



COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impacts as Experienced by Women in Afghanistan

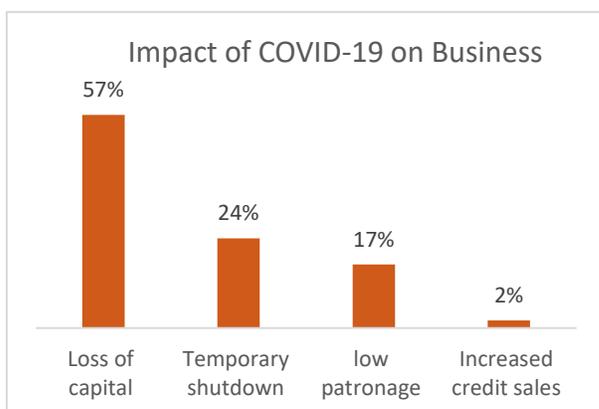
Since 1993, Women for Women International (WfWI) programs have supported over half a million to earn and save money, improve health and wellbeing, influence decisions in their home and community, and connect to networks for support. The Women for Women International-Afghanistan (WfWI-Afghanistan) program offers women a constructive, dignified way to regain control of their lives. The training provides foundational training the supports women to know and defend their rights, mentally and physically lead healthy lives, influence decisions and generate income.

The COVID-19 in Afghanistan has disrupted the informal labor sector, which makes up the largest percentage of employment in Afghanistan, particularly day laborers, and has impacted Afghan's unemployment rate. As the lockdown was instituted Women for Women International shutdown in person training. However, prior to the pandemic, the offices were able to contact program participants and provide participants with hygiene kits. These kits provided them tools to stay safe and maintain safety in their home, that might otherwise be too expensive. This learning brief offers insights on COVID-19 outbreak impact experienced by the women from the Nangarhar, Kabul, Kapisa, Parwan, and Panjsheer provinces.

WfWI conducted a survey with 90 women in June 2020 to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's wellbeing, economic outcomes, and habits.

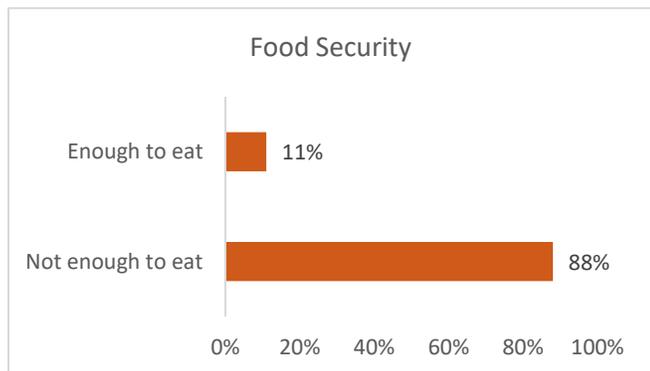
Key Outcomes:

- Most women have either lost their business or expect that it will fail in the next three months.
- Women reported increased instances of family conflict and stress related to the lockdown.
- Women are experiencing moderate to mild depression and anxiety related to social isolation.
- Women stated that the pandemic has helped them learn about the importance of income and saving.

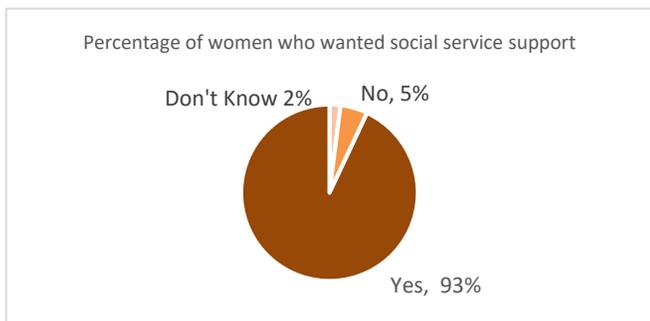


Women's businesses were deeply impacted by lockdown and COVID-19. As the pandemic continues, women's income, businesses, and their family's wellbeing are at risk. 72% of women stated that their businesses were not receiving any profit, and more than half reported that they were losing capital. Of those that had a business or income generating activity, quarter stated that they had completely shutdown their business due to decreased income, patronage or issues of the lockdown. These challenges to their income generating activities, led to significant difficulties in providing for their families.

Without crucial income from their businesses, women and their families are facing food insecurity. More than half of women in the study reported that they often or sometimes do not have enough to eat in the households. Less than 15% stated that they do not have enough or the foods they wanted. This is an area where participants emphasized the importance of governmental aid, of all the women surveyed only 4 households had received any food aid for a government or nonprofit agency.



Women reported increased familial conflict and arguments due to financial hardship, poverty and lack of income. The majority (75%) of participants reported their relationships with their spouse and children had been negatively affected due to the pandemic. The tensions related to financial stress, the pandemic at large, and separation from family were cited as major driving factors of familial conflict. Of all the women, 93% stated that they would like to be introduced to social service workers either to contact family or receive increased social support.



Increased household labor, and decreased socialization with neighbors and community had significant psychosocial impacts on women. 90% of women reported they had no communication with neighbors, friends and relatives due to the pandemic. Some were able to use cell phones to communicate. In addition to the stress of isolation, women were tasked with taking care of sick family members in homes, unemployment, increasing prices of essential food items and medicine. Because of these increased stressors and decreased social time, women reported higher rates of depression and anxiety.

Women reported the importance of savings and caring for children and families. During this time, women have increased responsibilities- to act as teacher, nurse, housekeeper, and mother. This is especially challenging managing a household that is facing food insecurity. Most women reported this pandemic highlighted the importance of savings and respecting and supporting their fellow community members, as they needed to lean on them in this time of uncertainty.



When it is safe and possible, women highlighted the need for stipends and for the program to begin again.

Women for Women International participants stated the importance of starting the program back up again when possible and increasing training duration, providing a stipend, and providing participants with a business start up kit.



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