

Public Disclosure Authorized

Public Disclosure Authorized

Public Disclosure Authorized

Public Disclosure Authorized

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN PRACTICE:

LESSONS FROM THE GHANA PRODUCTIVE SAFETY NET PROJECT





© 2023 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank
1818 H Street NW
Washington DC 20433
Telephone: 202-473-1000
Internet: www.worldbank.org

This work is a product of the staff of The World Bank with external contributions. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of The World Bank, its Board of Executive Directors, or the governments they represent.

The World Bank does not guarantee the accuracy, completeness, or currency of the data included in this work and does not assume responsibility for any errors, omissions, or discrepancies in the information, or liability with respect to the use of or failure to use the information, methods, processes, or conclusions set forth. The boundaries, colors, denominations, and other information shown on any map in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of The World Bank concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.

Nothing herein shall constitute or be construed or considered to be a limitation upon or waiver of the privileges and immunities of The World Bank, all of which are specifically reserved.

Rights and Permissions

The material in this work is subject to copyright. Because The World Bank encourages dissemination of its knowledge, this work may be reproduced, in whole or in part, for noncommercial purposes as long as full attribution to this work is given.

Any queries on rights and licenses, including subsidiary rights, should be addressed to World Bank Publications, The World Bank Group, 1818 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20433, USA; fax: 202-522-2625; e-mail: pubrights@worldbank.org.

Cover design: Jihane El Khoury Roederer



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



This report was drafted by Sophia Friedson-Ridenour, under the guidance of Ioana Botea, Wendy Cunningham, and Christabel Dadzie. The authors are grateful to the Rural Development Coordinating Unit in the Ministry of Local Government, Decentralization, and Rural Development, specifically Dr. George Ababio, Desmond Duametu, and Adwoa Asotia-Boakye, for extensive feedback and guidance. The authors would also like to recognize The Khana Group who oversaw all data collection and the respondents who provided their thoughtful insights and feedback.

This work was financed by a grant from the World Bank's Rapid Social Response and Adaptive and Dynamic Social Protection Trust Fund Umbrella Program, which is supported by Australia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation without which this work would not have been possible.





AUTHOR'S NOTE

This guide is part of a package aimed at helping Social Protection and Jobs (SPJ) task teams in the Africa region to incorporate women's and girls' empowerment (WGE) into their operational and analytical work. The package consists of four products:

- 1. Dashboard of Women's and Girls' Empowerment Interventions**
A curated repository of WGE interventions from the SPJ portfolio in Africa, including information on operational details, any impact evaluation results, and implementation arrangements – with various filters enabling users to tailor the information.
- 2. Highlights from Africa: Empowering Women and Girls through Social Protection**
A paper that condenses the information from the dashboard to identify evidence-based types of WGE interventions and draw lessons for moving the WGE agenda forward.
- 3. Measurement Guide: Four Indicators for Assessing Women's and Girls' Empowerment**
A guide proposing a set of essential indicators to track changes in WGE as part of lending operations and providing guidance on how to collect and analyze the data.
- 4. Women's Empowerment in Practice: Lessons from the Ghana Productive Safety Nets Project**
A qualitative case study presenting beneficiary and frontline provider perspectives on the implementation and experience of WGE interventions on the ground.

These materials can be used side-by-side or on their own.

The resources use the operational approach outlined in “**An Operational Approach to Enhancing Women's and Girls' Empowerment in World Bank Operations**” (Cunningham and Gupta, 2022), which is a guide to linking empowerment concepts with intervention areas that can be integrated into World Bank operations.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	II
AUTHOR'S NOTE	III
ABBREVIATIONS	V
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 METHODOLOGY	4
3 IMPLEMENTATION	6
4 BENEFICIARY OUTCOMES	16
5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS	21
REFERENCES	24



ABBREVIATIONS

CLASS	Complementary Livelihood and Asset Support Scheme
FDG	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GIIP	Gender Inclusion Implementation Plan
GPSNP	Ghana Productive Safety Net Project
GPSNP 2	Ghana Productive Safety Net Project 2
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
GSOP	Ghana Social Opportunities Project
IDA	International Development Association
IDI	In-depth Interview
KII	Key Informant Interview
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
LIPW	Labor Intensive Public Works
PI	Productive Inclusion
SPJ	Social Protection and Jobs
SWCES	Single Window Citizen Engagement Service
TKG	The Khana Group
WGE	Women's and Girls' Empowerment





1 INTRODUCTION

Women’s and girls’ empowerment (WGE) is a key priority for the World Bank’s engagement in the Africa region. Gender equality has long been central to the World Bank’s twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity.¹ The Bank has, therefore, made substantial investments aimed at closing gaps between men and women as well as advancing our understanding of what are the most effective ways to close those gaps. However, only recently has the Bank recognized WGE as a policy goal in its own right and a key strategy for human capital development in Africa.² This highlights the need for guidance and tools to help task teams operationalize the WGE agenda in the region.

WGE is a process that rests on three pillars: resources, agency, and context. “Empowerment” is a process of change by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability.³ Specifically, it requires the removal of barriers in three interrelated pillars: (i) “resources” or physical/financial, human, and social capital; (ii) “agency” or the ability to make decisions about one’s own life; and (iii) “context” or the formal and informal social norms, relationships, and institutions within which women and girls operate. While interventions in each pillar can increase the ability of women and girls to make and realize choices, implementing actions in all three pillars is more likely to achieve transformational change.⁴

The Social Protection and Jobs (SPJ) Global Practice plays a key role in empowering girls and women, particularly the poorest and most disadvantaged. Most SPJ operations aim to expand girls’ and women’s resources using cash transfers, productive grants, or the provision of income through employment schemes. These methods provide beneficiaries with the means to realize their goals. Increasingly, SPJ operations also include accompanying measures to directly increase girls’ and women’s agency. This includes training on self-esteem, goal setting, and negotiation skills as well as mechanisms enabling them to voice their concerns and preferences. Finally, under the context pillar, SPJ projects are increasingly piloting interventions to promote equal gender norms.⁵

This case study aims to present perspectives on the implementation and experience of WGE interventions on the ground. Drawing on qualitative research with beneficiaries and frontline providers from the Ghana Productive Safety Net Project (GPSNP), the study is intended to illustrate how WGE concepts are applied in the context of a World Bank operation. It further serves as a platform to share women’s voices and their own views of how the project responds to their needs and goals. Finally, the

1 World Bank (2015).

2 World Bank (2019).

3 Kabeer (1999).

4 See Cunningham and Gupta (2022) for more detailed information.

5 See Botea et al. (2022a) and the Dashboard of WGE Interventions for more details.

study aims to identify challenges and provide actionable recommendations for how the GPSNP can improve implementation of WGE interventions and strengthen its impact.

The GPSNP has taken a proactive approach to WGE. The GPSNP is a US\$60 million IDA-financed project that was initiated in 2018 (and closed December 2022). The project aims to strengthen the country's safety net systems with the goal of improving the welfare and increasing the productivity of the poor. It has a strong focus on enhancing women's participation in social protection programs and contributing to their empowerment. Ghana has established flagship safety net programs that have progressively been expanded under projects such as the GPSNP and that include the Labor Intensive Public Works (LIPW) and Productive Inclusion (PI) programs, which are the focus of this qualitative case study. The GPSNP builds on the experience of the predecessor project, Ghana Social Opportunities Project (GSOP), which among other goals, aimed to contribute to gender equality in its programming.

LIPW aims to provide short-term employment to poor people during the lean season and to build productive assets in their communities. It was first introduced in 2010 under the GSOP and has been continued through GPSNP. The assets created through LIPW have improved the wellbeing of communities by addressing the underlying causes of poverty in project areas, for example, by reducing soil erosion, facilitating access to markets (through feeder roads), and increasing access to irrigation. These assets are intended to increase agricultural productivity in project areas and help poor households to respond to the risks of climate change. The LIPW program has supported more than 180,000 unskilled beneficiaries since inception in 2010 by providing them with over 13 million person-days of labor.

The LIPW program has gradually been adapted to respond to women's needs in terms of changing the location of work sites, allowing for piecework to accommodate women's time constraints, and providing on-site childcare. Additionally, men and women receive equal wages, and payments are made directly to the worker rather than to the household head. In an effort to ensure that women's voices are heard and elevated, the program requires that a "women's representative" is included as part of a three-member grievance redress case management committee in each community. The LIPW program under GPSNP originally had a target of 50 percent female participation but has exceeded this, with 62 percent of LIPW workers currently being women.

Productive Inclusion (PI) activities began under the GPSNP in 2020 with the objective of assisting poor households to improve their productivity by supporting targeted beneficiaries with sustainable livelihoods. The Complementary Livelihood and Asset Support Scheme (CLASS), a sub-project of PI, builds on activities piloted under the GSOP between 2016 and 2018. These activities include: (i) training in life skills and in running a microenterprise; (ii) training in business management and vocational skills; (iii) the provision of start-up cash grants; and (iv) microenterprise coaching and mentoring. CLASS seeks to assist extremely poor households participating in the LIPW and the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfers programs—both part of GPSNP—to establish and engage in enterprise/livelihood activities that will guarantee them sustainable incomes. CLASS beneficiaries are assigned to small groups for training purposes only. They are not compelled to work together on collective economic activities, although they may choose to do so in order to enjoy the benefits of economies of scale. Upon completion of all of the required training (life skills, business management, and vocational skills) and after they have formulated an investment plan and accompanying budget, beneficiaries are provided with a start-up cash grant to set up their microenterprises. Each individual beneficiary receives up to a maximum

of the equivalent of US\$200 in Ghana Cedi (the local currency). The exact grant amount is dependent on the beneficiary's approved investment plan and budget. The grants are disbursed in tranches that are released when the microenterprise reaches certain development milestones. Henceforth, for the purposes of this case study, CLASS activities will be referred to under the more general umbrella of PI.

Similar to LIPW, PI has made a number of program adaptations to respond to women's needs, including ensuring that women help select times for training activities that do not conflict with their household and caretaking responsibilities. Other adaptations, for example, include ensuring that training materials include information that addresses the needs of women. Specifically, this means that, among other things, the training provides empowering skills intended to enhance beneficiaries' ability to build aspirations, to develop self-confidence, and to identify and take advantage of opportunities without inhibition. There are also sessions focused on guiding participants to think critically about how gender norms influence their interactions with others and affect their behaviors. PI has a goal of 60 percent female participation but has far exceeded this goal, with as many as 80 percent of participants currently being women.

This report is structured as follows. Section 2 highlights the methodology used in the GPSNP case study, Section 3 provides insights into the implementation of the project, and Section 4 explores beneficiary outcomes or achievements. Section 5 offers insights on lessons learned and makes recommendations that are specific to the GPSNP, but could be relevant to an audience beyond Ghana, as well as broader recommendations for those looking for practical advice on incorporating WGE adaptations into new and ongoing SPJ programming.





2 METHODOLOGY



Between March 21 and April 7, 2022, qualitative research was conducted in seven communities in three districts in the Upper West and Northern Regions of Ghana. The research focused on two components of the GPSNP—LIPW sub-projects and PI activities implemented under the CLASS component. The data collection was overseen by The Khana Group (TKG). TKG recruited two local data collection teams, each consisting of five women and two men, one for the Northern Region and one for the Upper West Region. All of the data collectors participated in three days of in-person training, a two-day pilot, and two-day debrief prior to beginning the data collection.

Data collection included interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with 136 unique respondents, and observations at LIPW sub-projects and PI training sites. To learn more about how WGE adaptations were implemented and any changes or innovations that were made, 26 key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with community members, frontline providers, and regional and national project personnel from LIPW and PI programs. To better understand beneficiaries' experiences and outcomes as a result of GPSNP participation, FGDs were completed with current and former women beneficiaries and separate FGDs were conducted with their spouses (when applicable). In addition, follow-up in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with a subset of female beneficiaries who participated in FGDs, and observations were conducted at LIPW work and PI training sites. The sample of female beneficiaries included both younger women (under 35) and older women (over 35) as well as women with a variety of marital statuses, including widows and single women.

The research was conducted in the northern regions of Ghana where both LIPW and PI activities are being implemented. Currently, LIPW is implemented in the 80 poorest districts across the country, whereas PI is only being implemented in 41 districts in the five regions of northern Ghana and will gradually be scaled up geographically. All PI sites are drawn from and overlap with existing LEAP and/or LIPW districts.

The data were recorded and then transcribed and translated into English. All data were then uploaded into Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software. The data were initially coded using 23 descriptive first cycle codes and were then re-analyzed to look for any emerging themes related to either the program's implementation or beneficiaries' experiences and outcomes. The findings in this report are based on what the data revealed about these two major areas.

TABLE 1. Data Collection by Activity and Project

Data collection activity	Number completed
LIPW	
FGDs with past beneficiaries	2
FGDs with current beneficiaries	4
FGDs with spouses of beneficiaries	2
IDIs with past beneficiaries	2
IDIs with current beneficiaries	4
KIIs with community members and frontline providers	11
Observations by research team	4
PI	
FGDs with current beneficiaries	4
FGDs with spouses	2
IDIs with current beneficiaries	4
KIIs with community members and frontline providers	9
Observations by research team	2
National and Regional LIPW/PI	
KIIs with national project personnel	4
KIIs with regional project personnel	2

Note: FGDs = focus group discussions, IDI = in-depth interviews, KIIs = key informant interviews.

3 IMPLEMENTATION



The operations manuals for the LIPW and PI programs include the following WGE adaptations that cover the three empowerment pillars (resources, agency, and context) and are meant to meet the needs of women and enable their inclusion in project activities:

- Activities take place at times that do not conflict with female participants household responsibilities (resources pillar).
- The information provided at community sensitization sessions about program activities highlights the need for gender equality and avoiding discrimination against women (context pillar).
- All trainers and external contractors/consultants who will have any physical presence in any community must sign a gender-based violence (GBV) code of conduct (context pillar).
- Women are encouraged to use the Single Window Citizen Engagement Service (SWCES), a gender-responsive grievance and redress mechanism (GRM), to report any form of infraction that they may experience while participating in the program (agency pillar).

In addition, there are some WGE adaptations specific to LIPW that focus primarily on the resources pillar:

- Crèches must be provided at LIPW sub-project sites to take care of babies and infants, which enables nursing mothers to participate in the program (resources pillar).
- Temporary latrines must be provided at the sub-project sites (resources pillar).
- Pregnant women should be permitted to participate but not be made to work on equipment that vibrates or participate in other activities that are harmful to them in view of their condition (resources pillar).
- Women should be given equal pay to that of men (resources pillar).
- The information provided at community sensitization sessions about the program must include discussions of gender equality and of joint household decision-making on how to use the earned income (context pillar).

The PI program also includes additional agency and resources WGE adaptations to meet women's needs:

- The program provides both business and life skills training that is designed to share important business management information as well as deliver content meant to positively influence beneficiaries' psycho-social and attitudinal abilities to navigate the social, economic, and political challenges in society (agency pillar).
- All of the program's materials (i.e. handbooks, manuals, and sensitization materials) are gender-sensitive. For example, when pictures are used as part of materials to sensitize people about the program, pictures of women and persons with disabilities are included. All manuals also have examples that include women and provide details about how to support and engage women in program activities (resources pillar).

The data show that frontline providers, community members, and beneficiaries understood the goals of the project, including its emphasis on women's participation. Project personnel at the national and regional levels were able to clearly articulate and explain the various WGE adaptations to the GPSNP that are designed to encourage women's participation and provided details about how these adaptations are being implemented in various locations. Frontline providers at the community level also proved to be knowledgeable about the broad goals of the project and its day-to-day operations and could point to many of the WGE adaptations that are in place. At all levels of project implementation, respondents were aware of the required quota for women's participation (60 percent).

However, the extent to which the WGE adaptations are being implemented varies across LIPW sub-project sites, which may partly be due to the vague guidance provided in the operations guidance documents. For example, on a practical level, LIPW has developed sample blueprints and budgets for building childcare sites and latrines to guide contractors, but that information is not clearly referenced in either the operations manual or the Gender Inclusion Implementation Plan (GIIP). The World Bank SPJ team and the Program Implementation Unit agreed to develop a GIIP for the LIPW and PI programs with the aim of providing guidelines and mechanisms for mainstreaming gender and gender activities throughout the implementation, but some gaps remain in terms of providing clear and actionable steps. At the same time, there seems to be a lack of consistent and standardized monitoring of contractors or of holding them accountable for their performance, which likely contributes to some of the variation in implementation.

The interviews, FGDs, and observations revealed the following findings about the implementation of specific WGE adaptations in the LIPW and PI programs:

- A. **Enrollment:** In the sites visited by the research teams, women constituted a majority of beneficiaries in both LIPW and PI. Frontline providers reported no problems in enrolling enough women; on the contrary, many reported experiencing over-subscription, especially by women. More research will be needed to establish whether the quota (requiring that women constitute 60 percent of enrollment) is driving these high levels of enrollment among women, or whether high female enrollment is due to lower demand from men who tend to have more access to income-generating opportunities. This is an issue that was also raised in the gender assessment that was carried out inform GSOP operations.

- B. **Choosing when to begin work (LIPW) or training (PI):** In terms of selecting a time to begin work (for LIPW) or training sessions (for PI), both frontline providers and beneficiaries reported that women were involved in those decisions and influenced the agreement on the start time for activities. For example, a PI community facilitator explained, “It was the women that chose the location and time for the training. They wanted to have enough time to fetch water and cook for their families before leaving the house for the training. The women actually set that time. The men suggested 6am but the women disagreed and put 8am.” A LIPW community facilitator similarly explained how women influenced the starting time that was selected, “When meetings are held at the Chief’s palace, we even encouraged the women to say something by giving them opportunities to also contribute to the conversation during the meeting. It’s because of this that we ended up allowing them to report at 7am, while we [men] came at 6am.” Each community in the sample seemed to have made a slight variation in starting times to accommodate the needs of women. At some sub-project sites, the activities began very early so women could work or attend training first and then attend to their other responsibilities, while at other sub-project sites, the women preferred to start their LIPW or PI activities later in order to attend to their domestic responsibilities first. Factors such as the nature of the work itself (for example, manual labor in the hot sun), how much time was needed to carry out domestic tasks such as collecting water, and whether the women participated in farming and other income-generating activities all affected the time at which different groups of women preferred to start and end work.

An LIPW desk officer explained that employing frontline providers who come from the community itself helps to ensure that activities do not conflict with (or present a challenge to) women’s other responsibilities: “The contractors and supervisors live in the community, therefore they try to ensure that the work does not affect household chores and farming activities.” Ensuring that the timeline for work and training activities is compatible with women’s other domestic and household responsibilities is important to enable their participation in the program. However, while this participation helps to reduce gender gaps in employment and income in the short term, it does not address the underlying “context” issues related to gender roles and responsibilities that constrain women in other aspects of their lives. For example, many beneficiaries reported that they experienced no meaningful reductions in their household obligations as they took on more paid work because their husbands continued to believe that these were the responsibility of women. Changing traditional attitudes around gender roles in favor of a more equitable distribution of domestic responsibilities would require projects to adopt more transformative context interventions.

- C. **Location of project activities:** The processes for selecting locations for LIPW and PI activities were different. LIPW sub-projects are located in places where a community asset such as a dam or road needs to be built or repaired. This means that beneficiaries (both men and women) have little say in where their work is located. However, women generally reported that the location selected was convenient for them. For example, a beneficiary working on an LIPW dam sub-project explained, “Once I come here [to the site], I can just easily proceed to my farm after work because the farm is not far from here.”

In the case of PI activities, a location is only needed for a discrete period of time during the provision of the training sessions. These are generally held in a central location in existing structures such as schools or other community spaces. A PI beneficiary explained, “The training was done under a tree,

and that made it convenient or easy for us to sit comfortably and listen. If we were to do the training in the scorching sun, it would have been difficult for some of us to attend all the sessions.” Both frontline providers and beneficiaries reported that women were involved in choosing an appropriate location for the training.

In some instances, a single LIPW sub-project site or PI training location served multiple communities. In this case, one group of people may live farther away from the site than others, making it less convenient. In cases where the distance to travel was long, women reported being at a disadvantage. An LIPW beneficiary explained, “We women walk from our houses to this place, and as if that is not enough, we are given huge heaps of sand to collect and by the time we get back home, it feels like there is fire on our heads.” Another beneficiary added, “before you even get to this place from the house, we are always tired, and when you are going home, because of the sun, you feel more tired by the time you get home. The place is far away, and it’s the women who suffer more [than men].” This is partly because the men were more likely to have bicycles to help them to get to the sites. A community facilitator for LIPW explained, “Women beneficiaries have to walk from home to work because they have no means of transport, whereas men beneficiaries ride bicycles to work. It is fortunate the location is not too far from the community.” There were also reports from PI beneficiaries that the location selected was sometimes too far away. One PI beneficiary reported, “Some of us were staying far away from the location... When you are rolling out another project next time, you [should] select a suitable location for us ... so that we can all always easily get there and come back.”

There is recognition by national-level project personnel that sometimes sub-project sites can be located too far from people’s place of residence. One explained, “We [the project] set up sites for participants living within a five-kilometer radius, but in my view, five kilometers is quite a distance. In the GSOP we specified 3.5 kilometers. And in the GPSNP, we said five kilometers. But now, going to the sites that are even about four kilometers away, we realize that it’s quite a distance. So, in the design of GPSNP 2⁶, this has been reduced to three kilometers.” This shows that there are efforts underway to reduce the distance that beneficiaries must travel to participate in project activities.

- D. **Grievances:** All beneficiaries and frontline providers reported that some mechanism was in place for participants to report grievances. Most respondents at the community level knew that someone had been appointed to receive complaints and to escalate them up the chain of command as needed, which was the original grievance redress mechanism established by the project in 2010. An LIPW community facilitator explained, “if a worker at the site had issues with another person or if he or she was not happy about anything, I was the first person he or she would meet to give their complaints to me. There were also some elderly people in the community who were chosen to mediate when those issues came up.”

At the national, regional, and district levels, there was widespread awareness among project personnel of a toll-free call line that participants could use to report grievances, including issues

6 The Ghana Productive Safety Net Project 2 (GPSNP 2) is an IDA-financed (US\$ 100 million) follow on project to GPSNP. GPSNP 2 was designed in the peak of COVID-19 pandemic to ensure continued support to the social protection sector, particularly to aid Government to provide relief and recovery for the poor and vulnerable population, as well as building systems to aid response and resilience to future shocks. GPSNP 2 became effective in January 2021 and implementation is underway.

related to GBV. For example, a district-level LIPW desk officer stated, “We signed the gender-based violence consent forms. We had training [sessions] with the women, and letters were given to us by the zonal office, and we had some training on how to record gender-based violence cases, either through the toll-free lines or through the community facilitator to the Assembly. If it is not solved, then we report the case to the zonal office.”

However, at the community level, particularly among beneficiaries, few people were aware of the existence of the toll-free call line, and even when they knew about it, these individuals often did not have or know the phone number. This is not unexpected as the call line was relatively new, and efforts to raise awareness of the line in local communities were still in the early stages at the time of research. Project personnel at the national level reported that most complaints channeled through the toll-free line were related to problems with payments and that few, if any, cases related to harassment, violence, or other such complaints that the toll-free line was also designed to address. It is not clear if this will change as more people become aware of the toll-free line and how to use it.

While the respondents generally felt that there was a way to report their grievances, they mentioned that the current reporting system did not allow for anonymous complaints to be made. However, as awareness of the toll-free line grows and people learn that reports made through the line are kept anonymous, it will be interesting to see if reports of GBV, sexual exploitation and abuse, and/ or sexual harassment increase.

- E. ***Accommodations for pregnant women:*** The inclusion of pregnant women is a WGE adaptation specific to the LIPW program. The LIPW operations manual states, “pregnant women should be permitted to participate in the works but not be made to work on plants or equipment that vibrate or participate in other activities that are harmful to them in view of their condition.” Pregnant women do seem to participate in program activities at most of the LIPW sub-project sites included in the study, although not at all. In one community, for example, a frontline provider reported, “We were told not to allow pregnant women to work so we did not pick any pregnant women unless they became pregnant while they were already working.” However, most sites accommodated pregnant women by giving them lighter work and plenty of time to rest. In one community, for example, a frontline provider reported that, “Pregnant women are not supposed to do hard jobs. So, when they come to the site, they are given the job of fetching water for the other workers.” Beneficiaries at multiple sites reported that there were pregnant women working among them. One group of LIPW beneficiaries stated, “We were told that the pregnant women should not work like the others. Whenever pregnant workers were tired, they were asked to go and rest.” Beneficiaries from another LIPW site explained that the location was favorable to pregnant women participating, stating, “The site being located near to their homes enables pregnant beneficiaries to participate actively in the program to improve their standard of living.”

National-level project personnel talked about the inclusion of pregnant women in program activities in very similar ways as community-level respondents. One explained, “Women who are pregnant are also allowed to work so, for instance...pregnant women may be required to care for the children at the crèche or assigned to fetch drinking water for other workers at the site.” Additional accommodations for pregnant women are planned for GPSNP 2, including maternity leave. A national-level project team member reported, “Pregnant women are allowed to work, but in GPSNP 2...after a pregnant

woman gives birth, she won't have to come to work or get an alternate [to work for her] because she will be paid for three months. This we believe will serve the women better.”

Although the inclusion of pregnant women was not explicitly mentioned in the PI operations manual, the Gender Inclusion Plan for PI in the GIIP does footnote that the plan is relevant to vulnerable groups including pregnant women, indicating that pregnant women should be included in project activities. While there is no specific mention of adaptations that should be made to ensure their inclusion, the research team observed pregnant women participating in PI training sessions.

- F. **Latrines:** Provision of temporary latrines is required at LIPW sites.⁷ The inclusion of latrines is clearly stipulated in the LIPW requirements, but few of the sampled sub-project sites had constructed latrines in practice. One of the district coordinators reported, “I must say, to a large extent, it [the construction of latrines] was not satisfactorily done, especially by the private contractors... We didn't want [participants] to defecate around the environment, but what they did was that, where latrines were not provided, they used latrines in nearby houses.” Most LIPW sites reported open defecation or lack of available latrines. Frontline providers at two LIPW sites reported being aware that latrines were supposed to be constructed, but they had not yet constructed latrines due to a lack of resources such as roofing materials. On one of the LIPW sites, a community facilitator explained, “I was called to the office and was told we would have toilets at the nursing site.” He even searched for wood and thatch, but at the time of the research teams' observation, the latrines had not yet been constructed. In those places where latrines were constructed, it appears that zinc roofing sheets and other materials were made available for the construction. The timekeeper at an LIPW site, for example, stated, “The person that was leading us said that there was supposed to be a urinal and a toilet. So they brought zinc to construct the urinal and a latrine.” It is not clear who “they” is in this instance, but it is likely someone from the district. One of the project personnel at the national level explained, “We made it a policy, that if we come to the sites and they didn't have them [latrines], we will take you on. So we gave them some marks to push them to do it.” The person later clarified that it was the District Assembly that was responsible for constructing the latrines.

Latrines seem to be one of the least implemented WGE adaptations. Latrines, while beneficial to everyone, are especially so for women who face greater stigma and risks of harassment when they do not have a safe, secure, and private place to relieve themselves. Women can also face greater health risks than men when latrines are not available, including an increased risk of urinary tract and vaginal infections, among other things.

- G. **Childcare and resting places:** Section 2.6 of the LIPW operations manual states, “Crèches should be provided at LIPW sites to house babies and infants, which would allow nursing mothers to participate in the program.” While site plans do exist for the construction of crèches and site offices and sample budgets for this construction have been drafted by the project, there is little or no guidance on how the caregiver(s) should be selected or what training or support should be provided to them. The focus of the operations manual is primarily on constructing a physical site within which care can be provided, but there is little or no standardized guidance for how these childcare facilities should operate and limited monitoring of or accountability for fulfilling the childcare requirement.

⁷ While latrines were also included in the Gender Inclusion Plan for PI, this was a mistake as PI is not required to provide latrines as part of its activities. No PI sites included in this research were found to have temporary latrines in place, and no beneficiaries explicitly mentioned latrines in their responses.

That being said, many of the LIPW sites had a designated area for pregnant women to rest and for mothers to breastfeed and/or to leave their children with caregivers. Although the LIPW operations manual stipulates that “crèches” should be provided and the construction plans indicate that there is an intention to build formal structures, most actual childcare arrangements appeared to be relatively informal. Many were located under a tree, although a few were in covered structures. In most cases, the caretaking consisted mainly of basic supervision without teaching or learning materials being available and no training having been given to the caregivers. The only materials that appeared to be available were mats, but even these were not consistently provided. A community facilitator from an LIPW site explained, “We were told the bushes were not safe for the children... I was told that we need to get a room to accommodate the children. God willing, I listened and was able to get a place. As of today, there is a room for the children and for us too. When we work and get tired, we take a rest and eat there.” A community facilitator at a LIPW site explained, “We were told not to allow children close to the site.” Beneficiaries at the same site explained, “Some of us have children. They have selected somebody who usually comes to take care of the children while we work.”

Most, but not all, LIPW sites sampled had selected one or two women to look after children while their mothers worked. The women beneficiaries generally valued the provision of childcare not only because it relieved them of having to carry and mind their children while they performed physical labor but also because it kept their children safe and prevented them from spending long hours in the hot sun. For example, one LIPW beneficiary stated, “When we bring the children here and they are crying, the caretaker takes the children and plays with them. This makes us feel free to work.” When childcare was not provided, researchers observed that mothers still brought their young children with them to the worksite. At one of the LIPW sites without childcare, three children were observed on the site, two of which were under a year old and were being carried on their mothers’ backs and a one who was five-years-old and was sitting alone under a tree. An LIPW zonal officer reported, “I think going forward, we are going to treat that [not having a crèche] as a very serious safeguard issue, so if your site does not have a crèche, we may think of taking the project away from that community.”

Crèches were originally imagined as operating in static and permanent locations, but for some types of LIPW activities (such as feeder roads), the location can change as the sub-project progresses, so some frontline providers have suggested that mobile crèches would have been more appropriate. One of the project personnel at the national level stated, “You know the crèche was the most challenging for some of the sub-projects, for instance, for the feeder roads... If you take a road that is going to be 3.5 kilometers and you locate your crèche at the beginning of the road, as you work and move further away, the distance to the crèche becomes longer, making it difficult for women who have babies at the crèche. So we have decided to use mobile tents, the type used by soldiers, for future sub-projects so that as the work moves along, we move the crèche along with it.”

Despite the provision of childcare in many locations, project personnel at the district, regional, and national levels were aware of at least some challenges with the implementation of this initiative as well as with uptake by beneficiaries. At the national level, one of the project personnel explained, “There was one site I went to where the community facilitator was complaining that the mothers refused to give their children to the caretakers because of superstition, but I could also see that they were only using that as an excuse to maybe take a break from work. They later brought their

own children who were a bit older to take care of their babies, which was not permitted...". It is not entirely clear why women did not always use the childcare provided on-site. For example, were they uncomfortable with the women selected to provide childcare? Was the location of the childcare inconvenient to the worksite? Did they feel their children may not be safe? The lack of specific guidance on and oversight of the provision of childcare by the GPSNP means that there is a lot of room for variation in how it is implemented. Further research will be needed to fully understand why some women hesitate to use the crèches when they are provided.

Few PI beneficiaries directly discussed the provision of childcare, but many indicated they did not have their children with them during the training, and this was helpful in terms of their ability to participate in training activities. One PI beneficiary explained, "It [the training] was all seriousness. There was no child with us." A community facilitator at one PI site stated, "I suggested that a shed be created for the women so that those with children would have shade to sit under. And they agreed to implement it." At the zonal level, one respondent commented, "Even women who are lactating mothers and are participating in the training are provided with babysitters to take care of the children to ensure that they can fully participate in the program." Childcare, therefore, seems to have been available at some PI sites but not as a standard program feature.

When asked about what was most important to women's inclusion and participation in LIPW and PI programs beyond the WGE adaptations, many beneficiaries also emphasized the importance of ensuring that core project features are functioning well, such as the timely payment of wages and grants. While WGE adaptations can and do add value to a project, it is also crucial for the project's core functions to operate reliably.

- A. **Problems with LIPW payments were among the most frequently reported challenges, and these issues sometimes undercut women's economic empowerment.** Project personnel at the national and district levels reported that a majority of complaints received related to issues with payments. A committee member at an LIPW site explained, "We receive complaints about payment delays, underpayments, and a lack of tools on the site." Frontline providers brought up various reasons for the problems with payments including: cash flow issues with the project at the national level; problems with the LIPW attendance system whereby if a person was accidentally recorded as absent, they were not paid; miscommunication by project personnel and between beneficiaries about LIPW wages and PI grants; and problems with beneficiaries' e-zwich cards.⁸

Problems with payments were reported in at least four of the six LIPW communities in the sample. A LIPW beneficiary who had not received any payments in four months explained, "Because the payments are not coming, I have been forced to sell my small amount of maize just to buy ingredients to prepare food for my children." Delayed payments often left beneficiaries, particularly women, in precarious financial situations, which is not conducive to achieving empowerment.

The wage rate for LIPW is set at the level of the national minimum wage. The representatives (2 per household) of each beneficiary household can work on an LIPW sub-project for a maximum of 90 person-days per year during the agricultural off-season and are allowed to do this for two

⁸ E-zwich is Ghana's national switch and smart card payment system, which is used by the GPSNP to pay wages and grants to beneficiaries.

consecutive dry seasons over a two-year period. There were more reports of men leaving the project than women because of either payment delays or low wages. Men often have other income-earning opportunities, whereas women have more limited options and so appear more likely to continue their participation even when they encounter problems with the project. For example, an LIPW community facilitator reported, “Initially there were more men than women, and when we were told to have more women participants, fortunately some men from the nearby communities decided they would not work [on the LIPW] again because they complained that the daily wage was not adequate.” Importantly, both the project personnel and beneficiaries reported that women and men were paid the same wage, even if the tasks that they performed were different.

In recognition of the challenges related to delayed and/or missing payments, the LIPW and PI programs have both invested in electronic monitoring and payments systems. These systems, while they have taken a while to be fully rolled out, will vastly speed up the payment process and reduce delays. Payment delays have also been compounded by the slow procurement of payment service providers as well as the need to ensure that district-level approvals are completed on time. Projects are embedded in the local government system at the district level. As such, District Assembly management teams, primarily the District Coordinating Director signs off on all site payments before they come to the zonal level and then the national level. This approval process can often be time consuming. These are challenges that the project team is aware of and has instituted measures, including increased communication and capacity building, to improve service delivery in both programs. Capacity development efforts have included providing support for the district implementation teams to help them better understand the project processes, their roles and responsibilities, and the implications of their actions. Capacity building efforts have also included support to help implementation teams more effectively use technology to complete needed approvals more swiftly.

B. Miscommunications and misunderstandings about the payment and distribution of PI grants were also reported, which sometimes created confusion and frustration among beneficiaries.

These misunderstandings seemed to be mainly concerned with the size of the grant that people would receive and when they would receive it. A respondent at the national level of the project explained, “After the beneficiaries have gone through the training the trainer would help them to put together an investment plan... It is the content of this plan that determines the amount of grant the person receives.” It was not always well understood by beneficiaries that, because the grants are based on the investment plans that they develop, they can therefore vary in value between beneficiaries and are also released in tranches. The project needs to improve its communications about how the PI grants are disbursed, particularly since beneficiaries may have limited literacy and numeracy, particularly women as they generally have lower levels of formal education than men in the project areas. One of the national-level PI personnel explained, “Most of the challenges we have are because of their [beneficiaries’] low level of literacy. For instance, with the e-zwich, when the [e-zwich] number is wrong, they don’t know. And during enrollment, some of them couldn’t remember or call out their phone numbers. Moving forward, we should look at giving them some formal education.” Including some basic literacy and numeracy education as part of the project’s activities would be especially beneficial to women.

While many WGE adaptations are in place and functioning well, better communication is needed to ensure that frontline providers and beneficiaries themselves fully understand them. Standardized messaging is also needed across all project documents and sites in order to ensure that opportunities for WGE are maximized. Increased monitoring of project implementation at the local level is needed, given that the project is decentralized, and a lot of the authority lies with district assemblies, to ensure that WGE adaptations are being implemented as intended.





4 BENEFICIARY OUTCOMES

Given the growing interest in WGE as a public policy goal in its own right and as a key priority for human capital development in Africa, it is important to fully understand how WGE adaptations can and do impact beneficiaries. Using an empowerment framework can be helpful for World Bank task teams when they are deciding on which WGE adaptations to incorporate into their projects. It can also be useful for choosing and measuring a set of meaningful beneficiary outcomes or achievements.

This section describes whether the respondents felt that participating in the project changed their feelings of agency, their family relationships, the distribution of domestic work and support for women's work in their households, the role played by women in their household's decision-making, the degree of respect that they received from family and community members, and the self-confidence and aspirations of women beneficiaries. In some cases, beneficiaries made direct links between WGE interventions, such as life skills training, and their outcomes, such as increased confidence and more ability to speak in public or greater collaboration between spouses. However, in most cases, beneficiaries attributed changes in their lives to the increases in income and reductions in poverty that were a direct result of their project participation. Moreover, while this qualitative research highlighted mechanisms through which beneficiaries experienced change, it is beyond the scope of the research to determine if, on average, there was a significant impact on the beneficiaries' lives for the outcomes they reported.

The income provided by LIPW and the start-up grants provided by the PI program were key motivating factors that led people to participate in the project, but the reported benefits went beyond purely financial outcomes. An LIPW beneficiary explained, "We use the money to solve our problems, which motivates us to come to work very often. It gives us a peace of mind too." However, beneficiaries recognized that the impact on their lives went beyond these material and financial gains. For example, a PI beneficiary reported, "Before the training, I had made plans to leave my children behind and travel down south to look for money...The training has given us an alternative source of livelihood... [and] has helped to solve my problems, and I no longer see the need to travel down south to look for money. In fact, the training has given me peace and joy with my family." Her participation in the PI program increased her ability to make important life decisions, like where to live and work. Similarly, one of the project personnel at the zonal level echoed this same point, "Before the project implementation, those women who did not have any money used to run to the cities to do kayayei [working as head porters]. But now that they are earning some money, they are stable and have stopped running to these cities." Empowerment is not just about having more money; it is about being able to make strategic life choices and decisions about how and where to work, choices that these women were formerly unable to make.

As a result of earning more income and having access to new income-generating opportunities, beneficiaries reported experiencing positive changes in their marital and other familial relationships.

One PI beneficiary stated, “There are good vibes between us [husband and wife]. Perhaps we used to have disputes over cash, but now that I earn some income from this work, we don’t have any issues because of money anymore.” Similarly, an LIPW beneficiary reported, “Ever since I started this work, the relationship between me and my husband has improved a lot because I had no additional income that I could use to support the family, and due to that, there were lots of issues between us. But currently there have been no disputes because I now work and earn income for myself and also support my family.” Many beneficiaries reported decreased tensions within their households as a result of generating more income. Similarly, a recent study of the LEAP cash transfer program found that many beneficiaries of the program reported experiencing less conflict and violence in their households, and the most commonly cited reason was because of a reduction in poverty.⁹

As women brought more income into the home, many tried to share their new resources with extended members of their households to increase feelings of peace within the home. For example, one PI beneficiary reported, “I try to help the other wife of my husband whenever I get something from working, and there has been a cordial relationship in the house. Sometimes when I make the soap, I give them some to use.” Being able to share benefits can alleviate women’s stress and improve their relationships with people in their immediate lives.

The more that husbands saw the ways in which women’s income alleviated the financial pressures on the household, the more supportive they usually became of their wife’s continued participation in the project. For example, one PI beneficiary noted that her husband was not initially supportive, but after seeing the benefit, he had changed his mind. She explained, “My husband asked me to...stop wasting time in going to that training until I received the grant support. He then realized that it was a great decision to attend the training. Some other family members used to criticize me a lot for going to the training and making so many nasty comments. The [financial] support from the training has brought great relief and love into my family. My husband and the other family members have praised me a lot for the support I have received.”

As a result of participating in the project, women also reported having more decision-making capacity. More than one PI beneficiary reported that they had learned about joint decision-making through the combined life skills and business training. One woman explained, “Now, whatever we are to do, we both [husband and wife] bring our ideas together and select the best one... The training has helped me a lot in sharing ideas with my husband on whatever we have to do in the family. Before the training, we used to do things differently on our own. There is so much love and peace in the family because now, we all share our opinions and ideas including our children.” Another female PI beneficiary stated, “Prior to this work, I didn’t know it was possible that a man and his wife can come together to take decisions. But through this work we were taught that it’s good for you and your husband to sit together and also consult one another. That’s what we practice now.” Not only did women report greater levels of consultation between spouses over the allocation of resources within the household, but women also reported having greater control and decision-making power over the income that they earned. One LIPW beneficiary explained, “My husband and I used to have conflict about supporting my extended family. Now that I am working here, I am able to share my allowance with my mother. Now I plan to take care of my mother and father myself. When I wasn’t employed, this used to be a source of worry to me. Now I can take care of my parents myself.”

9 Barrington et al (2022).

Women reported having greater agency in terms of their ability to set and achieve a range of goals.

For example, one PI beneficiary reported that she could now switch from trading shea nuts to purchasing and processing raw local rice. Her participation in the PI program had widened her skill set and given her the economic boost that she needed to change her business. Similarly, an LIPW beneficiary explained how through the project she worked with her husband to meet a savings goal and has been able to change her job, “This project has enabled my husband and me to save and buy a fridge, which I use as a cold store. I wanted to do business. I am doing petty trading now.” Another LIPW beneficiary reported, “I used to engage in prostitution to get money... but since I joined this project, I have been able to fend for myself and have some money saved for the future without engaging in prostitution. Because of the village savings and loans group I’m in, I am able to save 10 cedis every Friday, and I’m able to take out loans from the group... Now, I am financially independent due to this program, and am able to pay for school fees and other expenses without any issue.” For her, participating in LIPW increased her ability to make decisions not only about how she supported herself but also, importantly, about her bodily autonomy. Other women were incrementally working towards achieving set goals. One PI beneficiary explained, “Building [a house] was part of the reason I wanted to join this project. Thankfully, I am now saving towards this from the proceeds of the business.” Women expressed a range of goals towards which they were able to work as a result of participating in the project, which gave them a greater sense of agency and control over their lives.

Improved economic status also translated into greater levels of respect from family and community members.

A PI beneficiary reported, “I used to take money from my mother-in-law for domestic reasons like paying for bills at the grinding mill, but ever since I started this trade, I no longer have to go to her for money and even when I make the soap, I give her some to wash. This has earned me some respect from her.” Another PI beneficiary explained how earning money has translated into greater respect from her husband, “If you are a woman who does not have anything [money] because you are not working, your husband doesn’t value your inputs... Now our husbands are aware of the fact that we are no longer dependent on them, so they have to accord us some respect.” Similarly, an LIPW beneficiary stated, “Within my household, I am respected because of the financial contribution I now make.” Beneficiaries also earned respect for their hard work from the community. One LIPW beneficiary explained, “Initially they [community members] discouraged us [beneficiaries]. They made statements like ‘how can a dam be constructed with hands?’ Now that they have seen the work that we have done, they are interested in becoming beneficiaries. Everyone respects us now.” It was clear from both PI and LIPW beneficiaries that being an income earner and working hard improved women’s status within both their households and their communities.

LIPW and PI beneficiaries reported feeling more confident, particularly in terms of their ability to speak in public.

One PI beneficiary noted, “At first, some of us did not know how to communicate properly and also speak in public, but now, as a result of the meetings [training], a lot of us have learnt how to communicate.” Another PI beneficiary explained, “There have been great changes in my life because at first, I could not express myself properly to anyone because I was not confident, but with aid of the training, I can now confidently express myself in public. In fact, the training has made significant changes in my lifestyle.” Many women talked about building confidence during the training to speak in public and to communicate, in part because of the training materials and in part because of the way in which the training was conducted. One of the PI trainers, for example, explained, “During our interactions, I noticed that men were not giving women the opportunity to contribute. Women didn’t want to participate. I had to encourage

them to open up and feel free. Everyone is equal, and this project has nothing to do with a particular sex. We are all in the same field so through that, the women started to contribute to the discussions, and I am very excited about this.” One of the zonal PI personnel attributed women’s increased confidence to the life skills training, “The life skills training alone has increased and boosted their confidence level and also helped to reduce their level of timidity.” Similarly, LIPW beneficiaries reported feeling more confident and having a greater ability to speak in public, even though they did not receive the same life skills training that the PI beneficiaries did. One LIPW beneficiary explained, “Some of us could not talk in public, but through this project and the discussions we have at work, we learn to contribute to discussions. Personally, when I am going somewhere, and I meet about ten people sitting somewhere, I find it difficult to walk past them. My legs begin to shake, but through this project, I have developed my self-confidence. Even if we are a hundred people discussing, I can contribute to the discussion.” This seems to indicate that, at least in part, it is the way in which the project itself is run that promotes women’s increased confidence and ability to speak in public.

Overall, the beneficiaries reported a range of positive WGE-related outcomes or achievements, but these results were not universal and some beneficiaries experienced challenges as well. These challenges included:

- A. ***Increase in the overall work burden:*** While many beneficiaries enjoyed the support of their spouses in terms of participating in the project, many also said that they experienced no reduction in their domestic and household responsibilities. Therefore, taking on an income-generating activity can often increase a woman’s overall work burden.
- B. ***Reduced financial contributions to the household from the spouse:*** While their spouses were generally happy about the beneficiaries’ financial contributions to the household, there was some risk that as women earned more money, their husbands might reduce their financial support to the household. A PI payment agent explained, “In the beginning we had six women who complained that when they [started receiving] the money, the men stopped helping in terms of feeding. Others too have [had] their husbands borrow money from them and not pay [them] back. Some husbands too have left the paying of school fees and buying of clothes to the women. Their husbands were pushing so many responsibilities to them because they were earning income.” In other words, as women began earning wages, their spouses sometimes reduced the amount of money they had been contributing to the household, thus leaving women with heavier financial responsibilities. In other instances, there were reports that some husbands expected their wives to hand over their earnings to them. For example, a district coordinator stated, “there was one instance where a man did not take part [in the program]. It was the woman [who worked on the program] and the man was expecting the woman to give him the money at the end of the program. It generated into some quarrels, and then we [the program] cannot do anything but we reported it to the chief.” Problems like this were not commonly reported, but they did exist. Adding an intervention that engages men in discussions about gender equality and fairness under the “context” pillar might reduce or prevent this situation.
- C. ***Difficulties sustaining achievements:*** While many beneficiaries reported financial (as well as non-financial) achievements as a result of program participation, it was not entirely clear how long-lasting these gains were. However, evaluating the long-term impact of these achievements was beyond

the scope of this research. This case study did, however, capture reports of individuals who have struggled to sustain gains made during project participation. For example, a past beneficiary of a LIPW sub-project explained, “Life in this community is difficult. Things are expensive. The land is not fertile as well. When we are paid our allowances, we end up spending all the money within a short time. We don’t get any profit on any investment.” It is hard to know how widespread experiences such as this are, and it is important to remember that there are large externalities such as prolonged drought in many sub-project areas that the project cannot solve. Because these can undercut the beneficiaries’ achievements, they must be taken into account in any evaluation of the long-term outcomes of WGE adaptations and initiatives.

It should also be noted that one of the challenges in capturing the longer-term outcomes of program participation lies in the fact that the time horizon for seeing change can often be distant. For example, an LIPW performance evaluation (2022 not yet published) indicates that some beneficiaries of cashew plantations viewed the sub-project as a future investment for them and the community, once the trees bear fruit. So, while immediate gains are not eminent, beneficiaries anticipate positive change in the future. In the case of PI, the program is still new, and it will take time for beneficiaries’ income-generating activities to take hold and achievements to be translated into long-term gains. However, a tracer study of the PI pilot, undertaken in 2021, provides reason for optimism. It found that many beneficiaries (a majority of whom are from LIPW) were still in business two years after initiation. In addition, some LIPW beneficiaries who have enrolled in the PI program have reported using some of their LIPW payments to invest in their income-generating activities. While not conclusive, this strongly suggests that there are possibilities for PI to be a good avenue for promoting sustainable livelihoods for some LIPW beneficiaries. Ultimately, linking the LIPW program with other programs that are directly geared towards longer-term gains, can enhance women’s economic empowerment.

It is important to remember that empowerment is not a static state but rather is something that must be constantly pursued and sustained over time. Taking the kind of empowerment approach that has been taken by the GPSNP, which focuses on WGE adaptations under all three empowerment pillars (resources, agency, and context) is more likely to have a lasting positive impact than simply focusing on narrowing specific gender gaps.





5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This case study makes four recommendations that are specific to the GPSNP but could be relevant to an audience beyond Ghana. It also makes three broader recommendations for all World Bank task teams looking for practical advice on incorporating WGE adaptations into new and ongoing SPJ programming.

Ghana-specific recommendations

Recommendation 1: Ensure that core project activities are functioning as intended and that all messaging is harmonized across project documents. Many beneficiaries emphasized the importance of ensuring that the core project features functioned well, such as the timely payment of wages and grants. While WGE adaptations can and do add value to a project, it is also crucial for the core project elements to function efficiently to serve as a strong foundation onto which additional WGE adaptations can be layered. To ensure that core project activities are implemented as planned, particularly on big, widespread programs such as the LIPW and PI, project teams also need to ensure that all project documents (such as operation manuals, the GIIP, and contractor manuals) report the same messages and give sufficient direction and guidance for implementation, including clear information on roles and responsibilities, timelines, and budget allocations, particularly at the decentralized levels.

Recommendation 2: Provide gender sensitivity training to all project staff. While having a gender specialist on the project is important, it is also necessary to ensure that adequate training is provided to members of the project team at all levels, including within the decentralized structures (districts and communities), to ensure that gender sensitivity is adequately mainstreamed, operationalized, and monitored. Some beneficiaries reported that they gained a sense of self-confidence and increased ability to speak in public not only as a result of the content of the life skills training but also because of the way in which the training was facilitated. This suggests that increasing the capacity of frontline personnel to deal with issues of gender, particularly in terms of improving the quality of everyday interactions between project personnel and beneficiaries, is important for creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for WGE.

Recommendation 3: Progressively move towards a more gender transformative approach. While the GPSNP has included many important and effective WGE adaptations, there are yet more opportunities for the project to transform unequal gender relations. For example, the project has made adaptations to accommodate women's work schedules. While this is important and does help to reduce gender gaps in employment and income in the short term, it does not address the underlying "context" issues related to

traditional roles and responsibilities of men and women. Many beneficiaries, for example, reported that they experienced no meaningful reductions in their household responsibilities when they took on paid work. More needs to be done to address unequal social norms and achieve sustainable shifts in gender power dynamics in both households and communities. Interventions in other countries that have engaged gatekeepers such as husbands, fathers, and traditional community leaders in discussions about these norms have had promising results in terms of shifting attitudes. The dashboard of WGE interventions accompanying this study provides additional examples and information about ways to engage with men on this subject.

Recommendation 4: Increase guidance, support, and monitoring for the implementation of crèches.

Providing childcare can be an effective way of increasing women's participation in income-generating activities.¹⁰ In Ghana, this component of the GPSNP could be strengthened to better support women and children by: (i) monitoring contractors to ensure that they build crèches as intended and/or identifying ways to make crèches less costly and cumbersome to construct; (ii) making crèches mobile when appropriate; (iii) monitoring the operation of the crèches to ensure uniformity of provision across all sub-project sites; (iv) increasing the training of and investments in childcare providers to improve child development outcomes; and (v) building partnerships with and increasing buy-in and support from a variety of stakeholders including childcare users, opinion leaders, and government agencies to improve the quality of service delivery and to increase the willingness of beneficiaries to use the crèches provided.

General Recommendations

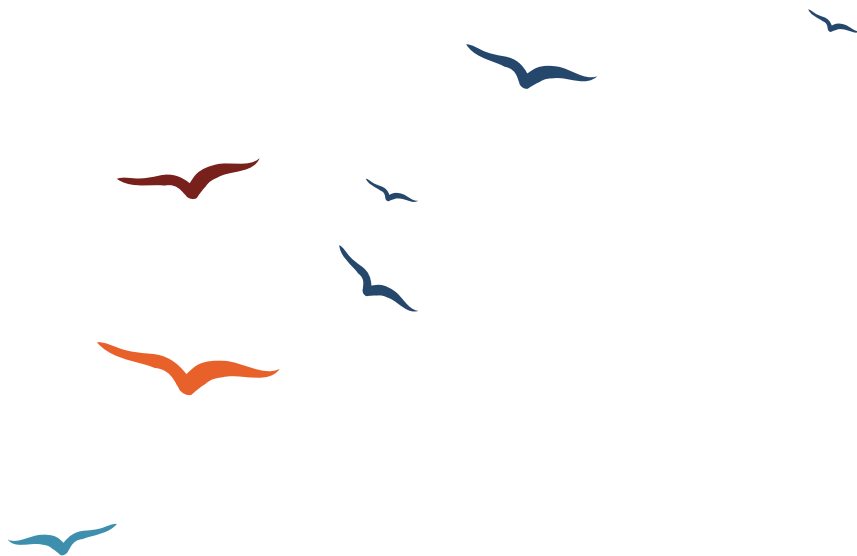
Recommendation 1: Integrate WGE adaptations into project design gradually and iteratively. The WGE adaptations to the GPSNP have been adopted gradually as each constraint has been newly identified. These include the introduction of gender quotas, the provision of crèches and temporary latrines, accommodations for pregnant and breastfeeding women, equal pay for men and women, sensitivity training for providers on gender equality, allowing beneficiaries to choose what time to start work, and a gender-sensitive GRM. Phasing in such WGE adaptations can be effective because it allows stakeholders some time to get used to the changes, particularly in the case of more radical gender transformative interventions. It also allows project teams to learn lessons from the implementation of each adaptation that can be applied to the next one.

Recommendation 2: Include regular monitoring of WGE adaptations and outcome indicators, not just output indicators. Measurement of WGE is often largely limited to output indicators (e.g., number of women beneficiaries), which observe participation, not empowerment. Although it can be difficult to observe and measure empowerment, a significant literature exists that has identified and tested suitable proxies for the three empowerment pillars (resources, agency, and context). The accompanying measurement guide proposes four WGE outcome measurement indicators drawn from this literature and offers guidance on data collection and analysis.¹¹ Projects need to include such outcome indicators in their M&E to gauge progress towards empowering women.

¹⁰ See Haddock et al. (2019) for practical guidance on what to consider when setting up childcare as part of project activities. See Ajayi et al. (2021) for additional information on mobile crèches in Burkina Faso. For evidence on the benefits of childcare in regard to women's income-generating activities see Clark et al. (2019) for evidence from Kenya, and Martinez and Peticara (2017) for evidence from Chile.

¹¹ Botea (2022b).

Recommendation 3: Engage women in project design and implementation in accordance with an empowerment approach that places women at the center. Women should be included in regular project planning and feedback sessions in order to ensure that their voices, opinions, and priorities are heard and drive the WGE agenda.¹² Putting women at the center of program design and implementation enables them to determine and achieve their own goals and objectives, which is an important part of the empowerment process itself. This can be done by conducting gender assessments and engaging with all stakeholders during project preparation to identify their specific needs and any potential intervention areas for WGE. It is also necessary to provide accessible channels for beneficiaries to report complaints about the project (in other words, gender-sensitive GRMs) and their feedback about the implementation of project activities.



¹² This aligns with World Bank Environmental and Social Framework requirements for stakeholder engagement during project design.

REFERENCES

- Ajayi, Kehinde, Aziz Dao, and Estelle Koussoubé. 2021. "Impact Evaluation of a Mobile Childcare Project in Burkina Faso." AEA RCT Registry. January 20. <https://doi.org/10.1257/rct.6811>.
- Barrington, C., P. Peterman, A. Akaligaung, T. Palermo, M. Milliano, and R. Aborgio, 2022. "Poverty can break a home': Exploring mechanisms linking cash plus programming and intimate partner violence in Ghana." *Social Science and Medicine*, 292.
- Botea, Ioana, Wendy Cunningham, and Lindsay Mossman, 2022a. "Highlights from Africa SPJ: Empowering Women and Girls through Social Protection." World Bank, Washington, D.C. *Mimeo*
- Botea, Ioana, 2022b. "Measurement Guide: Four Indicators for Assessing Women's and Girls' Empowerment." World Bank, Washington, D.C. *Mimeo*
- Clark, S., C. Kabiru, S. Laszlo, and St. Muthuri, 2019. "The impact of childcare on poor urban women's economic empowerment in Africa." *Demography* (56): 1247-1272.
- Cunningham, Wendy and Sarika Gupta, 2022. "An Operational Approach to Enhancing Women's and Girls' Empowerment in World Bank Operations," World Bank, Washington, D.C. *Mimeo*
- Haddock, S., A. Raza, and G. Palmisano, 2019. "Addressing Childcare in the World Bank Portfolio: Approaches, Experiences, and Lessons Learned." Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality, World Bank, Washington, D.C.
- Kabeer, Naila, 1999. "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment." *Development and Change*, 30: 435-464.
- Martinez, C., and M. Peticara, 2017. "Childcare effects on maternal employment: Evidence from Chile." *Journal of Development Economics*, 126: 127-137.
- World Bank, 2015. "World Bank Group Gender Strategy (FY16-23): Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Growth." Washington, D.C.
- World Bank, 2019. "Africa Human Capital Plan." Washington, D.C. Access [here](#).



