



## **Impact Evaluation of WfWI Holistic Women's Empowerment Program on Women's Agency, Decision-Making, and Economic Empowerment in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo**

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 training 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). WfWI has been conducting its economic and social empowerment program in the North and South Kivu provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since 2004 and has served over 95,000 women. In addition, WfWI recognizes the importance of engaging with men in efforts to sustainably improve women's empowerment. Since 2005, WfWI has provided men's engagement programming to 11,400 male family and community members, training them to become active allies in women's social and economic empowerment.

### Description of Research

WfWI is conducting a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of its year-long holistic social and economic empowerment program for women in South Kivu, DRC. The primary research questions of the study are:

- 1) What is the causal impact of WfWI's program on women's agency, decision-making, mental health and cognition?
- 2) How do women's increased agency and decision-making transform household welfare outcomes in fragile settings?
- 3) How does WfWI's men engagement programming impact women's agency and decision-making in the household?

2,000 participants are included in the evaluation, with half randomly selected to participate in the program and the other half selected to be in the control group. In addition, half of the women in the treatment arm have been randomized to benefit from men's engagement programming. This takes the form of the woman's male spouse, partner, or other household member participating in four months of men's discussion groups where men discuss topics including women's economic empowerment, domestic violence, women's health, and more.

**Outcomes of interest:** Women's agency, participation in household decision-making, financial control, physical and mental health of women, health of infants and young children, cognitive function, household consumption and investments, asset ownership, time use, and experience of and response to economic shocks.

### Project Timeline

The research project is taking place over three years (2017 to 2020). The baseline data collection took place in June and July 2017. Women in the treatment arms of the study enrolled in WfWI's 12-month program starting in August and October 2017 and will graduate in July and September 2018, respectively. Endline data collection will take place in late 2019. Results are anticipated in late 2020.

### Partners

This research project is being conducted with the guidance and leadership of two principal investigators: Manuela Angelucci, Associate Professor in Economics at the University of Texas, and Rachel Heath, Assistant Professor in Economics at the University of Washington. This project is funded by the Dutch government under the Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women initiative (FLOW) and Blackrock, Inc.