Female Youth Employment Initiative

**Impact Evaluation Concept Note**

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**Introduction**

The Female Youth Employment Initiative (FYEI) is part of a Bank-led Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI) to promote the economic empowerment of young women in eight countries (Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Rwanda, South Sudan, Haiti, Jordan, and Laos). Each AGI project offers skills training and complementary services to facilitate young women’s transition to productive work. These programs are seen as pilots in which to experiment with innovative approaches, measure the results, and provide quantitative evidence for possible scaling-up of similar interventions in the future. In addition, the evaluations of the AGI pilots will contribute to a nascent evidence base on job training programs in developing countries. To date, the evidence on skills training programs for youth in developing countries has focused on a handful of government-led programs in Latin America which showed relatively small impacts on employment and earnings (IADB 2009). Recently, new evidence has emerged from programs in Africa. Skills training programs focused on women in Uganda (Bandiera 2012) and Liberia (Adoho 2013) have shown very positive impacts on employment from ranging from 30% to 50%. A skills training program for male and female youth in Uganda also showed a 50% increase in employment and enterprise profits (Blattman 2011). A skills training program in Malawi, however, showed no short-run labor market impacts for men or women (Cho 2013). Several impact evaluations of youth skills training programs are ongoing in various South Asian countries, although results are not yet available.

Notwithstanding the lack of evidence for job training programs in particular, the larger realm of women’s economic empowerment in South Asia has a well-developed literature and a fair amount of robust evidence from development interventions. The most heavily studied class of interventions is microfinance. From the seminal early works on Grameen Foundation and BRAC (Hashemi 1996, Pitt 1998), researchers and policymakers have focused on the potential linkages between microfinance and women’s empowerment. Despite early promise, recent reviews of the evidence on microfinance (Duvendack 2011, Bannerjee 2013) have found that to date no rigorous experimental study has been able to demonstrate large positive effects of microfinance on either economic outcomes or women’s empowerment. Other types of interventions have had more success. A recent study on a community-level empowerment program in North India, for example, showed strong impacts on labor force participation, physical mobility, and political participation (Kandpal 2013). An assessment of BRAC’s Adolescent Development Program in Bangladesh showed positive impacts various dimensions of empowerment for young women, including decision-making, leadership, and attitudes toward early marriage and dowry (Kabir 2007). Another study in India found that increased access to labor market opportunities changed the preferences and behaviors of young women with regard to marriage and fertility (Jensen 2012). However, interventions to promote female entrepreneurship through basic business training (Field 2010) or infusions of capital (de Mel 2009), have found that non-economic constraints, such as traditional norms or lack of decision-making power within households, limit the success of these programs.

In the unique context of Afghanistan, evidence on the effectiveness of women’s empowerment or job training programs is quite scarce, although there is no shortage of NGO programs to empower poor women through vocational training. A recent study funded by UN Women, however, docuemnts the despite the huge strides the country has made since 2002, women’s economic participation remains low and focused on activities with low productivity (Ganesh 2013). The Government’s flagship social protection program, the National Solidarity Program (NSP), which supports communities to develop and implement their own development projects through inclusive locally-led processes, included a women’s empowerment component. The impact evaluation of the NSP found that mandated female participation in the selection and governance of community projects improved women’s mobility and participation in income-generating activities, but did not change decision-making power within the household or views about women in society (Beath 2012). Another recent randomized evaluation examined the impact of school provision in order to test whether the supply of education alone was sufficient to improve school enrollment in Afghan villages (Burde 2013). Despite fears that cultural constraints might limit the demand for education, the program led to a significant increase in enrolment and performance for all children, and the gains were larger for girls.

**Project Design**

The FYEI project was designed as a pilot to test whether skills training could serve as a viable means to promote female employment in a uniquely challenging environment. After a protracted preparation period, the FYEI project was launched on January 31, 2012 at the Ministry of Education in Kabul. The project has four components: (i) social mobilization through school management shuras (SMS) to raise community awareness of the importance of female training and employment and social marketing to identify employment and business opportunities for young women[[1]](#footnote-1); (ii) skills training and follow-up support provided through competitively selected training institutions or NGOs; (iii) institutional strengthening and implementation support to the Ministry of Education; and (iv) a rigorous impact evaluation to identify the causal effects of the program on its beneficiaries. The impact evaluation will focus on the second component (skills training). The skills training program aims to reach approximately 1300 beneficiaries during the project period and targets young women aged 18-30 who have completed secondary school in one of four districts of Balkh province: Balkh, Sholgara, Dehdadi, and the provincial capital city of Mazar-i-Sharif. The program will emphasize technical skills for selected vocational areas[[2]](#footnote-2) as well as life skills, including communication, workplace professionalism, savings and personal financial management, leadership, and decision-making. During project preparation, malnutrition was identified as one of the priority issues for the life skills training and the program is collaborating with the Bank-supported South Asia Food and Nutrition Security Initiative (SAFANSI) to develop and deliver a nutrition education module. The importance of nutrition education is underscored by a recent paper documenting the negative impact of food price shocks on food consumption and dietary diversity in Afghan households (Joliffe 2010). The technical and life skills trainings will be delivered concurrently by non-governmental providers in training centers located in each district. The number of training centers and the allocation of participants to each center will be determined in collaboration with the training providers and based on the findings of the social marketing survey.

**Evaluation Design**

Given the dearth of experimental evidence on development programs in Afghanistan, the current study is poised to make an important contribution to our knowledge about female employment in Afghanistan as well as the efficacy of job training programs in conflict-affected and culturally conservative contexts. To facilitate the examination of the FYEI project's impacts, a rigorous and independent impact evaluation was built into the project design from the outset.[[3]](#footnote-3) This impact evaluation has been designed in close coordination with the FYEI project staff in the Ministry of Education to ensure that the evaluation is conducted in an ethically responsible and culturally acceptable manner. The objective of the impact evaluation is to measure changes in the outcomes of beneficiaries that can be attributed causally to the project interventions. To this end, the impact evaluation will employ a **randomized controlled trial (RCT)** methodology to compare the outcomes of project participants (the “treatment group”) with a control group of eligible young women who applied, but were not selected, for the project. To ensure comparability between the participants and non-participants, beneficiaries will be selected randomly from the pool of eligible young women who express interest in the program, using a lottery process. Randomized evaluations have been used successfully in other projects in Afghanistan, most notably the government’s National Solidarity Program (NSP), and will ensure that the project's learning objectives can be met. The rigorous evidence produced by this impact evaluation will feed into active policy dialogues within Afghanistan and globally on the most effective methods to equip young women to succeed in the labor market.

**Selection of Beneficiaries**

The application of the RCT methodology for this impact evaluation requires a sizeable applicant pool from which to construct treatment and control groups. The first step is to solicit applications from potential beneficiaries and screen them to determine eligibility. From the pool of applicants deemed eligible, participants for the program are randomly drawn, with the remainder assigned to the control group. For the FYEI, an intensive social mobilization campaign was conducted in 2012 by the project’s social mobilization team in conjunction with school management shuras from 61 secondary schools across the four project districts. This campaign resulted in a total of 2,822 applications which met all eligibility criteria (age, education, and residency). Figures 1 and 2 show the distribution of these 2,822 applicants by district and age.

**Figure 1. Distribution of FYEI Applicants by District and Age**

The FYEI program aims to reach 1300 beneficiaries, all of whom will enroll and participate in the program concurrently. The selection of these 1300 beneficiaries will be stratified across the five project districts according to the market demand in each district, which itself will be informed by the project’s social marketing survey. Once the final allocation of beneficiaries across districts is determined, a random assignment (using Stata) will be conducted to select 1300 project beneficiaries as well as up to 300 “waitlist” candidates from the pool of 2822 eligible applicants. All applicants will be informed by the project team of the final outcome of their applications and those selected will be offered a chance to enroll in the course of their choice. If some of the courses are oversubscribed, applicants will be offered their second choice.

**Outcomes**

Because of the project's unique focus on empowering young women with both technical and life skills, the evaluation will seek to measure outcomes related not only to labor and income, but also to social outcomes, including mobility, marriage and fertility preferences, self-confidence, and family relationships. In this way, the project will contribute country-specific knowledge on the effectiveness of programs to empower young women both economically and socially. The main evaluation questions are:

1. Does the FYEI program improve the **economic well-being** of young women who participate? What is the impact on employment, earnings, investment, savings, borrowing, and lending?
2. Does the FYEI program promote the **empowerment** of participants, as measured by proxies such as self-confidence, fertility preferences, dependency on others, and control over household resources?
3. Are there **spillover effects** on the family members of participants?

The measurement of outcomes is expected to involve at least two rounds of household survey data collection, at baseline and endline, to be conducted by an independently contracted survey firm. The baseline survey will be conducted after all applications have been screened but before the random selection of program beneficiaries. Both the female applicant and the head of her household will be interviewed, and the applicant will be unaware of whether she has been selected for the program at the time of the baseline interview. The endline interview will be conducted after the completion of the program (both the classroom training period and the follow-up/ placement period). Because of the tight project deadline associated with the FYEI project and the overall Adolescent Girls Initiative, no longer term follow-up is planned at this point.

**Indicators**

Examination of each of the research questions above will involve the measurement of a variety of indicators, both quantitative and qualitative. Many of the indicators are subjective, with no straightforward or simple question that can measure it precisely. For these indicators, a battery of questions will be used to elucidate a more comprehensive and holistic measure of the indicator in question. For example, the indicator on “empowerment” is measured by posing a series of statements regarding self-confidence, mobility, and decision-making and requesting the respondent to state the degree with which they feel the statement applies to them.

The annex to this concept note includes a full list of the outcome indicators to be tracked in this impact evaluation, along with the baseline survey instruments which include the specific questions used to measure each indicator.

**Sample Size**

Power calculations have been performed to determine the appropriate sample size for this impact evaluation. The calculations assumed a baseline employment rate of 43%, the employment rate found for women aged 16 to 30 in Balkh province using data from the 2007 National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment survey conducted by the Government of Afghanistan. This is the broadest definition of employment, including farm work and unpaid work in household enterprises. The calculations were done using the “sampsi” command in Stata. The Table below lists the corresponding statistical power for three study samples (n=1500, 2000, or 2600) to detect various effect sizes (12%, 15% or 20%) on the employment rate.

Table 1. Power Calculations for various sample sizes and effect sizes

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Baseline Employment rate | Size of treatment group (n1)  | Size of control group (n2) | Effect Size | Power |
| .43 | 750 | 750 | 20% | 0.9109 |
| .43 | 750 | 750 | 15% | 0.6972 |
| .43 | 750 | 750 | 12% | 0.5050 |
| .43 | 1000 | 1000 | 20% | 0.9705 |
| .43 | 1000 | 1000 | 15% | 0.8199 |
| .43 | 1000 | 1000 | 12% | 0.6305 |
| .43 | 1300 | 1300 | 20% | 0.9927 |
| .43 | 1300 | 1300 | 15% | 0.9083 |
| .43 | 1300 | 1300 | 12% | 0.7475 |

Given the high cost of collecting survey data in Afghanistan, the proposed sample size for this study is 2000 individuals, with 1000 in the treatment group and 1000 in the control group. The results indicate that a sample of 2000 individuals is sufficient to detect a change of approximately 15% (or 6 percentage points) in the employment rate of the treatment group, relative to the control group. Even if we increased the sample size to include everyone in the treatment group (1300 each in treatment and control), we still would not have enough power to detect the lesser effect size of 12%. Given the cost savings of reducing the sample size, and the expectation from previous studies that have found effects much larger than 6 percentage points, the proposed size of 2000 individuals should be sufficient.

**Estimated Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Baseline Survey | Summer/ Fall 2013 |
| Assignment to rounds | Fall 2013 |
| Start of training | Late 2013 |
| Completion of FYEI project | December 2014 |
| Endline Survey | Jan 2015 |
| Data cleaning | Feb-April 2015 |
| Analysis/ Report Writing | April-December 2015 |
| Preliminary findings | Fall 2015 |
| Final report delivered | December 2015 |

**Estimated Budget for Data Collection**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Baseline Survey- Jan 2013 |  |
| Tracking survey (to update contact information between surveys) |  |
| Endline Survey- Jan 2015 |  |
| **TOTAL**  |  |

**Impact Evaluation Team**

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**Annex 1. FYEI Core Indicators for Impact Evaluation**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Class of indicator** | **Indicator** |
| Demographics | * Age
* Marital status
* Ethnicity
 |
| Education | * Highest level of education completed
* Current enrolment
* Aspirations to return to school
* Reasons why dropped out/ stopped attending
 |
| Employment | * Current employment (broad definition)
* Type of current employment (sector, self- or wage-, location)
* Intensity of current employment (hours, days)
* Earnings from current employment
 |
| Investment | * Savings
* Borrowing
* Lending
* Asset ownership
* Expenditures
* Transfers to and from others
 |
| Time Use | * Time spent on paid work
* Time spent on unpaid/domestic work
* Time spent on leisure/recreation
 |
| Empowerment | * Control over resources
* Mobility
* Self-regulation (11-item scale)
* Entrepreneurial self-confidence (8-item scale)
* Social support
* Subjective well-being
 |
| Family history / relationships | * Conflict exposure
* Marital history
* Number of children
* Currently pregnant
* Desired number of children
* Domestic violence/ intra-household conflict
 |
| Reproductive health | * Knowledge and use of contraception
* Knowledge of HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted infections
 |
| Nutrition | * Knowledge of healthy nutrition practices
* Self-reported food security
* Self-reported consumption of various food groups
 |
| Household Characteristics and spillovers | * Household size
* Education and employment of all household members
* Asset ownership of household
* Housing characteristics
* Food security of household
 |
| Family Support and Attitudes | * Expectations of young female household members
* Attitudes toward gender roles within the household
 |

1. To make best use of existing capacities, the FYEI project was designed to collaborate closely with the existing World Bank EQUIP project, based in the Ministry of Education, which is experienced in working with school management shuras through its Social Mobilization Unit (SMU). The project staff hired to work on FYEI sit within the MOE’s EQUIP project implementation unit and EQUIP’s provincial office in Balkh. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The choice of trades will be finalized after the social marketing survey conducted under the project’s first component, but is expected to include: office administration, computer literacy, English language, and accounting. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The impact evaluation is funded separately from the project through Bank-Executed resources. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)