



WOMEN *for* WOMEN
International

Women for Women International

Delivering the Global Goals

Leaving No Woman Behind





Photo: Ryan Carter

Tumaini's story

Tumaini is a graduate of the Women for Women International programme from Nyangezi in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Before joining the programme, Tumaini was struggling to feed and clothe her family as the sole provider. She was working on other people's land in order to make ends meet.

Upon enrolling on our core programme, she joined a savings group, which allowed her to buy a goat. The goat produced two kids, one of which Tumaini exchanged for a piece of land.

As an entrepreneur, Tumaini sold various products at the local market, but settled on farming as her main occupation, selling aubergines and cabbages to make a living.

She decided to build herself and her family another house with the profits - she's now able to send her younger children to school, an opportunity that her older children did not have. Her husband has more respect for her now and has begun participating more in the family.

"The fact that today I look like a human, is because of you. I am very thankful and pray for you."

Women for Women International

Since 1993, Women for Women International has worked with more than 479,000 marginalised women survivors of war in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kosovo, Iraq, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Sudan. We were founded on the belief that stronger women build stronger nations.

Our core work is centred on a holistic, rights-based programme to address the needs of marginalised women in conflict-affected countries around the world. We have tested and evolved our approach to fit the needs of women who have been denied access to education, have

been affected by conflict and who seek inclusion and recovery. Our programme equips women with skills and resources to earn and save money, regain their confidence and actively participate in their communities.

Our year-long investment in individual women includes:



Building knowledge in areas such as the value of women's work, basic health education and rights information;



Skill development in numeracy, business skills and a chosen vocational skill;



Resource provision through a monthly cash transfer and referrals to health and legal services; and



Connections to other women by training them together, in groups of 25, where they can form a tight support group that helps to break the isolation caused by war and insecurity.

The Promise: No one left behind

“As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognising that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.”

Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, paragraph 4 (outcome document of the UN Summit for the adoption of the Global Goals)

The UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development came into force in January 2016. Through these 17 interconnected goals, national governments and the international community agreed to work together to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

The Global Goals are underpinned by a commitment to ‘Leave No One Behind’ – which means that the very success of the Goals is dependent on reaching the most marginalised.

The **World Bank** estimates that by 2030, the deadline for the Goals, the majority of people living in extreme poverty will be living in conflict-affected countries.¹

The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** estimates this could increase to **62% (or half a billion people)**, with women disproportionately and overwhelmingly affected by both poverty and conflict.²

Identifying and prioritising support for the most vulnerable is a significant challenge. But translating this ambitious commitment into action would also be the most successful way to target inequality - a root cause of both poverty and conflict.

Three years into the Goals, and ahead of the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report, Women for Women International is concerned that women affected by conflict are being failed by the Goals and are continuing to be left behind.

Progress on the promise for marginalised women

Recent national and international reports highlight that progress on the Leave No One Behind agenda is failing to meet the needs of the most marginalised people.³

"...in some areas, progress is insufficient to meet the Agenda's goals and targets by 2030. This is especially true for the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups."

António Guterres, UN Secretary General, The Sustainable Development Goals Report, July 2018

Women for Women International has served more than 479,000 marginalised women survivors of conflict in the last 25 years. We routinely administer rigorous baseline and endline surveys to a geographically representative sample of enrolled participants to gauge women's progress through the programme.

The data we collect focuses exclusively on marginalised women survivors of conflict and is therefore not nationally representative. It does, however, provide a snapshot into the lives of the women we serve and can provide insights into working with hard-to-reach populations.

As acknowledged by the Goals, the lived experience of marginalisation or extreme poverty is multidimensional and interlinked - it is not defined by earnings alone. In that respect, our data also reflects the complexity of leaving no one behind and how marginalisation affects the women we serve in every aspect of their lives.



How we define 'marginalised'

Women for Women International works with marginalised women survivors of conflict. We work in communities where the type of support we offer is largely absent. We define 'marginalisation' based on crucial areas of vulnerability:

- **Conflict-affected, such as surviving violence, being displaced, or the de facto head of the household.**
 - > **10%** of the women we serve are widows or divorced and **9%** are heads of households (global averages).
 - > On average, women participants in **the DRC** are responsible for 4 children (2017 graduates).
- **Social exclusion**, as evidenced by signs of malnutrition or poor hygiene, poorer than average living conditions, restrictive traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and/or cutting, forced or early marriage, or limited or no education.
 - > At enrolment, **80-82%** of women participants reported no or partial ability to read or write a sentence (2017 global averages).
- **Living in extreme poverty**, perhaps due to unemployment, or limited to high risk or unsafe occupations, or responsible for dependents (children, elderly, disabled).
 - > At enrolment, only **19%** of women participants report average personal earnings of at least **\$1.90**, with the average daily personal earnings of **\$1.01** (2017 global averages, USD Purchasing Power Parity).⁴

In combination, these criteria help us to identify and reach the most marginalised women in the conflict-affected communities where we work.



Photo: Serrah Galos



Futmwake's story

Futmwake Zaka is 24 years old. She is a graduate of the Women for Women International training programme and lives with her husband Monday in Plateau State, Nigeria.

"Before joining the Women for Women International programme, my relationship with my husband was very bad. He would beat me and he didn't take care of me or our daughter. He didn't provide for our needs and all the money was spent on alcohol."

Monday joined the Men's Engagement Programme, which Women for Women International runs alongside the core programme to train male community leaders (including religious, traditional, military and civil society leaders) so that they can use their influence to help protect and promote women's rights and gender equality.

"After the first time my husband attended the Men's Engagement Programme, he came back and found me in the kitchen and decided to help me cook. From that day, he now always helps to fetch water or bathe the baby."

No One Left Behind: Our contribution

Women for Women International makes three key contributions to the Global Goals and the Leave No One Behind commitment:

Reaching marginalised women survivors of conflict

In 2017, we worked with **26,737** women in communities where support for marginalised women's economic and social empowerment is largely absent. Through our monitoring and evaluation efforts we see promising results:

- In **Afghanistan**, women's daily personal earnings increase from an average of **\$1.23** at enrolment to **\$2.29** at graduation (12 months later).⁵



- In **Nigeria**, women participants scored **47%** higher on a knowledge test on their rights and violence against women at graduation compared to enrolment 12 months earlier.



Filling the data gap

As national and international data collection efforts improve, particularly by using more gender sensitive approaches to measure change, large data gaps continue to affect monitoring progress of the Goals.

These data gaps relate to both the way that the data is collected (often unreliable, irregular and missing large segments of the populations) and what data is collected (with insufficient data collected for vulnerable groups e.g. women and girls).

Furthermore, national-level data continues to focus on national averages, thereby missing critical detail for various groups living below those averages.

The data we collect is focused exclusively on marginalised women survivors of conflict and, whilst not nationally representative, can provide a valuable snapshot to help national and international policymakers understand hard-to-reach populations.

For example:

- In **the DRC**, women participants scored **29%** higher on a knowledge test on their health and wellbeing at graduation compared to enrolment. This is key to attaining good health and wellbeing.



Amplifying voices

For the women we serve, being marginalised is a lived experience that includes being denied access to opportunities and having no say over the decisions that affect their lives. Linking local, national and international levels is key so we work with advocacy partners to provide **Change Agents** - women graduates of our core programme who are given advocacy training - with access to decision-makers at all levels. Our global advocacy efforts are informed by Change Agents' priorities and feedback from other women participants.

- In **the DRC**, we see a percentage change of **21%** in women participants who report being a member of any group outside of our training during our year-long programme - from **56%** at enrolment, to **68%** at graduation.⁶



- Over the last two years (2016 - 2018) we have provided **440** women graduates of our year-long programme with advanced leadership and advocacy training to become Change Agents in **Afghanistan, the DRC, Nigeria, Rwanda and Kosovo**.





Photo: Rada Akbar

Zarghuna's story*

Zarghuna is a graduate of our year-long programme in Afghanistan. Her story highlights the potential that can be unlocked when we identify and invest in marginalised women survivors of conflict.

When Zarghuna was only six years old, her parents gave her away to her uncle in marriage to appease a feud with his family. Her uncle was very abusive - he never let her see anyone and threatened to kill her if she tried to escape. By the time she was 15, Zarghuna was the young mother of a baby girl and often alone as her husband was away with the army. One day she received a message that he had been killed.

Zarghuna felt alone, with no one to help her and tried to commit suicide twice. When she went to the hospital for treatment for depression, the doctor suggested: "You need somewhere to go and sit with women, so you can see how they are dealing with the challenges that they face."

Soon after, Zarghuna joined the Women for Women International programme with a group of 24 other women.

"That's when I learned that I wasn't alone in my suffering. There are other women who have the same pain and the same hardships. To realise that was amazing."

After Zarghuna graduated from the programme, she found a job adding embroidery to textiles and creating handicrafts and eventually decided to take a micro-loan of \$500 to start her own business. Today, Zarghuna provides employment to more than 120 women and has plans to expand her business even further.

"I am always talking to other women. I want to share all my experiences and tell them to be strong, as I became strong."

*For reasons of security and privacy, we are using a photo of a different Women for Women International graduate to represent the woman in the story.

Delivering on the promise: our recommendations

Three years into the Goals, and ahead of the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report, it is clear from recent reports that women affected by conflict are at risk of being left behind.⁷

Based on 25 years of experience and evidence from working with marginalised women survivors of conflict, we make the following **four recommendations to governments and the international community to prevent the women we serve from being further left behind:**

1

Use alternative data sources to complement national-level data collection:

The inclusion of alternative data sources, including data that is more relevant to marginalised groups, should be used by national governments and the wider international community to provide a more nuanced understanding of whether we are delivering on the promise to leave no one behind.

Progress for those left furthest behind is unlikely to be captured in official, national-level data, particularly whilst existing data collection efforts struggle to capture accurate or sufficiently aggregable data. The emphasis on vulnerable, marginalised groups and inequality within the Goals therefore provides an opportunity to rethink the data that is collected and to look for information that is more relevant to those left furthest behind.

For example, the **Government of Nigeria's Global Goals report (June 2017)** commits to increasing the proportion of people living above the international poverty line (\$1.90 per day) from **36.4%** (2015), to 58.2% by 2020 and to **100% by 2030.**⁸

Situating Women for Women International's data in the context of national statistics highlights how much further behind the

women we serve are, and how much more work needs to be done to prioritise them to meet the Goals. In **Nigeria**, for example, only **22%** of women enrolling on our programme report earning an average of more than \$1.90 a day, which is much lower than the reported national average of **36.4%**.

Our work also shows how investing in the most marginalised women contributes to meeting the Goals and leaving no one behind:

- In **Nigeria**, the proportion of women participants of our programme earning an average of more than **\$1.90 a day** almost **doubled** - rising from **22%** at enrolment to **40%** by graduation.



- In **Afghanistan**, the proportion of participants earning more than **\$1.90 a day** almost **tripled** - rising from 9% at enrolment to **35%** by graduation.



“Even where progress has been made, it has been highly uneven. Looking beyond national averages, our report uncovers yawning gaps between women and girls who, even within the same country, are living worlds apart.”

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director, Turning Promises into Action, July 2018.

The international community must ensure precise targeting of women who are at risk of being left behind: those who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination related to conflict, poverty, lack of rights and gender-based violence. We find the largest proportion of women who face extreme social and economic marginalisation in conflict-affected and fragile states.

A recent report by the Overseas Development Institute and International Rescue Committee concluded that “people caught in crisis risk being even more excluded from progress in 2030 than they are now.”⁹

Security is a key enabler for women’s empowerment. Conflict increases women’s vulnerability to exclusion and abuse, further driving them into marginalisation and excluding them from opportunities.

This was also echoed by national reports:

- The **Government of Nigeria’s Global Goals report (June 2017)** highlights key challenges for progress including the economic recession (due to fluctuating oil prices) and the humanitarian crisis in the North East of the country.¹⁰ It also highlights persistent physical, psychological and sexual abuse against women as a key block to gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- The **Government of Afghanistan’s Global Goals report (July 2017)** notes deteriorating security and labour market conditions as the key factors for increasing rates of poverty, with 1.3 million more Afghans living in poverty in 2013-14 (compared to 2011-12).¹¹ The report also highlights persistent rural-urban inequalities, with higher levels of poverty and unemployment and a lack of access to basic services (such as health, education, and safe drinking water). For Afghan women, the report notes a decrease in likelihood for rural and poor women to access skilled antenatal care. Girls’ education has been particularly affected by insecurity, with rural and poor girls most affected.

Closing the gender inequality gap is not only fundamental to women's rights but is also key to achieving the Goals and the commitment to Leave No One Behind. Targeting and investing in marginalised women in conflict affected countries, and improving the security environment around them, are critical to making lasting change in women's empowerment. Our monitoring and evaluation findings highlight the potential that can be unlocked when we identify and invest in marginalised women survivors of conflict.

- At enrolment, only **21%** of women participants in **Afghanistan** reported being involved in decisions about having more children compared to **65%** at graduation - a **210%** percentage change.



- At graduation, women participants in **Afghanistan** report a **27%** increase of children in school. With the proportion of girls in school rising from **48%** at enrolment to **61%** at graduation.



We therefore also recommend that governments and the international community invest more in efforts to listen to the voices of marginalised groups.

The Leave No One Behind commitment hinges on the most marginalised benefiting from progress made to achieve the Goals. This requires an active process through which marginalised groups can be heard and are supported to drive forward the changes they want to see.

The voices of the most marginalised must therefore be front and centre to both the implementation and review of the Global Goals, for example through establishing ongoing, meaningful dialogues with a diverse range of women's organisations in conflict-affected countries.

"The greatest change in my life is the emotional relief I have received from the trainings offered. Being in the Women for Women International programme has helped me to build friendships with women of other religions and tribes. We support each other emotionally and financially when need be. I visit their homes and they also visit mine. I am so grateful for being a part of this programme."

Zainab, a woman graduate (Nigeria).

3

Provide comprehensive and long-term support for women affected by conflict

"[The UN] urges Member States, international and regional organisations to take further measures to improve women's participation during all stages of peace processes [...] including by enhancing their engagement in political and economic decision-making at early stages of recovery processes, through [...] promoting women's leadership and capacity to engage in aid management and planning, supporting women's organisations, and countering negative societal attitudes about women's capacity to participate equally"

UN Security Council Resolution 1889

Women affected by conflict have varied and intersecting needs. A comprehensive, long-term approach that takes into account their challenges and supports their social, economic and political empowerment is fundamental.

Linkages to platforms in order to influence decisions and create long-term change are critical to sustaining opportunities for women in conflict. For example, in our recent research in the **Kurdistan Region of Iraq**, the increases in women generating income had led to some positive changes in perceptions of women's economic role.¹² However, these changes appeared to be temporary and instrumental as short-term economic support for women (e.g. livelihood support or cash transfers) did not support their long-term economic empowerment or link to other longer-term transformative approaches, such as the one offered by our year-long programme.

Studies have found that intimate partner violence continues to be the most prevalent form of violence against women, even in conflict. Emerging evidence highlights the effectiveness of combined economic and social programming in reducing intimate partner violence as well as promoting women's broader empowerment.¹³

The recent Global Study on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 highlighted the important contribution of women's economic empowerment for household resilience to economic shocks and promoting wider stability.¹⁴ This is particularly important as conflict results in an increase of female headed households.

Women's ability to save money is key to their ability to mitigate economic shocks:

- In **Afghanistan**, we see a percentage change of **100%** in women participants who report saving a portion of their earnings - from **9%** at enrolment, to **35%** at graduation.



- In **the DRC**, women saw an increase in the average amount of monthly savings - rising from **\$29.16** at enrolment to **\$68.04** at graduation.



Women's ability to influence decision-making is a key measure of both their empowerment as well as changing norms in communities. Working with women to build their leadership and decision-making skills is therefore critical as part of comprehensive and long-term support:

- In **Nigeria**, there was an increase in the number of women who reported speaking up in public against hitting or slapping women - from **17%** at enrolment to **23%** at graduation.



- In the **DRC**, there is a **9%** percentage change in the share of women who report being involved in decisions about having more children during the 12 months of our programme - from **68%** at enrolment, to **74%** at graduation.



"I told them that my daughter is now a little baby, I can't accept your request [to betroth her]. I told it to my husband, and he also agreed with me. It is this kind of decision-making which I didn't know about before the programme. I understood from the programme not to give our daughters at a young age, and also I have persuaded my other daughters to get education."

Woman graduate (Afghanistan, 2014)



Women for Women International participants working on crochet in Afghanistan. Our year-long programme supports women to learn a marketable job skill, such as crochet, and provides business training so that women can turn their chosen skill into a stable income.

“Before I lived like my wife’s chief in the house. My wife could not say anything. But since the teachings, my wife is taking part in decision-making in the household.”

Male graduate (DRC, 2016)

It is vital that efforts to support marginalised women engage with men as allies who can help to promote more enabling environments for women’s rights.

Women’s rights and gender equality are not just “women’s issues” as all members of society suffer from patriarchal attitudes and have a role to play in promoting gender equality. The promotion of equality cannot be founded on division and an important objective of our work is to support men to work with women in their homes and communities as equal partners.

Women for Women International has been a pioneer in men’s engagement activities. We work with male community leaders (e.g. traditional, military or religious) and male family members of our women participants in **Afghanistan, the DRC, Nigeria, South Sudan, Rwanda and Kosovo**. We have trained almost 26,000 men in women’s rights and gender equality since we began this work in 2002.

Changing men’s behaviours is crucial to realising women’s equality. Such behavioural changes include stopping negative actions as well as actively performing positive actions. Positive actions can be on both an individual level (including within the household) or on a wider, societal level. Women for Women International believes that men can become effective agents of change in promoting women’s equality, both for the women in their lives as well as in the wider society.

Through our monitoring and evaluation, we see promising results as male graduates take action to support women’s equality:¹⁵

- Across our men’s engagement activities in **Afghanistan, the DRC and Nigeria**, men were **80%** more active in supporting women’s rights at graduation compared to enrolment.



- In **Afghanistan**, the number of **male graduates** who reported having taken action to share information with their community about the effects of violence against women increased from **15% at enrolment to 39% at graduation**.



- In communities where men’s engagement activities are delivered, the women we work with have higher class attendance rates and increased value as decision-makers within the family.





Women for Women International participants learning crop farming techniques in Nigeria. Our year-long programme supports women to learn a marketable job skill, such as agriculture, and provides business training so that women can turn their chosen skill into a stable income.

Join our movement

We can do so much more together and we urgently need more funding to help women survivors of war. There are more than 3,000 women currently waiting to enrol in our year-long training programme.



Sponsor a woman through our year-long training programme. Your monthly donation of £22 could help her learn the skills to support her family and transform her life.

womenforwomen.org.uk/sponsor



Join the global sisterhood and lend your voice to create a chain of inspiration. We need to speak out against injustices that women survivors of war face. Show your support. Stand with us. Join the sisterhood!

womenforwomen.org.uk/sisterhood



Help us engage women as agents of change.

A donation of £1,000 could pay for the training of three Change Agents who will stand up for women's rights in their community.

womenforwomen.org.uk/donate



Endnotes

1. World Bank, Fragility, Conflict & Violence <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/overview>
2. OECD (2015) States of Fragility 2015: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions <https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/FINAL%20States%20of%20Fragility%20Highlights%20document.pdf>
3. Overseas Development Institute and International Rescue Committee (2018) SDG Progress: fragility, crisis and leaving no one behind; SDG Progress Report (2018); UN Women (2018) Turning Promises into Action
4. In 2016/17, we integrated the new international poverty line into our monitoring instruments. Our previous data was based on \$1.25 a day.
5. Data was provided by 3,195 participants who graduated from Women for Women International's year-long programme in Afghanistan, the DRC and Nigeria between January and December 2017. This dataset only includes baseline and endline data for sampled graduates who were interviewed in both survey rounds. For data related to household decision-making, women whose responses were recorded as 'N/A' are excluded from the sample.
6. 'Percentage change' is the amount of change as a proportion of the starting point (our baseline/enrolment data). We use this method as a way of understanding the magnitude of change relative to a baseline figure.
7. Overseas Development Institute and International Rescue Committee (2018) SDG Progress: fragility, crisis and leaving no one behind; SDG Progress Report (2018); UN Women (2018) Turning Promises into Action
8. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2017) Implementation of the SDGs: A National Voluntary Review
9. Overseas Development Institute and International Rescue Committee (2018) SDG Progress: fragility, crisis and leaving no one behind <https://www.odi.org/publications/11194-sdg-progress-fragility-crisis-and-leaving-no-one-behind>
10. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2017) Implementation of the SDGs: A National Voluntary Review <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16029Nigeria.pdf>
11. Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2017) Voluntary National Review at the High Level Political Forum: SDGs' Progress Report <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16277Afghanistan.pdf>
12. Women for Women International (WfWI), Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) and LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security (2018) Displacement and Women's Economic Empowerment: Voices of Displaced Women in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq <https://www.womenforwomen.org.uk/who-we-are-our-delivery-partners/womens-economic-empowerment-kri>
13. Women for Women International (2017) Policy Briefing: Violence against women <https://www.womenforwomen.org.uk/file/3168/download?token=0PmKUTse>
14. Lead Author: Radhika Coomaraswamy (2015) A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 [https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf)
15. Data is taken from a 31% sample (404 men) who enrolled in men's engagement activities (1,319) in 2016 in the three countries mentioned. Average score on scale (1-10) of actions taken in support of women's rights increased from 3.9 at enrolment to 7.02 at graduation.

In countries affected by conflict and war, Women for Women International supports the most marginalised women to earn and save money, improve health and well-being, influence decisions in their home and community, and connect with networks for support. By utilising skills, knowledge and resources, she is able to create sustainable change for herself, her family, and community.

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