



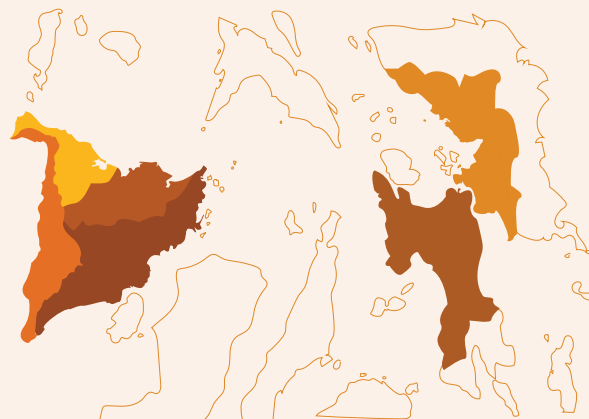
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From July 2014 to November 2016, CARE Philippines launched Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), a women-targeted livelihood recovery programming which worked on women entrepreneurship development. The project assisted the beneficiaries from the most vulnerable households affected by Typhoon Haiyan to establish sustainable livelihoods to help them secure their basic needs, generate employment and other economic opportunities by contributing to long-term solutions of addressing social and gender inequality and increasing the resilience among women.

“I think of ways to recover (my business). Don’t lose trust in oneself. I started from nothing; I can prove that I can lead a better life.”

As gender inequality worsens the vulnerability of women in disaster situations, the project introduced related interventions such as provision of financial capital for women’s microenterprises, conduct of capacity-strengthening trainings, and fostering of links to relevant supply chain actors and service providers.

The WEF involved 929 women entrepreneurs from six provinces (in Aklan, Antique, and Leyte provinces) with livelihood sources related to food vending, agriculture, handicraft, textile products, services, and other micro-businesses. At the end of the project, the following key results have been achieved: change in income, enterprise status, confidence of WEF entrepreneur, establishment of network and linkages, decision-making and control, gender equality (GE) beliefs, and strengthened coping strategies.



Food Vending
62.5%



Agriculture
24%



Handicraft
4.8%



Textile Products
4%



Services
0.5%



Micro-business
4.2%

To assess the sustainability of women’s economic empowerment (WEE) and resilience outcomes among WEF-supported women entrepreneurs, the post-project sustainability (PPS) study was done three years after the project completion. The study’s objectives include assessing the extent of the outcomes/impacts of the project to WEE and resilience are sustained or translated into lasting influences, identifying the factors that contributed to sustainable project outcomes based on WEE and resilience framework, and providing recommendations for future CARE programming and to ensure impact at scale.

To effectively conduct the study, a mixed-method evaluation was used to systematically combine quantitative and qualitative research techniques to collect, analyze, triangulate, and interpret results. The primary methodology used in the study was adjusted outcome harvesting complemented with the most significant change (MSC) technique.

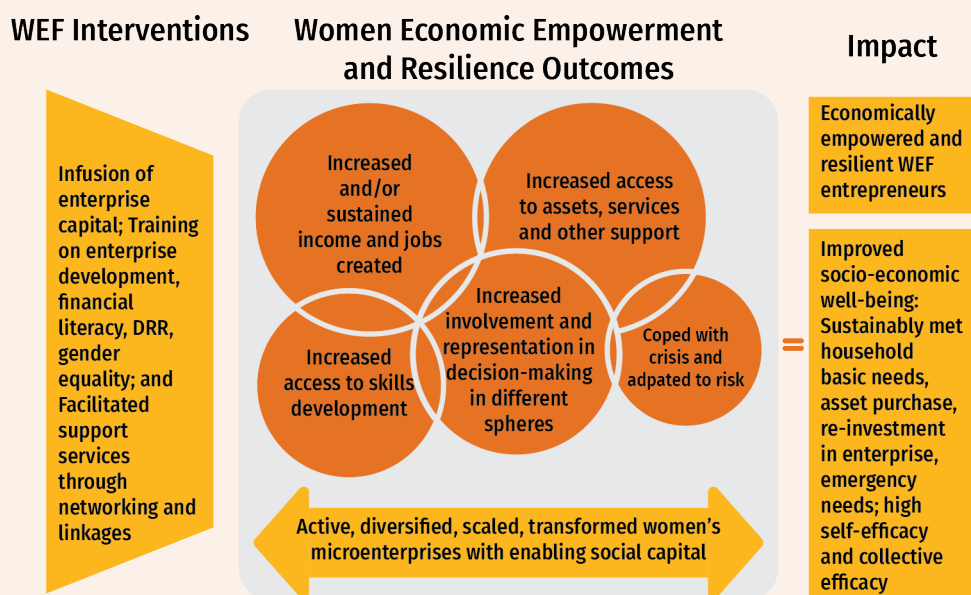
In conclusion, the sustainability of WEE and resilience outcomes is connected on the microenterprises that influenced the entrepreneurs' access to and control over information, enterprise assets, business development, financial services, and other needed support. The entrepreneurs' developed adaptive enterprise management capability was instrumental in keeping their microenterprises active which also enabled them to generate continuous income even times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The WEF entrepreneurs' aspirations and embraced role to take care of their families were key drivers to the sustainability of their microenterprises. The resilience of women and their microenterprises is not only measured by sustained income but also how they cope, start over, and have sustained income again. The entrepreneurs considered themselves successful in running their businesses and their definition of success varies.

As part of the study's key learnings, entrepreneurial qualities and viability of microenterprises in designing an early livelihood recovery project such as the WEF should be considered and the operating environment of the COVID-19 pandemic provided a factual scenario to examine the sustainability of WEE and resilience outcomes during a crisis.

The conduct of the study has also faced various challenges including the absence of updated information at hand about the WEF entrepreneurs after the project completion, difficulties in data collection due to the restrictions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, locating respondents, and inability to investigate certain pieces of evidence such as change in income and decision making at household, among others.

Finally, the study raised some recommendations for sustainable outcomes such as anchoring the livelihood recovery interventions with functioning local organizations, focus the capacity strengthening interventions of women on establishing means to access skills development services, and women need further awareness-raising on negotiation capacities and lobbying with power holders.



Learnings



A combination of appropriate soft and hard tools for microenterprises has proven to be an effective intervention



Sustained livelihood sources are empowering women in both normal and crises situations



A high proportion of WEF entrepreneurs remain micro and operate with limited capital and reinvestment of income, as income is often allocated for daily household needs.



Established relations, especially family and networks, are beneficial to WEF entrepreneurs to tide them over difficult times when facing shocks or stresses.



WEE and resilience reinforce each other.



Classifying outcomes by WEE and resilience domains of change provided focus and made analysis and interpretation of findings more efficient.



Good research practice requires flexibility in adopting proven research methodologies and refining tools based on women's lived realities and context.



Discussions with a group of WEF entrepreneurs or WEF entrepreneur with members of her group could have surfaced insights on collective efficacy.

Recommendations



Anchor the livelihood recovery interventions with functioning local organizations in project areas



Focus the capacity strengthening of women on establishing networks to access services, not just the usual skills training.



Provide further awareness-raising with women on negotiation capacities and lobbying with power holders.



Facilitate linkages with women's and community groups to influence change in social and enabling environments.



Promote collective action towards reducing drivers of risks