WfWI works. These should be based on an informed assessment of the situation in Afghanistan and which women are most vulnerable in this specific context, and how the programme can most effectively target them.

Relevance

- **Build on existing relationships and utilize the expertise of partners:** Additionally, further exploring linkages with organizations with this expertise such as Harakat and Zardozi for support in delivering more effective trainings related to business, vocational training, and skills development in the specific Afghan context would likely be beneficial.
- **Contextualize training materials to ensure they are relevant for Afghanistan:** Utilizing the same training materials in all countries where WfWI delivers programming is likely an explanatory factor as to why women had so little knowledge on their rights and matters specific to the Afghan context. The current manuals often lack local specificity and at times cultural appropriateness, and the relevance of materials is considerably weak in consideration of this. It is unreasonable to give women in Afghanistan general information about women's rights as an abstract concept, and to assume that they will be able to protect their rights in Afghanistan. Each country that WfWI operates in has a different socio-cultural context, legal system, laws, and mechanisms for addressing rights violations, which should be reflected in the materials utilized for training women. Depending on individual trainers and country offices to subjectively determine when additional materials are required is inadequate and potentially poses risks for women receiving inaccurate information. Training materials should be developed for each specific country where WfWI operates, based on the specific context, challenges, and needs that women have in that specific area of operation.
- **Include Islamic perspectives:** Islamic perspectives on women's rights, which proved successful in many other programmes and are already adopted in the MLP, should be also included in the female training curricula.

Coherence

- **Ensure the programme is in compliance with legal frameworks:** It is critical that a programme targeting business development and economic engagement fully considers and is in compliance with the relevant laws in Afghanistan regarding business, taxation, labour, and other relevant topics.
- **Ensure that the programme supports larger objectives such as stability, self-sufficiency, and rule of law in Afghanistan:** The WfWI training programme does not provide formal training or information on Afghanistan's laws and legal system. Additionally, this evaluation

has evidenced that graduates from the programme have limited information regarding the formal justice system and the laws and mechanisms available to them for their protection and where they can turn outside of traditional bodies for support. What's more, as described by a WfWI staff member, women are encouraged to utilize traditional bodies if they are being abused, based on the rationale that supporting women to seek protection through other means may jeopardize support from community leaders, which prioritizes patriarchy and the perpetuation of existing gender norms over the protecting of women. Furthermore, it is fundamentally at odds with larger development objectives in Afghanistan aimed at promoting rule of law and protecting the legal rights of its citizens. As an NGO operating in Afghanistan, WfWI has a wider responsibility to ensure that its programmes and policies are aligned with national priorities where possible, and to deliver programmes in a way that support the long-term development of Afghanistan in support of programme objectives through rule of law, economic development and self-sufficiency, and addressing structural barriers to gender equality and the realization of women's rights.

- **Coordinate with both formal and informal actors:** The programme appears to be successful in terms of community outreach and engaging with informal actors such as community elders and religious leaders. However, it does not appear to coordinate with actors critical to addressing the structural context in Afghanistan regarding women's rights and empowerment at either the local or macro levels such as DoWA, the AIHRC, the police, or the judiciary. It is unreasonable to expect much impact from training on these topics without also incorporating the means to address the institutions and wider social context. For example, if a woman is trained that she has a legal right to inheritance, but the judiciary continues to deny women this right, the training will likely have little impact in terms of affecting real change for women. Developing policies and procedures for coordination and advocacy with both formal and informal actors could help to increase the impact and effectiveness of the programme.

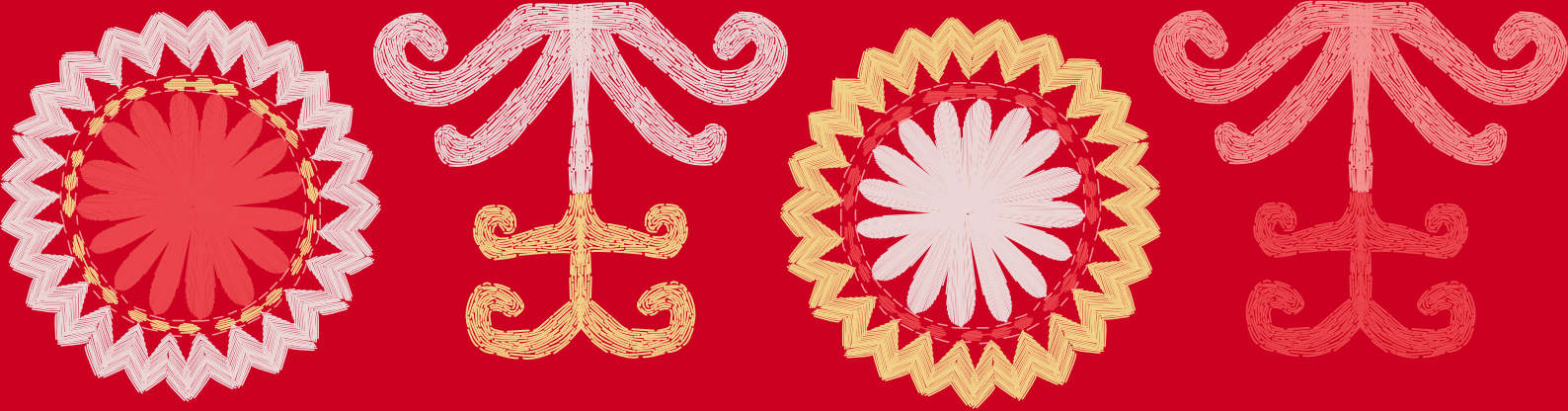
Sustainability

- **Target fewer women, but provide the necessary follow-up support:** WfWI staff in Afghanistan explained that they are unable to provide follow-up support through self-help groups and supporting market linkages to all women targeted by the programme, explaining that feasibly they can only provide such support to around 15% of participants. Considering that the findings of this evaluation as well as existing research and evaluations from similar projects find that training alone is insufficient to actually enable women to earn income, it would be more cost effective to train fewer women, and instead reallocate these resources to increased investment in the provision of follow-up technical support.
- **Provide materials and refresher trainings in follow-up support:** Additionally, given that programme participants are largely illiterate and have considerably

limited access to information, it is unreasonable to assume that the programme will be sustainable when women are not provided with materials to reference and update their knowledge in all areas of the training—life skills, business, and particularly vocational. Graduates should be provided with infographic-based materials they can continually reference, particularly regarding the vocational skills they have acquired, and WfWI should conduct further studies to assess the need for periodic refresher trainings to ensure that women are able to continue to utilize what they have learned and support the sustainability of the programme.

To Human Dignity Foundation

- **Require complete budget breakdowns:** The budgets required from WfWI for this programme only included a general categorization of costs, and HDF did not require a further breakdown of expenses according to specific items, number, cost, and duration. Requiring such a breakdown from grantees would allow for a better understanding of how money is spent, and for a better evaluation of VfM in a project.
- **Include data sharing as a requirement in grant agreements:** In the interest of promoting transparency and accountability, it is critical that any monitoring data collected through the project is made available to HDF and any external evaluator hired by the grantee or HDF. HDF should require grantees to make programme-related data available as a condition of any grant agreement.



1. INTRODUCTION

Women for Women International (WfWI) has been working in Afghanistan since 2002 with the mission of helping women survivors of war move from being victims to survivors to active citizens. WfWI provides women with direct aid to cover basic needs, coupled with a yearlong training programme that combines rights education and vocational skills training. Headquartered in Kabul, WfWI operates three satellite offices in Mazar-e Sharif, Jalalabad, and Parwan.

In 2011, WfWI received a three-year grant of USD 900,000 from the Human Dignity Foundation (HDF) for its programme, “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan.” The overall goal of WfWI’s Afghanistan programme is to improve the lives of socially excluded women and their families by building self-reliance and access to sustainable livelihood opportunities. With the HDF grant, WfWI planned to work with 5,200 new women in Afghanistan each year, reaching 16,000 women over three years. The specific objectives of the programme are to: (1) Provide life-skills and vocational training to 5,200 socially-excluded women each year to improve their understanding of health and hygiene, increase their participation in family decision-making, and enable them to earn an income; (2) Sensitize and engage 450 male community religious leaders, over the next three years, to increase their support for women’s rights in three provinces.

Human Dignity Foundation (HDF) is a private, Swiss foundation established in 2004 and governed by a Board of Directors. The foundation has a limited lifespan and will end its grant-making in 2021. In 2015, HDF sanctioned an external evaluation of the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme to assess the impact of the intervention on women, families and communities in the programme locations. Thousand Plateaus Consultancy Services was selected by HDF to carry out the evaluation.

1.1 BACKGROUND: THE STRONGER WOMEN, STRONGER AFGHANISTAN PROGRAMME

Planned Results

According to the initial proposal, the programme results would be tracked according to the following indicators:

Objective 1 Indicators: *Provide life-skills and vocational training to 5,200 socially excluded women each year to improve their understanding of health and hygiene, increase their participation in family decision-making, and enable them to earn an income.*

- At least 80% of participants report saving a portion of their income and 80% will be earning a minimum of \$1 a day.
- At least 80% of participants report gaining skills in the vocational area in which they are trained, and at least 60% report using these skills to earn incomes.
- At least 60% of participants report practicing good nutrition, 50% report practicing family planning, and 80% report knowledge of reproductive health.
- After completing the 12-month programme, at least 90% of participants increase knowledge of their rights, and 80% of participants report contributing to family decisions on children’s school attendance and household finances.
- At least 70% of participants report voting in national and/or local elections, and 30% of participants report participating in a community activity.
- Three cooperatives formed and registered with the government each year for 3 years

Objective 2 Indicators: *Sensitize and engage 450 male community religious leaders, over the next three years, to increase their support for women's rights in three provinces.*

- 450 local leaders complete the training.
- 60% of men who complete MLP report they would take action to reduce gender-based violence in their communities.
- 90% of men who complete MLP articulate changes in knowledge, attitude regarding rights of women.
- 90% of MLP participants recognize the value of women's roles, accomplishments and contributions at family and community levels.

Activities

Activities planned for this programme in the initial proposal included: (1) a pre-programme phase to select beneficiaries with the most need; (2) a life-skills and vocational programme for women with income generation opportunities; and (3) training for men in three provinces.

Pre-Programme Phase

According to WfWI, the pre-programming phase consists of community identification, community assessment, outreach and recruitment, and participant selection. The community identification process is described as a process of determining the economic, political, and social conditions of potential programme sites, community identification targets broad geographic groupings of communities, such as provinces, municipalities, districts, and villages to review issues related to employment, demographics, infrastructure, and security conditions. Key conditions for identifying communities include productive potential, access and availability of health resources, access and availability of educational resources, and community structures. Communities should be able to sustain the programme for at least 3-5 years, be geographically accessible and have market access and opportunity, should not have duplication of services, and should be willing to support the programme.

After identifying communities, WfWI conducts community assessments, which they describe as consisting of focus groups and meetings with local shuras and district officials, women, as well as husbands and male relatives. Accordingly, WfWI asserts that community analyses are written up regarding four outcomes—health, income, rights awareness, and support networks, and including information on demographics, infrastructure, health, access to education, and economic status. Based on these assessments, WfWI decides whether or not to target a particular community for the programme.

Once the assessment phase is completed and a community has been chosen, WfWI conducts outreach and recruitment. The approaches described include public announcements and informational meetings at mosques, marketplaces and community gatherings; gatherings with women where staff explain the programme; and obtaining lists of participants from local government

representatives, community elders, and NGOs that are already working in these areas. From this, participants are selected according to a set of criteria from WfWI, which is meant to include age (between 18 and 55 years), economic situation, ability to participate and family consent where possible, and desire to participate. Only one member per household is allowed to participate in the programme.

Life-Skills and Vocational Programme

Once women are selected and enrolled they begin WfWI's core programme, which consists of sponsorship and direct aid combined with a one-year training curriculum. According to WfWI, through the sponsorship programme each participant is matched with an individual sponsor, who provides a monthly contribution of 30 USD (10 USD of which goes to the participant, and 20 USD of which helps to cover training costs), in addition there is a letter exchange between the sponsor and their sponsored "sister." Direct aid also refers to the stipend provided for programme participants, which is not always covered entirely through sponsorship funds.

Women who are enrolled form classes of 20-25 women for completing the one-year training course. According to WfWI, the life skills component of the training in Afghanistan covers four key modules—health and wellness, sustaining an income, family and community decision-making, and social networks and safety nets. These modules address the gender division of labour, household financial management, opportunities for income generation, psychological health, reproductive health, family planning, personal and family hygiene and nutrition, family law, women's rights, violence against women, civic participation, building social networks, and conflict management, among other topics. The life skills component also includes elements of literacy and numeracy.

The second component of the training programme is vocational skills training. According to WfWI, vocational training topics are matched to local market conditions and tailored to sectors of the economy that are most promising for women. In Afghanistan, the key sectors that may be a part of vocational training on the individual participant plan include animal husbandry (poultry, cows, bees, and goats), handicrafts (embroidery, knitting, spinning, gem cutting), agriculture (kitchen garden and greenhouse), tailoring, and carpet weaving. The initial project proposal also included manufacturing, food processing and trade.

In addition to the vocational training, the curriculum includes training on business skills and cooperatives. This component is meant to translate skill into an income generation tool, and covers lessons providing knowledge on business basics, entrepreneurship, planning, selling, bookkeeping, and finance. Women are also trained on cooperative development, which includes basic cooperative management principles; Afghanistan's legal and regulatory norms on co-ops; purchasing and marketing through co-ops; structure, control and financing; responsibilities and duties of co-op members; and membership decisions.

Follow-up Graduate Support

According to WfWI, the programme continues to support local businesses and cooperatives established and managed by programme graduates after completing the training programme. This assistance is described as providing support regarding logistical barriers such as transportation, market linkages, partnership agreements, and supply contracts.

Partnerships, Support, and Stakeholder Engagement

WfWI also focuses on building relationships with government agencies in Afghanistan, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) and Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). WfWI worked with MAIL on soil analyses and value chain assessments in 2011, and trained officials from MAIL and UN-Habitat on sustainable poultry processing. According to WfWI, the organization has also coordinated with UNHCR to target IDPs and returnees, as well as with the World Food Program for food distribution. However, in the initial project proposal WfWI acknowledged a gap in building relationships with local Afghan women's organizations.

Men's Leadership Programme

In support of the second programme objective, WfWI developed the Men's Leadership Programme (MLP), which was piloted in Afghanistan in 2008 with men in Nangarhar province. The MLP is a four-month programme implemented as a Training of Trainers (ToT) to build awareness and influence attitudes and customs affecting women. The project consists of men meeting twice a week for an hour to complete a curriculum that is meant to cover women's importance in the family and community and their right to engage in economic activity, participate in community life, own property and live free of violence. The men who participate in the trainings are meant to provide trainings to other community leaders. The MLP participants are given a stipend of 20 USD per month to attend the training.

Target Beneficiaries

WfWI-Afghanistan programme describes its target beneficiaries as socially excluded women, including widows, single heads of household, refugee returnees, the internally displaced, and the physically challenged. The target participants were intended to be survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, victims of human rights violations and those whose lives have been shattered by conflict, through the loss of family, rape or other injury, loss of property or displacement.

1.2 EXISTING RESEARCH, LESSONS LEARNED, AND BEST PRACTICES ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

With a basic understanding of the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme, this section provides a contextual foundation for the evaluation report, covering existing research, lessons learned, and best practices on women's economic and social empowerment. The first component of this section covers the dominant theories and approaches regarding gender equality and women's empowerment in development. This theoretical overview is critical to effectively assessing and evaluating the programme in terms of its approach to gender equality and women's empowerment. From that, this section will review general best practices and lessons learned regarding economic and social empowerment, and will explore a number of case study evaluations on similar approaches to the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme. These frameworks and best practices will be revisited in the conclusion as they relate to the findings of this evaluation.

Approaches to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development

The dominant theories regarding gender-based development initiatives are Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD). 'Women in Development' (WID) emerged in the 1970s with a primary focus on women's productive roles and incorporation into the economy as a means of status improvement for women.¹ WID projects would typically involve income-generating activities involving some sort of training for women in areas like skills or crafts, often with a welfare aspect where women would be taught things like hygiene or literacy as well,² largely resting on the assumption that access to income will sufficiently empower women and gender relations will change on their own as women become economically viable members of society.³

With the emergence of figures on the mostly symbolic success of the WID approach, a new movement emerged, WAD, which focused on the relationship between women and development processes, rather than only focusing on the integration of women into development.⁴ However,

1 Shahrashoub Razavi and Carol Miller, "From WID to GAD: Conceptual Shifts in the Women and Development Discourse," *United Nations Research Institute for Social Development*, February 1995, 2-3.

2 Ibid.

3 Eva M. Rathgeber, "WID, WAD, GAD: Trends in Research and Practice," *The Journal of Developing Areas* 24, no. 4 (1990): 489-502.

4 Ibid.

WAD similarly failed to take into account relational aspects of women's status and focused almost exclusively on productive aspects of women's lives.⁵

GAD emerged out of these approaches in the late 1980s.⁶ GAD theorizes that gender identities are historically and socially constructed,⁷ and aims for gender equality, which is considered in terms of the removal of structural barriers.⁸ Concepts of 'empowerment' and 'gender mainstreaming' are products of the GAD approach. However, despite GAD being generally accepted as the dominant approach to gender adopted by international development actors since the 1980s,⁹ WID-style approaches and implementation persist. Several have analysed the current trend of investing in women and girls as 'smart economics,' which is a direct descendant of the efficiency approach to WID prevalent in the wake of the economic crisis in the 1980s.¹⁰ The smart economics approach, which is of particular relevance in determining the best approach for women's economic empowerment, can actually be counterintuitive, where 'without reform of the institutions whose decisions and resource distribution shape their lives, women and girls are set up for exhaustion and failure.'¹¹

Evidence from Evaluations of Women's Social and Economic Empowerment Projects

With the prevalence of GAD and the prevalence of development objectives that prioritize gender equality and investing in women, there is not a lack of research, evaluations, evidence, and best practices on means of promoting women's social and economic empowerment. As such, in a project such as "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan," there is an immense amount of information that can inform programmatic approach in line with evidence-based research on which interventions have more potential to work and which are generally less effective.

The United Nations Foundation has undertaken a systematic review of existing research regarding women's economic empowerment based on existing evaluation data, and classified interventions as proven, promising, or high potential. However, it is important to acknowledge that this roadmap for promoting women's empowerment clarified that it is not enough to ask what works—it is critical to also ask what works for whom, and where. In consideration of the existing research and tools available for determining best practices and identifying

interventions with the most potential for success, it is not enough to have a theory of change guiding interventions that seems logical; it must also be rigorously based on what is already known about what works and what doesn't, for whom, and where. Existing research, best practices, and lessons learned will be revisited in the conclusion of this report as they relate to the findings of the evaluation.

1.3 THE EVALUATION REPORT

Structure

The introductory chapter of this evaluation served to introduce the programme being evaluated, its objectives and planned activities, as well as contextualizing the present evaluation with a basic overview of existing theory and knowledge regarding women's empowerment that will inform the conclusions of the evaluation. The second chapter addresses the methodology of the evaluation, including its purpose, approach, and methods, as well as an overview of the limitations of the study. Chapter three covers the findings of the evaluation, in line with the evaluation criteria outlined under the purpose of the evaluation, in turn reviewing findings and analysis of the programme's effectiveness, impact, efficiency, coverage, relevance, coherence, and sustainability. Chapter four presents the conclusions, taking findings from chapter three and drawing conclusions based on the wider context as outlined in the introduction, and presenting key recommendations for future programming.

Concepts and Definitions

At the centre of WfWI's core programme and the training women receive are two components—social empowerment and economic empowerment.¹² WfWI describes empowerment in their programming in stating, "The women whom we assist are leaders in their own lives. Tools are provided for each woman to rebuild her life and the lives of others,"¹³ but no working definition of 'empowerment' was found within the WfWI programmatic framework. The WfWI approach covers four areas of social and economic empowerment: (1) women earn and save money; (2) women develop health and well-being; (3) women influence decisions in their homes and communities; (4) women create and connect to networks for support.¹⁴

Empowerment is a widely used term that encompasses a variety of usages and meaning, not only in the field of development but across a number of disciplines across which there is a general lack of consensus on a precise definition of empowerment, and particularly what it means in economic, social, and gendered terms. For the purpose of this evaluation, 'empowerment' is understood in terms of the concept at its core—power. According to Naila Kabeer, power can be thought of in terms of

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Yasemin Ozer, "Women in Development and its Discontents: A Comparative Analysis of WID and Gender and Development (GAD)," *Khamasin: Reflections on the Social and Political* 3 (2009): 47-62.

8 Elaine Unterhalter, "Fragmented frameworks? Researching women, gender, education, and development," in *Beyond Access: Transforming Policy and Practice for Gender Equality in Education*, ed. Sheila Aikman and Elaine Unterhalter, 13-35 (Oxford: Oxfam, 2005).

9 Jorgen Carling, "Gender dimensions of international migration," Global Commission on International Migration, *Global Migration Perspectives* 35 (2005).

10 Sylvia Chant, "Fixing the economy or fixing the world? 'Smart economics', efficiency approaches, and gender equality in development," *Gender & Development* 20, no. 3 (2012): 517-529.

11 Ibid.

12 "Women for Women International Program Overview," 2015.

13 "Women for Women International Program Framework and Guidelines," May 2011.

14 "Impact," Women for Women International, 2015, <http://www.womenforwomen.org/what-we-do/impact>.

the ability to make choices, and real choice requires a number of certain conditions to be fulfilled. There must be alternatives and the alternatives must not only exist but must also be seen to exist. Within this framework, there are three dimensions of empowerment—agency, resources, and achievements. Agency refers to processes by which choices are made and put into effect; resources are the medium through which the agency is exercised; and achievements are the outcomes of agency.¹⁵ With this, Kabeer’s definition of empowerment is “the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.”¹⁶

Empowerment is multi-dimensional and spans numerous domains of people’s lives. As such, there are a number of commonly used dimensions of empowerment with applications at the household, community, and societal levels. These generally include: economic; socio-cultural beliefs and visibility; familial/interpersonal; legal; political; psychological; and physical domains.¹⁷ These domains will provide the general framework for assessing empowerment in this research (See *Annex A: Measuring Empowerment*).

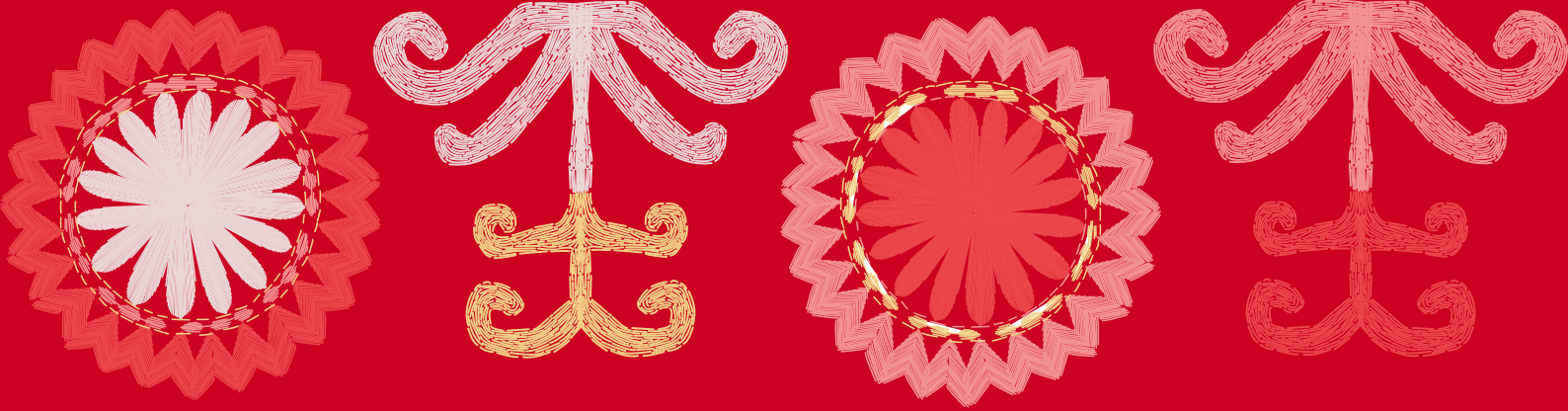
15 Naila Kabeer, “Gender equality and women’s empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal,” *Gender and Development* 13, no. 1 (2005): 13–24.

16 Naila Kabeer, “Reflections on the measurement of women’s empowerment,” In *Discussing Women’s Empowerment—Theory and Practice*, Sida Studies No. 3, Novum Grafiska AB: Stockholm.

17 Dr. Anju Malhotra, Dr. Sidney Ruth Schuler, and Carol Boender, “Measuring Women’s Empowerment as a Variable in International Development,” Background Paper Prepared for the World Bank Workshop on Poverty and Gender: New Perspectives, 28 June 2002, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/MalhotraSchulerBoender.pdf>.

“Empowerment of Women Program,” John Snow, Inc., 1990.

Simeen Mahmud, Nirali M. Shah, and Stan Becker, “Measurement of Women’s Empowerment in Rural Bangladesh,” *World Development* 40, no. 3 (2012): 610–619.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PURPOSE

The main purpose of the present evaluation is to assess the impact of the intervention on women, families and communities in the programme locations. The evaluation focuses on seven criteria: (1) effectiveness, (2) impact, (3) relevance, (4) efficiency, (5) coverage, (6) coherence, and (7) sustainability.

1. Effectiveness:

- Measure and analysis of achievements (and variations) of project in comparison with logical framework, taking into account potential unplanned positive and/or negative effects;

2. Impact:

- **Assessment of project impacts, on target groups and final beneficiaries, with an analysis of potential long-term effects;**

3. Relevance:

- Capacity of the project to answer to the needs and expectations of participants, direct and indirect beneficiaries, stakeholders, and other target groups, according to initial objectives and issues to be addressed;

4. Efficiency and Cost-Effectiveness:

- Comparison of implementation means and their cost, with the related achievements, in order to assess the use of human and financial resources in the project;

5. Coverage:

- Who was supported? Which groups were taken into account and which not? Who has really received support at the local level? Have all of those in need of support received support during the programme?

6. Coherence/Complementarity:

- Study of coherence and complementarity of the project with other actions, in particular: project from other national and international NGOs, institutions, national policies and objectives;

7. Sustainability:

- Identification of the leverages of sustainability created by the project; the level to which positive impact has been and/or can be sustained over time; the level to which the work can continue beyond the HDF grant

2.2 APPROACH AND METHODS

Evaluation Methods and Methodology

This evaluation takes a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both primary and secondary quantitative and qualitative data. In the first stage, a quantitative individual survey was conducted with a representative sample of female project participants administered by female facilitators. From these surveys, a number of female participants were selected to take part in qualitative focus group discussions (FGDs) and for in-depth individual interviews. Additionally, FGDs were also conducted with men who participated in the MLP. These men also completed a self-administered survey questionnaire.

Quantitative

A quantitative survey was administered to the female project participants. The survey gauged social and economic empowerment, based on socio-cultural beliefs and visibility, familial/interpersonal, legal, political, psychological, and economic domains by utilizing a range of existing scales and screening tools, the majority coming from the fields of psychology and sociology. The decision to utilize this approach was based on a number of factors. There is growing recognition within the field of development that it is critical to look to multidisciplinary approaches that more carefully consider human factors. Psychological and social underpinnings of behaviour from the disciplines of cognitive science, behavioural, economics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology can help explain decisions that individuals make not only in aspects of development such as savings, investment, health, and parenting, but also how collective behaviours affect society and individuals, and how individuals

rationalize, make decisions, and engage in social behaviours and interactions.¹⁸

There are existing frameworks for measuring empowerment utilized by various development actors. However, the limitations of these approaches lie in their inability to capture psychological and social influences. They generally do not consider the importance of insights that could be drawn from modern behavioural and social sciences, which was also emphasized in the latest World Bank Development Report.¹⁹ As such, this evaluation did not follow an existing methodology for measuring empowerment, but rather developed a comprehensive measure designed to address these gaps in existing frameworks based on the aforementioned dimensions of empowerment—economic; socio-cultural beliefs and visibility; familial/interpersonal; legal; political; psychological; and physical domains, explained below.

Measures

This section provides a general overview of the scales utilized for measuring empowerment. For a full explanation of each measure and its reliability in this evaluation, please refer to *Annex A: Measuring Empowerment*.

Socio-Cultural Beliefs and Visibility

To measure the socio-cultural and visibility domain of empowerment, the Social Well-Being Construct was utilized, plus an additional two scales that overlap with the Familial/Interpersonal Domain (the Gender Role Attitudes Scale and Restrictiveness Evaluation Measure for Youth, explained below). The Social Well-Being Construct consists of 15 items in a five-component model of social well-being that includes social integration, social contribution, social coherence, social actualization, and social acceptance. Taken together, these components indicate whether and to what degree individuals are overcoming social challenges and function well in their social world.

Familial/Interpersonal

Three scales were utilized to measure the familial/interpersonal domain of empowerment—the Gender Roles Attitude Scale (GRAS), the Restrictiveness Evaluation Measure for Youth (REM-Y), and the Hurt, Insult, Threaten, and Scream (HITS) Tool for Intimate Partner Violence Screening. The GRAS contains 38 items across five dimensions—egalitarian gender roles, female gender roles, marriage gender roles, traditional gender roles, and male gender roles. For the purpose of our evaluation, the GRAS was modified, selecting two items from each of the five dimensions based on cultural appropriateness and purposive selection with regards to the objectives of this survey.²⁰

The REM-Y includes items on activity restrictions (limits on what a person can do), movement restrictions (limits on where a person can go), social restrictions (limits on whom a person can see and spend time with), the burden of treatment (constraints embedded within treatment), and independent living (constraints placed on finances and living arrangements). The dimensions of the REM-Y included in this evaluation include 8 items. The wording of each response option has been revised to match the context and purpose of the modified measure of restrictiveness of living environment.²¹

The HITS Tool for Intimate Partner Violence Screening is a four-item tool that serves as a brief instrument for use in clinical settings to identify victims of domestic violence.²²

Legal

For measuring the legal domain of empowerment, the survey questionnaire only addressed knowledge and practice regarding rights. For this domain, an Afghanistan-specific scale was developed, designed to measure how women would provide advice and support to others, their knowledge of their own legal rights according to Afghan law, and their familiarity with the various institutions in place in Afghanistan that are meant to provide legal support and protection for women.

Political

In the political area of empowerment, the survey utilizes one scale to measure political attitudes (the Public Values Scale), and another developed specifically for this evaluation to assess actual practices regarding civic engagement and participation in political processes. The Public Values Scale includes three items designed to measure the respondent's perceived importance of voting, engaging in and considering national affairs, and willingness to engage with government actors at the community level. In the second component looking at practices related to political engagement and empowerment, three items related to actual political practices were included, looking at the participants' voting behaviours in the 2014 Presidential and Provincial Council elections and decision-making process regarding who to vote for, and a hypothetical scenario meant to gauge women's level of empowerment in engaging with political institutions at their community level.

Psychological

To measure this component, the survey utilizes three scales measuring self-esteem (the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale), self-efficacy (the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES)) and general mental health of the respondents (the Mental Health Inventory-5 (MHI-5)). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale consists of 10 items, designed to measure

18 "Human decision-making and development policy," World Bank, In World Bank Development Report 2015: Mind, Society, and Behavior, December 2014.

19 Ibid.

20 Simge Zeyneloglu and Fusun Terzioğlu, "Development and Psychometric Properties Gender Roles Attitude Scale," *H. U. Journal of Education* 40 (2011): 409-240.

21 Mary E. Rauktis, Jonathan C. Huefner, Kirk O'Brien, Peter J. Pecora, Ann Doucette, and Ronald W. Thompson, "Measuring the Restrictiveness of Living Environments for Children and Youth: Reconceptualizing Restriction," *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* 17, no. 3 (2009): 147-163.

22 Amer Shakil, MD, Smith Donald, PhD, James M. Sinacore, PhD, Martin Krepcho, PhD, "Validation of HITS Domestic Violence Screening Tool with Males," *Clinical Research Methods* 37, no. 3 (2005): 193-198.

the respondent's positive or negative orientation towards themselves in an overall evaluation of their worth or value.²³ The GSES is a ten-item scale assessing the strength of an individual's belief in their own ability to respond to novel or difficult situations and to deal with associated obstacles or setbacks. The MHI-5 is a five-item short screening questionnaire designed for research and clinical practice to detect patients with psychiatric disorders in primary care. It looks at anxiety, depression, behavioural control, and positive affect.²⁴

Physical

The Health Locus of Control (HLOC) is used to measure perceived influencing factors over one's physical health, including internal, chance, and "powerful others" dimensions. This three-dimensional HLOC consists of subscales for each dimension, measuring generalized locus of control beliefs. For the purpose of this survey, a shortened version was utilized, consisting of a four-item internal subscale, and two-item subscales for chance and powerful others.

Economic

For measuring economic empowerment, the survey consists of four scales, measuring financial literacy, perceived economic power (the Economic Locus of Control Scale (ELCS)), economic abuse (the Scale of Economic Abuse (SEA)), and household decision-making regarding use of financial resources (the Empowerment Index of Women). The measure of financial literacy posed four questions measuring respondents' ability to answer correctly based on borrowing money and interest rates, risk, choosing a loan, and identifying better value for money in purchasing household food items. The ELCS is a 40-item scale across four dimensions—internal, chance, external/denial, and powerful others. For the purpose of this survey, only items from the internal and chance scale were utilized to measure respondent's internal beliefs regarding the perception of the factors responsible for the outcome of an event where the event is monetary or financially defined.²⁵ The SEA consists of two dimensions—economic control and economic exploitation.²⁶ For the purposes of this evaluation, only the economic control dimension is used. It consists of 17 items, from which 10 were selected based on contextual relevance. The economic control scale looks at aspects of economic control, primarily preventing women's resource use and preventing women's resource acquisition.²⁷ The economic empowerment component also looks at the

Economic Empowerment Index of Women, which assesses women's involvement in household financial decision-making, asking whether specific types of decisions in the household are made by men, jointly, or by women.

Project Experiences

In addition to empowerment, the survey also explored the livelihoods situation of the respondents and assessed their knowledge and skills, especially in business development, health, and nutrition. The first subscale on business skills was developed based on the six modules included in the business skills training manual provided by WfWI. The items were designed to address materials covered in each of the six modules—business basics, entrepreneurship, business planning, selling, bookkeeping, and financing your business, with an additional item based on the additional training module on cooperatives. The second subscale addressed the health and nutrition components of the life skills training manual provided by WfWI, consisting of three two-item subscales—one on reproductive health/family planning, one on nutrition, and one on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)—measuring respondents' ability to answer questions correctly based on materials covered in the training and of practical use in their daily lives.

And lastly, the survey also explored participant's experiences, perceptions, and recommendations regarding the project activities as outlined in the initial proposal and project reports provided by WfWI. It included questions on pre-programming outreach, the vocational training programme, the sponsorship component, and follow-up support from WfWI.

The information obtained with the present survey is triangulated with monitoring data undertaken throughout the three years of the programme. However, there were serious limitations regarding the monitoring data collected and provided by WfWI, addressed in the section 3.3 on efficiency. Additionally, WfWI did not give access to raw monitoring data, so the evaluation relied on analysis provided by WfWI according to a request prepared and submitted by the evaluators. Due to these limitations, this triangulation was done with caution, noted throughout the report.

Sampling

The sample is representative of the 11,605 female participants in the project for the period covered by the HDF grant (October 2011 – October 2014) according to the participant database provided by WfWI with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. The total number of surveys, collected in the provinces of Kabul, Parwan, and Nangarhar is 374 (102 in Kabul, 154 in Nangarhar, and 118 in Parwan), slightly fewer than the 377 women initially targeted for the survey due to errors in survey administration and difficulties in accessing the sampled beneficiaries. The sampling for the household survey was conducted in two stages, stratifying the sample first by project year, and then by district within each year of the project proportional to the number of

23 M. Rosenberg, *Society and the adolescent self-image*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965.

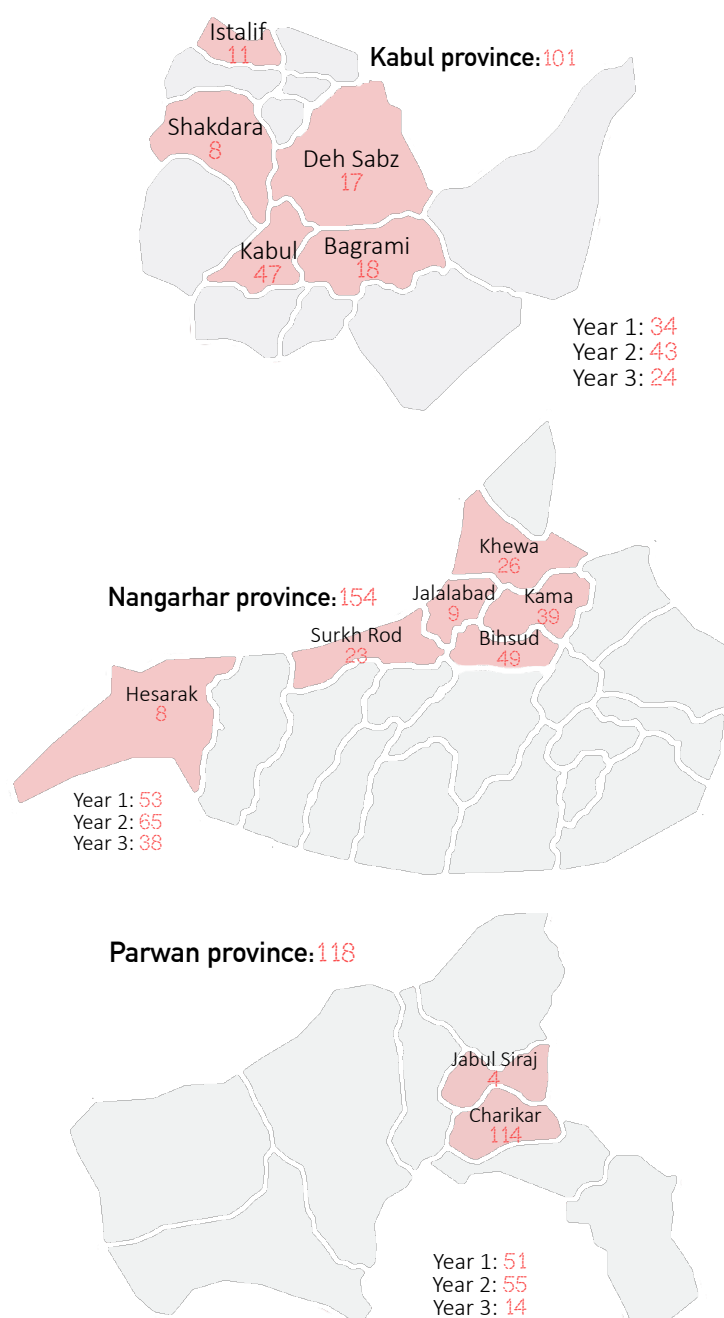
24 "Mental Health Inventory (MHI)," National Multiple Sclerosis Society, n.g., [http://www.nationalmssociety.org/For-Professionals/Researchers/Resources-for-Researchers/Clinical-Study-Measures/Mental-Health-Inventory-\(MHI\)](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/For-Professionals/Researchers/Resources-for-Researchers/Clinical-Study-Measures/Mental-Health-Inventory-(MHI)).

25 John V. Hayes, "Money Attitudes, Economic Locus of Control, and Financial Strain Among College Students," A Dissertation in Consumer Economics and Environmental Design, Texas Tech University, August 2006, https://repositories.tdl.org/ttu-ir/bitstream/handle/2346/18717/Hayes_John_V_Diss.pdf?sequence=1.

26 Adrienne E. Adams, Cris M. Sullivan, Deborah Bybee, and Megan R. Greeson, "Development of the Scale of Economic Abuse," *Violence Against Women* 14, no. 5 (2008): 563-588.

27 Ibid.

Figure 2.1: Planned Survey Sampling Frame



beneficiaries targeted in each district in each project year. From this, the participant list provided by WfWI was utilized in randomly selecting the appropriate number of participants per project year and district. The table below provides the number of interviews collected in each province and district, from participants from each project year.

WfWI field staff provided support in identifying and contacting the selected beneficiaries for quantitative data collection.

Male Leadership Programme (MLP)

In the FGDs with male leaders, prior to beginning the FGD these were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire. This measured whether men who participated in the programme have gender equitable

beliefs, assessed rape prevention through bystander education through a broader community perspective to sexual violence prevention²⁸ with a focus on general attitudes towards violence prevention, and factors that influence the decision to support the prevention of violence against women. The survey was conducted with 24 participants in the MLP, which is only representative of the participants in the programme with an 80% confidence level and 13% margin of error, further discussed in the section on limitations of the evaluation.

The MLP questionnaire consisted of three sections. The Gender Roles Attitude Scale (GRAS), explained above, was modified for the MLP survey to include 25 items (five subscales) that measure egalitarian gender roles, female gender roles, marriage gender roles, traditional gender roles, and male gender roles.²⁹ The survey adopted the “Slaby Bystander Efficacy Scale”, which is a nine-item scale designed to assess participant’s beliefs about the efficacy of violence prevention.³⁰ The “Decisional Balance Scale” consists of a ten-item scale reflecting both positive benefits and negative consequences for “in a situation where you thought a woman might be being hurt or was at risk of being hurt”. Additionally, similar to the questionnaire developed for female programme participants, male respondents were presented with the same hypothetical scenario of a woman being abused by her husband and the advice they would give her. (For a full explanation of each measure and its reliability in this evaluation, please refer to *Annex A: Measuring Empowerment*.)

Qualitative

Based on the participant surveys, the evaluators selected 8-10 women per province for each project year to participate in an FGD, which represents approximately 20% of surveyed participants. The criteria for selecting participants included: diversity in economic status, diversity in ethnicity, diversity in programme experiences, and diversity in age. The FGD with female project participants consisted of a discussion and participatory exercise on what empowerment means to them, followed by a semi-structured interview on the WfWI programme. In each province 3 case studies were also collected and these explored women’s successful business outcomes, women with unsuccessful business outcomes, and women participating in a cooperative.

Additionally, in Nangarhar (the only province where the MLP operated), all of the MLP survey participants (8-10 men per project year) were invited to participate in a FGD. These participants were chosen based on referral from WfWI staff, as there was no participant list from which to select male participants. The FGD with MLP participants consisted of a discussion and participatory exercise on what women’s empowerment means to them, followed

28 Victoria L. Banyard, Elizabeth G. Plante, and Mary M. Moynihan, “Rape Prevention Through Bystander Education: Bringing a Broader Community Perspective to Sexual Violence Prevention,” National Institute of Justice, 2005, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/208701.pdf>.

29 Simge Zeyneloglu and Fusun Terzioğlu, “Development and Psychometric Properties Gender Roles Attitude Scale,” 2011.

30 Ibid.

by a semi-structured interview on the WfWI programme.

An interview with staff from Women from Women was conducted at central level. One semi-structured interview was conducted with a management-level staff member at the central level from the social empowerment component of the WfWI programme, and a semi-structured meeting was conducted with management level staff from the economic empowerment component of the WfWI programme at the evaluation's inception. However, due to an emergency and absence from the country, a follow-up interview with this staff member was not possible. These interviews primarily served to collect basic information on the programme's implementation, as well as to determine where the project had changed from the original proposal and why, as well as for triangulating information collected through the FGDs and participant surveys.

Secondary Data

The evaluation also utilizes secondary data to triangulate findings from the survey and interviews. The secondary data help to validate the findings of the evaluation and to assess the impact by comparing beneficiary perceptions to the perceptions and experiences of others in Afghanistan, while also providing data regarding perceptions on women's rights and women's community and economic participation in the wider target communities. Where possible, the findings of this evaluation are triangulated with the findings reported by WfWI from their baseline and graduation surveys, though due to the limitations associated with this data outlined in the next section, secondary data from other sources was consulted as necessary to contextualize findings.

2.3 LIMITATIONS

Sampling

Women were sampled based on a list of participants given by WfWI. Thousand Plateaus also created a back-up list of participants in case these were not reachable. The list provided by WfWI also included participants who had started before HDF, who were excluded from the sampling. WfWI reported to HDF that a total of 15,259 women were supported over the period of November 2011 to October 2014 supported by the HDF grant. However, the participant database provided by WfWI showed that 2,151 of the participants counted as beneficiaries had started their training prior to the HDF grant agreement. Of these, 671 had begun their training prior to April 2011, indicating that only a few months of their participation was covered under the HDF grant. Accordingly, this evaluation has only covered participants who began their training course after the grant period under HDF had commenced. Due to these inconsistencies, the total number of beneficiaries for the programme was based on the database provided by the WfWI Afghanistan staff, which constituted a complete listing of each individual project participant under the HDF grant. According to this database, 4,228 women were targeted in the first year of the project, 5,056 in the second, and 2,321 in the third year, totalling 11,605 participants,

fewer than the 15,259 reported by WfWI in their donor reporting. Considering the structure of the programme and the system for registering beneficiaries as explained by WfWI Afghanistan staff, it is highly unlikely that there were undocumented participants. The discrepancies in the number of women in the programme database and the figures reported by WfWI contributed to some inconsistencies between WfWI reporting to HDF and the information provided by WfWI Afghanistan staff, as well as findings of the evaluation. Where these inconsistencies arose, they are noted throughout the report.

Additionally, in some instances women who were called by WfWI staff supporting the evaluation for the survey were not on the primary or backup sample list. A small number of women (approximately 7) from Dasht-e Barchi and Bagrami districts and all of the 11 women surveyed in Istalif were not on either sampling list. However, due to the limited amount of women not on either list, the extent of this issue should be considered marginal. However, 45 (12%) of the women surveyed were unclear on the year they participated in the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme, which affected the possibility of providing perspectives from the different years of participation. Since the survey participants were kept anonymous, the missing years could not be crosschecked with the list of participants.

In the course of the evaluation, it was also found that the MLP was only conducted in Nangarhar, rather than in all three provinces as planned in the original proposal. As such, though the initial plan was to conduct the MLP survey with 72-90 participants through three FGDs in each province, the FGDs were only conducted in Nangarhar. As such, the survey was only conducted with 24 participants in the MLP, which is only representative of the participants in the programme with an 80% confidence level and 13% margin of error, constituting a lower level of precision and accuracy than the survey conducted with female beneficiaries.

Respondent's Bias

The findings of the evaluation should be also read against the backdrop of potential bias among the respondents in providing answers that they may believe will attract financial or other type of assistance, which can be especially problematic with marginalized groups. Therefore, it is possible that women could have under-reported income and availability of assets. Additionally, based on past research undertaken by Thousand Plateaus in Afghanistan, attendance at trainings represents a source of income and therefore respondents could possibly provide answers in an attempt to attract more trainings such as those delivered by WfWI.

Another potential response bias is the tendency of the respondent to provide the answer they believe the facilitator wants them to give or that they believe will make them appear in the most positive light. This is particularly problematic in evaluating women's empowerment, after extensive training on the rights and behaviours women should be able to assert. Given this background, it is

possible that respondents would provide answers that are consistent with what they have been trained on rather than answers that reflect their actual realities and daily lives. Asking a series of indirect questions that allow for a composite indicator of things like economic empowerment or psychological state mitigates this issue.

It is also important to note that nearly all the scales utilized for measuring empowerment in this evaluation were initially designed to be self-administered. However, this was not possible in this context due to the high level of illiteracy among respondents, so an enumerator administered the surveys verbally. This procedural deviation could have additionally contributed to increased social desirability bias because respondents had to provide their answers verbally to another person, which can lead to the over-reporting of 'good' behaviour and the under-reporting of 'bad' behaviour. This was however mitigated in the male survey due to its self-administered format.

During survey administration, there is also a well-documented tendency among respondents to repeatedly choose either the first or the last response in a list of response options, or primacy and recency effect. Through utilizing reverse coding or 'flipping' the category values in the survey for this evaluation, this issue is mitigated as well.

Measures Utilized and Reliability

It is necessary to acknowledge most of the scales utilized here have been extensively pretested, but with a few exceptions almost exclusively in Western contexts. It is important to note that their utility as composite measures is not limited to Western contexts and utilizing such well-established measures is a preferable approach to developing an entirely new questionnaire, but they need to be pretested and adapted accordingly for other contexts, as this evaluation has endeavoured to do. As such, they have almost all been modified in some way—length (number of items) and/or phrasing and application, in accordance with cultural context. The issue of language is further compounding, as the pre-tested scales were in English, and required translation into Dari and Pashto for the purposes of this evaluation. As such, while all of the scales utilized have acceptable internal validity in the contexts they have been tested in, none had been tested in Afghanistan prior to this evaluation. As such, each scale was tested for internal validity in this context.

The internal validity of each scale was ascertained and when the value of Cronbach's alpha was higher than 0.50 then the scale was utilized as a composite measure. It is important to acknowledge that while there is generally no consensus on acceptable alpha coefficients, generally values between 0.50 and 0.60 are considered poor.³¹ However, in consideration of the context and issues regarding translation and illiteracy, for the purpose of

31 Joseph A. Gliem and Roesmary R. Gliem, "Calculating, Interpreting, and Reporting Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient for Likert-Type Scales," 2003 Midwest Research to Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, October 8-10, 2003.

this evaluation, alpha coefficients as low as 0.50 were considered acceptable. However, of the 19 scales utilized in this evaluation (*See Annex A: Measuring Empowerment—Scales and Reliability*), 15 of which were from the female participant survey and 4 from the MLP survey, only five had a Cronbach's alpha of lower than 0.50 (three in the female participant survey and 2 in the MLP survey).

Access to data

There were a number of difficulties and delays in accessing the baseline and evaluation data as per the evaluators' request, which may have hampered meaningful and in-depth comparison with the data generated by this evaluation. WfWI determined that they were not in a position to share raw monitoring data on the basis that it would constitute a violation of beneficiaries' confidentiality, even after the evaluators consented to removing participants' ID numbers, districts, and provinces, which would have rendered the data completely anonymous. WfWI requested that Thousand Plateaus prepare a data analysis request, and the WfWI M&E team would prepare the analysis accordingly. However, though WfWI had approximately two months to respond to the request, it was not fully completed, and the analysis shared consisted only of frequencies and cross tabulations broken down at provincial level by project year, which did not allow for more in-depth analysis. WfWI does collect longitudinal data, tracking participants by their participant ID number throughout the baseline, endline, and other data collected. Thousand Plateaus requested longitudinal analysis on a number of variables from the baseline to endline of the project based on the existing data in the WfWI database, but WfWI was unable to provide analysis at this level. As such, it is difficult to meaningfully examine whether improvements from the baseline to endline data reported by WfWI can be attributed to the programme.

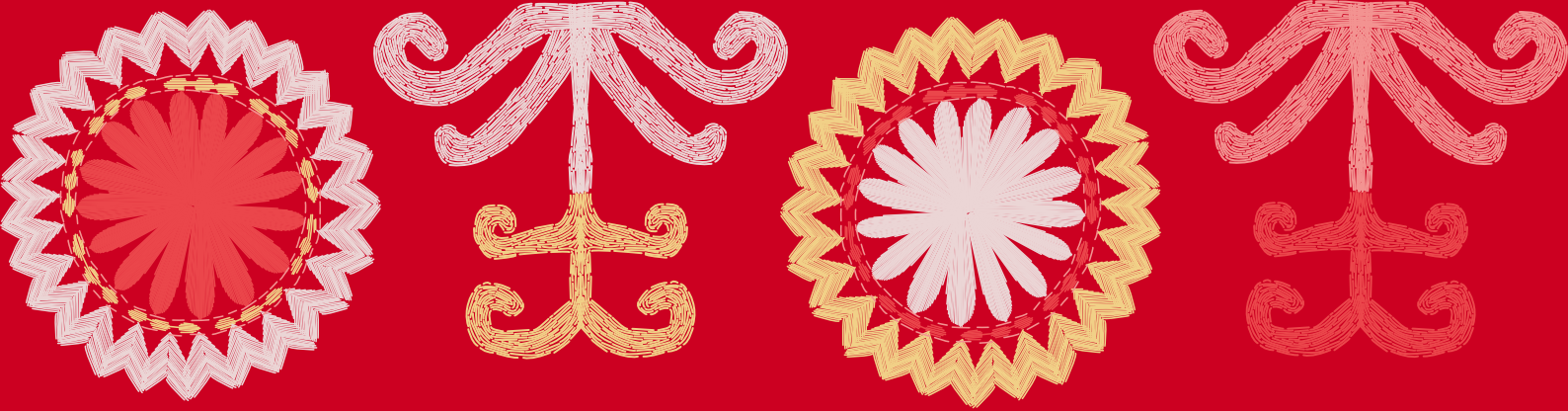
Influence of Time on Data

There is also an inherent limitation in the length of time between the WfWI endline and the present evaluation. For women who participated in the project in year one and year two, the evaluation fell over 1-2 years after completion of the programme. With the continuous monthly enrolment of women in the program, for women who completed the programme in year three, the evaluation fell a matter of months to over one year after they had completed the programme. It could be reasonably assumed that certain indicators would possibly decrease as more time passes from the training, such as knowledge acquired. However, where this is suspected as a possible explanation of the gap between WfWI endline data and the findings of this evaluation, the data was analysed for statistically significant differences between participants from each year to assess whether it can be assumed that lower figures at present are attributable to time elapsed since graduation from the programme, and these results are noted where relevant.

Political Context

The general political and security situation also did not favour women's economic empowerment, where the economy was further weakened compared to past years, which could result in some indicators potentially being worse than they would have been in a more favourable climate. According to the World Bank, economic growth is estimated to have fallen further to 2% in 2014 from 3.7% in 2013 and an average of 9% during 2003-12. Political uncertainty as well as slow progress in implementing reforms further impacted investor and consumer confidence in 2014, which was already weakened in the context of uncertainty in 2013. The economy was further weakened from the drawdown in aid, affecting growth in non-agricultural sectors (manufacturing, construction, and services). Even though the agricultural harvest in 2014 was strong for the third year in a row, it was only marginally up from 2012.³²

³² World Bank, Afghanistan Overview, 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/overview>



3. FINDINGS

3.1 EFFECTIVENESS

Achievement of project objectives

Objective 1: Provide life-skills and vocational training to 5,200 socially excluded women each year to improve their understanding of health and hygiene, increase their participation in family decision-making, and enable them to earn an income.

Indicator 1.1 At least 80% of participants report saving a portion of their income and 80% will be earning a minimum of \$1 a day.

23% of surveyed women reported earning an income: 11% of women who reported starting the project in year one, 30% in year two, and 30% in year three reported that they are currently earning an income.

Figure 3.1.1: Participants earning income



These findings are in contrast to that reported in the WfWI endline figures, which found that 69% of women from year one, 99% from year two, and 99% from year three were using their vocational skills to earn an income at the end of the training. The low level of women earning an income could be attributed to the time between completing the project and the evaluation, or given that the evaluation was conducted shortly after the completion of the training. However, this seems unlikely as 11% of women starting the project in year one, 30% in year two, and 30% in year three reported that they are currently earning an income.

While the figure of 23% appears to be an improvement from the reported baseline indicators reported by WfWI,³³ when taken in context of the programme

33 5% employed or self-employed in year one; 20% employed or self-employed in year two; 4% employed or self-employed in year three baseline as

scope and objectives, the number of women earning an income is low. Additionally, the figures are low also in comparison to national figures: in the 2014 Survey of the Afghan people, 24% of households reported that female members of the family contribute to household income.³⁴ However, it is possible that there is a distinction between earning income and contributing to household income—for example, undertaking unpaid agricultural labour that provides a source of income generation for the household. Considering that the female labour force participation rate in Afghanistan is around 16%,³⁵ that the percentage of project participants generating an income found in this evaluation is only 7% higher than the latter, can be considered an average achievement.

Figure 3.1.2: Participants earning at least 1 USD per day



Additionally, the evaluation asked participants to estimate their own personal monthly income, which was coded into income ranges. Taking the upper bound of this range and calculating the average daily income³⁶ found that 7.5% of all women surveyed self-reported earning an income of more than 1 USD per day, falling short of the target of 80% of all participants earning an income of at least 1 USD per day. Women earning more than 1 USD per day accounted for only 36% of the 23% of respondents who reported earning an income. One woman explained how earning an income is difficult since the possibilities are limited:

The programme made me learn about agriculture and the equal rights of girls and boys. Now, we treat our daughters and sons equal. We sell eggs and hens, also. There is poverty in our villages and we cannot do anything except these things here.³⁷

reported by WfWI

34 "Visualizing Afghanistan," The Asia Foundation.

35 "Labor force participation rate, female," World Bank, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>.

36 Based on a 30 day month and an exchange rate of 60 AFN = 1 USD consistent with the timing of the evaluation

37 Nangarhar, Focus group with women, June 2015

When looking at total household income, based on the global definition of extreme poverty as 1.25 USD (75AFN) or less per person per day and severe poverty as 0.70 USD (40 AFN) per person per day, 90% of the households of participants surveyed live in extreme poverty and 67% in severe poverty.

Figure 3.1.3: Participants earning income who are also saving a portion of their income

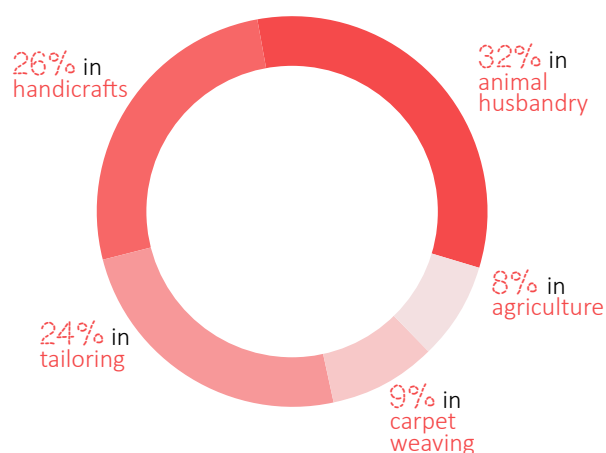


52% of participants who were actually earning an income save a portion of their income (11% of all participants), with no significant difference according to project year.³⁸ More women in Kabul report saving a portion of their income as compared to Nangarhar and Parwan: 46 women manage to save (or 52% of all women reporting saving a portion of their income) in Kabul, 22 (or 23%) in Nangarhar, and 16 (or 20%) in Parwan. This figure also contrasts the findings reported by WfWI in their own endline evaluation, where they reported that 65% of women at the end of year one were saving a portion of their income, 98% in year two, and 99% in year three.

48% of the women who are earning an income do not save anything, 37% save at least 10%, 5% at least 20%, 2.5% at least 30%, one woman saves at least 40%, 1.1% save at least 50%, and one woman saves more than 50%. A focus group discussed the challenges for saving money:

- 1: It is very difficult to save money because of household expenditures, my children go to a private school; we lack money and have financial problems
- 2: if our work improves we could save some money
- 3: I don't save money because I'm unemployed, because of household expenses, and because we rent the house. In order to save, we need support for work³⁹

Figure 3.1.4a: Field in which business-owning participants have businesses



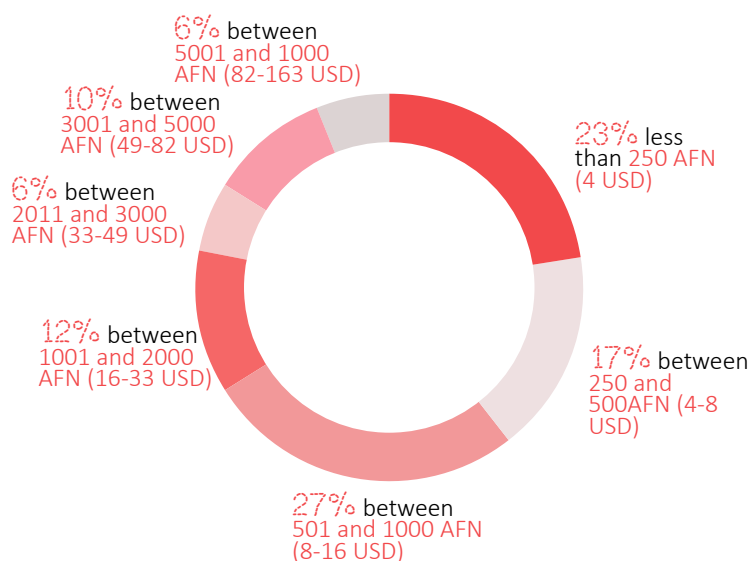
38 $\chi^2(18, N=79)=0.41, p>0.5$

39 Kabul, Dasht-e-Barchi, Focus group with women, June 2015

Apart from asking whether they are earning and saving income, women surveyed were also asked whether they have any savings at all, which could include assets such as gold or other valuable items or long-term savings even if they are not currently earning income. 32% of women reported that they do not have any savings at all, where the remaining 68% have at least one kind of savings. 60% of respondents have savings in the form of cash in hand, 28% have loans given to other people, 21% have tangible assets like gold or other valuable items, 19% have cash in a mobile banking account, 10% having cash at a bank, and 8% have cash at a local money exchange (sarafi).

Approximately 14% of women reported having their own business. Significantly more women reported having their own business with each project year, with 6% from year one, 16% from year two, and 23% from year three.⁴⁰ The level of business ownership was also significantly higher in Kabul (57% of women who reported having their own business) than in Nangarhar (30% of business owners) and Parwan (14%).⁴¹ Among these, 32% have a business in animal husbandry, 26% in handicrafts; 24% in tailoring, 9% in carpet weaving, and 8% own an agriculture-related business. Women owning a business reported the following profits in a month: 23% earn less than 250

Figure 3.1.4b: Level of income from business



AFN (4 USD), 17% earn between 250 and 500 AFN (4-8 USD), 27% between 501 and 1000 AFN (8-16 USD), 12% between 1001 and 2000 AFN (16-33 USD), 6% between 2001 and 3000 AFN (33-49 USD), 10% between 3001 and 5000 AFN (49-82 USD), and 6% between 5001 to 10000 AFN (82-163 USD); no businesses were earning more than 10000 AFN (163 USD) per month.

Contextualizing this with data at the national level, according to data from the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA), 1,600 women-owned businesses have been registered in Afghanistan since 2003, most of which are in the handicraft and business service sectors

40 $\chi^2(4, N=370)=14.58, p<.01$

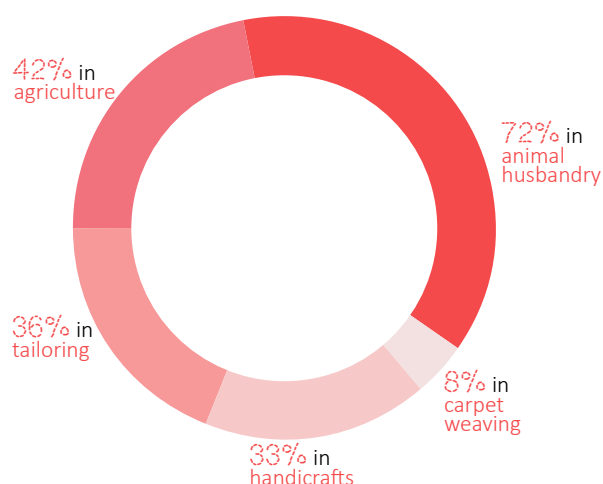
41 $\chi^2(2, N=372)=26.62, p<.001$

and are largely supported by international donors. 78% of businesses owned by women in Afghanistan are small businesses, and 38% of women Afghan business owners reported earning a monthly income between 30,000 AFN and 50,000 AFN (489-815 USD),⁴² suggesting that women who graduated from the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme that are operating businesses are earning considerably less than other women Afghan business owners.

Afghan businesswomen face a number of challenges. 81% of Afghan businesswomen were unable to access any credit or financing.⁴³ Additionally, women’s access to finance and credit can be a challenge for starting and running a business, with banks and microfinance institutions often offering loans that rely on property or land ownership, which is limited for Afghan women. Additionally, banking institutions often provide loans at high interest rates, between 15% and 17%, which can be prohibitive for entrepreneurs.⁴⁴ In this evaluation, access to credit also appears to be problematic. When asked about the sources of credit available in their community, 21% of women reported that they are not aware of any. Others named family and friends (43%), loans from private banks (31%), moneylenders (28%), community savings and loans associations (18%), private companies (15%), micro-credit providers (14%), and the government (3%). Less than half of women surveyed (44%) are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the credit available in their communities.

Indicator 1.2 At least 80% of participants report gaining skills in the vocational area in which they are trained, and at least 60% report using these skills to earn incomes.

Figure 3.1.5: Type of vocational trainings received



All women surveyed reported participating in vocational training as a part of the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme. 72% participated in training in animal husbandry, 33% in handicrafts, 42% in agriculture, 36% in tailoring, 8% in carpet weaving, and smaller

Figure 3.1.6: Participants using what they learned to earn an income



percentages in other unspecified trainings.

16% of those surveyed self-reported using what they have learned during the training to earn an income (8% of first year, 19% second year, and 22% of third year participants), as opposed to what was reported by WfWI, where 69% in year one, 99% in year two, and 99% in year three were reported to be using their vocational skill to earn an income at graduation. Women from focus groups also provided some reasons why they could not use their skills: “we lacked practice” (the reason provided for tailoring only for family members and not customers); “we have duties at home;”⁴⁵ and “we lack support, we have financial problems, and we do not have an appropriate space for our income generating activities.”⁴⁶

Women were also asked to provide information on their personal sources of income where among women who were earning income the majority was tailoring, carpet weaving, and other handicrafts (72%); livestock (17%); crop cultivation (12%); dairy (13%); fishery (4%); 5% are daily labourers in agriculture-related field; 4% are daily labourers in non-agricultural field. Even smaller numbers derive their incomes from the following sources: four (5% of income earners) receive financial support from the government; two respondents are in regular part-time employment; one is in full-time employment; one derives income from cash incentives provided for trainings, and one from remittances. Among those who reported earning an income from crop cultivation, 37%—constituting less than half—had received training in agriculture through the WfWI programme. Among those earning an income from livestock, only around half (49%) had received training in animal husbandry. Among those earning income from tailoring, handicrafts or weaving, fewer than half (39%) had received training in handicrafts, and the same regarding tailoring (30%), and carpet weaving (22%). These figures indicate that women’s income generation was not necessarily exclusively related to the vocational trainings they had received. However, it is also possible that women attended trainings in vocational areas where they were not earning income in the interest of developing income diversification, which could be a positive impact even if women are not currently utilizing their skills to generate income.

The training mostly appears to have benefited those that were already earning an income since of the 23% who reported earning an income, 67% also reported that they were already personally earning an income prior to

42 Marie S. Huber, “Gender Equality Report Card,” 2015.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Kabul, Dasht-e –Barchi, Focus group with women 2, June 2015

46 Kabul, Dasht-e –Barchi, Focus group with women 1, June 2015

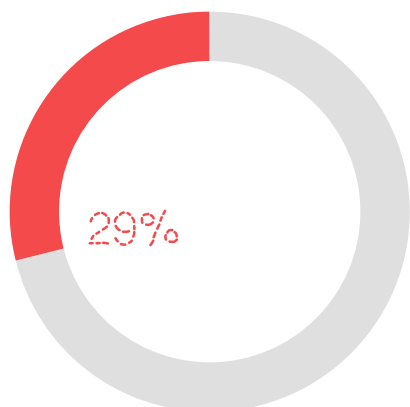
participating in the programme. This figure indicates that though 23% of participants were earning an income at the time of the evaluation, only around 8% of these were newly earning income after participating in the WfWI programme. However, this does not necessarily mean that the women who were already earning income did not benefit from the training, as their level of income may have increased, or they may have acquired new skills that would allow them to diversify their sources of income. However, due to the lack of availability of the longitudinal analysis of baseline and endline data these conclusions cannot be tested.

Participants also received training on business skills as a component of their vocational training, with the stated objective of improving participants' understanding of the market economy, small business, and what they will actually do in operating their own business, with a focus on micro- and small business. This training package included modules on business basics, entrepreneurship, planning ahead, selling, bookkeeping, and financing your own business. This evaluation included a subscale developed based on the six modules included in the business skills training manual provided by WfWI to assess the effectiveness of the business training. The items were designed to assess knowledge of materials covered in each of the six modules, with an additional item based on the additional training module on cooperatives.

56% of participants correctly answered a question regarding supply and demand. 32% correctly answered that successful businesses produce goods or services that consumers want. When given a scenario with three different women having responsibility for three different stages of production in a tailoring business, 43% answered correctly that the reason for allocating work this way was to make more clothes, with 28% believing it was because each woman wanted to learn different jobs, 6% that it would increase the price of the clothes, and 11% that it would increase the demand for clothes, with 11% unable to provide an answer. 9% of respondents were able to correctly identify the best definition of selling (an interaction that attempts to convince a potential buyer to purchase a product), and 36% the definition of balance (the difference between income and expenditure).

Figure 3.1.7: Business Skills Knowledge

Average participant score on
Business Knowledge



Considerably few women (13%) knew the definition of credit (funds available for borrowing), with 48% believing it refers to a financial statement, 10% the sum of your assets, and 27% unable to provide an answer. Only 17% were able to identify which statement was true regarding cooperatives (that the upfront investment and risk of members is lower than if each member is doing business as an individual), with 35% believing that you are guaranteed to make more money in a cooperative because there are many members, 13% believing that members don't have to make any decisions because the cooperative has a manager, and 18% believing that a cooperative is owned by one person who employs all the other members.

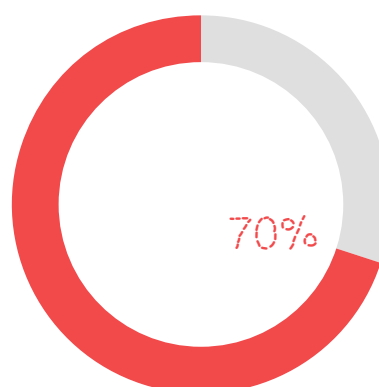
A business knowledge score was calculated, which was comprised from the different variables listed above. The average score was 29% (which would be approximately 2 out of the 7 answers correct where do not know and missing answers were treated as incorrect). 8% of respondents did not answer a single question correctly; 23% only answered one question correctly; 38% two questions; 20% three questions; 10% four questions; 2% five questions. Not a single respondent got more than five of the seven business training-related questions correct. These findings would indicate a very low level of participants with the basic knowledge to apply the skills they were meant to learn in building and operating their own business or cooperative.

Indicator 1.3 At least 60% of participants report practicing good nutrition, 50% report practicing family planning, and 80% report knowledge of reproductive health.

At baseline level only 15% of women in year one, 15% in year two, and 5% in year three reported that they practice good nutrition, though this figure is based on a one-item self-assessment variable that did not actually assess women's nutrition knowledge and practices.⁴⁷ In this evaluation, women's actual knowledge and practices regarding nutrition was assessed. Respondents were asked

Figure 3.1.8: Health and Nutrition Knowledge

Average participant score on
Health and Nutrition Knowledge



47 The baseline question from the WfWI questionnaire asked, "How often do you practice the following:" with nutrition planning as one item respondents were asked to rate their frequency of practice on a four-point scale from frequently to never.

four questions on breastfeeding, based on the contents of the WfWI life skills training manual. 95% were aware that a baby should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months after birth; 37% falsely believed that a baby should be exclusively breastfed for a full year after birth; 94% were aware that a newborn should be breastfed for the first time within the first hour after birth; 24% falsely believed that the primary source of nutrition from the age of six to twelve months is solid food. Women were also asked to identify a good food source of Vitamin A, to which 30% answered correctly. A total health and nutrition score was created that included answers on women's knowledge on breastfeeding and the sources of Vitamin A with the mean score of approximately 70%, indicating a generally positive level of knowledge regarding the materials included in the nutrition component of the training. However, women's knowledge in this evaluation was lower than the findings of the WfWI survey administered at graduation, in which 94% of year one, 90% of year two, and 100% of year three women reported that they are practicing good nutrition.

Regarding WASH knowledge, the survey found that 26% of participants were aware that dirty water could cause diarrhoea, dysentery, and typhoid. 97% were aware that

it is good practice to wash hands with soap before cooking or handling food, 96% that it is good practice to wash hands with soap after defecating, 23% stated it was good practice to wash hands with ash, and 92% stated it was good practice to boil water before drinking it. However, there were also some false beliefs regarding WASH: 66% of respondents believed that rinsing hands under water promotes good hygiene, 46% regarding keeping food outside overnight for consumption the next day, 17% regarding putting bathrooms near drinking water supply, and 25% regarding keeping livestock in the yard or living area. A scale was additionally created to assess the knowledge on WASH among women, with an average score of 64%. Considering that the training module includes an entire session on personal and family hygiene, including WASH and information on contamination and disease, that women on average knew the answers to 6 out of 9 questions would indicate a generally average level of awareness on the water, sanitation and hygiene issues they received training on, where women did exhibit a very high level of knowledge specifically regarding washing hands and safe drinking water.

70% of married women reported that they practice at least one type of family planning,⁴⁸ surpassing the proposed target of 50%. Married women most commonly reported practicing abstinence (40%), using the birth control pill (29%), family planning injections (28%), emergency contraception (22%), and natural family planning (19%). Fewer reported using male condoms (6%), female condoms (4%), intrauterine device (4%), and a very small percentage use spermicides (less than 1%). According to WfWI data, at the baseline level only 10% reported that they were practicing family planning, while this evaluation found that 40% of respondents were using a form of contraception (excluding abstinence and natural family planning). This is a considerable level, above the national average as in 2012, 21.2% of married women in Afghanistan were using contraception.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ In consideration of cultural context, unmarried, widowed, and divorced women were not analyzed for variables regarding family planning and contraception practices.

⁴⁹ "Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey: Monitoring the Situation of Women & Children," Central Statistics Organization and UNICEF, June 2012, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/AMICS-Jun24-2012->

Figure 3.1.9: WASH Knowledge

Average participant score on
WASH Knowledge

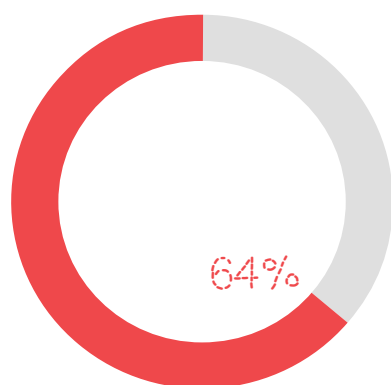
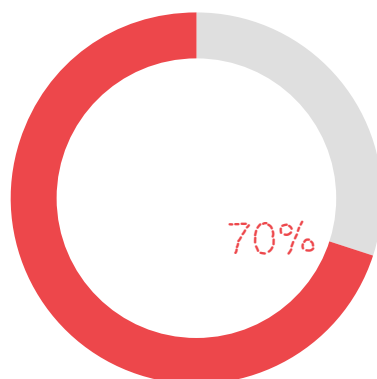
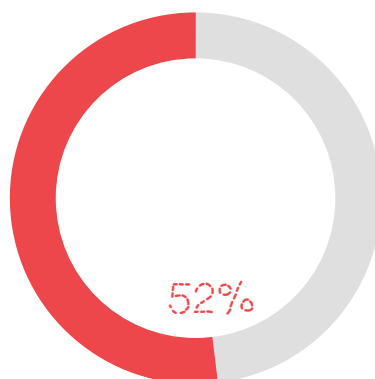


Figure 3.1.10: Family Planning and Reproductive Health Knowledge

Participants practicing some
form of Family Planning



Participants who know when
they are most likely to get
pregnant



Participants who know the
recommended birth spacing
interval

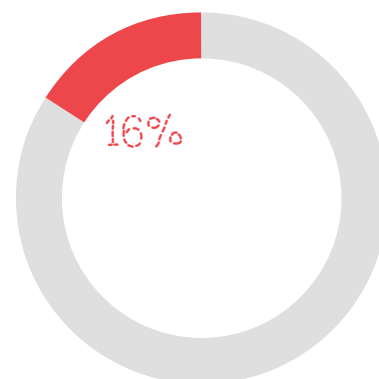
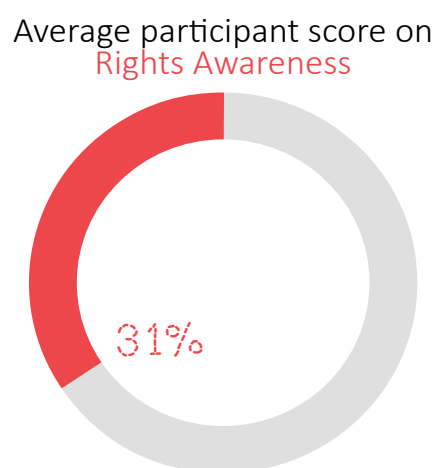


Figure 3.1.11: Rights Awareness



Considerably less than the proposed target of 80% of women have basic knowledge on reproductive health. Women were asked about the recommended birth-spacing interval and on their knowledge on when a woman is most likely to become pregnant where 52% and 16% answered correctly, respectively.⁵⁰ That only 16% of women were aware of when in their menstrual cycle they are most likely to get pregnant is especially concerning, since 30% of married women are not actively practicing any type of family planning. What's more, of the 19% of married women who reported that they are practicing natural family planning, 90% answered incorrectly or were unable to provide an answer regarding when they are most likely to become pregnant, which would generally indicate that they are unable to actually practice natural family planning effectively.

Indicator 1.4 After completing the 12-month programme, at least 90% of participants increase knowledge of their rights, and 80% of participants report contributing to family decisions on children's school attendance and household finances.

The life skills training manual provided by WfWI includes a module on rights. However, the training manual appears to be universal for all geographic locations in which WfWI operates, and contained no specific information on laws, rights, and institutions in Afghanistan. The training manual speaks broadly about human rights, women's rights, and international law, but the materials provided by WfWI for this evaluation did not include any additional materials or directives specific to the Afghan context. Though WfWI staff explained that trainers sometimes incorporate additional materials at their own discretion, there was apparently no structure for doing so, which could impact whether women receive accurate information. In one interview with WfWI staff responsible for trainings, a management-level staff member asserted that the EVAW Law, which was enacted and published in the official gazette in 2009, does not have legal status, demonstrating little awareness of the various institutions and bodies in place to register cases and support women. Despite this not necessarily representing all WfWI staff, ensuring up-to-date knowledge and developments in the sector of women's rights, especially at the management level, is very important for a women's empowerment programme.

At the baseline level as reported by WfWI, only 17% of participants from year one, 7% from year two, and 2% from year three self-reported having knowledge on rights. However, this was based on an indicator asking women to rate their own level of knowledge regarding their rights, generally, and did not actually assess whether women had knowledge of their rights. This self-report indicator is an inaccurate measure of rights awareness, especially in consideration that women who do not have knowledge of their rights would likely also be unaware that they do not have knowledge of their rights.

In this evaluation, in order to assess participants' knowledge on their rights, a subscale was developed consisting of

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50 Analysis of variables regarding reproductive knowledge includes all respondents, regardless of marital status.

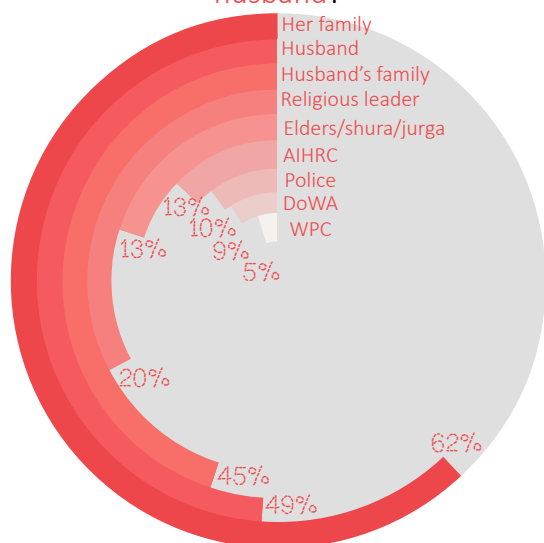
five knowledge assessment questions regarding key laws and women's rights in Afghanistan. The average score on these questions was 31% of questions answered correctly (where missing and don't know answers were treated as incorrect). 14% of respondents did not answer a single question correctly, and 36% of respondents answered only one question correctly. 46% answered 2-3 questions correctly, and 5% answered 4 questions correctly. No respondents answered all of the questions on women's rights correctly. Using the threshold of answering at least 3 out of 5 questions regarding rights correctly as a basic level of rights awareness, approximately 15% of participants demonstrated a basic level of awareness of their rights, falling considerably short of the 90% target. Women's knowledge of their rights is further discussed in section 3.2 on project impact regarding women's legal empowerment.

In addition to the questions on knowledge on rights, respondents were confronted with a hypothetical scenario where a woman in the community was experiencing physical abuse from her husband and they had to provide advice on where she should go to solve the issue. 49% women reported that the abused woman should go to her husband, therefore to the perpetrator, and of these, 6% would not provide any further advice on what she could do about her abuse. Considering the fact that women underwent a training on women's rights, such high percentage advising women to the return to the perpetrator is somewhat troubling. It is possible that respondents could have meant resorting to dialogue first and trying to solve the issue with the husband before undertaking any other actions, though at a point where conflict has escalated to the level of physical abuse, protection should be prioritized.

A majority of women (62%) also reported that they would advise a woman to return to her own family if her husband was abusing her. Advising her to go to her husband's family was also common, reported by 45% of women. These findings are in line with established ideas on family issues being a private matter and being preferably solved inside the family in Afghanistan. Even community elders and religious leaders were not considered central for solving these issues, where 13% said that they would advise the abused woman to turn to community elders, shuras or jirgas, and 20% to a religious leader.

Figure 3.1.12: Advice Regarding Physical Abuse

Where would you advise a woman to turn if she were experiencing physical abuse from her husband?



Only 13% of respondents would advise a woman to turn to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), a government institution that regularly registers cases and assists victims of violence against women. There was little place for governmental bodies like the police, Department of Women's Affairs (DoWA), Women's Protection Centers (WPCs, or women's shelters), which were mentioned by less than 10% of women. Based on the fact that women underwent women's rights trainings, the relatively low level of women who would advise a victim of abuse to turn to bodies responsible for providing protection and support is concerning, as rights awareness should entail knowledge and promotion of effective options for prevention, protection, and addressing abuse.

56% of women contribute to the household decision whether boys and girls will attend school, missing the target set at 80%. This figure is actually lower than the baseline data reported by WfWI for participants from years two and three of the project, when 62% and 57% respectively reported that they were involved in family decisions on children's school attendance. However, it is higher than the baseline figure from year one participants, when only 27% reported contributing to such a decision. This finding is also much lower than the endline figures from WfWI, where 97% of year one participants, 100% from year two, and 98% from year three were said to be contributing to such decisions by the end of the project.

Though results on women's contribution to financial decision-making were mixed, on average, respondents reported that female household members are involved in 58% of the areas of household financial decision-making listed in the survey. However, less than half (41%) were involved in at least half of the financial decisions listed in the survey, which is less than the proposed target of 80%. This represents a somewhat modest improvement from the baseline figures reported by WfWI regarding involvement in financial decision-making in the household, where 22% of year one participants, 44% of year two, and

29% of year three participants reported that they are generally involved in decisions on household finances.

Indicator 1.5 At least 70% of participants report voting in national and/or local elections, and 30% of participants report participating in a community activity.

Figure 3.1.13: Participants who voted in 2014



8.6 out of every 10 participants is voted in the 2014 Presidential and Provincial Council elections

86% of women surveyed voted in the Presidential and Provincial Council elections in 2014, which represents a meaningful increase from the baseline when only 50% of women from year one, 61% from year two, and 48% from year three of the programme had voted in the last elections. According to information from the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan, in the 2014 Presidential Elections, of the 6.6 million votes cast in the first round of the elections, 36% were female voters nationally.⁵¹

Participation in community activities was high among women and the target set at 30% was met and surpassed based on answers on different community activities. Overall, 75% of respondents had participated in at least half of the activities listed, and the average score was 39%, which indicates a relatively high level of community participation. Though what constituted "community participation" at baseline level was not clarified, the baseline from WfWI registered only 7% of year one participants, 71% in year two, and 98% in year three as participating in community activities. In this evaluation, 30% of respondents had participated in a community shura in the past six months, 20% in a school shura, and 14% in a jirga or dispute resolution body. 34% had participated in a festival or community celebration and 21% in a public political gathering. The bulk of community participation was in family-related or private gatherings, where 90% had attended a wedding, funeral or other family-related gathering and 76% had participated in a private female gathering in someone's home. 53% had participated in a gathering in a public space, and 27% had participated in a community advocacy campaign.

This can be considered a positive achievement, considering that women have limited access to public and social spaces, and have limited participation in extra-familial groups and social networks in Afghanistan.⁵² Whereas Afghan men generally enjoy unrestricted movement and

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Chona R. Chavez, "Gender and Economic Choice: What's Old and What's New for Women in Afghanistan – Results from a Rapid Qualitative Assessment in Kabul and Parwan Provinces," Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, March 2012, <http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1206E-Gender%20and%20Economic%20Choice%20RQA%202012.pdf>.

participation, women's social engagement is generally limited to family gatherings or events such as weddings and funerals, where men and women traditionally gather separately and women are provided an opportunity for engaging with other women, which is also reflected in these findings, where a high level of women's participation was in family gatherings or private homes.

Women showed slightly less initiative regarding involvement in community leadership. 16% had participated in a Community Development Council (CDC) meeting in the past six months. Women's community participation has somewhat been facilitated through the National Solidarity Program (NSP) and its CDCs. The purpose of the NSP is to develop the ability of Afghan communities to identify, plan, manage and monitor their own development projects, and promote good local governance to empower rural communities to make decisions affecting their own lives and livelihoods. The NSP requires a level of female participation in CDCs, and female members constitute around 35% of CDC members.⁵³

Respondents were also given a scenario where the construction of a public well was needed in their community, and asked what action they would take to address it, where multiple responses were allowed. Again, women's responses showed a high level of proactivity where 51% would personally approach a female member of the CDC shura, 62% would ask a trusted male elder to bring the issue to the CDC shura, 23% would go to a meeting with female CDC members to bring up the issue, 13% would personally approach a male member of the CDC to bring up the issue, and 9% would go to a CDC meeting with all members regardless of their sex. However, some respondents show less involvement, where 11% of women answered they would personally do nothing about it and hope that someone else would take initiative.

Indicator 1.6 Three cooperatives formed and registered with the government each year for 3 years

Based on interviews with WfWI country staff, no cooperatives were established or formally affiliated with the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme. Nonetheless, 9 women (2.4%) reported being members of a cooperative, 8 from the province of Nangarhar and one from Kabul. One respondent reported being a member of an agriculture-related, four animal husbandry-related, two tailoring, one services, and one carpet-weaving cooperative. Of these nine women, five reported that the cooperative was not started with WfWI and one cooperative includes also men. Even though WfWI did not establish cooperatives, the remaining four women reported that their cooperative was started with WfWI; it is possible that these respondents meant that the cooperative involves other women who had also participated in the WfWI programme.

In an interview with WfWI staff, it was explained that cooperatives were not registered because of the legal complexities of doing so in Afghanistan, which requires formal registration with the government through the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), though the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) claims to also be authorized to license to cooperatives under the law on the ACCI.⁵⁴ According to WfWI staff, instead of cooperatives, they are supporting women in forming "self-help groups," which were described by a WfWI staff member as a small business group, but not called a cooperative by name. According to the WfWI staff member, each group has a leader, deputy, and a cashier, and consists of around 20-25 women working as a group, marketing their product together with the support of a WfWI staff member. According to WfWI staff, they have helped WfWI training participants to form 17 self-help groups to date since introducing the initiative last year, ten of which started in 2014 with women who were participants in the project under the support of the HDF grant.

Objective 2: Sensitize and engage 450 male community religious leaders to increase their support for women's rights in three provinces

Traditionally, community leaders, family elders, and religious leaders set the moral, social and religious compass for Afghan society. According to WfWI, the purpose of the trainings provided through the Men's Leadership Programme (MLP) is to provide new information about women's rights and women's roles in society and promote appropriate behaviour change, framing the discussions around women's rights as they relate to Islam and highlighting particular verses from the Quran that promote women's position in society. The mullahs are then supposed to pass on messages about women's rights during Friday prayers to other men in the local community. WfWI measured the indicators measuring men's support of women's rights with pre and post-training tests, though the forms and results were not shared with the evaluators as committed.

Indicator 2.1: 450 local leaders complete the training

According to WfWI, 450 local leaders completed the training, though no participant lists were available for verification as with the female beneficiaries. The entire MLP pilot programme was conducted in Nangarhar province.

Indicator 2.2: 60% of men who complete MLP report they would take action to reduce gender-based violence in their communities

The MLP survey included scales based on a questionnaire developed for assessing rape prevention through bystander education through a broader community perspective to sexual violence prevention.⁵⁵ These sections

53 Marie S. Huber, "Afghanistan Gender Equality Report Card: Evaluating the Government of Afghanistan's Commitments to Women and Gender Equality," EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy, 2015, <http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/GERC-English.pdf>.

54 "Board Members visit SME in Sri Lanka," Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries, 14 September 2014, <http://www.acci.org.af/component/content/article/38-news/312-board-members-visit-sme-in-sri-lanka-.html>.

55 Victoria L. Banyard, Elizabeth G. Plante, and Mary M. Moynihan, "Rape

focus on general attitudes towards violence prevention, and factors that influence the decision to support the prevention of violence against women.

Regarding men's beliefs in efficacy of violence prevention in general, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 would indicate a very high level of belief in the efficacy of violence prevention and 5 would indicate a very low level of belief, the average score was 1.85,⁵⁶ indicating a moderately high level of belief. Specifically regarding the prevention of violence against women (VAW), on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 would indicate a very high level of self-efficacy related to the prevention of VAW and 5 would be very low, the average score was 2.84,⁵⁷ indicating an average to slightly higher than average level of self-efficacy in this regard.

When looking at specific items on these scales, it seems that though the level of efficacy among MLP participants is moderately high (for example, 88% believe they can prevent VAW in their community; 79% believe they can make a difference in helping to prevent violence; 54% believe they have the skills to help support someone who is being abused) it does not seem that men would actually take action to reduce gender-based violence, at least in public. MLP participants surveyed were found to be more motivated in their decision-making by negative factors than by positive factors. This would likely indicate that the negative factors, which would be demotivating, could prevent participants from taking action to prevent or intervene in a situation where a woman is being hurt, and the positive factors that would likely motivate them to take action are less of an influence on their decision-making. 67% think it is intimidating to think about trying to stop a husband from hitting their wife. 54% think they could not stop a group of men who are harassing a woman on the street (where only 28% think they could with the remaining being neutral). 50% would be uncomfortable telling their friend to stop calling their wife names, and 33% felt it would be too hard to confront a man who is abusing his wife, though only 29% disagreed and the remaining 38% were neutral. These findings should be also considered against a different context than where these scales were developed, where in the Afghan context for intervening in a matter that is considered private, the consequences could be harsher than a simple argument with the perpetrator.

Male respondents were also asked about the advice or intervention to help a woman abused by her husband. 58% reported she should go to her husband; 67% to her own family; 54% to her husband's family; 30% would advise her to go to the local shura or jirga with the same percentage advising her to go the community elders; 46% to religious leaders; 25% to the police and 25% to the AIHRC. Only 8% would advise her to go the Women's Protection Centre and none to DoWA or an NGO. In summary, a high percentage of men would advise the woman to turn to her husband, who is the perpetrator,

which could not be considered a positive attitude in terms of VAW prevention. However, advising women to go to the police or the AIHRC was higher among MLP participants than among female project participants. Though it is impossible to contextualize these findings in the absence of baseline figures or similar data from other research, generally these findings can be seen as positive, though likely falling somewhat short of the 60% target.

Indicator 2.3: 90% of men who complete MLP articulate changes in knowledge, attitude regarding rights of women and Indicator 2.4: 90% of MLP participants recognize the value of women's roles, accomplishments and contributions at family and community levels.

All focus group participants articulated the change in knowledge and attitude regarding women's rights. A participant explained the change:

We did not give women their share of inheritance but after we receive this training from WfWI, we give it. We did not let them to receive education, but we do it now. We were making difference between sons and daughters, but now we do not do it. We were using violence against women but we do not do it now. We were not allowing women to work, but now we give them permission to work. We were giving our daughters in *badal* but we do not do it now.⁵⁸

However, based on the answers from the GRAS, which measures attitudes towards gender equality in a number of dimensions, the MLP participants surveyed have less positive attitudes in terms of gender equality. On a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 would indicate extremely positive attitudes towards gender roles and 5 extremely negative attitudes, the average score was 3.23, which is somewhere between neutral and somewhat negative attitudes toward gender equality as a composite of all these dimensions. Only 31% of the men surveyed had scores above 3, which would indicate neutral to positive gender role attitudes, falling short of the target of 90% recognizing the value of women's roles, accomplishments, and contributions.

Positively, all respondents felt that the decision to have a child should be made by both spouses, and 96% felt that men and women should receive equal pay in professional life. 96% believed that domestic work should be shared equally between spouses, and 91% that spouses should decide together in the family. However, 83% believed that women should only consult female doctors, which can be life endangering in areas of Afghanistan where there is often a shortage of female doctors.⁵⁹ 65% believed that the father should decide whom his daughter marries, and only 22% disagreed. 88% believed that a man should take a second wife if his wife cannot have children, and 63% that a woman's basic task is motherhood. 60% believe a woman should remain silent instead of arguing if she disagrees with her husband, and 67% that husbands should make the decisions regarding women's lives.

Prevention Through Bystander Education: Bringing a Broader Community Perspective to Sexual Violence Prevention," National Institute of Justice, 2005, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/208701.pdf>.

56 N=24, SD=.441

57 N=24, SD=.637

58 Nangarhar, Focus group with men, June 2015

59 Marie S. Huber, "Gender Equality Report Card," 2015.

Deeply worrisome is the fact that when men were asked whether it is sometimes ok for a man to beat his wife, only 5 out of the 24 men disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Furthermore, in the context of a women's economic empowerment programme, 42% of MLP participants surveyed believe that a woman should not work if the financial situation of her husband and/or male household members is adequate, indicating that just under half of the MLP participants surveyed would not necessarily support the female programme participants on a very fundamental level. 79% believe that men should be given preference for employment because of women's reproductive role, and 63% that men should decide on how to use family income.

3.2 IMPACT

The evaluation of the programme's effectiveness focused on the outputs and deliverables of the project, and whether it achieved what it planned in these terms. Empowerment lies at the core of WfWI programming, and this section focuses on impact in terms of social and economic empowerment, based on the aforementioned domains of empowerment—socio-cultural beliefs and visibility, familial/interpersonal, legal, political, psychological, physical, and economic. Though direct attribution of the results presented in this section to the programme is difficult, it is reasonable to assume that one year of training, interaction with other women, and new knowledge acquired, have to some extent contributed to the situation as presented in this section.

Women's Empowerment

Socio-Cultural Beliefs and Visibility

As a domain of empowerment, socio-cultural beliefs and visibility refers to things like women's freedom of movement, lack of discrimination against daughters, commitment to educating daughters, women's visibility and access to social spaces, and participation in extra-familial groups and social networks. The "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" project acknowledged that social support, belonging, and mobility are key aspects of women's empowerment, and aimed to address it through building social networks for women, and aiming to strengthen the position of women in their communities through sensitizing male leaders to facilitate social and civic involvement in their communities.⁶⁰ Women who are

Figure 3.2.1: Social Well-Being



60 "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" project proposal

empowered in this domain would likely exhibit a strong sense of social well-being.

Among those surveyed, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 would indicate the highest level of social well-being and 5 the lowest, the average score was 2.58,⁶¹ which would indicate a generally average level of social well-being. There was no significant difference in social well-being according to age,⁶² marital status⁶³ or level of education.⁶⁴ Respondents demonstrated a generally strong sense of community and social integration, with 87% reporting that they feel close to other people in their community, and 80% reporting that their community is a source of comfort. Perceptions were also moderately positive regarding social actualization, with 48% believing the world is becoming a better place for everyone (24% neutral and only 8% disagreeing), though 33% felt that society is not improving for people like them.

However, respondents exhibited slightly more negative perceptions in terms of social acceptance, with 36% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that people who do favours expect nothing in return, 39% believing that people do not care about other people's problems, and 24% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that people are kind. Respondents also did not demonstrate very high levels of perceived social contribution, with only 42% believing they have something valuable to give to the world, 21% believing that their daily activities do not produce anything worthwhile for their community, and only 35% believing they have something important to contribute to society. Respondents also exhibited a moderately low degree of perceived social coherence, with 50% feeling that the world is too complex for them, and 40% finding it difficult to predict what will happen next in society.

Familial/Interpersonal

Familial and interpersonal domains of empowerment refer to participation in decision-making, control over decisions, control over spousal selection and marriage, and freedom from domestic violence. In this context, a woman who was empowered in terms of the family/interpersonal domain would likely have positive gender role attitudes that promote gender equality, would experience limited restrictions in her day to day life imposed by family members or the community, and would be free from domestic violence.

Gender Role Attitudes

According to the project proposal, the training provided by WfWI was designed to address this by promoting more gender equitable beliefs, particularly those that would prevent women from gaining economic self-sufficiency, such as that women's work is less valuable; that women's work is unpaid or underpaid; and customs that prevent women from controlling assets, property, and their own incomes. Additionally, the life skills curriculum provided is designed to promote gender equitable beliefs in a

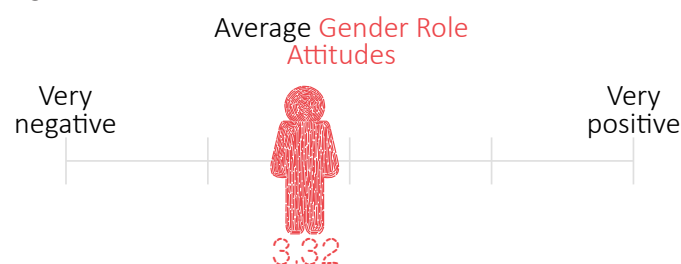
61 $N=215$, $SD=.472$

62 $r(212)=-.032$, $p>.05$

63 $F(2, 210)=1.031$, $p>.05$

64 $F(8, 206)=.983$, $p>.05$

Figure 3.2.2: Gender Role Attitudes



number of areas, including the roles of men and women in household decision-making, community participation, and everyday life.

On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating very positive gender role attitudes that support gender equality and 5 indicating very negative attitudes, the mean score on the GRAS among respondents was 3.32,⁶⁵ indicating average to moderately negative gender role attitudes. GRAS scores were not significantly correlated with age,⁶⁶ and differences according to marital status were also non-significant.⁶⁷ However, there was a relationship between the GRAS and level of education, where those with higher levels of education generally had more positive gender role attitudes than those who were illiterate or had lower levels of education.⁶⁸ There were also significant differences according to province, where gender role attitudes were most positive in Kabul and least positive in Nangarhar,⁶⁹ corresponding both with areas where more women were generating income and with trends according to ethnicity.

Positively, 95% felt that the decision to have a child should be made by both spouses in a marriage, and 86% that men and women should be paid equal salaries in professional life. However, there were also pronounced negative gender role beliefs among participants. 65% believed a woman should only consult a woman doctor, which can have serious health implications for women in Afghanistan, where there remains a shortage of female healthcare professionals, especially in rural and remote areas. 49% felt that the final decision regarding the choice of a woman's husband should be made by her father, indicating that one out of every two participants feel that women should not have control over spousal selection and marriage. Tellingly in terms of gender role perceptions, 84% believe a man should marry again if his wife is unable to deliver a child, and 82% that a woman should remain silent instead of arguing if she disagrees with her husband. 77% believe that men should deal with tasks outside the home such as shopping and paying bills, 57% that boys' education should be prioritized in the family, and 45% that men should be more education than women in marriage. In the context of the WfWI programme, it is perhaps most concerning that 71% of respondents' believe that a woman should not work if the financial situation of her husband and/or male household members is adequate.

65 $N=324$, $M=3.32$, $SD=.529$

66 $r(311)=.004$, $p>.05$

67 $F(2, 320)=1.699$, $p>.05$

68 $r(322)=-.151$, $p<.01$

69 $F(2, 321)=13.69$, $p<.001$ (Kabul $N=99$, $M=3.01$, $SD=.691$; Parwan $N=108$, $M=3.31$, $SD=.409$; Nangarhar $N=117$, $M=3.35$, $SD=.401$)

Restrictiveness of Environment

The proposal for the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme did not explicitly aim to create change for women in terms of their mobility and restrictiveness of living environment, though it can be assumed that such a change would have to precede women's ability to participate in income-generating activities and being involved in their communities. Mobility is a fundamental underpinning of empowerment in a number of areas—for example, for a woman to have control over the income she generates from tailoring, she must be allowed to undertake such activities and to travel to the market to market and sell her goods. For a woman to participate in social groups and establish social safety nets, she must be free to make friends and to interact with them.

Figure 3.2.3: Restrictiveness of Living Environment



In assessing restrictiveness of environment, on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being the least restricted and 5 being the most restricted, the average among respondents was 1.94,⁷⁰ indicating a reasonably unrestricted living environment. Interestingly, restrictiveness of living environment was not significantly related to age,⁷¹ suggesting that the restrictions placed on younger and older women are not significantly different in an age group that ranges from 15 to 65. Differences according to marital status were also not significant, indicating that among married, unmarried, and widowed respondents the differences in restrictiveness on average were not significantly different.⁷² Differences were also not significant according to level of education.⁷³ However, there were significant differences according to province, with living environments being the least restricted in Kabul and the most in Parwan,⁷⁴ possibly corresponding to issues related to physical safety and security and their impacts on mobility.

Regarding choice of clothing, 59% said they could wear whatever clothing they choose, either all the time or with some specific items prohibited. However, 13% said that most of the time they are required to wear clothing covering their face, head and full body, and 12% are always required to do so. Regarding employment, only 32% are allowed to seek employment with no restrictions, and 23% were allowed to seek employment as long as it doesn't interfere with household responsibilities. 17% said they are not allowed to seek employment, and 7% that they are

70 $N=266$, $SD=.924$

71 $r(261)=.057$, $p>.05$

72 $F(2, 261)=1.61$, $p>.05$

73 $F(7, 257)=1.87$, $p>.05$

74 $F(2, 263)=23.99$, $p<.001$ (Kabul $N=97$, $M=1.47$, $SD=.574$; Parwan $N=104$, $M=2.29$, $SD=1.06$; Nangarhar $N=65$, $M=2.06$, $SD=.834$)

only allowed to pursue employment opportunities within the home setting. 60% said their household allows them to move freely within their community or freely with one or two restrictions, and only 4% are not allowed to go out in the community. 51% are allowed to participate in any available learning opportunity, and 15% can participate in certain types, with less than 1% reporting that they are not allowed to participate in any learning opportunities.

47% have no limitations in choosing their friends (non-family members), but 34% are occasionally or usually restricted from seeing certain friends, and 4% are not allowed to have contact with friends. 45% are also not limited on how they interact with non-family member friends, and 21% are only limited by being expected to be home at a certain time. However, 8% said they are questioned about how they spend time with their friends, 8% said their time with friends is limited and monitored, and 6% that they are not allowed any interaction with non-family member friends. 60% said there are no limits placed on their interaction with family members, but 22% have limitations regarding specific family members. 7% are limited in terms of time and place; 5% only have limited, supervised interaction with family members; less than 1% are not allowed to have contact with family members.

Physical and Psychological Abuse

Experiences of domestic violence and physical abuse are also very telling of the situation of women and familial and interpersonal relations. Of the women surveyed by The Asia Foundation in 2012, 8% said they experienced domestic violence, and smaller percentages mentioned forced marriage/dowry (6%). In a 2008 study undertaken by Global Rights based on a survey of 4,700 households, 87.2% of women reported to have experienced at least one form of physical, sexual or psychological violence or forced marriage.⁷⁵ The “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme explicitly targeted the reduction of gender-based violence through programme activities, both through the rights trainings provided to women and the sensitization of men through the MLP, through which men were meant to take action to reduce violence against the women in their communities.

Figure 3.2.4: Experience of Physical and Psychological Abuse



The HITS screening tool for physical and psychological abuse measures abuse on a four-item scale from 1 to 5, 1 being never and 5 being frequently,⁷⁶ with a score over 10 showing that the individual is suffering from abuse.

75 Marie S. Huber, “Gender Equality Report Card,” 2015.

76 The HITS tool was scored according to this format for the cumulative score and assessing the HITS independently, however, for correlation with other questions it was scored according to a scale averaging

Among the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” respondents, the average score was 10.26,⁷⁷ indicating that the average project participant is experiencing psychological or physical abuse.⁷⁸ 46% of participants for whom the score was calculated scored over 10 on the HITS scale. Experiences of abuse did not vary significantly according to age,⁷⁹ marital status,⁸⁰ or education level.⁸¹ There were significant differences in experiences of abuse according to province, with women in Nangarhar reporting higher levels of abuse than those in Kabul and Parwan.⁸²

38% of respondents said that their partner (or male household members) frequently (14%), fairly often (10%), or sometimes (14%) physically hurts them. Being insulted or talked down was also common, with 42% reporting that it occurs frequently (14%), fairly often (11%), or sometimes (17%). Being threatened with harm was also disturbingly common, with 13% reporting that they are threatened with harm frequently, 11% fairly often, and 12% sometimes. Being screamed or cursed at was the most prevalent form of abuse, with 22% reporting that it happens to them frequently, 7% fairly often, and 20% sometimes. This means that approximately one out of every two participants experiences verbal abuse, approximately 4 out of 10 threats, and approximately 4 out of 10 physical abuse.

Legal

The legal domain of empowerment refers to dimensions such as women’s knowledge of legal rights, domestic support for existing rights, effective enforcement of rights, and the use of the judicial system to enforce rights. According to WfWI, the life skills curriculum is designed to deliver practical information about rights. The project proposal explains that the rights module of the training is designed to equip women with the knowledge required to access opportunities available to them, such as acquiring land, or contributing to family and community decisions. Participants are meant to learn about concepts such as equality, rights and law, with special emphasis on ownership and inheritance of property; marriage, divorce and child custody; and domestic violence and rape.⁸³ The rationale of the programme acknowledges that women need knowledge about their rights and how to exercise them within their families and communities. However, women also need the knowledge of how to protect their rights, and adequate legal empowerment would require both a fundamental understanding of what one’s rights are, as well as the mechanisms and support available for both exercising and protecting those rights.

The results of the scale measuring women’s knowledge of their legal rights was reported under indicator 1.4

77 $N=314$, $SD=5.55$

78 This question was asked of all participants regardless of marital status. Some unmarried participants chose to answer the question based on male household members, but others did not answer these questions due to the phrasing, which implied intimate partner violence (IPV).

79 $r(301)=-.063$, $p>.05$

80 $F(2, 309)=1.30$, $p>.05$

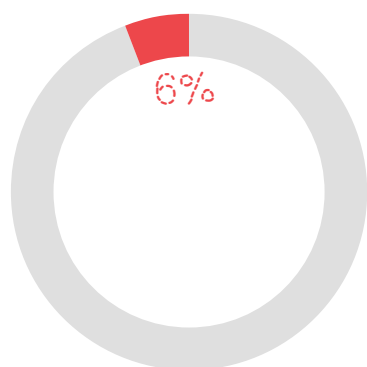
81 $F(7, 304)=.989$, $p>.05$

82 $F(2, 311)=94.20$, $p<.001$ (Kabul $N=95$, $M=8.23$, $SD=3.73$; Parwan $N=84$, $M=6.39$, $SD=4.00$; Nangarhar $N=135$, $M=14.09$, $SD=5.01$)

83 “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” proposal

Figure 3.2.5: Knowledge regarding legal documents

Participants who knew what legal document is needed to protect their right to *mahr*



regarding women's increased knowledge of their rights, where the average "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" participant only answered 31% of questions regarding women's legal rights in Afghanistan correctly. Only 6% of women knew about the legal documents needed for protecting their rights to *mahr* (a woman's financial rights guaranteed through her marriage), inheritance, or divorce. In Afghanistan, it is very common to have the customary documents from their *nikkah* (religious marriage ceremony), but very few women have an official marriage certificate registered with the state. Without a legal document, many problems can arise for women when they try to seek a divorce or secure their *mahr*. The absence of this document can also complicate custody or maintenance claims for children, and can complicate women's rights to inheritance as officials may claim that her lack of documentation prevents them from enforcement.⁸⁴ 79% of respondents falsely believed that customary documents from their *nikkah* are legal documents. 9% believed only a signed document from a mullah is required; 3% a signed document from a mullah and a local elder; 3% a marriage certificate signed by any government official. Only 6% were aware of the marriage contract (*Nikkah-nama*) introduced by the government in 2012 to help curb child and forced marriage and that a legally recognized marriage requires a marriage certificate issued by the government and signed by a judge or civil officer.

In Afghanistan, running away is not an offense found in the Afghan Penal Code. 73% of participants wrongly believe that in Afghan law, it is illegal for a woman to run away from home, punishable by imprisonment. However, respondents may have misunderstood the question and they answered based on their knowledge on what happens *de facto*, where women are often illegally punished for leaving home without permission, based on the assumption that it "could cause crimes like adultery and prostitution."⁸⁵ There are considerable legal protections in place for women's inheritance in Afghanistan. Article

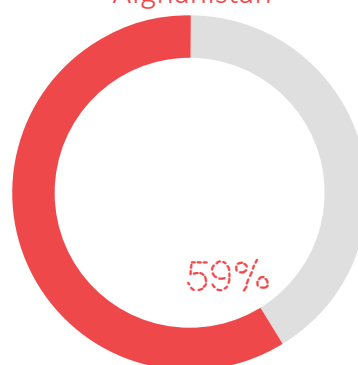
84 Tim Luccaro and Erica Gaston, "Women's Access to Justice in Afghanistan: Individual versus Community Barriers to Justice," United States Institute of Peace, 2014, http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW98_Women's-Access-to-Justice-in-Afghanistan.pdf.

85 "I Had to Run Away: The Imprisonment of Women and Girls for 'Moral Crimes' in Afghanistan," Human Rights Watch, 2012, http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/afghanistan0312webwcover_0.pdf.

40 of the Constitution allows every Afghan citizen to acquire and use property within the limitations of the law, and Article 22 stipulates that men and women have equal rights and duties before the law. The Afghan Civil Code includes 109 provisions related specifically to the topic of inheritance, and names sisters, wives, daughters, full sisters, half sisters from the father, daughters of daughters or daughters of sons, grandmother and great grandmother on the male side as quota holders to specific shares. Article 2027 outlines six persons who cannot face total exclusion from inheritance, including mother, daughter, and wife.⁸⁶ Despite these legal protections, 70% of respondents wrongly believe that according to Afghan law, female family members can inherit only if there is left-over after all male family members have received

Figure 3.2.6: Knowledge regarding the EVAW Law

Participants who knew that *slapping or shoving a woman is a crime in Afghanistan*



their share of inheritance. Comparatively, a 2013 study of attitudes regarding women's inheritance rights in ten provinces found that 45% of women and 55% of men believed women do not have the right to inheritance.⁸⁷ The Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Law in Afghanistan was enacted in 2009. Though it has not yet been ratified by the parliament, it has legal status, having been enacted by presidential decree and officially published in the official gazette number 989, dated 30 March 2009. It criminalizes acts of violence against women including rape, domestic violence, child marriage, forced marriage, *baad*, and other forms of VAW, totalling 22 specific forms, and specifies punishments for those who commit such acts. The law outlines the responsibilities of seven ministries and public institutions for enforcing the law, including the police and judiciary.⁸⁸ The Afghan Civil Code clearly stipulates that the minimum marriage age for girls is 16, though she can be married at 15 if her father or the court consents. It stipulates that girls under the age of 15 cannot legally marry under any circumstances, and the EVAW Law stipulates punishment of imprisonment for a minimum of two years for anyone who marries a girl under the age of 15.⁸⁹ However, 60% of respondents do

86 Marie S. Huber, "Gender Equality Report Card." 2015.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

89 "First Report on the Implementation of the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) Law in Afghanistan," Ministry of Women's Affairs, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2014, http://mowa.gov.af/Content/files/EVAW%20Law%20Report_Final_English_17%20%20March%202014.pdf.

not believe that it is illegal for girls under the age of 15 to get married, even if her parents consent. Just over half (59%) are aware that slapping or shoving a woman, even in the absence of injury, constitutes a crime in Afghan law. Considerably few women were aware of the institutions in place to support them, and the various mechanisms they can turn to for legal support or protection. 61% reported that they are aware of the Department of Women's Affairs. While this could be seen as high, since it is a majority of participants, it cannot be considered a success that four out of ten women who completed a one-year empowerment training programme are not familiar with the most widely known institution available to support women in Afghanistan. Positively, 82% reported that they are familiar with the AIHRC, which is very important considering that the AIHRC is largely responsible for documenting and registering cases of violence against women and can provide women with legal support.⁹⁰ These findings are generally consistent with national trends, where in terms of going to formal institutions for support, in Afghanistan many women still prefer to go to the AIHRC or DoWA rather than to justice institutions. In the 2014 Survey of the Afghan People, only 22% of women reported that there is an organization, institution, or authority where women can go to have their problems resolved. By far the most common answer of which institution this would be was the DoWA.

Family Resolution Units (FRUs), a unit of the Afghan National Police, were established in 2006 for addressing family violence, children in trouble, and female victims of crime.⁹¹ Only 31% of WfWI project participants were familiar with the existence of FRUs. Positively, 68% reported that they were familiar with the ERAW Unit of the Attorney General's Office (AGO). These findings seem to indicate a higher level of awareness among project participants than among all Afghan women. Nationally, in 2014, 22% of women reported having had a dispute or formal case they needed help resolving in the past two years, and of those, roughly one out of three (34%) had taken their case to the Huquq Department (under the MoJ) and 44% to the State Court. Only 1% of women from across all of Afghanistan reported the court and only 0.2% the AGO.⁹² It is important to note that these questions were phrased as self-report items where the institution was named and the woman was asked to answer whether she was familiar with it or not, so these figures are likely to some extent inflated due to self-report bias. The inconsistency of awareness of these bodies suggests that women may not have received adequate training on the support institutions available to them, or possibly that their knowledge on institutions is derived from other sources.

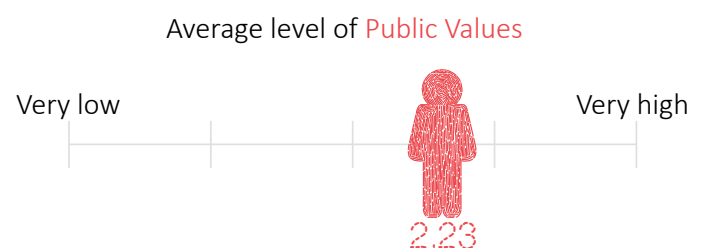
It was explained by WfWI that women are not trained on the legal remedies available to them in Afghanistan for abuse, which falls short of a fundamental aspect of women's rights – legal empowerment. Though the initial project proposal stated that in some cases in Afghanistan, WfWI has been able to refer women for assistance with inheritance and domestic violence issues to MoWA and the AIHRC, the WfWI staff member interviewed explained that WfWI staff would not encourage women to seek

protection outside of the family or community, which would be the mechanisms that are already predominantly used for addressing domestic violence in Afghanistan. The approach that field staff take in such situations was described as encouraging women to “respect your husband, take care of your children, take care of your family” as means of trying to bring about positive change. It was explained that this approach is taken for fear of losing community support if women are encouraged to seek protection outside of traditional forums, which while likely a legitimate concern, also represents a fundamental incoherence in the programmatic approach that prioritizes patriarchal norms over women's protection. WfWI staff did, however, acknowledge that if the abuse is at a certain level it should be referred to the legal system, but also explained that this was the job of a legal organization and WfWI would not get involved. As a notable demonstration of this shortcoming, there are no official policies at WfWI for supporting women who are victims of abuse or VAW.

Political

The political domain of empowerment refers to aspects including knowledge of the political system and means of access to it, domestic support for political engagement, exercising the right to vote, and participation in governance at all levels. The “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme acknowledges that civic engagement is a critical component of active citizenship, which requires the delivery of practical information about rights and civic engagement.⁹³ The programme asserts that a solid economic foundation is critical to women's expanded civic involvement in their communities,⁹⁴ essentially asserting that economic participation can lead to increased civic participation. In this context, a politically empowered woman would have strong public values, and would exercise her right to vote and have access to information and the right to determine how she uses that right independently.

Figure 3.2.7: Public Values



On a scale from 1 to 5, 1 corresponding to a high level of public values and 5 low, the average score among respondents was 2.23,⁹⁵ indicating a moderately high level of public values. 41% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that individuals should have an inescapable duty to address national affairs, with only 7% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Additionally, 52% agreed or strongly agreed that they would put forward their suggestions with initiative or negotiate with relevant departments in the interest of their community, with only 8% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. On the third item, which was

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” proposal

94 Ibid.

95 $N=225$, $SD=.863$

excluded from the scale, 45% disagreed or strongly disagreed that it does not matter whether one's obligation to vote has been fulfilled or not, though 28% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

As previously addressed, 86% of respondents reported that they voted in the 2014 Presidential and Provincial Council elections. However, a measure of women's participation in voting is a superficial measurement of political empowerment and is not telling on the actual women's ability to select a candidate. Though the percentage of women voting is an often-cited measure of women's political participation, it is a misleading one in the Afghan context, where the autonomy of women's votes and using women for fraud is common. Male family members, community elders, and other influential figures often try to decide who women should vote for, and sometimes even sell the votes of women living under their influence.⁹⁶

The 86% of women who had voted were asked how they decided which candidate to vote for, and a high percentage lacked freedom in making their decision where their husbands or male family members told them who to vote for (45%), elders or other influential community members decided who should they vote for (27%), and 10% reported that other women in the community decided on who they should vote for. In total, 82% of respondents listed at least one or more person or party that attempted to decide who they should vote for on their behalf.

Voting with freedom of choice in the selection of candidates, reported by 55% of those who voted, should be therefore considered a more accurate measurement of a meaningful participation, which dramatically reduces the percentage of women freely voting in the 2014 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections and consequently of women's political empowerment. When looking at women's voting behaviour in the last election, opposite patterns were found. Women who had voted had lower levels of social well-being on average,⁹⁷ had more negative gender role attitudes,⁹⁸ and exhibited lower levels of knowledge regarding their rights.⁹⁹ These findings further indicate the issues with utilizing voting practices as a measure of political empowerment and gender equality.

Psychological

In terms of empowerment, the psychological domain covers areas such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, psychological well-being, collective awareness of injustice, potential of mobilization, women's sense of inclusion and entitlement, and systemic acceptance of women's entitlement and inclusion. According to WfWI, the life

skills curriculum focuses on a number of core strategies and techniques, which include self-awareness building skills, empathy, coping with stress, and emotions.¹⁰⁰ This is a part of the programme approach that seeks to achieve women's wellness, both in terms of physical and psychological health that enables them to actively participate in the family and community.¹⁰¹ Psychological empowerment would entail a woman with a moderately high level of self-esteem, a strong sense of self-efficacy, and generally healthy psychological well-being.

Self-Esteem

Figure 3.2.8: Self-Esteem



On a scale from 1 to 5, 1 corresponding to a very high level of self-esteem and 5 very low, the average among respondents was 2.16,¹⁰² indicating a generally healthy level of self-esteem. Self-esteem did not vary significantly according to age,¹⁰³ marital status,¹⁰⁴ or level of education.¹⁰⁵ Interestingly, self-esteem did vary significantly according to ethnicity, where Pashtun women had the highest self-esteem on average and Hazara women the lowest.¹⁰⁶ This seems to demonstrate the opposite relationship to other variables where there were differences according to ethnicity, where Pashtun women also had more negative gender role attitudes and experienced higher levels of physical and psychological abuse though self-esteem was not significantly associated with gender role attitudes¹⁰⁷ or the HITS scale.¹⁰⁸

90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are a person of worth, 89% that they have a number of good qualities, 82% that they take a positive attitude toward themselves, 87% that they are satisfied with themselves, and 75% that they are able to do things as well as most people. 75% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they feel useless at times, 71% that they sometimes think they are no good at all, 69% that they are inclined to feel like a failure, and 47% that they wish they could have more respect for themselves. However, 33% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they do not have much to be proud of.

96 Marie S. Huber and Hannah Partis-Jennings, "Women and Elections in Afghanistan: Challenges and Opportunities for Future Civic Participation," EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy, October 2014, <http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/WE-paper-English.pdf>.

97 $t(213)=3.19, p<.01$ (Voted $N=172, M=2.63, SD=.035$; Didn't vote $N=43, M=2.38, SD=.074$)

98 $t(60)=2.10, p<.05$ (Voted $N=274, M=3.26, SD=.502$; Didn't vote $N=50, M=3.06, SD=.637$)

99 $t(374)=2.70, p<.01$ (Voted $N=323, M=.301, SD=.845$; Didn't vote $N=53, M=.381, SD=.222$)

100 "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" proposal

101 Ibid.

102 $N=315, SD=.523$

103 $r(305)=.072, p>.05$

104 $F(3,309)=2.60, p>.05$

105 $F(8, 306)=1.35, p>.05$

106 $F(4, 310)=16.29, p<.001$ (Pashtun $N=70, M=1.85, SD=.504$; Tajik $N=181, M=2.29, SD=.473$; Hazara $N=43, M=2.32, SD=.526$; Arab $N=20, M=1.74, SD=.291$)

107 $r(284)=.075, p>.05$

108 $r(261)=-.063, p>.05$

Self-Efficacy

Figure 3.2.9: Self-Efficacy

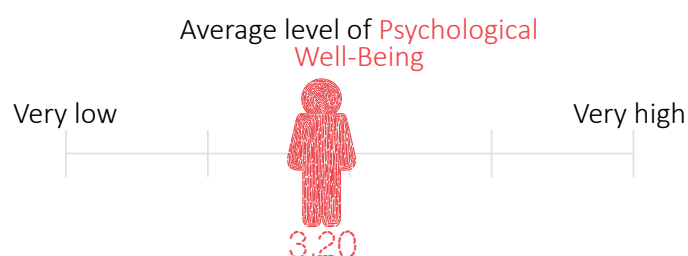


On a scale from 1 to 5, 1 corresponding to a very high level of self-efficacy and 5 very low, the average among respondents was 2.07,¹⁰⁹ indicating a generally healthy and moderately high level of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy did not vary significantly according to age,¹¹⁰ education level,¹¹¹ or marital status.¹¹²

83% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they can always manage to solve difficult problems if they try hard enough, 75% that they can solve most problems if they invest the necessary effort, 61% that they can find a means and way to get what they want if someone opposes them, 57% that they can find several solutions when confronted with a problem. This would align with core strategies of the life skills training, which addresses problem solving and critical thinking.¹¹³ 53% that it is easy for them to stick to their aims and accomplish their goals, 48% that they can remain calm when facing difficulties because they can rely on their coping abilities, 47% that they can usually think of something to do if they are in a bind, 44% that they could deal efficiently with unexpected events, 42% that they know how to handle unforeseen situations thanks to their resourcefulness, and 42% that no matter what comes their way they are usually able to handle it. This also corresponds to the life skills training, which includes coping with stress and creative thinking as core strategies.

Psychological Well-Being

Figure 3.2.10: Psychological Well-Being



At a fundamental level, psychological empowerment depends on women being psychologically well and in a positive state of mental health. The MHI-5 measures psychological well-being where 1 indicates a generally

positive psychological state and 5 negative. In other research, the optimal cut-off point for assessing depressive symptoms has been found to be scores above the 70th percentile,¹¹⁴ which applied to a five point average would indicate that scores higher than 3.5 would indicate depressive symptoms. The average score on the MHI-5 among respondents was 3.2,¹¹⁵ indicating that the average participant generally has a degree of psychological distress, but does not exhibit depressive symptoms. Psychological well-being was significantly associated with age, where younger women seemed to have higher psychological well-being.¹¹⁶ It was also significantly related to marital status, where unmarried women had higher levels of psychological well-being on average than married women and widows.¹¹⁷ However, the relationship between psychological well-being and level of education was non-significant.¹¹⁸

59% of respondents reported that in the past month, they were a happy person all or most of the time, with 14% reporting that they were only happy a little or none of the time. 53% felt calm and peaceful most of the time, though 20% said they only felt this way a little or none of the time, which could relate to pervasive security concerns and physical safety. Only 14% reported feeling very nervous most or all of the time, and 29% some of the time. However, 13% said they felt downhearted and blue most of the time, though 27% said they did not feel this way at all in the past month. 2% said they felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer them up all of the time in the past month, 9% most of the time, and 15% at least some of the time.

In Afghanistan, prolonged conflict and trauma, violence and insecurity, and poverty have led to increased vulnerabilities in terms of mental health, with specific vulnerabilities for women due to restrictions on mobility and social support resulting from gender disparities. In 2010, the Ministry of Public Health and World Health Organization reported that over 60% of Afghans (mostly women) suffer from stress and psychosocial problems or mental disorders. Similarly, the former Deputy Health Minister stated in 2010 that an estimated 2,300 women or girls are attempting suicide each year. A 2011 report found that half of the Afghan population over the age of 15 is affected by depression, anxiety, and/or post-traumatic stress disorder, and that social restrictions and taboos are obstacles for women's access to mental health services in Afghanistan.¹¹⁹

Physical

The physical domain of empowerment would generally refer to the ability to make choices regarding their health and physical well-being. This concept of empowerment is a strong theme in the WfWI approach in the programme, based on the rationale that it is critical that women have

109 $N=238$, $SD=.782$

110 $r(232)=.002$, $p>.05$

111 $r(237)=.020$, $p>.05$

112 $F(2, 233)=1.42$, $p>.05$

113 "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" proposal

114 Dr. Q. Ashton Acton, Ed., *Mental Health: New Insights for the Healthcare Professional*; 2013 Edition, Scholarly Editions: Atlanta, Georgia (2013).

115 $N=296$, $SD=1.01$

116 $r(289)=.128$, $p<.05$

117 $F(2, 291)=6.06$, $p<.01$ (Unmarried $N=81$, $M=2.06$, $SD=.646$; Married $N=192$, $M=2.39$, $SD=.784$; Widow $N=21$, $M=2.48$, $SD=.776$)

118 $r(296)=-.052$, $p>.05$

119 Ibid.

an understanding of their bodies and how to care for them, with a focus on prevention, treatment, and the management of key health issues such as communicable diseases, nutrition, sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and stress and hygiene. The proposal explains that the emphasis is on preventive strategies as opposed to treatment due to the low availability of health services. This component of the programme is based on the rationale that women need information about health so they can take better care of themselves and their families, can actively participate in the family and community, and are physically well for being productive and economically engaged.¹²⁰

For health-related decision-making, many women in Afghanistan still cannot make their own decisions regarding their own health and often need to be accompanied by men when seeking health services. Often, the head of household, who is usually male, makes these decisions on women's behalf, which can result in delays in seeking treatment that can have serious negative impacts on women's health.¹²¹ Qualitative evidence across a number of studies have demonstrated that women have more influence in decision-making regarding children, such as on children's health or education, but often the primary decision-maker and final say is with the father.¹²²

On average, on the Health Locus of Control (HLOC), which measured respondents' beliefs about their personal health across three dimensions, respondents scored highest on the "powerful others" dimension,¹²³ then internal,¹²⁴ and lowest on chance.¹²⁵ A high level of perceived internal locus of control would correspond with higher levels of physical empowerment. This indicates that respondents perceive that their personal health is controlled primarily by others, but also exhibit a generally high level of perceived internal control, and believe less that chance impacts personal health. It did not vary significantly according to age¹²⁶ or education level.¹²⁷ However, it did vary according to marital status, where unmarried women perceived higher levels of internal control than married and widowed women.¹²⁸ It was also significantly related to the number of children women have,¹²⁹ where women seem to feel more internal control over their own health as they have more children.

120 "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" proposal

121 "Increasing access to health care services in Afghanistan with gender-sensitive health service delivery," World Health Organization, 2013, http://apps.who.int/iris/mobile/bitstream/handle/10665/119999/EMROPUB_2013_EN_1585.pdf?sequence=1.

122 Pamela Hunte, "Household Decision-Making and School Enrolment in Afghanistan – Case Study 3: Neshar Villages, Belcheragh District, Faryab Province," AREU, December 2005, <http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/533E-Household%20Decision%20Making%20and%20School%20Enrolment%20in%20Afghanistan-Faryab-CS-print.pdf>.

Pamela Hunte, "Household Decision-Making and School Enrolment in Afghanistan – Case Study 1: Chasar Asyab District, Kabul Province," AREU, December 2005, <http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/533E-Household%20Decision%20Making%20and%20School%20Enrolment%20in%20Afghanistan-Kabul-Chahar%20Asyab-CS-print.pdf>.

123 $N=357$, $M=1.67$, $SD=.641$

124 $N=321$, $M=1.79$, $SD=.547$

125 $N=344$, $M=2.92$, $SD=1.24$

126 $r(311)=.061$, $p>.05$

127 $r(320)=-.032$, $p>.05$

128 $F(3, 340)=4.04$, $p<.01$ (Unmarried $N=96$, $M=1.49$, $SD=.607$; Married $N=227$, $M=1.57$, $SD=.636$; Widow $N=20$, $M=1.98$, $SD=.617$)

129 $r(290)=.115$, $p<.05$

61% agree or strongly agree that if they get sick, it is their own behaviour that determines how soon they get well again, and 82% the same regarding being in control of their health. 91% agree or strongly agree that they can avoid illness if they take care of themselves, and 88% that they can stay healthy if they take the right actions. 87% agree or strongly agree that whenever they do not feel well they should consult a medically trained professional, and 85% the same that their family has a lot to do with their becoming sick or staying healthy. 49% disagree or strongly disagree that if they are going to get sick they will, no matter what they do, though 56% also agreed or strongly agreed that they will stay healthy if it is meant to be.

Family planning is another critical dimension of physical empowerment. The ability to choose when and whether to have a child has been widely acknowledged as a critical underpinning of women's empowerment, and a fundamental human right, that is central to women's and their families health, wellbeing, and often survival.¹³⁰ Analyses have found that meeting the need for family planning could reduce the number of unintended pregnancies globally by more than two-thirds per year, 70% of maternal deaths would be averted, and 44% of newborn deaths would be averted.¹³¹ Greater use of condoms for contraception would reduce the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.¹³² Women who are empowered to make decisions regarding childbearing are more likely to take advantage of economic opportunities, invest in their children's education, and they and their children are less likely to be poor.¹³³

As addressed in the effectiveness section, though participants reported high levels of family planning and contraceptive use, women demonstrated low levels of knowledge regarding reproductive health and family planning. Taken in context, though the percentage of women who participated in the WfWI programme utilizing contraception is very positive, the fundamental lack of knowledge regarding reproductive health and family planning, and the low utilization of contraception methods that lower the risk of sexually transmitted infections is associated with and undermines women's empowerment.

Economic

The economic domain of empowerment, which is of central concern in this evaluation related to the project activities, refers to women's control over income, contribution to household support, access to and control of family resources and decisions, access to employment, ownership of assets and land, savings, access to credit,

130 "Women's Empowerment and Family Planning," Center for Environment & Population, n.g., <http://www.cepnet.org/documents/CEPRIplus20beyondFactSheetWomenFPweb.pdf>.

131 Susheela Singh, Jacqueline E. Darroch, Lori S. Ashford, and Micahel Vlassof, "Adding it Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Family Planning and Maternal and Newborn Health," Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA, 2009, <https://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/AddingItUp2009.pdf>.

132 Ibid.

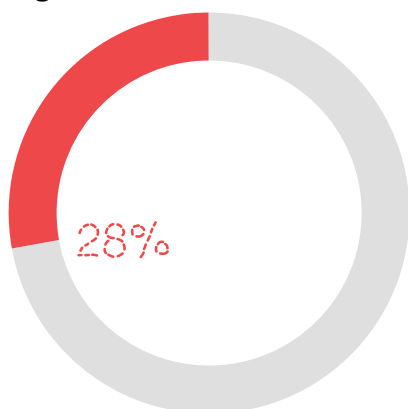
133 John Cleland, Stan Bernstein, Alex Ezeh, Anibal Faundes, Anna Glasier, and Jolene Innis, "Family planning: the unfinished agenda," World Health Organization journal paper, Sexual and Reproductive Health 3, 2006, http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/general/lancet_3.pdf.

and access to markets. Economic empowerment is at the core of the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme, which largely builds on the idea that women’s economic empowerment facilitates improvement in all dimensions of women’s lives, as well as their families, communities, and society as a whole.¹³⁴ In line with this, the programme aims to address economic empowerment through a number of approaches, including training on numeracy, business skills, cooperatives, and vocational training. In this framework, an economically empowered woman would have access to employment, be involved in household decision-making regarding finances, assets, and savings, and would have a general understanding of basic economics and markets that enable her to make informed decisions.

Financial Literacy

Figure 3.2.11: Financial Literacy

Average score on Financial Literacy



On average, respondents answered only 28% (roughly one out of the four questions) correctly on the scale measuring financial literacy, indicating a generally low level of financial literacy. Financial literacy was not significantly related to age,¹³⁵ marital status,¹³⁶ though it was positively related to level of education.¹³⁷ The first question posed a scenario where the respondent has borrowed 10,000 AFN from a moneylender at an interest rate of 2% per month with no repayment for three months, asking how much would be owed after three months. 17% (less than 1 out of every 5 participants) were able to identify the correct answer, that they would owe more than 10,200 AFN after three months. The second question asked whether it is riskier to plant multiple crops or just one crop, with 29% (less than 1 out of every 3 participants) responding correctly that planting one crop is riskier. The third question posed a scenario where the respondent is offered two different loans for the amount of 10,000 AFN. One requires repayment in the amount of 12,000 AFN after one month, and the other requires repayment of 10,000 AFN plus 15% interest after one month, and the respondent must identify which is a better deal. 24% (fewer than 1 out of every 4 participants) correctly identified the loan of 10,000 with 15% interest, totalling

11,500 AFN in repayment, as the better deal. In the final scenario, substituted for the original question regarding savings accounts and interest, respondents were given a scenario where they are buying food items and need to buy 5 kilo of rice. One shop sells rice for 50 AFN per kilo, and the second sells a 5-kilo bag of rice for 225 AFN, and they were asked which is the better deal. 41% correctly identified the 5-kilo bag for 225 AFN as the better deal.

The low level of financial literacy among programme participants is particularly troubling given the overall aims of the programme to train women to the extent that they are able to make decisions about income generating activities, develop businesses, and operate cooperatives. That participants were generally unable to make decisions and calculations regarding credit options, income diversification, loan repayment, and purchasing, can be viewed as a factor that would considerably undermine their ability to fulfil the project objectives.

Economic Locus of Control

The ELCS measures perceived internal-external control over financial issues.¹³⁸ This survey utilized items from the internal and chance scales to measure respondent’s internal beliefs regarding the factors responsible for economic outcomes. On the economic locus of control, respondents scored higher on the internal¹³⁹ than the chance dimension,¹⁴⁰ indicating that respondents feel that economic and financial well-being is attributable to internal factors such as saving, investing, and ability, rather than due to chance. The internal dimension was positively related to age, where older women also perceived more internal control over economic well-being.¹⁴¹ However, on average unmarried women and married women perceived higher levels of internal influence over economic well-being than widows.¹⁴² This is positive in consideration of the scope of the project, which aims to facilitate self-sufficiency among participants regarding their economic status.

Scale of Economic Abuse

Figure 3.2.12: Economic Abuse



On a scale from 1 to 5, 1 indicating low levels of economic abuse and 5 high, the average score among respondents was 1.78,¹⁴³ corresponding to a moderately low level of economic abuse. However, this should be read in a

134 “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” proposal

135 $r(360)=-.025, p>.05$

136 $F(3, 370)=1.69, p>.05$

137 $r(374)=.113, p<.05$

138 Adrian Furnham, “Economic Locus of Control,” *Human Relations* 39, no. 1 (1986): 29-43.

139 $N=346, M=1.57, SD=.635$

140 $N=270, M=2.83, SD=1.08$

141 $r(334)=.111, p<.05$

142 $F(3, 340)=4.042, p<.01$ (Unmarried $N=96, M=1.49, SD=.607$; Married $N=227, M=1.57, SD=.636$; Widowed $N=20, M=1.98, SD=.617$)

143 $N=274, SD=.871$

context where women have little financial resources or access to finances and savings, which would reduce their vulnerability to economic abuse in several aspects. There was no significant relationship between economic abuse and age,¹⁴⁴ level of education,¹⁴⁵ or marital status.¹⁴⁶

51% reported that their husband and/or male household members never do things to keep them from going to their job or earning money, though 22% said that this sometimes, often, or very often occurs. 60% said their husband and/or male household members never or hardly ever make them ask them for money, and 64% the same regarding doing things to keep them from having money of their own. 68% said their husband and/or male household members never keep them from having the money they need to buy food, clothes, or other necessities, and 70% that money is never hidden from them so they cannot find it. 67% said that financial information is never or hardly ever kept from them, and 61% the same regarding husbands and/or male family members making important financial decisions without talking to them first. 65% reported that their husband and/or male family members never or hardly ever take the money they earn, savings, or other money from them, and 56% the same regarding deciding how she could spend money rather than letting her spend it how she saw fit. However, regarding decisions on spending money, 20% said it is sometimes decided for them, and 15% often or very often. 21% said their husband and/or male household members often or very often demand to know how money was spent; with 16% saying this occurs sometimes.

Decision-Making and Control of Household Financial Resources

Households in Afghanistan are often comprised of extended family units, which can include paternal mothers and fathers, married sons, unmarried children, daughters-in-law, unmarried daughters, female-headed households, and children.¹⁴⁷ In 2014, the average household size in Afghanistan was 10 household members.¹⁴⁸ A case study in Samangan province outlined the general household roles of men and women, reflecting the traditional public/private divide that can be found throughout Afghanistan.¹⁴⁹ Women are generally viewed as responsible for caring for children and doing work inside the home, as well as agricultural work and domestic tasks such as water or firewood collection, and possibly in-home income generation or more rarely work outside the home, often as teachers or other generally accepted professions.¹⁵⁰ Regarding household decision-making, even where women are often involved in the decision-making process, the male head of household primarily holds decision-making power.¹⁵¹

144 $r(267) = -.029$ $p > .05$

145 $r(274) = -.073$, $p > .05$

146 $F(2, 270) = 1.68$, $p > .05$

147 Shawna Wakefield, "Gender and Local Level Decision-making: Findings from a Case Study in Samangan," Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, March 2005, <http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/506E-Local%20Decision%20Making%20Samangan-CS-print.pdf>.

148 "Visualizing Afghanistan," The Asia Foundation.

149 Shawna Wakefield, "Gender and Local Level Decision-making: Findings from a Case Study in Samangan," March 2005.

150 Shawna Wakefield, "Gender and Local Level Decision-making," 2005.

151 Pamela Hunte, "Household Decision-Making and School Enrolment in

A study in Kabul and Parwan in 2012 utilized a "Ladder of Power of Freedom" exercise. In this exercise, participants claimed that both men and women at the top rung of the ladder had control over the money that they earned though, women could actually spend their own money on small items but for bigger items, they would need to ask permission from their husbands. In most areas, only men were reported to have any savings. However, when looking at women at the bottom of the ladder, male participants explained that women have to seek their husband's permission when doing anything, such as spending the household income or making purchases for themselves, and were completely dependent on their husbands in almost all areas.¹⁵² Second to the bottom on the ladder were women mostly engaged in in-home income-generation. According to the participants, these women still had limited decision-making power, and could only make decisions for themselves or related to their children. For spending the money they had personally earned or purchasing personal items, they would need to ask their husband's opinion.

The dynamic is also not as simple as men and women, as there is traditionally great respect for elders in Afghanistan. Also in the Samangan case study, researchers noted that the eldest women in the household are often regarded as having a great deal of authority within the household, including regarding household expenditures. However they also noted that this respect appeared to often be largely rhetorical, where men still tightly control the decision-making process.¹⁵³ Women's involvement in family decision-making is a core theme of the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme.¹⁵⁴

In this evaluation, as previously addressed, on average women were involved in 58% of decisions related to household finances. Just over half of the respondents (58%) reported that female household members are involved in decision-making regarding the purchase of everyday food items, and 52% regarding the purchase of everyday non-food items. There were similar levels of involvement regarding expense related to children (58%), purchasing normal clothes (60%), purchasing clothes for special occasions (62%), spending on marriages or celebrations of special occasions (60%), purchasing gifts (58%), family savings and utilization (62%), and the purchase of jewellery (61%). Slightly fewer women reported female involvement in decision-making related to property and land, including the buying and selling of land (36%), renting or sharecropping land (27%), and buying and selling of property (33%). However, only half (50%) reported that they would know if the household was having financial problems.

Discussion

Due to the absence of data for considering counterfactuals and in the absence of similar baseline figures, it is impossible to credibly triangulate these findings regarding

Afghanistan – Case Study 1: Chasar Asyab District, Kabul Province," 2005.

152 Chona R. Echavez, "Gender and Economic Choice: What's Old and What's New for Women in Afghanistan," 2012.

153 Shawna Wakefield, "Gender and Local Level Decision-making," 2005

154 "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" proposal

women's empowerment to determine the direct impact of the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme. However, generally, based on the results of the different measurements of women's empowerment as presented above, it could be concluded that women are somewhat empowered in the political, psychological, and physical domains of empowerment, but less so in terms of the socio-cultural beliefs and visibility, economic, familial/interpersonal and legal dimensions. In terms of familial and interpersonal domains of empowerment, women indicated average to moderately negative gender roles attitudes and experience psychological and physical abuse, but have a reasonably unrestricted living environment. In terms of legal empowerment, women scored low by showing poor knowledge on their rights based on law.

Positively, in terms of socio-cultural beliefs and visibility, women scored an average to moderately high level of social well-being. Women showed a moderately high level of public values, though they still demonstrated generally low to average autonomy in political decision-making. In terms of psychological empowerment, women showed a healthy level of self-esteem, a healthy and moderately high level of self-efficacy, and general psychological distress but not exhibiting depressive symptoms. In terms of physical empowerment, women feel that their health is primarily controlled by others but also generally believe less that chance determines personal health than that they have internal control over their personal health. In terms of economic empowerment, financial literacy was low among women: respondents feel that economic and financial well-being is attributable to internal factors such as saving, investing, and ability rather than due to chance, and women experience a moderately low level of economic abuse, and have an average level of involvement in household financial decision-making.

3.3 RELEVANCE

Programme Approach and Key Programme Assumptions

The proposal outlined a general theory of change based on the idea that women's economic empowerment can change the way families, communities, and societies view women, which promotes gender equality and facilitates the empowerment of women, based on the rationale that "when women earn an income in a deeply patriarchal society like Afghanistan – they begin to shift the narrow lens through which they are viewed, as male relatives start to see them as "contributing" family members."¹⁵⁵ The programme rationale presents establishing viable livelihood opportunities for women as a 'remedy' for gender inequality, based on the idea that investments in women have multiplied impacts in family and social well-being, and that women's economic participation will change the way that men in their lives see them in that men will naturally view women as having more social value once they have financial value.¹⁵⁶ It is furthermore based on the idea that women with access to knowledge and expression of voice, coupled with access to and

control of economic resources, leads to lasting social and economic change.¹⁵⁷

However, the programme approach also acknowledges that women's economic empowerment cannot be the sole focus of a programme addressing gender inequality, and advances what is deemed as a holistic approach to address the different areas of discrimination women face, including social isolation, lack of awareness of rights, lack of health information, lack of access to economic opportunities and education. The programme approach is based on a number of key assumptions across each dimension of empowerment, and how these relate to each other and specifically to women's income-generating status, which is reviewed in this section, as well as larger observations regarding women's empowerment programming.

Financial Status, Economic Productivity, and Empowerment

Women's Personal Income-Generating Status

The findings of this evaluation would suggest that a number of dimensions of the underlying rationale provided for the economic focus of the programme do not necessarily hold true. There was no significant difference between women who were and were not earning income in terms of social well-being,¹⁵⁸ experiences of physical and psychological abuse,¹⁵⁹ public values,¹⁶⁰ voting behaviours¹⁶¹ self-esteem,¹⁶² psychological well-being,¹⁶³ internal health locus of control,¹⁶⁴ family planning practices,¹⁶⁵ economic locus of control,¹⁶⁶ or experiences of economic abuse.¹⁶⁷

According to these findings, it does not appear that women who are economically active will feel more supported and accepted in their communities, or that they will experience less physical and psychological abuse from their husband and/or male family members. The level of public values held by participants and their voting behaviours did not differ according to their personal income generating status, which would undermine the logic informing the programme that economic participation contributes to increased civic engagement. Women earning income do not appear to feel any more in control of their personal health than women who are not earning income, nor are they more likely to practice family planning. Similarly, women earning income do not feel any more in control of their economic outcomes than their non-income generating counterparts, and whether women are or are not generating income does not necessarily increase or decrease their exposure to economic abuse.

Additionally, research has posited that women's increased involvement in financial decision-making contributes to decision-making that favours social spending and prioritizes spending on items such food, healthcare, education, childcare, apparel, consumer durables, and

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ $t(212) = .45, p > .05$

¹⁵⁹ $t(144) = .666, p > .05$

¹⁶⁰ $t(222) = .903, p > .05$

¹⁶¹ $\chi^2(1, N=374) = .478, p > .05$

¹⁶² $t(312) = 1.57, p > .05$

¹⁶³ $t(293) = .086, p > .05$

¹⁶⁴ $t(318) = .418, p > .05$

¹⁶⁵ $\chi^2(2, N=338) = 2.67, p > .05$

¹⁶⁶ $t(342) = .047, p > .05$

¹⁶⁷ $t(170) = 1.22, p > .05$

¹⁵⁵ "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" project proposal

¹⁵⁶ "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" proposal

financial services.¹⁶⁸ In this evaluation, women reported that their households spend most of their income on food (95%), health (60%), education (30%), purchasing clothing (29%), housing (17%), repaying loans (10%), 4% spend for generating income, and smaller percentages for other items. Housing as one of the top three household spending priorities was higher among income earning women (26%) than non-income earning women (14%).¹⁶⁹ Similarly, income-earning women reported higher levels of spending on income generation as a household spending priority (8%) than non-income earning women (2%).¹⁷⁰ Conversely, non-income earning women reported higher prioritization of health spending (65%) than non-income earning women (44%).¹⁷¹ However, differences were non-significant regarding spending on food¹⁷² and education.¹⁷³

These findings suggest that women's income generation may contribute to different spending priorities within the household, and that women earning income in the programme may have had an impact on household spending priorities. However, they also find that this was not necessarily always in line with project assumptions. The initial proposal asserted that women's income generation could facilitate more educational opportunities, access to healthcare, and improved family nutrition.¹⁷⁴ However, the findings of this evaluation do not support this assumption, where household spending on health was actually higher among women who were not earning income, and women's income generation was not significantly related to spending on food or education.

There were significant differences between women who were and were not earning income in terms of gender role attitudes,¹⁷⁵ restrictiveness of living environment,¹⁷⁶ rights awareness,¹⁷⁷ financial literacy,¹⁷⁸ and involvement in household financial decision-making.¹⁷⁹ However, it is important to acknowledge that the causal direction of these relationships cannot be determined and it cannot be assumed that women's income generation is the source of higher levels of empowerment in these domains; it may also be that women's empowerment in these areas makes them more likely to be capable, allowed, and motivated to undertake income generating activities.

Women who were currently earning an income demonstrated more positive gender role attitudes than

168 Sandra Lawson and Douglas B. Gilman, "The Power of the Purse: Gender Equality and Middle-Class Spending," Global Markets Institute, 5 August 2009, <http://www.gbaforwomen.org/docs/GOLDMAN-SACHS-Power-of-the-Purse.pdf>.

169 $\chi^2(1, N=374)=6.414, p<.05$

170 $\chi^2(1, N=374)=6.160, p<.05$

171 $\chi^2(1, N=374)=13.136, p<.001$

172 $\chi^2(1, N=374)=2.812, p>.05$

173 $\chi^2(1, N=374)=2.232, p>.05$

174 "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" proposal

175 $t(320)=2.87, p<.01$ (Earning an income $N=71, M=3.07, SD=.520$; Not earning an income $N=251, M=3.27, SD=.525$)

176 $t(199)=5.24, p<.001$ (Earning an income: $N=71, M=1.55, SD=.609$; Not earning an income $N=195, M=2.08, SD=.978$)

177 $t(372)=2.84, p<.01$ (Earning an income $N=85, M=.367, SD=.209$; Not earning an income $N=289, M=.278, SD=.195$)

178 $t(122)=3.54, p<.01$ (Earning income $N=85, M=.379, SD=.308$; Not earning income $N=289, M=.249, SD=.263$)

179 $t(145)=2.47, p<.05$ (Earning income $N=69, M=.661, SD=.296$; Not earning income $N=195, M=.551, SD=.363$)

those who were not. This could suggest either that gender role attitudes are influenced by whether women are personally earning income, or that whether or not women undertake income-generating activities is influenced by their perception of gender roles. However, in either case, it appears that these are related to the woman's personal income generation status, and not to the overall financial situation of the household, as discussed below. Interestingly, GRAS scores were not significantly correlated with the amount of income a woman personally earned,¹⁸⁰ only whether she was currently earning any level of income or not. There was also a significant difference in gender role attitudes between women who reported that they were earning income prior to participating in the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme, where those who were already earning income had more positive gender role attitudes than those who were not.¹⁸¹

Similar to gender role attitudes, women who were currently earning an income also had less restrictive living environments on average, though the relationship between level of personal income and restrictiveness of environment was non-significant,¹⁸² indicating that restrictiveness of living environment doesn't necessarily correspond to how much women contribute to household income, only whether they are undertaking income-generating activities. Restrictiveness of living environment is largely determined by the attitudes and practices of household members, rather than the women themselves. Though the programme theorizes that women's economic contributions will change how their household members perceive them and can contribute to improved situations for women, including regarding their mobility and social interactions, these findings do not seem to support this assumption. Though the causal direction cannot be definitively asserted, these findings would suggest that women from poorer households with more restrictive living environments are probably less likely to be allowed to undertake income-generating activities, particularly outside the home. Though generating income may in theory change the way household members view women and lead to less restrictive living environments, this is unlikely to happen if women are not given the freedom to take income generation opportunities to begin with due to restrictive living environments. As such, the shortcoming of the programme in terms of engaging women's families and addressing structural barriers within the household could be a weak point of the approach.

Importantly, women who were earning income exhibited higher levels of rights awareness than women who were not,¹⁸³ though the 37% level among income-earning women is still considerably low. Rights awareness also differed significantly according to household economic well-being, with an average score of 37% among women who were not living in severe poverty. That women's awareness of their rights is related to the overall economic situation

180 $r(64)=-.032, p>.05$

181 $t(322)=2.69, p<.01$ (Earning income prior to WfWI program $N=33, M=3.00, SD=.501$; Not earning income prior to WfWI program $N=291, M=3.26, SD=.526$)

182 $r(66)=-.149, p>.05$

183 $t(372)=2.84, p<.01$ (Earning an income $N=85, M=.367, SD=.209$; Not earning an income $N=289, M=.278, SD=.195$)

of the household would again suggest that women's empowerment may be at least in part determined by the household's attitudes towards and awareness of the rights of women, which would again support a programmatic approach that also engages women's family members and structural issues within the household as a means of supporting programme objectives.

Unlike self-esteem, there was a significant difference in self-efficacy between women who were and were not currently earning an income, though not in the expected direction. Women who were earning an income actually had lower levels of self-efficacy on average than those who were not.¹⁸⁴ There are a number of possible explanations for this finding, though determining the reason for this relationship would require further research. It is possible that women who are economically active have lower levels of self-efficacy because they would likely face challenges and have to make decisions outside the domestic sphere more regularly than women who are not economically active, which can be very challenging in the Afghan context. However, it also suggests that higher levels of self-efficacy may not be an enabling factor for women to undertake income-generating activities, which would undermine the rationale that a sense of self-determination and self-sufficiency enables women to be more economically active.

Financial literacy was higher among women who were currently earning income than those who were not, though it was not significantly related to the level of income women were earning.¹⁸⁵ This relationship is logical, in that financial literacy would be a likely precursor to successfully generating income. Similarly, involvement in household financial decision-making did vary significantly between women who were and were not earning income, with income earners reporting higher levels of involvement. Though it is possible that this indicates that contributing to household income increases women's authority to participate in household financial decision-making, other findings of this evaluation related to women's income generation would imply that this explanation should be taken with caution. It is also possible that women who are more involved in household financial decision-making and enjoy more gender equitable household beliefs are also more supported and able to undertake income-generating activities. The WfWI programme assumes the former, but it is critical to undertake further research to determine the causal direction of this relationship and provide a more evidence-based rationale for programmatic approach.

Household Financial Status

In addition to whether women were personally earning income, this evaluation looked at the relationship between the household's economic status and the various measures of women's empowerment. There were significant differences between women whose households were and were not living in severe poverty in a considerable number of dimensions, including restrictiveness of living

environment,¹⁸⁶ experiences of physical and psychological abuse,¹⁸⁷ rights knowledge,¹⁸⁸ internal health locus of control,¹⁸⁹ and financial literacy.¹⁹⁰

Women whose household was in severe poverty also had more restrictive living environments, on average, than those whose household income was higher than the severe poverty level. Interestingly, these findings seem to suggest that households with lower income are actually more controlling of women's movement and social interaction. Or, conversely, it could be associated with lower household income due to greater restrictions on women and thus lower ability of female household members to contribute to household income. Supporting the latter explanation, women with less restrictive living environments also perceived economic well-being as more internally determined (detailed in the section on economic empowerment),¹⁹¹ reported less economic abuse,¹⁹² and had more involvement in household decision-making regarding finances.¹⁹³

What's more, there was a significant inverse relationship between the level of household income and abuse, where increased household income corresponded to lower levels of abuse.¹⁹⁴ The HITS variable was also significantly related to economic abuse, and to women's involvement in household financial decision-making, where women reporting physical and psychological abuse also reported higher levels of economic abuse,¹⁹⁵ and women who reported higher levels of abuse also had less involvement in financial decision-making.¹⁹⁶ These findings indicate that women experiencing physical and psychological abuse are also more likely to experience economic abuse and are less likely to be consulted regarding household financial matters.

These findings also suggest that a woman being economically active and contributing to household income does not necessarily make her more or less susceptible to abuse, but a better overall economic situation of the household may contribute to reduced abuse of women. This would suggest that unless women's income generation contributes considerably to overall household finances, it wouldn't reduce her likelihood of being abused. The difference in household income between women who were and were not currently earning income was non-significant,¹⁹⁷ and the difference in household income between women who were and were not earning at least **1 USD per day** was also non-significant.¹⁹⁸ This finding

186 $t(262)=3.41, p<.01$ (Severe poverty $N=160, M=2.10, SD=.945$; Not in severe poverty $N=104, M=1.71, SD=.844$)

187 $t(232)=5.96, p<.001$ (Severe poverty $N=215, M=11.25, SD=5.71$; Not in severe poverty $N=93, M=7.75, SD=4.24$)

188 $t(365)=3.28, p<.01$ (Severe poverty $N=252, M=.292, SD=.205$; Not in severe poverty $N=115, M=.365, SD=.184$)

189 $t(215)=2.18, p<.05$ (Severe poverty $N=203, M=1.84, SD=.532$; Not in severe poverty $N=112, M=1.70, SD=.571$)

190 $t(365)=6.98, p<.001$ (Severe poverty $N=252, M=.216, SD=.256$; Not in severe poverty $N=115, M=.421, SD=.273$)

191 $r(260)=.440, p<.001$

192 $r(235)=.148, p<.05$

193 $r(216)=-.270, p<.001$

194 $r(230)=-.171, p<.01$

195 $r(236)=.128, p<.05$

196 $r(219)=-.140, p<.05$

197 $t(163)=.318, p<.05$

198 $t(70)=1.47, p>.05$

184 $t(88)=2.23, p<.05$ (Earning an income $N=61, M=2.28, SD=.901$; Not earning an income $N=177, M=2.00, SD=.725$)

185 $r(78)=.116, p>.05$

suggests that the goal of women earning at least 1 USD per day set by the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme is not high enough to have an effect on women’s likelihood of being abused. More importantly, these findings suggest that income generation is not necessarily a protection mechanism for women, which is often a critical assumption of programming targeting women’s income generation, and one that also underpins the rationale for the WfWI approach.

However, differences in gender role attitudes were non-significant between those whose households were and were not living in severe poverty.¹⁹⁹ There was also no significant difference between women whose households were and were not living in severe poverty in terms of social well-being,²⁰⁰ public values,²⁰¹ self-efficacy,²⁰² psychological well-being,²⁰³ economic locus of control,²⁰⁴ experiences of economic abuse,²⁰⁵ and female involvement in household decision-making.²⁰⁶

Additionally, whether or not women’s household was living in severe poverty was significantly related to self-esteem,²⁰⁷ but not in the expected direction. Women whose households were living in severe poverty had higher self-esteem on average than those who were not.

Discussion

Few of the measures used to assess women’s empowerment varied significantly according to whether women were personally earning income. While it was related to the GRAS and REMY measures, it was not related to social well-being, and while this could suggest that women’s income generation facilitates more positive gender role attitudes and mobility, it could also support that women with more positive gender role attitudes and mobility are more able to undertake income-generating activities. The lack of relationships observed would suggest that the overall approach and rationale that women’s economic engagement can facilitate empowerment informing the programme and its activities does not seem to hold true in a number of key components of the programme, including promoting women’s participation in their communities and social inclusion, promoting their physical and psychological well-being, and economic empowerment.

Importantly, dimensions of empowerment varied according to whether or not the woman’s household was living in severe poverty, largely overlapping with the areas that were related to women’s personal income generation with the exception of gender role attitudes and involvement in financial decision-making. Taken in context with the areas in which women’s personal income generation is related, these findings suggest that in

several areas, particularly those that are externally rather than internally located (for example, abuse being external and self-esteem internal). Particularly in the context of the focus of the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme, these findings could suggest that women’s income generation has limited impact on key dimensions of empowerment, especially related to physical and psychological abuse, unless women’s income is to the level that it considerably impacts overall household financial situation.

Relationships Between the Domains of Empowerment

Additionally, this evaluation looks at the relationship between the different domains of empowerment. Though the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme acknowledges that empowerment requires a holistic approach, its activities are largely predicated on the theory that facilitating women’s income generation coupled with awareness raising in other domains will engender empowerment among participants and will facilitate social change. This section addresses this assumption further in looking at the relationships between various domains of empowerment and contextualizing findings regarding economic productivity and empowerment to assess whether programme activities were best suited to facilitate the programme’s intended outcomes.

While social well-being was not related to whether or not women were earning income or whether their household was living in severe poverty, social well-being scores were higher among those who had participated in a CDC meeting in the past six months than those who had not,²⁰⁸ higher among those who reported they had participated in a community celebration within the past six months versus those who had not,²⁰⁹ and social well-being scores were also higher among those who said they had participated in an advocacy campaign in the past six months versus those who had not.²¹⁰ This suggests that directly facilitating women’s participation in their communities and decision-making forums may have an impact on women’s sense of social well-being, regardless of whether they are generating income or not. However, there were no statistically significant differences in social well-being between participants who had and had not participated in the other community activities included in the survey (community shura, school shura, jirga, political gathering, family gathering, and meeting with other women in public or in private).

Additionally, social well-being was positively correlated with the GRAS,²¹¹ indicating that respondents with more gender equitable views also exhibited higher levels of social well-being. Social well-being was also positively

199 $t(315)=-.870, p>.05$

200 $t(202)=-.64, p>.05$

201 $t(161)=-.343, p>.05$

202 $t(206)=-.539, p>.05$

203 $t(289)=-.565, p>.05$

204 $t(336)=-.926, p>.05$

205 $t(270)=1.21, p>.05$

206 $t(256)=-.860, p>.05$

207 $t(256)=2.77, p<.01$ (Severe poverty $N=200, M=2.11, SD=.547$; Not in severe poverty $N=109, M=2.27, SD=.460$)

208 $t(213)=2.24, p<.05$ (Those who had participated in a CDC meeting $N=27, M=2.39, SD=.376$; those who had not participated $N=188, M=2.61, SD=.478$)

209 $t(212)=2.98, p<.01$ (Those who had participated in a community celebration $N=45, M=2.40, SD=.487$; those who had not participated $N=169, M=2.63, SD=.456$)

210 $t(207)=2.35, p<.05$ (Those who had participated in an advocacy campaign $N=60, M=2.45, SD=.392$; those who had not participated $N=149, M=.481, SD=.039$)

211 $r(202)=-.244, p<.001$

associated with self-esteem²¹² and self-efficacy,²¹³ indicating that social well-being was higher among those with a stronger sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy. In terms of promoting empowerment, social well-being appeared to have an influential role. However, it appeared to have less effect on economic dimensions, as it was not significantly related to economic abuse or involvement in household financial decision-making. Findings indicate that social well-being is likely not strongly related to whether women earn an income or not or generally to their economic and financial status, or to a variety of demographic factors. It does, however, appear to be related to participation in certain types of community activities, though not to others, and to individuals' attitudes towards gender equality and their sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy. In the context of the WfWI programme, it can be concluded that vocational training and support is likely ineffective in promoting women's sense of social well-being, but also that it is a critical component of facilitating women's empowerment.

While women's gender role attitudes were significantly related to their income generating status, gender role attitudes were also significantly related to women's involvement in decision-making regarding household finances,²¹⁴ experiences of economic abuse,²¹⁵ social well-being,²¹⁶ restrictiveness of living environment,²¹⁷ rights knowledge,²¹⁸ public values,²¹⁹ and experiences of physical and psychological abuse.²²⁰ Women with more involvement in household financial decision-making and who experienced lower levels of economic abuse had more positive gender role attitudes. Though the causal direction of these relationships cannot be determined, these findings could suggest that women who have more positive gender role attitudes are more likely to be involved and respected in terms of household finances. It could also suggest that women's gender role attitudes are related to the gender role attitudes of the household, based on the assumption that households where women are involved and respected in terms of household finances would also have more positive and equitable gender role attitudes. GRAS scores were also more positive among those who reported that other women in their household contribute to household income,²²¹ which would support the explanation that households that have more positive gender role attitudes are more likely to support women undertaking income generating activities. GRAS scores were higher among those living in less restrictive living environments, and there was also a correlation between gender role attitudes and physical and psychological abuse, where women who experience more psychological and physical abuse also had more negative gender role attitudes. Taken with this, the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme may be somewhat limited in its

potential impact by only engaging directly with women and with male leaders, without also addressing the attitudes, beliefs, and practice within households and among women's immediate family members.

Restrictiveness of living environment was associated with both women's personal income generating status and whether their household was living in severe poverty. Additionally, restrictiveness of living environment was positively correlated with gender role attitudes, likely supporting the hypothesis that households with more gender egalitarian beliefs also correspond to women with more positive gender role attitudes. Restrictiveness of living environment was also associated with the level of physical and psychological abuse women reported, where women who had less restrictive living environments also reported experiencing less frequent abuse.²²² Women who had less restrictive living environments also had higher levels of self-esteem,²²³ though the relationships with self-efficacy²²⁴ and psychological well-being were non-significant.²²⁵ Taken together with the relationship between restrictiveness of living environment and women's personal and household economic status, these findings would tentatively support the conclusion that it is perhaps not women's income generation that leads to less restrictive living environments, but rather households that place less restrictions on women's mobility and social interaction are more likely to create an enabling environment for women's income generation. In the context of the programme, this would furthermore suggest that facilitating women's income generation does not necessarily begin with knowledge and capacity development, but rather with addressing the situation of women and gender beliefs within their homes.

Women's experiences of physical and psychological abuse did not vary between income generating and non-income generating women, but there was a relationship with the household being in severe poverty. In addition, the HITS variable was significantly related to social well-being and gender role attitudes, where women with higher levels of social well-being and more positive gender role attitudes also reported experiencing lower levels of abuse, though it was not significantly related to restrictiveness of living environment. Experiences of abuse were significantly related to women's knowledge of their rights, where women with more knowledge also reported lower levels of abuse.²²⁶ Interestingly, experiences of abuse were not significantly related to women's self-esteem²²⁷ though women who exhibited higher levels of self-efficacy also reported lower levels of abuse,²²⁸ as did women with higher psychological well-being.²²⁹ Though causation cannot be determined, it is likely that experiences of violence against women and psychological and physical abuse engender more negative gender role attitudes and erode women's sense of self-efficacy and psychological well-being, though it is also possible that women who

212 $r(205) = .398, p < .001$

213 $r(189) = .235, p < .01$

214 $r(237) = -.199, p < .01$

215 $r(246) = .225, p < .001$

216 $r(202) = .244, p < .001$

217 $r(236) = .303, p < .001$

218 $r(324) = -.253, p < .001$

219 $r(207) = .339, p < .001$

220 $r(275) = .137, p < .05$

221 $t(311) = 2.38, p < .05$ (Other female household members contribute to household income $N=16, M=2.96, SD=.566$; Other female household members do not contribute to household income $N=297, M=3.25, SD=.528$)

222 $r(84) = .244, p < .05$

223 $r(242) = .253, p < .001$

224 $r(205) = .128, p > .05$

225 $r(247) = -.072, p > .05$

226 $r(314) = -.259, p < .001$

227 $r(261) = -.063, p > .05$

228 $r(196) = .265, p < .001$

229 $r(241) = .218, p < .01$

scored high on these dimensions are more resilient and less vulnerable to abuse. Taken with the conclusion that income generation is not a protection mechanism for women, this would suggest that without addressing abuse, programmes such as “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” may be ineffective in psychologically empowering women in addition to failing to address a very fundamental aspect of women’s empowerment—physical and emotional safety.

Legal empowerment is an important aspect of women’s empowerment, especially in terms of protection. Women’s awareness of their legal rights was significantly related to a number of other dimensions of empowerment, including the aforementioned social well-being, gender role attitudes, and physical and psychological abuse. With each of these variables, women with less awareness of their rights were worse off. It was also related to economic abuse, where women with less rights awareness also reported higher levels of economic abuse.²³⁰ Though the causal relationship cannot be definitively asserted, it seems much less likely that these other variables cause women’s awareness of their rights to decrease, and much more plausible that women’s increased awareness of their rights contributes to more egalitarian gender role attitudes, decreased physical, psychological, and economic abuse, thus reiterating the critical importance of rights awareness and legal empowerment.

The relationship between women’s awareness of their rights and economic, physical, and psychological abuse is an especially critical finding in consideration of the relatively high levels of abuse experienced by programme participants and the generally low level of rights awareness found in this evaluation. Considering women’s low level of knowledge regarding their legal rights, and the answers provided regarding the advice they would give another woman being abused that highly favoured patriarchal traditional institutions, it is reasonable to conclude that the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme did not contribute to women’s legal empowerment. Coupled with a programmatic approach that did not support protection of women’s legal rights and an absence of a programme component to address structural issues regarding access to justice and effectiveness of the legal system in terms of support for women’s rights, the programme does not effectively consider legal empowerment in its programme design or delivery.

Women’s psychological empowerment appeared to be closely related to other domains of empowerment. Women with higher levels of social well-being, less restricted living environments, more awareness of their rights,²³¹ and stronger public values²³² also had higher self-esteem. Women with higher self-esteem also scored higher in terms of internal dimensions of the health²³³ and economic²³⁴ locus of control scales. Similarly, higher levels of self-efficacy were also associated with higher levels of social well-being, as well as lower levels of physical and psychological abuse. Women with higher degrees of self-

efficacy also demonstrated higher public values and also scored higher on internal dimensions of the health²³⁵ and economic²³⁶ locus of control scales. In terms of mental health, women who exhibited higher degrees of social well-being also had higher levels of psychological well-being, as did women who were experiencing less physical and psychological abuse. Accordingly, women with higher self-esteem also had higher levels of self-efficacy,²³⁷ and also exhibited higher levels of psychological well-being.²³⁸ While psychological well-being was positively related to women’s self-esteem, the relationship with self-efficacy was non-significant.

Women with higher levels of self-esteem also experienced less economic abuse.²³⁹ This finding is important in that it suggests that while higher levels of self-esteem can reduce women’s vulnerability to being economically abused by their partner or family members, women being economically active does not seem to have an impact on women’s self-esteem, which would suggest that the programme’s objective of women generating income may not impact this aspect of women’s psychological empowerment. Women’s psychological empowerment did not appear to be facilitated by women’s personal or household economic status, and there were even inverse relationships observed between these factors and women’s self-esteem and self-efficacy. Taken together with findings regarding other domains of empowerment, women’s psychological state, self-esteem, and self-efficacy appear to be related to resilience and empowerment.

While women’s perceived level of internal control over their own health was related to whether or not her household was in severe poverty, whether or not she was earning an income did not appear to have an effect. Women’s perceived levels of internal control over their own health were significantly related to social well-being,²⁴⁰ gender role attitudes,²⁴¹ experiences of physical and psychological abuse,²⁴² restrictiveness of living environment,²⁴³ and rights awareness.²⁴⁴ Additionally, more perceived internal control was also associated with higher self-esteem²⁴⁵ and higher self-efficacy.²⁴⁶ Women who were utilizing some method of family planning also had higher levels of perceived internal control of personal health.²⁴⁷ Perhaps most importantly, women’s perceived control over their health was significantly related to their level of knowledge regarding health and nutrition,²⁴⁸ indicating that other elements of empowerment are likely an inadequate substitute for actual knowledge and practices that facilitate good health. This finding is important, considering that while women in this evaluation demonstrated knowledge regarding nutrition,

235 $r(235) = .553, p < .001$

236 $r(223) = .247, p < .001$

237 $r(230) = .266, p < .001$

238 $r(267) = -.331, p < .001$

239 $r(251) = .162, p < .05$

240 $r(204) = .314, p < .001$

241 $r(277) = .238, p < .001$

242 $r(270) = .310, p < .001$

243 $r(248) = .262, p < .001$

244 $r(321) = -.138, p < .05$

245 $r(287) = .120, p < .05$

246 $r(235) = .553, p < .001$

247 $r(288) = .166, p < .05$

248 $r(230) = .193, p < .01$

230 $r(274) = -.129, p < .05$

231 $r(315) = .119, p < .05$

232 $r(203) = .165, p < .05$

233 $r(287) = .120, p < .05$

234 $r(294) = .151, p < .05$

findings were less positive regarding women’s knowledge on WASH and reproductive health—critical components of women’s and their families’ health.

At the core of the programme is women’s economic empowerment. Financial literacy is a fundamental underpinning of economic empowerment, and it was related to both women’s income-generating status and the financial status of their household. Women with more knowledge about their rights were also more financially literate,²⁴⁹ and women who were more financially literate also had higher self-esteem²⁵⁰ and higher psychological well-being.²⁵¹ Women with higher levels of financial literacy also had more involvement in household decision-making regarding finances.²⁵² This finding is important in the context of the project, considering that it implies that women’s financial literacy is a precursor to being involved and respected in household decision-making regarding finances; therefore, the finding that financial literacy among programme participants is generally low would suggest that it may have limited impact on influencing women’s involvement in household financial decision-making.

Though income generation and household financial status were related to financial literacy, neither was related to the internal economic locus of control or women’s experiences of economic abuse. However, internal economic locus of control was positively related to gender role attitudes,²⁵³ restrictiveness of living environment,²⁵⁴ where women with more positive attitudes and unrestricted environments also perceived internal factors to influence economic well-being more. It was also positively related to self-esteem²⁵⁵ and self-efficacy.²⁵⁶ On the one hand, while this finding would tentatively support the logic that women’s economic empowerment can facilitate improved self-esteem and self-efficacy, it also further points to the observation that women’s economic empowerment appears to be at least in part determined by her home situation and attitudes toward women within the household, which is generally not addressed in the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme.

Lower levels of economic abuse corresponded with higher awareness of rights,²⁵⁷ which can also be taken as a point of potential improvement for the programme, whereby improving the rights component of the training could help to reduce women’s vulnerability to economic abuse. Lower levels of economic abuse also corresponded with higher self-esteem²⁵⁸ and a higher level of involvement in household financial decision-making.²⁵⁹ Economic abuse was not significantly related to social well-being,²⁶⁰ but lower levels of economic abuse corresponded with

more positive gender role attitudes,²⁶¹ less restricted living environments,²⁶² and lower levels of physical and psychological abuse.²⁶³ Again, these findings would suggest that for a programme to facilitate women’s economic empowerment and reduced economic abuse, it would need to also engage women’s immediate family and address structural issues within women’s households and daily lives, which appear to be a precursor to, rather than influenced by, women’s income generation.

Throughout the findings related to the impact of the programme, a recurring theme was the apparent relationship between attitudes, perceptions, and practices in the household and women’s empowerment. There were a number of findings to indicate that women’s empowerment is likely facilitated or stifled depending on the attitudes within the households and among household members, which would indicate that a programme like “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” would have limited impact if it does not engage family members and address structural barriers at the household level. Though the programme targets men through the MLP, the focus of this component is on community leadership. Based on the findings of this evaluation, while facilitating support for women at the community level is important, the programme may be targeting the wrong men to actually affect changes in women’s day to day lives, which are largely determined within the household. These findings suggest that engagement with male family members may prove a more effective means of facilitating women’s social and economic empowerment.

Importantly, the inter-relatedness of all the various dimensions of empowerment demonstrated by the findings in this section indicate that the various dimensions of empowerment are inextricably connected, and cannot be effectively addressed in isolation. For example, gender role attitudes was positively related to social well-being, so addressing women’s ideas of gender norms without also promoting belonging and participation in the community may be less effective. Experiences of physical and psychological abuse were related to women’s knowledge of their rights, so attempting to reduce domestic violence without also providing women complete and accurate information regarding their rights may be less effective. Given the number of relationships observed across each dimension, it is unreasonable to think that a programme that does not address empowerment as a comprehensive, holistic concept will be greatly effective.

Context and Local Needs

Local Context and Needs

Adjusting to Local Contexts and Needs

As explained by WfWI staff and observed in this evaluation, the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme is a one-size-fits-all package, both internationally and within Afghanistan. As observed and confirmed by WfWI

249 $r(376) = .319, p < .001$
 250 $r(315) = .325, p < .001$
 251 $r(296) = .120, p < .05$
 252 $r(265) = .320, p < .001$
 253 $r(298) = .258, p < .001$
 254 $r(260) = .440, p < .001$
 255 $r(294) = .151, p < .05$
 256 $r(223) = .427, p < .001$
 257 $r(274) = -.129, p < .05$
 258 $r(251) = .162, p < .05$
 259 $r(229) = -.162, p < .05$
 260 $r(192) = .038, p > .05$

261 $r(246) = .225, p < .001$
 262 $r(235) = .148, p < .05$
 263 $r(236) = .128, p < .05$

staff, the same training manuals are used in all WfWI programming covering a very diverse geographic and sociocultural, and developmental scope—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Kosovo, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Sudan. Consequently, the manuals generally lack local specificity and cultural appropriateness, and the relevance of materials is considerably weak in consideration of this. This limitation is easily observed in the results of this evaluation, which found that women have little knowledge or understanding of laws and institutions in place in Afghanistan to support them and promote their rights.

Additionally, the same procedures and approaches are employed in each province and community of Afghanistan, despite variation in demographics and even social and cultural context in the target areas. The evaluation findings demonstrate provincial variation, which suggests that the programme was not necessarily tailored to local needs. There was considerable difference between provinces in terms of women currently earning an income, where 41% of women in Kabul, 14% in Parwan, and 18% in Nangarhar reported that they are currently earning an income.²⁶⁴ The high percentage of women working in Kabul is likely attributable to their mostly urban location, with a large number residing within or very near to Kabul city (46%). 35% of women in Kabul were working in tailoring, handicrafts or weaving, and a small number were earning an income from livestock (4%), and two were earning income from other sources that were not included in the survey. In Parwan, the main areas in which women reported income were crop cultivation (3%), dairy (2%), livestock (1%), tailoring, handicrafts, and weaving (8%), and full-time employment (2%). In Nangarhar, women were mainly earning income from crop cultivation (6%), dairy (6%), fishery (2%), livestock (6%), tailoring, handicrafts, and weaving (10%), and day labour (5%). These figures demonstrate that it is likely that access to work is more easily facilitated in urban or peri-urban areas, where 67% in Dashte Barchi and 64% in Kabul districts were earning an income, with none in Istalef or Shakdara, and only 30-35% in Bagرامي and Deh Sabz districts.

Illiteracy and Access to Information

Considering the high levels of illiteracy among women (75% of respondents), the approach to training is also not context specific. Trainings should be interactive, based on participatory techniques and plenty of practical exercises that are generally missing from the curriculum. The curriculum is also entirely text-based, with few audio-visual materials such as infographics, diagrams, videos, or audio recordings provided, which is highly inconsistent with the needs of largely illiterate trainees. Additionally, issues of illiteracy and access to information are not considered in the materials and their relevance to Afghanistan, which is revisited in addressing the sustainability of the programme.

Cultural Appropriateness and Islam

It is explicitly stated in the proposal that ‘WfWI-Afghanistan does not engage with participants or community leaders around Islam, and all discussions on women’s rights are presented as sharing of decision-making responsibilities with their husbands and/or other male relatives.’ The rationale provided for this approach is that ‘it worked well for WfWI; we have continued to enjoy enormous goodwill in the communities where we work, and often receive letters requesting programme delivery from male leaders in other communities.’²⁶⁵ However, in the MLP programme, women’s rights are discussed from the Islamic perspective. With the training of mullahs, the WfWI team seeks to frame the discussions around women’s rights as they relate to Islam, highlighting particular verses from the Quran that promote women’s position in society. This can be viewed as generally in line with growing best practice in Afghanistan, where Islamic perspectives on women’s rights are gaining ground among various stakeholders. This has proven a particularly promising approach considering suspicions that women’s rights are ideas imported from the West, which can consequently easily lead to reverting to customary practices. Islamic law is viewed as more credible at the community level and as more progressive with regards to women’s rights than most customary norms and practices.²⁶⁶

Interestingly, the baseline evaluation for the programme asked about ownership of pigs, which are considered forbidden in Islam, and pork and pig products are illegal in Afghanistan.²⁶⁷ Afghanistan somewhat famously reportedly has only one pig named Khanzir, who lives in the Kabul zoo.²⁶⁸ However, according to data provided by WfWI, at the project baseline, one woman in Kabul, one in Parwan, and seven in Nangarhar own pigs.

The programme’s approach to building social safety nets appears to have generally been quite successful, and relevant in consideration of sociocultural context. Other research has found that women are able to develop social networks around productive activities for social events, such as *namad* (felted woollen rug) making and embroidery for weddings, which is often held in the home of the wife of a local leader, or collecting water or agricultural activities.²⁶⁹ This previous research would suggest that a programme aiming to bring women together around vocational training and income generation would likely be successful and met by social and family support. This is substantiated by the findings regarding women’s continued meeting after graduating from the WfWI programme, addressed below regarding ownership. Therefore, in this regard, this evaluation concludes that the structure and approach to building social safety nets that brought women together in accepted spaces with

265 “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” proposal

266 Ana Hozyainova, “Sharia and Women’s Rights in Afghanistan”, USIP, 2014, http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR347-Sharia_and_Women%E2%80%99s_Rights_in_Afghanistan.pdf

267 Robert Mackey, “Quarantine for Afghanistan’s Only Pig,” The New York Times, 8 May 2009, http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/05/08/quarantine-for-afghanistans-only-pig/?_r=0.

268 Ibid.

269 Shawna Wakefield, “Gender and Local Level Decision-making,” 2005.

264 $\chi^2(2, N=374)=27.78, p<.001$

the support of community leadership was in line with general best practice in Afghanistan and appears to have facilitated opportunities for the effective development of social safety nets for participants.

Training and Relevance of Topics

In the first phase of the programme, each participant completes an Individual Participant Plan, in which they indicate which type of vocational training they are most interested in receiving. Options include animal husbandry (poultry, cow keeping, bee keeping, goat keeping), handicrafts (embroidery, knitting, spinning, and gem cutting), agriculture (kitchen garden and greenhouse), tailoring, carpet weaving, or “other.” However, WfWI staff explained that women do not necessarily receive training based on what most of the women in the group select. While it may be the case, in other instances it was explained that the vocational training topic is decided for the women based on what WfWI thinks the community needs and can sustain. Though WfWI staff stated that market assessments are a part of the process, the evaluators were not provided with any examples of a market assessment and WfWI staff did not explain how, when, and by whom these are undertaken. WfWI did provide examples of vocational evaluations. However, the evaluations provided were not rigorous evaluations, but rather case studies of individual programme graduates working in a specific field.

There is a discrepancy between the trainings that women attended and the areas where these women actually derived their personal incomes. 72% participated in training in animal husbandry, 33% in handicrafts, % in agriculture, 36% in tailoring, 8% in rug weaving, and smaller percentages in other unspecified trainings. However, only 3.5% of all women derive their income from crop cultivation, 3.7% from livestock and approximately 3% from selling dairy products, 16% from tailoring, handicrafts or weaving. There is also a discrepancy between the 42% of women participating in agriculture training and 72% in animal husbandry where only 31% of the women’s households own land (where 75% have control over the land and 7% personally own land), which makes the use of skills gained somewhat more difficult. Also, despite the 72% participation in animal husbandry a relatively low number of women (26%) owns at least one animal among chicken, goats, cows, and sheep where 74% do not own any animals, which again makes the use of skills gained somewhat more difficult. In fact, 34% of women thought that there should have been more useful training subjects.

The programme appears to have been somewhat inconsistent with the realities of women’s situation regarding decision-making and access to inputs and resources, which in turn would limit their ability to take the skills they had learned and translate them into income generating activities. Few women reported that female household members would be involved in decision-making related to property and land, including the buying and selling of land (36%), renting or sharecropping land (27%), and buying and selling of property (33%). 31%

of the households reported owning land and 69% of the households do not own any land. In total, 7% of interviewed women personally own land. Households use land for cultivating crops (90%), raising livestock (18%), for orchards (23%), fodder (18%), gardens (10%), renting to other (8%), 6% keep it fallow, for agro-forestry 3.7%, and 6% for other unspecified purposes.

Women, on average reported having 3.4 livestock (including cows, goats, sheep, and chicken (where the latter are owned in higher percentages)) and 40% personally own some of these animals. These animals are primarily used for household consumption of animal products (63%), sale of animal products (60%), sale of livestock (23%), slaughter for household consumption (22%), and slaughter for sale of food products (14%). 35% think that if they decide to generate income with embroidery and decide to pay a deposit to a shopkeeper for the materials they will not need the permission from their husband (with 22% needing the permission and others did not know).

Training topics did seem to cater to local prospects, with more women receiving training in animal husbandry in Nangarhar (87%) and Parwan (76%) than in Kabul (40%). This corresponded with baseline data provided by WfWI, where those living in Parwan and Nangarhar generally reported higher levels of household animal ownership than those in Kabul. More women also received training on agriculture in Nangarhar (83%) than in Parwan (16%) and Kabul (7%), somewhat corresponding to land accesses and the predominant vocational fields in each province. The WfWI baseline did not assess land access or ownership, but this corresponds to the number of women who reported farming for household consumption, where this was most common in Nangarhar.

As discussed above, despite women’s overall satisfaction with the training, there were also many complaints on the different aspects of the training, which indicates that their expectations were not always met: 75% felt that the training should have consisted of more hours per week, and 51% think it should consist of more days in a month. Participants also felt that trainers should be more qualified (51%), subjects should be more diverse (40%), training subjects should be more useful (34%), there should be better training materials (28%), the timing should be changed (24%), the location should be changed (24%), and that day-care services should be provided (18%). Most of the women from the focus groups in the three provinces were satisfied where some had some reservations:

We lacked practical work, we had damaged sewing machines, we worked on the same model of dress for some days, and we were working on newspaper to learn how to make certain models. We also lack support after graduation. The course should continue. In order to improve the programme women should be supported and graduates should be employed to start production such as tailoring.²⁷⁰

270 Kabul, Dasht-e-Barchi, Focus group with women, June 2015

3.4 EFFICIENCY

Value for Money

Value for Money (VfM) refers to the optimal use of resources to achieve intended outcomes. Generally, VfM can be understood through the results chain, looking at how project inputs are transformed into outputs through activities, and how these outputs contribute to the larger impact of the project. This is looked at through the three Es—Economy, Efficiency, and Effectiveness. Generally, economy looks at the purchase of inputs; efficiency looks at whether money was spent well; effectiveness looks at how well outputs achieve the desired outcome, and whether spending was effective in achieving the targeted impact of the project.

The budget information available regarding the programme categorizes costs into general categories of spending, and does not contain specific breakdowns of what each category consists of, nor the actual amounts budgeted for each input. Additionally, the details provided regarding programme expenditures were somewhat limited (for example, the number of training centres rented each year, number of trainers, etc.). As such, this evaluation of value for money is generally limited in scope, and largely focuses on the amount spent on training and its value in terms of outputs and outcomes of the project. Assessing VfM in terms of operational expenses is beyond the scope of this evaluation.

The overall budget of the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme under the HDF grant proposal was 300,000 USD each year for three years, totalling 900,000 USD. However, the HDF funding was only a portion of the programme expenses, with WfWI sharing costs for the programme and contributions from other sources, mostly consisting of sponsorship funds, gifts from individual donors, and funds from governments, private sources, and corporations. In total, the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme expenses from year one were planned as 1.74 million USD (300,043 USD from HDF, 1.142 million USD WfWI cost share, and 319,506 USD from other sources). In year two of the project, the planned budget was 2.347 million USD (300,000 USD from HDF, 1.163 million USD WfWI cost share, and 883,963 USD from other sources). The budget from year three of the project was not available for this evaluation.

The largest programme components (based on the year one budget) were local staff salaries and benefits cost (35% of the total project expenses), and direct humanitarian aid, which was referring to the stipend for women participating in the training programme of 10 USD per month for 12 months (36% of the total project expenses). However, the latter expense (stipends) was not covered by the HDF grant, but rather was listed as a WfWI cost share, likely covered through the sponsorship programme. Other larger expenses included training supplies and services (9%), rent and facilities costs (6%), travel and entertainment (3.5%), and professional services and consulting (3.5%).

In year two of the project, these expenses were broken down somewhat more thoroughly. Again, the largest expenses were direct payment of stipends to women (42%, covered by other funding WfWI cost share with no contribution from the HDF grant) and staff salary and benefits (31%, covering 52 staff members employed by WfWI at its headquarters in Kabul and satellite office in Jalalabad). Other large expense areas included domestic travel (4%) and rent (4%). Year two also included expenses for the MLP (4%). However, in year two less was spent on training supplies and equipment (3%), professional services and consulting (1.25%).

In the absence of a more complete budget that clarifies what is purchased under each of these categories and at what rate, it is impossible to assess the economy of the WfWI budget. However, in terms of efficiency, there are a few aspects that can be explored based on this information. Given the issues regarding the reported number of participants, in this aspect we will consider the budget for year two of the programme, when the figures reported by WfWI most closely match those in the participant database, with 5,056 participants. Expenses exclusively related to providing training would include the direct stipend paid to participants, training services, training supplies and equipment, and training facilities and rent, totalling 1,080,022 USD in the second year of the project. Training expenses would also comprise a percentage of expenses such as staff salary and benefits and travel, but due to the lack of breakdown these are not reflected here. Based on this figure, the programme spent a modest estimate of 214 USD on each participant over the course of one year for providing training, with 120 USD of that being spent in direct stipends provided to participants at 10 USD per month for one year.

According to the findings of this evaluation, based on the upper bound of personal income reported and extrapolating the findings of this report to the total number of women who participated in the programme in the second year, taken in sum, participants who are earning money are likely earning around a total of 872,062 USD per year, though 67% of year two participants were already earning an income prior to participating in the WfWI programme, so a portion of this is likely not attributable to the programme. Additionally, fewer than 1 out of every four (23%) of the women in year two were currently earning an income at the time of the evaluation, with 10% reporting that they were personally earning income prior to participating in the programme. This would indicate that assuming an annual budget of 2.044 million USD (average of year one and two total budgets), every 1 USD invested in the programme yields approximately 0.43 USD in actual earnings for women, though this is only including income-earning women, where it yields nothing for the other 77% of participants who are not earning income. Additionally, this figure is likely lower when considering that 67% of income earning women were already earning income prior to participating in the programme.

The primary areas of vocational training for this programme—animal husbandry, handicrafts, agriculture, tailoring, and carpet weaving—would require a level of

investment in order to begin generating income, as well as continued investment in inputs that support continued income generation. For example, other research provides some information on the cost of investing in livestock. The cost of a non-pregnant cow ranges from around 12,000-20,000 AFN (196-326 USD),²⁷¹ and the average cost incurred per cattle per day is around 132 AFN (2.15 USD).²⁷² Chickens are generally considered a lower-cost animal to raise. Estimates from southern Afghanistan found that a one-day-old chick could be purchased for approximately 0.80 USD, but the cost of feed to raise a 2-kilo bird in 45-50 days is approximately 1.65 USD. The estimated value of selling the chicken is around 3.50 USD, though eggs could be sold for around 5-7 AFN (0.08-0.11 USD).²⁷³ In an example from another programme supporting women's income generation, starting a tailoring business that produces 5-6 elaborate dresses per day required 60,000 AFN (978 USD) total capital invested.²⁷⁴ Doing work in embroidery often requires the payment of a deposit at a local shop, which provides the materials and patterns, and women are paid for what they produce when they return it to the shop. Raising animals requires the purchase of animals and continued financial inputs for feed, veterinary costs, and other expenses. Working in agriculture requires the purchase or lease of land, purchase of seed, and other expenses such as fertilizer, tools, and labour, depending on the scale.

36% of year two participants reported that someone in their household owns land at the time of the evaluation, and 64% said they have access to and control over the use of this land. However, only 6% of said that they personally own at least some of this land. 60% of year two participants' households own livestock, of which 36% said they personally own at least some of the household's livestock. As discussed earlier in the report, few women are saving a portion of their income (11%), and 32% reported that they have no savings. WfWI does not provide loans or credit as a component of the programme, and 21% of participants surveyed were unaware of any source of credit in their community. Though assessing the VfM of the project in these terms definitively is beyond the scope of this evaluation, based on the findings of this evaluation regarding the level of poverty women's households live in coupled with the level of income and savings women reported, it is likely that the 10 USD per month is not sufficient to enable women to save and invest in their own income generation at the close of the programme.

The findings on programmes helping very poor women in income generation in other contexts also found that it is

important to ensure that women do not divert capital to non-business uses (in-kind assets can be effective as they are difficult to portion off and share, for example a cow instead of a flock of chickens).²⁷⁵ In fact, many women reported that the stipend provided by WfWI was used for other things, mainly household expenses in the context of extreme poverty that many of the programme participants' households live in. It is important to acknowledge that providing high stipends can have negative consequences, as has been seen in other training programmes across Afghanistan, such as contributing to the involvement of non-committed participants, disincentivizing income generation, contributing to low sustainability, and inflating household incomes at an unsustainable level. However, in the context of a programme that aims to support women's income generation and economic empowerment, it is critical that the amount of financial support provided is enabling for meeting project objectives and planned outcomes. The observation that the financial support provided may be insufficient is supported by the finding that 65% of respondents felt that there should be a higher stipend.

Considering that women generally exhibit low levels of knowledge in the areas they have been trained on, and the contributions of the programme to women's empowerment appear to fall short of target objectives in a number of areas, this evaluation has found that the spending on training is generally ineffective in supporting the desired impact of the programme in the manner it is currently delivered. In this perspective, there are a number of possible ways that programme spending could possibly be allocated more efficiently as supported by the findings of this evaluation throughout this report. For example, targeting fewer women with increased spending in supporting them (training, investment, and follow up) would mean that fewer women would be impacted, but the women targeted may have better outcomes in terms of actually generating income, as it was amply demonstrated by many studies in similar contexts with similar programming.²⁷⁶ Additionally, investing more in professional and training services would allow WfWI to invest in tailoring training manuals to the Afghan context and improving the training programme to facilitate better outcomes for the women who participate.

Generally, the VfM of the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" appears to be low, with large financial inputs resulting in only minimal improvements in women's income generation, and the programme outputs appearing to have limited impact in terms of supporting the project's overall goal of empowering women. Given the limitations of the information available in this evaluation, concrete observations and recommendations are not included in this evaluation, as such an analysis would require a proper VfM assessment of the programme to be undertaken.

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272 Abdul Samad Katawazy, "Investment Opportunities in Afghan Dairy and Livestock," Research Planning and Policy Directorate, Afghanistan Investment Support Agency, August 2013, http://www.aisa.org.af/Content/Media/Documents/Investment_opportunities_in_Afghan_Dairy_Livestock811201413935807553325325.pdf.

273 "Evaluation Report for Alternative Development Program (ADP) Southern Region by USAID in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan," Checchi and Company Consulting and USAID, April 2010, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACS236.pdf.

274 Matin Ezidyar, "A Loan Officer Becomes the Borrower," MISFA, n.g., <http://www.misfa.org.af/wp-data/uploads/2015/07/Story-of-Mastoora.pdf>.

275 Ibid.

276 Ibid.

Project Implementation and Management

Monitoring and Evaluation

WfWI collects data from a randomly selected sample of participants at baseline, endline, one year after the programme and two years after the programme, with the same sample being tracked over time using their participant ID number. A standard survey instrument covering key areas of the programme is administered consistently at these points in time. Since 2013, WfWI has been administering surveys electronically using tablets to streamline data collection processes. The surveys are programmed using a software application and platform called IForm-Builder (IFB). Tablets are used as the data collection devices in the field and M&E Assistant staff in each Country Office administers the electronic surveys, with oversight provided by the M&E Officer and/or Manager. The devices are used offline in the field (a number of data quality and consistency checks are built in the application) – once the enumerators return to the office, the data are uploaded from the tablets to the IForm-Builder online application and database. The M&E Manager reviews the data on the IFB platform before approving the records. Once approved, the data are then imported from the IFB platform to a secure master database that is housed at Headquarters, and contains all historic data from participants to which each batch of new participant data are added. This is done by the HQ Programme Monitoring Officer, in coordination with HQ IT staff. For analysis, data from this master SQL database are pulled by the M&E Analysis Officer using SQL Server or using an online Analytical Dashboard tool. The data are then cleaned, tabulated and analysed using SPSS to prepare reports and share with Country Office staff for programmatic reflection and decision-making.

Participants are also administered pre-programme and post-programme questionnaires. However, the structure and content of the questionnaires that WfWI uses have a limited ability to actually measure change, as they very often include questions that ask women to assess their own knowledge, rather than assessing their actual level of knowledge. For example, women are generally asked to assess what level of knowledge or understanding they have on hygiene or safe sex without incorporating any questions actually assessing participants' knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP). Similarly, women are asked about knowledge on their rights by simply asking 'How is your knowledge of your rights?' with options being no knowledge, low, medium, or high. Fundamentally, this monitoring framework is flawed. A woman who does not know her rights would also inherently be unaware of the rights she does not know, and as such would be fundamentally unable to assess her own level of knowledge accurately.

At the end of the programme, staff members evaluate a random sample of participants through face-to-face interviews, recording summative data, with similar problems already evidenced in the baseline questionnaire,

which document progress against the outcomes and assess participants' satisfaction with the programme experience. WfWI has a graduate follow-up interview and plans for follow-up evaluations call for interviews with random samples of participants one and two years after they have graduated. According to WfWI, questions focus on the four outcome areas and track the impacts women have sustained after programme completion. However, considering that the women sampled for the present evaluation from the WfWI list of participants were difficult to find, it is unclear how the graduate follow-up survey is effectively administered.

WfWI has also developed surveys for MLP Participants in Afghanistan that are administered before and after the training to capture the increase in knowledge on women's social engagement, protection and rights. These, similarly to the women's questionnaire, do not always measure changes on acquired knowledge but rather perceptions on their knowledge (for example, "Describe your level of knowledge on women's rights" with response options such as 'no knowledge', 'low', 'medium', and 'high').

Timeframe

As a part of the programme, women attend training for one year, and on average the participants self-reported that they spent approximately 30 hours per month in training.²⁷⁷ As outlined by a WfWI staff member, participants receive 25 classes on life skills, 32 classes of vocation training, 12 business classes, and 12 classes of numeracy over the course of the one-year programme. A more in-depth study of the comprehensive WfWI approach, programme, its contents, and procedures would be required to pinpoint the reason why women have not learned as much as intended in the programme objectives, but generally it is likely due to the scope being too ambitious for a one year training programme, or due to the contents of the programme, its delivery, or some degree of each. The findings from this evaluation would suggest that based on the current curriculum the timeframe of the training programme could be inadequate for participants to learn what they are meant to learn from the training programme; 75% of women felt that more training hours per week are needed, and 51% suggested more training days per month, suggesting that the majority of women felt the timeframe of the project was insufficient.

Problems with attendance and completion were also a challenge for the programme. WfWI staff described a process whereby a certain level of attendance is required for women to stay in the training programme. Women's attendance is tracked according to their participant ID number, which is then submitted to HQ and HQ dismisses women who do not meet the mandatory attendance requirements. This system was said to include policies for assessing the reason for absence, and offering makeup classes for women who are unable to attend. The staff member estimated that each month, around 1.5-1.7% of participants are dismissed from the programme, and around 10% of participants do not complete the

277 N=291, n=26.067

programme due to attendance requirements. The staff member explained that dropout can occur due to family issues, other obligations taking priority, or simply lack of dedication to the programme, though WfWI described a screening process for participants to try to mitigate these issues, including not enrolling women who are currently pregnant or have disabilities to the extent that they may be unable to attend the course regularly. Considering that a high percentage of women did not have objections on the time of the trainings (24% listed this as a suggestion for improving the training approach), there seems to be little that the programme could do to reinforce retention aside from a more precise ‘initial scanning’ in what circumstances and how likely women would miss or stop attending trainings.

Additionally, based on missing the number of target participants registered each year of the programme, the timeframe of three years for providing life skills and vocational training to 15,600 women (5,200 per year) appears to have been overly ambitious. As previously addressed, the total number of women registered fell short of the overall target as per the database received from WfWI. Additionally, WfWI counted women who had begun the training programme prior to the HDF grant in and still did not meet their target in year one (4,228 participants registered in the database provided). The programme was closer to meeting its target in year two, registering 5,056 participants. However, the programme did not even meet half of its target in year three, when only 2,321 participants were registered. Additionally, 1,099 of the women registered in the final year of the project began their training in October, and another 400 in September, with the project closing in October 2014. These figures would indicate an attempt to compensate for not meeting targets right before the project closed, and further counting beneficiaries that were not really covered by the HDF grant. As such, this evaluation concludes that the number of project participants targeted was too high for the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme.

3.5 COVERAGE

Reaching Target Groups

WfWI describes their target participants as socially excluded women, including widows, single heads of household, refugee returnees, the internally displaced, and the physically challenged. The target participants were intended to be survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, victims of human rights violations and those whose lives have been shattered by conflict, through the loss of family, rape or other injury, loss of property or displacement.

Vulnerable Groups

There are a number of vulnerable groups among women in Afghanistan, namely poor female-headed households, women with disabilities, and widows. Research from 2008

found that a significant share of Afghan women fall within the category of “chronically poor”, defined as resources amounting to 1 USD per person per day for five years. According to the 2011-12 National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA), less than 1% of households are female-headed, representing 0.4% of the population. While this figure may seem small, it amounts to 102,000 people of the total population. The absence of a male head of household signifies a highly vulnerable position for all household members regarding income security and social protection.²⁷⁸

The NRVA also found that 57% of women over the age of 65 are widowed, and 19% of women aged 15 to 64.²⁷⁹ There are an estimated 1.5 million widows in Afghanistan, one of the highest proportions in the world. Widows face considerable vulnerabilities. For example, the widowed and divorced in both urban and rural areas tend to be more food insecure compared to other groups. While widows under the age of 35 may be able to remarry, widows over the age of 35 are generally unable to do so. What’s more, if a young widow decides to remarry, she often has to leave her children behind with her deceased husband’s family, making the decision to remarry undesirable for many mothers.²⁸⁰

Disabled women are also extremely vulnerable. Poor disabled women are more likely to become chronically poor than other women, and employment opportunities for disabled women remain scarce.²⁸¹ According to the most comprehensive disability survey in 2005, 58.9% of Afghans have very severe, severe, moderate, or mild difficulties in at least one of nine dimensions of ability to do certain things. Around 41% of those with disabilities are women. 91.7% of active adult women with disabilities earned less than 2,000 AFN (35 USD) per month, compared to 58.7% of non-disabled active Afghan women.²⁸²

Project Participants

The programme appears to have been generally successful in targeting marginalized women as outlined in the proposal. 20% of women have a long-standing illness, disability, or infirmity where 6% think it is very limiting in their daily activities, 7% think it is limiting, and 4% think it is somewhat limiting. 6% reported having a disease or long-term illness, 4% reported having brain injury/mental disability, and smaller percentages reported paralysis, sight-related disability, loss of a limb, and other. WfWI informed the evaluators that severely disabled women are ineligible for the programme. In 7% of the cases the head of the household is a woman, in 91% is a man. 48% of women reported a household history of displacement,

278 Marie S. Huber, “Gender Equality Report Card, 2015.

279 “National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-2012: Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey,” Central Statistics Organization, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2014, <http://www.af.undp.org/content/dam/afghanistan/docs/MDGs/NRVA%20REPORT-rev-5%202013.pdf>.

280 Marie S. Huber, “Gender Equality Report Card, 2015.

281 Ibid.

282 “Understanding the Challenge Ahead: Executive Summary Report – National Disability Survey in Afghanistan,” Handicap International and the GIRA, 2006, <http://www.handicap-international.org/uploads/media/Understanding-the-challenge-ahead.pdf>.

where 16% define their household as being currently displaced.

However, only 6% of project participants were widowed, indicating that the number involved in the programme is generally lower than would be expected given the prevalence of widows. This can be partially explained by the age range of targeted participants for the programme, which generally targets women no older than 55, as much of the widowed population is over the age of 65. However, as previously addressed, 17% of women aged 40 to 64 are widowed, and this highly vulnerable population should be considered as a priority target group for this project.

The programme also appeared successful in targeting illiterate and women lacking formal education, which can contribute to vulnerability. 74% of the respondents are illiterate, 7% are semi-literate, 5% have Madrassa education, 3% have some primary school, 2% have completed primary school, 1.6% have some secondary school, 1.9% have completed secondary education, 4% have completed high school, and one respondent has a university degree. 41% of women defined themselves as unemployed, 27% as unpaid family worker, 17% as working at home, 2% as a day labourer, 9% as self-employed, and very small percentages having an occupation in the government, private sector, and other. As their main economic activities women listed agriculture or livestock (10%), government (2.4%), education (1.9%) with very small percentages in sectors like health, transportation, retail, and other.

Outreach and Participant Engagement

Recruiting strategies outlined by Women for Women in the proposal were meant to ensure that marginalized women have access to the programme and the variety of sources for attracting women reported confirms that different approaches were used. Women reported hearing about the programme through an elder or influential member of the community, who recommended them for the programme (34%), a friend or family member told them about the programme (32%), a family member heard an announcement in a public space such as a mosque or a marketplace (11%), invitation to a gathering from Women for Women's staff, and 10% personally heard an announcement in a public space.

In Afghanistan, community elders are often an entry point to the community. This serves the dual purpose of identifying potential participants while also attempting to ensure the project has community support and endorsement. The "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme seems to have also utilized this approach, in that referral from elders was the most common way that women heard about the programme. Women were asked to what extent they already knew the other women who participated in their training group. This question was meant to assess whether the project

targeted a wide variety of women within each community, or included women from a specific social group. 35% did not know the women who participated in the programme and 42% knew some of them women prior to training but did not really interact with them. In conclusion, though relying on elders and community leadership can sometimes have risks in terms of elite capture if not managed successfully, elite capture appears to have been successfully avoided by the programme.

Inclusivity

Respondents classified themselves as 28% Pashtun, 51% Tajik, 12% Hazara (in Kabul only), and 8% Arab (in Nangarhar only), and 2 women as Pashayee. Though local-level figures are impossible to obtain, the distribution of ethnicities according to project locations appeared to be reasonably inclusive. The programme was also generally inclusive in terms of participants' age, though it seemed to favour younger women. 41% of respondents were under the age of 25; 28% were between the age of 26 and 35; 21% between the age of 36 and 45; 6% between 46 and 55; the remaining 4% were over the age of 55.

Inclusivity appears to have been considered in the outreach and recruitment phase of programming. Participants were asked which criteria were included in the vetting process for their participation in the programme. 92% of respondents recalled being asked their age at the moment of recruitment. Participants were supposed to come from the lowest economic level possible, earning less than a \$1 a day, which is confirmed by the high percentage of households living in severe and extreme poverty targeted by the programme. At the moment of recruitment, participants also mentioned being asked about their employment status (58%), household level of income (81%), and personal level of income (57%). Women who are mothers or heading households, irrespective of marital status, had priority in recruitment, and only 22% of the respondents do not have children.

The participation criteria provided by WfWI also stipulated that women should not receive similar assistance from other sources, but only 21% of women surveyed mentioned being asked regarding whether they had previously participated in training opportunities. Only one member per household could participate in the programme, which was recalled as a criterion by 33% of the participants. 41% of respondents mentioned being asked about their desire to participate, which was a requirement for participation. However, the inclusion of women who fell into some of the most vulnerable categories does appear to have been somewhat coincidental, and perhaps not as rigorously considered in the recruitment phase. Only 31% said they were asked about their family support, and fewer were asked regarding mobility (12%), ethnicity (28%), disability (20%), and literacy (71%).

3.6 COHERENCE

Coordination

This section explores the coherence and complementarity of the project with other actions, in particular alignment of the programme with national policies/objectives and how the project complemented or paralleled similar projects present in the area.

Coordination with Government Actors and Informal Leaders

At the local level WfWI staff seem to have positive relationships and productive coordination with government actors and influential local leaders such as elders and mullahs. As described by WfWI staff, in the community assessment phase they initially reach out to the government, usually the Provincial Governor and/or the District Governor. They described a process where the District Governor holds a monthly elder meeting, at which WfWI delivers a presentation about their programme, policies, and limitations to secure their support. After this, WfWI reaches out to elders at the community level in areas they would like to target for the programme to ensure the programme has the community's support and will be endorsed by the leaders within the community from the enrolment process and throughout the programme. However, staff members did not describe any efforts to coordinate at the macro level or with actors such as DoWA, AIHRC, the police, or justice actors at the local level. Though issues such as legal response to VAW and responsiveness of justice institutions were not explicitly incorporated into the objectives of the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme, not addressing the institutions and the wider context can contribute to a generally lower impact of the training.

Coordination with Other Organizations and Initiatives

Projects on women's economic development and rights abound in Afghanistan. A review in 2012 undertaken by AREU found over 120 international and national organizations working specifically in the areas of women's economic and social empowerment, covering all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. Projects range from social and legal counselling centres, animal husbandry, handicrafts, midwifery training, microbusiness, leadership, agriculture, community-based self-help groups, vocational training institutes, tree nurseries for women, small and medium enterprise (SME) development, literacy, vocational training and support for disabled women, and microfinance, in addition to awareness raising and promoting women's participation and social empowerment.²⁸³

WfWI has signed a MoU with Harakat and Zardozi, two other NGOs operating in Afghanistan. Zardozi operates the programme “Market for Afghan Artisans.” Currently,

Zardozi supports women handicraft and clothing producers through artisans who produce directly for the Zardozi shop in Kabul and works with around 1,000 other women who live closer to markets in poor urban areas. Zardozi provides support to women in starting small businesses and selling handicrafts and clothing to shopkeepers and traders, and directly works with more than 20 small businesses in the handicraft sector to help them improve their business and production skills to increase their profits and expand.²⁸⁴ As previously explained, Harakat is an independent, non-profit, Afghan-managed organization that aims to improve Afghanistan's business environment. They provide grant funds to the private sector, government and civil society to implement activities to reduce or remove barriers that currently make it difficult to do business in Afghanistan. According to WfWI staff, Zardozi and Harakat have provided some training on marketing, and Harakat provided books on marketing for free to disseminate to programme participants provided by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

In this evaluation, 11% of respondents reported that prior to the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme there were other organizations providing women's vocational training and learning opportunities in their communities. 7% mentioned that prior to the programme, there were other organizations providing training to women in the community on the topics of hygiene, health, leadership or rights. In terms of vocational training, the most duplication was found in Nangarhar province, where 18% of respondents reported that vocational training as already being delivered to women in their community prior to the programme, and 15% life skills training. While this does suggest some degree of duplication, in consideration of the number of programmes working on vocational training and women's empowerment, this generally indicates success in targeting underserved communities that are not covered by other programming.

Gender Equality in Programme Delivery

Ironically, based on the 10 USD stipend given to women and 20 to men per month (where men attended fewer meetings than women) it seems that WfWI itself does not believe in gender equality. What's more, the men participating in the programme were not expected to save a portion of this stipend to utilize for future income generation, and instead were simply given twice the stipend with far lower expectations or accountability regarding how it would be utilized.

Alignment of the Programme with National Policies and Laws

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) has made countless commitments to gender equality through many documents and policies, such as the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan, the

283 Dr. Lena Ganesh, “Women's Economic Empowerment in Afghanistan, 2002-2012: Information Mapping,” Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, July 2013, <http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdf/Information%20Mapping.pdf>.

284 “About Us,” Zardozi Market for Afghan Artisans, 2015, <http://www.afghanartisans.com/content/6-about-zardozi>.

Afghanistan National Development Strategy, the National Priority Programs, and the Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals.²⁸⁵ Generally, the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme supports the broad goals and objectives covered by these documents, particularly with regards to women’s economic and social development. However, it is important to also note that the training materials do not incorporate any Afghanistan-specific laws or policies, and do not explicitly align their objectives with these policies.

The government of Afghanistan also has a national Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme, which the WfWI programme does not appear to formally coordinate with. Formal TVET is generally implemented by the Ministry of Education, and informal TVET by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and the Disabled as well as other public sector stakeholder ministries. The National TVET Strategy for Afghanistan formulates a vision of an affordable and fitting TVET and skills development system in Afghanistan that contributes to achieving the country’s economic and social development plans and creates competent and self-reliant citizens (men and women). Women and girls are a specific target group for increased access to TVET.²⁸⁶

The programme also does not adequately consider its alignment with Afghanistan’s laws and broader support for rule of law in Afghanistan, which is a critical prerequisite for the full realization of women’s rights and gender equality. As previously explained, the WfWI training programme does not provide formal training or information on Afghanistan’s laws and legal system. Most importantly, it does not even provide women with basic information on one of the strongest legal tools for their protection from both physical and psychological abuse—the EVAW Law. As explained by WfWI staff, they do not encourage women to engage with the formal justice system, instead promoting the use of traditional bodies, which are often patriarchal and have a mixed record on women’s rights.²⁸⁷ While traditional bodies are important, influential, and widely utilized institutions in Afghan society, there is no formal agreement between the formal and informal justice systems, and as such there is no accountability for the decisions they make and no formal means of ensuring women’s rights are respected in the process.

Additionally, the “self-help groups” as described by WfWI appear as cooperatives by a different name. The legal definition of a cooperative under the Cooperative Law (Official Gazette no. 287) is “an association of persons who have voluntarily joined together to achieve a common social and economic end through the formation of a democratically managed and controlled organization.” In consideration of this definition, from a legal perspective, though they are called “self-help groups” they still fall under the definition of a cooperative. Calling them a

different name does not necessarily absolve them of the legal requirement to register with the government, or of the recognition of cooperatives as a commercial company by law²⁸⁸ or compliance with Afghanistan’s tax laws. Encouraging participants to start businesses that operate in, at best, a legal grey area is not responsible development. Furthermore, it is not in support of the long-term development of Afghanistan, which currently only collects approximately 10% of its GDP in domestic revenue.²⁸⁹ It is critical that organizations that are encouraging business development also encourage compliance with Afghanistan’s laws and payment of taxes in accordance with the law. Furthermore, having an informal business excludes actors from the benefits that could potentially come from legal status, such as regulation of employment, subsidies and access to capacity building initiatives. It can lead to low investment, the “free rider problem” (overuse of public goods but low tax collection), low innovation, a population uninsured against income shocks, and workers who are unprotected by basic safety standards and labour regulations.²⁹⁰

It is important to acknowledge that there are very difficult challenges in encouraging engagement with the formal justice system and with the state on business and commercial matters. Afghanistan is consistently ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. According to the 2014 National Corruption Survey, courts are considered the most corrupt institution (34%), followed by MoI at 26%. MoJ was considered the fourth most corrupt (17%). Perceptions of corruption discourage women from seeking out the formal justice system, where many cases brought by women are unsettled, withdrawn, or simply closed due to corruption or use of influence on the justice system, or officials expect bribes or compensation for their services.²⁹¹ Additionally, justice institutions and police are viewed as the two most corrupt public institutions in Afghanistan,²⁹² and both also have a mixed record at best on women’s rights. Sometimes going to the police can actually expose women to abuse and a further deterioration of their rights.²⁹³ There are considerable safety risks for women in accessing the formal justice system. Furthermore, ANP personnel have been accused of actually being the perpetrators of violence against women at disturbingly considerable rates.²⁹⁴

These issues present considerable challenges for a programme such as WfWI in encouraging women to avail of the legal protection mechanisms available to them, and in this context it is understandable that promoting engagement with the judiciary and police could have potentially harmful consequences. However, DoWA and

288 “Law of Commerce,” Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 1334, <http://moci.gov.af/Content/files/Law%20of%20Commerce.pdf>.

289 Marie S. Huber, Maurits Rade, and Shamsia Noori, “Independent Review of Afghanistan 1394 Draft National Budget: A Snapshot of Resources, Allocations, and Public Finance Management Performance,” EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy, November 2014, http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/1394-Budget-Snapshot_English.pdf.

290 “Informality and Small Business Development in the City of Kabul,” Afghan Management and Marketing Consultants for Harakat, July 2011, http://www.harakat.af/site_files/13623051011.pdf.

291 Ibid.

292 Marie S. Huber, “Gender Equality Report Card,” 2015.

293 Ibid.

294 Ibid.

285 Marie S. Huber, “Gender Equality Report Card,” 2015.

286 “National TVET Strategy: 2013-2018,” Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Matrys and the Disabled, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2013, <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Kabul/pdf/NationalTVetStrategyEnglish.pdf>.

287 Marie S. Huber, “Gender Equality Report Card,” 2015.

AIHRC have generally good reputations for registering cases and providing support to women, and in this evaluation women were also generally unaware of these options and relatively few reported that they would advise other women to turn to these options when experiencing abuse in comparison to family and traditional mechanisms. Generally, this would indicate that the training on rights and legal support did not effectively inform participants of the mechanisms available to them.

Aside from the risks stemming from the attitudes and behaviours of formal justice and security actors, women face considerable social risks in attempting to access state mechanisms. Consequences of going outside the home for support could include social stigma, disapproval, physical retaliation, and loss of economic sustenance, and these risks intensify when a woman goes outside of community structures such as shuras, elders, and religious leaders to access the formal justice system. Research has found that many women will only seek out state and external mechanisms after they have tried and failed to resolve their dispute within the home or the community, and only when faced with a “serious” issue, such as life-threatening physical violence. Often normative barriers associated with the “shame” of seeking out the formal justice system continue to pose risks to women’s safety if they seek state support.²⁹⁵

Corruption is also a key issue in the registration and tax compliance of cooperatives. In Afghanistan, all government procedures are often marked by bureaucracy and legal red tape, and can be time-consuming and costly to complete,²⁹⁶ and processes such as registering a cooperative are likely no exception. For businesses that are registered, there are often problems during tax reporting and filing, and forms are often described as too complicated and inappropriate for small businesses. Additionally, illiteracy is a huge barrier to the entire process.²⁹⁷ Particularly for small women’s business in Afghanistan, research has found that confusion and fear of formalization, lack of support, corruption, and the complication of tax filing are key barriers.²⁹⁸

Positively, according to a WfWI staff member interviewed, with the MoU with Harakat, when Harakat has a training they invite 1-3 women from the WfWI training programme who are self-help group leaders to participate. However, Harakat is a grant-giving organization, so it is unclear whether the trainings are provided directly by Harakat or through its grantees. While this is a positive step, as Harakat is one of the leading NGOs on business and compliance in Afghanistan, it still only provides information and support to a miniscule fraction of WfWI programme participants. This shortcoming could actually expose WfWI programme participants to considerable risk by encouraging them to start businesses without

providing the necessary information or support to ensure they are legally compliant, and does not support a do no harm programmatic approach.

As such, this evaluation acknowledges the considerable complexities facing a programme such as “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan.” The evaluation does not suggest that women should be encouraged to seek recourse with the state in all situations, but rather that women should know about all of their options, and the general pros, cons, and risks associated with each of them. Though business formalization and legal compliance in Afghanistan can be deeply complicated, the WfWI programme does not address this. The training manuals provided to the evaluators do not include any materials on business formalization or training on the procedures, institutions, and legal requirements of doing business in Afghanistan.

3.7 SUSTAINABILITY

As outlined in the proposal, WfWI planned to provide follow-up support in the form of registration of cooperatives, market linkages, transport, and support in the form of capacity building to manage and grow businesses established by graduates, which should support the sustainability of the programme in the absence of financial support. The major aspect of sustainability of the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme, the registration of cooperatives, never occurred due to complexities and legal issues surrounding its formalization.

The near complete absence of project support in actually helping women take what they had learned and develop their skills into income generating activities is likely a large contributor to the low number of women actually earning an income. 8% of respondents had received support from WfWI in establishing self-help groups, and 8% in terms of facilitating self-help group meetings. As described by a WfWI staff member, WfWI provides support to women in establishing the self-help group and facilitating the first four meetings, up to selection of a leader, then conducts a follow-up visit two months later, but does not provide financial support. However, the staff member explained that women who are not members of the self-help groups (less than 10% of programme participants according to this staff member) are only provided with basic training on marketing, and do not receive any support in actually finding and connecting to markets to find a way to generate income using the skills they have developed through the vocational training.

Though support for graduates is included as a programme component in the proposal,²⁹⁹ only 28% of respondents reported that they had received follow up support from WfWI since they graduated from the training programme. Only 3% of respondents reported that they had received support to a business or cooperative they were involved in, and only 3% had received support in accessing markets. Very few had received support in terms of logistics such as transportation (1.5%), legal support (3%), and marketing

299 “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” proposal

295 Ibid.

296 Mohammad Razaq Isaqzadeh and Shahim Ahmad Kabuli, “National Corruption Survey 2014,” Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2014.

297 Holly Ritchie, “Practical Framework for Women in Inclusive Local Business Development in Afghanistan: National and Provincial-Based Approaches for Strengthening Women’s Participation in Enterprise,” Harakat ‘Women in Business’ Briefing Paper Series, August 2011, http://www.harakat.af/site_files/13623051014.pdf.

298 Ibid.

support (1.5%). Additionally supporting women in applying their new skills into income generating activities through measures such as additional follow-up, visits, counselling, facilitation in business and cooperative registration could have contributed to more women earning an income.

In fact, women from four FGDs mentioned receiving limited support from WFWI and highlighting it as an aspect of the programme that needs to be improved. A participant explained:

They said that they would support us in tailoring and sewing of carpets. For tailoring, they listed our names, they said to us that we need to prepare the cloth by ourselves, one sews and the other one sells it, but after that they didn't support us. They said that they will come to see our houses, and meet one of the members in their house but did not do anything after that. For sewing carpets, we need to prepare the materials and they will provide the place. We need to sew it and then sell it.³⁰⁰

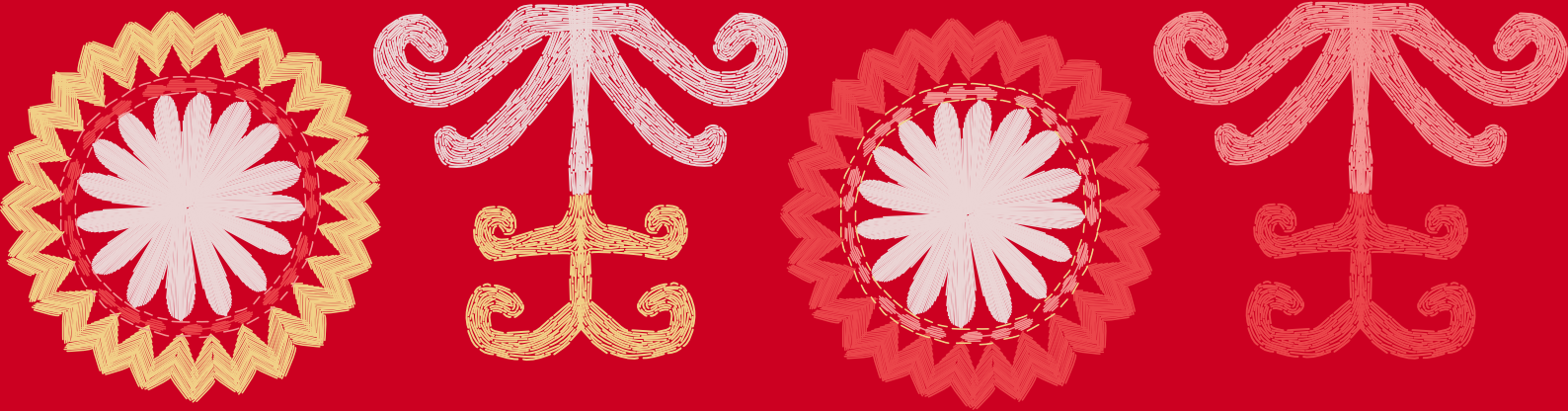
Additionally, based on the materials provided and findings of this evaluation, once women graduate they are not provided with refresher trainings or materials to ensure they are able to refresh their knowledge on what they have learned. It is unreasonable to assume that women will not need materials to reference and update their knowledge in all areas of the training—life skills, business, and particularly vocational. Additionally, women have limited access to information resources. In 2006, 86% of women reported having a radio in their household, and

37% a TV set. 37% of women had a functioning mobile phone within their household. In 2014, 39% of women reported using a mobile phone for obtaining information, and only 2% the Internet. 75% got information from radio, and 56% from TV.³⁰¹ Whereas a woman in Kosovo may be able to just search online if she forgets a certain type of stitch or a piece of information regarding poultry feed, the 75% illiterate project participants in Afghanistan with limited access to Internet or other information sources have few options, other than to ask other participants and hope to find someone with the information they need. This is a considerable factor affecting the sustainability of the programme.

The major positive aspect of sustainability found in this evaluation lies in the social nets established among women while they attended the trainings. A general sense of ownership was observed among participants, where a high percentage of women (65%) continue to meet with the women from the programme after graduation where 22% meet at least once a week, 24% at least once a month, 18% at least once every few months and others did not provide an answer. Women mostly meet at the house of one of the women (50%), at the mosque or public space (26%), or at the training centre where they have attended the programme (22%). 60% stated they meet out of their own initiative and 25% with the support of WfWI (15% did not know or refused to answer). This would indicate that women are able to develop strong social networks throughout the programme that they are able to carry through beyond the life of the programme and continue to rely upon for social and programme-related support.

300 Kabul, Dasht-e Barchi, Focus group with women, June 2015

301 Marie S. Huber, "Gender Equality Report Card," 2015.



4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme had a mixed effect, but generally did not meet its stated objectives. Women showed good knowledge on nutrition, a high percentage practice family planning, and participate in community activities. Overall, women are somewhat empowered in the political, psychological, and physical domains of empowerment, but less so in terms of the socio-cultural beliefs and visibility, economic, familial/interpersonal and legal dimensions. On the other hand, in terms of earning an income and saving a portion of their income, the programme had a limited impact on women’s lives. Knowledge on business basics, reproductive health, and rights remains limited. Women’s ability to influence household decision on girls’ and boys’ school attendance and financials decisions did not meet the proposed target. Men showed high levels of belief in the efficacy of violence prevention but an average level of self-efficacy in violence prevention. Nonetheless, taking action seems rather difficult for the participants, who also showed somewhat neutral to negative gender role attitudes.

In other aspects of the programme, results also appear to be mixed. Marginalized women were successfully included in the programme, elite capture was successfully avoided, and women established sustainable social networks and safety nets. A positive relationship and productive coordination with local leaders such as elders and mullahs was also established. However, efficiency was mixed, with seemingly low value for money, poor assessment tools, and an overly ambitious timeframe. Manuals in general lack local specificity and the trainings poorly cater to the needs of illiterate women aside the complete absence of a formal training or information on Afghanistan’s laws and legal system regarding both rights and business. There is also a discrepancy between the trainings that women attended and the areas where they actually derived their personal incomes. The programme appears to have been somewhat inconsistent with the realities of women’s situation regarding decision-making and access to inputs and resources, which in turn would limit their ability to take the skills they had learned and translate them into income generating activities. Despite successful coordination at micro-level, staff members did not describe any efforts to coordinate at the macro level or with actors such as DoWA, AIHRC, the police, or justice actors at the local level. Cooperatives were not established, which fell short of the main component of sustainability outside the safety nets.

4.1 PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In returning to the theoretical framework outlined at the beginning of the evaluation report, the programme rationale is largely in line with WID and the “smart economics” approach, though some of the programme’s activities and implementation are more aligned with GAD concepts. At surface level, the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme incorporates some components of a GAD approach, attempting to address practical gender needs by training women in business and other skills in order to enable them to earn an income and sustain a living. This is coupled with trainings in reproductive health, family planning, and women’s rights. However, as this evaluation has found, these components of the program have had limited success, and amount to largely symbolic accomplishments in terms of outputs and the number of women who participated, rather than women actually being able to use their skills to address practical gender needs in terms of inadequacies in living conditions such as water provision, food, and health care.

The programme attempts to address strategic gender needs by raising women’s awareness through training and through the MLP programme, where the inclusion of men was seen as a tool for facilitating gender equality and a change in gender relations, in line with GAD approaches that (not without criticisms) saw a solution in the inclusion of men. The MLP targets influential male community members like religious leaders and elders, based on the rationale that changing community leaders’ minds can help related to address strategic gender needs related to gender divisions of labor, power and control, and issues such as legal rights and domestic violence. However, this component appears to be a surface-level attempt in trying to establish gender equality, based on a largely unsubstantiated theory of a trickle-down effect from community leadership. This is an especially problematic theory when considering that only 13% or participants surveyed said that they would advise a woman experiencing physical abuse to turn to community elders, shuras or jirgas, and 20% to a religious leader.

Structural barriers are not addressed at the very root of the problem, inside the family, or at the macro level and through institutions and legal mechanisms.

The approach taken by the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme is imbued with assumptions that dominated the WID approach, where the programme predominantly focuses on women’s productive roles and income generation as a means of status improvement for women. It generally incorporates training and vocational skills and specific income generating activities typical of WID such as skills and crafts, while also incorporating some elements of welfare-centric topics such as hygiene and literacy. The “empowerment” language tied to the programme attempts to mask the WID approach as GAD, but falls short in failing to operate under a definition of empowerment that moves beyond the WID concept of economic productivity as empowerment.

The approach to addressing both women’s practical and strategic gender needs in terms of actual activities in the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme is largely through awareness raising, reduced to direct training activities without coupling these with advocacy and direct engagement to actually target the structural barriers facing women in areas such as their health, nutrition, family planning, access to protection and legal support, civic participation, and other critical areas of empowerment. Essentially, the programme rests on the assumption that if women are just aware of their practical and strategic gender needs, paired with an increased capacity to become economically productive, they will naturally become empowered. Similarly, it assumes that if community leadership’s awareness is raised regarding women’s rights, the rest will naturally follow, with men actively intervening in situations of abuse and supporting women’s participation in the community. However, the program stops at awareness raising and does not undertake activities or provide any actual support in tackling the multitude of remaining structural barriers they face. The findings of this evaluation highlight the limitations to the awareness-raising approach in terms of engendering meaningful change and empowerment of women.

The WID approach was generally abandoned in the late 1970s due to its mostly symbolic success, and the use of symbolic markers of success can also be found in the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme. The programme generally concluded that women’s employment and self-assessed knowledge of their rights and other life skills areas would constitute project success, without actually addressing or meaningfully measuring the complexity of women’s empowerment. This evaluation has similarly found that even the programme’s outputs were mostly symbolic, with few women generating income and even fewer generating income in the areas in which they received training, and few women demonstrating meaningful levels of knowledge regarding the topics upon which they were supposed to be trained regarding business and life skills areas.

In its implementation, the “Stronger women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme appears to generally address women’s economic engagement and empowerment in a vacuum, similar to the WID approach that generally focused on existing social structures and how to integrate women into them through advocacy for equal participation. This approach, which in the programme focuses only on addressing structural barriers through trying to raise awareness among traditional patriarchal bodies at the community level, does not address the multitude of structural barriers that prevent women’s meaningful empowerment. It furthermore avoids questioning and addressing the sources and nature of women’s subordination, looking at women in isolation without considering the relational dimensions of the status of women in their homes and their daily lives and in society at large. The programme rationale itself utilizes language directly derived from WID, which assumes that access to income will sufficiently empower women and gender relations will change on their own as women become economically viable members of society,³⁰² in stating that “when women earn an income in a deeply patriarchal society like Afghanistan – they begin to shift the narrow lens through which they are viewed, as male relatives start to see them as ‘contributing’ family members.”³⁰³ The “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme provides further evidence that primary emphasis on access to income does not sufficiently empower women, and social structures and gender relations do not change on their own as women become economically active members of society.

4.2 TRIANGULATING EVALUATION FINDINGS WITH EXISTING FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED ON WOMEN’S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

There are a number of existing lessons learned from similar projects regarding women’s social and economic empowerment that would help inform and understanding of the shortcomings of the project. An evaluation on gendered differences in vocational training (conducted among youth in Malawi) found that women drop out due to adverse shocks (severe illness or injury), and are more likely to participate when alternative opportunities disappear (e.g. they get fired). The evaluation found that girls are on average less educated than boys at baseline, have more dependents, and spend more time on domestic chores as opposed to paid labour or business activities. Women self-report constraints such as ‘family obligations’

302 Eva M. Rathgeber, “WID, WAD, GAD: Trends in Research and Practice,” *The Journal of Developing Areas* 24, no. 4 (1990): 489-502.

303 “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” proposal

and ‘getting married’ as the main reasons they drop out. Second, participating in training is expensive and trainees – especially girls – have to draw down their savings to do so.³⁰⁴ Much of these observations were also found in this evaluation, where approximately one out of every ten women were not able to complete the programme, and women did not appear to have sufficient decision-making authority to translate the training into actual returns.

Another evaluation of a programme that attempted to jump-start female economic and social empowerment in Uganda that included vocational skills that enabled them to start small-scale income generating activities, and life skills that enabled them to make informed choices about sex, reproduction and marriage, traced the impacts over two years using a panel of 4800 adolescent girls. The authors documented quantitatively large and beneficial impacts along both margins of economic and social empowerment. On the first margin, girls were significantly more likely to be engaged in self-employment activities, reported improved business skills and had higher monthly expenditures. On the second margin, adolescent girls were significantly less likely to become pregnant and more likely to delay marriage. These delays have been shown, in other contexts, to improve marriage quality, increase decision-making within households and reduce exposure to domestic violence.³⁰⁵ What the programme achieved was changing the girls’ own perceptions of what they are economically capable of and of what rights they have over their own bodies. However, some points remain unclear, like whether the gains occur because adolescent girls were able to match with better quality men when their human capital improved, whether it improved their bargaining power within existing relationships, or whether men’s attitudes towards women changed as women’s human capital improved.³⁰⁶

This evaluation showed similar results, where women seemed to have considerable levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy, though they did not demonstrate the same effectiveness in terms of women actually earning income. Similarly, the women in the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme seem to be exercising considerably high levels of family planning and decision-making autonomy regarding their own health and childbearing. However, this evaluation can to some extent provide evidence contrary to the hypothesis that men’s attitudes towards women change as women’s human capital rises, given the absence of relationships between a number of dimensions of empowerment and whether women were or were not earning income, and the absence of correlations to the level of income earned among those who were earning an income.

A study conducted among Muslim women in India found

304 Yoonyoung Cho, Davie Kalomba, Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak, Victor Orozco, “Gender Differences in the Effects of Vocational Training Constraints on Women and Drop-Out Behavior”, 2004, <http://www.povertyactionlab.org/publication/gender-differences-effects-vocational-training-constraints-women-and-drop-out-behavior>

305 Oriana Bandiera, Niklas Buehren, Robin Burgess, Markus Goldstein, Selim Gulesci, Imran Rasul and Munshi Sulaiman, “Women’s Empowerment in Action: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in Africa, UCL, 2014, <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctpimr/research/ELA.pdf>

306 Ibid.

that they did not benefit from business training, likely due to social restrictions,³⁰⁷ which could provide some insight as to why the “Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan” programme was somewhat less successful in terms of business development and economic engagement. The study explored how traditional religious and caste institutions in India that impose restrictions on women’s behaviour influence their business activity. The approach consisted of a randomly selected sample of poor self-employed women, who were trained in basic financial literacy and business skills and encouraged to identify concrete financial goals. The sample was relatively homogenous in terms of socio-economic status (e.g., education). However, differences in religion and caste meant that they face very different traditional restrictions on mobility and social interactions where Muslim women faced the most restrictions. The results were interpreted as a non-monotonic relationship between social restrictions and the ability to benefit from business training. The training helped women whose businesses had been held down by social restrictions, but women subject to extreme restrictions had too little agency to easily change their aspirations or activities. Even with more knowledge or higher aspirations, the most restricted women might face too many social strictures to avail themselves of entrepreneurial opportunities. This finding, similar to the conclusions of this evaluation, would suggest that business training in the absence of interventions to address structural barriers within women’s households and communities may have limited effect.

A randomized community trial explored the impacts of giving cash grants of approximately \$150 business skills training to the very poorest and most excluded women in a war-affected region of northern Uganda.³⁰⁸ Overall, the programme had a positive impact on poverty alleviation but little on women empowerment. The women were encouraged by the NGO to begin with retail trading and goods, and most started and sustained small retail businesses with the capital they receive, while continuing their farming and other miscellaneous activities. A year after the intervention, monthly cash earnings doubled from 16,500 Uganda Shillings (UGX) to 31,300 (\$6.60 to \$12.52 U.S. Dollars; USD), cash savings tripled, and short-term expenditures and durable assets increased 30 to 50% relative to the control group. Although these results suggested the programme led to relatively large increases in income and wealth, there was no effect on women’s independence, status in the community, or freedom from intimate partner violence (though, importantly, the programme did not increase a woman’s probability of experiencing partner violence). There was also little effect on psychological or social well-being from this reduction in poverty. This is congruent with other experimental studies, including employment programmes in northern Uganda, that show little short-

307 Erica Field, Seema Jayachandran, Rohini Pande, “Do Traditional Institutions Constrain Female Entrepreneurship? A Field Experiment on Business Training in India”, 2010, <http://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/~sjv340/entrepreneurs.pdf>

308 Christopher Blattman, Eric Greene, Jeannie Annan, “Building Women’s Economic and Social Empowerment Through Enterprise An Experimental Assessment of the Women’s Income Generating Support (WINGS) Program in Uganda”, 2013, https://www.poverty-action.org/sites/default/files/wings_full_policy_report_0.pdf

term connection between poverty relief and either social support or symptoms of distress. The authors suggested that perhaps economic success and empowerment are not closely linked, at least in the short run, for poverty impacts of this magnitude.³⁰⁹ Similarly, the findings of this evaluation found that while few empowerment variables were linked to women's income generation, several were related to the overall economic situation of the household, further supporting the hypothesis that in the context of extreme poverty, women's economic success and empowerment may not be as closely linked as has been previously assumed.

As discussed in the introduction to this evaluation, considerable research has been done to assess what is and is not effective in promoting women's economic empowerment. In the "Roadmap for Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment," proven interventions included designing and marketing appropriate savings vehicles for women; credit and business management training targeting women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs); bundled services including capital, income generation training, and follow-up technical visits for women-owned micro firms; land registration and land titling promotion schemes; quality, accessible, and affordable childcare for women wage workers; and loans and subsidies to connect poor households to electricity grids in rural areas. Promising interventions, which were classified as such for needing to be further tested and refined, included mobile phones that allow access to financial transactions and market information for all women; consulting services and technical advice for entrepreneurs; capital in-kind for entrepreneurs; and livelihood programmes and unconditional cash transfers for young women.

However, the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme does not meaningfully align its approach with any of these proven interventions. As the Roadmap supports, similar to the conclusion of this evaluation, it is proven that addressing larger structural barriers promotes women's economic empowerment through initiatives that do not just seek to provide information, but rather implement direct actions to increase the gender equitability of land and asset ownership, access to healthcare and childcare, and access to resources and services. Furthermore, the field of mobile money services has shown some potential in terms of savings and access to credit, specifically for women in Afghanistan,³¹⁰ but the WfWI programme has not incorporated this into their approach.

In terms of lessons learned, the review of existing evaluation data from around the world included a number of items of key relevance in consideration of the activities and objectives of the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme. The review found that capital alone is insufficient for growing women-owned subsistence-level firms, and that a relatively large capital transfer paired with income generation training and

follow-up technical support can be cost effective, as well as delivering capital alone as in-kind. This could also help in part explain why the programme has fallen short of its target objectives, as women are provided with minimal financial resources in monetary form, then provided with training but no follow-up support.

The Roadmap review also found that business training can improve business practices, but has few measurable effects on the actual growth of women-owned firms, and that this could be improved by increasing the quality and duration of trainings combined with technical support. Additionally, they found that savings interventions increase women's business earnings, but savings are most effectively promoted through savings products, such as savings accounts.³¹¹ Though women are encouraged to save a portion of their income, the programme does not include any component of actually designing or delivering effective savings vehicles for women. The programme delivers income generation training, but these have been found to be more effective when also coupled with capital and follow-up technical visits, which the programme does not include.

Additionally, the Roadmap review found that formal ownership and control over farmland improves women's productivity and economic security. Though low land ownership and somewhat low levels of control over farmland were found in this evaluation, the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme does not include any element of land tenure interventions. Additionally, the Roadmap concluded that farmer groups and collectives are beneficial in providing women producers with access to markets and meeting supply chain demands. WfWI has also concluded that women may have more success collectively, but has struggled to reconcile this with the Afghan context and logistical complexities of establishing cooperatives, which this evaluation found ultimately rendered this component ineffective and to some extent non-existent. Furthermore, the Roadmap found that an integrated approach that addresses both production and marketing as well as addressing social constraints is the main feature of projects that succeed in raising the productivity of small-scale women farmers, again highlighting the critical shortcoming of the "Stronger Women, Stronger Afghanistan" programme in failing to meaningfully address social constraints and structural barriers.

309 Ibid.

310 "Connecting to Opportunity: A Survey of Afghan Women's Access to Mobile Technology," USAID, May 2013, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1871/survey_afghan_women_mobile.pdf.

311 Mayra Buvinic, Rebecca Rust-Nichols, and Emily Courey Pryor, "A Roadmap for Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment," 2013.

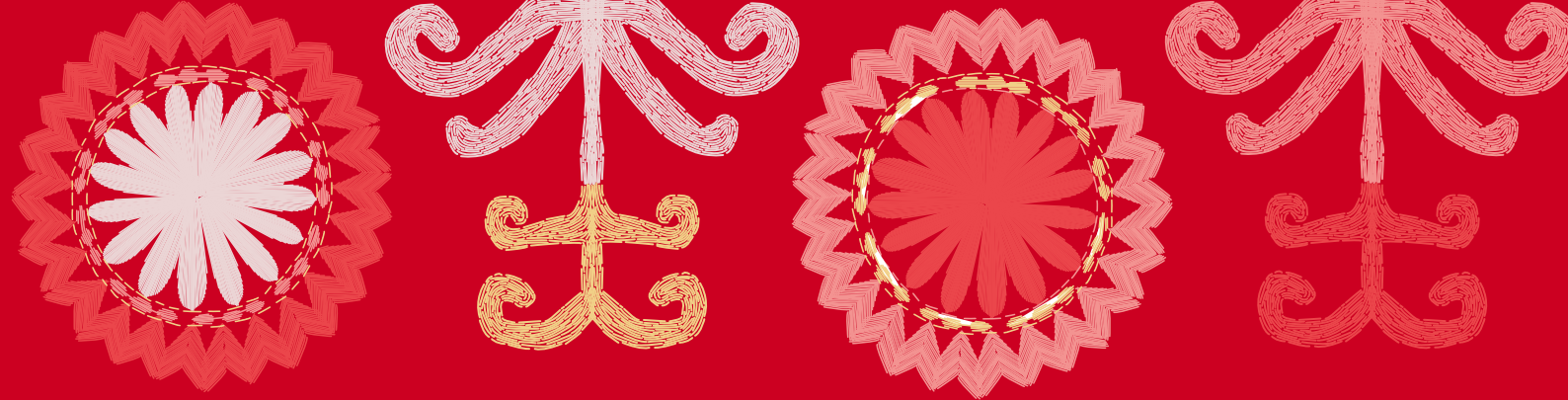
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ANNEX A: MEASURING EMPOWERMENT

MEASURES

Female Participant Survey

Socio-Cultural Beliefs and Visibility

As a domain of empowerment, socio-cultural beliefs and visibility refers to things like women's freedom of movement, lack of discrimination against daughters, commitment to educating daughters, women's visibility and access to social spaces, and participation in extra-familial groups and social networks. To measure this aspect, we have utilized one scale, plus an additional two scales that overlap with the Familial/Interpersonal Domain.

The Social Well-Being Construct was developed by Corey Keyes in 1998, drawing on classical sociology. The scale consists of 15 items in a five-component model of social well-being that includes social integration, social contribution, social coherence, social actualization, and social acceptance. Taken together, these components indicate whether and to what degree individuals are overcoming social challenges and function well in their social world (with neighbours, in their community, and as a member of society). For the purposes of this survey, the 15-item version of the construct was used. Two items were removed in analysis ("I cannot make sense of what's going on in the world" and "Society has stopped making progress"), with the final scale consisting of 13 items.

Familial/Interpersonal

Familial and intrapersonal domains of empowerment refer to participation in decision-making, control over decisions, control over spousal selection and marriage, and freedom from domestic violence. This component utilizes three scales. The first two overlap with socio-cultural beliefs and visibility, measuring gender role attitudes and restrictiveness of living environments. The third is a screening tool for domestic violence.

The Gender Roles Attitude Scale (GRAS) was developed to measure university students' attitudes towards gender roles in Turkey via self-administered questionnaires. The GRAS contains 38 items across five dimensions—egalitarian gender roles, female gender roles, marriage gender roles, traditional gender roles, and male gender roles. For the purpose of our evaluation, the GRAS was modified, selecting two items from each of the five dimensions based on cultural appropriateness and purposive selection with regards to the objectives of this survey.³¹²

The Restrictiveness Evaluation Measure for Youth (REM-Y) is a revised version of the Restrictiveness of Living Environment Survey (ROLES), which was actually developed to conceptualize the restrictiveness of children's' living situation for use in youth care services. The first conceptualization of restrictiveness using dimensions was developed in the 1980s, and the ROLES was developed in 1992, and has been used extensively in the field of youth care services. The REM-Y aimed to describe restrictiveness as reflecting the ways in which adults have anticipated limits that need to be made for the child's safety and developmental needs. It includes items on activity restrictions (limits on what a person can do), movement restrictions (limits on where a person can go), social restrictions (limits on whom a person can see and spend time with), the burden of treatment (constraints embedded within treatment), and independent living (constraints placed on finances and living arrangements).

312 Simge Zeyneloglu and Fusun Terzioğlu, "Development and Psychometric Properties Gender Roles Attitude Scale," H. U. Journal of education 40 (2011): 409-240.

Though the REM-Y was developed based on the restrictiveness of children's living environments, the conceptual approach and items themselves have applicability in the context of measuring the restrictiveness of women's living environments in Afghanistan. As would be expected, this scale was heavily modified for use in this evaluation. The burden of treatment and independent living components were removed, as they were not applicable in this context. Within the remaining dimensions, only certain items were utilized, with a total of 8 items. Regarding activity restrictions, the modified scale utilized in this survey addresses clothing and employment; in movement restrictions it addresses movement in community, movement within setting, and educational setting; regarding social restrictions it addresses friend selection, interaction with friends, and family interaction. The wording of each response option has been revised to match the context and purpose of the modified measure of restrictiveness of living environment.³¹³

The Hurt, Insult, Threaten, and Scream (HITS) Tool for Intimate Partner Violence Screening is a four-item tool that was developed and tested in a female population in Chicago as a simple, brief instrument for use in clinical settings to identify victims of domestic violence.³¹⁴ The HITS scale has been found to be very reliable as a rapid assessment tool, but has largely only been tested among relatively homogenous populations and in English-speaking populations.³¹⁵ The tool also lacks an item for sexual intimate partner violence, which was considered too sensitive for inclusion in this evaluation anyways given that it is a third-party evaluation and adequate trust has not been built to ask such questions in this context.

Legal

The legal domain of empowerment refers to dimensions such as women's knowledge of legal rights, domestic support for existing rights, effective enforcement of rights, and the use of the judicial system to enforce rights. For this domain, the household questionnaire only addresses knowledge and practice regarding rights. For this domain, an Afghanistan-specific scale was developed, designed to measure how women would provide advice and support to others, their knowledge of their own legal rights according to Afghan law, and their familiarity with the various institutions in place in Afghanistan that are meant to provide legal support and protection for women.

Political

The political domain of empowerment refers to aspects including knowledge of the political system and means of access to it, domestic support for political engagement, exercising the right to vote, and participation in governance at all levels. The survey utilizes one scale to measure political attitudes, and another to measure actual practices regarding civic engagement and participation in political processes.

The Public Values Scale is derived from one dimension of a tool for measuring civic awareness that was conceptualized in China to measure impact on e-participation.³¹⁶ The three items included in the scale are designed to measure the respondent's perceived importance of voting, engaging in and considering national affairs, and willingness to engage with government actors at the community level. The overall scale exhibited low reliability,³¹⁷ so one item was removed, with the final scale consisting of a two items measuring public values. Additionally, three items related to actual political practices were included, looking at the participants' voting behaviours in the 2014 Presidential and Provincial Council elections and decision-making process regarding who to vote for, and a hypothetical scenario meant to gauge women's level of empowerment in engaging with political institutions at their community level.

Psychological

In terms of empowerment, the psychological domain covers areas such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, psychological well-being, collective awareness of injustice, potential of mobilization, women's sense of inclusion and entitlement, and systemic acceptance of women's entitlement and inclusion. To measure this component, the survey utilizes three scales, measuring self-esteem, self-efficacy and general mental health of the respondents.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is one of the most widely used measures of self-esteem in social science research. The scale was developed in 1956 in the field of sociology, and consists of 10 items answered on a four-point scale. It is designed to measure the respondent's positive or negative orientation towards themselves in an overall evaluation of their worth or value.³¹⁸

313 Mary E. Rauktis, Jonathan C. Huefner, Kirk O'Brien, Peter J. Pecora, Ann Doucette, and Ronald W. Thompson, "Measuring the Restrictiveness of Living Environments for Children and Youth: Reconceptualizing Restriction," *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* 17, no. 3 (2009): 147-163.

314 Amer Shakil, MD, Smith Donald, PhD, James M. Sinacore, PhD, Martin Krepcho, PhD, "Validation of HITS Domestic Violence Screening Tool with Males," *Clinical Research Methods* 37, no. 3 (2005): 193-198.

315 Mallika Punukollu, MD, "Domestic violence: Screening made practical," *The Journal of Family Practice* 52, no. 7 (2003): 537-543.

316 Nan Zhang, "Measuring Civic Awareness and Validating its Impact on E-Participation: An Empirical Study on a G2C Platform Adoption in China," *Tsinghua University School of Public Policy and Management*, 1991, <http://www.pacis-net.org/file/2014/1991.pdf>.

317 Cronbach's alpha=.476

318 M. Rosenberg, *Society and the adolescent of self-image*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965.

The Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) is a ten-item scale that was originally developed in German, assessing the strength of an individual's belief in their own ability to respond to novel or difficult situations and to deal with associated obstacles or setbacks. It is designed to be self-administered, with responses on a four-point scale.³¹⁹ However, for both of these scales, they were modified to use the same five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree utilized throughout the survey.

The Mental Health Inventory-5 (MHI-5) is a five-item screening test. It is a short screening questionnaire designed for research and clinical practice to detect patients with psychiatric disorders in primary care. It looks at anxiety, depression, behavioural control, and positive affect.³²⁰

Physical

The Health Locus of Control (HLOC) is used to measure perceived influencing factors over one's physical health, including internal, chance, and "powerful others" dimensions. This three-dimensional HLOC consists of subscales for each dimension, measuring generalized locus of control beliefs. For the purpose of this survey, a shortened version was utilized, consisting of a four-item internal subscale, and two-item subscales for chance and powerful others, measured on a five-point Likert scale.

Economic

In this component, the survey consists of four scales, measuring financial literacy, perceived economic power, economic abuse, and household decision-making regarding use of financial resources. The measure of financial literacy was based on research from India and Indonesia, posing four questions measuring respondents' ability to answer correctly based on borrowing money and interest rates, risk, and choosing a loan.³²¹ For the purposes of this survey, the item related to savings accounts and interest was removed due to contextual irrelevance, and replaced with a question gauging the respondents' ability to identify a better deal between purchasing food items and two local shops based on buying in bulk or price per kilo.

The Economic Locus of Control Scale (ELCS) was developed by Adrian Furnham in the 1980s as a measurement of perceived internal-external control over financial issues.³²² It is a 40-item scale across four dimensions—internal, chance, external/denial, and powerful others. For the purpose of this survey, only items from the internal and chance scale were utilized to measure respondent's internal beliefs regarding the perception of the factors responsible for the outcome of an event where the event is monetary or financially defined.³²³

The Scale of Economic Abuse (SEA) was designed to measure the behaviours used by batterers to maintain power and control over their partners. It was developed based on numerous sources including domestic violence literature, the knowledge and experience of domestic violence researchers, advocates, and survivors, a review of quantitative and qualitative studies, and theoretical and anecdotal literature on the control tactics used by abusive men. It also reviewed five measures of psychological abuse. The resulting SEA consists of two dimensions—economic control and economic exploitation.³²⁴ For the purposes of this evaluation, only the economic control dimension is used. It consists of 17 items, from which 10 were selected based on contextual relevance. The economic control scale looks at aspects of economic control, primarily preventing women's resource use and preventing women's resource acquisition.³²⁵

The economic empowerment component also looks at the Economic Empowerment Index of Women, based on research from Pakistan.³²⁶ This tool also looks at women's involvement in household financial decision-making, but is a direct self-report asking whether specific types of decisions are made by men, jointly, or by women.

MLP Survey

The "Slaby Bystander Efficacy Scale" is a nine-item scale designed to assess participants beliefs about the efficacy of violence prevention.³²⁷ On the bystander efficacy scale, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 would indicate a very high level

319 R. Schwarzer and M. Jerusalem, "Generalized Self Efficacy Scale," In J. Weinman, S. Wright, and M. Johnston, *Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio. Causal and control beliefs* (pp. 35-37), Windsor, England: NFER-NELSON, 1995.

320 "Mental Health Inventory (MHI)," National Multiple Sclerosis Society, n.g., [http://www.nationalmssociety.org/For-Professionals/Researchers/Resources-for-Researchers/Clinical-Study-Measures/Mental-Health-Inventory-\(MHI\)](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/For-Professionals/Researchers/Resources-for-Researchers/Clinical-Study-Measures/Mental-Health-Inventory-(MHI)).

321 Bilal Zia, "Measuring Financial Literacy in Developing Countries: Surveys from India and Indonesia, World Bank, 2009.

322 Adrian Furnham, "Economic Locus of Control," *Human Relations* 39, no. 1 (1986): 29-43.

323 John V. Hayes, "Money Attitudes, Economic Locus of Control, and Financial Strain Among College Students," A Dissertation in Consumer Economics and Environmental Design, Texas Tech University, August 2006, https://repositories.tdl.org/ttu-ir/bitstream/handle/2346/18717/Hayes_John_V_Diss.pdf?sequence=1.

324 Adrienne E. Adams, Cris M. Sullivan, Deborah Bybee, and Megan R. Greeson, "Development of the Scale of Economic Abuse," *Violence Against Women* 14, no. 5 (2008): 563-588.

325 Ibid.

326 Qurra-tul-ain Ali Sheikh and Mahpara Begum Sadaqat, "Measuring and modeling women's economic empowerment in Pakistan," *Ritsumeikan Journal of Asia Pacific Studies* 34 (2015), http://www.apu.ac.jp/rcaps/uploads/fckeditor/publications/journal/RJAPS34_5_Ali%20Sheikh.pdf.

327 Ibid.

of belief in the efficacy of violence prevention and 5 would indicate a very low level of belief, the average score was 1.85,³²⁸ indicating a moderately high level of belief.

The “MVP Efficacy Scale” is a ten-item scale that was developed for use in a programme evaluation of a Mentors in Violence Programme in 1994, consisting of ten items assessing self-efficacy related to gender violence prevention.³²⁹ In this evaluation, one item related to sexist behaviour was removed due to cultural context, but the reliability of the complete scale was low, so three items were further removed, consisting of a final five-item scale.³³⁰

The “Decisional Balance Scale” addresses the decisions that individuals must make, weighing the pros and cons before making the decision on whether or not to intervene. This scale is based on the Decisional Balance Scale developed for the previously referenced evaluation for assessing rape prevention through bystander education,³³¹ consisting of a ten-item scale reflecting both positive benefits and negative consequences for intervening “in a situation where you thought someone might be being hurt or was at risk of being hurt,” which was modified to “in a situation where you thought a woman might be being hurt or was at risk of being hurt” for this evaluation. The reliability of the complete subscale for positive attitudes was low, so two items were removed. A total decisional balance score was calculated by subtracting the “negative” score from the “positive” score.

SCALES AND RELIABILITY

Female Participant Survey

Scale	Social Well-Being (A2)
Items	I don't feel I belong to anything I'd call a community. (-)
	I feel close to other people in my community. (+)
	My community is a source of comfort (+)
	People who do a favour expect nothing in return. (+)
	People do not care about other people's problems. (-)
	I believe that people are kind. (+)
	I have something valuable to give to the world. (+)
	My daily activities do not produce anything worthwhile for my community. (-)
	I have nothing important to contribute to society. (-)
	The world is becoming a better place for everyone. (+)
	Society isn't improving for people like me. (-)
	The world is too complex for me. (-)
	I find it easy to predict what will happen next in society. (+)
N	215
Chronbach's Alpha	.577
Coding (+)	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree
Coding (-)	1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

328 N=24, SD=.441

329 Victoria L. Banyard, Elizabeth G. Plante, and Mary M. Moynihan, “Rape Prevention Through Bystander Education: Bringing a Broader Community Perspective to Sexual Violence Prevention,” National Institute of Justice, 2005, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/208701.pdf>.

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331 Victoria L. Banyard, Elizabeth G. Plante, and Mary M. Moynihan, “Rape Prevention Through Bystander Education: Bringing a Broader Community Perspective to Sexual Violence Prevention,” National Institute of Justice, 2005, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/208701.pdf>.

Scale	Gender Role Attitudes Scale (A3)
Items	The decision to have a child should be made by both spouses in a marriage. (+)
	Equal salary should be paid to women and men in professional life. (+)
	A woman should only consult a woman doctor in the hospital. (-)
	The final decision regarding the choice of a woman's husband should be made by her father. (-)
	A man should marry again if his wife is not able to deliver a child. (-)
	Women should remain silent instead of arguing in the case of a disagreement with their husband. (-)
	A woman should not work if the financial situation of her husband and/or male household members is adequate. (-)
	Men should deal with tasks away from the home such as shopping and paying the bills. (-)
	Boy's education should be prioritized in the family. (-)
	The education level of a man should be higher than the woman in marriage. (-)
N	324
Chronbach's Alpha	.563
Coding (positive)	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree
Coding (negative)	1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

Scale	REM-Y (A4)
Items	These statements are regarding your choice of clothing.
	These statements are regarding your choice of employment.
	These statements are regarding your movement within your community when you are by yourself.
	These statements are regarding your movement within your living environment.
	These statements are regarding your education.
	These statements are regarding your selection of friends who are not members of my family.
	These statements are regarding your interaction with friends who are not members of my family.
	These statements are regarding your interaction with family.
N	266
Chronbach's Alpha	.919
Coding	1-5, 1 being the least restricted and 5 the most

Scale	Public Values
Items	I will put forward my suggestions with initiative or negotiate with relevant departments in the interest of my community. (+)
	Individuals should have an inescapable duty to address national affairs. (+)
N	225
Chronbach's Alpha	.690
Coding	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree

Scale	HITS
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Items	How often does your partner physically hurt you
	How often does your partner insult you or talk down to you
	How often does your partner threaten you with harm
	How often does your partner scream or curse at you
N	314
Chronbach's Alpha	.926
Coding (for summative score)	1 = Frequently 2 = Fairly often 3 = Sometimes 4 = Rarely 5 = Never
Coding (for empowerment scale)	1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Fairly often 5 = Frequently
Scale	Women's Economic Empowerment Index
Items	I will put forward my suggestions with initiative or negotiate with relevant departments in the interest of my community. (+)
	Individuals should have an inescapable duty to address national affairs. (+)
N	225
Chronbach's Alpha	.690
Coding	1 = Women are involved (jointly or independently make the decision) 0 = Women are not involved (men make the decision)
Scale	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (A14)
Items	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others. (+)
	I feel that I have a number of good qualities. (+)
	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. (-)
	I am able to do things as well as most people. (+)
	I feel I do not have much to be proud of. (-)
	I take a positive attitude toward myself (+)
	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. (+)
	I wish I could have more respect for myself. (-)
	I certainly feel useless at times. (-)
	At times I think that I am no good at all. (-)
N	315
Chronbach's Alpha	.638
Coding (+)	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree
Coding (-)	1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree
Scale	Self-Efficacy Scale (A15)

Items	I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough. (+)
	If someone opposes me, I can find means and ways to get what I want. (+)
	It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals. (+)
	I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events. (+)
	Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations. (+)
	I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort. (+)
	I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities. (+)
	When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions. (+)
	If I am in a bind, I can usually think of something to do. (+)
	No matter what comes my way, I'm usually able to handle it. (+)
N	238
Chronbach's Alpha	.930
Coding	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree
Scale	MHI-5 (A16)
Items	During the past month, how much of the time were you a happy person? (+)
	How much of the time, during the past month, have you felt calm and peaceful? (+)
	How much of the time, during the past month, have you been a very nervous person? (-)
	How much of the time, during the past month, have you felt downhearted and blue? (-)
	How much of the time, during the past month, have you felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer you up? (-)
N	296
Chronbach's Alpha	.743
Coding (+)	1 = All the time 2 = Most of the time 3 = Some of the time 4 = A little of the time 5 = None of the time
Coding (-)	1 = None of the time 2 = A little of the time 3 = Some of the time 4 = Most of the time 5 = All the time
Scale	Health Locus of Control (A17)
Items	Internal
	If I get sick, it is my own behaviour that determines how soon I get well again. (Internal)
	I am in control of my health. (Internal)
	If I take care of myself, I can avoid illness. (Internal)
	If I take the right actions, I can stay healthy. (Internal)
N	321
Chronbach's Alpha	.626
Items	Powerful Others
	Whenever I don't feel well, I should consult a medically trained professional. (Powerful Others)
	My family has a lot to do with my becoming sick or staying healthy. (Powerful Others)
N	357
Chronbach's Alpha	.495
Items	Chance

	No matter what I do, if I am going to get sick, I will get sick. (Chance)
	If it's meant to be, I will stay healthy. (Chance)
N	344
Chronbach's Alpha	.745
Coding	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree
Scale	Economic Locus of Control (A23)
Items	Internal
	Saving and careful investing is a key factor in becoming rich. (Internal)
	Whether or not I get to become wealthy depends mostly on my ability. (Internal)
N	346
Chronbach's Alpha	.575
Items	Internal
	Regarding money, there isn't much you can do for yourself when you are poor. (Chance)
	It's not always wise for me to save because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune. (Chance)
	It is chiefly a matter of fate whether I become rich or poor. (Chance)
N	270
Chronbach's Alpha	.693
Coding	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree
Scale	Scale of Economic Abuse (A24)
Items	Do things to keep you from going to your job or earning money. (EC)
	Make you ask him for money. (EC)
	Do things to keep you from having money of your own. (EC)
	Take the money you earn, savings, or other payments such as support from you. (EE)
	Decide how you could spend money rather than letting you spend it how you saw fit. (EC)
	Demand to know how money was spent. (EC)
	Keep you from having the money you needed to buy food, clothes, or other necessities. (EC)
	Hide money so that you could not find it. (EC)
	Keep financial information from you. (EC)
	Make important financial decisions without talking with you about it first. (EC)
N	274
Chronbach's Alpha	.909
Coding	1 = Never 2 = Hardly ever 3 = Sometimes 4 = Often 5 = Very often

MLP Survey

Scale	GRAS men
Items	Egalitarian Gender Roles
	The decision to have a child should be made by both spouses in a marriage. (+)
	Equal salary should be paid to women and men in professional life. (+)
	Domestic work should be shared equally between spouses in the family. (+)
	Daughters and sons should be benefited equally from the family's economic means. (+)
	Spouses should decide together in the family. (+)
	Female Gender Roles
	A woman should only consult a woman doctor in the hospital. (-)
	The final decision regarding the choice of a woman's husband should be made by her father. (-)
	A woman should be able to go out by herself at night. (+)
	A woman's basic task is motherhood. (-)
	Girls can be able to live by themselves when they gain their economic independence. (+)
	Marriage Gender Roles
	A man should marry again if his wife is not able to deliver a child. (-)
	Women should remain silent instead of arguing in the case of a disagreement with their husband. (-)
	Every wish of the man should be realized at home. (-)
	Husbands should make the decisions regarding women's lives. (-)
	A woman is more valued if she gives birth to a son. (+)
	Traditional Gender Roles
	A woman should not work if the financial situation of her husband and/or male household members is adequate. (-)
	Men should deal with tasks away from the home such as shopping and paying the bills. (-)
	The head of household is the man. (-)
	Men should be given preference for employment because of women's fertility. (-)
	A man's main task in the house is breadwinning. (-)
	Male Gender Roles
	Boy's education should be prioritized in the family. (-)
	The education level of a man should be higher than the woman in marriage. (-)
	Men should decide on how to use the family income. (-)
	In some instances, it is okay for a man to beat his wife. (-)
	Men should be older than women in marriages. (-)
N	24
Cronbach's Alpha	.699
Coding	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree

Scale	Slaby's Bystander Efficacy Scale
Items	People's violent behaviour can be prevented.
	There are certain things a person can do to help prevent violence.
	I myself can make a difference in helping to prevent violence.
	People can be taught to help prevent violence.
	Doing or saying certain kinds of things can work to help prevent violence.
	I can learn to do or say the kinds of things that help prevent violence.
	People can learn to become someone who helps others to avoid violence.
	Even people who are not involved in a fight can do things that help prevent violence.
	Even when I'm not involved and it's not about me, I can make a difference in helping to prevent violence.
N	
Cronbach's Alpha	

Coding	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree
Scale	MVP Efficacy Scale
Items	I can help prevent violence against women in my community (+)
	It is intimidating to think about trying to stop a husband from hitting his wife. (-)
	I have the skills to help support someone who is being abused. (+)
	The fear of being laughed at would prevent me from telling a group of men it is disrespectful to harass women. (-)
	I don't think I could stop a group of guys who are harassing a woman in the street. (-)
N	24
Cronbach's Alpha	.561
Coding (+)	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree
Coding (-)	1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree
Scale	Decisional Balance Scale
Items	Subscale for Positive Attitudes
	It is important for all community members to play a role in keeping everyone safe. (+)
	Friends will look up to me and admire me if I intervene. (+)
	I will feel like a leader in my community if I intervene. (+)
N	23
Cronbach's Alpha	.608
Items	Subscale for Negative Attitudes
	Intervening would make my friends angry with me. (-)
	Intervening might cost my friendships. (-)
	I might get physically hurt for intervening. (-)
	I could make the wrong decision and intervene when nothing was wrong and feel embarrassed. (-)
	People might think I am too sensitive and am overreacting to the situation. (-)
	I could get in trouble by making the wrong decision about how to intervene. (-)
N	23
Cronbach's Alpha	.538
Coding (+)	1 = Extremely important 2 = Very important 3 = Somewhat important 4 = Slightly unimportant 5 = Not important at all
Coding (-)	1 = Not important at all 2 = Slightly unimportant 3 = Somewhat important 4 = Very important 5 = Extremely important