



Strengthening and Linking Women-Led Efforts to Promote Women's Property and Literacy Rights in Sierra Leone

Project Effectiveness Review

Summary Report



**Oxfam GB
Women's Empowerment Outcome Indicator**

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Photo Credit: Ruby Wright

Executive summary

Under Oxfam Great Britain's (OGB) Global Performance Framework, a number of projects are randomly selected each year for a rigorous assessment of their effectiveness. The project 'Strengthening and Linking Women-Led Efforts to Promote Women's Property and Literacy Rights in Sierra Leone' was one of those selected for review in the 2012/13 financial year. This project aimed, firstly, to strengthen the capacity of community-based groups and national women's networks in raising awareness on women's property and literacy rights, and secondly, to advocate for greater participation of women in decision-making on property ownership and for a more enabling environment for women to exercise their property and literacy rights. The project was managed by a consortium of partners and implemented in four districts of Sierra Leone, of which Oxfam was responsible for implementation in Koinadugu and Kailahun Districts.

Under this project, 130 women leaders from communities in the two districts received training on women's rights issues, leadership skills and advocacy skills, and were then supported in carrying out awareness-raising and advocacy on women's property and literacy rights within their communities. They also received training on how to promote adult literacy, using the REFLECT framework. It is the impact of these community-level activities that is evaluated in this Effectiveness Review. The project also involved promoting women's property and literacy rights on local radio stations and providing capacity-building for district-level officials, as well as facilitation of national-level advocacy work: the impact of these activities is not evaluated in this review.

The Effectiveness Review adopted a quasi-experimental impact evaluation design, comparing a sample of women in the communities where the project activities had been implemented to women in nearby comparison communities. In total, 1,027 women were interviewed in Koinadugu and Kailahun districts. The survey questions allow the project's impact on various dimensions of women's empowerment to be evaluated. At the analysis stage, the statistical tools of propensity-score matching (PSM) and multivariable regression were used to reduce bias in making comparisons between the supported and comparison households.

The results provide evidence that the community-level activities of this project have resulted in significant positive effects on some characteristics of women's empowerment in Koinadugu District. In particular, women in communities where the project had been implemented expressed more positive attitudes towards women's political rights and gender equity in education and stronger opinions against early marriage and violence against women than did women in the comparison communities. Women in the project communities were also significantly more likely to describe themselves as able to read and write a simple letter, and expressed more positive statements about the amount of control they have over their work and their time.

Unexpectedly, fewer of the women in the project communities in Koinadugu said that they had ownership of or control over some land or property than did women in the comparison communities. A potential explanation for this may be that the project activities have resulted in women becoming more aware that they lack control over these assets.

In Kailahun District, it is not clear that there is any difference in overall women's empowerment between the communities where the project was implemented and the comparison communities. While the model of implementation was the same in both districts, there are some important differences between the two environments, which may have led to these differential effects. It is worth noting that some of the project activities not evaluated here – especially the radio discussion programmes – are believed to have had wider impact in Kailahun District than in Koinadugu.

Oxfam in general, and the Sierra Leone team and partners in particular, are encouraged to consider the following to take forward learning from this project:

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- Ensure that mechanisms are in place to monitor the extent to which literacy training and campaign messages are disseminated by leaders trained under a project such as this to other community members.
- Continue following up on progress with women's property and literacy rights in the project districts, to understand what effects this project has in the longer term.

Introduction

Oxfam GB has put in place a Global Performance Framework (GPF) as part of its effort to better understand and communicate its effectiveness, as well as to enhance learning across the organisation. Under this framework, samples of mature projects associated with six different thematic indicator areas are being randomly selected each year for a rigorous evaluation of impact. These 'Effectiveness Reviews' involve assessing the extent to which projects have been able to promote change in the key outcome areas for the project, as well as in relation to relevant OGB global outcome indicators.

One of the projects selected for an Effectiveness Review in the 2012/13 financial year was the 'Strengthening and Linking Women-Led Efforts to Promote Women's Property and Literacy Rights' project in Sierra Leone. This project had two main aims: firstly, to strengthen the capacity and improve networking between community-based groups and national women's networks to raise awareness of women's property and literacy rights, and secondly, to advocate for greater participation of women in decision-making on property ownership and for a more enabling environment for women to exercise their property and literacy rights. The project was implemented in partnership with Concern, Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI), Sleyo, and the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) in four rural districts of Sierra Leone, with Oxfam responsible for implementation in Koinadugu and Kailahun districts.

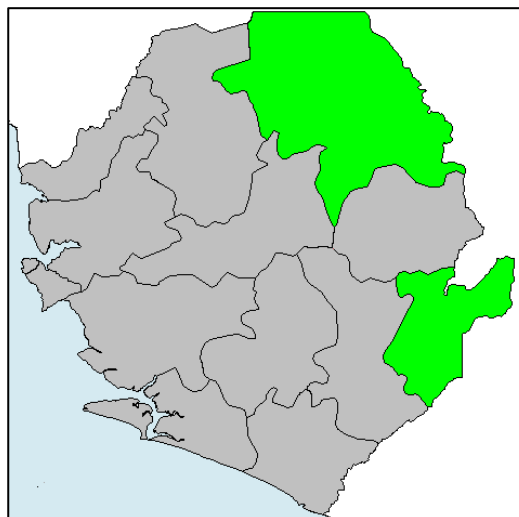
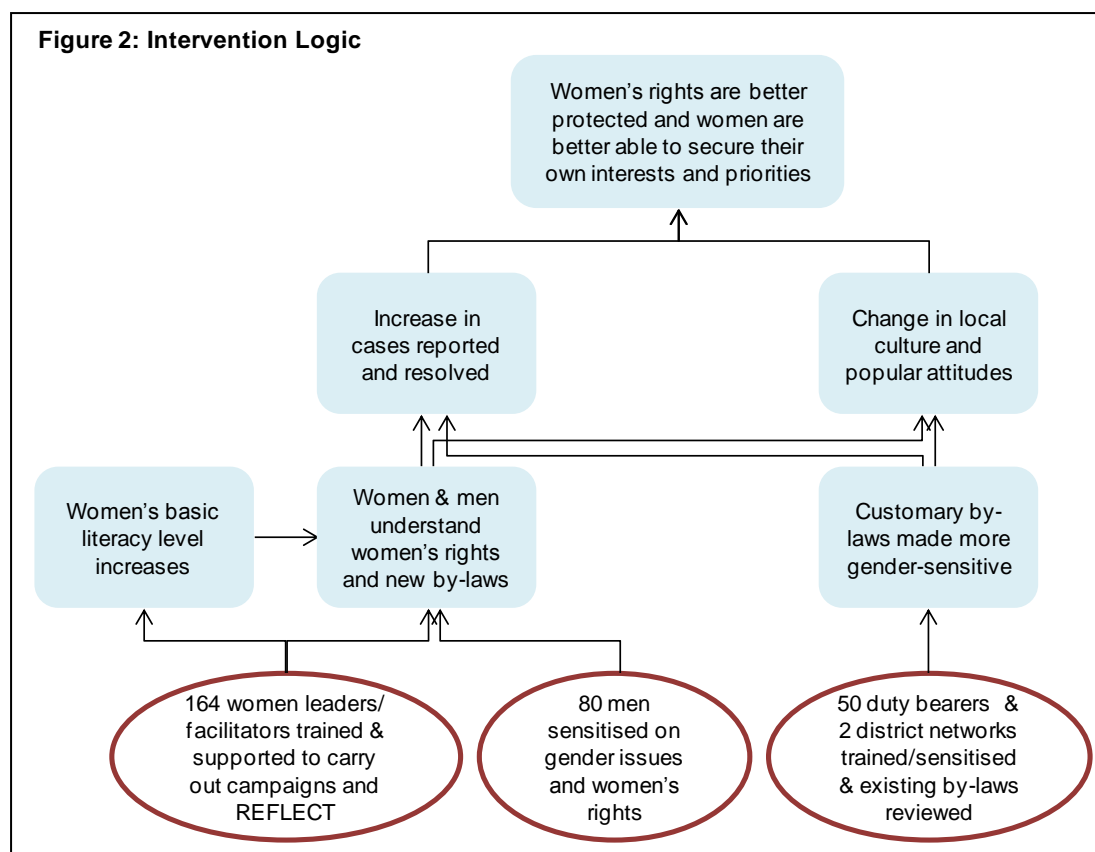


Figure 1: Map of Sierra Leone with Koinadugu and Kailahun districts highlighted in green

To realise these aims, 130 women leaders in communities across the two districts were identified and given training on women's property rights and literacy rights, leadership skills and advocacy skills. The same women were also trained in how to promote adult literacy using the REFLECT methodology. The project then supported and supervised these community leaders in carrying out awareness-raising and advocacy on women's property rights within their communities, as well as in implementing literacy training for women. Male community leaders and district-level office-holders also received training and sensitisation on women's property rights and were encouraged to support the passing of by-laws at district or chiefdom level to better recognise and protect these rights. Figure 2 illustrates how these interventions are intended to result in women in these districts being better able to secure their property and literacy rights.

These activities were supported through the use of discussions on community radio stations to promote women's property rights issues. In order to develop a joint advocacy strategy for the protection of women's property and literacy rights throughout the country capacity-building was carried out with the national coalition of organisations that work on women's rights issues,.

This Effectiveness Review evaluates the effect of the interventions that were carried out at a community level – primarily through the awareness-raising, local-level advocacy and literacy training carried out by the 130 women leaders. Since the evaluation methodology (discussed in more detail in the next section) involved comparing the outcomes for women from different communities within the same chiefdoms and districts, no assessment can be made of the impact of the project activities that were carried out at district or national level. This means that the results of the training of district-level office holders, the radio discussions, and the national-level advocacy are not covered by this Effectiveness Review.



Evaluation approach

The programme work considered in this Effectiveness Review aimed to improve the livelihoods of producer households through interventions at the community level. The approach adopted to evaluate the success of this work was a 'quasi-experimental' design, where women in the communities in which the project had been implemented were compared to women in communities where the project had not been implemented. The comparison communities were deliberately selected from the same chiefdoms as those in which the project had been implemented. As far as possible, they had similar characteristics to the project communities, in their size, ethnic composition, mix of livelihoods activities, and access to infrastructure.

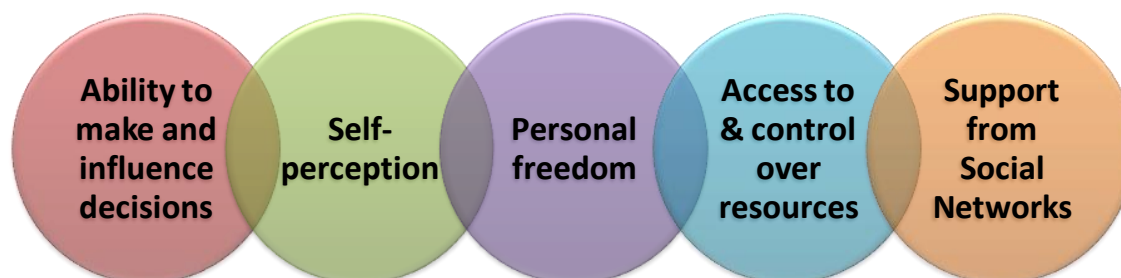
No communities could be identified that were comparable to the two district capitals and some other larger settlements, so these larger settlements were excluded from the Effectiveness Review. In addition, in Koinadugu District, two chiefdoms where the project had been implemented were too remote to be reached within the time and budgetary limitations available for the fieldwork, and so were excluded from this review.

A questionnaire was designed and administered to random samples of women in each of the project communities and the comparison communities. The survey included questions not only relating to women's empowerment, but also about household composition and information about the productive activities and indicators of socio-economic status. In total, 1,027 women were interviewed in the 34 project communities and 37 comparison communities. At the analysis stage, the statistical tools of propensity-score matching and multivariable regression were used to control for differences between the supported and comparison women in their demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

Measuring women’s empowerment

In order to assess a multi-dimensional concept, such as women’s empowerment, Oxfam GB has adopted and adapted an approach that assesses several dimensions of women’s empowerment. This approach builds on the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

Figure 3: What affects a woman’s ability to control her own circumstances and fulfil her own interests and priorities?



This approach involved considering five dimensions of women’s empowerment, as shown in Figure 3, and identifying various characteristics under each dimension that are important for women’s empowerment in the context in Sierra Leone. The characteristics identified for this Effectiveness Review included:

- **Ability to make and influence decisions:** Involvement in household decisions related to production, use of income and other domestic activities, as well as influence on decision-making at a community level.
- **Self-perception:** Opinions on women’s rights and women’s economic and domestic roles; self-confidence and psycho-social wellbeing.
- **Personal freedom:** Autonomy in work and personal life, literacy, attitudes towards and experience of violence.
- **Access to and control over resources:** Access to an independent income, savings and credit; access to, and decision-making power over, productive resources such as land, property, livestock and other assets.
- **Support from social networks:** Level of self-confidence in dealing with a range of situations and attitudes towards women’s rights, position and responsibilities.

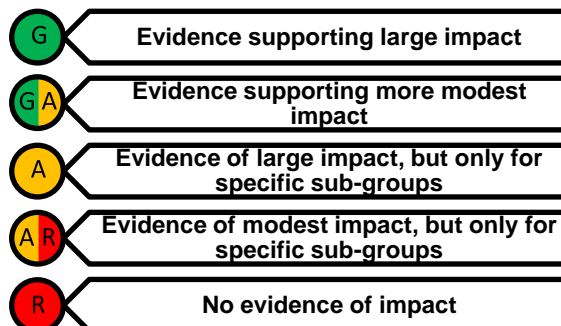
The full list of characteristics considered is shown in the table on page 8. Some of these characteristics – including literacy and the ability to realise land and property rights – are closely linked to the project interventions. Other characteristics were not directly linked to the objectives of the project, but were included in order to provide an overall view of women’s empowerment in the population served by this project.

For each characteristic of empowerment listed in the summary table on page 8, a benchmark was defined based on what it means for a women to be faring reasonably well in relation to the characteristic in question. An aggregate index of women’s empowerment was then defined as the proportion of characteristics in which each woman scores positively. It should be noted that, in this aggregate measure, each of the 27 characteristics is given equal weight.

For the purposes of measuring women’s empowerment under the Global Performance Framework, a woman is deemed to score positively on empowerment overall if she is empowered in more characteristics than a ‘typical’ woman in her district, as defined by the median of the comparison group.

Summary results table

The summary results table provides a snapshot of the key findings of the Effectiveness Review. For each of the characteristics of women’s empowerment, the table details whether it is connected to the project logic, and whether there is, in fact, evidence of the project having achieved a positive effect. Also shown are the proportions of women in the communities where the project was implemented in each district who score positively, according to the benchmark defined for each characteristic. For each dimension of women’s empowerment, the table also shows the whether there is evidence for a positive effect from the project, in the form of a simple five-point ‘traffic light’ system. The key illustrates what the various traffic lights represent: in this case, it should be particularly noted that an amber light indicates that there is evidence of impact in one of the two districts, but not in the other.



A separate full report is also available that provides a more detailed and technical description of the evaluation design, process and results.

Summary of results

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Overall index of women's empowerment

Women in the project communities in Koinadugu District demonstrated empowerment in significantly more of the characteristics than did those in comparison communities. It is not clear that there is any such difference between women in the project and comparison communities in Kailahun District.

Dimension	Characteristic	Connected to project logic?	Koinadugu District		Kailahun District	
			Proportion of women in project communities above benchmark	Evidence of impact	Proportion of women in project communities above benchmark	Evidence of impact
Ability to make and influence decisions R	Involvement in household productive decisions	No	40%	No	47%	No
	Involvement in household spending decisions	No	37%	No	42%	No
	Involvement in other household decisions	No	47%	No	39%	No
	Influence in community decision-making	No	23%	No	13%	No
Self-perception A	Attitude to women's political rights	Yes	82%	Yes	66%	No
	Attitude to women's property rights	Yes	22%	No	36%	No
	Attitude to women's educational rights	No	36%	Yes	38%	No
	Opinion on early marriage	No	68%	Yes	51%	No
	Attitude to women's economic roles	No	63%	No	51%	No
	Attitude to women's domestic roles	No	31%	No	11%	No
	Self-efficacy	No	36%	No	30%	No
Personal freedom A	Literacy	Yes	24%	Yes	11%	No
	Personal autonomy	No	41%	Yes	11%	No
	Spare time	No	90%	Yes	79%	No
	Support in achieving personal goals	No	30%	No	24%	No
	Attitude to violence against women	No	24%	Yes	32%	No
	Experience of violence	No	52%	No	59%	No
Access to and control over resources R	Ownership of land and property	Yes	44%	No	48%	No
	Ownership of other assets	No	20%	No	22%	Yes
	Independent income	No	46%	No	69%	No
	Role in cash management	No	40%	No	39%	No
	Savings	No	17%	No	19%	No
	Access to credit	No	42%	No	25%	Yes
Support from social networks R	Social connectivity	No	21%	No	26%	No
	Group participation	No	49%	No	29%	No
	Support from groups to achieve personal goals	No	49%	No	35%	No

Applicability: These results apply to women residing in the communities in Koinadugu and Kailahun districts where the project was implemented, with the exceptions of (a) Kailahun town and two other larger communities in Kailahun district, and (b) two chiefdoms in Koinadugu, which were too remote to be accessible for the purposes of the survey. The results relate only to the impact of the community-level interventions carried out under this project. The impact of the national advocacy work, the local radio programmes, and the capacity-building of district-level office holders is not covered in this report.

Impact assessment findings

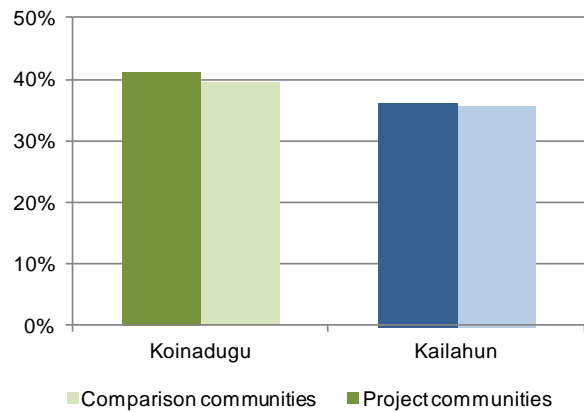
Overall index of women’s empowerment

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As discussed earlier, women’s empowerment was assessed in this Effectiveness Review by considering 27 different characteristics thought to be important contributors to empowerment. From the responses to the survey, each respondent was identified as having scored positively or negatively in terms of each of these characteristics, based on benchmarks which are described in detail in the following sections of this report. An overall index of women’s empowerment was then created as the proportion of characteristics in which each respondent scored positively.

The breakdown of the women’s empowerment index by district is shown in Figure 4. In each of the districts, the darker-coloured bar represents the average index score for women residing in communities where the project activities were implemented, while the lighter-coloured bar represents the average for women in comparison communities. It can be seen that respondents in Koinadugu District scored positively, on average, in approximately 40 per cent of the characteristics, compared to approximately 35 per cent in Kailahun District. In Koinadugu District, women in the project communities score positively on slightly more of the characteristics than women in comparison communities. Although small, this difference is statistically significant, and on balance probably does reflect an outcome of the project activities. In Kailahun District, it is not clear whether there is any significant difference in the empowerment index between women in the intervention and comparison communities.

Figure 4: Women’s empowerment index: Proportion of empowerment characteristics on which respondents score positively
(figures after PSM kernel matching)



It should be remembered that the women’s empowerment index is a composite of some characteristics that are related to the expected outcomes of the project in question, and other characteristics that are not. To understand the effectiveness of the project, it is therefore necessary to examine the results under each of the characteristics individually. The analysis of each characteristic is carried out in the sections that follow.

A key question arising from these results is why the project activities should have resulted in some significant change in Koinadugu District but not in Kailahun District. While the model of implementation was the same in both districts, there are some important differences between the two environments. For example, radio coverage in Kailahun District is more effective than in Koinadugu, meaning that more people (including in the comparison communities) will have been exposed to the radio discussions on women’s property rights. Potentially this may have made it more difficult to detect any incremental effect from the community-level activities in Kailahun. Differences in political control of the two districts may have affected respondents’ perceptions of their ability to influence decision-making processes. In addition, Oxfam’s work is better known in Koinadugu District, as a result of a recent cholera response and a water, sanitation and hygiene governance project having strengthened relationships with leaders across the district. This may have facilitated Oxfam’s achievement of positive results in this project. Importantly, it should also be noted that the district capital and two other market centres were excluded from the Effectiveness Review in Kailahun District. A relatively high proportion of the women community leaders trained are thought to come from these larger

towns rather than from the rural areas, so the results may not reflect the full effect of the project activities in the district.

Dimension 1 – Ability to make and influence decisions



The first dimension of women’s empowerment considered in the Effectiveness Review focused on women’s influence in decision-making, both at household and at community level. Figure 5 shows the proportions of respondents in each district who scored positively in each of the four characteristics considered. It can be seen that there is little sign of a difference in any of these outcomes between women in the communities where the project was implemented and women in the comparison communities, in either district. However, this is not surprising, since affecting women’s influence in decision-making was not among the project’s intended outcomes.

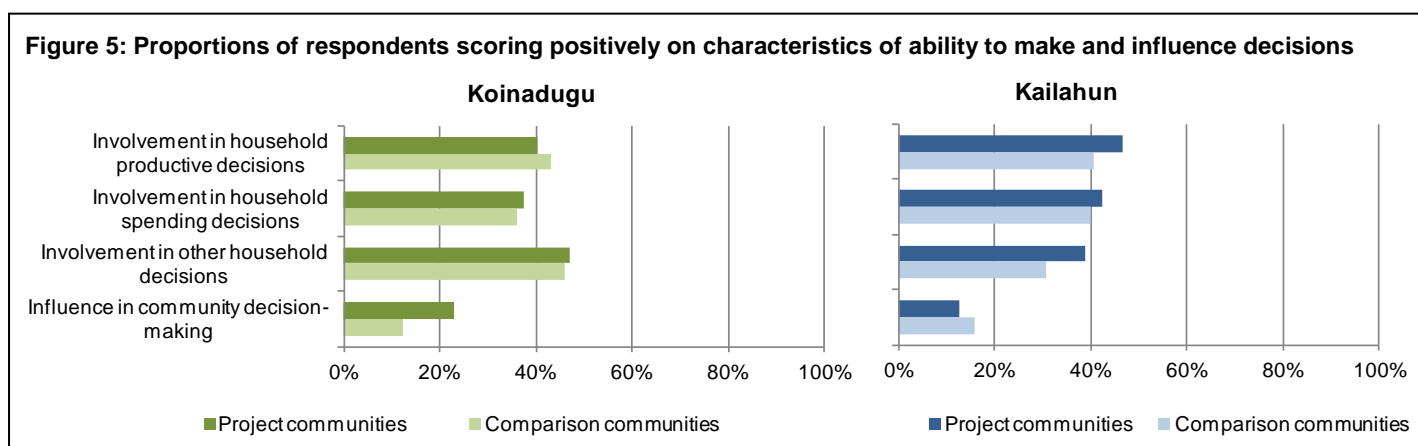
The results on women’s involvement in household decision-making are based on questions from the survey in which respondents were asked who in their household is normally responsible for each of 12 different types of decisions. If the respondent stated that she was not the sole decision-maker in any particular area, she was also asked to what extent she would be able to influence a decision she disagreed with.

The 12 different types of decision were divided into the following three areas:

- **Decisions on productive activities:** Decisions relate to agricultural activities, livestock rearing, and other income-generating activities.
- **Spending decisions:** How income gained from each of the household’s income-generating activities is spent.
- **Other types of household decisions:** Decisions over household members’ travel, what to give as gifts during festivals, and what to do when a household member falls sick.

In each of these three areas, a woman was considered to score positively if she is either the main decision-maker or has a large amount of influence over at least half of the types of decisions made in the household. Around 40 per cent of women surveyed reached this benchmark in each of these the decision-making areas. There was no indication of a difference between women in the project and comparison communities in terms of involvement in productive or spending decisions. There is some indication that involvement in other types of household decisions is higher among the women in the project communities – but the statistical evidence for this is not conclusive, so this finding should be not treated with confidence.

To evaluate women’s influence on **decision-making at community level**, respondents were presented with the following four statements, and were asked to state the level of their



agreement or disagreement with each:

- There are real opportunities open to you to participate meaningfully in important decision-making bodies in your community.
- You are able to influence how your community is run, particularly on issues you think are important.
- When you feel it is important, you can influence the decisions leaders make in your community.
- You are in a position to change things in your community if you really wanted to.

Each respondent was deemed to have scored positively on community influencing if she agreed with at least three of these four statements. On that basis, only 16 per cent of women overall scored positively. Again, there is no indication of a difference between the project and comparison communities on that basis.

Dimension 2 – Self-perception

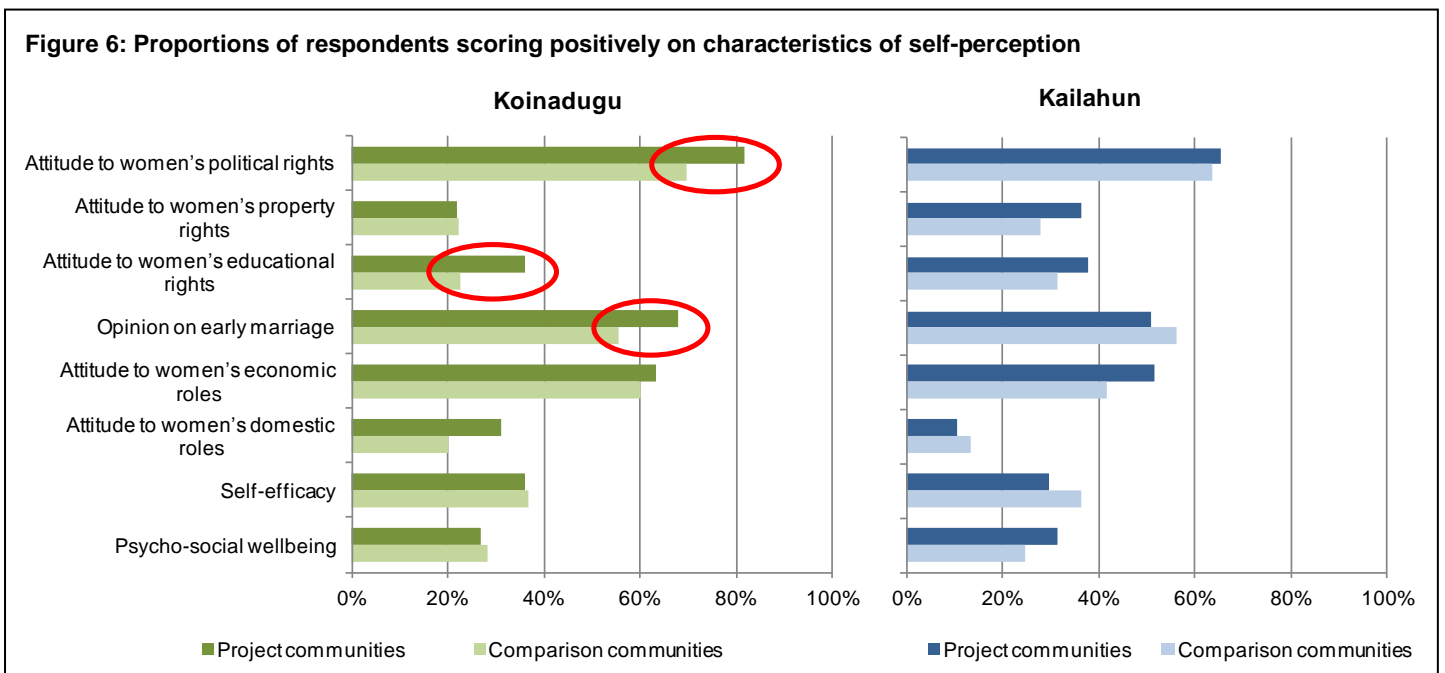


The ‘self-perception’ dimension includes an assessment of respondents’ attitudes and opinions towards women’s rights and traditional economic and domestic roles, as well as measures of self-confidence and ‘psycho-social’ wellbeing. Figure 6 shows the proportions of respondents in each district who scored positively in terms of each of these dimensions. Statistically significant differences between the women in project communities and comparison communities are circled in red.

Each of the characteristics under this dimension were assessed, like community influencing above, by presenting various statements to the respondents, and asking them about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each.

Attitude towards women’s political rights was assessed by agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

- The leadership of a community should be largely in the hands of both men and women.
- During elections, it is better for wives to vote for the same candidates as their husbands, rather than voting for their own preferred candidates.
- Women should leave politics to men.



- During elections, a woman has the right to vote for her own preferred candidate, even if this candidate differs from her own husband's preferred candidate.

Responses to the second and third statements (which are expressed in a negative form) were inverted during analysis. Each respondent was then deemed to score positively for attitude to political rights if she expressed positive responses in at least three of the four statements. On this measure, respondents in project communities in Koinadugu District had clearly more positive scores than those in comparison communities. For example, 73 per cent of women in project communities agreed with the fourth statement above (that women have the right to vote for their preferred candidates), against only 65 per cent of women in comparison communities. In Kailahun District, 73 per cent of women agreed with this statement, but with no significant difference between the project and comparison communities.

Two further statements included in the survey were intended to elicit respondents' **opinions on women's property rights**:

- The husband should not be favoured over the wife in the disposal of family property or income.
- Men are better placed to own land than are women.

A woman was deemed to have scored positively on this indicator if she agreed with the first statement and disagreed with the second statement. Approximately 22 per cent of women in Koinadugu District and 31 per cent of women in Kailahun District met that criterion – but these proportions did not differ significantly between the project and comparison communities.

Similarly, two statements about **gender disparities in education** were presented to respondents:

- Even in cases where a family only has enough money to send one child to school, boys should not be given priority over girls.
- It is more important to educate boys than girls.

Again, a woman scored positively on this indicator if she agreed with the first statement and disagreed with the second statement. More of the women interviewed scored positively in Kailahun District than in Koinadugu District – and in this case, there is a statistically significant difference between the women in project communities and comparison communities in Koinadugu. For example, 43 per cent of women in project communities in Koinadugu agreed with the first statement, and only 33 per cent of women in comparison communities. It is not clear that there is any such difference between project and comparison communities in Kailahun.

Another two statements in the questionnaire sought to elicit information about the respondent's **attitude to early marriage**:

- It is better for girls to be married soon after they have reached puberty.
- It is wrong for girls to be married before they reach the age of 18 years.

Respondents were scored positively in this characteristic if they disagreed with the first statement and agreed with the second. Again a higher proportion of the women in the project communities in Koinadugu District met these criteria than did women in the comparison communities, suggesting that the project activities may have had some effect on attitudes in this area. No such difference between project and comparison communities was evident in Kailahun District.

Two further characteristics considered under this dimension sought to assess respondents' attitudes to women's economic roles and domestic roles. These were again by means of asking about respondents' agreement or disagreement with various statements. For attitudes towards **economic roles**, the statements were:

- A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family.
- Wives should be more concerned with their duties of childbearing and housekeeping

and leave most household income generation to men.

- Men are more important than women in ensuring that the food and income needs of families are met.
- Women are less capable of contributing to household income and food security than are men.

Respondents were deemed to score positively in terms of this characteristic if they responded positively to at least three of the four statements. Sixty-one per cent of respondents in Koinadugu District met this benchmark, against only 46 per cent in Kailahun District. However, there are no clear indications of a systematic difference between women in project and comparison communities in either district.

To assess opinions on women's **domestic roles**, another four statements were used:

- A wife should obey her husband, even if she disagrees with him.
- A husband, rather than his wife, should be the overall boss of the home.
- A wife should never question the decisions made by her husband.
- A man should have the final word about decisions in the home.

Once again, respondents were deemed to have scored positively if they responded positively to at least three of these four statements. As for the results on women's economic roles, respondents in Koinadugu District generally expressed more positive attitudes than those in Kailahun District, but there are no clear differences between those in project and comparison communities.

Respondents' **self-confidence** was assessed by means of four questions derived from the General Self-Efficacy Scale:

- You are confident that you can deal effectively with unexpected events.
- If you are in trouble, you can usually think of a solution.
- You can always manage to solve difficult problems if you try hard enough.
- You can usually handle whatever comes your way.

Approximately a third of women interviewed responded positively to at least three of these statements. Strangely, the proportion responding positively was lower in project communities in Koinadugu District than in neighbouring comparison communities.

Finally under this dimension, another section of the questionnaire asked respondents whether they had experienced any of the following **psycho-social health** problems during the past two weeks:

- Lost much sleep over problems.
- Felt constantly under stress.
- Felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties.
- Been feeling unhappy and depressed.
- Been losing confidence in yourself.

Respondents were scored positively if they did not respond 'yes, often' to any of these questions, and only responded 'sometimes' to one or two. On this basis, just over a quarter of respondents scored positively. Again there were no clear differences between women in the project and comparison communities.

Dimension 3 – Personal freedom

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The survey included questions relating to six characteristics of personal freedom. Figure 7 shows the breakdown of the number of women who scored positively for each of these characteristics, with the statistically significant differences between project and comparison communities highlighted in red.

The first characteristic to be considered is each respondent’s level of **literacy**, defined as being whether the respondent is able to read and write a simple letter. In the communities where the project was implemented in Koinadugu District, the proportion of women who responded positively was approximately 22 per cent, compared to 13 per cent of the corresponding comparison respondents. In Kailahun District, there was no indication of a difference in women’s literacy rates between the project and comparison communities.

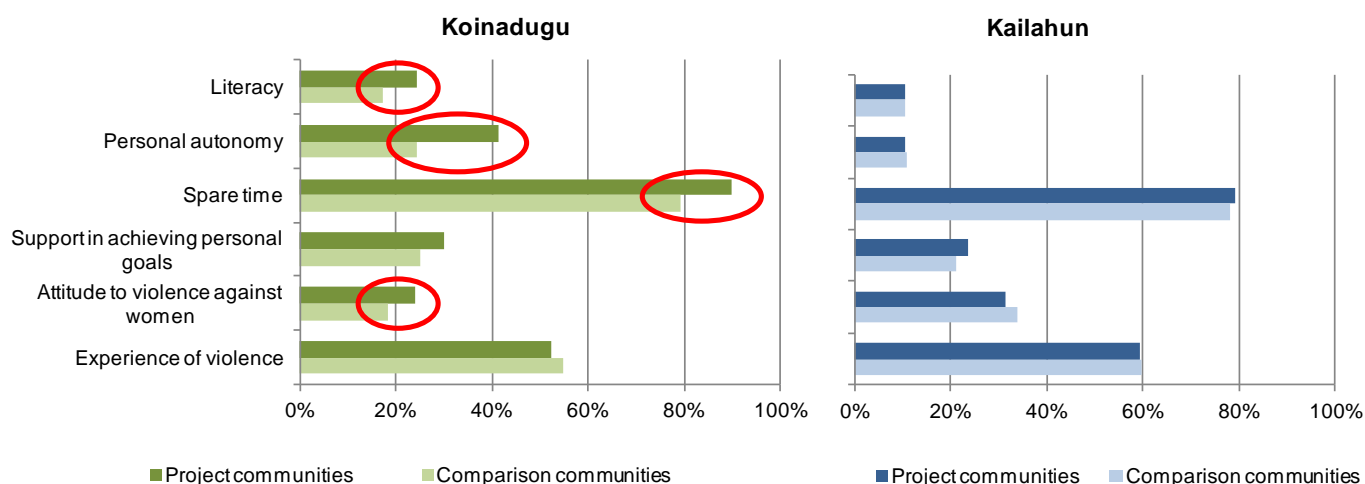
The second characteristic considered is the degree of **autonomy** that the respondent has in her life and work. The indicator was again constructed by presenting three statements, and asking whether each of these was true for her:

- It is up to you and you alone to decide how you do your daily work; nobody else controls how you do your own work.
- You do not need to seek approval from anyone to travel outside of your community.
- You do not need to seek approval from anyone to join a group in your community or participate in community-level activities.

Each respondent was scored positively on this characteristic if she said that all of these statements are at least partially true. On this indicator, there was a clear difference between the project communities in Koinadugu District (where 40 per cent scored positively) and the comparison communities (where only 23 per cent scored positively). Again in Kailahun District, it did not appear that women in project communities were any more likely to score positively than those in comparison communities.

Another characteristic considered under this dimension was the **time** available to the respondent to pursue her own activities. This was evaluated by asking respondents to think about a typical day of the week and all the time they normally spend working or carrying out care duties or domestic duties. The respondents were then asked to estimate how many hours they have to themselves. Respondents were considered to have scored positively if they said that they had two or more hours available to themselves. On this basis, the majority of respondents scored positively. However, there again appeared to be a positive difference between those in project communities and comparison communities in Koinadugu District: 90

Figure 7: Proportions of respondents scoring positively on characteristics of personal freedom



per cent scored positively in the project communities, but only 77 per cent in the comparison communities.

The fourth characteristic considered under this dimension was whether respondents can rely on **support from other household members** to achieve their personal goals. Respondents were considered to have scored positively if they reported that they receive a great deal of support from other household members, or if the level of support received had improved considerably since 2009. Around a quarter of respondents met this benchmark, with no apparent differences between those in project or comparison communities.

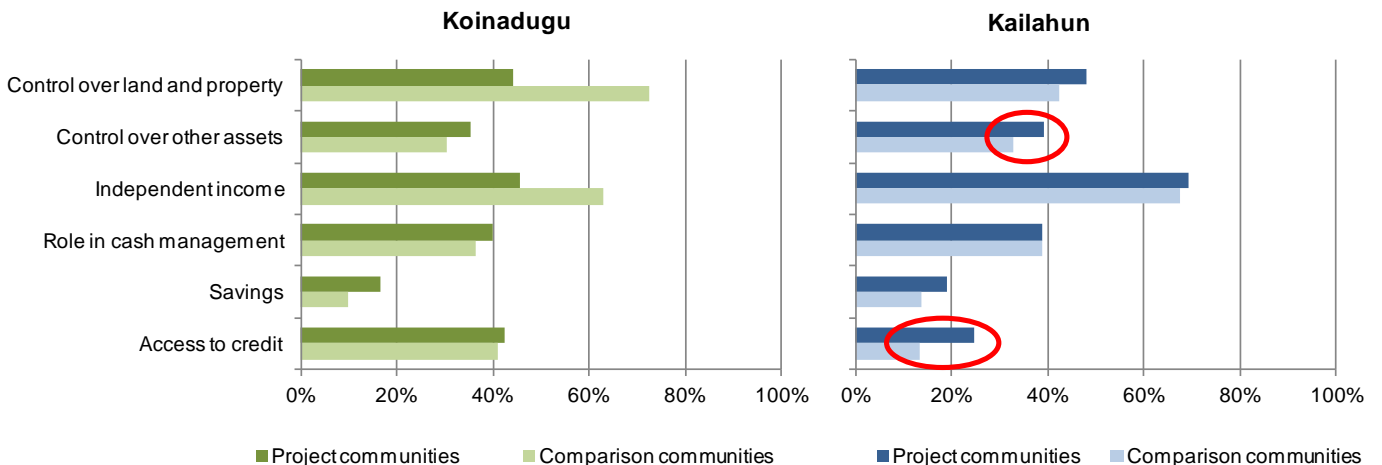
Respondents were also asked for their **opinion on the acceptability of violence against women**, as well as on their actual **experience of violence** in the 12 months prior to the survey. Overall, 75 per cent of respondents said that there are some situations in which they believe a husband has a right to hit his wife. However, this proportion was substantially lower in the project communities than in the comparison communities in Koinadugu District. Again there did not seem to be any significant difference between project and comparison communities in Kailahun District. Nearly half (44 per cent) of respondents reported having experienced some form of violence, insults or theft during the past 12 months, a proportion that did not differ significantly between the project and comparison communities.

Dimension 4 – Access to and control over resources



A further six characteristics were identified and measured corresponding to women’s access to and control over resources. The first two of these characteristics were related to women’s **ownership or control of land and property**, and ownership of other kinds of strategic assets. For all the land, property and other major assets owned by their household, respondents were asked which household members have control over that asset – meaning who would make the decisions to sell or dispose of the asset if necessary. Just over half of the respondents (56 per cent) reported that they have at least joint control over some land or property, a figure that was higher in Koinadugu District than in Kailahun District. Surprisingly, women in the project communities in Koinadugu District were considerably *less* likely to report that they have control over some land or property than women in comparison communities – that is, they were more likely to report that other household members would make decisions over control of those assets without consulting them. It is possible that this result reflects that the project activities have resulted in women becoming more aware that they lack control over these assets. Women in the comparison communities may have been less likely to think critically about ownership of property within the household, and so potentially more likely to state by default that they have joint ownership with their husbands.

Figure 8: Proportions of respondents scoring positively on characteristics of access to and control over resources



In terms of **ownership of other types of assets** (including livestock and valuable productive equipment, such as a plough, threshing machine or sewing machine), a third of women in each district reported that they have at least joint decision-making control over at least two livestock or asset types. There were no differences between women in project and comparison communities in this regard.

Whether a woman has **access to some independent income** was another characteristic considered in this dimension. Each respondent was considered to score positively on this basis if she reported that she personally contributes more than a third of total household income through her work. Approximately 56 per cent of women in Koinadugu and 68 per cent of women in Kailahun met this benchmark – a difference largely due to the higher proportion of female-headed households in Kailahun District. In Koinadugu District, significantly fewer women in project communities scored positively than in comparison communities on this indicator.

Respondents were also asked who in their household plays the main role in **keeping and managing the family’s cash**. Thirty-eight per cent of women reported that the responsibility is theirs or is shared with their husband or another household member. This proportion did not differ significantly by district or between the project and comparison communities.

The existence of **personal savings** and access to credit are two additional characteristics that indicate whether a woman has some degree of autonomy in accessing financial resources. Survey respondents were not asked directly about the amount of their savings, but were instead asked to estimate how long their household would be able to manage in an emergency, using only those savings. Just under half of respondents reported that they have some personal savings, and approximately 14 per cent reported that their household could survive for at least two weeks from those savings. To evaluate their **access to credit**, respondents were also asked if they would be able to borrow 250,000 Leones if necessary, from any source. The number who responded positively was much greater in Koinadugu District (41 per cent) than in Kailahun (18 per cent). Women in project communities in Kailahun were significantly more likely to respond positively on access to credit than women in comparison communities, but it is not clear why this should be the case: this is presumably not connected with the project activities.

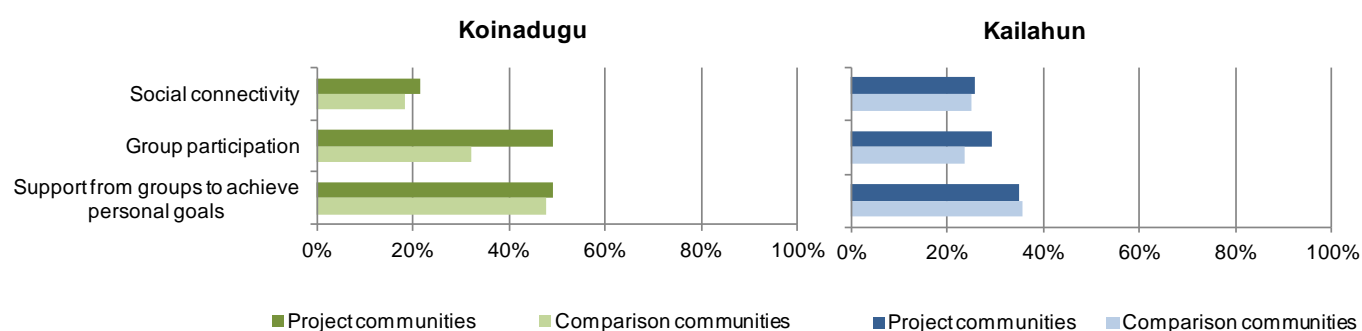
Dimension 5 – Support from social networks

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The final set of characteristics included in the Effectiveness Review attempted to evaluate the strength of respondents’ social networks. The first characteristic did this by presenting four further statements, and asking respondents the extent to which these apply to them:

- You are regularly invited to attend festivities in the communities (e.g. weddings, cultural rituals).
- You are regularly invited to participate in important meetings in your community.

Figure 9: Proportions of respondents scoring positively on characteristics of support from social networks



- You are regularly consulted for advice by members of your community, and are able to seek their advice and support when you need it.
- You regularly eat and drink with your neighbours and other friends in your community.

Each respondent was scored positively on this indicator if she agreed strongly with at least three of these four statements. Between a fifth and a quarter of respondents scored positively, and this did not differ significantly between project and comparison communities.

Respondents were also asked which **community groups they participate in**, such as savings or credit groups, religious groups, or producers' associations. Respondents were considered to have scored positively if they reported participating in at least two different community groups, and are involved to some extent in decision-making in at least one of them. Further, they were also asked to what extent membership of those groups enabled them to **realise their personal goals**. There were no detectable differences between women in project and comparison communities in terms of either of these characteristics.

Programme learning considerations

- **Ensure that mechanisms are in place to monitor the extent to which literacy training and campaign messages are disseminated by those trained directly under the project to other community members.**

In a project with a model such as this one – where the intervention involves building the capacity of selected community leaders to carry out training and awareness-raising among their neighbours – it is particularly important to monitor to what extent that dissemination is taking place. This should at least take the form of periodic visits to a sample of community members, to understand what contact they had with the training and campaign messages being promoted under the project, and whether these messages had been understood. Such feedback will allow the implementers to test for what the optimum number of people to train in each community would be, and what level of follow-up support and encouragement is necessary in order to maximise the value of their work.

- **Continue following up on progress with women's property and literacy rights in the project districts, to understand what effects this project has in the longer term.**

Although this Effectiveness Review was carried out during the final stages of implementation of the project, it is possible that in many cases there had been only limited time for the training and campaign messages to be disseminated throughout communities. Certainly whether women are able to assert their property rights, and to what extent this leads to increased women's control over valuable assets, are changes that will take more time to become clear. It will be interesting to continue following up to track whether the women trained under the project continue to promote women's property rights and to provide literacy training locally, as well as to what extent these activities result in longer-term changes in women's ability to assert their property rights. Even if carrying out further formal impact assessments is not feasible, if Oxfam continues to work in Koinadugu and Kailahun districts in other projects during the coming years, then this should allow opportunities for informal monitoring of changes taking place a district and community level. Such monitoring may well provide valuable insights into the long-term impacts of this project.