



Women for Women International
Working with men
to support women's
empowerment





About Women for Women International

Since 1993, Women for Women International has worked with more than 462,000 marginalised women survivors of war in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Kosovo, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), 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 and other opportunities, have been affected by conflict and who seek inclusion and recovery. Our programme equips women with skills and resources to earn and save money, learn about their health and human rights, regain their confidence and actively participate in their communities.

Women for Women International's 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 in a safe space, in groups of 25, where they can form a tight support group that helps to break the isolation caused by war and insecurity.

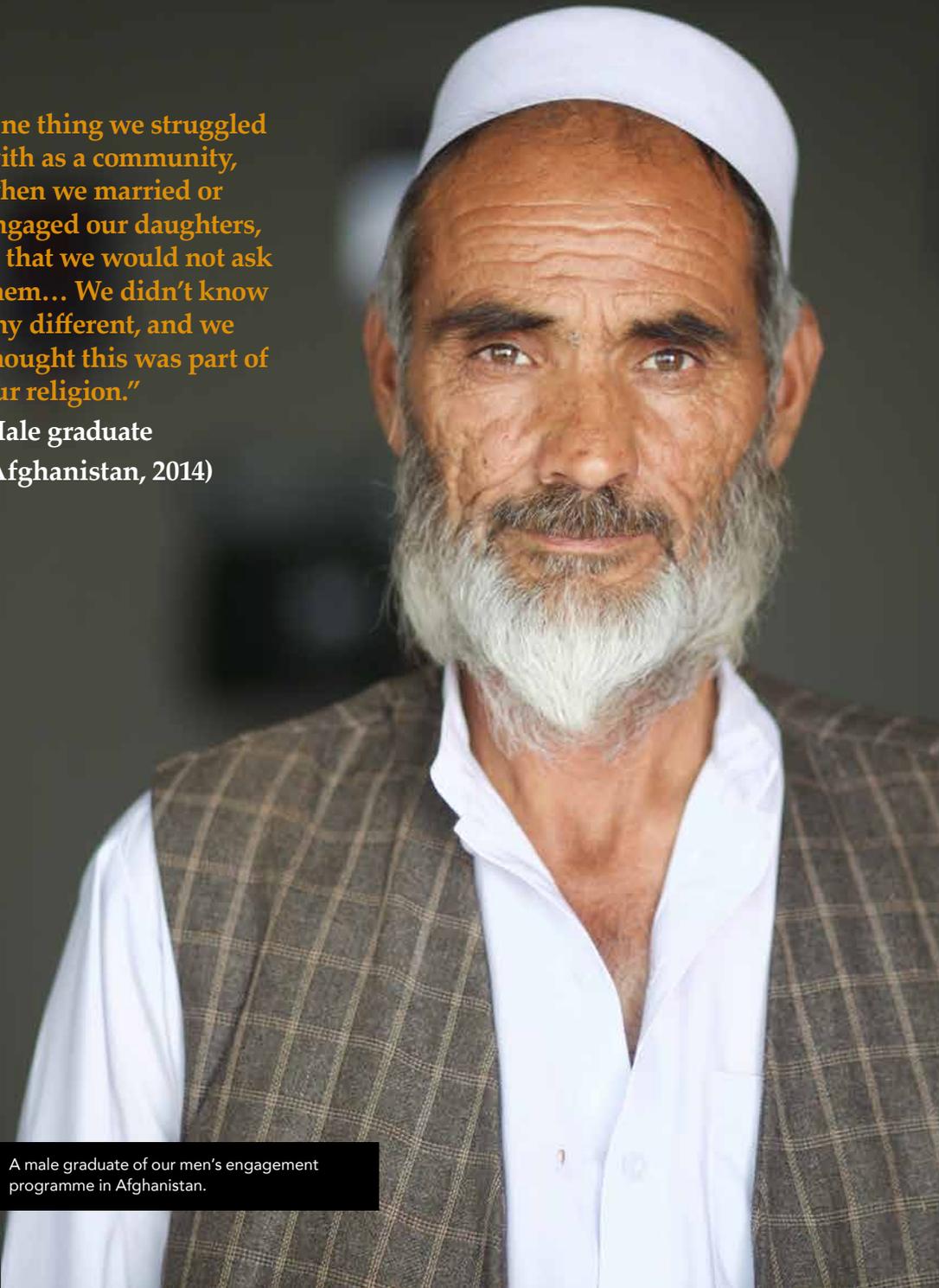
We see sustainable change for the women we serve in four key outcome areas: earning and saving money; developing health and well-being; influencing decisions; and connecting to networks.

The table below demonstrates our impact, showing progress against key indicators for women who participate in our programme (global averages).¹

	Enrolment (2011)	Graduation (2012)	2 years post- graduation (2014)
Women participants who report average personal earnings of at least \$1.25 per day (in current USD)	6%	35%	48%
Women participants who report practicing nutrition planning (sometimes/frequently)	34%	89%	97%
Women participants who report attending community activities in the past 12 months (excludes N/A)	44%	90%	91%
Women participants who report educating another woman on her rights in the past 12 months (excludes N/A)	7%	65%	83%

“One thing we struggled with as a community, when we married or engaged our daughters, is that we would not ask them... We didn’t know any different, and we thought this was part of our religion.”

**Male graduate
(Afghanistan, 2014)**



A male graduate of our men’s engagement programme in Afghanistan.

What do we mean by women’s rights and gender equality?

As human beings, men and women should be treated equally – afforded equal opportunities regardless of gender. This principle is enshrined in all international human rights standards and reinforced through specific standards, such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and UN Security Council Resolution 1325. These international standards have been subsequently applied in regional frameworks (such as the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples’ Rights) as well as national frameworks (such as gender parity in constitutions). Promoting women’s rights and gender equality is not about weakening the status of men; it is about promoting women’s empowerment.

These standards recognise that gender equality is a fundamental necessity for human equality, and that prevailing patriarchal systems disempower and discriminate against women. Discrimination persists due to the weakness (or even absence) of laws and policies, the inconsistent application of those laws, as well as customary law and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality in every

aspect of life. In many communities where we work, people defer more to traditional or customary laws than formal laws and policies, meaning that women do not benefit from the formal protections in national law.

Even when legal protections exist, they are not fully realised. This implementation gap can be caused by a lack of political will, reflected in insufficient resources. According to UN Women, for example, at least 119 countries have passed laws on domestic violence, 125 have laws on sexual harassment and 52 have laws on marital rape. Yet 1 in 3 women worldwide will experience physical or sexual violence at some point in her lifetime, mostly by an intimate partner.

Underpinning these obstacles are prevailing gender norms that tolerate or promote discrimination against women. Such patriarchal attitudes explain why effective implementation of protections are not prioritised or sufficiently resourced and that institutions, some religious interpretations, as well as traditional or customary mechanisms can reinforce inequality between men and women.

Gender, according to the World Health Organisation, refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men.

It varies from society to society and changes over time. While most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviours – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and work places.

Why do we work with men?

Women's equality is everyone's business. All members of society suffer from patriarchal attitudes and have a role to play in promoting gender equality - these are not just "women's issues."

The emerging literature suggests that there are three main reasons for engaging with men for women's equality:

- Men hold important positions of power and influence over societies. Engaging with them as **'gatekeepers'** can promote more efficient normative change via their influence.
- Men can become **allies** who understand the benefits of promoting gender equality and work in partnership with women.
- Men can also be **co-beneficiaries**, as patriarchal attitudes reinforce stringent masculine norms that dictate how men should behave and limit the roles a man can play in his family and community.

However, as a women's empowerment organisation we recognise the risk that working with men could simply reinforce their power and privilege. We do not support men to talk on behalf of women, but rather work with them to create a more enabling environment for women to be heard. No society can prosper whilst half the population are prevented from reaching their full potential, economically, socially or politically.

Through our men's engagement activities, we aim to enable and improve women's participation in our core programme and to enable men to provide support for women's new economic and social activities. In some contexts, working with men can help mitigate risks for implementing our core programme by providing endorsement of women's participation in the programme by family and community members. We also aim to support transformational change, including by shifting power dynamics and social norms, developing male role models and inspiring intergenerational change.

"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)



Men participate in a men's engagement training session in Kayonza, Rwanda.

How do we work with men?

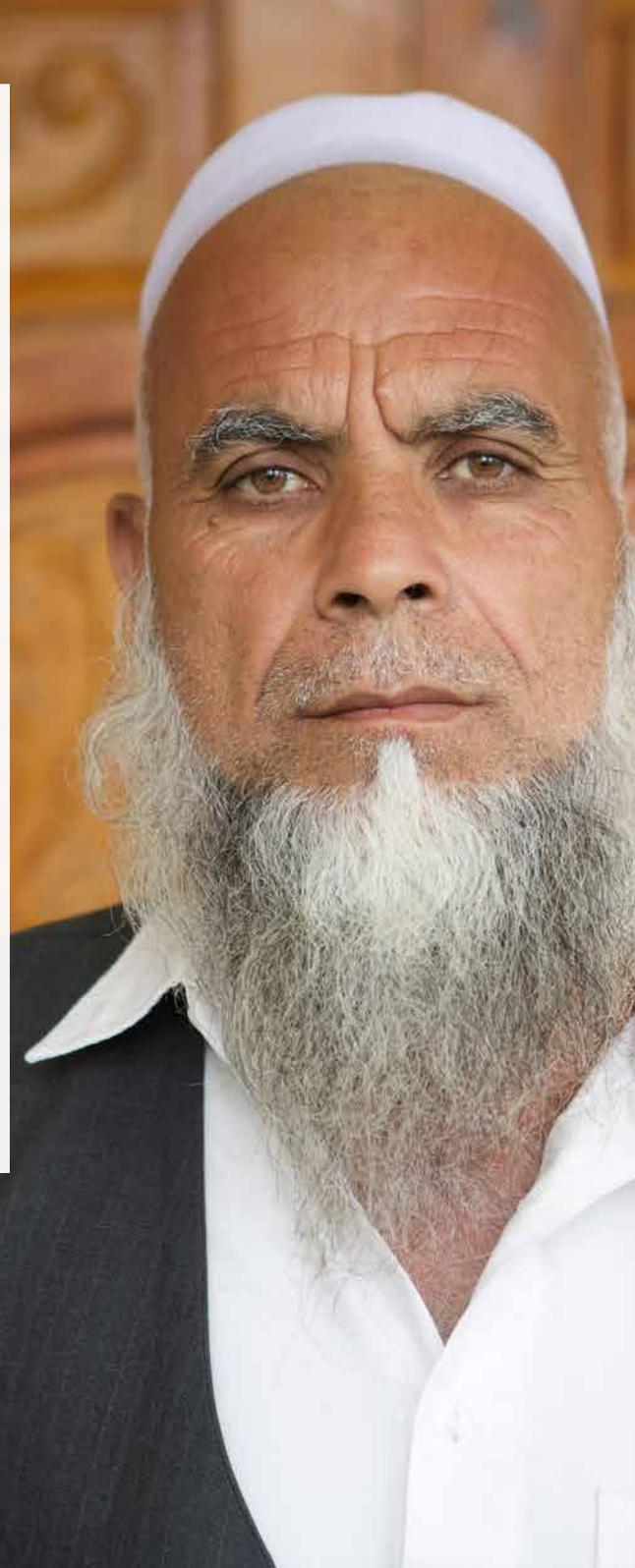
Women for Women International's priority is to serve marginalised women survivors of conflict. We invest in them, as individuals, to give them opportunities to overcome the discrimination and inequality they have faced in their lives. These women's lives are intertwined in their relationships with their husbands, fathers, mothers, children, other community members and leaders. The dynamics within families and communities must be taken into consideration. We began working with men in 2002 to create positive, enabling environments for women's empowerment and equality.

In 15 years, we have trained almost 21,000 men in our Men's Engagement Programme. The training aims to raise men's understanding of and attitudes towards violence against women, the value of women's work, girls' education and women's participation in community activities. In each country, men's engagement activities and training content are tailored to the cultural and religious context. For example, in Afghanistan, male religious and community leaders, who exert a strong influence on community social norms and practices, are currently being trained on women's rights in Islam, quoting verses from the Qur'an to

underscore specific aspects of women's rights.

We have been a pioneer in men's engagement activities aimed at targeting male community leaders and male family members of our women participants in Afghanistan, the DRC, Nigeria, South Sudan, Rwanda and Kosovo. We work with a variety of male leaders (e.g. traditional, military, or religious), male family members of women participants, and other male community members, providing them with training in women's rights and gender equality. We also create spaces for them to discuss critical issues that their communities face related to these topics.

Our men's engagement activities vary between countries, but generally involve a 'training of trainer' approach, so that men we train (Level 1) can train other male community members (Level 2). In some countries, there is also a Level 3 which includes activities where community meetings are held to discuss gender-related issues or couples who may be experiencing violence in the home are brought together by trainers to start discussing these issues. This cascading approach multiplies the reach of the initial training.



Ghulam Rabi is a local leader living in rural Afghanistan. Together with 50 other men from his community, he participated in our men's training programme. For several months, they met twice a week to discuss women's rights, using the verses or "Surahs" of the Qur'an as a guide.

"We didn't know about these verses, and all the rights that women have in the Holy Book," says Ghulam. When he was younger, Ghulam had the chance to go to school, where he learned to recite the Qur'an in Arabic. Yet neither he, nor the other leaders in the community, ever studied the Qur'an from the perspective of women's rights. His education was cut short when the Russians invaded Afghanistan, and he was forced to leave school.

"I believe that Islam is an open, bright religion, and has good rights for women," says Ghulam. During the programme, the men studied how the Qur'an supports the right of women to choose their own husbands, and how women should not be married as young girls. With this knowledge, he feels better informed to advise his community.

Shortly after Ghulam finished the programme, a neighbour came to him to ask for advice. He was poor, and struggling to support his family, so he wanted to sell his daughter in marriage. The money would enable him to provide for his remaining family members, but would change his daughter's life forever. "Before the training, I would have agreed with him. But instead I said, 'No, you should not sell your daughter for money.' And he listened to me."

Ghulam Rabi, a graduate of our men's engagement programme in Afghanistan.

This document highlights **four** key questions around areas of change that we see from our men's engagement activities which support long-term, transformational changes for women's equality.

1 How do we challenge discriminatory attitudes?

Through our men's engagement activities, at all levels, we aim to help men become more knowledgeable about critical women's rights issues, more positive and open-minded about concepts of gender, and to show greater respect towards women in their behaviours as a result. Our ultimate goal is to improve women's outcomes and see improvements in women's decision-making and health, well-being and economic status.

Educating men is key to growing their capacity for change as well as stimulating discussions that can go deeper and begin to effectively challenge discriminatory attitudes. The first step is equipping men with knowledge on women's rights.

Across three countries (Afghanistan, DRC and Nigeria) we see an average increase of 50% in men's knowledge scores between enrolment and graduation. This test includes questions on women's inheritance, age of consent, violence against women and family planning.²

In Afghanistan, 53% of male graduates were able to correctly select all four definitions presented as violence against women,³ compared to only 1% at enrolment.

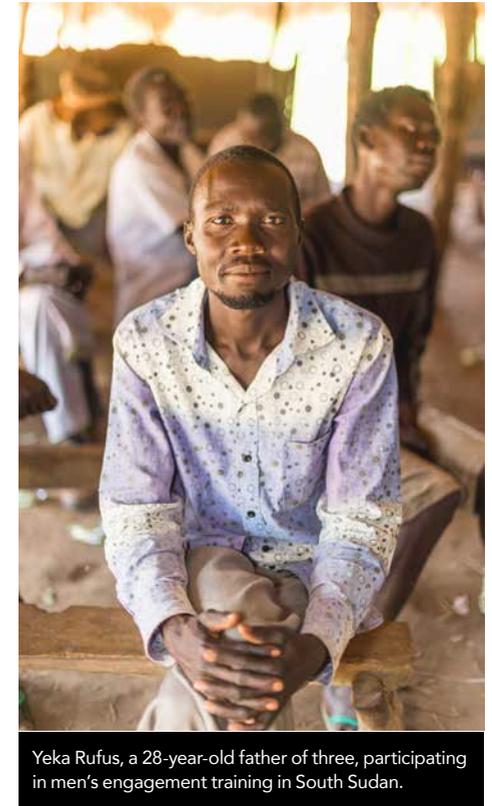
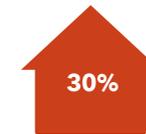


Transforming attitudes is essential to tackling discrimination and inequality at its roots. For many male participants, the activities provide crucial spaces to reflect or challenge things that have 'always just been that way', such as rigid gender roles and norms. In some communities, men who do not conform to these norms are judged as abnormal and even punished. If men want to change, they need to have a space to discuss - and solidarity with others who want to change. It is inspiring for men to witness other men, especially respected leaders, change their own attitudes.

To measure gender attitudes of male graduates, we have started to integrate the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) scale into our monitoring and evaluation tools. This scale is specifically designed to measure attitudes around intimate relationships and differing social expectations for men and women.

Across our men's engagement activities in Afghanistan, DRC and Nigeria, men's score on the GEM scale improved by an average of 30% between enrolment and graduation (Level 1 participants only).

In Afghanistan, 99% of male graduates reported positive attitudes to women's rights in the household compared to 87% at enrolment.



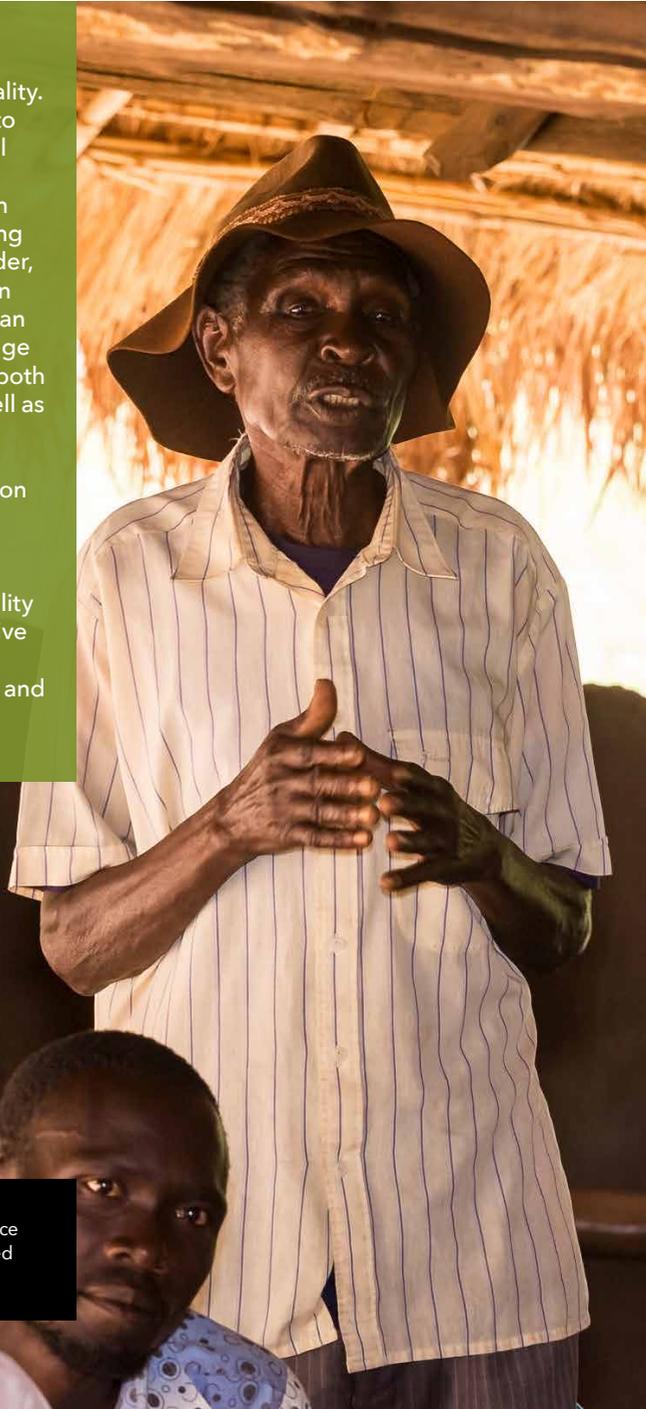
Yeka Rufus, a 28-year-old father of three, participating in men's engagement training in South Sudan.

"I regret all the years I was like a lion, drinking and beating my wife and not taking care of our family. I have asked her to forgive all the bad things I did to her. Now we talk, share and live in peace."

Male graduate (DRC, 2014)

Changing men's behaviours is crucial to realising women's equality. Such behavioural changes refer to stopping negative actions as well as actively performing positive actions. Such positive actions can be on 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 community.

We also believe that the promotion of equality cannot be founded on division. The inclusion of men in progress towards women's empowerment and gender equality is essential. An important objective of our work is to support men to work with women in their homes and communities as equal partners.



Francis Kujo Moses explains to his fellow participants in South Sudan the importance of information about the dangers of forced and early child marriages.

Through our monitoring and evaluation data, we see promising results in male graduates taking action to support women's equality:

Across our men's engagement activities in Afghanistan, DRC and Nigeria, men were 80% more active in supporting women's rights at graduation compared to enrolment.⁴

In Afghanistan, 39% of male graduates reported having taken action to share information with their community about the effects of violence against women, compared to only 15% at enrolment.

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.



Findings from a recent external, longitudinal evaluation of our men's engagement activities in Nigeria found an improved score (6%) between men who had been engaged compared to those in the comparison group (statistically significant at a 10% confidence level). This was on a behavioural index that measured men's adherence to traditional norms of masculinity, negative reproductive and sexual health behaviours, the use of physical and verbal violence within the household, and behaviour concerning household chores and family care. In contrast, intervention and comparison communities responded similarly to almost all of the knowledge items and have non-distinguishable scores on the GEM attitudes scale.

This finding inspires us to do further research into how - and when - change occurs. For example, could behaviour change be a precursor to attitudinal change, rather than attitudinal change being an assumed prerequisite to action? This would further support other literature which demonstrates that behavioural change is more likely when participants are shown concrete models of behaviour rather than relying on abstract ideas.⁵

“Violence or beating women is prohibited in Islam and no one is allowed to beat his wife or any family member.”

Male graduate (Afghanistan, 2016)

3

What changes do we see in women's decision-making?

Women's decision-making is a key indicator in terms of empowerment and agency as it suggests that women are able to control or yield influence over aspects of their lives. As one of our four key outcomes, our core women's programme focuses on building women's knowledge and skills in decision-making, including negotiation within the household.

Our monitoring and evaluation data of our women's programme (with or without men's engagement activities) indicates positive changes for women in this area:

At graduation, 93% of women graduates reported being involved in family planning decisions, compared to only 55% at enrolment (global averages, 2016 graduates).

At graduation, 91% of women graduates reported being involved in household financial decisions, compared to only 63% at enrolment (global averages, 2016 graduates).



Haji Gheyas, a graduate of our men's engagement training in Afghanistan, says "Before we used to think that women are just servants. Now I ask for my wife's opinion in all matters."



Photo: Alison Wright

Mokili Mputela, a graduate of our men's engagement training in DRC, explains how he has learned more respect for his wife through the programme.

This is complemented by our men's engagement activities which seek to promote more positive norms around women's decision-making to help create a more supportive and enabling environment for women graduates and other women in the communities where we work. We would therefore expect to see positive changes in male graduates' attitudes and beliefs around women's decision-making.

In a recent longitudinal evaluation of our men's engagement activities in Nigeria, researchers found that women in intervention communities (where men's engagement activities took place) were more empowered as sole decision-makers than women in comparison communities (where no men's engagement activities were being conducted). In fact, women in intervention communities had 45% higher scores than women in comparison communities, particularly with a positive impact in women's economic empowerment.

Our monitoring and evaluation data also shows positive changes in men's attitudes and beliefs around women's decision-making:

In Afghanistan, 99% of sampled 2016 graduates reported positive attitudes regarding women's role in family decision-making, compared to only 24% at enrolment.⁶

In Afghanistan, three months post-training, only 5% of sampled graduates reported that a man should have the final decisions in his home, compared to 91% at enrolment.

In Nigeria, 19% of men sampled at enrolment disagreed that men should have the final say in household decisions, compared to 44% three months after completion of training.



"Some husbands are putting the training into action but not all. For instance, my husband has really changed. He now gives me [the] opportunity to discuss what is bothering me with him and seeks my opinion before taking decisions. Before, if I tried to contribute he viewed it as complaints."

Woman graduate (Nigeria, 2016)

4 What changes do we see in women's health, well-being and economic self-sufficiency?

Health, well-being and economic self-sufficiency are fundamental for women to be able to actively participate economically, socially and politically, and to reach their full potential. Good health and well-being for women and families can reduce expenditure on illness and enable women to work, increasing the household income. Women for Women International also makes referrals and negotiates lower rates for healthcare with partner organisations, to make it easier for our participants to access needed health services.

At the most extreme, this results in a husband feeling entitled to use force to 'discipline' his wife, or entitled to demand sexual gratification from women, in contravention of their sexual and reproductive rights. More indirect consequences include women being required to seek permission to go to health clinics, use family planning methods or spend household budget on nutritious food for the family.

In many traditional communities, men are perceived as the manager of household financial resources. As women increase their incomes and savings through entrepreneurship or group businesses, there isn't always a correlating shift in household power dynamics. Men are often the owners of land and assets, the holders of bank accounts, and the distributors of money to be spent on household needs. Our men's engagement training addresses issues of inheritance, the value of women's work, women and business, and women and household financial decision-making.

But increased incomes, lower fees and referrals may not be enough. In societies where women have a lower status, men often perceive that they have control or even own women's lives and their bodies.

“Now that my husband is taking part, he no longer beats me, he no longer wastes the money of the family. Today, he considers me a useful person who can add value in all we undertake for the well-being of our family.”

Wife of male participant (DRC, 2016)

Key subjects in our training with men include women's rights, sexual and reproductive health (for men and women), family planning, sexually transmitted diseases, and violence against women.

We see positive changes in both men's attitudes and behaviours around violence against women. The table below shows results from our men's engagement training in Afghanistan.

Share of men who report:	At enrolment	At graduation
Disagreeing with justifications for violence against women	6%	60%
Positive attitudes regarding the roles of husbands and community leaders in the community reintegration of female victims of violence	50%	98%
Having taken action to support a female victim of violence	15%	41%
Having taken action to stop own violent actions against women	16%	42%

1 This longitudinal data analysis tracks a set of 2,574 participants who graduated from Women for Women International's social and economic empowerment programme between October 2011 and July 2012, representing approximately 9 percent of all graduates from this period. Data are self-reported and are gathered on a geographically stratified sample of participants at enrolment and two years post-graduation. Due to office relocation, two year follow-up data for graduates from South Sudan were not available - the global average figures therefore do not include data from South Sudan. Only participants who were tracked and surveyed at both enrolment and two years

post-graduation are included in this analysis, which represents 49% of the target sample that was randomly selected for follow-up surveys. We do not gather routine monitoring data from a comparison group. This dataset of outcomes two years post-graduation was cleaned and analysed in 2015. For the question on reported practice of family planning, we exclude the 10-30% of respondents who report family planning as being N/A to them at the time of the survey. Our Monitoring, Research, and Evaluation team is engaged in ongoing efforts to establish the effects of our programs more definitively. For additional questions, please contact us at general@womenforwomen.org.

2 Data are taken from a 31% sample (404 men) who enrolled in men's engagement activities (1,319) in 2016 in the three countries mentioned.

3 Share of respondents who selected all four definitions presented as violence against women: abuse to a woman's emotional well-being; physical beating; rape; and withholding money or income.

4 Data are 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.

5 Evans, A., 'Women Can Do What Men Can Do': The causes and consequences of growing flexibility in gender divisions of labour in Kitwe, Zambia. (The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2014). Available online: http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/752/1/Evans_women_can_do.pdf.

6 Share of respondents from MEP in Afghanistan (n=404) reporting "Disagree" to the statement, "A man should have the final word about decisions in his home."

Recommendations

Based on our evidence and experience, Women for Women International makes the following recommendations to other practitioners and donors interested in engaging men for women's equality:

Continue to invest in women

Engaging men is neither an alternative nor a priority over supporting activities aimed at women's empowerment that directly support women. The discrimination and limitations that women face need to be addressed by investing in women. Men's engagement activities therefore should be delivered as part of a larger, more comprehensive approach that supports women's equality and meaningful partnerships between men and women.

Take an inclusive approach

Equality cannot be founded on division and so approaches must be grounded in respecting each other's differences. This relates not only to highlighting how patriarchal norms can be harmful (including for men) but also building inclusive approaches to promoting gender equality, i.e. collective efforts that bring a diverse range of people together, including those most marginalised.

Focus on behaviour and action

Whilst raising awareness on women's rights should be a core tenant of men's engagement activities, focusing on behavioural changes is not only important to delivering more immediate changes in women's lives but evidence suggests may be effective in promoting positive attitude changes. Training is not enough to make significant changes; men's engagement should include activities that are practical and action-oriented, like role play.

Ensure clarity of outcomes

The basis for men's engagement activities that are focused on women's equality must ensure that outcomes are clearly focused on women's agency, specifically women's decision-making, economic self-sufficiency and control over their own bodies. As women's equality is dependent on ending discrimination against women and promoting their empowerment, men's engagement activities must also aim to achieve this.

Be context specific

The challenges to women's equality that people face vary significantly from country to country, community to community, and sometimes family to family. They are influenced by tradition, culture, religion and experience. A context-specific approach needs to be taken to ensure that content is focused on the specific, tangible issues that communities face, and provides concrete ways to address them.



Obadia Lowiya Steven at his men's engagement training in South Sudan. "Since attending this training my behaviour has changed for the better. We can now manage our family problems better. I am learning about the importance of allowing girls to finish school, and am against early marriage."

Photo: Charles Atiki Lomodong

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.

Help us engage men as allies. A donation of £1,000 could pay for the training of 10 male community leaders as champions for women's empowerment.

womenforwomen.org.uk/donate

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

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