

WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL

BUSINESS TRAINING

PROGRESS REPORT



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Executive Summary

Increased economic empowerment is critical to the global movement for women's rights and greater gender equality. Women for Women International (WfWI) believes that providing women with access to skills and resources will enable them to earn a sustainable income and become active citizens. With access to economic resources and increased income, the status of women in their families and communities can improve dramatically.

WfWI currently works in eight countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Rwanda and South Sudan. During the last 18 years, WfWI has transformed the lives of more than 250,000 socially-excluded women and distributed over \$79 million in direct aid and microcredit loans.

WfWI provides a year-long program of direct aid and emotional support, rights awareness and life skills education, and vocational training. The Danida grant supported the introduction of business skills classes to supplement vocational training. The goal was to provide 13,150 socially-excluded women in Rwanda, South Sudan, and the DRC with new business training over a three-year period.

WfWI far exceeded the initial goals of the Danida grant. In 2010, WfWI launched business and numeracy training in all eight country office programs, providing business training to more than 30,000 women. WfWI also piloted numeracy training for innumerate women, providing training to more than 11,000 women.

An initial assessment of the first year of training implementation demonstrated that business and numeracy training were a successful addition to the WfWI program. We found that:

1. Business and numeracy training are essential to achieving WfWI's economic development goal of increasing women's income.
2. The amount of business and numeracy training should be increased to provide women with a stronger foundation in addition, subtraction, and basic business concepts.
3. Interactive teaching methods should be incorporated into the training to promote transformative learning.
4. Basic literacy training greatly improves numeracy training.

WfWI will implement these changes in the second year of business and numeracy training, and will continue to assess the impact of these new trainings on women's ability to earn a sustainable income and promote longer-term economic development.

Introduction

Gender equality is Goal 3 of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. To achieve gender equality, women must first gain economic empowerment. Women's economic empowerment – the ability of women to earn a sustainable income – is one of the most important factors in bridging the gender divide. When women earn an income, they are able to improve the health and nutrition of their families, send their children to school, and engage in decision-making within their households and communities. For women to become economically empowered, they must break traditional gender roles that prohibit women from learning business skills and entering the marketplace.

Women for Women International (WfWI) believes that when you provide women with the skills and resources they need, they are capable of bringing lasting change to their communities. WfWI, through its year-long sponsorship program, is dedicated to helping women sustain an income by providing life skills, business, numeracy, and vocational training.

With funding from Danida, WfWI launched new programs in business and numeracy training in 2010 that have brought new skills to more than 30,000 women in conflict and post-conflict countries. In this document, we will explore our successes, challenges, and recommendations for offering business and numeracy training to socially-excluded women in our programs in the future.

I. Background on WfWI

Founded in 1993, Women for Women International is dedicated to providing women survivors of war with the tools and resources to move from crisis and poverty to stability and self-sufficiency, thereby promoting viable civil societies. We offer a 12-month integrated program of sponsorship, life skills education, and rights awareness trainings facilitated by local trainers who adapt classes to local needs. This is followed by market-based vocational skills, business, and numeracy training aimed at teaching women how to operate micro-enterprises or find jobs.

During the program, the participants are matched with sponsors who support their training. The sponsorship program offers a one-to-one connection between women survivors of war and supporters around the world. Sponsors give their sponsored "sisters" both financial and emotional support, through direct aid and a letter-exchange program.

WfWI currently works in eight countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Sudan. During the last 18 years, WfWI has transformed the lives of more than 250,000 socially-excluded women and distributed over \$79 million in direct aid and microcredit loans, benefiting more

than 1.3 million family and community members in the process. In 2010, over 61,800 women in all eight countries received program services through more than 23,000 sponsors from 56 countries across the world. WfWI has over 600 employees worldwide, and each of our country offices is fully staffed by women and men from the local community.

WfWI is dedicated to working with women survivors of war in conflict and post-conflict societies. The core belief of the organization is that stronger women build stronger nations, and that with adequate access to information and resources, socially excluded women can lead the change towards peaceful and stable societies.

Embedded in the core of WfWI programs is a belief in the integrity of women and their experiences. Through affirmation and networks of support, WfWI seeks to amplify the voices of the women we serve. In addition, WfWI contributes to the global women's movement, in which women and men around the world are mobilized to promote lasting change in the lives of women survivors of war.

Mission

Women for Women International provides women survivors of war, civil strife, and other conflicts with the tools and resources to move from crisis and poverty to stability and self-sufficiency, thereby promoting viable civil societies.

Vision

Women for Women International envisions a world where no one is abused, poor, illiterate or marginalized; where members of communities have full and equal participation in the processes that ensure their health, well-being, and economic independence; and where everyone has the freedom to define the scope of their life, their future, and to achieve their full potential.

In the past 18 years, WfWI has learned that along with the extreme challenges women face in the midst of and aftermath of wars, there is a window of opportunity for women to redefine their rights. This window of opportunity arises during the process of negotiating peace and rebuilding nations. WfWI has learned that this opportunity can often be used to create lasting change by increasing women's social awareness, political voice, and access to resources. To make this happen, however, the following elements need to be present:

- The commitment of leadership to social change
- Women gaining access to economic resources and renegotiating their decision-making power in their households, communities, and societies
- Women becoming socially aware, organizing themselves in groups, and articulating their needs

WfWI has also learned that women and men in stable societies can be mobilized to assist women in desperate circumstances, not only with financial resources and emotional support, but also by working towards amplifying their voices. Thus, WfWI's sponsors and donors, who provide the majority of the organization's financial resources, represent a critical force for change. The sponsorship connection in particular is at the heart of Women for Women International's approach and provides a tangible and personalized means to support the organization's work.

Program Theory

Women for Women International's program theory has evolved through our experience and is based on the belief that lasting change can only take place when women are able to express themselves, have access to knowledge, and have access to resources. WfWI seeks to establish peaceful and stable communities through women-led community change and policies that support women's safety and rights. The programmatic approach is designed to develop sustainable economic opportunities, ensure that women are physically and psychologically well, provide women with knowledge about their rights, and help them build networks so they can contribute to decision-making in their families and communities.

At the heart of WfWI's interventions is the belief that the following outcomes are critical to enable lasting change in women's lives:

- *Women sustain an income:* Women earn an average income in line with the standards in their country.
- *Women are well:* Women have and are able to maintain a level of physical and psychological strength necessary to actively participate in their families and communities.
- *Women are decision-makers:* Women contribute to decisions in their families and communities.
- *Women have strong social safety nets and networks:* Women by themselves and in solidarity with others aid the cause of women by promoting and advocating shared needs and desires.

When these four outcomes are met, women will experience lasting change in their lives and will be uniquely positioned to promote change in their communities and nations.

The success of these outcomes is largely interdependent, and when all are achieved, they will enable women to become active citizens. Our program theory defines "active citizenship" as women taking the individual and/or collective initiative to engage socially, civically, and economically for the betterment of their families and communities. As active citizens, women can bring about community change that will lead to peaceful, stable communities and societies.

Program Methodology

The cornerstone of Women for Women International's program methodology is an integrated approach to social change where economic, social, and civic interventions intersect to make a difference in women's lives. Program interventions are structured in three stages as women have increased access to both knowledge and resources on the path to lasting change.

Stage 1: Creating Awareness

This stage is dedicated to improving women's access to knowledge about their value and the importance of women's rights and roles in society. WfWI increases the awareness of women in our program in four basic areas: Sustaining an Income, Wellness, Family and Community Decision-Making, and Social Networks and Safety Nets. Women learn about the importance of savings, building assets, opportunities to earn income; health awareness, protection and prevention; women's rights, particularly within the family; and the power of group support. As women move through the Life Skills curriculum training, they build knowledge to help support positive action in their lives.

In conjunction with Life Skills training, WfWI's market-driven and outcome-based vocational strategy operates to promote women's economic growth. WfWI also increases basic skills by providing business training to all women and numeracy classes where needed.

Stage 2: Promoting Behavior Change

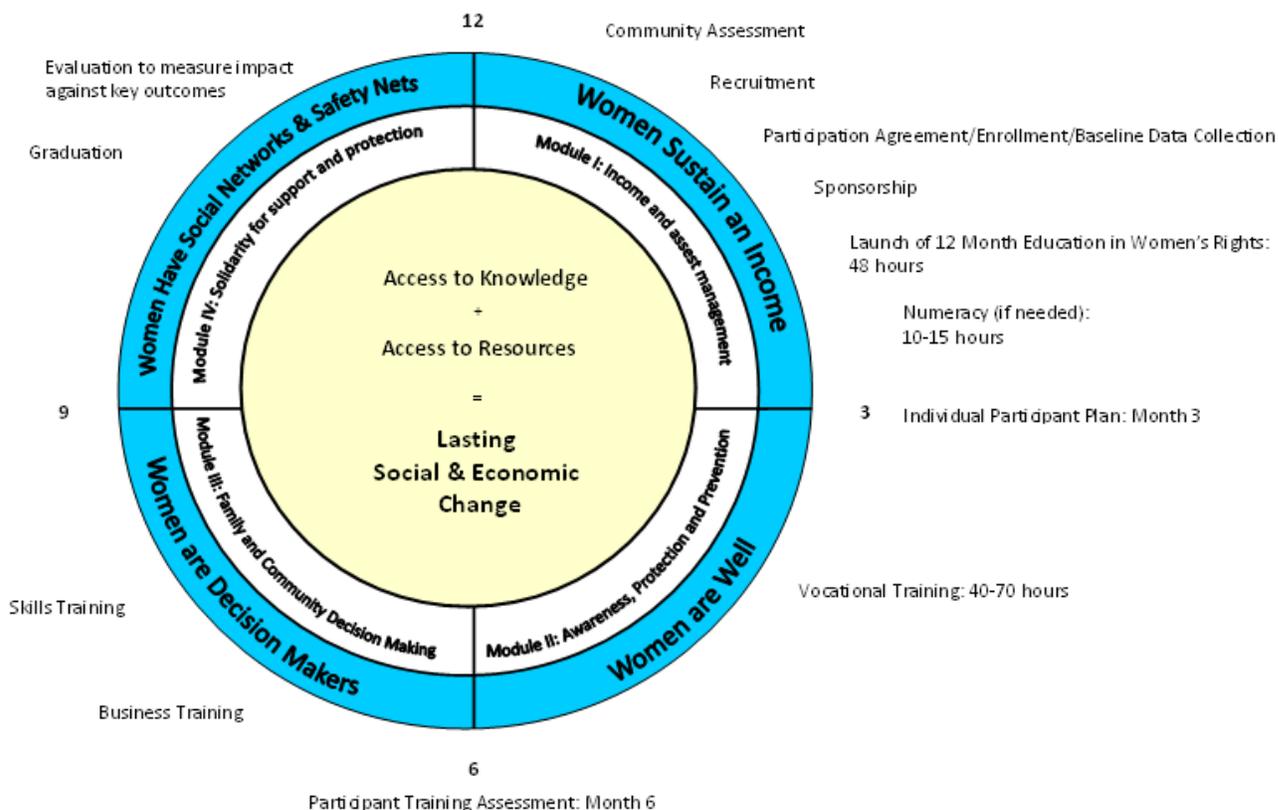
The training promotes behavior change regarding women's willingness to actively make decisions in their families and communities, to apply knowledge to maintain their physical and psychological wellness, to form or join women's and community groups, and to take advantage of economic opportunities. This behavior change is indicative of a woman's active citizenship, and, with time, these individual behavior changes enable broader women-led community change.

Stage 3: Enabling Action

The Life Skills curriculum provides program participants with opportunities to develop personal and group plans for action, encouraging them to become active citizens individually and in solidarity with other women. WfWI "enables action" by providing women with support and access to essential services, some through partner organizations, such as microcredit loans, legal assistance, cooperative and employment opportunities, and social networks.

The Life Skills training curriculum enables women to take an active role during training through participatory activities and encourages each woman to discuss and share how she plans to put what she is learning into action.

12-Month Program



II. Income Generation Program

The average baseline income of a woman in our program is about fifty-five cents a day. Our objective is that she will be able to raise her income to one dollar a day within a year of graduation from our program.

WfWI's income generation (IG) program matches the skills and interests of the women to opportunities in the market. The IG program helps women improve their economic situations by preparing them for income generating work, promoting and enabling regular saving, teaching household budgeting, and helping women improve their decision-making.

The process of developing the IG program included market assessments to analyze local economies, sector evaluations to match the sectors to the skills and interests of the women, a capability assessment of each country office's capacity to implement the program, a

review of the business environment, implementation plans, revisions to training curricula, and pilot projects to test assumptions and refine the plans.

WfWI organizes the IG program into "vocational tracks." In Africa, for example, most of these tracks are in some aspect of agricultural production because our enrollment is primarily rural.

A good vocational track is a function of the women's skills and interests, market demand, the viability of micro-businesses or business groups, and the opportunity to benefit large numbers of participants. Periodic market assessments identify the sectors of the economy that are most promising for the women given their resources and other constraints. Matching the vocational training topics to local market conditions is a cornerstone of WfWI's IG program.

Each country office offers five or six tracks, and each woman in the program selects her own track from the two or three offered in her community. The vocational training begins with a business training course. The business classes include entrepreneurship, planning ahead, selling, bookkeeping, and financing a business. A series of numeracy classes is also available to women who require this training and is offered prior to the start of business training. The skills training (farming, goat rearing, etc.) follows and consists of 25 to 52 hours of both classroom learning and hands-on training in the field.

All of these training sessions are structured to be participatory and foster discussions that emphasize application of the ideas to real experiences of the women, resulting in a greater understanding of market-oriented commercial activity.

Each country has its own IG strategy which includes the specific vocational tracks for each country, and pilots to test the plan and create models for women-led businesses.

From the women's perspective, the year looks like this:

Life Skills Training 36 hours			
		Vocational Training 40-70 hours	
	Numeracy (if needed) 10-15 hours	Business Training 15-18 hours	Skills Training 25-52 hours

III. Need for Business Training

The success of WfWI's IG activities is limited by a widespread unfamiliarity with basic business concepts among the women in our program. A woman's often complete ignorance of the functioning of a market economy is a major hindrance to her economic success and a major obstacle as she works to improve her life.

To help fill-in such gaps in knowledge, the Life Skills workshops include topics about household finances, women's productive work, and better understanding of basic business principles and practices. The women need basic and practical training sessions tailored to their level of education and to their likely application of the principles.

Before 2010, the vocational segment of WfWI's program consisted of 20-70 hours of skills training for each woman. Realizing this was inadequate, the board made a strategic decision to dramatically increase support for activities that would enable women to generate incomes. It was decided to add classes in business skills and revise the skills curriculum to include far more commercial content to complement the technical skills already being taught.

IV. The Original Plan

The Danida grant supported the introduction of the business skills classes. In South Sudan, the DRC, and Rwanda, the goal was to provide 13,150 socially-excluded women with this new training over a three-year period.

Over 56% of the women in the WfWI program in these countries are illiterate, and most have a very low understanding of commercial activity and the basics of participating in a market economy. To begin, WfWI drafted a business training curriculum of six topics to be delivered in 11 classes totaling 15 to 18 hours of training.

In initial discussions about business training start-up and implementation it quickly became clear that the business training as designed would not be effective for the thousands of innumerate women in the WfWI program. About 30% of the women in the program are innumerate.

Innumerate Women April 2010-January 2011							
Afghanistan	Bosnia	DRC	Iraq	Kosovo	Nigeria	Rwanda	South
66%	2%	14%	25%	8%	13%	14%	98%

From these discussions, WfWI decided to implement 10 to 15 hours of numeracy training for all participants who do not have the basic counting and math skills needed to run a small business.

This led to a combined business and numeracy training program. Numeracy begins in the first month of the program, and business training begins in the third month, after participants have completing the “Sustaining an Income” module.

Numeracy

Many participants in WfWI’s programs cannot use numbers, but minimal competency in numeracy is essential to women's success in their daily lives. It is important to the women as they work to sustain an income.

The numeracy training is a short series of 10 classes that focuses on numbers, counting, and simple arithmetic. It is mandatory for all women who need it. Women who need numeracy training are identified during the baseline data collection process. The goal is "minimal competency"— i.e., a basic level of ability. After these classes, a woman should be able to add a column of four three-digit numbers, subtract four-digit numbers, and be able to use money.

Business Training

Business training is part of the vocational training package. It leads into the skills training. The classes are basic, practical, tailored to the education level of the women, and delivered to all participants. Each woman knows before these courses begin what skills training she will receive so she can apply the course work to her specific situation.

The business training is delivered by trainers with an understanding of business, and the material is tailored to the commercial environment of the country. From comparatively simple examples and case studies to more complicated concepts, as adjusted to the women’s education levels and literacy, the material is relevant to the specific women in the class. Business training at WfWI includes:

- **Business Basics:** In this two-session topic, the women learn about the market economy. The material covers micro- and small-business concepts and includes an overview of all aspects of operations.
- **Entrepreneurship:** This topic, in one session, defines entrepreneurship and how it is practiced. It describes the successful entrepreneur and highlights initiative, risk, and judgment. The differences between entrepreneurship, general business management, and salaried jobs are discussed.
- **Planning Ahead:** This two-session course takes a look at the range of tasks in operating a small business.

- Selling: This two-session course guides the women toward understanding their customers. This leads to the process of finding customers and persuading them to buy.
- Bookkeeping: This two-session course focuses on the importance and methods of tracking expenses and income.
- Financing Your Business: In this two-session course, which follows the bookkeeping course, women gain an understanding of credit and savings as tools for financing their small businesses.

Skills Training

Skills training is technical training in a market sector identified as promising in the local market. For skills training, every effort is made to employ professionals in the field. Experiential training is included to supplement classroom training, such as visits to a greenhouse or farm.

Specific technical topics vary from country to country, and the length of the skills training units varies by topic. All skills training sessions are documented with lesson plans and compiled into syllabi that provide a basis for training and monitoring.

In Africa, about 70% of WfWI participants are in an agricultural track, and each country has established demonstration farms where participants receive practical, hands-on training. WfWI typically negotiates with local government entities and community organizations to donate this land.

Individual Participant Plan

After completing the first module of the Life Skills training curriculum, "Sustaining an Income," participants complete an individual participant plan. This is a simple document through which each participant sets goals for herself in terms of saving and training. The purpose of the individual plan is to ensure that each woman owns the outcome of her training by articulating her vision of her future economic activities. She demonstrates to herself that she has resources and a measure of control over her future.

Savings

The practice of regular saving is the most important tool in escaping poverty. The first module of the Life Skills training discusses the importance of savings and different methods of saving in the formal sector through banks or credit unions or informally through saving circles. (In saving circles, known as tontine or likilimba, each member gives a fixed amount of money each month to another member of the group. This continues every month until everyone in the group has received one of the accumulated distributions and the cycle repeats if all members agree.)

Saving is also a topic in the business classes as the women learn the cost of borrowing and in the skills training as the women learn the costs of various inputs or needed investments.

Cooperatives

As we encourage women to move into commercial activity, we also encourage them to work together. By pooling their resources, both money and labor, they will be able to produce more in fewer work hours.

We provide basic and practical sessions about cooperatives, tailored to the women’s level of education, their likely application of the principles, and to the legal, regulatory, and cultural norms of their societies. There is an introductory class for any women interested in cooperatives and a series of advanced classes for managers.

These classes deliver a practical understanding of what distinguishes a cooperative from other forms of business entities; of the various types of cooperatives; of purchasing and marketing through cooperatives; of the structure, control, and finance of co-ops; of the responsibilities and duties of cooperative members; and how to make decisions concerning membership.

V. First Year's Experience

A. What Was Done

In 2010, WfWI launched business and numeracy training in all eight country office programs. This far exceeded the initial goals of the Danida grant, providing business training to more than 30,000 women.

Women trained in business skills in 2010									
DRC		Rwanda		South Sudan		Others		Total	
Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
6,471	9,440	5,493	3,675	1,187	1,625	0	15,380	13,150	30,120

In addition, more than 11,000 women received numeracy training in 2010.

Women trained in numeracy skills in 2010									
DRC		Rwanda		South Sudan		Others		Total	
Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
0	6,725	0	944	0	600	0	3,560	0	11,829

To deliver the numeracy and business training, different countries offered different numbers of training hours:

Numeracy

Nigeria – 10 classes, 20 hours

Rwanda – 6 classes, 12 hours

South Sudan – 6 classes, 12 hours

Kosovo – 10 classes, 15 hours

DRC – 8 classes, 16 hours

Iraq – 10 classes, 15 hours

Afghanistan – 10 classes, 10 hours

Case Study: Numeracy in South Sudan

Daniel Dhieu is the only numeracy trainer at Barpakang and teaches four numeracy groups.



Although Daniel has the new numeracy syllabus from WfWI, he is also using a numeracy book belonging to one of the participants. A few women have purchased their own numeracy books. The books are all basic numeracy books written in English for schools.

Daniel says that participants who can read and write in the local language,

Dinka, learn numeracy faster than the others. He uses Dinka as the medium of instruction for explanation and learning but uses English when referring to numbers.

The trainer writes simple sums on the board using good blackboard writing technique. He is to the side of the board, his voice is clear, his manner gentle but authoritative. The women like him.

He proceeds to say each number and symbol in English and gets the women to repeat this in chorus four times. Occasionally he translates and explains the words in Dinka.

$$5 + 1 = 6$$

Trainer says: "Five" Women repeat in chorus: "Five"

Trainer says: "Six" Women repeat in chorus: "Six"

Rwanda incorporated multiplication and division into their lessons. Other countries reported that while addition and subtraction are easy for the women to understand, multiplication is difficult. The average class size is 25 women.

In the DRC, women use beans or stones to count. Some countries employed literacy trainers to create illustrations for the lessons that would enable the women to count. For example, using an illustration of two cows makes it very simple for women to count the cows. In the DRC, women also have small chalkboards. The instructor writes a number and has the women write it on their own chalkboards to show the instructor.

At the beginning, some women need to be taught how to hold the chalk or make a line. Other women immediately begin asking to write letters or words like “children.” To address the issue of varying skill levels, some countries separated women by skill level.

Case Study: Numeracy in DRC

WfWI-DRC runs two courses. For some women there is a numeracy component of literacy classes; for others there is a 15-hour numeracy course.

The numeracy component of the literacy program is taught by literacy trainers and covers reading, writing, and counting to 100,000; addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division; using weighing scales to weigh solids (kg, 100kg, ½ kg); measuring liquids (liter, ½ ml); different periods of time (second, minute, hour, day, month, year); counting and changing the four currencies common to the area; and using a calculator. The trainers sometimes include other tasks related to skills training such as writing invoices and lists of creditors as well as homework exercises.

The 15-hour basic numeracy course is run separately using the new syllabus translated into Swahili.

Comparing the two approaches, the women say that the standard syllabus is too simple. They already know how to count and do simple calculations. They know how to count the number of children they have, the number of trees, the number of seeds they need to plant and so on. Instead, they requested more literacy combined with numeracy— to complete forms with the names of products, prices, and amounts written in words.

All sessions are lively and participatory. The trainer reviews the session by inviting volunteers to summarize what they have learned. The content is very relevant and practical, focusing on marketing and tips on how to promote and sell agricultural products in the markets and street stalls.

B. What Was Learned

In February 2011, WfWI held a two-week global conference in Istanbul, Turkey to share experiences and discuss outcomes and recommendations after the first year of implementation of business and numeracy training. The discussions focused on several key themes:

1. Enrollment
2. Teaching Methodology
 - a. Transformative Learning
 - b. Training Methods
3. Trainers
4. Language of Instruction
5. Literacy

1. Enrollment

One of the first points raised in discussion was how women are selected and enrolled in these programs. This discussion focused on numeracy training, as business training is mandatory for all program participants but numeracy training is delivered on an as-needed basis. How do trainers determine which women need the numeracy training?

The enrollment of participants in numeracy training proved to be challenging during the first year. Several different countries, including South Sudan and DRC, reported that women misrepresent their abilities during enrollment which makes selection for the numeracy training difficult. Some women overstate their need because they think that it will increase their chances of acceptance to the program. A woman who knows how to count and use numbers may pretend to be innumerate because she thinks that being educated will disqualify her for the program. Other women understate their need because they are embarrassed.

Field staff from all countries agreed that it is difficult to enroll the right women in the numeracy program. Staff from Nigeria recommended including a quick test during enrollment to assess women's level of numeracy.

2. Teaching Methodology

a. Transformative Learning

An analysis of the teaching methodology used during the first year of business and numeracy training implementation determined that the primary method of training used was "diffusive learning." Knowledge is imparted from the instructor to the participants with channels for the participants to provide feedback and demonstrate their learning.

However, the business and numeracy training also employs transformative learning because it challenges the traditional roles of women and girls in many societies.

First, the training must be transformative to change women's own perspectives and beliefs about their capabilities and role in their families and communities. As women gain business skills, their confidence grows and their stress about earning an income reduces. After a change occurs on the individual level, the transformative nature of this training can extend beyond the woman to the family and community level.

By giving women the skills they need to earn an income and enter the marketplace, WfWI's business and numeracy training is helping women transform gender roles by moving from the domestic to public sphere, and by challenging the power dynamics in their households and communities.

b. Training Methods

Based on the discussion of transformative learning, the field staff from all WfWI's country offices agreed that business and numeracy training need more interactive and facilitative elements. Trainers should use visual aids whenever possible and encourage peer-learning and teaching. This could help address the challenge of having women with different levels of knowledge and skills enrolled in the same class. Participants with higher levels of knowledge and capacities should be engaged in helping train others who are beginners. Through peer-learning and teaching, the participants with higher levels of knowledge will remain engaged in the training, and the participants with lower levels of knowledge will benefit from their mentoring.

Field staff also emphasized that linking lessons to real-world examples is essential in business and numeracy training. Trainers should use examples that are relevant to the local context and that are consistent throughout all training provided by WfWI (life skills, numeracy, business, and vocational skills). In the numeracy classes, the trainers should be sure that women know how to use money. Numeracy lessons can also be linked to skills training. For example, women can learn measurements for tailoring or reading a thermometer for poultry rearing.

3. Trainers

For the business and numeracy training to be successful, there must be good trainers and an appropriate student-to-teacher ratio. In some contexts, local capacity is scarce and it can be difficult to find trainers with experience in adult education. Trainers should be well prepared for lessons and come to the training sessions with the materials needed and activities planned.

4. Language of Instruction

In several regions where WfWI works, there are many tribal languages that are mostly oral languages. Staff in Nigeria and South Sudan specifically identified language of instruction as an issue in business and numeracy training. Women may be familiar with how to count in their local language but are unable to do so in the national language. We concluded that women should be trained in the local rather than national language whenever possible.

5. Literacy

One of the most significant findings from the first year's experience with business and numeracy training is the importance of literacy. Field staff from all country offices agreed that women cannot learn numeracy without literacy. It is difficult to separate numeracy and literacy training, and in reality they are taught together.

Women need to know how to write numbers with numerals and in words. Many women cannot equate the numeral "1" and the word "one." Words also help to associate the counting with what they know, although they often cannot write common words such as "goat" or "maize."

Women also want to learn to write their names. If they go to the bank, they need to write their names. Trainers need to include some literacy in the numeracy training.

VI. Recommendations

The Istanbul discussions on business and numeracy training were very useful and promoted cross-program learning and capacity building. From these discussions, we developed three key recommendations to guide the evolution of business and numeracy training going forward.

1. Increase number of training hours

One point of consensus among staff from all country offices is that the amount of training hours is not enough for program participants to become numerate and grasp basic business concepts. Field staff asserted that the duration of the training should be longer because women have difficulty retaining information. Although a participant may understand the material when it is taught, she is often unable to retain the information and later apply it in a real-world setting.

South Sudan staff recommend increasing the training hours for each session to two or two-and-a-half hours to bring the total training to 24 hours of class time. Since women have to travel great distances to get to the training site, sometimes walking up to three hours, we need to maximize the time they spend in the training. We discussed the option of an intensive training, of 10 sessions per day for 10 days.

While staff from different countries had different recommendations for the amount of training hours needed, all agreed an increase was needed. However, when field staff said that the training was not enough, we asked “enough for what?”

We must realize that as a non-profit organization with limited resources, we cannot provide unlimited training. The increase in training for business and numeracy must move us toward reaching the organization's larger objectives. In this case, because WfWI is not a provider of literacy training, the goal is help each woman attain a minimal proficiency in numeracy and business skills so that she will be better able to succeed in an income generating activity.

2. Enhance training with more interactive learning

Based on the discussion of transformative learning, we agreed that the business and numeracy training must be more interactive. Lesson plans for these trainings should include visual aids and activities that will engage the participants and enhance their understanding of the topics.

Trainers should use examples that are relevant in the local context and applicable to the women’s everyday lives. Trainers should be encouraged to take the women to the marketplace for an interactive lesson, or bring in a successful program graduate to talk to the women about her business.

Some staff recommended that trainers be provided with a “teaching kit” that includes all relevant teaching materials so that the quality of the lessons and materials available will become standardized.

3. Integrate numeracy training with some literacy training

Numeracy and literacy skills are closely linked, and it is difficult to provide one without the other. Women say numeracy training is not enough because they want to include literacy training. As their numeracy rises, the demand for literacy training rises as well.

WfWI is considering making numeracy compulsory and integrating it with some literacy training. We will research the models of other NGOs who integrate literacy into their programming. For example, some organizations in South Sudan incorporate literacy topics into the entirety of their programs— they have an explicit literacy element even in skills classes.

A literacy assessment was recently conducted to determine whether and how best to integrate literacy training into WfWI’s program, and the results of this assessment are currently being analyzed to guide our next steps.

VII. Conclusion

After evaluating of the first year of training, it is evident that business and numeracy training are essential to achieving WfWI's long-term economic development outcomes, and they should be integrated into our core programming. The first year of business and numeracy training demonstrated that, as anticipated, this training is both needed and desired by our program participants.

Based upon the recommendations of our field staff, we will look to potentially expand business and numeracy training, encourage interactive teaching methods that promote transformative learning, and integrate elements of literacy training in our business skills classes.

For more information, please visit www.womenforwomen.org.



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