



Impact Evaluation of Mentorship for Female Micro-entrepreneurs: Bridging the Gap in Conflict-Affected Areas of Nigeria

Women for Women International (WfWI) works with the most marginalized women in conflict-affected countries to help them move from poverty and isolation to self-sufficiency and empowerment. Through our combined economic and social empowerment program, we aim to provide participants with a combination of knowledge, skills, and resources to increase their self-confidence and capacity to create sustainable change in their lives and those of their families and communities. We have worked with over 479,000 women across eight conflict-affected countries since 1993.

WfWI's Holistic Social and Economic Empowerment Program

Through WfWI's 12-month training program, women learn about the value of their work in the family and local economy, their role in decision-making, the importance of women's rights, basic health practices, and the benefits of working together in a group for social and economic purposes. The training, delivered to groups of 25 women at a time, includes modules on life skills, numeracy, business practices, vocational training, and an introduction to cooperatives. Participants receive a monthly stipend of \$10 (USD) and support to open formal bank savings accounts wherever possible. WfWI also engages with men to sustainably improve women's empowerment by creating an enabling environment in the family and in the community. WfWI has been conducting its economic and social empowerment program in Nigeria since 2001 and has served over 64,000 women. On average, 74% of women from the program report using their vocational skills to earn an income at graduation. One year later, even more women (86%) report using their skills.

Description of Research

WfWI is conducting a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to better understand the impact of programmatic additions to the year-long holistic social and economic empowerment program in Bauchi state and Plateau State, Nigeria. The primary research question of the study is whether follow-up mentoring visits by WfWI trainers for 6 months after women graduate from the training program significantly affect economic outcomes for women micro-entrepreneurs' employment activities. In addition to this question, this study is also examining how being part of a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) provides better support for sustained profitability, scale, and access to capital. 1,000 participants are included in the evaluation. All women in this study are receiving WfWI's standard year-long program. Participants are randomly assigned to either receive 6 months of mentorship post-graduation or not, and randomly assigned to either receive VSLA training and support or not. In this factorial design, participants receive both support to participate in a VSLA and mentoring services, just mentoring, just VSLA activities, or neither mentoring nor VSLA activities.

Outcomes of interest: Income, asset ownership, employment, business profits, use of business practices, decision-making, aspirations, social capital, household welfare, savings behaviors, response to economic shocks, and agency.

Project Timeline

The research project is taking place from 2018 to 2020. The baseline data collection took place in March and April 2018. Women in the study enrolled in WfWI's 12-month program starting in April 2018 and will graduate in March 2019. Women who are assigned to the mentorship treatment arm will participate in post-graduation mentorship from April to October 2019. Endline data collection will take place in January to March 2020. Results are anticipated in late 2020.

Partners

This research project is being conducted with the guidance and leadership of two principal investigators: Jenny Aker, Associate Professor of Development Economics at the Tufts University, and Megan Rounseville, Development Economics PhD Candidate at Tufts University. This project is funded by the Nielsen Foundation, BlackRock, Inc., and private donors.

For more information, please contact WfWI at research@womenforwomen.org.