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USAID / SIERRA LEONE WOMEN EMPOWERED FOR LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT (WELD) PROJECT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

MAY 2019

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	i
ACRONYMS.....	iii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	I
Evaluation Methods and Limitations.....	I
Key Findings	3
EVALUATION PURPOSE AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS	7
Evaluation Purpose.....	7
Evaluation Questions	7
PROJECT BACKGROUND	8
Project Context.....	8
Project Objectives.....	9
EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS.....	10
Key Informant Interviews	10
Focus Group Discussions	12
Case Studies.....	14
Quantitative Surveys.....	14
Limitations.....	15
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	17
Evaluation Question 1	17
Evaluation Question 2	30
Evaluation Question 3	53
Evaluation Question 4	55
Evaluation Question 5	62
SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING.....	67
Evaluation Question 1	67
Evaluation Question 2	68
Evaluation Question 4	68
Evaluation Question 5	69
ANNEXES	71
Annex A: Evaluation Statement of Work	71

Annex B: Data Collection Instruments	74
Annex C: Variable and Data Analysis Description.....	112
Annex D: 2016 KAP Data Analysis Tables	115
Annex E: Information Sources.....	123
Annex F: No Conflict of Interest Statement.....	125

ACRONYMS

AAISL	Action Aid International Sierra Leone
AMNeT	Advocacy Movement Network
APC	All People's Congress
BCC	Behavioral Change Communication
CoP	Chief of Party
CSO	Civil society organization
DQA	Data quality assurance
DRG-LER	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Learning, Evaluation, and Research Activity
EMB	Election Management Body
FGD	Focus group discussion
GBV	Gender-based violence
IGR	Institute of Governance Reform
KAP	Knowledge, attitudes, and practice
KII	Key informant interview
IEC	Information, Education and Communication Strategy
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MSWGCA	Ministry for Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NBI	NestBuilders International
NEC	National Election Commission
NMJD	Network Movement for Justice and Development

NORC	National Opinion Research Center
PPRC	Political Party Registration Committee
S4T	Savings for Transformation
SBGV	Sexual gender-based violence
SG	Savings group
SLL	Sierra Leonean Leone (currency)
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SOW	Statement of work
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
VSLA	Village savings and loan associations
WELD	Women Empowered for Development
WV	World Vision

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Poverty is widespread in Sierra Leone, as over 60 percent of the population reside below the poverty line and subsist on \$1.25 per day or less.¹ As poor as most Sierra Leoneans are, women are poorer still, with women and girls even more marginalized by poverty than men.² Traditional structures, both patrilineal and shaped by entrenched patriarchy, perpetuate customs and norms that hinder economic and, indeed, political opportunities in ways that ultimately exclude Sierra Leonean women and girls from critical political and economic processes and venues of influence. Such barriers exist not just within the wider milieu, but also at the level of community and household. Connections through lineage and marriage, for instance, determine a women's status in Sierra Leone, and thus can be a source of vulnerability and insecurity. According to the United Nations (UN), Sierra Leone ranks high on the Gender Inequality Index, placing 150th out of 189 countries. Though Sierra Leone's National Election Commission (NEC) reported 52 percent of all registered voters in the 2018 elections were female, women represent only about 13 percent of parliamentarians. Such figures are sobering, against the backdrop of patterns of female participation that have been traditionally low. Power, moral authority, social privileges, and access to land, have been long controlled by men.³

The USAID-supported Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD) Project, implemented from September 2014 to February 2019, sought to reverse patterns of gender inequality, with goals of increasing women's participation in the social, economic and political spaces of Sierra Leone. A four-and-a-half year project administered through a consortium of four implementing organizations – World Vision (WV), Action Aid in Sierra Leone (AASIL), Advocacy Movement Network (AMNeT), and the Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD) – WELD efforts aimed to facilitate women's empowerment in Sierra Leone through three cornerstone objectives: (1) supporting an enabling environment for women's participation; (2) building the capacity of local councils and sub-national governance structures, and (3) strengthening the role of civil society organizations.

The project, with WV as the lead organization, implemented interventions across seven Sierra Leonean districts where women have faced pronounced underrepresentation in the economy and politics. Those districts are: Bombali, Koinadugu, Kenema, Kailahun, Tonkolili, Port Loko, and Kono.

EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

The current performance evaluation seeks to independently verify the key outcomes of the WELD project and the effectiveness of strategies used to contribute to the achievement of

¹ On the United Nation's Human Development Index, Sierra Leone in 2017 ranked 184 of 189 countries. See, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

² Hazel McFerson, "Women and Post-Conflict Society in Sierra Leone," in *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 13: 1 (2012).

³ [UN Women](http://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2017/02/sierra-leone-steps-it-up-for-gender-equality) <http://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2017/02/sierra-leone-steps-it-up-for-gender-equality>

these outcomes. The evaluation generates lessons learned from implementation of women empowerment programming, and will inform similar interventions under a proposed USAID Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Initiative, and other activities executed by the government of Sierra Leone and other development partners in the country.

The evaluation relies on a combination of mutually reinforcing qualitative and quantitative methods reflecting the project logic and research questions being addressed. Thus, the evaluation includes: project document and literature review; in-depth key informant interviews (KII) among WELD stakeholders; focus group discussions (FGD) among beneficiaries; case studies; and secondary analysis of existing quantitative survey data, specifically, knowledge and practice surveys from 2016 and 2018 conducted project-wide among WELD beneficiaries. The evaluation period of performance was 2014 to 2018, though the WELD project began in earnest in 2016, due to the Ebola crisis.

There are several limitations associated with the evaluation:

- **Lack of baseline data.** Baseline data was collected during 2015, however, the results were not reliable due to changes or inconsistencies in data collection approaches. Thus, comparison of current findings with the situation prior to the start of the project or at mid-line is limited.
- **Selection bias.** There is a possibility of selection bias, whereby chosen respondents were receptive to being interviewed or to participating in FGDs, but their perceptions may differ from those who did not. The team endeavored to have as diverse and as large a sample as possible to verify responses, and used a variety of methodologies to validate results.
- **Recall bias.** KIIs and FGDs relied on self-reporting of events and perceptions dating back several years. Thus, some data may be inaccurate due to lapses in memory. To address this challenge, protocols and discussion guides included general as well as probative queries.
- **Social desirability or halo bias.** There is a known tendency among respondents to under-report socially undesirable answers and alter their responses to approximate what they perceive as the social norm (*halo bias*). To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team provided appropriate confidentiality and anonymity assurances to all KIIs and FGD respondents through an informed consent process.
- **Availability of WELD project staff.** As the WELD project came to a close in November 2018, and fieldwork began mid-December 2018, some WELD project staff members were unavailable for interview. To locate individuals, the evaluation team conducted follow-up KIIs in January 2019 among those who later were available, found substitutes with knowledge, and conducted interviews using remote technologies (WhatsApp, Skype, phone) when in-person interviews were not feasible.

- **Gender imbalance in KAP surveys.** The evaluation team notes a significant imbalance in the number of men in the 2016 and 2018 KAP surveys. In the former, men represent 48 percent of the sample, in the latter, men represent only 21 percent.
- **Lack of comparability between survey rounds.** Differences in the KAP survey sample size and differences in some questions between survey rounds preclude drawing inferences of change in outcomes between survey years.

None of these challenges, however, prevented the evaluation team from drawing reliable, evidence-based conclusions the data. Key findings, based on the fieldwork, are summarized below.

KEY FINDINGS

EVALUATION QUESTION 1: TO WHAT EXTENT HAS WELD ACHIEVED ITS INTENDED RESULTS AND OUTCOMES AT THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS? WHAT ARE KEY ENABLING AND HINDERING FACTORS THAT HAVE AFFECTED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF OUTCOMES?

WELD efforts to increase women's representation in decision-making processes were met with contrasting levels of success at the national versus the local level. WELD's efforts to improve women's participation in the political sphere of Sierra Leone did not result in a significant change of women in the national parliament, although women's participation in local councils did increase. Women's participation in decision-making also increased throughout WELD project districts, in large part through the saving groups (SGs), which in turn, bolstered the esteem of women among members of their community. On the dimension of women's leadership, the WELD project also helped women achieve breakthroughs in ascending to traditional leadership roles. Some female aspirants noted that information from the various WELD trainings gave them confidence to run for leadership positions and assisted in campaigning. Despite these successes, the WELD project encountered some challenges related to engagement with political parties and other key actors at the national level. The political party symbol allocation process was generally overlooked by the WELD project, which exacerbated an already challenging situation where women struggled with an at-times corrupt, patriarchal party system that favors men. According to WELD project animators, WELD-supported media messages had a positive effect in their communities, although animators said their own role in the project was not always clear and they struggled with carrying out activities due to a lack of stipends.

The WELD project led to greater awareness of the need to adopt gender-sensitive planning, monitoring and reporting, particularly at the community and council levels, but less so at the national level. Though the evaluation team found that many districts were still developing their plans, other districts advanced in their efforts to incorporate gender mainstreaming into their institutions.

The WELD project also helped organize advocacy and governance CSO groups. CSOs worked with local-level institutions like the Ministry for Social Welfare, Gender and Child Affairs (MSWGCA) and local councils to advocate around issues of concern such as

SGBV and registering customary marriages. The record is weak on WELD accomplishments on the objective of increasing organizations that are able to shape gender policies at the national-level. The pattern of weaker influence at the national level, however, is a reflection of the WELD program's intended emphasis on affecting local-level dynamics.

EVALUATION QUESTION 2: TO WHAT EXTENT DID INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES USED UNDER THE WELD PROJECT BEST ADDRESS BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT FOR BENEFICIARY WOMEN?

The WELD project, on the whole, addressed barriers to women's political, economic, and social empowerment quite successfully. Though accomplishing gains in each of these three areas was not without challenges, the project contributed to greater unity among women and influenced knowledge, perceptions, and behavior among beneficiary populations.

WELD's ability to bring women together decreased local tensions and increased social capital by providing an opportunity for women to discuss common concerns amongst themselves in their SGs. WELD programming adapted well to challenges such as women's illiteracy, by starting short courses for basic skills, although these started late in the project.

Challenges occurred regarding aspirants' ability to mobilize financial resources and the short project timeframe of roughly four years, however.

Importantly, WELD programming widened the space for women to campaign for political leadership positions, a key project goal. Much of this occurred through advocacy and training for women beneficiaries around self-confidence and networking. Programming stopped short, however, on assisting women once they were elected to parliament, and some are currently struggling to participate in the political arena with their male counterparts.

The evaluation found that SGs augmented the economic capacity of women members, by helping them bring money into the households. The SGs enhanced economic empowerment both within households and communities, but also for the women beneficiary aspirants who were targets of WELD project support.

An analysis of 2016 and 2018 knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) revealed a positive relationship between WELD interventions and increased respondent knowledge of women's rights, and that increased knowledge is linked with changes in attitudes / practices regarding greater participation for women in multiple arenas. Specifically, WELD interventions correlate with more egalitarian perceptions of women's participation in politics and support for a larger role in household decision-making. Messaging is positively correlated with: (1) respondent engagement in business enterprises; (2) support for a large role for women in economic decision-making; (3) women's decision-making power regarding her person, and; (4) favorable attitudes towards women's access to financial resources.

WELD participants highlighted that Sierra Leone's longstanding culture of patriarchy ultimately remains a significant barrier, particularly in perceptions that women are not fit for leadership positions, or as frequently expressed in local parlance, "the hen does not crow." Additionally, women in politics are often viewed as promiscuous. The paramount chiefs played a key role in

the opening of space within communities, as did women's newfound ability to bring financial resources into their households.

In qualitative and quantitative results, age did not appear to be a variable distinguishing participant perspectives and experiences. In FGDs, participants over age 30 were just as likely to have favorable views of the project as younger participants and both age groups experienced similar challenges. Nor were there notable differences according to gender. Men were just as likely as women to express favorable attitudes towards women's participation in economic, political and social spaces. Findings from the 2016 and 2018 quantitative KAP survey analysis reflect these trends: neither gender nor age significantly influenced views. Perhaps more importantly, project-wide, the KAP surveys showed that WELD interventions are associated with improved knowledge of women's political, social and economic rights, and with changed practices regarding women's involvement in decision-making.

EVALUATION QUESTION 3: WHAT UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES (POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE) – IF ANY – HAVE BEEN REGISTERED AS A RESULT OF THE WELD INTERVENTIONS?

Unintended consequences emerging from the WELD project largely revolved around financial issues. To mitigate vulnerability to theft of cash mobilized and kept within the communities from SGs, WELD linked the groups into the mobile money system. This furthered women's empowerment by raising their incomes and status in communities where the new financial system was introduced. Another noteworthy and unexpected outcome was the organic replicability of the SGs, which were adopted by individuals who were not initially WELD participants.

EVALUATION QUESTION 4: WHICH ELEMENTS OF THE INTERVENTION APPROACHES AND RESULTS ACHIEVED BY WELD ARE MOST LIKELY TO BE REPLICATED AND SUSTAINED BEYOND THE CLOSE OF THE PROJECT? WHY?

The WELD project activities appearing most sustainable include the SGs, whose success is largely attributed to the model as designed by WELD. Saving group members are ultimately able to generate their own funds to acquire loans and are not reliant on WELD programming to continue. A case study of WELD-supported SGs shows that, through the SGs women enhanced their financial capacity, and their confidence to participate in the public arena. Outcomes from the short literacy courses which increased women's knowledge and bolstered their willingness to engage in public spaces, are also likely to endure. Challenges will likely remain with: 1) enabling women's ability to navigate the national parliamentary system once elected into power; 2) maintaining aspirant beneficiary confidence in similar future programming without providing campaign funding; 3) program monitoring post-programming by WELD beneficiaries (CSOs, local councils and the MSWGCA) to assess the success of project outcomes; and 4) ensuring future accountability without the strengthening of formal laws to overcome informal norms that create challenges for women within the political sphere.

EVALUATION QUESTION 5: WHAT ARE WE LEARNING ABOUT THE CONSORTIUM APPROACH ADOPTED BY WORLD VISION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE WELD PROJECT AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT INFLUENCED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF INTENDED OUTCOMES?

Finally, the consortium management approach embraced by WELD linked the partner organizations in a way that capitalized on partners' knowledge. Many partner CSOs worked in districts in which they had prior experience, paving the way for community acceptance of CSOs' mission with WELD. Partners shared ideas and experiences to learn from each other and maximize output. Working as such enabled widespread geographical project coverage across the Sierra Leonean districts and emphasized teamwork.

Yet the consortium structure was beleaguered with high turnover of key staff, limited capacity, and conflicting visions among implementing partners over what the hierarchy should look like. Assessments regarding the consortium's success varied widely amongst respondents, and while some of this is inherent within this type of structure, the confusion and consternation articulated by some WELD project partners will likely constitute a challenge for potential future programming. While these challenges may be relevant for decisions concerning the most suitable structure for future programming, they should in no way obviate the impressive overall successes of the WELD project.

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

EVALUATION PURPOSE

As part of the DRG Learning, Evaluation, and Research II (DRG-LER II) Activity, USAID Sierra Leone's Coordination Office requested a performance evaluation to independently verify the key outcomes of USAID's Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD) project in Sierra Leone, including an analysis of the influence of strategies designed to contribute to the achievement of WELD outcomes. The goal of the evaluation also involves identification of lessons learned from implementation of women empowerment initiatives. Such learning will inform similar interventions under a proposed USAID-supported Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Initiative, and other activities supported by the Sierra Leonean government and other development partners in the country. The evaluation findings, moreover, will be used by USAID / Sierra Leone to: (1) inform its design of future projects dedicated to women's empowerment; and (2) understand how well current approaches enable fulfillment of project objectives.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This performance evaluation addresses the following questions outlined below. The queries fall into five broad clusters: overall performance; appropriateness; unintended consequences; outcome sustainability; and project management.

- (1) **Performance.** To what extent has WELD achieved its intended results and outcomes at the local and national levels? What are key enabling and hindering factors that have affected the achievement of outcomes?
- (2) **Appropriateness.** To what extent did intervention strategies and approaches used under the WELD project best address barriers to women's political, social and economic empowerment for beneficiary women?
- (3) **Unintended consequences.** What unintended consequences (positive and negative) – if any – have been registered as a result of the WELD interventions?
- (4) **Sustainability and replicability.** Which elements of the intervention approaches and results achieved by WELD are most likely to be replicated and sustained beyond the close of the project? Why?
- (5) **Project management.** What are we learning about the consortium approach adopted by World Vision in the management of the WELD project and the extent to which it influenced the achievement of intended outcomes?

PROJECT BACKGROUND

PROJECT CONTEXT

Women in Sierra Leone have for long suffered political, social and economic marginalization. Traditions, culture and customs have drastically hampered their participation in governance and socio-economic development. The disproportionate disenfranchisement of women, who comprise 50 percent of the population of the country, has been attributed to poverty and a lack of decision-making power.

USAID launched the Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD) project in September 2014, with an overall goal of increasing women's social, political and economic rights in Sierra Leone. This goal was to be achieved through three strategic objectives: (1) Women's participation and representation in decision-making processes increased; (2) Gender sensitive planning, monitoring and reporting adopted at council, community, and national levels; and (3) Critical mass of organizations to influence gender policies at the national level increased. WELD was implemented by a consortium of four organizations led by World Vision International, alongside Action Aid International Sierra Leone (AAISL), Advocacy Movement Network (AMNeT) and Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD) across seven districts. WELD was initially awarded as a three-year project scheduled to end in September 2017 but was later extended through December 2018, bringing the total duration to 51 months and increasing the total estimated cost from \$3,930,691 to \$5,301,500.

First year implementation was severely affected by an outbreak of Ebola in Sierra Leone, causing delays in the roll-out of activities. Since the end of the brutal civil war in 2002, and until the most severe Ebola outbreak ever recorded struck in May 2014, the country made gains in its democratic and development processes. This is evidenced by peaceful transitions from one democratically-elected government to another in 2007, 2012, and 2018. During the Ebola outbreak, the Sierra Leone economy contracted at an estimated rate of nearly three percent per year. Previously, the economy had grown at an estimated annual rate of 11 percent, with an average growth rate in per capita income of about four percent, largely based on export earnings from iron ore.⁴

The country gradually recovered from the Ebola outbreak, despite many challenges, including poor public service delivery, high levels of poverty, high youth unemployment and weak economic governance. Thus, the WELD project did not launch in earnest until 2016. From 2016 onwards, the project gained momentum, and launched all components across seven districts, registering significant gains in the economic, social and political empowerment of women. During this time, WELD worked very closely with the MSWGCA both at the national level and with the local governments to ensure that gender is effectively mainstreamed in all development activities.

The March 2018 presidential, parliamentary and local elections presented an opportunity for WELD-supported beneficiaries to stand for and contest political positions at the different levels,

⁴ [USAID](https://www.usaid.gov/sierra-leone), at <https://www.usaid.gov/sierra-leone>

thereby demonstrating changes in attitudes towards women participation in politics. Following the election, WELD commissioned the University of Illinois to conduct research identifying key factors that influenced women's political aspirations, political candidacy and electoral victories in Sierra Leone within the context of the 2018 national elections.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The WELD project was governed by three strategic objectives, which include:

Strategic Objective 1: Women's participation and representation in decision-making processes increased.

- IR1.1: Barriers to women's participation in decision-making decreased
- IR1.2: Enhanced engagement capacity of councilors, parliamentarians, and aspiring politicians regarding gender-specific causes

Strategic Objective 2: Gender-sensitive planning, monitoring and reporting adopted at council, community, national levels.

- IR2.1: Increased knowledge and practice of gender-sensitive strategies by Local Councils and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Strategic Objective 3: Critical mass of organizations to influence gender policies at the national level increased.

- IR3.1: Capacity of CSOs to advocate for gender-sensitive policies, plans, and budgets increased
- IR3.2: CSO Coalitions established common platforms to engage with decision-makers

EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

To gather data required for this evaluation, the evaluation team used several techniques relying on a combination of mutually reinforcing qualitative methodologies that reflect the project design, research questions addressed, and indicators. The team integrated the results of each of the methods to capture the diversity of opinions and perceptions of beneficiaries and stakeholders regarding the WELD project.

Qualitative methods included a desktop document review, in-depth key informant interviews (KIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and case studies. The quantitative component involved analysis of existing surveys.

Data collection for the WELD evaluation occurred over the course of three fieldwork periods. The first round of fieldwork, December 6-21, 2018, consisted of KIs with key stakeholders, USAID and implementing staff, primarily in Freetown, but in select project areas as well. The second and third fieldwork periods--January 7-24, 2019 and February 15-March 2, 2019--consisted of FGDs with WELD stakeholders, case study data collection, and follow-up KIs.

The evaluation team's approach to selecting the appropriate methodology has been based on the USAID Evaluation Policy as well as NORC's experience conducting evaluations in the field. The NORC evaluation team conducted its work in a participatory manner, which involved engaging USAID, WELD implementing partners, project beneficiaries, and other stakeholders. This began with a literature review to acquire a shared understanding of the WELD project and guide the development of the data collection instruments to enrich this report. To triangulate the data collection with the desk review, the team repeatedly returned to the literature throughout the course of the project. For a full list of documents, see Annex V.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The evaluation began with the implementation of select in-depth KIs among cognizant USAID/Sierra Leone Mission personnel and key stakeholders. The NORC evaluation team also held KIs among WELD civil society organization (CSO) implementing partners, other relevant CSOs and WELD women and men beneficiaries. The interviews sought to contribute to an understanding of views around WELD interventions, and critically, to understand the extent to which the project addressed behavioral and attitudinal change regarding women's empowerment. The effort also considered, in addition to unintended consequences, the views on the consortium approach to management.

KIs utilized, in part, purposive sampling to ensure a diverse distribution of respondents in terms of demographics and interventions, while gaining a broad project-wide perspective of the WELD project. First the NORC team reviewed WELD project documentation to determine the universe of project stakeholders and the nature of project interventions. Although USAID and WELD recommended candidates for interview, the evaluation team acquired lists of project stakeholders and beneficiaries, and randomly selected respondents from certain categories of beneficiaries for interview (see Table I). Most interviews occurred face-to-face, but a small portion employed remote technologies (via telephone or Skype) when respondents

were in inaccessible areas. The team conducted 51 interviews among implementing partners and CSOs, key local political and community leaders, and relevant USAID personnel. A summary of the categories reached, 13 in all, is in Table I, below.

Table I. KII beneficiary and stakeholder categories

Category	Engagement With Weld Project
Women aspirants	Women trained on elections campaigning, fundraising and elections safety
Women and men members of savings and loans groups	Women and men, who participated in savings and loans groups, including women aspirants for political office
Male champions	Male community members who are supportive advocates of gender equity and engage other males in the community
Civil society partner organizations (including coalition members)	CSO coalitions that engage with local and national decision makers to advocate for women's rights and gender equity, monitor gender sensitive policies and practices and promote good governance
Traditional leaders (paramount chiefs, section chiefs and mami queens)	Stakeholders who have been involved in trainings to improve women's access to political processes and on human rights for women
Animators	Individuals who received radio peace messaging, conducted sensitization on women's empowerment and served as savings group facilitators
MSWGCA personnel	A key national-level government stakeholder that has engaged in trainings on gender planning, monitoring and reporting with the aim of contributing to women's empowerment
Ministries, Departments and Agency personnel	Key government stakeholders who engaged in trainings on gender planning, monitoring and reporting, and in dialogues to improve services
District and city council members, and community committee members	Key local government stakeholders who received training on gender mainstreaming, gender planning, monitoring and reporting to enhance women's empowerment and to improve women's participation in local political processes
USAID project personnel	USAID staff responsible for project monitoring, oversight and stewardship
Main implementer and consortium members	WELD consortium implementing partners responsible for various aspects of project implementation (WV, AAISL, AMNeT, and NMJD)

Category	Engagement With Weld Project
Political Parties Registration Commission	A key government stakeholder overseeing political parties in Sierra Leone that has engaged in information-sharing sessions on their role with WELD participants, including on the code of conduct of political parties
National Election Commission	A key government body responsible for overseeing the conduct of elections that has engaged in information-sharing sessions on their work with WELD participants, including nomination and campaign fees.

The NORC team developed semi-structured, open-ended interview guides tailored for each category of KIs (see Annex II). The interviews were conducted by the NORC team experts, who are fluent in Krio. Local experts, who supported the fieldwork by conducting interviews, participated in a one-day training on the instruments. The interviews unfolded during the two fieldwork phases: in December 2018, the team conducted a series of initial interviews to gain familiarity with the WELD project and also to inform the protocols for the subsequent focus group fieldwork; during January and February 2019, the evaluation team conducted focus groups (discussed in the next section) and follow-up KIs, some of which also laid the foundation for the FGDs. The discussions, in turn, informed the overall evaluation, and its associated case studies, described in greater detail below.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The evaluation methodology also involved FGDs, which provided concrete examples that illustrate the processes and results of projects in greater detail. The group setting offered an opportunity to discover rich information on complex questions related to activities that respondents may have found more or less useful, and the environmental, organizational and individual-level factors contributing to such views.

The evaluation team conducted 18 FGDs across the seven WELD project districts, in order to assess views among beneficiaries towards WELD interventions, and determine progress along project goals. Each group comprised five to eight WELD beneficiaries recently active in the project. Several categories were represented, including members of savings and loans groups, male champions, animators, and former women election candidates and aspirants. The evaluation team then disaggregated groups according to gender and age as appropriate (see Table 2).

Table 2. Focus Group Structure

District	Group				Total
I. Koinadugu	SG Members (1)	Female Aspirants (18-30 years old and 31 years old+) (1)	Male Champions (1)	CSOs (1) (advocacy and governance)	4

District		Group			Total
2. Kono	SG Members (I)	Female Aspirants (18-30 years old and 31 years old +) (I)	Male Champions (I)	CSOs (I) (advocacy and governance)	4
3. Kailahun	SG Members (I)	Female Aspirants (18-30 years old and 31 years old+) (I)			2
4. Kenema	SG Members (I)	Female Aspirants (18-30 years old and 31 years old+) (I)			2
5. Port Loko	Female Aspirants (18-30 years old and 31 years old +) (I)	Animators and Listeners (I)			2
6. Bombali	SG Members (I)	Animators and Listeners (I)			2
7. Tonkolili	SG Members (I)	Animators and Listeners (I)			2
Total					18

FGDs were based on discussion guides, designed by the evaluation team (see Annex II). Importantly, the guide was informed by the KIs implemented during Phase I of the fieldwork. The guides comprised 10 to 15 open-ended questions and probes. Prior to the January fieldwork, the evaluation team held a two-day FGD training for NORC's in-country partner, Nest Builder International (NBI), on the goals and purpose of the evaluation, as well as training on obtaining consent and implementation of the guide. For the February fieldwork, the team briefed NBI, as part of a refresher, though study subject matter was unchanged. After the training, the NORC experts supervised and observed a pilot FGD to test the instrument, structure, and any issues among respondents.

WELD focus group respondents were selected also through random sampling from WELD beneficiary lists. WELD district coordinators confirmed age and gender demographic

information, and provided contact information for FGD candidate beneficiaries (a coordinator was located in each district.) Once the individual was identified, they were invited to the group and received a reminder.

The focus groups were conducted in Krio and Mende, and moderated by skilled moderators fluent in the languages. Discussions lasted approximately 90 minutes, and were observed by members of the NORC evaluation team or an expert supervisor affiliated with NBI. A separate note taker took detailed notes on each session; the NORC team also took notes. At the end of each FGD, the moderator, evaluation team member, and note taker debriefed to discuss the session to reach consensus on the outcomes. FGDs were recorded to produce English-language transcripts. Each transcript was analyzed by the NORC team to determine common patterns in themes, attitudes and preferences.

CASE STUDIES

To illustrate and highlight in-depth, more specific, and complex project dynamics and processes, NORC included two case studies as part of the evaluation. Case studies are valuable for addressing descriptive questions of *what* happened and more explanatory queries of *how* or *why* phenomena occurred.

The cases were determined after an analysis of WELD data reports, and findings from FGDs and KIs with implementers and beneficiaries. The team also consulted with USAID on the cases. Based on this information, NORC determined institutional structures regarding symbols in general – and the political party structure regarding symbols in particular – were key mediating factors in women’s political participation that were largely unanticipated by the WELD project. The nomination processes of political parties, the lack of enforceable quotas, and the shifting and relatively fluid electoral context of the 2018 elections affected the numbers of women nominated and was found to be a factor across all WELD project intervention districts. The team also determined that respondents highlighted the success of the Savings Groups (SGs) for women’s economic empowerment and related political, social and economic benefits, and thus, an overview of these as a second case is also included.

QUANTITATIVE SURVEYS

The evaluation’s quantitative approach looked to existing surveys, particularly, WELD knowledge and practice surveys implemented during 2016 and 2018. The KAP surveys were conducted in each of the WELD project’s seven target districts and gauge the extent to which WELD interventions affect knowledge, perceptions, and behaviors in ways conducive to reducing social, economic and political barriers to Sierra Leonean women. The 2016 and 2018 surveys are comprised of a total of 357 and 800 WELD male and female beneficiaries, respectively. In the 2016 sample, 48 percent of respondents were male, and in 2018, 22 percent were male.

The evaluation team noted that the 2016 and 2018 KAP survey rounds appear to have adopted the same descriptive cross-sectional design and similar sampling strategies. However, the study

design did not include a comparison group, which precludes the drawing of causal linkages regarding the interventions and changes in knowledge, attitudes or behaviors.⁵

Through the existing surveys, the evaluation team looked for potential relationships or associations between demographic and core attitudinal variables using inferential statistics. Specifically, we examined: (1) whether WELD project interventions contributed to an increase in knowledge on women's rights in the political, economic, and social space; and relatedly (2) whether the increase in knowledge has translated into a change of attitudes and practices around greater participation for women in political, economic, and community decision-making. While previous WELD reports include descriptive statistics on WELD interventions,⁶ the current evaluation uses data reduction techniques and regression analysis to contribute to a more detailed understanding of the influences of WELD project interventions. Explanation of the model specification and variable measurement can be found in Annex III.

To facilitate comprehensive analysis of the WELD project and ensure robust findings, the analysis triangulated the findings from document review, KIs, FGDs, and the existing quantitative survey data to identify converging patterns of evidence. The evaluation team assessed trends and compared findings across demographic groups and districts, as appropriate. We also analyzed data on gender and age to establish the differential effects of the project interventions on men, women, and different age groups.

LIMITATIONS

The evaluation team notes several challenges and limitations associated with the evaluation:

- **Lack of baseline data:** No baseline data was collected at the start of the project. Thus, the evaluation team's ability to compare current findings with the situation prior to the start of the project or at mid-line is limited.
- **Selection bias:** There is a possibility of selection bias, whereby chosen respondents were receptive to being interviewed or to participating in focus group discussions (FGDs), but their perceptions may differ from those who did not; for example, in their affiliation with government / non-government structures, socio-demographic characteristics, and life experience. The evaluation team endeavored to have as diverse and as large a sample as possible to verify responses and used a variety of methodologies to validate results.
- **Recall bias:** KIs and FGDs relied on self-reporting of events and perceptions dating back several years. Thus, some data may be inaccurate due to lapses in memory. To

⁵ Descriptive analysis for 2016 and 2018 results were previously conducted in earlier analyses and reporting.

⁶ See Teddy Amara Morlai, "Women Empowered for Development Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Survey Report: 2016, Women Empowered for Development (WELD)," (Freetown, Sierra Leone: World Vision) and "Women Empowered for Development Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Survey Report: 2016, Women Empowered for Development (WELD)" (Freetown, Sierra Leone: World Vision).

address this challenge, protocols, and discussion guides included general as well as probative queries.

- **Social desirability or halo bias.** There is a known tendency among respondents to under-report socially undesirable answers and alter their responses to approximate what they perceive as the social norm (*halo bias*). The extent to which respondents are prepared to reveal their true opinions may also vary for some questions calling upon the respondents to assess the attitudes and perceptions of their peers, or people outside of the WELD project upon whom they depend for the provision of services. To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team provided appropriate confidentiality and anonymity assurances to all KIs and FGD respondents through an informed consent process. The protocols and discussion guides also included general as well as probative queries.
- **Availability of WELD project staff.** The WELD project began to close in November 2018, and fieldwork began mid-December 2018. Some of the WELD project staff members departed the project by the time fieldwork began. To locate individuals, the evaluation team conducted follow-up KIs in January 2019 among those who later were available, found substitutes with knowledge to inform the evaluation or alternative data sources, and conducted interviews using remote technologies (WhatsApp, Skype, phone) when in-person interviews were not feasible.
- **Gender imbalance in KAP surveys:** The evaluation team notes a significant imbalance in the number of men in the 2016 and 2018 KAP surveys. In the former, men represent 48 percent of the sample, in the latter, men represent only 21 percent.
- **Survey Rounds are Not Directly Comparable:** Differences exist in the KAP survey sample size and in some questions, precluding drawing inferences of change in outcomes between survey years.

None of the above challenges, however, precluded the collection of relevant information or data needed to produce evidence-based findings and conclusions for this evaluation of USAID's approach to addressing women's empowerment in Sierra Leone. The following sections provide detailed findings from the quantitative and qualitative research, and include the case study and results from analysis of existing surveys.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section discusses findings based on the qualitative and quantitative data collected in the evaluation. Results are discussed according to each objective where appropriate, beginning with Evaluation Question I, which includes the findings and a supporting case study.

EVALUATION QUESTION I

Performance: To what extent has WELD achieved its intended results and outcomes, at the local and national levels? What are key enabling and hindering factors that have affected the achievement of outcomes?

FINDINGS

- **Objective I: To increase women's participation and representation in decision-making processes**

WELD's effectiveness increasing women's representation in decision-making processes varied at the national versus the local level.⁷ In the case of the latter, the WELD project contributed significantly to increased women's *participation* – understood as their willingness to compete for political positions as well as make decisions at the household and community levels.

According to project reporting, 184 women competed for local council positions in 2012. Following engagement of the WELD project, the number of female competitors who aspired for political positions rose dramatically to 289⁸ in 2018 in WELD supported areas. (WELD Performance Report, 2018). At the parliamentary level, however, the number of female candidates rose only marginally, from 32 women competitors in 2012, to 33 in 2018. Among the 2018 cohort, a total of 185 were nominated, including 165 for local councils and 20 for national parliament. Seven of these women were actually elected to parliament, and 50 won local council seats. One female mayor, a deputy mayor and a district chairperson were also elected. Age did not seem to be a factor in whether women were ultimately given symbols, or in the support they received from their broader communities. AS will be elaborated on in later sections, in Sierra Leone, the process through which candidates or nominees will contest in an election under a political party's banner is known as 'giving the symbol'. Symbols, similar to a party endorsement, are an essential aspect of the Sierra Leone election process. Without symbols from parties, candidates cannot effectively compete for office. Contrary to dominant perceptions in Sierra Leone that youth are discriminated against, younger aspirants in Klls said they received fairly widespread support from their fellow community members irrespective of their age, a sentiment also shared by older aspirants over 30.

⁷ The research team noted this in the data collection and 2018 WELD Performance Report.

⁸ WELD trained 289 female political aspirants at the national and sub-national levels.

The youth really supported me because I was young when I entered into politics. Even the elderly were in support of me because it is very difficult to see a young lady like me going in for political position in the community,...when I was going around, anywhere I went to campaign, my fellow young women and young men were with me because I was young like them (FGD, Female Aspirants, Unsuccessful female aspirant, Kenema).

On the dimension of women's leadership, the WELD project also helped women achieve breakthroughs in ascending to traditional leadership roles. Five women were appointed section chiefs (Women Rising Report, 2019) and women elected to both local councils and parliament now hold leadership positions within those institutions. For example, in Makeni and Kenema, most women councilors are heading committees in those local councils:

In the previous local council, the few women councilors had not been placed in good committees. Now they have been placed in key posts – all of them now belong to a committee, and some are part of high ranking committees, including chairs of some committees... You can see the difference in women now (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Kenema).

Beyond political positions, women's participation in decision making increased throughout the districts, in large part through the savings groups, discussed in further depth in the Case Study under Evaluation Question 2. According to WELD project reports, 1,637 women held leadership positions in Saving Groups (SGs), also known as Savings for Transformation (S4T) groups (Project Summary, WELD). Beneficiary women in these groups reported increased respect by community members and decision-making in the household.

Quantitative findings from 2016 and 2018 KAP surveys across the seven WELD project districts – elaborated upon subsequently for Evaluation Question 2 – substantiate qualitative results. The surveys indicate women's role in household and community decision making increased between 2016 and 2018, as did the scope of attitudes supportive of women's political, economic and social rights.

Respondents said the information from the various WELD trainings helped significantly. It gave them confidence to run for leadership positions and assisted in campaigning. For example, in Koinadugu female aspirants said even though many were ultimately not awarded their party symbols due to intra-party politics, their performance at public debates helped showcase their skills and increase citizen support for their campaigns:

Another factor that affected the change in momentum for we the women was the debate that was organized for all aspirants. They had expected the women to fail but we emerged victorious more than anticipated. We did exceptionally well, more than the men (FGD, Female Aspirants, Koinadugu).

Despite these successes, the WELD project encountered some challenges related to engagement with political parties and other key actors at the national level. In focus groups, beneficiary respondents were unhappy, however, that a larger number of more competitive women were not selected, because of questionable party nomination processes (FGD, Women Aspirants, Koinadugu; FGD, Male CSOs, Koinadugu; FGD, Male Champions,

Koinadugu). In Koinadugu, in particular, several women were convinced they were not selected because the party felt it necessary to nominate candidates from a particular ethnic group to win the election.

Many respondents believed WELD programming to engage political parties and election management bodies (EMBs), like the National Electoral Commission (NEC), and the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), tended to focus on the local level (WELD project staff member), and when it did, engagements occurred later than they should have.

A national level-consultative meeting involving aspirants, the election management bodies (NEC and PPRC), district leaders and others, occurred only three months prior to the elections. WELD convened the meeting after a series of district level meetings between female aspirants, election management bodies (EMBs), and political party representatives on a range of issues including electoral processes, how to contest, and how to win elections, which overlooked national level engagement. The consultative meeting included a report at the end where women raised their concerns. Although there were some successes from the meeting, there was little movement on other issues.⁹

Two particularly difficult issues raised were national- and party-level quotas and party nomination processes. Addressing national-level quotas should have begun earlier (WELD Project Staff Member, Freetown), particularly with those parties – like the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP), which was formerly the country’s main opposition party, and is now the ruling party – that have policies for gender quotas but resist their implementation.¹⁰ A related criticism was that the project did not address intra-party tensions.

WELD must preach peace among the parties – there were different factions. When you are all divided – you will find it very difficult to succeed. We only told the parties to support women, award more symbols to women but we never spoke to the parties about the need to come together as one within the party (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Kenema).

⁹ Concerns included the 30 percent quota, symbol allocation processes, the need for parties to nominate more women, high nomination fees, eligibility criteria, and membership procedures and petitions (WELD Performance Report 2018). These issues required much more substantive and on-going engagement than was possible given the timeframe, particularly as lobbying around national issues takes time. Successes included the outlaw of secret society activities, the payment of nomination fees by the SLPP, and a renewed call for the NEC to work on a nomination bill to reduce the nomination fees for female aspirants. One could argue that WELD contributed to these successes because they were instrumental in providing the platform for this meeting to take place.

¹⁰ Despite these policies, as well as their own stated pledges to increase the numbers of women political parties nominated, parties failed to do so. However, progress in these areas might have also been hindered by dynamics within the PPRC, which has been described as a “toothless bulldog.” Although the PPRC is supposed to ensure parties abide by laws, it lacks the mandate to penalize parties that do not (NEC staff member, Freetown). Without a legal mandate to honor quota commitments, nor repercussions for non-compliance, the likelihood of a 30 percent quota is unlikely. Several respondents noted that without sustained advocacy and action in this area, interventions to increase women’s political participation are bound to fail.

It is possible that the project failed to take this into account because it was not part of the barrier analysis that was done at the start of the project and only became apparent during the lead up to the elections.

Tensions were also reported between women, with a number of respondents across all categories indicating that a main barrier to women’s political participation has been the failure of women to support each other. In Port Loko, women said that NGOs helped contribute to this problem:

We equally have some organizations that are pretending to be working with women, these are the very ones that have succeeded in dividing the women of Port Loko district. Previously for the whole of Port Loko District we had a woman’s organization called the Port Loko District women’s network,...all the women were united...but with the intervention of this NGO that came in the form of helping the women decide to form another woman’s group within the network...when this was done some of the women thought that they would be getting support or would make more money since the network has been divided into two organizations. (FGD, Female Aspirants, Unsuccessful Female Aspirant, Port Loko)

Importantly, the evaluation noted the realities of the symbol allocation process in Sierra Leone – often tied to corrupt practices – which were overlooked as a crucial part of the election (see Case Study I, below). In a system dominated by two main political parties, the All People’s Congress (APC) and the SLPP serving as gatekeepers for women’s candidacy, this process also needed to be addressed.

CASE STUDY I: THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTY SYMBOLS FOR WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION

In Sierra Leone, the process through which candidates or nominees who will contest in an election under a political party’s banner is known as ‘giving the symbol.’ Women in Sierra Leone have long expressed dissatisfaction with the process of symbol allocation in the country. Despite commitments from Sierra Leonean political parties, and efforts to promote women’s political participation through national and international mechanisms, women remain under-represented in the awarding of party symbols. Symbols are an essential aspect of the election process in Sierra Leone; without symbols from parties, candidates cannot effectively compete for office. This case study underscores the importance of symbols and the need to address the influence of the symbol allocation process in women’s empowerment programming in Sierra Leone.¹¹

In the 2018 elections, several women were nominated at the parliamentary and local levels to hold leadership positions. Nearly 260, women ran, with 33 awarded symbols, and seven women in WELD project districts were elected to parliament, indicating a substantial increase in local council candidates from 2012 (see Table 3 below). Table 4 illustrates symbols allocated to women in each district.¹² Although political parties in Sierra Leone have vowed to promote

¹¹ AWOKO.org, <https://awoko.org/2018/01/16/sierra-leone-news-women-robbed-of-party-symbols/>

¹² See, the WELD Performance Report 2018.

women's participation in politics, these pronouncements have not translated into practice, given the paucity of women's representation in the country's political institutions. Actors, such as 50/50 and the Institute of Governance Reform (IGR), engaged political parties to award at least 30 percent of seats to women, but the trend of preferring men continues. Although some parties (at least on paper) have a quota, they find these quotas difficult to fulfill (KII, NMJD Staff Member, Kenema), in part because of a lack of political will, as well as unclear guidelines on how to do so.

Table 3. Women Local and National Candidates

District	MP Female Candidates		Local Council Candidates	
	2012	2018	2012	2018
Kailahun	7	9	39	32
Kenema	7	5	46	69
Kono	5	4	40	60
Bombali	3	5	31	41
Tonkolili	2	4	8	17
Port Loko	6	2	5	31
Koinadugu	2	4	5	7
Total	32	33	184	257

Table 4. Symbols Allocated to Women Candidates in the 2018 Elections

District	No. of WELD/Non-WELD Female Aspirants	No. of Females Awarded Party Symbols	% Percentage of Aspirants Awarded Symbols
Kenema	8	5	62.5%
Kailahun	12	9	75
Kono	8	4	50
Tonkolili	2	4	200
Bombali	5	5	100
Port Loko	8	2	25
Koinadugu	8	4	50
Total	51	33	64.7

WELD women aspirant beneficiaries and WELD staff largely considered a lack of appreciation of the realities in symbol allocation to be a key oversight in WELD programming:

The political parties hold the power and we didn't have major engagement with the political parties to inform them to make it mandatory to award a number of symbols to women. That's what was missing in this landscape. (KII, WELD Partner Senior Staff Member, Freetown)

The Political Party Registration Committee (PPRC) in Sierra Leone oversees compliance of symbol allocation in the country.¹³ As mentioned, the symbols are vital for election candidates, yet the symbol allocation process is not transparent. Candidates, theoretically, are awarded symbols based on community favorability, but in practice some circumvent transparent

¹³ It is important to note that while different parties have different nominating procedures, parties do not necessarily observe the formal processes laid out in their own party constitutions.

allocation methods; one aspirant in Kabala, for example, indicated her party awarded the symbol a mere night before the vote was scheduled, thus excluding her candidacy and the votes of others who would have thrown their support behind her. Other women asserted they received symbols “for show”, even though their parties doubted constituents would elect the women as they were contesting in non-party strongholds.¹⁴ When asked about the transparency of the symbol allocation process, a senior-level WELD coordinator indicated part of the challenge stems from symbols that are essentially for purchase, which led to party losses:

To get a symbol is not easy. They are looking for the highest bidder. When you give them a huge amount of money, they give you a symbol.” In one district, the previous secretary general was looking for money for the symbol. The current one said, ‘No, I’m going to look at the voice of the people,’ and would only give the symbol to those who deserve it, to those that the people want. Though in other districts, they have a lot of challenges, we are fortunate in our district. (KII, MP, Bangura).

The reluctance of political parties to give symbols to women led a few women to decide to stand as independent candidates, although women who went independent faced significant challenges from their former parties, including physical harassment. An unsuccessful independent candidate in Port Loko had this to say, “I left my former party to contest as an independent candidate because the symbol was awarded to someone who did not register within the locality or constituency. Symbols are not supposed to be awarded that way. ... When I heard that some set of people were about to set my house on fire, I decided to call all the big dons from my previous party... to each and every one of them that if you people dare to send your thugs to get my house burnt, I will make sure that all of yours are burnt too. (KII, Unsuccessful Aspirant, Port Loko)

However, one of these candidates, supported by WELD, was successful in her bid for a parliamentary seat in Kailahun district, typically a SLPP stronghold and became the only successful female independent parliamentarian. She stood as an independent candidate because SLPP failed to give her the symbol. She was able to win because she had strong community support. This shows that when women are popular within their communities, it is possible for them to stand as an independent candidate and win in spite of the challenges. As a WELD senior level coordinator put it:

The APC decided, for some strange reason, not to give symbols to a lot of women. These were strong women candidates who would have won. You want to win. It’s not about who pays more money, it’s about who gives more advantage... The SLPP made the same mistakes. When you speak to [one candidate] she went independent and [the SLPP] paid dearly for that mistake. (KII, WELD Senior Level Coordinator)

To facilitate women’s representation and participation, a portion of political parties in Sierra Leone have adopted gender policies, such as a 30 percent quota allocated for women party

¹⁴ Additionally, successful aspirants are prohibited from receiving any salary one year before either the nomination or the actual election; there is confusion as to which it is. Numerous respondents told the story of a successful candidate in Kenema, who was favored by her constituents and her party and was awarded the symbol, only to have it rescinded four days later because she misunderstood the timeline.

members. Yet, the quota requirement is voluntary and comes with no mandate or mechanism for enforcement. One government official noted, “The enforcement of the 30 percent quota has to be done and institutionalized and placed) in the constitution. Once it is documented in our constitution and becomes a law, everyone will adhere to it.” (KII, Government Staff Member, Port Loko)

This case study illustrates the importance of engaging with political parties around the symbol allocating process, in terms of increasing transparency, ensuring rules and procedures are followed, as well as implementing a 30-percent quota. Parties in Sierra Leone are gatekeepers to political positions, and as such, the practices highlighted above compound the existing barriers for women in electoral contests.

In other Objective I evaluation results, **several EMBs at the national-level reported having little interaction with the project, again, demonstrating the possible need for greater engagement with national actors.** For example, PPRC representatives said they were largely unaware of the WELD project until the end (KII, PPRC Committee Member, Freetown). Respondents mentioned interacting with PPRC representatives in regional meetings and discussing elections, yet noted they still struggled to link with the WELD project effectively.

Against this backdrop, some linkages were nevertheless accomplished by the WELD project. The NEC’s gender and disability unit partnered with the PPRC and 50/50 to advocate for a larger number of women in politics. NEC officers participated in the national- and local-level WELD-supported workshops and are currently looking for ways to employ more women within the institution, create a quota system for recruitment, and lobby parties to attract more women (KII, NEC Staff Member, Freetown).

Another component of Objective I seeks to minimize cultural and social barriers to Sierra Leonean women’s participation in decision making structures. WELD developed IEC / BCC strategies spearheaded by AAISL drawing heavily on media dissemination of jingles and discussion programs on women’s empowerment, including topics around violence against women, early marriage, and children’s rights. Animators and radio listener groups helped deliver these messages into their communities in WELD project districts. According to WELD project reporting, radio messages were widely heard; 75 percent of respondents received messages on women’s empowerment in the six months preceding a survey conducted by WELD (WELD Evaluation Report, 2018).

The extent to which WELD project animators and radio listening groups were able to engage with the communities more broadly around the media messages, however, was less clear in evaluation findings. Animators helped to set up savings groups, but were also responsible for organizing discussion groups around the media topics with radio listener groups. They then monitored these listener groups, which were, in turn, responsible for delivering messages to their communities. However, the animator and radio listener groups faced considerable challenges. There appeared to be no clear understanding or consensus of what the role of the animator should be or if/how they should be remunerated. In FGDs we conducted, animators indicated that they also functioned as radio listener group members. One USAID staff member indicated the positions were voluntary, because these individuals “wanted

to see their communities develop.” Yet others disagreed and said the process for animators was not adequately resourced:

The animation process is an empowerment process. And for a development process to be done it needs investment. If it is not invested in properly, you cannot achieve your long-term goal. ...And you want people to do ‘A, B, C, D’ but you don’t give them the equipment to do it properly. ...We believe, if you want to do something, you either do it well or you don’t do it. (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Freetown)

Not only was there no consensus on the role of the animators, they indicated they were paid differently across the consortium. All animators received bicycles to facilitate monitoring of savings groups and radio listening groups, a radio, phone, and solar light. Some, however, in Bombali and Tonkolili, for example, received an initial stipend of SLL 500,000, although this was later discontinued. Others in Port Loko did not receive this initial payment. According to commentary in the FGDs, lack of remuneration prevented animators from doing their job effectively. Animators said they did not convene meetings regularly with radio listener groups as they lacked the funds to hold these meetings. Similarly, some radio listener group members said that they did not go around the community to share the contents of the IEC messages from the radio stations because they did not have funds to do so.

The reason why we didn’t succeed in achieving our goal is that ActionAid and AMNeT carried out the same operations, but ActionAid paid their animators little stipends, while we at AMNeT received nothing. It has always been on patience and promise basis. We did not receive anything. (FGD, Radio Listeners and Animators, Port Loko)

I was given the money, but the money was not enough for me, because I travelled in so many communities to do my work. (FGD, Radio Listeners and Animators, Tonkolili)

■ **Objective 2: To adopt gender-sensitive planning, monitoring and reporting at the council, community, and national levels**

In assessing WELD project efforts to promote gender-sensitive planning as part of Objective 2, respondents indicated the project led to greater awareness of the need to adopt gender-sensitive planning, monitoring and reporting, particularly at the community and council levels, but less so at the national level. Training occurred for local staff with the Ministry of Local Government, MSWGCA, CSO members, and community leaders on the value of adopting gender-sensitive programming for the communities. Initial training occurred in 2015 at the district-level for local council staff to examine their development plans for gender inequalities and to ensure that future development plans were responsive to gender concerns. At the local government level, perceptions were mixed regarding how much had

actually changed in the extent to which these actors adopted gender-sensitive planning into their institutional strategies.¹⁵

Certain districts responded well to gender programming, and incorporated advocates who could promote the cause (KII, WELD Partner Project Coordinator, Freetown). In Koinadugu, Port Loko, and Kenema, for instance, some of the male champions were elected district chairpersons of the local councils. Respondents believed that the election of these men would translate into greater focus on gender issues, although this remains to be seen as most of the district council plans were under review during the research period.

Nevertheless staff members across the local and district councils and the MSWGA reported the WELD-supported council training as helpful.

It has made a difference in terms of the planning for the District and the Finance Officer. It has helped me to look at the budget and to know whether it is gender-sensitive. (KIIs, MSWGCA Staff Member, Kenema)

All local district council participants interviewed spoke of the importance of taking gender into consideration and of taking steps to include women's voices in the consultation processes behind national action plan development after engaging with the WELD project. The Port Loko District Council, for example, reported the consultation committees for the district development plan were now gender balanced since engagement with the WELD project. Women constitute at least seven of the 15-person committees that led the consultation process in the 24 wards (KII, District Council Staff Member, Port Loko). They also organized a separate women-only validation session to ensure women would be comfortable enough to comment on the development initiatives proposed under the plan.

Some movement on adopting gender sensitive planning in actual practice was also evident. Although several districts were developing their plans at the time of fieldwork – rendering it difficult to assess the extent of planning – there were some positive inclusion examples:

- Port Loko's District Plan incorporated gender issues, several women have been elected as the heads of government committees, and the district received an award for its strength in scaling up its work.
- In Kono, the local council allocated money to support women's education from revenue generated by minerals.
- A local council staff member in Koinadugu pointed out that she worked to ensure that gender was taken into account in their development of the new district development plan. In the only development plan we were able to review during the research period,

¹⁵ Also, one USAID staff member said in building local governance capacity for gender sensitive reporting, planning and budgeting, local government was dependent on financial transfers from central government. During the WELD training and capacity building, local government was not receiving funding, which affected efficiency.

the Koinadugu Local council pledged the following under gender and children's affairs: to promote gender mainstreaming in the district; provide quality education for children and women; minimize child abuse and violence cases; encourage women to go into skills and vocational careers; improve food, health and sanitation for the vulnerable, women and children to ensure their survival; minimize teenage marriage and pregnancy and ensure increased participation of children in matters affecting their welfare (Koinadugu District Development Plan 2018-2020: 22).

- The Koinadugu Local Council staff member also said that she worked regularly with stakeholders on their development projects to ensure that women were taken into account. She gave the example of working with a development organization during the mapping phase of a water well project. She ensured that women were involved in the identification of the water well sites as they would be the primary users (KII, Local Council Staff Member, Koinadugu). She also mentioned that thanks to WELD training, she is an effective advocate against early Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and that she had seen an increase in reports of under-aged initiation, although the research team was unable to independently confirm this. Finally, she reported that early marriages in the community were decreasing due to sensitization conducted by the local council.
- Overall, MWSGCA and local council staff indicated that the WELD training helped strengthen their awareness of gender issues in part because it built on a pre-existing foundation: "Gender has been a national issue, and so it cannot be seen that it is just WELD. The Council has been thinking about these issues for a while." (KII, Local Council Staff Member, Koinadugu)
- Newly elected female councilors mentioned focusing on issues to do with women and girls as their priority areas. Child protection, education and employment opportunities were the most frequently mentioned:

One of the laws I am enforcing right now is the issue of free education and that every child must go to school and we in the council are strengthening the law by arresting any child we see in the street selling during school hours or we take the matter to the local authorities to levy a fine on the parents. (KII, Female Councilor, Port Loko)

In Kenema the local councilor said,

Since WELD taught us to unite as women, I am holding a position in the council. I always try to help the young women, for example when money comes for the monthly cleaning¹⁶ I have started giving school materials to school going children in the community. They were very happy saying the councilor is our mother as she has started doing better things in the community... I have set up an agricultural groups for [women] so that they can be involved in garden works. Then this VSLA, I have set up groups for women in many parts of the community. I am also on radio

¹⁶ The new government has instituted a national cleaning day on the first Saturday of every month

advocating for women. Though it is not easy, I am keeping up the hard work. (KII, Female Councilor, Kenema)

Along with the aforementioned successes associated with Objective 2, **an examination of project areas that may require greater attention reveals insufficient engagement at the national-level, again emerging as a weakness in programming.** This was further hindered by a lack of communication between district- and national-level staff. A representative from MSWGCA said during an evaluation interview that WELD personnel liaised with their ministry field staff, but this knowledge was often not conveyed to the Ministry in Freetown. Part of this was owed, however, to internal issues of communication and project follow-up within the MSWGCA and the new staff employed during the Ebola crisis and was thus outside the manageable interest of the project (KII, MSWGCA Staff Member, Freetown).

There was also a lack of communication within institutions. WELD staff communicated primarily with the district gender officers in the local councils. Many of the development planning officers said they rarely met with WELD staff and did not know about the programming. This reinforced a siloed approach to engagement and the perception WELD was not working alongside the council.

Most times, WELD will just call us when they are planning workshops. They just invite rather than co-work. We are just being invited to be a listener in their programs. Possibly we could have valid things to add to the program or to the workshops, but most times, we are simply invited and just sit passively. (KII, District Council Staff Member, Koinadugu)

If they have projects, they should ensure that it be collaborative with the local council and World Vision. Collaboration should not be one-sided. They should ensure that the council knows what they are doing from start to finish so when there are interviews such as this [the interview with the research team], it will come out very well. (KII, District Council Staff Member, Kono)

While outside the full scope of WELD programming, stakeholders stated in interviews that at times it was difficult to adequately motivate local government staff. One senior-level WELD coordinator noted, in hindsight, there could have been discussions for MSWGCA to send memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to the local councils to ensure buy-in to the WELD programming and achieve local ownership post-programming.¹⁷ A related issue was the lack of financial independence of local councils and the MSWGCA. Activities such as encouraging women to register customary marriages, following up on SGBV crimes, or even starting new SGs all required funding. WELD could have considered linking with the local councils to assist in budget revisions to request funding from the central government.¹⁸

¹⁷ The CSOs, local councils and MSWGCA are supposed to take over key aspects of the WELD program, post-project, such as following up with the SGs, creating new SGs and monitoring established SGs.

¹⁸ USAID advised partners to develop a budget on initializing VSLAs to give to local government to potentially include in their Development Plan, but they refused, and WV did not create a budget that the councils could work on (KII, USAID Staff Member, Freetown). Similarly, several

- **Objective 3: Increased critical mass of organizations to influence gender policies at the national-level.**

The WELD project also helped organize advocacy and governance CSO groups. CSOs worked with local-level institutions like the MSWGCA and local councils to advocate around issues of concern such as SGBV and registering customary marriages.

At the community level, CSO capacity-building training occurred to ensure CSOs focused on relevant issues, were coordinated with each other and the government, and could adequately monitor service providers. Governance CSOs worked to hold local councils accountable on service delivery. Again, by contrast, the record is weak on WELD accomplishments on the objective of increasing organizations that are able to shape gender policies at the national-level.

CSOs in Kenema engaged the local councils, especially the gender desk officer, to identify gaps in gender programming. When asked if the council is now trying to promote women, one CSO Staff Member indicated, “They are really trying. But the government institutions have not been performing as expected, and they still have very huge work to do, considering the problems, they still need to scale up” and require much more training (CSO Staff Member, Kenema).

In Port Loko, the WELD-supported CSO training was seen as effective in strengthening CSO capabilities to lobby around gender issues. One local council staff member noted,

When I had just come from [name withheld], I found that CSOs were complacent. But after the training, they are engaging more with council. The benefit I see from the training is that they are now equipped to mount advocacy campaigns, to hold council accountable for stewardship. At one time, CSOs asked council to an accountability platform to explain [to citizens] what they did with two quarters of funding from government – and I had to explain to CSOs and citizens what we did in health, education, social welfare, agriculture. (KII, Local Council Staff Member, Port Loko)

CONCLUSIONS

Women’s representation in the parliament of Sierra Leone did not change significantly, but their participation in local councils did, by sharp contrast. Women’s participation in decision making also increased throughout the WELD project districts, in large part through the SGs, which, as a result, increased their own credibility in their respective communities.

WELD programming tended to focus on the local level rather than the national. The political party symbol allocation process was generally overlooked by the WELD project, which exacerbated an already challenging situation where women struggled with an at-times corrupt, patriarchal party system that favors men.

local council respondents mentioned having insufficient money to monitor SGBV crimes properly or to enter communities to register women’s customary marriages.

Animators indicated that media messages had a positive effect, particularly on teenage pregnancy rates, knowledge about rights, and SGBV. At the same time, however, the role of the animators was not clear within the WELD project communities and they faced challenges due to a lack of stipends.

The WELD project led to greater awareness of the need to adopt gender-sensitive planning, monitoring and reporting, particularly at the community and council levels, but less so at the national level. While several districts were still developing their plans, certain areas exhibited positive trends. The project also helped organize advocacy and governance CSO groups by giving them training focused on core gender issues.

Challenges existed in evolving attitudes toward gender sensitivity: some communication challenges occurred between district and national-level staff, as well as within institutions. Additionally, it was difficult at times to fully motivate government staff at both the national and local levels.

EVALUATION QUESTION 2

Appropriateness: To what extent did WELD intervention strategies and approaches address barriers to women's political, economic, and social empowerment for beneficiary women?

FINDINGS

The WELD project, on the whole, addressed barriers to women's political, economic, and social empowerment quite successfully. Though accomplishing gains in each of these three areas was not without challenges, the project contributed to greater unity among women and, as a quantitative analysis will illustrate later in this section, WELD interventions importantly influenced knowledge, perceptions, and behavior among beneficiary populations. We discuss first the project's general outcomes based on the fieldwork results and, in turn, consider WELD outcomes along the project's political, economic, and social aspects.

WELD brought women together on multiple levels, and in so doing, decreased previous local tensions between women. In some Port Loko communities, for instance, there was little unity amongst women prior to WELD project engagement. A common argument in Sierra Leone is that women do not support themselves. This has been identified by some women's groups and women themselves as a barrier. Given that women are 52 percent of the population, some argued that if women can better support themselves, greater numbers of women would be elected. The WELD project helped unify women, addressing this barrier. Prior to the WELD project, "women were used to pulling themselves down," a tactic known as "PHD (Pulling Her Down) syndrome", according to a project coordinator in Freetown. He attributed the reversal of this attitude to the SGs: "We never knew that [they had] some magical wand effect, it brought the rural people closer." In Kono and Koinadugu, SG participants also noted the groups served as a source of social capital for women who could meet, share concerns, and receive advice and encouragement.

[As] women, we normally keep our problems and challenges, like quarrelling with our husbands to ourselves. Sometimes, the stress that I will face in my home, when I explain it to one or two members in the savings group, they are able to advise me or give me encouraging words that will reduce the stress or calm my worries. Unity is very important, the more we come together the more we will understand ourselves. (FGD, Savings Group Leaders, Kono)

WELD program analysis documents barriers, such as the sentiment that women's place is in the household and early marriage curtailing education for young women, accompany high rates of SGBV - so much so that many women did not feel comfortable discussing the latter. It stands to reason that many women would also be unlikely to discuss sensitive topics with not only men, but other women, though more research could be done on this. While men were perceived to be supportive of women in leadership positions in some areas – as in Koinadugu, where prior support was attributed to women's economic enterprises and independence, thus leading to higher social status and respect – in other areas such as Port Loko or Bombali, rates have been much lower (Barrier Analysis Survey 2015).

Bringing women together under the umbrella of the SGs fostered a sense of community, unity and strength which helped bridge previous political divides. Women not only supported their fellow members, who were politically active, largely through campaigning for them out of their own funds; SG members also supported women in general, irrespective of political party affiliation. This helped bridge one of the most prevalent societal barriers mentioned across districts during evaluation fieldwork research: women were not supportive of one another.

One of the strategies is oneness and togetherness, because we have actually seen that we the women should actually come together. We have power more than the men, but because we are most times not united, the men usually defeat us. So, we have actually determined to take over...Every day we are parading for the men, so, now, we have decided to come on board, and give support to our fellow women. That is why we have started having branches in these savings business we are doing. (FGD, Kono Savings Group Leaders)

In Koinadugu, a savings group member shared her experience with receiving the support from her group members in her political campaign:

During the time of my campaigning, they would follow me to any location I was going to campaign. They would help me cook for the people. I would not have made it, if it were not for their support. My community women were so supportive of me to the extent that, if I hadn't been given the symbol under APC, they were ready to prod me to go as an independent candidate. (Successful aspirant and Savings Group Member, Koinadugu)

Consortium member, AMNeT, established women's caucuses in the districts to encourage women to come to a safe space to discuss common issues and concerns openly amongst themselves, which also helped to promote unity.

Not all WELD strategies were deemed appropriate by some of the intended beneficiary recipients, however. According to the WELD Barrier Analysis Report (2015),

lack of funding has been identified as a principal barrier for women entering politics. Many women did not believe this was adequately addressed. Complaints largely revolved around resources – specifically, a lack of campaign funding. This was due to attitudes toward economic marginalization toward women, and thus reinforced women’s perception that they were denied access to adequate financial resources. Complaints around funding were essentially two-fold: respondents mentioned that not only did running for political office require substantial amounts of money, **successful candidates were often those perceived to have already accomplished a great deal in their communities.**¹⁹

Current female politicians (as well as unsuccessful WELD aspirants) highlighted that even if WELD could not provide tangible election funding, they wanted projects that could provide them with independent sources of income to provide them with a strong financial foundation for the next election.²⁰

To keep the knowledge for women’s revolution in politics sustainable, we that are already in the political realm, need to be financially capable before the next election. If they [WELD], can help us with a scheme that will strengthen us for that, it will be great. Whatever it may be whether business or whatsoever they may deem fit. Financing ourselves has been a main hindrance to our course in politics as women. Campaigning incurs so much expense. Most of us have used every ounce of our resources, lost our jobs, and at the end didn’t get what we aspired for. So a system that will make us financially stable throughout is most desirable. We still have the political drive and most importantly, the know-how and how to make it a success. (FGD, Aspirants, Kabala)

While WELD tried to address this via the SGs, and despite numerous and continuous conversations between USAID, WV and partner staff with beneficiaries regarding how offering funding was outside of the WELD project’s mandate, aspirants resisted this boundary.²¹ Multiple

¹⁹ Many had previous long-term relationships in their communities and asserted themselves in conversations with mineral extraction companies and / or helped to build roads or other infrastructure that their communities deemed necessary. One MP constructed classrooms and wells and looks for microfinance for women who are trying to upgrade their economic marketability. Another trained youths as mechanics and drivers for her transportation company and already offers microcredit. Also, successful local councilors had a long history of engagement in their communities. This included building schools, and providing scholarships and agricultural employment for youths.

²⁰ In Koinadugu, respondents wondered why WELD did not provide start-up funds like CARE, which they believed would help increase their returns and scale up their businesses. Male champions in Kono for example, asked, “Another challenge for the women that have been empowered economically is how they would turn the economic support given to them into a productive business.” While WELD did conduct business skills trainings for selected members of some SG groups, respondents wanted these to be scaled up and felt that the project could have done more in terms of linking them with other investors. For example, SG members in Kenema asked, “I am pleading to WELD to please connect us with other organizations; organizations that help women in business as we need help to develop our business. This will help us keep the box going strong.” (FGD, SG Member, Kenema). More information on this can be found under Evaluation Question 4 on sustainability.

²¹ It is beyond the scope of USAID funding to offer financial resources to aspirants, because this could be construed as US government interference in a country’s political process. USAID supported women candidates without focusing on individuals in order to create mass awareness and general support for women.

beneficiaries addressed the issue to the evaluation team during fieldwork, and the evaluation team notes similarly divergent viewpoints regarding financial support among other women beneficiaries participants in other USAID programming focusing women's political empowerment through electoral participation.²² Aspirants – even those who were successful – highlighted their challenges campaigning without adequate financial resources. They particularly noted how the lack of resources constitutes a barrier when running against men, who they perceived as having an easier time due to traditional gender roles in Sierra Leone that allow men greater access to financial resources. Unsuccessful aspirants were dissatisfied with the lack of funding, and said they would likely require future encouragement to run again.

What was really heart rending for me, was that I spent all my personal savings to back up my aspirations, and then someone took it all away from me unjustly. Nobody funded my campaign. All was from my hard earned savings. It's not as if the electorate did not support me; it was the corruptness of the executives that manipulated the process. I am so frustrated with politics and I doubt I will run again in the future. I didn't blame my people, I blame corrupt individuals who are holding top position offices. (FGD, women aspirants, Kabala)

Figure 1. WELD Women's Empowerment Message



In addition, a few WELD beneficiaries said that project line items for expenses could have been better distributed to individual candidates: “The project printed so many materials and fliers, banners, for WELD. Why couldn’t they have done that for us?” (See Figure 1.)

WELD beneficiaries also opined that the short programming period hindered the women’s ability to achieve long-term results in a manner that would have deepened the effect of project outcomes. WELD implemented its project over a three-year period, encountering significant challenges with the 2014-2016 Ebola crisis, which respondents acknowledged set the project’s trajectory back. The short span of the project did not allow adequate time to change historical

²² In Liberia, women beneficiaries expressed frustration over the implementing and donor organizations’ inability to directly fund their campaign activities. See NORC/USAID Liberia: Getting Ready to Lead Assessment, 2018.

beliefs to open public spaces for Sierra Leonean women, or to create changes in women's economic participation. For example, regarding beliefs, one respondent noted:

We did meet the council chiefs that said, 'Forget it. Are we ever going to have a woman chief here? No.' And they said it openly, and they said it again and again. That is a challenge. You are not going to take this away in three years. (KII, USAID Staff Member, Freetown)

A WELD consortium partner similarly indicated:

We did a lot of training and those trainings are good. But tell me, is one, two trainings enough for people to do things differently? You do an assessment, you do a training and then you plan. So that those training or issues can be implemented and then you follow through and refresh and rebuild. This human development is a process – you don't just do one or two things and you stop, continuity is important. There is no magic bullet. (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Freetown)

WELD partners had to adapt to current events once the project began, though the objectives did not need to change. Women's illiteracy was, indeed, a test for the WELD-supported SGs. Sierra Leone has one of the world's highest illiteracy rates, with most men (69 percent) and an even larger proportion of women (80 percent) unable to read or write.²³ WELD adapted to these circumstances by starting adult literacy classes – which beneficiaries deemed extremely successful – and which are discussed further on the issue of sustainability in Evaluation Question 4.

Other forms of adaptation proved more difficult, however. One WELD partner respondent also noted the partners overlooked the links between financial resources and actualizing women's empowerment:

[We failed] to take on board what the women really want [for empowerment]... the real thing that would make them stand up and be counted and say we [as WELD] want them to go in. The money, was not there. But that's the problem with projects with a log frame. They have a logic that has to be followed; it is planned that way and there are expected results. If other things come up, you will need an adaptive leader who can take some of these things on board. So, this project suffered...while we did a lot of good things, we did not listen to them [beneficiaries] and take on their real issues. (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Freetown)

The apparent difficulty in the project's ability to quickly adapt prohibited the project's ability to fund certain items, particularly in Kenema:

The women were bullied, which excluded them from getting enough symbols, to have money to bring promotional materials, banners, T-shirts, into the sessions. We couldn't do anything about it, because it wasn't in the project design. ...Even though the paramount chiefs brought up potential action plans to disseminate information,

²³ State University. "Sierra Leone: Nonformal Education" <https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1339/Sierra-Leone-nonformal-education.html>

and [tried to call in] Section Chiefs, there was no money to do this, for example with transport for Section Chiefs. (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Kenema)

In other areas, the WELD project adjusted to requirements of change in approach, particularly around addressing the barrier of social norms confronting women. While some senior WV staff members indicated training was the same across districts, others said regional variations were adopted to address prevalent social norms. For example, WELD staff avoided discussing women's access to land in Tonkolili and Kono because it is controversial due to natural resources such as diamonds. (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Freetown)

POLITICAL BARRIERS

WELD contributed to opening the political space for women to campaign for a variety of leadership positions in project districts. Virtually all respondents highlighted the advantages of this aspect of WELD assistance.

WELD has empowered a lot of women in local communities to take part in decision making. You see now if you go to the councils, we have five women in the city council, six in the district council. (KII, CSO Staff Member, Kenema)

In our work, before now, they did not have that number. If you look at the women now in the councils, some are holding positions in the various communities. There are committees at the ward level, with collaboration with the political effort of the parties, they have ensured they have women's representation in 24 areas. And even some females are in leadership roles, secretaries, treasurers, if you look at communities as well, chiefdoms, we have women now that are chiefs. (KII, CSO Staff Member, Kenema)

This was largely attributed to WELD's advocacy, even in northern districts traditionally opposed to women chiefs.

As candidates, Sierra Leone members of parliament (MPs) and women aspirant beneficiaries cite the numerous WELD program benefits, which largely centered on enhanced self-confidence and assertiveness. WELD provided training for women around all aspects of campaigning and networking with mentors, and in so doing addressed barriers associated with women's lack of confidence and low education. The trainings were highly praised by MPs and other beneficiary respondents, because "you need to have more mentorship, to build capacity. WELD gave me this. I learned how to campaign, how to talk to people, how to deliver your messages" (KII, MP Freetown).

Common campaign rhetoric for the successful MPs centered on the idea of constituents trying "someone different" via a tactic of "change", even if it meant repositioning one woman candidate in place of a former candidate. In Kenema, the previous female incumbent was perceived as unable to deliver on her promises. To sway voters, one successful WELD-supported MP explained, "I might be a different person, you don't know who I am. She has a different character. Try me!" In Bombali, the successful MP similarly told her prospective voters, "I have a passion to serve. Try me!"

WELD's political empowerment involved an initial trajectory of bringing women into the public political arena. However, several MPs interviewed believed the WELD project could have provided beneficiaries with skills to continue once they successfully ascended to political office following elections. There are currently several who are struggling to keep up with their more experienced male MP counterparts regarding articulating their ideas in front of other MPs, a point discussed further in the Sustainability in Evaluation Question 4.

Citizen voice and action approaches also opened space for political participation and campaigning for WELD women beneficiary aspirants. The evaluation found in Kono and Koinadugu, for example, male champions were instrumental in this assistance for women, and engaged in several enabling activities with them, including:

- Fundraising for women through planning a football gala (Kono, Kenema);
- Hosting radio programs on SGBV and providing women with free airtime (Kono);
- Speaking to police and traditional leaders, with the aim of protecting women from violence and preventing secret male-dominated societies from interfering with women while they were campaigning in public;²⁴
- Championing a female candidate facing opposition to her candidacy from her political party when the party sought to nominate a man, against the wishes of her constituents (Koinadugu).

SOCIAL BARRIERS

At the same time, however, the space in certain areas has remained limited, despite WELD project attempts to encourage greater inclusion for women. These challenges are less due to project strategies, and more to the persistence of historical patterns and traditional customs in the country. **WELD participants largely cited “culture and customs” as an enabling or hindering factor affecting social empowerment. Both religion as well as culture were noted as barriers.** Evaluation fieldwork indicated many WELD project communities seemed to hold high awareness of the larger and more substantive roles women can play. At the national parliamentary level, this appeared more evident in areas like Kono and Kenema. In other places, “The chiefs said, ‘No, forget it. This is our society and structure’,” and firmly opposed breaking down social barriers (KII, USAID Staff Member, Freetown). Similarly, another respondent noted:

We have customs and traditions that are a challenge. There are certain parts of eastern province, like Kailahun, where they say they don't believe in the leadership

²⁴ In Sierra Leone, women are not allowed in public when male secret societies are out and about, and this is frequently a tactic used to intimidate women politicians. Women across all districts mentioned this as a practice to intimidate them. The evaluation team also notes a similar dynamic in Liberia, where women political candidates also are confronted with male secret societies that attempt to thwart their campaign activities through intimidation.

of women. ‘The hen does not crow’ [signifying females should not lead]. But gradually, we have some men supporting women.” (CSO Staff Member, Kenema)

In the North, religious and cultural barriers combined to make it difficult for women to contest for leadership positions. According to one MP, in one predominantly Muslim area, the slogan of a male competitor stated, “Have you ever seen a woman leading in the mosque? So why vote for her? She’s a woman.” (KII, MP, Freetown). However, WELD organized dialogue meetings with paramount chiefs which helped to open up space for women, at least at the lower levels:

“For a woman to become section chief, for a woman to become town chief, it has never happened, it is because of this advocacy that is why we have three women that are section chiefs right now as I speak.” (FGD, SG Women Leaders, Kono)

Critically, then, the WELD project saw some success in districts traditionally opposed to women chiefs, with the election of women chiefs in Tonkolili, Port Loko and Koinadugu. In Koinadugu, where customs and traditions have historically prevented women from becoming paramount chiefs – and where women have, now, been elected to the lower positions of section chief and town chief since the WELD project began – a male paramount chief shared that, as a father of four daughters, he was aware of the importance of politically empowering and educating girls and women. He supported the election of the first female town chief in Koinadugu because of the candidate’s work in her community. Simultaneously, paramount chief positions continue to be more elusive than not for women, at least for now. Even the aforementioned current chief explained that while he did not mind supporting women for lower chieftaincy positions, “Custom and tradition would not allow a woman to stand as paramount chief, as there is a secret society threat, and we do not want women there.”

Importantly, the number of women paramount chiefs in northern Sierra Leone, where women traditionally are barred from holding traditional positions, is still lower than in the eastern part of the country where districts, like Kenema, have a much longer history of women chiefs.

WELD project contributions to a reduction in social barriers is mostly attributed to both political and social will: In the words of a WELD partner CSO, “Some people really wanted it, accepted it, and owned it. Some places hold back” (KII, WELD Partner Organization, Freetown). For example, one MP surmised Tonkolili is distinguished from other districts in the country because it is more receptive: “My own paramount chief wants to empower women. The counsellor is a woman in one of the wards and he [the paramount chief] supported my candidacy.” (KII, MP, Freetown)

But societal perceptions of women in politics are still crucial, as some community members perceive political women as promiscuous: “They think if you’re in politics, you’re not a decent woman...They think that maybe you have numerous boyfriends...but I’m a decent woman, I keep my head high.” (KII, MP, Freetown)

Violence against women has been identified as another barrier that women face (Barrier Analysis 2015). Despite measures taken by the project to address this, including meeting with paramount chiefs to offer protection to women, challenges remained. Some aspirants

encountered openly hostile situations during their campaigns (KII, Aspirant, Falaba, previously part of Koinadugu).

They would send their rude guys around them, and they would chase you. They raped one woman. They tried to give her a negative character. Those men don't want to see a woman take a leadership position. This current president passed through my constituency and they took down all my banners in the streets. My opponents would go outside and talk negatively, that I was arrested by policemen, that they had put me in jail for a week. So there are a lot of issues. The intimidation is too much for us. (KII, MP, Freetown)

An unsuccessful aspirant said the violence has discouraged her from running again:

I will never aspire for symbol in this community, as I was mistreated and my family was under threat until I had to hand over myself to the police for security reasons. My house was almost burned down. Just imagine, I aspired for councillorship in this community and the traditional leaders started using words like, 'This one wants to act like man, but she will see the end of it.' (FGD, SG Women Aspirants, Kailahun)

Despite the above negative societal dynamics, there was some evidence from the evaluation that social structures within the districts changed, because WELD activities (e.g. SGs) helped women bring money into beneficiary households. In one area, husbands began to call their wives “Mama”, as a sign of respect, once women began to generate income and help develop the community. Port Loko’s district council now has women on the staff and ward members who engaged female residents to learn about their health, water, and education needs, as well as with their inheritance, helping women acquire property if their husband passes away. The WELD project also supported efforts encouraging the media to advocate and discuss Sierra Leone’s gender laws to raise public awareness of women’s rights. They also conducted trainings on sexual offenses and laws, and they conducted campaigns on teenage pregnancy.

ECONOMIC BARRIERS

Across the in-depth KIIs and FGDs, respondents enthusiastically indicated SGs augmented the economic capacity of women members, by helping them bring money into the households.²⁵

Indeed, the WELD-supported SGs contributed notably to reducing economic barriers. Savings groups are a means of providing marginalized groups with financial services (Flynn and Sumberg 2016). Saving groups are informal mechanisms that facilitate financial inclusion and promote good savings behavior and asset accumulation (Smith, Scott and Shephard 2015). Savings groups are particularly beneficial, as savings and loans can help groups start or expand income-generating activities that contribute to sustainable livelihoods. Accordingly,

²⁵ The Barrier Analysis Report 2015 indicated that very few women were engaged in the formal sector, the main problem women traders encountered related to access to funding to start ventures, problems with transportation, and that a majority of access to credit came from SGs.

[I]velelihoods of households and entire communities have been transformed by the power of members knowing that at any time they can call on savings, credit, and insurance benefits in a manner that is flexible, appropriate to their situation, and set in an administrative and social culture where they feel understood and valued (Allen and Panetta 2010, 5).

Case Study 2, below, illustrates the dynamics of the WELD SG activity.

CASE STUDY 2: SAVINGS GROUPS AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

For Sierra Leonean women participants in savings groups, savings groups are a path to financial inclusion and enhanced roles in decision-making in settings where such opportunities more often flow to men. The SG-supported groups contributed significantly to enhanced financial capacity among women, as well as broader demonstration effects in other areas, as groups spread.

Access to Economic Resources

According to WELD project reports, WELD has improved rural women's access to productive economic resources. There are 361 savings groups across the seven WELD project areas, with a membership of 9,620 (1,297 male, 8,323 female). Nearly 90 percent of SG members are female, who hold 81 percent of executive positions in savings groups (WELD Final Performance Report 2019). The SGs are fairly widespread throughout WELD districts (See, Figure 2, below).

Savings groups are based on a simple model where members contribute an agreed minimum amount of savings during weekly meetings. Funds are, then, loaned out to members based on demand, for a period of approximately 12 months. At that point, lending stops and outstanding loans are repaid in preparation for distributing the interest earned to the members. The groups thus share the income generated over the cycle, but retain the savings. As of August 2018, WELD-supported groups saved \$410,712, and disbursed 62 percent of savings (\$252,381.33), as loans to 7,472 members (WELD Final

Figure 2. Savings Groups in WELD Districts

Evaluation Report 2019). The total amount accumulated in the social (group) account, by the SGs, was \$15,795 (WELD Final Performance Report 2019). Individually, we estimate women saved between LE 1,000 - LE 5000 per week, though this is a very rough estimate, as the amount saved and borrowed varied widely between groups, dependent on financial capabilities. Those who could afford to save more were able to do so.

SG members choose their leaders, ensuring influence for those who are widely respected. This also assists with a high recovery rate of loan repayments and is based on informal institutions of savings (referred as *osusu*) in Sierra Leone. WELD project staff largely attributed the success of the SGs to the strategy of offering no incentives or money to groups in exchange for participation. The WELD project only provided training and, to a certain extent, security boxes which were funded by individual partner budgets (e.g. from AAISL, rather than from WV or USAID). The goal was to keep the responsibility in the hands of local members, thus potentially creating the sense of internal ownership. One staff member put it well, “If you introduce an incentive, it is less sustainable” because “if we paid a teacher, then they will stop, if not paid.” (WELD Project Staff Member, Freetown)

Expanding the Credibility of Women: Replication and Reputation

Equally important, SGs self-replicated, as WELD staff encouraged members to train other residents in the community. This reduced the amount of training required by WELD, but also facilitate reproduction of SGs at low cost. For example, in Port Loko:

We train someone in the village to keep track of the financial records. Whenever this trained group is meeting, you have people coming from other areas to see what

is happening. They engage the record keeper and she helps train them. (KII, WELD District Coordinator, Port Loko)

SG benefits ultimately transcended economic domain to include broader social and public effects, namely acknowledgment within SG members' communities. Beneficiary women in groups reported that community members have more respect for them, and are more likely to have their husbands, as well as community members in general, consult them in decision-making. Male SG members also reported consulting more with their wives on making decisions.

One of my colleagues told me that her husband never used to respect her but because of this savings group and the woman is now earning money, the husband is the first person to ask the woman how she slept. Before when she would tell him good morning, he would ask her, "What do you want? Why are you greeting me?" But now he is the first person to wish her a good morning... Even some of us, there are people in the community who used to look down on us...but a day like today, they respect us more than others in the community. (FGD, Female SG Leaders, Kono)

There is an absolute equality now in our homes as our husbands now acknowledge that we are contributors to the financial well-being of the home. (FGD, Female SG Leaders, Kebala)

Enhancing Gender-Awareness among Male SG Members

Importantly, male members of the predominantly female savings groups, for their part, became more gender-aware and supportive of women's rights. For example, one male SG member said that he now consults his wife on decisions, even though he is the one who is a savings group member:

Before joining the group, only I would decide on issues at home. Since joining the savings group, I have changed the idea of making decision on my own. This is because I am the adviser [in his Savings

Group], and I know how women feel when not allowed to participate in important decisions in the household. (KII, Male SG member, Kailahun)

To an extent, SGs also assisted women in the political realms. Initially, WV did not link the SGs with women political aspirants, but later determined a linkage could potentially create a mutually beneficial relationship. In Kenema, the female MP-elect supported by one SG was aided by SG members who canvassed door-to-door for her (WELD project staff member). Similar strategies were evidenced in Koinadugu and other districts. Remarkably, at the end of 2018, there were over 9,000 SG members across the seven WELD project districts in over 300 groups, 105 of which were replicated groups (WELD Performance Report, 2018) (KII, WELD Project Staff Member, Freetown).

Some MPs interviewed emphasized the assistance they received as a result of their links to the WELD SGs: "[They] helped a lot...when they have their meetings you attend the meetings. They see us working together with WELD, so they think I'm the one that brought WELD to

them” (KII, MP, Freetown). One SG in Kenema assisted one woman candidate by hiring bikes to transport her around and telling community members they support her.²⁶

Female Aspirants are More Socially Efficacious; CSO Backing is Beneficial to Aspirants’ Success

While some research indicated that no impact was found regarding SG support for political aspirants (McNamara, et al, 2018) and aspirant success in their bids for public office, other research indicated key variables related to aspirants, such as their experience and the availability of resources influenced their likelihood of being successful in political contests: both male and female aspirants reported higher education levels, more experience in community organizations, greater access to material and non-material resources, more social and political connections, and more training on key topics than male and female non-aspirants. Women’s empowerment via more decision-making within the household increased their likelihood of pursuing political careers, and female aspirants belonged on average to more social/community organizations than male aspirants, indicating that female aspirants brought to their political careers the experience of having participated in community groups. Finally, receiving support from CSOs increased the likelihood of women becoming political candidates, thus indicating the importance of having communities back aspirants’ candidacy (World Vision International 2018).

These findings, combined with the data collected for this evaluation, seem to indicate that while the SGs are still somewhat new, there will be positive long-term effects on future numbers of women aspirants, particularly as the groups strengthen and potentially continue to replicate, thus increasing women’s ability to partake in community groups.

Although the savings groups provided a much needed source of finance for beneficiaries, some respondents felt that more might have been done by the WELD project to help SG members leverage their finances. Only a minority of women, for instance, were able to use their loans for the campaign, as indicated by one successful political candidate in Kabala:

I think we just need more women empowerment. This savings scheme helped me greatly in acquiring my councillorship within my constituency. Had it not been for the loans offered to me with a lengthy period of paying back, it would have been tough. So many challenges faced by women are due to lack of empowerment and our hands are tied. Most importantly for a woman to win a political position within my region, is so tough because of lack of finance. If you have other means of financial support like the type OXFAM gave us in their first coming here, it will be nice.²⁷

²⁶ The VSLA fundraising football competition mentioned earlier raised \$400 (Le 3,000,000.00). This amount was handed over to MP Makieu to help her campaign for SLPP symbol. This also includes the door-to-door campaign (WELD Performance Report 2018).

²⁷ In 2006, Oxfam provided tangible financial support to women in Koinadugu to help candidates mount successful campaigns. A number of respondents in Koinadugu frequently contrasted the Oxfam approach unfavorably with WELD’s no-cash policy. Again, however, this reflects a difference in mandates between a governmental entity such as USAID, and an NGO such as Oxfam.

WELD-Supported SGs Break Barriers and are a Sustainable Aspect of the Project

Overall, however, the ongoing involvement within and sustainability of the SGs, and their replication without donor assistance, has combined with an ability to serve as a means of reducing cultural barriers to women's participation in the local economy and public life, and is a testament to the strength of this aspect of WELD programming. Other research indicated that this was particularly important for women with low socioeconomic status: women in areas where the SG expansion program was offered increased their likelihood of participating in the SGs and taking a loan, with a higher impact for women with low socioeconomic status in terms of educational attainment and home ownership, compared to others in control areas (McNamara et al, 2018).

To a certain degree, SGs were also able to mobilize other women to campaign without financial compensation or USAID support in funding any community initiatives. The groups also supported the educational needs of women and their children in the way of literacy training, children's uniforms and books, signifying their ability to mobilize funds. These are potential gains that have not been reflected in the numeric data of an increase in savings, and signify that the SGs are a key mechanism to channel technical assistance into communities with women as the primary beneficiaries (Communication with USAID Staff Member).

Evaluation results clearly indicate that the WELD-supported SGs are widely perceived as the most sustainable aspect of the project, in large part, owed to the model chosen by WELD. Women were not offered incentives for participation and training of trainers allowed the SGs to proliferate.

Thus, the case study underscores the value of the SG intervention in contributing to the reduction of economic barriers. A further discussion on sustainability, particularly regarding the use of mobile money and scaling up from small to larger business trade is discussed later under Evaluation Question 4: Sustainability.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

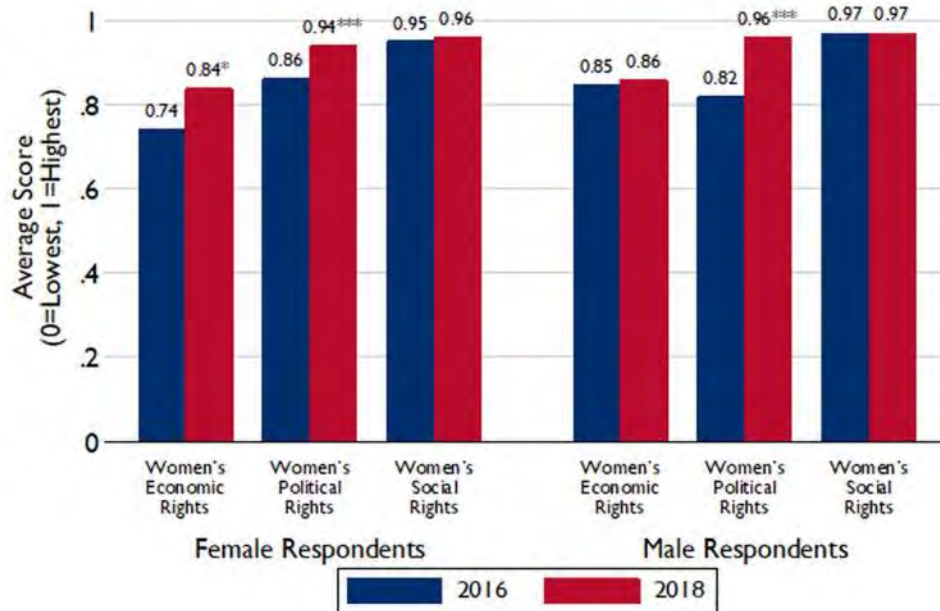
Quantitative results from 2016 and 2018 WELD KAP surveys across the seven WELD project districts align with the above qualitative FGD and KII results. In quantitative analysis exploring whether WELD project interventions are associated with increased support for political, social, and economic rights, the analysis finds: (1) a positive relationship between WELD interventions and increased knowledge of women's rights; and (2) increased knowledge is correlated with changes in attitudes and practices around greater participation for women in political, social and economic decision-making. (For a description of variables, measure construction and model specification, see Annex C.)²⁸

Compared to 2016 results, respondents in WELD project districts in 2018 displayed higher levels of knowledge of Sierra Leonean laws related to women's political,

²⁸ The data sets were imbalanced with respect to gender initially precluding drawing conclusions on changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices across years. The NORC team corrected the imbalance enabling comparison between years.

social, and economic rights. The survey asked respondents about a series of laws related to these three categories, and the evaluation team measured the percentage of respondents knowledgeable of laws in each category. As Figure 3 shows, awareness of women’s economic rights among female respondents improved by approximately 10 points between 2016 and 2018, statistically significant at the ten-percent confidence level, while awareness of women’s political rights improved by approximately 8 points, significant at the one-percent level. Awareness of women’s political rights improved among male respondents as well, increasing by approximately 14 points between 2016 and 2018. For both males and females, however, awareness of women’s social rights remained mostly unchanged.²⁹

²⁹ More detail on the changes between 2016 and 2018 for these and other variables is found in Table 1D in Annex D.

Figure 3. Awareness of existing economic, political, and social rights for women

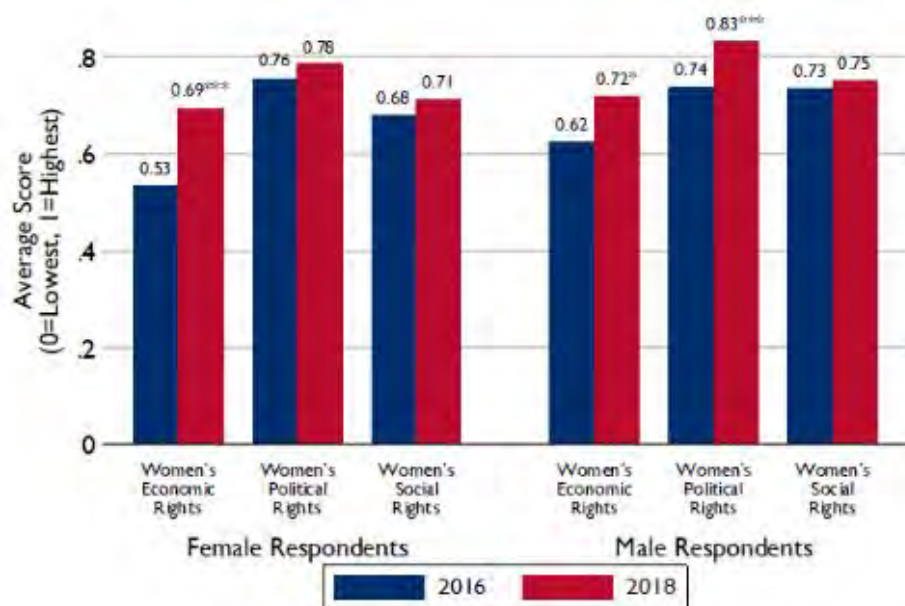
Note: Stars denote statistical significance for the change between 2016 and 2018.

***/**/* statistically significant at the 0.01/0.05/0.1 level

Respondent perceptions towards gender equality on political, social, and economic issues were all significantly strengthened. Respondents were asked about whether women had equal rights to men on a number of issues related to these three categories in their communities. Measuring the average extent to which respondents agreed for each category, perceptions of women's economic rights increased by approximately 16 points among female respondents, while among male respondents perceptions of women's economic and political rights increased by 10 and 9 points, respectively (Figure 4). As was the case for awareness of social rights, perceptions of women's social rights remained little-changed for both male and female respondents.

Respondents were more engaged in decision-making processes at the family, household- or community-level. A larger proportion of respondents had access to credit through savings groups, with an increase of 18 percentage points from 2016. Women saw an average increase of approximately 17 percentage points in access to credit, compared to an approximate 19-percentage-point increase for male respondents; women receiving management or leadership training increased by approximately 12 percentage points over the period.

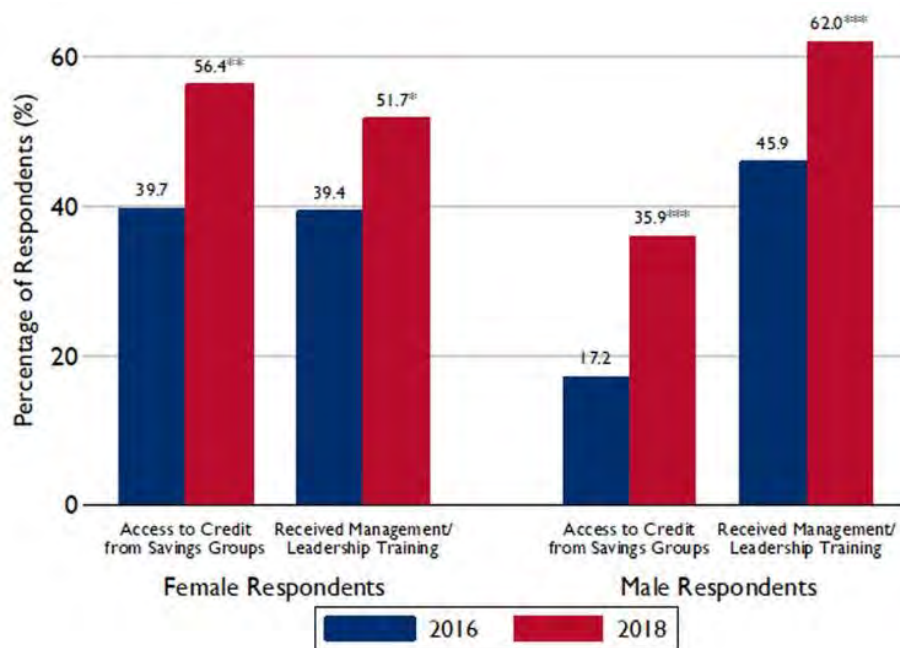
Figure 4. Perceptions of gender equality across economic, political, and social dimensions



Note: Stars denote statistical significance for the change between 2016 and 2018.

***/**/* statistically significant at the 0.01/0.05/0.1 level

Figure 5. Percentage of respondents with access to savings groups and receiving trainings



Note: Stars denote statistical significance for the change between 2016 and 2018.

***/**/* statistically significant at the 0.01/0.05/0.1 level

Table 1. Respondent-level correlates with women's political rights

Variables	(1) Knowledge of laws on women's political rights	(2) Confidence to hold certain positions	(3) Contributed to promoting women's rights	(4) Perception of gender equality in political issues
Year=2018	0.1024*** (0.0154)	2.4143*** (0.0678)	0.0428 (0.0735)	0.0133 (0.0154)
Respondent age is 35+	0.0161* (0.0093)	0.0275 (0.0446)	0.0465 (0.0414)	0.0052 (0.0126)
Gender=Male	-0.0107 (0.0109)	0.3484*** (0.0424)	0.2258*** (0.0332)	0.0234** (0.0089)
Access to credits through savings groups	0.0138 (0.0136)	0.1554*** (0.0507)	0.1651*** (0.0465)	0.0250** (0.0098)
Knowledge of laws on women's political rights		0.6442*** (0.1364)	-0.0170 (0.1498)	0.4009*** (0.0531)
Constant	0.8362*** (0.0146)	-0.3071** (0.1186)	0.2957*** (0.1075)	0.3882*** (0.0468)
Observations	1,226	1,226	1,225	1,225
R-squared	0.1735	0.8207	0.0775	0.2652

Note: ***/**/* statistically significant at the 0.01/0.05/0.1 level. All regressions control for district.

For a closer look at the 2016 and 2018 data, Tables 5 to 7 analyze the changes in key political, social, and economic empowerment outcomes over time, along with examining the influence of respondent-level characteristics on these outcomes. Specifically, participation in WELD savings groups was positively and significantly correlated with confidence in holding certain leadership positions, contribution to promoting women's rights, and perceptions of gender equality in

political issues (Table 5, Columns 2 and 4). Knowledge of laws on women's political rights is also shown to be positively and significantly correlated to confidence in holding leadership positions and perceptions of women's political equality (table 5? Columns 2 and 4). Additionally, Table 5 confirms the message seen above for changes in gender equality over time, showing an increase in awareness of laws on women's political rights and women's confidence to hold certain positions, even when controlling for respondent-level traits.

On women's social rights, participation in WELD business and leadership trainings is correlated with higher levels of awareness of the existing laws on women's social rights (Table 6, Column 1). In addition, respondents who received WELD business or leadership trainings are more likely to be involved in community decision-making processes (Table 6, Column 2), and participation in these trainings is also positively correlated with an increase in women's decision-making power at household-level (Table 6, Column 3). Equally important, knowledge of laws and savings group participation are positively and significantly correlated with involvement in community meetings and a wife's decision-making power in the household, respectively, suggesting WELD-supported activities are positively correlated with an increase in women's decision-making power.

Table 2. Respondent-level correlates with women's social rights

Variables	(1) Knowledge of laws on women's social rights	(2) Sometimes or frequently involved in community and family meetings	(3) Wife's decision power in the household	(4) Perception of gender equality in social issues
Year = 2018	-0.0010 (0.0092)	0.0595* (0.0352)	-0.0391* (0.0221)	0.0212 (0.0170)
Respondent age is 35+	0.0067 (0.0092)	-0.0359** (0.0166)	0.0097 (0.0217)	0.0006 (0.0094)
Gender = Male	0.0116 (0.0085)	0.0339 (0.0286)	-0.0707*** (0.0211)	0.0461*** (0.0125)
Knowledge of laws on women's social rights		0.2846** (0.1210)	0.0192 (0.0709)	0.2847*** (0.0533)

Variables	(1) Knowledge of laws on women's social rights	(2) Sometimes or frequently involved in community and family meetings	(3) Wife's decision power in the household	(4) Perception of gender equality in social issues
Access to credits through savings groups	-0.0039 (0.0086)	0.0342 (0.0298)	0.0348** (0.0166)	0.0164 (0.0105)
Leadership or business management training	0.0322*** (0.0075)	0.0574** (0.0259)	0.0554** (0.0205)	0.0039 (0.0126)
Constant	0.9393*** (0.0086)	0.5282*** (0.1071)	0.2719*** (0.0710)	0.4039*** (0.0501)
Observations	1,227	1,201	1,227	1,226
R-squared	0.0349	0.0612	0.0576	0.1439

Note: ***/**/* statistically significant at the 0.01/0.05/0.1 level. All regressions control for district.

Additionally, analysis of dynamics during 2018 show that more exposure to WELD-supported messaging on women's empowerment at endline was positively and significantly correlated with knowledge of women's social rights (see within-year regressions in Annex D, Table 6D). **Thus, the overall evidence suggests WELD-related activities, including trainings, participation in savings groups, and exposure to messaging, are each associated with enhanced empowerment of women on social dimensions.**

Analysis of economic rights shows that participation in WELD savings groups and management or leadership training are positively and significantly correlated with women's economic rights (Table 7). Receiving training and engagement in business activities are both positively correlated with knowledge of women's economic rights (Table 7, Column 1). Moreover, respondents who were more aware of women's legal economic rights are more likely to say women play central decision-making roles – either the wife alone, or jointly with the husband (Table 7, Column 2). However, the results show an unexpected overall decline over the 2016-2018 period in the percentage of respondents saying women play a central

decision-making role over the use of cash primarily generated by the woman (Table 7, Column 2).³⁰

Consistent with other findings for participation in savings groups and leadership trainings, respondents with access to credits through WELD savings groups, and those who participated in the business and leadership trainings, were more engaged in some form of business activity (Table 7, Column 3). Results also suggest an increase in a respondent's knowledge of existing laws on women's economic rights is associated with more egalitarian perceptions towards gender regarding economic issues (Table 7, Column 4).

Table 3. Respondent-level correlates with women's economic rights

Variables	(1) Knowledge of laws on women's economic rights	(2) Wife as primary decision maker over cash they earned	(3) Engagement in any form of business	(4) Perception of gender equality in economic issues
Year = 2018	0.0250 (0.0353)	-0.1499*** (0.0489)	0.0904 (0.0539)	0.1109*** (0.0313)
Respondent age is 35+	0.0151 (0.0241)	-0.0010 (0.0390)	0.0774** (0.0372)	-0.0185 (0.0150)
Gender = Male	0.0826*** (0.0201)	0.0057 (0.0356)	-0.2630*** (0.0367)	0.0483*** (0.0173)
Knowledge of laws on women's economic rights		0.3003*** (0.0543)	0.1275** (0.0557)	0.2838*** (0.0355)
Access to credits through savings groups	0.0498 (0.0297)	0.0217 (0.0358)	0.0896*** (0.0323)	0.0011 (0.0195)
Leadership or business management	0.0589***	0.0124	0.1094***	0.0069

³⁰ For this result, we control for WELD-related activities.

Variables	(1) Knowledge of laws on women's economic rights	(2) Wife as primary decision maker over cash they earned	(3) Engagement in any form of business	(4) Perception of gender equality in economic issues
training	(0.0214)	(0.0274)	(0.0374)	(0.0163)
Engaged in any form of business	0.0563** (0.0262)	0.0444 (0.0301)		0.0289 (0.0245)
Constant	0.6850*** (0.0466)	0.5348*** (0.0522)	0.3446*** (0.0657)	0.3205*** (0.0258)
Observations	1,225	1,225	1,225	1,213
R-squared	0.0894	0.1097	0.1474	0.3740

Note: ***/**/* statistically significant at the 0.01/0.05/0.1 level. All regressions control for district.

It is particularly noteworthy that respondents reporting more exposure to WELD-supported messages on women's empowerment show greater knowledge of women's economic rights laws, and are more likely to say women have a central decision-making role over spending income they have generated themselves, and are also more likely to have engaged in any form of business (see 2018 regression in Annex D, Table 7D).

Within-year analysis for 2016 echoes the results above (see 2016 regression, Annex D, tables 2D through 4D). Concerning the influence of WELD interventions on women's access to political rights in 2016, access to credits through savings groups is positively correlated with a respondent's confidence to hold certain leadership positions. Also, knowledge of women's legal political rights is positively and significantly correlated with confidence in holding leadership positions and perceptions of gender equality in political rights, suggesting an increase in the respondent's knowledge of women's legal political rights corresponds to more egalitarian gender perceptions regarding women's political participation (Annex D, Table 2D).

Consistent with the above 2016 results, WELD business and leadership training participation is associated with higher levels of knowledge of women's legal social rights and greater involvement in community or family meetings (Annex D, Table 3D). Knowledge of existing laws also positively corresponds to the engagement of decision-making processes at the family and community levels. Higher levels of awareness of women's legal social rights is associated with

greater decision-making roles for wives in the household and awareness levels also positively correlate with egalitarian gender attitudes on social issues.

In 2016, respondents more aware of women's economic rights were more likely to report the wife was the primary decision maker concerning issues related to finances (Annex D, Table 4D). Respondents who participated in savings groups were also more likely to have engaged in business activity.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, qualitative and quantitative analyses each suggest the WELD project contributed to a reduction in barriers to women's inclusion in political, social and economic spaces. The KAP survey analysis found project-wide, a positive relationship between WELD interventions and increased respondent knowledge of women's rights, and that increased knowledge is linked with changes in attitudes / practices regarding greater participation for women in multiple arenas. Specifically, WELD interventions correlate with more egalitarian perceptions of women's participation in politics and support for a larger role in household decision-making. Messaging is positively correlated with: (1) respondent engagement in business enterprises; (2) support for a large role for women in economic decision-making; (3) women's decision-making power regarding her person, and; (4) favorable attitudes towards women's access to financial resources.

FGDs and KIs reveal that some challenges remain, however, for deepening project accomplishments. Specifically, financial resource mobilization presented difficulties for women's aspirants' campaigns. Women lacked direct financial resources and perceived men to have an easier time. Virtually all respondents concluded three years as too short a project performance period, as it hindered the potential for long-term sustainability.

Still, WELD contributions appear to outweigh the above issues; the project's ability to bring women together decreased local tensions and increased social capital by providing an opportunity for women to discuss common concerns amongst themselves. This was particularly evident in the SGs, where, in some areas, the WELD project assisted aspirants with garnering community support. WELD programming adapted well to challenges such as women's illiteracy, by starting short courses for basic skills, although these started late in the project.

Political barriers. WELD programming widened the space for women to campaign for leadership positions, which was a key project goal. Much of this occurred through advocacy and training on self-confidence and networking. Women beneficiary aspirants advertised themselves as "someone different" and, in certain areas, this seemed to work well. But the programming appears to have stopped short on assisting women once they were elected to parliament and some aspirants said they are currently struggling to participate. While women now hold chieftom positions, they are still unable to achieve the highest posts (e.g., paramount chief) in the North, which has historically marginalized women, indicating that space for political inclusion in certain areas of Sierra Leone remains limited.

Economic barriers. The SGs enhanced economic empowerment both within households and communities, but also for the women beneficiary aspirants who were targets of WELD project

support. Successful aspirants often accomplished tangible projects within their communities as a result of WELD, which were noted as a crucial factor for effective campaigning and earning community support.

Social barriers. WELD participants highlighted that the historical “culture and customs” of patriarchy persist as a significant barrier to women, particularly in the common perceptions that women in politics are promiscuous. Political and social will, especially among the paramount chiefs, served as a key factor in the opening of social space within communities, as did women’s newfound ability to bring financial resources into their households. As a result of the latter, social structures evolved so that men hold greater respect for women who are achieving higher levels of empowerment. Dialogue sessions with paramount chiefs and community members also helped to marginally increase community acceptance of women in politics as evidenced by statistical data and the election of women chiefs in districts that were historically resistant (albeit not for the top paramount chieftaincy positions).

EVALUATION QUESTION 3

Unintended Consequences: What unintended consequences (positive and negative) – if any – have been registered as a result of the WELD interventions?

FINDINGS

Unintended consequences associated with WELD interventions revolved predominantly around financial issues. Some consequences were positive, others negative.

First, **SGs, while successful with generating funds, held onto their cash, making them vulnerable to theft.** The problem of theft was crucial to address. In response, WV began discussions with mobile phone companies to determine alternative banking possibilities. WELD also used radio to explain how they were adapting with mobile money, so that thieves would know the groups no longer held cash. This strategy worked well, and demonstrated project responsiveness and nimble adaptation to changes in the project environment.³¹ This adaptation, in fact, provided women with more than just a way to avoid theft. As Orange Money vendors, the beneficiary women are also perceived as bringing mobile money to their communities (KII, USAID Staff Member). This further augmented the esteem and credibility of WELD women beneficiaries among their fellow community members. Since their WELD engagement, they are now invited to meetings, their opinions are solicited, and they enjoy an expanded role in community-decision making. As one member put it, “For now, what I believe is that the community people just think that we are the best. They admire us, they have respect for us, and have confidence in us” (FGD, SG Members, Female Respondent, Kono). In some communities, this was reinforced by the social projects that some SGs were able to undertake in their communities such as contributing to school renovations. While most of the savings

³¹ When they linked the VSLA members to cell phones, the central bank admonished the phone companies for not holding an appropriate license, creating some tension between entities. As deposits were being made to MNOs, transactions fell under the central bank. WV explained these were not savings accounts, which only banks can allow, but the bank indicated it should be receiving transactions fees. This is an on-going issue.

group members interviewed in this assessment indicated their savings within the groups was only sufficient for them to invest in personal projects and activities rather than for the community, they all maintained a social welfare fund that could be accessed by members in need for various expenses including burial expenses or sudden illness. In so doing, they served as a welfare safety net, important in communities where the state is largely absent.

Second, in addition to enhanced financial independence and social acceptance, **the camaraderie of belonging to a group and sharing emotional burdens helped foster a solidarity among women that spilled over into the political arena, as WELD beneficiary women were willing to support each other in elections, irrespective of party affiliation.** Although women desired more skills training, women also felt a sense of independence and accomplishment with the literacy training (FGD, SG Members, Kono and Koinadugu).

Third, anecdotally, women in the Savings Groups mentioned that their husbands had more respect for them and consulted them more on financial decisions which could have contributed to a decline in household conflicts, but this was not explicitly stated.

Fourth, **the WELD SGs have widely replicated across communities, adopted by some WELD partners outside of the WELD project.** For example, an AAISL staff member shared that due to the success of the SGs in their action areas, they decided to implement groups in other communities in which they work.

Fifth, **some male champions translated support for women candidate into support for their own political ambitions.** This has both positive and negative implications for election outcomes. Specifically, male champions in Kenema, Kono and Koinadugu are now local council chairs. A champion in a KII explained that due to men's advocacy for women, women inadvertently supported the male candidates. "Because of the trust I have gained [among women], the women that I am working with also see me as a problem solver, particularly on issues relating to women" (FGD, Male Champions, Kono). This can be either positive or negative, depending on how much the male champions continue to advocate for women, or whether they used gender issues as a platform to achieve power and will subsequently change their attitudes. Currently, it is too soon to tell.

Sixth, **as discussed earlier, the lack of financial disbursement discouraged some WELD women aspirants, who will likely need added encouragement to participate in future similar types of programs again.**

When people realize you are aspiring for a political position, they automatically believe that you have money to spend. No matter what you tell them, money is their primary focus. Imagine me as a woman, getting through all that challenge to pursue my dream in politics, only then, to fail with all my investment thrown away. What am I supposed to do? Please, help from [WELD] will be most suitable. (FGD, Aspirants, Kabala)

Finally, **the timing of financial disbursements to CSO partner organizations also created bottlenecks.** In some cases, slow payments resulted in delays in project

implementation and beneficiary dissatisfaction with World Vision and the implementing partner organization. According to a CSO staff member:

The first challenge was releasing funds to support activities. They [World Vision] have protocols for everything to be changed in their standardized format [for payment requests] hence creating more ... bureaucracy to payment, subsequently making some payments to be made extremely slow. The [locals] do not understand all these protocols hence they just think they [World Vision] are not reliable and disassociate themselves with anything that concerns World Vision...Considering the high expectations of the community when these activities are not carried out as promised we at the front line get the blame thinking we are failing in carrying out our activities stipulated to us. (CSO Staff Member, Kono)

CONCLUSIONS

Unintended consequences largely revolved around financial issues. Although the team learned in interviews that theft occurred as a result of SGs holding cash, this was mitigated by involving a mobile money system and allowed women to further enhance their own empowerment by raising their status in communities because they brought a new financial system into play. Social capital increased because women came together to discuss mutual challenges. This created greater support for each other, which historically had been a challenge in many of the communities. The SGs have also widely replicated into communities that were not a part of the WELD project.

Some male champions who supported women found they were able to become local council chairs because women in the communities trusted them. Whether or not they will continue to advocate for women remains to be seen, but seems to have been a positive consequence.

Some women may need encouragement to participate in this type of project again because the lack of financial resources was a burden for them. Financial challenges also existed between WV and the WELD partners, as partners perceived disbursements to be limiting regarding line items for candidate expenses and material resources, which were also considered to be too slow in coming.

EVALUATION QUESTION 4

Sustainability and Replicability: Which elements of the intervention approaches and results achieved by WELD are most likely to be replicated and sustained beyond the close of the project? Why?

FINDINGS

The current section addresses those WELD project activities that are most likely sustainable, such as the SGs, short literacy courses, and efforts to increase confidence in public arenas. Also examined, are WELD activities which appear less sustainable, namely, beneficiaries' capacity to survive once elected, post-project monitoring, and ensuring future accountability without the

strengthening of formal laws to overcome informal norms that present challenges for women within the political sphere.

Evaluation results clearly indicate that the WELD-supported SGs were widely regarded as the most sustainable aspect of the programming, in large part, due to the model chosen by WELD. As a result, participants are ultimately able to generate their own funds to acquire loans and are not reliant on WELD programming to continue, a point already elaborated upon and discussed in detail in the Case Study. WELD project staff largely attributed the success of the SGs to the strategy of offering no incentives or money to groups in exchange for participation.

Figure 6. Mobile Money Banking



Toward the end of the WELD project, the SGs were linked to mobile money for banking, which decreased the potential for theft and helped groups scale up. Respondents' mobile banking with Orange was particularly successful (see Figure 6) as it allowed women to bring in money from selling airtime and to bring mobile money services to those in rural areas who were previously unserved, thus increasing financial inclusion.³² This has helped them overcome previously noted economic barriers (Barrier Analysis Report, 2015). Initially, SG members used savings for more immediate needs, such as school fees and hospital

³² SG members are uncomfortable opening bank accounts, because of the fees (SLL 500,000 to register), harassment for non-payment of loans, illiteracy, and past experience with theft. In response, Orange and Africel developed eWallet to ensure safer money management.

bills, but WV supported them to use the money to support beneficiaries' longer term needs / business investment (KII, USAID Staff Member) which allows them to further invest in more income generating activities and increase social capital.³³

The evaluation found some evidence that this focus on larger business is occurring.³⁴ As one beneficiary stated:

Most had been using [the SG money generated] for petty trading [rather than income generation], so then they started cassava farming, fish farming, etc., and some have put a vehicle for use for transport business... This has attracted more members to the groups. (KII, WELD Project Staff Member)

In Tonkolili, the SG women beneficiaries planted cassava and independently procured machines to produce starch and animal feed. Formerly, the women conducted small-scale value chain activities on their own, but now, "Several people work at one farm all on one day, then go to the next [farm] the next day, or they have collective farms" (KII, WELD Partner Staff, Kenema). To strive for maximum benefit, NMJD conducted a mapping exercise in Kenema in 2015 and 2016 to pinpoint women already involved in business. The project then trained the women on business skills/management so they could train others (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Kenema). However, only leaders such as the chairperson and secretary were selected and they were then expected to train group members. Overall, WELD women beneficiaries found the training helpful as they received information on how to identify a market need and budgeting among other skills, all of which seemed appropriate and relevant for beneficiaries. However, many felt that the training was not enough, while others wished that all members could have received the training directly from WELD, even though those trained passed it on to other members.

A business training was conducted on how to go about doing business, because you will not get up one day and say I want to get involved in business in [name withheld] community without you knowing what the people really need or what is most suitable for selling in this community. So, that is the reason we undergo entrepreneurship training in order to have the knowledge of observing a certain community area before conducting a business enterprise there. Although not everybody was fortunate to go through the training, when I came back from the training I made sure that I passed the idea to the group. (FGD SG Member, Tonkolili)

³³ At the same time, however, SG members also highlighted issues with timing. "The approaches were effective, the time frame was a challenge... The programming did not fully cement the partnership with mobile money," because only two months of literacy training occurred and, moreover, the WELD project introduced mobile money for the SGs toward the end of the project (KII, USAID Staff Member, Freetown). In addition, only a limited number of groups received literacy training or partnership with Orange Money.

³⁴ WV assists in identifying potential businesses that are viable, but most rely on agriculture-related business.

We were trained by our chairlady but it would be nice if WELD staff came to the community and trained us together...If we were all trained together it would have been better. (FGD SG Member, Kenema)

In Kono, SG members said that while the training was good, it was not enough:

We need more training, learning is very important and you are never old to learn. Before this time, we were novices when it comes to business because we don't know the techniques that will help the business to grow. The reason why we need to know all these things is because some of us in this group are family heads and we have a lot of responsibilities to carry. So if we don't have the appropriate skill to manage the business, there is a great possibility we might misuse the money. (FGD SG Member, Kono)

Related to this is the fact that staff tell the SG to report theft to the police or paramount chief, rather than WV, to keep the issue localized within the communities and ensure reporting continues after WELD ended.

Although WELD short literacy courses began late in the programming, they were well received and reflected project adaptability as they were a response to an identified need. They had not been in the initial project design. However, responses were mixed regarding whether they are likely to continue. In 2016, WELD staff discovered the need for adult education and so staff trained facilitators in the SGs. The notable outcome is 372 women learned how to write their names, count up to 100, and sign a document. During a recent trip to Port Loko, WELD staff reported they found the women in a class convened on their own, indicating women had taken it upon themselves to continue the training. However, two months of literacy training is not enough, staff acknowledged (KII, USAID staff member). WELD women beneficiaries expressed interest in more training and it is not clear whether the apps the WELD project installed on some trainers' phones are currently in use (FGD, SG Members, Koinadugu and Kono). In other communities in districts like Tonkolili, respondents said they did not receive any apps and were no longer conducting training (FGD, SG Member, Tonkolili).

Since participating in the WELD project trainings, women beneficiaries now feel more confident in the public realm and this skill will not likely diminish. Numerous examples emerged supporting the sustainability of newly earned skills under the WELD project. One woman shared that she did not initially feel comfortable attending meetings because others could see she was illiterate based on thumbprint ink, but now she knows how to sign her name and has increased confidence (KII, WELD Project Staff Member). The WELD MP training on public speaking and self-confidence was considered extremely successful and will likely have long-lasting advantages for the aspirants.

At the same time, instruction fell short of educating successful aspirants on what to do after actually entering parliament. "You can't just train me with no follow-up" (KII, MP, Freetown). WV attempted to address the need for post-election training, but perceptions of the effort among beneficiaries were largely critical. Importantly, WV acknowledged the need to use additional financial resources, holding a mock parliament session, but only 10 out of 18

women leaders could attend due to WV financial constraints. The women therefore decided to boycott the event.³⁵

To combat the challenge posed by limited follow-up, some MPs have found alternative ways to assist their female colleagues new to their elected positions:

We still have six of the women, who haven't made their maiden speech. If we have a serious debate, I'll call them to attention. I will meet with them, call two to three leaders, and do coaching. For the last inquiry, I'll ask what they want to talk about for the next debate: 'give me your points.' We have a set research team [to assist] the women parliamentarians. We did this very quietly. I will send their topics to the research team to help [so they can practice public speaking]. (KII, MP, Freetown)

As discussed in previous sections of this report, there was backlash regarding the lack of financial support and some women became skeptical of WV programming. **Reaching out to these women will be important for sustainability purposes.** Many are also financially weak, following heavy campaign expenditures and are therefore unable to implement development projects in their communities, which is one source through which women gain legitimacy and political support: “Women should also be connected to donors etc. who can help them embark on developmental projects in their communities long before elections. This would help them earn the respect of their people” (KII, Female Local Councilor, Koinadugu). Women who received training, but did not succeed in the elections, nevertheless feel empowered. In communities where the WELD project helped boost women’s visibility, women now command respect and are known in their communities.³⁶ These women should be supported so they can participate in future elections (KII, USAID Staff Member, Freetown). This will help with sustainability as these women represent a pool of potential aspirants for the next election that the project can build on: they are trained and have some name recognition within their communities. However, if they are not supported in some way, they might not be able to run in the next elections.

Similarly, in some WELD project districts the women’s caucuses are still holding meetings to bring women together. However, beneficiaries expressed concerns that without funding or support, these institutions will weaken and dissolve:

We [the caucus] are going to start holding meetings on how we can succeed in the 2023 election. (FGD, Unsuccessful female aspirant, Kenema)

WELD has done a good job forming structures but what about maintaining them? Look at the female caucus – we can use the caucus to help us to go around and do mobilization. They could be an organization to help implement activities. But right now they don't function. (KII, WELD Partner Staff, Kenema)

³⁵ The point of the training was to understand what to do once in power, with a goal of training women on internal parliamentary dynamics, building coalitions with counterparts, public speaking, and power structures, particularly for those women who are still struggling now that they are in power.

³⁶ One example of this is in Koinadugu where the media covered debates that helped showcase women’s skills.

By contrast, some other aspects of WELD programming seem less likely to be sustainable.

Monitoring post-project is imperative to determine how groups are progressing, but is likely to be difficult. Part of WELD's original goal of sustainability included implementation of many project elements through pre-existing institutions and organizations. Along these lines, post-project monitoring was an element of the project: it was expected that CSOs and local government would continue with some aspects of the project, however, both CSOs and local government staff faced funding constraints, and in practice have not been able to continue project activities as planned.

One CSO staff member in Kenema cited the need to continue assessing the financial situation of the SGs to ensure groups were managing resources effectively: "For some, the management of resources with the loans they take are not grounded in basic business plans" and local staff "find it difficult to reach out to monitor progress," due to a lack of CSO resources.

Part of WELD's original goal of sustainability included implementation of many project elements through pre-existing institutions and organizations. In practice, this has been a difficult. Although CSOs were selected based on their work in either advocacy or service delivery, there is wide variation in terms of CSO capacity as well as their funding bases. In addition, some CSOs are unable to continue critical elements, such as monitoring service delivery or assisting women to access justice for SGBV cases, due to the financial resources required for such trips (e.g., using a motorbike to take a woman to court, to the family support unit (FSU), or to a health center to be checked following a rape incident).

Similarly, as mentioned in previous sections of this report, WELD established linkages to two key ministries in Sierra Leone: the Ministry of Local Government and the MSWGCA. These ministries were expected to drive the project's activities following its end. Staff members within the MSWGCA, for example, were trained on how to develop SGs, but without a clear sense of the associated costs the likelihood of the MSWGCA taking on this role is slim. Repeated requests by USAID to implementing partners for a cost breakdown to establish a SG were never responded to during the project. WV has since indicated it would cost approximately SLL 700,000 to establish a SG group, accounting for staff time, travel and stipends. One government staff member stated the project did not leave any "hardware" for them to build on the project's accomplishments (KII, MSWGCA, Koinadugu). The staff member suggested signing MOUs from the start of the project with government institutions at both the community / district and national levels to fully flesh out their financial commitment so institutions can include requirements in development plan budget requests.

Without the assistance of formal laws, gender-based initiatives are likely to remain challenged. For example, most political parties do not have a 30 percent quota for women, or even a gender policy. One MP questioned the rationale of this in regards to Sierra Leone's national bill: "How can we be working on a gender bill without having a gender policy?" (KII, MP, Kenema). Another government staff member noted: "The enforcement of the 30 percent quota has to be done and institutionalized and placed in the constitution. Once it is documented in our constitution and becomes a law, everyone will adhere to it" (KII, Government Staff Member, Port Loko).

Anecdotally, respondents indicated that they believed SGBV reporting has increased in WELD project districts, but convictions have not. However, we were unable to independently verify this, with the exception of Kailahun, due to the presence of an active magistrate. They attributed this to CSO work in helping SGBV victims access a variety of services, including helping to pay for some physical exams for SGBV or paying transportation costs for victims to see the police. Yet this is not sustainable as CSOs do not have funding to continue assisting victims in this manner.

Although the WELD project handed its work over to local and district council structures and local stakeholders, many institution **staff felt that they do not have sufficient capacity to monitor the structures formed through WELD's support.** For example the MSWGCA said they do not have adequate funds to monitor already-formed savings groups, or develop new ones, while other activities such as following up on SGBV cases or registering customary marriages are not budgeted for, either by CSOs or local government. FGDs and interviews with CSOs, animators, and radio listener groups all implied they would find it difficult to continue with the lobbying for gender responsive plans and budgets.

Finally, sustainability of gains made within the communities may ultimately lie in the hands of the paramount chiefs, who play a crucial role in making or breaking gender programming. Those higher level traditional leaders who support such programming are well placed to assist the more skeptical. As a WELD partner summarized in Bombali, “One of the paramount chiefs was very active, and put in place things we have been crying for. I wish we would have used him as a model for other areas” (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Freetown). Another CSO respondent noted, “Whosoever the paramount chief supports, everyone will follow the support” (KII, CSO Staff Member, Kabala).

CONCLUSIONS

Results from qualitative and quantitative data collection for the evaluation suggest the WELD project activities most likely to be sustainable include the SGs, short literacy courses, and beneficiary women's increased confidence to participate in public forums in their communities of Sierra Leone. Challenges will likely remain with women's ability to navigate the parliamentary system once elected into power, being confident to participate in similar future programming without campaign funding and monitoring post-programming by project beneficiaries (e.g. CSOs, local councils and the MSWGCA). The persistence of formal laws and informal norms that make it difficult for women to be nominated in the first place weaken accountability.

The WELD-supported SGs are, by far, the most likely project outcomes that will continue, as the members feel a strong sense of ownership and the groups have replicated into new areas because members have served as mentors to train them. They are not reliant on WELD to continue and are able to generate their own funds and use mobile money for banking. Some groups have also begun to focus on larger business ventures, which strengthens the potential for sustainability. The sustainability of the SGs, their replication without donor assistance, and their effectiveness at the community level as a means of reducing cultural barriers to women's participation in politics and the local economy all serve as positive contributions from the WELD project.

Community members are training others on basic literacy skills and women now feel more confident in public spaces. The WELD project's MP training on public speaking and self-confidence was considered particularly successful, although the project did less to educate aspirants on how to navigate the parliamentary system. Backlash among aspirant beneficiaries occurred due to the lack of financial support for campaigning, which led to skepticism about WELD. This will need to be considered in future projects.

While it is difficult to say the extent to which local council gender responsive planning and development will continue as most local council development plans were still in process at the time of data collection, the existence of gender desk officers in the local councils suggest that attention to gender issues will remain. Knowing what this means in practice however will only be seen over time. Similarly, the impact of male champions in local councils remains to be seen.

In the view of the evaluation team, post-project monitoring is likely to be, perhaps, one of the biggest challenges to overcome. Most respondents indicated that continued advocacy and monitoring will be an uphill battle. This is in part due to a lack of funding for partner organizations to do so, as they vary in strength. Linkages with government staff are also likely to vary by community, as some official staff exhibited the political will to advocate for women, while others seemed less committed. MOUs might mitigate such dynamics. Sustainability of gains made within WELD communities may lie with the paramount chiefs, who play a crucial role regarding advocacy, even as they face their own challenges.

Formal laws are still weak, indicating that it will take effort to garner public and local leader support for gender-based initiatives. This is evident by a dearth of 30 percent quotas within the political parties and gender policies.

EVALUATION QUESTION 5

Project management: What are we learning about the consortium approach adopted by World Vision in the management of the WELD project and the extent to which it influenced the achievement of intended outcomes?

FINDINGS

Numerous WELD staff explained the greatest success of the WELD consortium was the ability to link the CSO partner organizations to capitalize on their strengths to assist in learning, transferring capacities, and building M&E and financial reporting skills that were historically weak. One partner appreciated the consortium, saying, "We share ideas and experiences that we didn't have in-house. We could learn from other partners who had the capacity" (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Freetown). Some saw WELD trainings for CSOs as highly effective for gender and planning: "We have a whole lot of ideas now for it" (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Kenema).

The WELD consortium also worked with CSO partners that had a pre-existing presence in the WELD project districts and were familiar with these communities. Bridging the partners strengthened the message that allowed for widespread geographical coverage across all seven project districts. The WELD effort also put an emphasis on teamwork. "I expected competition

between partners. We didn't see that...they were trying to learn from each other rather than trying to compete. We did our plans together, and we became a team, as opposed to [separate entities]" (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Freetown).

As a consequence, all the WELD CSO partners developed a better understanding of the process of comparing regions, attitudes, and practices (KII, Partner Staff Member, Kenema). Such dynamic feedback enhanced knowledge and learning.

Yet many WELD affiliates highlighted challenges with the consortium structure, particularly concerning capacity, communication, and hierarchy. Also, high turnover of key positions – which occurred in the initial years of the project – significantly affected structure efficiency and ability. During the initial years of the WELD project, several Chiefs of Party (CoPs), and M&E coordinators departed the project.³⁷ Many participants noted efforts to improve organization, benefitting the consortium's entire operating system, once the final CoP and M&E Coordinator arrived.

Related to turnover, **several interviewees observed that the capacity of CSO partner organizations varied, in part, based on whether they were local or international organizations and implementation in WELD project districts was rather haphazard.**³⁸ WELD programming in project districts developed at different levels, with some more successful than others. When staff members resigned, there was little handover, or institutional memory, which led to gaps in documentation and M&E plans and tools. As a byproduct of this instability, the final M&E Coordinator needed to build capacity and develop adequate monitoring tools the partners could use. Amongst certain perspectives, this had the effect of ultimately improving the situation (KII, WELD Project Staff Member).

Initially, different key positions, such as the Gender Specialist and M&E Coordinator, were housed in the partner organizations, but the final CoP changed the arrangement, as it complicated communication, chain of command, and quality control. The line item for these positions was re-distributed to WV to house them under a single organization. This helped eradicate high turnover and the hiring of staff members without WV input.³⁹ Yet, some of the CSO partners were dissatisfied with the final staffing arrangement.

Dissemination of the appropriate message, as well as organized self-examination of successes and failures also constituted challenges. This was especially an issue for the WELD consortium during the nascent years of the project's inception. The consortium appears

³⁷ Along with turnover, even though the program focused on gender, bias against women occurred at a high level, senior WV staff explained during the evaluation. Local project managers resisted answering to senior female personnel, creating high tension and leading to senior resignation. The final CoP arrived in August 2016, while the final M&E Coordinator arrived in April 2017.

³⁸ There were also issues, according to a WV senior staff member. He indicated that local partners needed reasons to do the project, in order to have enough money to not only conduct the project but also pay staff salaries, which conflicted with WV's mandate as a non-profit organization. Partners also sent reports late.

³⁹ For example, WV retained the same gender specialist who was originally from one of the partner organizations and explained to the partners that her role was not to report to them, but rather to WV, while briefing the partners when necessary (KII, WV Senior Staff Member, Freetown).

to have struggled with how to operate effectively, amid weak communication and coordination. Comments below underscore those concerns.

We struggled with communications. We did not have a budget line for communications and I found this very troubling. ... A year went by, and I said I [must] find someone [for communications]. The message just wasn't going out [to beneficiaries]. We brought in [name of communications staff member]. She's young, willing to learn. Having a woman helped us with this last bit of the journey, the women knew her [well].” (KII, WV Staff Member, Freetown)

These projects have very big ideas, but this is not a short-term thing. The problems of women's empowerment are entrenched. They need to be taken beyond this project. But because we did not have strategic governance meetings, we don't have a collective assessment of what we did and how we did the project. No reflection on the good and bad. No reflection of our own leadership and assessment and that could have informed your evaluation. We were thinking, if we were meeting quarterly, this could have informed how the project was progressing, and at the end, we could have said these are the good things we can associate ourselves with, and these are the bad things we can let go. But more importantly, because we did not have these meetings we could not feed into the ongoing processes and support emerging issues that could add value to our work. (KII, WELD Partner Senior Staff Member, Freetown)

A cited lack of coordination and communication seems to have left some consortium partners feeling marginalized.

We felt that the project was hijacked and we were marginalized and not part of the leadership anymore and this was reinforced by the fact that even when we called meetings we were not listened to. (KII, WELD Partner Senior Staff Member, Freetown)

Although WV staff indicated there was little to no tension with the partner organizations, certain consortium partners expressed mild to severe levels of frustration with the consortium structure, due what appears to be conflicting perceptions about what should be the appropriate hierarchy. Some senior WELD staff members were perceived to be more effective than others. These differing viewpoints may have partially occurred, as a result of a lack of experience with consortia hierarchy and appropriate communication structures. On one hand, the nature of a consortium is top-down; activities must be approved through channels that often have long response times. This creates additional back-and-forth between all parties. On the other hand, partners strongly felt they needed a more equal partnership than a consortia mandate may call for or be able to permit. Partners felt the consortium leadership occasionally bypassed the usual channels used by the structures.

From the perspective of some consortium partners, this led to confusion over “appropriate” chains of command⁴⁰ (KII, WELD Staff Member, Freetown).⁴¹

WV leadership elaborated on the issue, underscoring complications emerging for lack of understanding among partners of how the consortium model operates.

When this funding came through, people who were here at the time, I don't think understood how the consortium works. The CoP is employed by the prime [contractor / donor]. It does not report to the sub-grantees. And nobody from WV knew what was going on, and there was a lot of bad blood really between the partners and the CoP. The CoP was pulled in too many directions. You can't have the CoP reporting to the sub-grantees. We strengthened the WV side—the national director called the meetings at the request of the CoP. I explained that the CoP does not report to the partners. There was a time when the partners were engaging the donors directly, I said, 'You can't do that.'” (KII, WV Senior Staff Member, Freetown)

Staff in CSO partner organizations also expressed concern that the timing for coordination and decision making hindered their ability to work efficiently. We should “not have to wait to have WV tell [us] what to do” (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Kenema). Another partner wanted to work with radio stations on communication strategies via an MOU, but WV preferred to serve as the MOU partner, and it took approximately seven months to put it together (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member). The same partner was generally unhappy with the consortium structure and would not participate again without significant changes; they thought the central hierarchy contributed to both delays in timing and the feeling of being left out of key planning conversations. Another partner felt similarly and thought the consortium relied too much on a top-down approach to delegation and decision-making. “For me, the issues were not making an effort to integrate [ideas and plans] with other partners. You have to convince the partners to buy into this” (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Freetown). Overall, there existed confusion regarding activities and short-term versus long-term thinking within approaches. Several partners felt the relationship between the partners and the WELD leadership had eroded (KII, WELD Partner Staff Member, Freetown).

Consortium Roles May Have been Unclear. WV's role in the consortium concerned project coordination, supervision of all aspects of projects, and representing the program to the USG and other stakeholders. The sub-recipients, meanwhile, provided leadership, oversaw activities, and implemented the project components. WELD program description documents, likewise,

⁴⁰ There were questions around whether decisions should flow to either the partner country directors or straight to the WELD CoP.

⁴¹ This included: confusion about staffing (some staff were 100% attributed to the WELD project and the CoP considered them as his own employees, bypassing at least one partner organization's normal chain of command), activities and travel (whereby the CoP controlled travel for the WELD staff without discussing with the partner directors). Additionally, this partner noted that the mode of operation was a challenge regarding: 1) the need to constantly provide new budgets and receiving less money than requested to conduct the appropriate work and 2) the use of external consultants because the partners could not manage certain requests, which was perceived to have occurred because an initial external audit of capacities was not conducted. This lack of knowledge about strength was corroborated elsewhere by a USAID Staff Member.

addressed roles for three key WV staff members (The Chief of Party, M&E Specialist, and Gender Specialist).⁴² Overall, WV served as the prime grantee for the WELD project, coordinating all project planning, administration, compliance and reporting to USAID. A Strategic Governance Team (SGT) was also planned and expected to be comprised of the heads of each organization and a representative from USAID. The SGT, however, seems to have not functioned as intended, as the partner heads felt marginalized from discourse and in their ability to provide feedback to the CoP. The program description does not provide information about the role of feedback, or the appropriate channels.⁴³ In consortium structures, where details are not provided in writing, tensions can ensue and have been documented elsewhere.⁴⁴

CONCLUSIONS

To an extent, the consortium approach successfully linked the partner organizations to capitalize on consortium partner strengths and knowledge. Partner CSOs shared ideas and experiences so as to learn from each other and maximize knowledge output. Working as such enabled widespread CSO geographic project coverage across seven districts and also facilitated an emphasis on teamwork among CSOs.

At the same time, interviews suggest that the consortium structure itself encountered significant hurdles concerning high turnover of key staff, capacity, and conflicting visions and understandings of which decision-making arrangements are appropriate for successful project implementation. Perceptions regarding the consortium's success widely varied amongst respondents. While some of the variance is inherent within any consortium structure, the frustration expressed among some partners will constitute a challenge for potential future programming of this nature, especially if replicated in the districts in which the WELD project operated.

High turnover greatly affected efficiency and ability during the early part of the project. As the capacity of the partner organizations varied partly, based on whether they were local or international, implementation was often haphazard and some districts developed more successfully than others.

Certain consortium partners expressed mild to severe levels of frustration at the hierarchical nature of the structure, felt excluded from decision-making, and believed their strengths were not well leveraged. It remains to be seen whether partners will engage with another consortium project of this type. While these challenges may be relevant for decisions concerning the most suitable structure for future programming, they should in no way obviate the impressive overall successes of the WELD project.

⁴² See Program Description, PD-AID-636 A-14-00001 WIDPP.

⁴³ Individual organization contracts may have provided this information, but the NORC team did not have access to these at the time of the evaluation.

⁴⁴ IHSI. 2017. [Independent Analysis and Evaluation of the El Nino Drought Response in Mozambique](https://www.careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/IHSICOSACA_FinalReport.pdf) (COSACA II). https://www.careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/IHSICOSACA_FinalReport.pdf

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING

Based on the results from the quantitative and qualitative fieldwork discussed above, we identify a series of suggestions and recommendations for future programming for similar projects designed to address gender equity. They are addressed according to each evaluation question, including the stakeholders for which the suggestion is intended.

EVALUATION QUESTION I

- (1) As the WELD project largely focused on influencing local-level change with impressive progress along project objectives, outcomes were less robust at the national-level, which could be mitigated by increasing the number of earlier discussions with key stakeholders in Freetown. Additionally, dialogue would ensure open lines of communication between local-level institutions and their national counterparts. Although some services are devolved, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and the national-level MSWGCA need to be fully informed and on board with community projects. This is important, if they are to provide requisite political and financial support. [For Government Staff and Consortium Partners at the National and Local Levels]
- (2) Local councils and the MSWGCA may need to “buy in” to the project and share ownership from the outset of the project. This includes consulting these actors on project objectives and providing an opportunity for substantive input, in addition to clearly articulating their responsibilities during the project and after, especially considering funding challenges. MOUs might be signed at the project’s inception with government institutions at both the district and national levels to fully flesh out their financial commitments so district offices can include requirements in development plan budgets and requests. [For Government Staff and Consortium Partners at the National and Local Levels]
- (3) Paramount chiefs are instrumental for influencing community attitudes, yet, as custodians of customs and traditions in their communities, are also resistant to change. Continued advocacy training with these key actors that is appropriate to the cultural climate of the district / region (e.g., in the northern part of Sierra Leone, which has higher levels of women’s marginalization vs. the east, where communities are relatively more receptive to women’s inclusion) could be scaled up. [For Consortium Partners and Paramount Chiefs]
- (4) The evaluation finds symbol allocation was a critical matter for many aspirants due to widespread corruption around elections and within the party system. Future projects might develop a component of advocacy and education to try to shape how aspirants confront and address corrupt practices in way that mitigates harm to achieving participants’ goals. This would involve continuous lobbying and engagement with the targeted aspirants, political parties, the PPRC and NEC. [For Consortium Partners, Political Parties, the PPRC and NEC]

EVALUATION QUESTION 2

- (5) One of the key lessons learned during the evaluation is that economic empowerment is a crucial component to the promotion of overall women's empowerment, including their confidence and ability to campaign. As this was not a key aspect of the WELD project – despite repeated discussions with beneficiary aspirants that it was beyond the project's mandate – unsuccessful aspirants were, nonetheless, disappointed and will likely need future encouragement to run in elections again. Programming could begin now for 2023, rather than waiting to mobilize women, and discussions with potential aspirants about income-generating activities could occur to determine what, if any, financial resources are feasible. Discussions might involve: income-generating activities; how to best utilize linkages between aspirants and SGs; lobbying donors; writing proposals for community projects that would help aspirants mobilize more support; and the most desired / appropriate resource allocation online items that involve the women. [For Consortium Partners and USAID]
- (6) Multiple respondents indicated the WELD project timeline of three years was too short. Programming might start earlier and last longer. Programming could also involve workshops or trainings between election periods to ensure potential aspirants remain motivated and local partners have continuity in message delivery. It would also be helpful to have on-going training with female parliamentarians to hone their skills as parliamentarians, including speaking in public, lobbying on gender issues and bill development, among other issues. WELD partners could link up with other organizations such as the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), a key institution that provides training to parliamentarians generally in Sierra Leone and the 50/50 group that has provided training for female parliamentarians on a range of topics. [For Consortium Partners, and other NGOs, such as WFD].
- (7) A future project could also involve continued skills-building around adult literacy, and business training which would be well-received within the communities. [For Consortium Partners]
- (8) While women greatly appreciated the training offered by the WELD project, they noted the project, in their view, dealt less with major obstacles confronting women aspirants, such as smear campaigns and lack of experience with navigating the political system, once elected to parliament. Future projects could include these as components to broaden beneficiary capacity and skills in ways that are sustainable. [For Consortium Partners]

EVALUATION QUESTION 4

- (9) The widespread success of the SGs should be expanded and further leveraged. Overall, the sustainability, replication, and effectiveness of the SGs on the various levels of empowerment should be closely monitored to continue determining best practices. The WELD project did not cover the entire 57 chiefdoms, because some focused on towns rather than remote areas and largely included areas where the organizations already had an established presence. Discussions could continue on how best to expand the SGs into

more rural areas, with strong groups training the new ones and providing support to those additional groups that were created in response to the success of the project. While the WELD project envisioned this would be done by the MSWGCA, or animators, at the conclusion of the project, funding constraints means this works somewhat less effectively in practice. There also exists a natural fit between the SGs and scaling up businesses that could be expanded upon to best assist USAID's democracy and governance programming aspects. This could include market analysis to identify viable business opportunities, value chain analysis to identify sectors in which women are well represented and which have a viable future, scaling up business skills training offered to women, and more purposive linking of women's businesses with investors and other opportunities. In some district areas, like Kenema, there are women conducting large-scale business but who are not in SGs. They could be brought into future projects of this nature. However, bringing wealthier women into the groups comes with risks. Unless they are very altruistic, it may be best to allow the women to establish their own groups.[For Consortium Partners]

- (10) Post-project monitoring will remain a challenge, and should therefore, be considered for future projects. For example, if a project ends, and the CSO partners lack funding to continue to monitor progress, discussions might occur around potential external funding streams and how best to utilize existing resources. The same could occur with discussions with government offices – as discussed in Recommendation 1 on MOUs – to ensure sustainability and handover in ownership. [For Consortium Partners]
- (11) Formal laws on gender equality are not entrenched enough in the mindsets of crucial stakeholders and communities. Based on fieldwork results, the evaluation team believes this requires more engagement with the formal and informal institutional structures that hold women back. Additional support might be provided regarding: (1) efforts currently underway for the cabinet to adopt the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment policy, which will serve as a guiding document for the drafting of the Gender Equality Bill that will include an affirmative action quota for women; (2) the PPRC and strengthening its mandate to ensure the compliance of political parties with their charters and policies, including gender; and (3) efforts with the NEC and how to institutionalize lower/no nomination fees for women. Efforts might involve workshops to bring together stakeholders to map out legal frameworks, rather than having them work in silos. [For Consortium Members, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, the MPS and other Government Staff, the PPRC and NEC]

EVALUATION QUESTION 5

- (12) Mixed perceptions of the consortium structure, processes, and relationships require some rethinking on successes and challenges encountered. In the shorter-term and as part of a lessons-learned exercise, this could involve a meeting now or prior to another iteration of the project to discuss this and potential solutions to some of the miscommunication and disconnects in expectations to determine best practices were this type of collaboration to occur again. It would also likely air out some of the grievances and tensions that currently exist. In the long run, this might involve discussions with potential partners prior to the

establishment of the consortium, whereby all understand their roles, a point we elaborate upon in Recommendation 13. Although the WELD project is now closed, it would benefit all parties involved to come together for a one-day workshop to discuss these lessons learned. Future programming could implement one or two days at the outset to bring the relevant stakeholders together prior to finalizing contracts. [For Consortium Partners]

- (13) Whether future programming is governed by another consortium, meetings between implementing partners could occur in the field rather than solely in Freetown to scale up lessons learned and best practices and to further the knowledge that partners have of overall successes and challenges. [For Consortium Partners]
- (14) For future projects, mapping of consortium partner strengths might occur at the beginning of the project, to determine gaps and if / when external consultants would need to be hired. This could help alleviate or eradicate the need for external partners, which would make the overall process smoother. This could also be a platform to clearly delineate the roles of each partner so all parties understand the consortium structure, who to report to and why, and the thinking behind why decisions are made the way they are, thus potentially decreasing tensions and perceptions of marginalization that arise. Future projects might consider organizing a consortium steering committee to assist with this endeavor. Future funders could require clear operational procedures at the procurement stage and for the consortium to implement and continuously update these during implementation. [For USAID, Consortium Partners]

ANNEXES

ANNEX A: EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK

**USAID DRG-LER
Tasking Request N006:
Performance Evaluation in Sierra Leone**

Date of Request: 10/3/2018

Type of Task:

Performance evaluation

SOW:

From attached SOW:

Purpose of the Evaluation: USAID intends to commission an evaluation to independently verify the key outcomes of the WELD project and the effectiveness of strategies used to contribute to the achievement of these outcomes. This evaluation should generate lessons learned in implementation of women empowerment initiatives that will inform similar interventions under a proposed Gender Based Violence Initiative by USAID and similar activities undertaken by government and other development partners in Sierra Leone.

For more details, please see the attached draft SOW, drafted by the Mission.

Dates of performance and timeline:

The assignment is expected to start in October 2018 and be completed before November 2018.

Deliverables:

DELIVERABLES

- **In country in-brief:** Upon arrival in country the evaluation team will hold an in-brief with USAID, and WELD staff as part of the team planning exercise. The in brief will include an introduction of the evaluation team and discussion of the scope of work, initial presentation of the proposed evaluation methodology and work plan, and other emerging issues that may affect the evaluation⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ The Evaluation Contractor is expected to schedule team planning calls / meetings even before and after the team arrives in country to enable the evaluation team meet to form common understandings of the assignments, discuss individual roles and tasks, and plan for the assignment.

- **Inception report including evaluation design and plan:** The evaluation team will draft and present an Inception Report to be reviewed by USAID within five days of the in country in-brief. The report will include:
 - The evaluation team’s interpretation of the key evaluation questions and their approach to how each question will be addressed.
 - Detailed methodology i.e. the methods to be used to answer each question, sampling/selection procedures for selecting respondents/informants to be interviewed, the list of respondents, and project sites to be visited. The Evaluation team shall attach a revised and completed evaluation design matrix using the template attached as Annex 2;
 - Detailed work plan showing a timeline for each evaluation activity to be undertaken, including the field work and allocation of expertise efforts
 - Draft instruments for data collection
 - Known limitations to the evaluation and how they will be addressed.
- **Weekly Progress Reports:** Brief informal reports highlighting progress, challenges and constraints and describing evaluation team’s response.
- **Oral Presentations:** Following field work and initial analysis, the evaluation team will present preliminary findings and conclusions to USAID and the Implementing Partner through an in-person presentation using Power Point. The oral presentation should, at a minimum, cover the major findings, conclusions, recommendations for improvement and key lessons. It should not be longer than 40 minutes. The evaluation team will liaise with the mission to agree on the dates, audience, venue and other logistical arrangements for this briefing. A similar presentation will also be made to a wider stakeholder group including the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children’s Affairs. Plans for these presentations will be finalized during the team planning meeting.
- **Draft Evaluation Report:** The content should cover all the main elements of the report including major findings, conclusions, lessons learned, recommendations for improvement and relevant annexes. The input from the oral presentation sessions should also be incorporated in the report. The report should comply with the USAID’s Evaluation Report standards set out in Annex 4. The first draft report will be submitted within 7 days after the oral presentation to USAID.
- **Final Report:** The contractor will submit a final report (not exceeding 30 pages, excluding the annexes) incorporating final edits within five days of receiving comments from USAID and other stakeholders. The approved final report should be cleared by USAID.
- **Evaluation Summary:** The evaluation team will produce a user friendly synthesis or summary of the evaluation in a format that is attractive and understandable for public use. The Summary will be presented alongside the final evaluation report.
- **After Action Review (AAR):** The evaluation team together with USAID will participate in an After Action Review of the evaluation process as part of the out brief process to

establish lessons and needed improvements for future evaluation exercises. This discussion will be organized and documented by USAID for sharing with the Evaluation Contractor.

- **Cleaned, labelled and ready to use electronic copies of data sets:** The Evaluation Contractor will also submit on a CD all data records from the evaluation i.e. ready-to-use full data sets from the quantitative data and accompanying code books, (if any), interview transcripts, and other documented survey responses.

ANNEX B: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

USAID Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD)

In-Depth Key Informant Interview Protocol

WELD Partners

(November 2018)

(Please record demographic information for notes)

District _____

Name and Title/Role _____

Organization _____

Male or Female

How long have you been with this organization? _____

Date _____

Time Started _____

Time Finished _____

Introduction and Consent

Hello, my name is _____. I am working with the National Opinion Research Center, at the University of Chicago, which is based in the United States. We are conducting a study of the Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD) project, which is carried out by World Vision. As you may know, WELD seeks to empower women for Sierra Leone by increasing their social, political and economic rights.

We would like to talk with you today about your experiences with the project. This should only take about 45 minutes. But if we should need to contact you again for follow up interviews, may we do so? We are speaking with a number of stakeholders and beneficiaries, and we may want to follow-up with you, based on our findings.

In both the present and the future, your feedback is very important. The information you provide will be used to improve current and future projects like this one.

We will share your opinions with WELD and USAID only, but your name and identity will kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone. We are recording and taking notes of this

discussion so that we can accurately record and summarize what you are saying. This is for purposes of analysis only and the recordings will not be kept once the analysis is finished. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you can choose to stop participating at any time and leave without penalty.

May I begin?

- (1) Can you give us an overview of your organization’s work with this Consortium?

Probe: Which activities is your organization responsible for implementing?

- (2) What were the intended goals, objectives, outcomes your organization expected to achieve?

Probe: To what extent have your expectations been met?

- (3) What beneficiaries were reached?

Probe: Were there any that were not reached that your organization hoped to reach? Why?

- (4) How relevant was this intervention for the communities in Sierra Leone?

Probe: In what ways did this intervention address the unique needs of communities?

- (5) In your view, what were the successes of working with the Consortium?

- (6) What were the challenges of working with the Consortium?

- (7) How did the Consortium help build and increase women’s participation regarding human rights in the public arena in Sierra Leone?

- (8) How did the Consortium build the capacities of local councils and sub-national governance structures in Sierra Leone?

- (9) What about national-level capacity – how did the consortium build the capacities of national institutions, such as the MGSWCA?

- (10) What changes have you seen within the civil society organizations your organization has engaged on this project?

- (11) What have been the short-term and long-term impacts of the intervention? *Probe: Where do you think the communities would be today if the intervention had not occurred?*

Probe: How effective was the organizational aspect of the Consortium?

Probe: How efficient was the Consortium overall at delivering project services? In your opinion was this intervention more effective as a consortium, or would it have been more/less/equally successful if done by individual aid organizations?

(12) What, if any, is the value-added approach for a Consortium?

(13) What was the biggest success in working together with the Consortium?

Probe: Were there any unintended positive outcomes?

(14) What were some of the challenges that arose when implementing the WELD project?

Probe: Were challenges the result of working within the Consortium structure or do you see them as general challenges?

(15) Did the Consortium address these challenges?

Probe: How could the Consortium address these challenges in the future?

(16) Broadly speaking, what are some of the lessons learned during implementation?

Probe: What aspects of the WELD project could be replicated?

Probe: Should the consortium structure be replicated? Why or why not?

Probe: What recommendations would you have for improving this type of project at the project level and organization level?

Closing

Thank you for taking the time to speak to me today. Is there anything you would like to add to what we have discussed today?

USAID Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD)

In-Depth Key Informant Interview Protocol

Local CSOs

(November 2018)

(Please record demographic information for notes)

First Name (only) _____

Date _____

Time Started _____

Time Finished _____

Male or Female

District _____

Name of Organization _____

Primary Organization Issue-Focus:

Title / Position _____

Introduction and Consent

Hello, my name is _____. I am working with the National Opinion Research Center, at the University of Chicago, which is based in the United States. We are conducting a study of the Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD) project, which is carried out by World Vision. As you may know, WELD seeks to empower women for Sierra Leone by increasing their social, political and economic rights.

We would like to talk with you today about your experiences with the project. This should only take about 45 minutes. But if we should need to contact you again for follow up interviews, may we do so? We are speaking with a number of stakeholders and beneficiaries, and we may want to follow-up up with you, based on our findings.

In both the present and the future, your feedback is very important. The information you provide will be used to improve current and future projects like this one.

We will share your opinions with WELD and USAID only, but your name and identity will kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone. We are recording and taking notes of this discussion so that we can accurately record and summarize what you are saying. This is for

purposes of analysis only and the recordings will not be kept once the analysis is finished. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you can choose to stop participating at any time and leave without penalty.

May I begin?

(1) Please tell me a little about your organization?

(2) What is your title and formal role in the organization?

Probe: What responsibilities does your role entail?

(3) Please describe your CSO's activities related to women's empowerment.

Probe: How does your organization try to empower women?

Probe: Through which kinds of activities / projects?

Probe: Are the activities around political empowerment, economic empowerment, social empowerment or household-level empowerment?

(4) To what extent has your organization actually strengthened its capacity to promote women's empowerment over time?

Probe: Please describe your CSO's activities in 2013.

Probe: In what areas has your CSO shown the most growth between 2013 and now?

Probe: How have advocacy activities for women changed?

Probe: How has service provision around women's needs changed?

Probe: How have training activities around responsiveness to women's needs changed?

Probe: Have you adopting gender mainstreaming in your program approaches?

Probe: Can you tell me more about how your CSO has improved?

(5) What would you say are the biggest factors contributing to your organization's ability to improve its capacity to empower women?

Probe: How have WELD trainings / interventions / programs contributed to your organization's ability to empower women?

Probe: What were the biggest obstacles?

(6) In your view, what was most helpful or valuable in your CSOs engagement with the WELD project?

(7) And what was least helpful?

- (8) How did the Ebola crisis affect your organization's activities to empower women?

Probe: What challenges did the crisis present?

Probe: What opportunities did it present?

Probe: What partnerships, if any, did it present?

- (9) How suitable were WELD strategies for your CSO's ability to contribute to empowering Sierra Leonean women?

Probe: To what extent did the project help your CSO meet the needs and interests of Sierra Leonean women?

Probe: To what extent did the WELD project meet the unique needs of your CSO and the environment in which your CSO works?

Probe: Was the WELD project responsive to your CSO needs? In what way?

Probe: How did the WELD project help your organization adjust, when changes were needed to meet women's needs around empowerment?

- (10) How will your CSO build on the improvements gained since its engagement with the WELD project?

Probe: What do you see as the greatest challenges to maintaining gains?

Probe: What is the role of funding?

Probe: What is the role of personnel capacity?

Probe: What is the role of broader political and social factors?

- (11) Did your CSO interact with any of the following organizations? Action Aid International Sierra Leone, Advocacy Movement Network, Network Movement for Justice and Development, World Vision (*Interviewer: these are consortium members*)

Probe: How did your CSO engage with the organization(s)?

Probe: How did this engagement affect your CSO's efforts or reach?

- (12) What was most effective about the engagement in terms of helping your CSOs capacity to aid women's empowerment?

- (13) What was least effective about the interactions in terms of helping your CSOs capacity to aid women's empowerment?

- (14) Is there anything the WELD project can improve upon to help organizations like yours empower women in Sierra Leone?

Closing

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me. Is there anything else you would like to add to what we have discussed today?

USAID Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD)

In-Depth Key Informant Interview Protocol

Local Government Institutions / District Councils / City Councils

(November 2018)

First Name (only) _____

Date _____

Time Started _____

Time Finished _____

Male or Female

District _____

Name of Institution _____

Unit within Institution:

Title / Position _____

Introduction and Consent

Hello, my name is _____. I am working with the National Opinion Research Center, at the University of Chicago, which is based in the United States. We are conducting a study of the Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD) project, which is carried out by World Vision. As you may know, WELD seeks to empower women for Sierra Leone by increasing their social, political and economic rights.

We would like to talk with you today about your experiences with the project. This should only take about 45 minutes. But if we should need to contact you again for follow up interviews, may we do so? We are speaking with a number of stakeholders and beneficiaries, and we may want to follow-up with you, based on our findings.

In both the present and the future, your feedback is very important. The information you provide will be used to improve current and future projects like this one.

We will share your opinions with WELD and USAID only, but your name and identity will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone. We are recording and taking notes of this discussion so that we can accurately record and summarize what you are saying. This is for purposes of analysis only and the recordings will not be kept once the analysis is finished. There

are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you can choose to stop participating at any time and leave without penalty.

May I begin?

- (1) Please tell about the work of your city / district council?
- (2) What is your role within the city / district council?
- (3) Can you please describe to me your councils work with the WELD project?
Probe: What specific activities / programs is your district council involved in?
Probe: What trainings has the district council been involved in? Do you know roughly how many people have been trained over the last 3 years?
- (4) Please describe the ways in which the council currently contributes to Sierra Leonean women’s empowerment?
Probe: What types of activities or programs does this involve?
Probe: Are the activities around political empowerment, economic empowerment, social empowerment or household-level empowerment?
- (5) What kind of progress has been made towards improving the council’s capacity to promote women’s empowerment?
Probe: To what extent has awareness of women’s rights and interests improved among staff?
Probe: To what extent has the council adopted gender-sensitive planning? In what way?
Probe: Has gender-sensitive planning been mainstreamed throughout departments within council structures? Which departments and how?
Probe: What kind of staff, and subunits are dedicated to addressing and monitoring gender issues?
Probe: Are there gender committees in place? What have they done to fulfill their mission and goals supporting women?
Probe: Are women and men represented on ward development committees?
Probe: In your view, how much of this improvement is attributed to the council’s engagement with the WELD project?
- (6) What is your assessment regarding council staffs’ skills in the area of gender-sensitive planning, monitoring and reporting?
Probe: To what extent have their technical skills improved in the area of designing gender-sensitive planning, and the implementation of such plans? Can you provide examples?
- (7) In your view, what was most helpful or valuable in the council’s engagement with the WELD project?
- (8) And what was least helpful?
- (9) How did the Ebola crisis affect your council’s efforts to empower women?
Probe: What challenges did the crisis present?
Probe: What opportunities did the crisis present?
- (10) How suitable were WELD strategies for your district’s ability to contribute to empowering Sierra Leonean women?
Probe: To what extent did the project help your council meet the needs and interests of Sierra Leonean women?
Probe: To what extent did the WELD project meet the unique needs of your council and the environment in which your district operates?
Probe: Was the WELD project responsive to your council’s needs overall? In what way?

Probe: How did the WELD project help your council adjust, when changes were needed to meet women's needs around empowerment?

- (11) How will your council office build on the improvements gained since its engagement with the WELD project?

Probe: What do you see as the greatest challenges to maintaining gains?

Probe: What is the role of material or financial support?

Probe: What is the role of broader political and social factors?

- (12) Did your council interact with any of the following organizations? (Interviewer: these are consortium members)

- Action Aid International Sierra Leone?
- Advocacy Movement Network (AMNeT)
- Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)
- World Vision (WV)

Probe: How did your council engage with the organization?

Probe: How did this engagement affect your council's efforts to empower women?

- (13) What was most effective about the engagement in terms of helping your district's capacity to aid women's empowerment?
- (14) What was least effective about the interactions in terms of helping your district's capacity to aid women's empowerment?
- (15) Is there anything the WELD project can improve upon to help local-level institutions empower women in Sierra Leone?

Closing

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Would you like to add anything to what we've discussed today?

USAID Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD)

In-Depth Key Informant Interview Protocol

Ministry for Gender, Social Welfare and Children's Affairs /

Ministries, Departments and Agencies

(November 2018)

First Name (only) _____

Date _____

Time Started _____

Time Finished _____

Male or Female

District _____

Name of Ministry / Department / Agency

Name of Office within
Institution _____

Title / Position _____

Introduction and Consent

Hello, my name is _____. I am working with the National Opinion Research Center, at the University of Chicago, which is based in the United States. We are conducting a study of the Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD) project, which is carried out by World Vision. As you may know, WELD seeks to empower women for Sierra Leone by increasing their social, political and economic rights.

We would like to talk with you today about your experiences with the project. This should only take about 45 minutes. But if we should need to contact you again for follow up interviews, may we do so? We are speaking with a number of stakeholders and beneficiaries, and we may want to follow-up with you, based on our findings.

In both the present and the future, your feedback is very important. The information you provide will be used to improve current and future projects like this one.

We will share your opinions with WELD and USAID only, but your name and identity will kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone. We are recording and taking notes of this

discussion so that we can accurately record and summarize what you are saying. This is for purposes of analysis only and the recordings will not be kept once the analysis is finished. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you can choose to stop participating at any time and leave without penalty.

May I begin?

- (1) Please tell a little about your role within the ministry / agency?
- (2) Can you please describe to who you engaged with the WELD project?
Probe: What specific activities / programs were you / your office involved in?
Probe: What trainings were you / your office involved in? Do you know roughly how many people were trained by WELD project over the last 3 years?
- (3) Please describe to me the ways in which you believe your office contributes to Sierra Leonean women’s empowerment.
Probe: How does your office try to empower women?
Probe: Through which kinds of activities / programs?
Probe: Are the activities around political empowerment, economic empowerment, social empowerment or household-level empowerment?
- (4) What kind of progress has been made towards improving your / your office’s staff capacity to promote women’s empowerment?
Probe: In other words, to what extent has awareness of women’s rights and interests improved among staff?
Probe: To what extent has your ministry / agency adopted gender-sensitive planning? In what way?
Probe: Has gender-sensitive planning been mainstreamed throughout departments? Which departments and how?
Probe: What kind of staff, and subunits are dedicated to addressing and monitoring gender issues?
Probe: What kind of dialogues do ministry / agency staff engage in to ensure provision of services to women?
Probe: In your view, how much of this improvement is attributed to the council’s engagement with the WELD project?
- (5) What is your assessment regarding ministry / agency staffs’ skills in the area of gender-sensitive planning, monitoring and reporting?
Probe: To what extent have their technical skills improved in the area of designing gender-sensitive planning, and the implementation of such plans? Can you provide examples?
- (6) In your view, what was most helpful or valuable in the ministry’s engagement with the WELD project?
- (7) And what was least helpful?
- (8) Thinking about the influence of the Ebola on Sierra Leone, has the crisis presented any opportunities for your district council in terms of its ability to empower women?
- (9) How suitable were WELD strategies for your ministry / agency’s ability to contribute to empowering Sierra Leonean women?
Probe: To what extent did the project help your ministry / agency meet the needs and interests of Sierra Leonean women?

Probe: To what extent did the WELD project meet the unique needs of the ministry / agency and the environment in which the ministry / agency operates?

Probe: Was the WELD project responsive to the ministry's needs overall? In what way?

- (10) How will your ministry / agency build on the improvements gained since its engagement with the WELD project?

Probe: What do you see as the greatest challenges to maintaining gains?

Probe: What is the role of material or financial support?

Probe: What is the role of personnel capacity?

Probe: What is the role broader political and social factors?

- (11) Did you / your ministry / agency interact with any of the following organizations?

(Interviewer: these are consortium members) If so, describe to me, how the purpose and how your CSO engaged the organization?

Probe: Action Aid International Sierra Leone?

Probe: Advocacy Movement Network (AMNeT)

Probe: Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)

Probe: World Vision (WV)

Probe: If so, describe to me, how your council engaged the organization?

- (12) What was most effective about the engagement in terms of helping you / your ministry's / agency's capacity to aid women's empowerment?

- (13) What was least effective about the interactions in terms of helping your district's capacity to aid women's empowerment?

- (14) Is there anything the WELD project can improve upon to help national-level institutions empower women in Sierra Leone?

Closing

Is there anything you would like to add that I may have missed? Thank you very much for speaking with me today.

USAID Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD)

In-Depth Key Informant Interview Protocol

Parliamentary Chiefs and other Traditional Leaders

(November 2018)

(Please record demographic information for notes)

First Name (only) _____

Date _____

Time Started _____

Time Finished _____

Male or Female _____

District _____

Title / Position _____

Introduction and Consent

Hello, my name is _____. I am working with the National Opinion Research Center, at the University of Chicago, which is based in the United States. We are conducting a study of the Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD) project, which is carried out by World Vision. As you may know, WELD seeks to empower women for Sierra Leone by increasing their social, political and economic rights.

We would like to talk with you today about your experiences with the village savings and loan group. This should only take about 45 minutes. But if we should need to contact you again for follow up interviews, may we do so? We are speaking with a number of stakeholders and beneficiaries, and we may want to follow-up up with you, based on our findings.

In both the present and the future, your feedback is very important. The information you provide will be used to improve current and future projects like this one.

We will share your opinions with WELD and USAID only, but your name and identity will kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone. We are recording and taking notes of this discussion so that we can accurately record and summarize what you are saying. This is for purposes of analysis only and the recordings will not be kept once the analysis is finished. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you can choose to stop participating at any time and leave without penalty.

May I begin?

(1) Please tell a little about yourself and what you do as Parliamentary Chief / Section Chief / Town Chief / Mami Queen.

(2) Can you please describe how you came to be involved in the WELD project?

Probe: Describe the activities to me – in what kind of specific activities were you involved?

Probe: What trainings were you involved in?

Probe: What about dialogues?

(3) What do you think about the status of women in Sierra Leone?

Probe: What are the most significant barriers women face?

(4) I would like to learn to what extent your involvement in WELD has influenced your outlook and approach to community engagement around women's issues.

Probe: Since your involvement with the WELD project, how has your attitude changed regarding women's participation in politics and economic activities?

Probe: To what extent are you now more aware of issues concerning women in Sierra Leone, such as women's human rights, access to justice, and political participation?

Probe: To what extent do you apply what you have learned to decisions that affect women in your community?

Probe: Thinking about the last few years, what kinds of decisions have you made affecting women? Can you provide more detail?

(5) In what ways, if any, do you, as a local leader, encourage greater women's participation in politics and decision-making in your community?

Probe: Do you see changes within the broader community? What kind? Do you see changes in the way community members think about women's political participation, or do you see changes in how people behave? Please provide examples.

Probe: Are more women elected to section chiefs and other positions?

Probe: To what do you attribute such changes? To what extent has the WELD project influenced broader changes and how?

(6) How can the gains you mentioned be sustained?

(7) In your view, what was most helpful or valuable about your engagement with the WELD project?

(8) And what was least helpful?

(9) Do you have any recommendations for the project?

Closing

Thank you for speaking with me today. Is there anything that you would like to add that I may have missed?

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDES

USAID Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD)

FGD Protocol

Female Aspirants

(February 2019)

Please record demographic information for notes. These names should go from left to right in the FGD.

Name of area FGD held in: _____

District: _____

Date _____

	Name	Community they live in	Age	Occupation normally held (other than aspirant)
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				

Time Started _____

Time Finished _____

Introduction and Consent

Hello, my name is _____. I am working with the National Opinion Research Center, at the University of Chicago, which is based in the United States. We are conducting a study of the Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD) project, which is carried out by World Vision. As you may know, WELD seeks to empower women for Sierra Leone by increasing their social, political and economic rights.

We would like to talk with you today about your experiences of being an aspirant. This should only take about 90 minutes. We would like to learn more about the We are speaking with a number of stakeholders and beneficiaries, and we may want to follow-up up with you, based on our findings.

Your feedback is very important to us. The information you provide will be used to improve current and future projects like this one.

We will share your opinions with WELD and USAID only, but your name and identity will kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone (we only use identifying characteristics such as age and gender). We would like to record and take notes of this discussion so that we can accurately record and summarize what you are saying. This is for purposes of analysis only and the recordings will not be kept once the analysis is finished. Do we have your permission to record this discussion? [Only record if they give you verbal permission.]

There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you can choose to stop participating at any time and leave without penalty.

We have a few rules for our discussion. Please speak one at a time so that the moderator can hear everything that everyone has to say. Also, please turn off any mobile phones so that the discussion is not interrupted. (This goes for the moderator and note taker as well.)

Do you have any questions before I begin?

As a first step, we should introduce ourselves. My colleague will prepare nametags to help us remember your names.

- (1) We would like to start by talking about life in general in this community for women. What are some of the biggest issues that women face in this community?
- (2) Can you tell me about your experience running for a political position in Sierra Leone?
 - (a) What have been successes and what have been challenges?
 - (b) Did any organization help you when you were running? If yes, which ones? What help did they provide?

- How, if at all, did WELD assist you? How did it assist others?
 - How, if at all, do you feel WELD did not assist you, or what do you think could have been better? What do you think should have been done differently?
- (c) What would you do differently now if you were starting over?
- (d) While you were running, did you see women supporting you? How common was this?
- (3) Do you think the election process was different for younger aspirants (under 30?)
 - (a) Did they face different challenges?
 - (b) Do you think their age affected their chances for success? If yes, how?
 - (c) [If any aspirants are under 30]: Do you think your age affected your chances for success?
- (4) What policies did you campaign on? How did these align with community priorities?
- (5) [For respondents in parliament/local council] – Now that you are in parliament/local council, what policies/programs/laws are you working on to benefit women and girls?
 - (a) Probe for any policies and programs to advance women and girls
 - (b) How are you using what you learned during WELD to help improve the situation of women and girls?
- (6) Did WELD connect you with NEC and the PPRC or help you build networks with PPRC and NEC? If yes, then probe:
 - (a) How did you work with NEC and the PPRC?
 - (b) Are you still engaging with NEC and PPRC?
 - (c) What was most helpful about meeting with NEC and the PPRC?
 - (d) What do you think needs to be done differently?
- (7) [If not already discussed] What changes regarding women's participation in public/political life have you seen in recent years? Why do you think these changes have been occurring?
- (8) What has been the overall effect of WELD in this community?
 - (a) Have you seen more women interested/running for political positions than before?
 - (b) Have you seen increased knowledge of gender-sensitive programs by Local Councils and CSOs? If yes, which? Is this significant or only superficial?

- (c) Have you seen more gender-sensitive programs or policies by Local Councils and CSOs? If yes, which? Is this significant or only superficial?
- (d) Do you believe communities are more likely to vote for women now than before?
- (e) How, if at all have attitudes changed among traditional leaders, spouses, and local and national officials?
- (f) Are women included more in political decision-making and participation? If yes, how so? [provide examples]
- (g) Have you seen changes in CSOs since the beginning of this project in regards to their knowledge and advocacy on women's issues? If yes, please provide examples.
- (9) Have you been involved in Savings Groups? How did this affect your participation in politics?
- (10) Has the experience participating in politics affected your confidence to do other things?
 - (a) What skills do you feel you have now that you did not have before running? Please give examples.
- (11) Do you believe that there are more women in leadership positions now than before the last elections? If yes, do you see a difference in men's attitudes in general in the community/government? How so?
- (12) What if anything, should WELD do differently if there is another project?

Closing

Is there anything else that you would like to share with me today? Then, thank you very much for your time and consideration!

USAID Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD)

Focus Group Discussion Guide

WELD Partners

(February 2019)

Please record demographic information for notes. These names should go from left to right in the FGD.

Name of area FGD held in: _____

District: _____

Date _____

Time Started _____

Time Finished _____

	Name	Title/Role/ Organization	Community they live in	Age	Gender	Occupation normally held (other than aspirant)
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

	Name	Title/Role/ Organization	Community they live in	Age	Gender	Occupation normally held (other than aspirant)
6						
7						
8						

Introduction and Consent

Hello, my name is _____. I am working with the National Opinion Research Center, at the University of Chicago, which is based in the United States. We are conducting a study of the Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD) project, which is carried out by World Vision. As you may know, WELD seeks to empower women for Sierra Leone by increasing their social, political and economic rights.

We would like to talk with you today about your experiences with the project. This should only take about 45 minutes. But if we should need to contact you again for follow up interviews, may we do so? We are speaking with a number of stakeholders and beneficiaries, and we may want to follow-up with you, based on our findings.

In both the present and the future, your feedback is very important. The information you provide will be used to improve current and future projects like this one.

We will share your opinions with WELD and USAID only, but your name and identity will kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone. We are recording and taking notes of this discussion so that we can accurately record and summarize what you are saying. This is for purposes of analysis only and the recordings will not be kept once the analysis is finished. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you can choose to stop participating at any time and leave without penalty.

May I begin?

(1) [If not already understood] Can you give us an overview of your work with this Consortium?

(a) Probe: Which activities were you responsible for implementing?

- (b) Probe: How did you do this work?
- (c) Probe: What was the difference in the work between an animator and a radio listening group member?
- (d) Probe: What topics did you discuss in the communities?
- (2) What were the intended goals, objectives, outcomes you were expected to achieve?
 - (a) Probe: To what extent have your expectations been met?
 - (b) Probe: Have goals changed?
- (3) What training did you receive?
 - (a) Probe: How helpful was this training?
 - (b) Probe: How did you use this training in your work?
- (4) What beneficiaries were reached?
 - (a) Probe: How did you reach your beneficiaries?
 - (b) Probe? Were there any that were not reached that you had hoped to reach? Why?
- (5) Were you given anything to carry out this work?
- (6) What have been the short-term and long-term impacts of the intervention?
 - (a) Probe: Has it changed people's willingness to vote for women?
 - (b) Probe: Has it led to for example, increase in people reporting on violence against women, or child marriage, or registration of marriages?
 - (c) Probe: How did the project help build and increase women's participation in Sierra Leone?
- (7) How relevant was this intervention for the communities in Sierra Leone?
 - (a) Probe: In what ways did this intervention address the unique needs of communities?
 - (b) Probe: Do you think the radio topics were the most important ones for the community?
 - (c) Were there other programs/topics that you think should have been covered that were not?
- (8) Did you face any challenges in carrying out your work in the communities?

- (a) Probe: Did you face resistance from community members etc.
- (9) In your view, what were the successes of working with the Consortium?
- (10) What were the challenges of working with the Consortium?
- (11) How (if at all) did the project build the capacities of local councils and sub-national governance structures in Sierra Leone? What about national-level capacity – how, if at all, did the project build the capacities of national institutions, such as the MGSWCA?
- (12) Please tell us about how the VSLAs have been working.
- (13) Probe: Do you see any links between the groups and political/public participation?
 - (a) Probe: How do you envision them working post-project?
 - (b) Probe: Are they formally registered
- (14) Have you heard anything in your community over the last year or two about gender? What have you heard? Who was talking about it? [Probe: which groups?]
- (15) Also thinking about the past year or two, in this community have you seen more women competing or showing an interest in politics?
- (16) What changes have you seen within civil society organizations that have engaged on this project (e.g. capacity)?
- (17) Broadly speaking, what are some of the lessons learned during implementation?
 - (a) Probe: What did the Consortium/you in your work miss?
 - (b) Probe: What should the Consortium/you have done differently?
 - (c) Probe: How could the Consortium/you address these challenges in the future?
 - (d) Probe: What aspects of the WELD project could be replicated?
 - (e) Probe: What recommendations would you have for improving this type of project at the project level and organization level?

Closing

Thank you for taking the time to speak to me today. Is there anything you would like to add to what we have discussed today?

USAID Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD)

FGD Protocol

SAVINGS AND LOANS GROUP

(February 2019)

(Please record demographic information for notes. These names should go from left to right in the FGD.)

Name of area FGD held in: _____

District: _____

Date _____

	Name	Community they live in	Age	Gender	Occupation normally held (other than aspirant)
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					

	Name	Community they live in	Age	Gender	Occupation normally held (other than aspirant)
8					

Time Started _____

Time Finished _____

Introduction and Consent

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We would like to talk with you today about your experiences with the village savings and loan group. This should only take about 90 minutes. We would like to learn more about the training that you received, about your participation in the savings group and the effect that had on your life. Your feedback is very important to us. The information you provide will be used to improve current and future projects like this one.

We will share your opinions with WELD and USAID only, but your name and identity will kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone. We would like to record and take notes of this discussion so that we can accurately record and summarize what you are saying. This is for purposes of analysis only and the recordings will not be kept once the analysis is finished. Do we have your permission to record this discussion? [Only record if they give you verbal permission.]

There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you can choose to stop participating at any time and leave without penalty.

We have a few rules for our discussion. Please speak one at a time so that the moderator can hear everything that everyone has to say. Also, please turn off any mobile phones so that the discussion is not interrupted. (This goes for the moderator and note taker as well.)

Do you have any questions before I begin?

As a first step, we should introduce ourselves. My colleague will prepare nametags to help us remember your names.

WARM UP QUESTION:

- In your opinion, what is the most significant problem facing women in Sierra Leone today? Why?
- Have you heard anything in your community over the last year or two about gender? What have you heard? Who was talking about it? [Probe: which groups?]
- Also thinking about the past year or two, in this community have you seen more women running for political positions?

CORE QUESTIONS:

Description of involvement with the village Savings and Loan Groups:

Can you please describe for me how you came to be involved in the savings and loan group?

Probes:

- What business trainings if any, did you receive from this project?
- How did these trainings help you?
- Did your spouse participate in this WELD training too?

Use of the savings at the household, personal and community level:

How did participation in the group influence your savings habits?

- By how much would you say? Please provide examples.
- What were barriers to efforts to save? Did the WELD project contribute to minimizing barriers? If so, how?

How did participation in the group influence your spending habits?

- Do you spend more money now that you are in the savings group? Please provide examples.
- In what ways did participation shape how your household allocates money? Please provide examples.

CORE QUESTIONS:	
Did your group provide share-outs at the end of each year?	Probes: • How did you use the share-outs that you received? • Did you share the share-out with others in your household? How did they use the funds? • Did your group contribute some of the share-out to the community? How were the funds used? • Did the group influence how the share out was used? How so? • Probe for: investment in saver's business, to send her children to school, to buy farm inputs, to pay for health care, food or clothes.
• Have you taken a loan from your savings group? If so, how was the loan used?	• Who decided how to use the loan? • Did you have any difficulties paying the loan back? Why?
Skills and capacities gained from participating in the savings group:	
In your opinion, how has your participation in the savings group affected how decisions are made in your household?	Probes: • How are financial decisions made in your household now? • In what ways is this different from how decisions were made before you joined the group?

CORE QUESTIONS:	
Do you make more financial decisions affecting your household without your spouse's participation now as opposed to before you joined the savings group?	Probes: • What type of financial decisions were affected? • Who decides how to use the profit from your business? • Does your spouse continue to make decisions without you? Why? • How did your participation in the Savings Group contribute to these changes?
Impact on levels of confidence and self-efficacy:	
Since participating in the groups, has your confidence to do other things changed? How so?	Probes: e.g. speak in public, advocate for something important, make decisions, etc. • Do you feel as though others, such as your spouse, or community members listen to your ideas or trust your ideas more than before? • How did participating in the Savings Group contribute to the changes you experienced?
The broader impacts of the savings and loan group on activities and goals:	
Have you been able to use the VLSA to help you expand your business?	Probes • Do you have connections with suppliers, investors, banks, or microfinance institutions?
Have you taken a loan from an MFI or a bank that was linked to your savings group?	• If so, how was the loan used? • Did you have any difficulties paying the loan back? Why? • If your group is not linked to a microfinance institution or a bank, why not? Do you think your group might do this in the future?

CORE QUESTIONS:	
Did your group provide financial support to any female candidates? Did your group provide any non-financial support to a female candidate? If so, please describe the support given.	
In what ways, if any, did your group spend/invest money in your community?	Probe: • Can you provide an example? (probe for building classrooms, funding orphans, buying desks)
Did you receive any literacy training for your group?	• If yes, who gave the training? • How useful was the training for you? What do you think should be done differently? • Were you given any apps on your phone to help you continue to do literacy training? Do you continue to conduct literacy trainings now?
What was most valuable / useful about the saving groups?	• Why? Can you provide an example?
What was least valuable / useful about the savings groups?	• Why? Can you provide an example?
How can gains be maintained over time?	• How long do you intend to stay involved in the savings group?
For Political Aspirants Linked to Savings Groups – only ask if any are there	
Did the project influence your desire to participate in politics? If so, how?	Probe: • What are your personal political goals? Did you participate in the 2017/2018 elections? How? • How did your involvement in the savings and loan groups influence your decision and make it possible for you to be involved in politics?
How did the savings and loan groups enable your political campaigns?	•

CORE QUESTIONS:	
What if any significant challenges did you encounter in your efforts to run for office	• How did you overcome them?
What aspects of the WELD project, if any, were helpful to the implementation of the campaign?	• Why?
What do you think the WELD project should do differently to increase the number of women in politics?	• Probe for political parties

USAID Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD)

FGD Protocol

SAVINGS AND LOANS GROUP

(February 2019)

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Do you have any questions before I begin?

As a first step, we should introduce ourselves. My colleague will prepare nametags to help us remember your names.

WARM UP QUESTION:

- In your opinion, what is the most significant problem facing women in Sierra Leone today? Why?
- Have you heard anything in your community over the last year or two about gender? What have you heard? Who was talking about it? [Probe: which groups?]

Also thinking about the past year or two, in this community have you seen more women trying to compete for politics?

CORE QUESTIONS:

Description of involvement with the village Savings and Loan Groups:

Can you please describe for me how you came to be involved in the savings and loan group?

Probes:

- What business trainings if any, did you receive from this project?
- How did these trainings help you?
- Did your spouse participate in this WELD training too?

Use of the savings at the household, personal and community level:

How did participation in the group influence your savings habits?

Probes:

- By how much would you say? Please provide examples.
- What were barriers to efforts to save? Did the WELD project contribute to minimizing barriers? If so, how?

How did participation in the group influence your spending habits?

- Do you spend more money now that you are in the savings group? Please provide examples.
- In what ways did participation shape how your household allocates money? Please provide examples.

CORE QUESTIONS:	
Did your group provide share-outs at the end of each year?	Probes: • How did you use the share-outs that you received? • Did you share the share-out with others in your household? How did they use the funds? • Did your group contribute some of the share-out to the community? How were the funds used? • Did the group influence how the share out was used? How so? • Probe for: investment in saver's business, to send children to school, to buy farm inputs, to pay for health care, food or clothes.
• Have you taken a loan from your savings group? If so, how was the loan used?	• Who decided how to use the loan? • Did you have any difficulties paying the loan back? Why?
Skills and capacities gained from participating in the savings group:	
In your opinion, how has your participation in the savings group affected how decisions are made in your household?	Probes: • How are financial decisions made in your household now? • In what ways is this different from how decisions were made before you joined the group?
Do you make more financial decisions affecting your household without your spouse's participation now as opposed to before you joined the savings group?	Probes: • What type of financial decisions were affected? • Who decides how to use the profit from your business? • How did your participation in the Savings Group contribute to these changes?

CORE QUESTIONS:	
Impact on levels of confidence and self-efficacy:	
Since participating in the groups, do you believe the confidence of women to do other things has changed?	Probes: E.g. speak in public, advocate for something important, make decisions, etc. - Do you feel as though others, such as your spouse, or community members listen more to women's ideas or trust their ideas more than before? - To what extent do you feel women are more confident in their willingness or ability to speak in public? - Has their confidence changed in any other ways? - How did participating in the Savings Group contribute to the changes you see?
The broader impacts of the savings and loan group on activities and goals:	
Have you been able to use the VLSA to help you expand your business?	Probes Do you have connections with suppliers, investors, banks, or microfinance institutions?
Have you taken a loan from an MFI or a bank that was linked to your savings group?	- If so, how was the loan used? - Did you have any difficulties paying the loan back? Why? - If your group is not linked to a microfinance institution or a bank, why not? Do you think your group might do this in the future?
Did your group provide financial support to any female candidates? Did your group provide any non-financial support to a female candidate? If so, please describe the support given.	

CORE QUESTIONS:	
In what ways, if any, did your group spend/invest money in your community?	Probe: • Can you provide an example? (probe for building classrooms, funding orphans, buying desks)
What was most valuable / useful about the saving groups?	• Why? Can you provide an example?
What was least valuable / useful about the savings groups?	• Why? Can you provide an example?
Did you receive any literacy training for your group?	• If yes, who gave the training? • How useful was the training for you? What do you think should be done differently? • Were you given any apps on your phone to help you continue to do literacy training? • Do you continue to conduct literacy trainings now?
How can gains be maintained over time?	• How long do you intend to stay involved in the savings group?
For Political Aspirants Linked to Savings Groups – only ask if any are there	
Did the project influence your desire to participate in politics? If so, how?	Probe: • What are your personal political goals? Did you participate in the 2017/2018 elections? How? • How did your involvement in the savings and loan groups influence your decision and make it possible for you to be involved in politics?
How did the savings and loan groups enable your political campaigns?	
What if any significant challenges did you encounter in your efforts to run for office	• How did you overcome them?

CORE QUESTIONS:	
What aspects of the WELD project, if any, were helpful to the implementation of the campaign?	• Why?
What do you think the WELD project should do differently to increase the number of women in politics?	• Probe for political parties

ANNEX C: VARIABLE AND DATA ANALYSIS DESCRIPTION

The analysis proceeded along three dimensions: social rights, economic rights and political rights. The following specifications are estimated:

$$knowledge_{ij} = \alpha + \beta X_i + \gamma Y_i + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

$$E_{ij} = \alpha + \beta X_i + \gamma Y_i + \delta knowledge_{ij} + \epsilon_i \quad (2)$$

Where i indexes individual respondent, j indexes dimensions (i.e. social rights, economic rights and political rights). The dependent variable in the first model, $knowledge_{ij}$ measures respondent i 's knowledge on women's rights of dimension j . The outcome variable in the second model, E_{ij} measures respondent i 's perception and practice on women's rights of dimension j . X is a vector of variables capturing WELD project's activities, Y is a vector of respondent's demographic controls (e.g. age group, gender, occupation type), ϵ_i is an error term and α , β , γ and δ are parameters to be estimated. The parameters of interest are β and δ , which capture potential effects of participating in the project's activities on the respondent's knowledge, attitudes and practice towards women's rights.

We use the awareness of existing gender laws and policies to measure a respondent's knowledge about women's rights. It is comprised of several binary questions such as "Do you know that there are laws that indicate that women have right to ...?" We coded each response as a dummy and took the arithmetic mean within each dimension. The gender attitudes index is constructed from sets of questions across the three dimensions, asking respondents about the extent to which they agree with statements about women's rights, on a scale of 1 (definitely disagree) to 5 (definitely agree). We reverse coded responses where appropriate to ensure that larger numbers always indicate stronger perception of gender equality. Responses were rescaled so that the index would range from 0 to 1. Other variables and indexes that measure a respondent's attitudes and practice on women's social/economic/political rights are further specified in Table I.

The WELD project promoted the concept of savings groups and trained participants from savings groups on business development and leadership. It also adopted a multimedia approach to deliver timely and targeted messages on women empowerment. We are able to capture these key interventions using the variables: whether have access to savings groups, whether have received any training from business management or leadership, and messages about women empowerment recalled.

A summary of all variables is shown in Table C I below.

Table C1. Outcome Variables and Explanatory Variables

Notation	Description	Measurement
Outcome variables		
Knowledge_laws_social ^a	Awareness of existing laws on women's social rights	composite score calculated as the average of 7 binary variables B1.a.-B1.h
Knowledge_laws_econ ^a	Awareness of existing laws on women's economic rights	composite score calculated as the average of 2 binary variables C1.a.-C1.b
Knowledge_laws_political ^a	Awareness of existing laws on women's political rights	composite score calculated as the average of 4 binary variables D1.a.-D1.d
Decision_wife	Wife's decision-making in matrimonial house/her visit/using and accessing information on contraceptives	Composite score calculated as the average of 3 variables capturing women's decision rights at household level B7-B9 Decision-making in matrimonial house: dummy equals 1 if the respondent reported that women were involved in the decision (either wife alone or joint decision-making) Decision-making in wife's visit: dummy equals 1 if women make the decision alone Decision-making in wife's use and access to information on contraceptives: dummy equals 1 if women make the decision alone
Involvedmeeting	Involved in community or family meetings	Coded as a dummy that equals 1 if respondents are sometimes or frequently involved in community or family meetings, and 0 otherwise
Decision_cash_use	Wife's decision right regarding the use of cash primarily generated by themselves	Coded as a dummy that equals to 1 if wife was the primary decision maker (either wife alone or both husband and wife).

Notation	Description	Measurement
Perception_social	Perception on women's social rights	Composite score calculated as the average value of 6 likert scale variables B10.a-B10.f; reverse-coding if needed; rescaled to the range of 0-1
Perception_econ	Perception on women's economic rights	Composite score calculated as the average value of 2 likert scale variables C6.a-C6.b; reverse-coding if needed; rescaled to the range of 0-1
Perception_political	Perception on women's political rights	Composite score calculated as the average value of 7 likert scale variables D6.a-D6.g; reverse-coding if needed; rescaled to the range of 0-1
Business ^a	Engagement in any form of business	Coded as dummy, 1 if yes and 0 if no
Independent variables of interest		
Credit_sg	Access to savings groups	C3a. [c]
Training	Have received any training from business management or leadership	Coded as a dummy, 1 if respondents participated in either of the trainings, and 0 otherwise
Message ^b	Messages about women empowerment heard	Composite score calculated as average of 5 binary variables 3a-3e
Control variables		
Age	Age group of the respondent	A2
Gender	Gender of the respondent	A1
Occupation ^B	Occupation group of the respondent	A4

Note:

^a In regressions where the variable is not dependent variable, we include it as an independent variable.

^b Variables not available in 2016 results.

ANNEX D: 2016 KAP DATA ANALYSIS TABLES**Table D1. Descriptive Sample Characteristics (2016 and 2018)**

Variables	2016 Survey Sample			2018 Survey Sample			Difference (t-test)
	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Knowledge_laws_social	357	0.960	0.115	870	0.965	0.111	0.004
Knowledge_laws_econ	355	0.795	0.351	870	0.848	0.283	0.052
Knowledge_laws_political	356	0.840	0.159	870	0.949	0.124	0.109 ***
Decision_wife	357	0.291	0.254	870	0.270	0.252	-0.021
Involvedmeeting	357	0.844	0.363	844	0.902	0.298	0.058
Decision_cash_use	357	0.807	0.395	870	0.684	0.465	-0.123 **
Business	357	0.407	0.492	870	0.570	0.495	0.163 ***
Credit_sg	357	0.283	0.451	870	0.463	0.499	0.180 ***
Training	357	0.427	0.495	870	0.568	0.496	0.141 ***
Message	N/A	N/A	N/A	870	0.462	0.333	N/A
Perception_social	357	0.708	0.141	869	0.732	0.146	0.024
Perception_econ	353	0.580	0.251	862	0.705	0.230	0.125 ***
Perception_political	356	0.746	0.128	870	0.808	0.157	0.062 ***
Gender=Male	357	0.508	0.501	870	0.492	0.500	-0.016
Sample size	357			870			

Note: All variables are measured on a scale from 0 to 1. ***/**/* Statistically significant at the 0.01/0.05/0.1 level.

Table D2. Regression on Results on Women's Political Rights (2016)

Variables	(1) Knowledge of laws on women's political rights	(2) Confidence to hold certain positions	(3) Contributed to promoting women's rights	(4) Perception of gender equality in political issues
Respondent age is 35+	0.0160 (0.0153)	-0.0006 (0.0242)	0.0933 (0.0627)	0.0123 (0.0198)
Gender=Male	-0.0350* (0.0181)	0.2038*** (0.0267)	0.2398*** (0.0407)	0.0006 (0.0133)
Knowledge of laws on women's political rights		0.2533* (0.1320)	-0.2738 (0.2149)	0.3753*** (0.0897)
Access to credits through savings groups	0.0258 (0.0252)	0.0873** (0.0332)	0.1285 (0.0998)	0.0054 (0.0218)
Constant	0.8461*** (0.0174)	0.1201 (0.1007)	0.5032** (0.1837)	0.4254*** (0.0773)
Observations	356	356	355	355
R-squared	0.1081	0.2367	0.1963	0.3000

Note: ***/**/* statistically significant at the 0.01/0.05/0.1 level. All regressions control for district.

Table D3. Regression Results on Women's Social Rights (2016)

Variables	(1) Knowledge of laws on women's social rights	(2) Sometimes or frequently involved in community and family meetings	(3) Wife's decision power in the household	(4) Perception of gender equality in social issues
Respondent age is 35+	0.0166 (0.0149)	-0.0920** (0.0377)	0.0059 (0.0304)	0.0398** (0.0147)
Gender=Male	0.0159 (0.0144)	0.0398 (0.0467)	-0.0330 (0.0367)	0.0525** (0.0207)
Knowledge of laws on women's social rights		0.3030 (0.2138)	0.0825 (0.1000)	0.3777*** (0.0599)
Access to credits through savings groups	-0.0140 (0.0156)	0.0804 (0.0553)	0.0189 (0.0302)	0.0082 (0.0154)
Leadership and business management trainings	0.0372*** (0.0117)	0.1117** (0.0459)	0.0764** (0.0281)	0.0141 (0.0199)
Constant	0.9354*** (0.0113)	0.4895** (0.2093)	0.1891* (0.1004)	0.2985*** (0.0571)
Observations	357	357	357	357
R-squared	0.0748	0.1326	0.1047	0.3221

Note: ***/**/* statistically significant at the 0.01/0.05/0.1 level. All regressions control for district.

Table D4. Regression Results on Women's Economic Rights (2016)

Variables	(1) Knowledge of laws on women's economic rights	(2) Wife as primary decision maker over cash they earned	(3) Engagement in any form of business	(4) Perception of gender equality in economic issues
Respondent age is 35+	0.0183 (0.0480)	0.0101 (0.0535)	0.1232** (0.0565)	0.0158 (0.0198)
Gender=Male	0.1328*** (0.0373)	0.0710 (0.0431)	-0.3025*** (0.0564)	0.0509** (0.0223)
Knowledge of laws on women's economic rights		0.2455*** (0.0765)	0.0942 (0.0914)	0.3004*** (0.0564)
Access to credits through savings groups	0.0736 (0.0466)	-0.0240 (0.0683)	0.1701*** (0.0604)	-0.0490* (0.0272)
Leadership and business management trainings	0.1120** (0.0426)	-0.0017 (0.0405)	0.0437 (0.0521)	0.0173 (0.0188)
Are you engaged in any form of business	0.0522 (0.0502)	0.0718 (0.0459)		0.0152 (0.0322)
Constant	0.6381*** (0.0934)	0.6137*** (0.1007)	0.7159*** (0.1139)	0.3503*** (0.0346)

Variables	(1) Knowledge of laws on women's economic rights	(2) Wife as primary decision maker over cash they earned	(3) Engagement in any form of business	(4) Perception of gender equality in economic issues
Observations	355	355	355	351
R-squared	0.1763	0.1739	0.2422	0.5725

Note: ***/**/* statistically significant at the 0.01/0.05/0.1 level. All regressions control for district.

Table D5. Regression Results on Women's Political Rights (2018)

Variables	(1) Knowledge of laws on women's political rights	(2) Confidence to hold certain positions	(3) Contributed to promoting women's rights	(4) Perception of gender equality in political issues
Respondent age is 35+	0.0068 (0.0096)	-0.0116 (0.0706)	0.1045** (0.0434)	-0.0137 (0.0116)
Gender=Male	0.0141 (0.0091)	0.4327*** (0.0775)	0.1453*** (0.0470)	0.0512*** (0.0111)
Occupation = Housewife/husband	0.0011 (0.0273)	0.3629** (0.1783)	0.0790 (0.0783)	0.0401* (0.0221)
Occupation = Trader/Business	0.0197*** (0.0068)	0.0411 (0.0832)	0.0010 (0.0474)	0.0333*** (0.0114)
Occupation = Formal employment	0.0278 (0.0186)	0.2685 (0.2421)	0.2296** (0.1059)	0.0580*** (0.0202)
Occupation = Informal Employment	0.0016 (0.0433)	0.3465** (0.1418)	0.0099 (0.1612)	-0.0819*** (0.0269)
Occupation = Other	0.0035 (0.0186)	-0.2466* (0.1376)	0.1664** (0.0682)	-0.0028 (0.0220)
Access to credits through savings groups	-0.0007 (0.0152)	0.1954*** (0.0719)	0.2286*** (0.0449)	0.0268* (0.0142)
Knowledge of laws on women's political rights		1.0481*** (0.3484)	0.2902** (0.1195)	0.3810*** (0.0632)
Messages on women's empowerment recalled	0.0532*** (0.0190)	0.5320*** (0.1611)	0.2735*** (0.0702)	0.0381* (0.0224)
Constant	0.9066*** (0.0171)	1.4236*** (0.3140)	-0.1321 (0.1106)	0.3896*** (0.0615)
Observations	870	870	870	870
R-squared	0.1067	0.2349	0.1894	0.2433

Note: ***/**/* statistically significant at the 0.01/0.05/0.1 level. All regressions control for district.

Table D6. Regression Results on Women's Social Rights (2018)

Variables	(1) Knowledge of laws on women's social rights	(2) Sometimes or frequently involved in community and family meetings	(3) Wife's decision power in the household	(4) Perception of gender equality in social issues
Respondent age is 35+	0.0080 (0.0065)	0.0235 (0.0210)	0.0464** (0.0225)	-0.0206** (0.0094)
Gender=Male	0.0006 0.0080	0.0127 0.0235	-0.1269*** 0.0464**	0.0449*** -0.0206**
Occupation = Housewife/husband	0.0214 (0.0199)	0.0404 (0.0577)	-0.0460 (0.0505)	0.0154 (0.0291)
Occupation = Trader/Business	-0.0129 (0.0158)	-0.0349 (0.0272)	0.0298 (0.0206)	-0.0079 (0.0118)
Occupation = Formal employment	0.0167 (0.0107)	0.0443 (0.0553)	-0.0500 (0.0313)	0.0322 (0.0448)
Occupation = Informal Employment	0.0274* (0.0155)	-0.0302 (0.0890)	-0.0179 (0.0614)	-0.0012 (0.0307)
Occupation = Other	0.0154 (0.0125)	-0.0160 (0.0587)	0.0460 (0.0386)	-0.0363* (0.0191)
Knowledge of laws on women's social rights		0.1069 (0.0902)	-0.0258 (0.0914)	0.1040 (0.0680)
Access to credits through savings groups	0.0056 (0.0087)	0.0164 (0.0270)	0.0179 (0.0221)	0.0212 (0.0139)
Leadership or business management training	0.0236** (0.0089)	-0.0121 (0.0232)	0.0256 (0.0209)	-0.0093 (0.0129)
Messages on women's empowerment recalled	0.0312** (0.0139)	0.0468 (0.0448)	0.0458 (0.0319)	0.0182 (0.0342)
Constant	0.9295*** (0.0139)	0.7631*** (0.0848)	0.2742*** (0.0890)	0.6133*** (0.0694)
Observations	870	844	870	869
R-squared	0.0534	0.0501	0.1017	0.0936

Note: ***/**/* statistically significant at the 0.01/0.05/0.1 level. All regressions control for district.

Table D7. Regression Results on Women's Economic Rights (2018)

Variables	(1) Knowledge of laws on women's economic rights	(2) Wife as primary decision maker over cash they earned	(3) Engagement in any form of business	(4) Perception of gender equality in economic issues
Respondent age is 35+	0.0564** (0.0239)	0.0482 (0.0372)	-0.0115 (0.0418)	-0.0207 (0.0198)
Gender=Male	0.0157 (0.0170)	-0.0787 (0.0538)	-0.1306*** (0.0409)	0.0310 (0.0212)
Occupation = Housewife/husband	0.0191 (0.0474)	0.0348 (0.0809)	-0.1560* (0.0922)	0.0265 (0.0356)
Occupation = Trader/Business	-0.0355 (0.0343)	0.0296 (0.0513)	0.4196*** (0.0492)	0.0041 (0.0236)
Occupation = Formal employment	0.0362 (0.0829)	0.0294 (0.0935)	0.0479 (0.1310)	0.1063** (0.0465)
Occupation = Informal Employment	-0.1401 (0.0934)	-0.0630 (0.1419)	0.0983 (0.1734)	-0.0418 (0.0598)
Occupation = Other	-0.0830 (0.0699)	-0.0700 (0.0953)	-0.1278** (0.0566)	-0.0006 (0.0453)
Knowledge of laws on women's social rights		0.2897*** (0.0831)	0.0511 (0.0729)	0.2387*** (0.0413)
Access to credits through savings groups	0.0615** (0.0237)	0.0276 (0.0461)	0.0567 (0.0417)	0.0214 (0.0229)
Leadership or business management training	-0.0011 (0.0273)	0.0090 (0.0343)	0.1470*** (0.0477)	-0.0139 (0.0219)
Engaged in any form of business	0.0204 (0.0286)	-0.0041 (0.0561)		0.0256 (0.0299)
Messages on women's empowerment recalled	0.1034** (0.0495)	0.1544** (0.0710)	0.1604** (0.0746)	0.0115 (0.0339)
Constant	0.7315*** (0.0376)	0.3534*** (0.0714)	0.3012*** (0.0733)	0.4745*** (0.0421)
Observations	870	870	870	862
R-squared	0.1265	0.1058	0.2849	0.2162

Note: ***/**/* statistically significant at the 0.01/0.05/0.1 level. All regressions control for district.

ANNEX E: INFORMATION SOURCES

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ANNEX F: NO CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Disclosure of Real or Potential Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluations

Instructions:

Evaluations of USAID projects will be undertaken so that they are not subject to the perception or reality of biased measurement or reporting due to conflict of interest.¹ For external evaluations, all evaluation team members will provide a signed statement attesting to a lack of conflict of interest or describing an existing conflict of interest relative to the project being evaluated.²

Evaluators of USAID projects have a responsibility to maintain independence so that opinions, conclusions, judgments, and recommendations will be impartial and will be viewed as impartial by third parties. Evaluators and evaluation team members are to disclose all relevant facts regarding real or potential conflicts of interest that could lead reasonable third parties with knowledge of the relevant facts and circumstances to conclude that the evaluator or evaluation team member is not able to maintain independence and, thus, is not capable of exercising objective and impartial judgment on all issues associated with conducting and reporting the work. Operating Unit leadership, in close consultation with the Contracting Officer, will determine whether the real or potential conflict of interest is one that should disqualify an individual from the evaluation team or require recusal by that individual from evaluating certain aspects of the project(s).

In addition, if evaluation team members gain access to proprietary information of other companies in the process of conducting the evaluation, then they must agree with the other companies to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.³

Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:

1. Immediate family or close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant/material though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.
3. Current or previous direct or significant/material though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.
4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.

¹ USAID Evaluation Policy (p. 8); USAID Contract Information Bulletin 99-17; and Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) Part 9.5, Organizational Conflicts of Interest, and Subpart 3.10, Contractor Code of Business Ethics and Conduct.

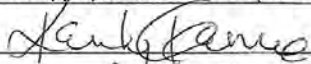
² USAID Evaluation Policy (p. 11)

³ FAR 9.505-4(b)

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	KENLY FENIO
Title	Senior Evaluation Expert
Organization	NORC
Evaluation Position?	☐ Team Leader ☒ Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	GS-10F-0033M / ~~72~~ 7200AA18
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	WOMEN EMPOWERED FOR LEADERSHIP+ DEVELOPMENT (WELD) M00016
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	☐ Yes ☒ No PERFORMANCE EVALUATION
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	15 APR 2019

Disclosure of Real or Potential Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluations

Instructions:

Evaluations of USAID projects will be undertaken so that they are not subject to the perception or reality of biased measurement or reporting due to conflict of interest.¹ For external evaluations, all evaluation team members will provide a signed statement attesting to a lack of conflict of interest or describing an existing conflict of interest relative to the project being evaluated.²

Evaluators of USAID projects have a responsibility to maintain independence so that opinions, conclusions, judgments, and recommendations will be impartial and will be viewed as impartial by third parties. Evaluators and evaluation team members are to disclose all relevant facts regarding real or potential conflicts of interest that could lead reasonable third parties with knowledge of the relevant facts and circumstances to conclude that the evaluator or evaluation team member is not able to maintain independence and, thus, is not capable of exercising objective and impartial judgment on all issues associated with conducting and reporting the work. Operating Unit leadership, in close consultation with the Contracting Officer, will determine whether the real or potential conflict of interest is one that should disqualify an individual from the evaluation team or require recusal by that individual from evaluating certain aspects of the project(s).

In addition, if evaluation team members gain access to proprietary information of other companies in the process of conducting the evaluation, then they must agree with the other companies to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.³

Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:

1. Immediate family or close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant/material though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.
3. Current or previous direct or significant/material though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.
4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.

¹ USAID Evaluation Policy (p. 8); USAID Contract Information Bulletin 99-17; and Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) Part 9.5, Organizational Conflicts of Interest, and Subpart 3.10, Contractor Code of Business Ethics and Conduct.

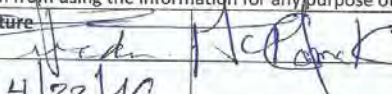
² USAID Evaluation Policy (p. 11)

³ FAR 9.505-4(b)

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Fredline O. MacCormack
Title	Subject Matter Expert
Organization	NORC
Evaluation Position?	☐ Team Leader ☒ Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	8389.006
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	USAID WELD PERFORMANCE EVAL
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	☐ Yes ☒ No
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to: 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	4/22/19

Disclosure of Real or Potential Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluations

Instructions:

Evaluations of USAID projects will be undertaken so that they are not subject to the perception or reality of biased measurement or reporting due to conflict of interest.¹ For external evaluations, all evaluation team members will provide a signed statement attesting to a lack of conflict of interest or describing an existing conflict of interest relative to the project being evaluated.²

Evaluators of USAID projects have a responsibility to maintain independence so that opinions, conclusions, judgments, and recommendations will be impartial and will be viewed as impartial by third parties. Evaluators and evaluation team members are to disclose all relevant facts regarding real or potential conflicts of interest that could lead reasonable third parties with knowledge of the relevant facts and circumstances to conclude that the evaluator or evaluation team member is not able to maintain independence and, thus, is not capable of exercising objective and impartial judgment on all issues associated with conducting and reporting the work. Operating Unit leadership, in close consultation with the Contracting Officer, will determine whether the real or potential conflict of interest is one that should disqualify an individual from the evaluation team or require recusal by that individual from evaluating certain aspects of the project(s).

In addition, if evaluation team members gain access to proprietary information of other companies in the process of conducting the evaluation, then they must agree with the other companies to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.³

Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:

1. Immediate family or close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant/material though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.
3. Current or previous direct or significant/material though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.
4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.

¹ USAID Evaluation Policy (p. 8); USAID Contract Information Bulletin 99-17; and Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) Part 9.5, Organizational Conflicts of Interest, and Subpart 3.10, Contractor Code of Business Ethics and Conduct.

² USAID Evaluation Policy (p. 11)

³ FAR 9.505-4(b)

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Eileen Y. Hanciles
Title	
Organization	Independent
Evaluation Position?	☐ Team Leader ☒ Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	8389.006.01, USAID Women Empowered for Leadership in Development (WELD)
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	☐ Yes ☒ No
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	4/25/19

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