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Empowering Women

Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan

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Abstract

In societies with widespread gender discrimination, development programs that encourage female participation in local governance can potentially redress gender imbalances in economic, political, and social outcomes. Using a randomized field experiment encompassing 500 Afghan villages, this study finds that

a development program which incorporates mandated female participation increases female mobility and involvement in income generation, but does not change female roles in family decision-making or attitudes toward the general role of women in society.

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Empowering Women: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan¹

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I. Introduction

Over the past two decades, there have been dramatic changes in women's access to education, health care, jobs, and political participation, with 136 countries now possessing constitutional guarantees according men and women equal rights (World Bank 2011). Nevertheless, progress has been uneven and women in many countries face restricted access to services and jobs and underrepresentation in politics and management. Promoting gender equality is especially challenging in countries with long-standing cultural traditions that preclude female participation in fundamental economic, social, and political activities. In such cases, the effectiveness of legislative actions to empower women is often constrained by social attitudes that guide gender roles.

In this study, we examine whether promoting female empowerment through development programs that mandate women's community participation can affect the position of women in societies characterized by gender segregation. We exploit a randomized field experiment conducted in 500 villages in Afghanistan to measure the effect of a development program that has special provisions aimed at promoting gender equality. These provisions include the establishment of a gender-balanced village development council, equal participation of men and women in the elections of the council and in the selection of development projects, as well as a requirement that at least one project is prioritized by women. Using survey data covering over 13,000 respondents from these villages, we explore how this development program affects attitudes and outcomes pertaining to women's role in family life, the village community, and society more broadly.

The setting for the experiment is of particular interest not only due to long-standing cultural practices in Afghanistan which exclude women from economic, social, and political activity, but also due to the state of heightened insecurity, which imposes further constraints on female mobility. Despite the efforts of the national government and foreign donors to improve the life of Afghan women over the past 10 years, development indicators for women in Afghanistan remain among the worst in the world. According to the Thomson Reuters poll, in 2011 Afghanistan was ranked as the most dangerous country in the world for women.² Women have at best a marginal role in customary governance structures since in most regions of Afghanistan cultural norms preclude interactions between unrelated men and women.

² <http://www.trust.org/trustlaw/news/trustlaw-poll-afghanistan-is-most-dangerous-country-for-women> (accessed on May 24, 2012)

In this context, the introduction of gender-balanced village development councils and the mandated involvement of women in council elections and project selection were considered to be a radical but necessary means of ensuring women were not excluded from the decisions concerning the use of financial resources subsequently channeled through the councils. As such, the intervention represents a “hard test” of whether mandated female participation can promote female empowerment in highly challenging environments. The results of the study thus have broad implications for the general class of interventions in such environments designed to promote the engagement of women in economic, social, and political activity.

The study finds that the introduction of the program increased female participation in village governance, community life, and production activities while also increasing support for female participation in village decision-making. However, we observe no effects on the division of intra-family decision-making or on attitudes towards the general role of women in society. Thus, while the creation of gender-balanced village councils provides notable women in the village with a ‘seat at the table’ and creates a forum in which women can interact, there is limited change in general attitudes towards the role of women in society. Overall, the changes we find two years into the program’s implementation—though notable especially given the extreme conditions of the background where they take effect—are largely incremental in nature: while we do not seem to witness changes in cultural norms pertaining to the household which are arguably very sticky, we do see an increase in community level activity that is considered socially acceptable

We find that the results are robust to controlling for measures of income and progress in development project implementation, suggesting that the effect of the program is driven primarily by the gender quotas mandating women’s participation, rather than by the infusion of resources. We also find, consistent with the expectation that the effect of the program on attitudes varies with both education and age, that it is stronger for more educated and younger men and women. The effect is weaker for women who are already influential in the village as proxied by level of female land ownership.

There are two explanations for why the intervention has notable community level effects for women’s participation, but a much more circumscribed impact in terms of changes in household level norms or broader norms on women’s societal role. First of all, given the general cultural context in rural Afghanistan, women are faced with very stringent household restrictions that could highly curtail the effect of this development intervention. This interpretation is consistent with Field,

Jayachandran and Pande (2010) who find that business training benefits both lower caste and upper caste Hindu women, but not Muslim women who face higher social restrictions. The second explanation is that the results simply come too early (two years after the start of the program) given the amount of time that deep social changes require. Studies of long-term effects of electoral quotas (Beaman et al. 2009) find time-variance in effects, lending credence to the rather intuitive explanation that changes affecting conservative core family values and general societal attitudes towards women would require more than a two year exposure to the program.

The study is related to the literature on gender inequality in political participation (Ingelhart and Norris 2003) and, specifically, to the identification of the effect of reservations of local government positions for women (Beaman et al. 2009, Bhavnani 2009). This body of research finds that men and women have different preferences over policies (Edlund and Pande 2001); that reservations and quotas translate these divergent preferences into differences in outcomes (Pande 2003, Besley et al. 2004, Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004);³ that there are normative priors for discrimination against women leaders that have nothing to do with their actual efficiency or performance (Duflo and Topalova 2004; Bearman et al. 2009); and that reservations can have long-lasting effects in conditioning voters to women's political participation (Bhavnani 2009).

The paper is divided into nine sections. Section II presents the relevant literature. Section III provides background information on the setting. Section IV describes the experiment. Section V offers the empirical hypotheses under examination. Section VI enumerates the data sources. Section VII describes the methodology and results of the empirical analysis, which are then discussed in Section VIII. Section IX concludes.

II. Relevant Literature

In a comprehensive review essay on gender equality in development, Duflo (2011) examines various channels that link economic development to improvements in women's lives. Empirical evidence to date suggests that increased involvement of women in income generating activities results in broader improved outcomes for women (Qian 2008, Munshi and Rosenzweig 2004). A reduction in poverty,

³ Using regression discontinuity approach Clots-Figueras (2011, 2012) find that gender of the political leaders affects policy outcomes in India even in the absence of quotas, but there is no such effect in the US (Ferreira and Gyourko 2011).

even if not specifically targeted to women, has a disproportionate effect in their favor, shielding them from vulnerability at times of crises.

The low level of women's participation in politics is seen as one of the barriers to improvement in gender roles. Some studies attribute women's barriers to entry to normative reasons. Specifically they argue that politics are seen to be the prerogative of men (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; Eagly and Karau, 2002), which in turn affects in whose favor people choose to cast their vote. Lab experiments also confirm bias against women's performance in leadership positions that are typically seen as male (Eagly and Karau 2002; Eckel and Grossman 1998).

An influential line of research has exploited natural experiments to identify the effectiveness of gender quotas as a means of promoting female participation in politics. Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004a, b) find that policies which reserve local leadership positions for women affect the types of public goods provided. Duflo and Topalova (2004) find that, despite providing goods of comparable quantity and quality, both male and female villagers are less likely to be satisfied with female leaders. Recent work by Beaman et. al. (2009) shows that it is prejudicial views towards female leaders – rather than actual performance – that cause lower levels of satisfaction. Focusing on one mechanism of influence—voter attitudes— they find that prior exposure to female local leaders improves gender perceptions of the effectiveness of female leaders and attitudes to female participation in public and household decision-making. In the same context, Bhavnani (2009) also observes that prior exposure to female local leaders has long-term consequences by demonstrating the effectiveness of female political leadership and by increasing acceptance of female political participation as measured by their likelihood of re-election.

III. Setting

III.1. Women's Status in Afghanistan

Afghanistan scores very low on the human development index, especially for social indicators pertaining to women. Specifically, women face particularly extreme constraints on economic, social, and political activity, owing to three decades of civil conflict, as well as to strict tribal codes and cultural mores that curtail interactions between unmarried men and women. In rural Afghanistan, women are generally barred from activities outside the household so as to preserve their honor

(*ghairat*), while the principle of *purdah* dictates that women should be generally hidden from public view. These norms render local governance a strictly male-dominated activity (Boesen, 2004, p.6).

Women's control over their own economic and family affairs is also often severely restricted by the commonly-held norm that women and their offspring are under the proprietary control of the male head of household, as manifested in their inability to inherit property and make choices over marriage and their children (Boesen, 2004, p.9). This principle is manifested by the custom of the payment of bride-price by the groom's family to the father of the bride and by the occasional practice of giving women in marriage to settle inter-household feuds or debts (Boesen, 2004). In more conservative rural areas, they are often exchanged or traded among families and subject to widespread verbal and physical violence.

Female mobility is also constrained by customs that require a woman travelling outside her village to have a male relative as an escort and which can even place restrictions on the movement of women within their own village. As a result, girls are usually prevented from attending school beyond fourth grade and, without education or mobility, women are provided with few opportunities to generate income or to exercise control over any assets they may possess.

The primary role of rural Afghan women is in the household, taking care of children and family obligations and looking after livestock. Female opinion is secondary to that of male household members on decisions involving the marriage of their children or whether children are allowed to go to school. Outside the household, women are involved in washing the carpets and cleaning the mosque prior to religious holidays and in preparing food or baking bread for special occasions (Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, 2009). Beyond such events, women's role in the community is very circumscribed.

Gender stereotypes in Afghanistan are in many respects similar to the situation in other conservative Islamic countries where social and economic forces reinforce each other in sustaining the underprivileged position of women. For oil rich Muslim countries, Michael Ross (2008) finds that oil production crowds out export-oriented industrial sectors that traditionally pay women more competitive wages, leading to fewer women entering the workforce. Such limited economic opportunities for women in Muslim countries, Blaydes and Linzer (2008) find, lead to their taking on fundamentalist and traditionalist belief systems that enhance their value as potential marriage partners.

III.2. National Solidarity Program (NSP)

The National Solidarity Program (NSP) was devised in 2002 as a means to promote rural development in Afghanistan. The program is focused on building representative institutions for village governance and on delivering services and infrastructure to Afghanistan's rural population, but it explicitly mentions promoting gender equality as one of the program's main goals.⁴ NSP has now been implemented in over 29,000 villages across 361 of Afghanistan's 398 districts at a cost of over \$1 billion, making it the largest single development program in Afghanistan.

NSP is structured around two major interventions at the village level: (i) the creation of a Community Development Council (CDC); and (ii) the disbursement of block grants to support project implementation. The councils created by NSP are elected by a secret-ballot, universal suffrage election and are comprised of equal number of men and women. Every resident of the village, whether male or female, aged eighteen years or older, who has lived in the community for at least one year, is eligible to vote or be elected for a three-year term as a council member.⁵

Once the councils are formed, NSP disburses block grants, valued at \$200 per household up to a village maximum of \$60,000, to support the implementation of projects and requires communities to contribute no less than 10 percent of the total cost of the projects which they overwhelmingly do in the form of labor. The average block grant in the villages included in the sample was slightly more than \$30,000. The newly elected councils are responsible for selecting and managing the projects in consultation with the village community.⁶ Selected projects are ordinarily focused on either the construction or rehabilitation of infrastructure, such as drinking water facilities, irrigation canals, roads and bridges, or electric generators; or the provision of human capital development, such as training and literacy courses. The program requires that one of the projects targets women. In all the villages in the sample such projects represented training courses for women (either literacy courses or courses in tailoring or embroidery).

⁴ <http://nspafghanistan.org/default.aspx?sel=26#Q6> (accessed on April 6, 2012).

⁵ The size of the council is proportional to the number of families residing in the village. Villages in the sample had either multiple single-member districts or single multimember district. The exact method of council election was randomly assigned as part of a program evaluation. For the purposes of this study, however, we do not separate villages in different groups. For more details on the effect of variation in electoral rules see Beath, Christia, Enikolopov (2011).

⁶ The projects were selected either at a village meeting or through a secret-ballot referendum. The exact method of project selection was randomly assigned as part of a program evaluation. For the purposes of this study, however, we do not separate villages in different groups. For more details on the effect of variation in the method of project selection see Beath, Christia, Enikolopov (2012b).

The design of NSP places a special focus on promoting gender equity in local governance.⁷ While female participation in local governance is often non-existent prior to the creation of CDCs, NSP requires that councils be gender-balanced, although male and female members may meet separately as prescribed by local cultural norms. Furthermore, as NSP requires that at least 60 percent of the adult population of a village must participate in order for a CDC election to be valid, female enfranchisement is a pre-condition for villages to receive the program. Finally, NSP requires that at least one NSP-funded project in each village is selected by women, with such projects usually consisting of training courses (either literacy courses, or courses in tailoring or embroidery).

So far there is only anecdotal evidence on the program's impact on gender relations. Requirements on female participation in the program cause significant tensions within communities, as they are in sharp conflict with the values and norms of Afghan culture and society. In some cases this results in women being denied meaningful participation in the program, despite a strong interest (Boesen, 2004, p. 48), and in projects favored by or benefiting women getting de-prioritized by powerful male elites (Brick 2008). Nevertheless, Boesen (2004, p.49) notes that there is a slow change in attitudes of males towards the involvement of women in the process of village governance and management of development projects. Many observers, however, agree that the launch of this program has provided women with a forum that allows interaction outside the household and offers an opportunity for them to discuss broader issues of interest beyond development, be they related to health, schooling or their children (Barakat 2006; Echavez 2010). A qualitative study on NSP's effect on gender also found that the program has generally improved women's mobility, especially for professional women such as teachers or midwives (Azarbaijani-Moghaddam 2009).

IV. Description of the Experiment

The field experiment described in this paper was conducted as part of an impact evaluation of the second phase of NSP that started in 2007 in areas that were not covered during the program's first rollout in 2003-2006. The evaluation assesses the effects of this bundled development treatment—both the creation of the elected gender balanced local councils and the allocation of funds—on an

⁷ <http://nspafghanistan.org/default.aspx?sel=26#Q6> (accessed on April 6, 2012).

array of outcomes ranging from empowerment of women in this paper, to security (Beath, Christia, Enikolopov 2012a), economic wellbeing and access to services, governance, and state building.⁸

IV.1. Sample

The sample for the experiment comprises 500 villages spanning ten rural districts that were large enough in terms of number of villages; had no previous experience with the program; and met the basic security conditions from a human subjects perspective.⁹ Despite the necessary exclusion of southern areas from the sample due to security concerns, the ten districts are broadly representative of Afghanistan's ethno-linguistic diversity, with five predominantly Tajik districts, four predominantly Pashtun districts, one predominantly Hazara district, and two districts with significant populations of Uzbek and Turkmen minorities. The basic characteristics of households in the sample appear generally comparable with the population of rural Afghanistan, with households in the study sample being slightly poorer, having worse access to medical services, and experiencing slightly better access to electricity (Beath et. al., 2010).

IV.2. Assignment of Treatment

In each of the ten districts, 50 villages were selected to be included in the study,¹⁰ 25 of which were then selected as treatment villages using a matched-pair randomization procedure, which also clustered proximate villages to limit potential for spillovers between treated and untreated units. These villages received NSP following the administration of a baseline survey in September 2007, with the remaining 250 control villages assigned to not receive NSP until early 2012.

The randomization proceeded in four stages:

1. *Village Clusters.* To minimize potential for spill-over between treated and untreated units, villages located within one kilometer were grouped in village clusters. Of the 500 sample

⁸ Preliminary results of this analysis in the form of a report are available in Beath et al (2010) with additional academic papers presently in progress.

⁹ See the Online Appendix for more details on district selection procedures.

¹⁰ The selection was undertaken by NGOs contracted to each district in order to ensure that selected villages were eligible for participation in NSP (villages must possess a minimum of 25 households in order to be eligible for NSP) and to limit attrition due to adverse security or accessibility conditions. In order to minimize non-compliance due to the assignment of politically important villages to the control group, NGOs also were given the option to select another 15 communities that would not be included in the evaluation and which could be guaranteed NSP. These villages were usually the ones most easily accessible from the district center, which resulted in the evaluation samples being more remote than the population of villages in each district. A map of the sample and non-sample villages in each district is presented in the Online Appendix.

villages, 107 were assigned to 41 village clusters. The number of villages in each village cluster ranged from two to six.

2. *Matched Pairs.* In each district, the 50 sample villages were paired into 25 groups of two using an optimal greedy matching algorithm (King et. al., 2007), which matched villages to ensure similarity based on background characteristics provided that the villages were not in the same village cluster. The matching was done based on information available before the baseline survey and used background characteristics such as village size (based on data collected a few years earlier by Afghanistan’s Central Statistics Organization) and a set of geographic variables (distance to river, distance to major road, altitude, and average slope).
3. *Assignment of Treatment.* In each matched pair, one village was randomly assigned to receive NSP, such that the clusters of villages were assigned the same treatment status.¹¹
4. *Violations of Clustering Restrictions.* In a few districts, the large number of clustered villages precluded the co-assignment of all the villages in the same village cluster to the same treatment status. For cases in which assignment of treatment status without a violation of the clustering restriction was not possible, the number of violations was minimized through a simulation approach.¹²

The randomization procedure was successful in ensuring statistical balance between treatment and control groups. Table 1 below presents means, normalized differences,¹³ and t-statistics for several important variables using baseline survey data. Among the variables listed, mean differences are always less than 13 percent of the standard deviation.

[TABLE 1 HERE]

IV.3. Timeline

The baseline survey was administered in August-September 2007, with treatment assignment occurring right after the survey was finished. Local council elections took place between October

¹¹ The assignment was performed after the baseline survey was conducted, but before the data was processed, so while the baseline survey results could not be affected by treatment assignment, the results of the survey could not be used in matching.

¹² Specifically, we generated 1000 random assignments for each district and chose the one with the minimum number of cluster restriction violations. In the resulting assignment, the clustering restriction was violated in 17 village clusters covering 44 villages.

¹³ Per Imbens and Wooldridge (2009), normalized differences are differences divided by pooled standard errors.

2007 and May 2008 and project selection occurred between November 2007 and August 2008 (at least a month after the elections of the council in each of the villages). The follow-up survey was administered between June and October 2009 following the start of project implementation, but before most of the projects were finished (projects funded by NSP ordinarily take 18–24 months to complete).

V. Hypotheses

Mandated female participation can have powerful demonstration effects, signaling that women can be effective when taking part in village governance, and in turn reducing long held biases against them. In this study, we seek to explore whether this demonstration effect is present in an environment characterized by extreme discrimination against women and whether, if present, it serves a broader role by increasing female involvement in economic and social activity as well as household decision-making by changing attitudes. Accordingly, we formulate a set of hypotheses that test whether in the context of Afghan villages the introduction of a community development program mandating female participation affected the role of women at each of these three levels—community, household, and broader societal context.

Female Participation in Local Governance

Development programs such as NSP that require women’s involvement in village governance are expected to create demonstration effects on women’s capabilities and effectiveness therefore changing perceptions of women’s role in local governance and community activities. Specifically, we expect that such an intervention will make villagers more open to women’s involvement in community affairs. In particular, we expect that both male and female villagers will be more likely to support women’s participation in village councils and in the selection of a village headman. Thus, our first empirical hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: A development program mandating female participation will increase the acceptance of women’s role in local governance.

Female Mobility and Social and Economic Participation

The intervention is expected to create a venue where village women can congregate and demonstrate that women can positively contribute to local governance. By extension, the intervention is expected to increase female mobility, enabling women to leave their houses more often and with fewer

restrictions, and thereby to increase female socialization and involvement in income generating activities. Thus, our second two-part empirical hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 2a: A development program mandating female participation will increase socialization among women.

Hypothesis 2b: A development program mandating female participation will increase women's engagement in economic activity.

Gender Division of Household Decision-Making

Although this intervention is designed to directly affect only the role of women in the life of their community, it could also translate into changing their position at a more private level, i.e. within the family, as well as at a more general level, i.e. in society more broadly. On the level of the household, the expectation is that women will increasingly have more say in household decisions as a result of their elevated position in the community and their increased involvement in income-generating activities. This rationale is reflected in Hypothesis 3 below.

Hypothesis 3: A development program mandating female participation will increase women's engagement in household decision-making.

Gender Roles in Society

The intervention is also expected to improve perceptions on the role of women in society generally. In particular, villagers would be more likely to approve women working for the government or NGOs, support their participation in national elections, and be more open to girls going to school and to male doctors treating women. Thus, we formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: A development program mandating female participation will improve perceptions of women's status in society.

VI. Data

VI.1. Data Sources

Data for this paper come from two surveys conducted in the NSP impact evaluation villages.

Baseline Survey: Data from the baseline survey were collected during August and September 2007 and prior to the introduction of the development program to the 250 treatment villages. The survey

consisted of four different instruments: (a) a male household questionnaire administered to ten randomly-selected male heads-of household in each village; (b) a male focus group questionnaire administered to a group of village leaders in each village; (c) a female focus group questionnaire administered to a group of important women who tended to overwhelmingly be wives or other relatives of the village leaders; and (d) a female individual questionnaire. In total, the survey covered 13,899 male and female villagers as well as village leaders across the 500 sample villages.¹⁴

Follow-up survey: Data from the follow-up survey were collected between May and October 2009. The follow-up survey was administered following council elections and project selection, but before projects were completed.¹⁵ Carrying out the survey at a time when the projects were being implemented but were not yet delivering any goods (i.e. wells were being dug but not yet yielding any water, roads were being groveled but were not usable etc.) allows us to isolate the effects of expectations from the actual provision of goods.

The follow-up survey drew upon many of the same questions from the baseline survey, but changed the sample for the female individual questionnaire from female focus group participants to wives of male household respondents.¹⁶ Detailed information on the coverage of the baseline and follow-up surveys can be found in Table A2 in the Appendix. Enumerators administering the male household questionnaire were instructed to locate and interview the same households and, whenever possible, the same villagers who participated in the baseline survey. Enumerators were able to successfully locate such respondents in 65 percent of households in which male respondents were interviewed during the baseline survey.¹⁷

VI.2. Data Description

Women leaders in our sample are less educated and younger than their male counterparts across control and treatment communities, which is consistent with Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004). The average age for female leaders is 38 years, whereas for male leaders is 46 years. The average number

¹⁴ See the Online Appendix for more information on the survey instruments.

¹⁵ By that time only 18 percent of the projects were fully completed.

¹⁶ During our baseline survey, an individual survey was administered only to female elites because of logistical constraints. During our follow-up survey potential panel data on individual responses of the female elites was sacrificed in order to measure attitudes of ordinary female villagers.

¹⁷ The predominant reason for enumerators not being able to interview baseline respondents was that the person was away from home on the day that the survey team visited the village as it was the time of harvest. Differences between treatment and control groups in individual-level attrition are not statistically significant.

of years of education (both secular and religious) is less than one for female leaders and more than four for male leaders. Female leaders also have distinct policy preferences than men. During the baseline survey the respondents were asked to indicate what type of development project in their opinion should be implemented first in their village, if the community were to be given a grant. The projects preferred by women and men turned out to be quite different (see Table 2). Women were much more likely than men to support projects that would provide drinking water and less likely to support irrigation projects and transportation related construction projects such as roads and bridges which is consistent with male preferences as they have more mobility and control over land ownership.

Information on non-elite female villagers comes from the follow up survey. The average age of non-elite female villagers is 35 years. The level of education is extremely low with only 11 percent of women attending religious school and 3 percent attending secular school, and the average number of years of education (both secular and religious) being only 0.4 years. The average number of years of education for those women who have attended school is 2.9 years. As a consequence, only 2 percent of female respondents were able to read a basic sentence and 38 percent were able to perform a basic calculation. Female asset ownership is limited, with only 3.4 percent of women owning land, 7 percent of women owning jewelry and 42 percent owning some livestock. The majority of women are housewives with only 39 percent involved in income generating activity.

Monitoring of the council elections and project selection offers information on the implementation of the program. In all of the 131 randomly selected villages where elections were monitored women were able to participate in elections, usually using separate voting booths (that was the case in 87% of the monitored villages). In the 127 randomly selected villages where project selection was monitored, female participation was high and not significantly different from male participation. The mean number of women who participated in the village consultation meeting was 75, whereas the mean number of women who participated in the referendum was 133 (the corresponding numbers for males are 71 and 138 respectively).

VII. Results

All hypotheses are tested by regressing the measures relevant for each hypothesis on a treatment indicator variable using the following OLS model:

$$Y_{vi} = \alpha + \tau * T_v + \varphi_p + \varepsilon_{vi} \quad (1)$$

where Y_{vi} is the outcome of interest for household i in village v , T_v is the village treatment dummy (i.e. whether this is an NSP village or not), φ_p is the village-pair fixed effect, and ε_{vi} is the error term. Where indicators are constructed at the village rather than the individual level, the outcome is captured as Y_v rather than Y_{vi} .

Following Bruhn and McKenzie (2009) we include village-pair fixed effects to account for allocation of treatment by pair-wise matching. Standard errors are clustered at the village-cluster level, to account for correlation of residuals caused by the non-independence of treatment assignment within clusters. To improve statistical power, wherever multiple measures exist for the same concept, we also use a summary index similar to the one introduced in Kling, Leibman and Katz (2007), which is defined to be the equally weighted average of z-scores of the added measures.¹⁸

Female Participation in Local Governance

We start by looking at the most immediate effects of the introduction of a community-driven development program that mandates female participation in local elected office and examine whether it leads to the creation of functional women’s councils (a compliance test) and whether those in turn increase the activity of women in the community. The results reported in Table 3 indicate, that the share of villages in which a women’s council exists is approximately sixty percent in both treatment and control groups. The level of activity of these councils, however, is very different in control and treatment villages. In control villages only six percent of the women’s councils had at least one meeting during the month before the survey, as compared to two thirds of councils in treatment villages. Women in treatment villages are more likely to have had meetings with both district authorities and with women from other villages in the year before the survey, with the share of treatment villages with such meetings increasing by 4 and 8 percentage points respectively. The overall measure of female local governance activity is 0.87 of a standard deviation higher in villages that received the intervention.

¹⁸ The z-scores are calculated by subtracting the control group mean from the treatment groups mean, and dividing by the control group standard deviation. Thus, each component of the index has a mean equal to 0 and a standard deviation equal to 1 for the control group.

Importantly, women’s self-reported increased participation in community affairs is more than just an opinion shared among female leaders. Both male and female respondents residing in NSP villages are also more likely to report a notable increase in the presence of well-respected women in the community (the difference of about 8 percentage points), offering support for the first hypothesis.

[Table 3 here]

The intervention also improves the attitudes of both men and women toward women’s involvement in local governance (see Table 4). Although the share of respondents who think that women should participate in decision-making in the village council on equal terms with men is slightly smaller in villages that received the intervention, the difference is not statistically significant for female respondents and only marginally significant for male respondents. At the same time, the share of respondents who think that women should play no role in village decision-making is significantly smaller in treatment villages. The difference is approximately two percentage points for both female and male respondents, which corresponds to 16 and 42 percent respectively.

The share of respondents who think that women should participate in the selection of the village headman is also higher in treatment villages. The magnitude of the effect is noticeably higher for male respondents, for whom the increase constitutes 7 percentage points as compared with 3 percentage points for female respondents. This corresponds to 20 and 8 percent increase respectively.

The overall measure of attitudes toward the involvement of women in local governance is higher in treatment villages by 4 percent of a standard deviation for female respondents and 7 percent for male respondents.

[Table 4 here]

Female Attitudes toward Village Leaders

The increased activity in the community sphere also appears to affect women’s attitudes towards their village leaders (see Table 5). The level of satisfaction with the local elites is significantly higher in treatment villages, although the magnitude of the effect is only 2 percentage points, which can be explained by the fact that the level of satisfaction is relatively high to begin with. Women in NSP villages are also significantly more likely to state that the village decision makers are altruistic (i.e. acting in the interest of all villagers) and that they are responsive to women’s needs. The magnitude of these effects is noticeably higher at 8 and 5 percentage points respectively, which corresponds to

an 8 and an 18 percent increase. The overall measure of the treatment effect on women's attitudes towards their village leaders is higher by 11 percent of a standard deviation. Female focus group respondents in treatment villages are also 11 percentage points more likely to report higher level of satisfaction with village leaders.

Female Mobility, Socialization and Economic Participation

Next we examine the effect on women's socialization as a test of Hypothesis 2a. Although we don't observe an increase in the overall frequency of social activity, we see a significant difference in the type of activity in which women engage (see Panel A in Table 6). Women residing in villages that received NSP are no more likely to report increased frequency of socialization outside their household or an increase in the number of times they left their compound during the past month. And although women in NSP villages are no more likely to go out without the all-enveloping attire of a *burqa*, they are more likely to go out without a chaperone. The magnitude of the effect, however, is rather small, with the 3-percentage points difference corresponding to a 4 percent increase.

The intervention does appear to induce a substitution effect in women's social activities. Women in treatment villages are fifty percent more likely to report that they have someone with whom to discuss and solve their problems in the village although the existence of such meetings and venues is relatively rare even in treatment villages. In addition, women in treatment villages are more mobile and, as noted above, are more likely to have attended a meeting with women outside their village as well and/or with representatives of the district government. These patterns suggest that, although levels of social activity among women in both groups of villages are similar, the type of venues and type of social activities differ. Thus, while there is no difference on the *extensive* margin of female socialization (i.e. how much women socialize) as a result of the introduction of these local institutions, there is notable difference on the *intensive* margin of their social interactions (i.e. in what activities they are involved when they socialize).

Looking at income generating activities, we find evidence that lends support to Hypothesis 2b (see Panel B in Table 6). Female respondents in treatment villages are 5 percentage points more likely to have engaged in such activities in the past year, a 13 percent difference that signals involvement outside the confines of the household. Thus, the intervention actually induces an increase in economic activities among women.

[Table 6 here]

Gender Division of Household Decision-Making

Despite increasing the role of women in village life, NSP has virtually no effect on their position within the family, with no change in the degree of agency over what is done with the money and assets that women identify as their own (see Table 7). Thus, we find no support for Hypothesis 3. Specifically, over 60% of female respondents, in control and treatment villages alike, stated that they have the authority to decide how to use the income they generate. 72% of among the roughly 50% of respondents who stated that they own assets—be they livestock, poultry, land or jewelry—claimed to have a certain degree of control over the use of their assets, with no statistically significant differences among respondents in treatment versus control communities.

It is important to underline that such financial decisions, irrespective of gender, are traditionally seen as family decisions rather than individual-level decisions. As such, the fact that they remain unchanged despite higher female involvement in the market place is in no way surprising. Apart from the financial decisions of the family, there are other even more sensitive decisions—those pertaining to family planning. Specifically, there has traditionally been a strong preference for male over female children in Afghanistan and this appears to remain unchanged two years into the program’s implementation. Slightly more than 40% of respondents stated that they would like to have an equal number of boys and girls or more girls than boys, with no statistically significant effect attributed to the intervention. There is also no difference in the share of women who are involved in decisions over the purchase of food, clothes, and medicine or in decisions in such family matters as children’s marriage and education, elderly care, and procreation. Thus, even though women are arguably gaining in legitimacy in the community realm, their role in the family, as argued above, appears to be largely unchanged.

[Table 7 here]

Gender Roles in Society

We find no significant effect of the program on attitudes towards women in the broader public sphere extending beyond the community, as perceived by both men and women, finding almost no support for Hypothesis 4. Results reported in

Table 8 indicates that be it for questions that the household is likely to have direct exposure to and experience with—such as whether girls should be allowed to go to school and women examined by male doctors when female doctors are not available— and more abstract and general questions—

such as whether women should be allowed to work for the government— men and women hold comparable views and there are no differences that can be attributed to the existence of the community-driven development program. Female respondents, however, are more likely to think that women should be allowed to work for NGOs in treatment villages, which is likely to reflect their direct experience interacting with female social organizers who were working for NGOs that were involved in implementing the program.

The difference in trends between questions specific to the community versus more abstract level questions is also mirrored in the context of elections and direct political participation which we use as alternative measures for Hypothesis 4. Though the presence of the program clearly increases men’s openness to the involvement of women in village governance, making them slightly more open to the existence of women’s councils and increasing the proportion that support the participation of village women in the selection of the village headman, there is no impact with respect to the election of the provincial governor. Women are somewhat more open to women’s participation in the election of the provincial governor (the difference is marginally statistically significant), but neither for male nor for female respondents is there an effect on views concerning women’s participation in local and national elections. The lack of differences in the question pertaining to participation in local and national elections, however, is probably driven by the fact that almost all respondents support women’s participation.

[Table 8 here]

To check for the robustness of the results we have included as additional controls the variables that indicated the answer to the same (or the most closely related) question in the baseline survey. The results in general prove to be robust to the addition of such controls. Several results lose their significance when we control for individual level controls, but the loss in statistical significance is driven by the reduction in sample size caused by individual-level attrition.

Disentangling Alternative Mechanisms

As stated above, the intervention of NSP bundles mandated participation of women in local governance – through the creation of gender-balanced councils, elected by universal suffrage elections, and the requirement that women participate in project selection – with the funding of village development projects, and the funding projects focused specifically on women. As such, the positive effects reported above could be driven by the mandated participation of women in council

elections and project selection, by the requirement that half of the council consist of women, by the income effect caused by the infusion of material resources, or by the effect of projects aimed at benefiting women. To distinguish between some of these possible mechanisms we provide two sets of additional results.

To take into account the program's possible income effects we control for various measures of economic welfare. In particular, we include as additional controls measures of income, expenditures and assets both at the household and community level. Table 9 reports the results of these estimations¹⁹ demonstrating that the general results are robust to including controls for economic welfare and that the results on female attitudes toward women's status in broader society become even stronger. These results suggest that the effects reported above are not driven by the infusion of resources.

[Table 9 here]

To account for the effect of projects that were aimed at benefiting women (all of which were training courses), we include in the regression a dummy variable that indicates whether the women's project in the village was complete by the time of the survey.²⁰ As reported in Table 10, almost all the results on attitudes toward women remain robust to the inclusion of this additional variable.²¹ Thus, the effect is observed even in villages where the women's project was not complete.

[Table 10 here]

Overall, the results suggest that the positive effect of the program on the position of women is driven by gender quotas and women's mandated participation, rather than by the infusion of resources or by the effect of projects aimed at benefiting women.

¹⁹ The table presents results only for summary measures. The full set of results is available in Table A3 in the Online Appendix. The results are robust to controlling for different measures of economic welfare one by one, rather than including them all in the regression.

²⁰ It was fully finished in 12 out of 250 villages. The results are similar if instead of fully finished projects we consider women's projects that were at least 80 percent complete, which was the case in 34 villages, women projects that have started, which was the case in 73 villages, or any project that was at least 80 percent complete, which was the case in 115 villages (see Tables A4-A6 in the Online Appendix).

²¹ The coefficient on the dummy for finishing the project is hard to interpret, since it reflect not only the effect of implementing women's projects, but the characteristics of the village that are conducive to fast implementation of such projects. Indeed, we find that fast implementation of women's projects is associated with more active women's councils and with the existence of well-respected women. The results on attitudes towards women's status in the household, the community, and beyond, which are more likely to reflect the effect of women's projects provide mixed evidence.

Geographical Heterogeneity of Treatment Effects

There is some variation on women's rights among Afghanistan's different ethnic groups with the Pashtuns being traditionally the most conservative. Qualitative studies on NSP's effect on gender find that in Pashtun areas women are less mobile and have lower levels of community participation (Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, 2009). As the districts in our sample are largely ethnically homogeneous, we are able to examine whether the effects of the program are different in the four ethnically Pashtun districts (*Sherzad*, *Hisarak*, *Fersi*, and *Balkh*) in our sample. Two of these districts (*Sherzad* and *Hisarak*) are located in the eastern province of Nangarhar, where the levels of violence have also been more pronounced (Beath, Christia, and Enikolopov 2012b). To distinguish between the effect of ethnicity and violence we examine these two eastern districts separately.

The results presented in Table 11 indicate that in Pashtun districts there is no positive effect of the program on attitudes to woman's participation.²² The difference between Pashtun districts and other districts is statically significant only for women's attitudes to women's participation. There is also evidence that in non-violent Pashtun areas the effect of the program on intra-family decision making is smaller, whereas the positive effect on male's perceptions of women's status in broader society is stronger. For all other indicators there is no statistically significant difference in the effect of the program between Pashtun districts and other districts. Overall, the effect of the program is not much different in Pashtun regions and in districts that are more affected by insecurity.

[Table 11 here]

Individual Heterogeneity of Treatment Effects

We examine how the effect of the program depends on such characteristics as land ownership, education, and age of the respondents.

Women tend to be more involved in decision-making if they own land, which is the most precious asset in rural Afghanistan where people subsist on agriculture (Azarbaijani-Moghaddam 2009). Consistent with this notion we find that women who own land have more say in intra-family decision making and have more positive attitudes toward women's participation in local governance and women's status in broader society (see Panel A in Table 12 on the effect for summary measures

²² The table presents results only for summary measures. The full set of results is available in Table A7 in the Online Appendix.

and Table A8 in the Online Appendix for full set of outcomes).²³ The results also indicate that the effect of the program on the attitudes of women who own land toward village leaders is significantly smaller than the effect on women who do not own land. The effect of the program on attitudes toward women's status in broader society turns out to be significantly negative for women who own land, whereas it is significantly positive for women who do not own land. At the same time, the positive effect of the program on women's socialization is even stronger for women who own land.

Women who have received some education are more likely to be engaged in income generating activities and have more positive attitudes toward women's status in broader society (see Panel B in Table 12 on the effect for summary measures and Table A9 in the Online Appendix for full set of outcomes). In control villages, the husbands of educated women are less likely to think that there is at least one woman who is well-respected by both men and women and they are less likely to support women's involvement in village governance. However, the effect of the program for them is much stronger, so that in treatment villages they are more likely to think that there is at least one woman who is well-respected by both men and women and they are more likely to support women's involvement in village governance.

The effect of the program on attitudes is smaller for older respondents (see Panel C in Table 12 on the effect for summary measures and Table A10 in the Online Appendix for full set of outcomes). Older respondents (both men and women) are significantly less likely to improve their attitudes regarding women's status in broader society. Older women are more likely to socialize outside their household, but the positive effect of the program on socialization is smaller for them.

[Table 12 here]

VIII. Discussion

Overall, our results indicate that the intervention increases women's involvement in community life which is reflected both in women's increased activity outside the household while making men and women more accepting of female participation in local governance and other aspects of community life. Specifically, men become more open to the idea of women being involved in the work of a village council and participating in the selection of the village head. The intervention also has a

²³ Positive effect on intra-family status is mechanical, since female land ownership is one of the indicators in that category.

positive effect on the socialization of women and on their involvement in income-generating activities. However, the program does not affect either the position of women within the family or the attitudes toward women's role in society more broadly. Both for areas of direct relevance to the household, such as girls' school enrolment or female medical treatment, and for more general questions, such as whether women should be allowed to work for the government, the intervention has no effects on attitudes.

The results thus show that even in a society in which women face extreme discrimination, the introduction of development programs with mandated female participation can have an effect on the role of women in community life. Contrary to some anecdotal evidence (Boesen 2004; Brick 2008), mandated female participation does not seem to be reduced to a pure formality. The positive effect of the program, however, is limited to the areas that are closely linked to direct interventions prescribed by the program. Women's involvement in community-level decision-making process is mandated by NSP, and that experience seems to make men more receptive to women's involvement in that area of community life. These effects do not appear to carry over to other areas that are not directly linked to the program's prescribed interventions, such as the role of women in the family and the broader public sphere.²⁴

Although the intervention under study is complex and consists of multiple components (creation of a gender-balanced development council; universal suffrage elections to the council; selection of village development projects; funding of the projects; provision of training courses for women) the results provide some evidence on the relative importance of these alternative channels. They are robust to controlling for various measures of income, consumption and assets, which suggest that the identified effects are not driven by the additional resources *per se* (though the money provided as part of the program certainly induces compliance, allowing for the election of women). The results also do not depend on the implementation of development projects, which is not surprising as NSP provides resources for the community as a whole and does not include direct provision of resources to women such as a conditional transfers program. Although the program does prescribe implementation of at least one project that should specifically benefit women, in almost all cases the

²⁴ The lack of the effect on the ability of women to control income and assets is especially important, since it indicates that the program is unlikely to ameliorate problems of inefficient production decisions, caused by differences in the property rights protection of male and female assets (Udry, 1996; Duflo and Urdy 2004; Goldstein and Udry 2005).

projects that fell under this category were training courses of different types which may provide more resources to women in the long run, but do not involve any such immediate transfers.

Thus, the effects appear to be driven mainly by the gender quotas in the council and mandated female participation in the council elections and project selection. However, given the nature of the treatment it is not possible to tease out the effect of these interventions separately and argue whether the effects are driven by mandated council representation, by mandated participation in council elections and project selection or by the combination of the above.

The results on the heterogeneity of the effects indicate that the intervention has a lesser effect on attitudes within households in which women own land and thus have enhanced economic status. Similarly, older respondents, who are likely to have deeper engraved notions about the role of women, are also less likely to change their attitudes as a result of the program. At the same time, households in which women have at least some education appear more open to the idea of higher status of women in society and are more likely to change their attitudes as a result of the program.

An important issue is the way the program effects evolve over time. Previous work that has examined the long-term effects of quotas (Beaman et al. 2009) finds that, although gender quotas altered male perceptions of female leaders' effectiveness, there was no such effect for women living in villages that had not experienced the quota or had experienced it only once. However, differences in female attitudes do emerge once villages have experienced the quota a second time. They also find that social norms are harder to alter than gender-based perceptions of the effectiveness of leaders. These results, thus, indicate that more broad-based changes in social attitudes may require a longer duration of treatment. Accordingly, it is perhaps unsurprising that the two year exposure to the treatment examined in this study does not suffice to change the conservative core family values or general societal attitudes towards women.

IX. Conclusion

In this paper, we analyze the effect on women's empowerment of a development program that mandates female participation. In particular, we examine the impact of the largest community-driven development program in Afghanistan on attitudes towards women's involvement in the household, the community, and society more generally. The program prescribes the creation of gender-balanced local councils elected through secret ballot voting and requires female participation both in the election of the councils and the selection of development projects. Random assignment of the

program across 500 evaluation villages allows us to estimate the program's causal effects. The results indicate that the program has significant positive effects on the acceptance of female participation in local governance, but it does not affect – at least in the short term – women's roles in household decision-making or in broader society. The observed changes appear to be driven mainly by the women's mandated involvement in the decision-making process, rather than by the infusion of financial resources that accompanies the program.

Thus, the evidence suggests that the strategy of empowering women through the provision of development programs that mandate female participation can work even in environments where women are subject to high levels of discrimination. Mandated female involvement in decision-making processes at the community level demonstrates the effectiveness of female participation and induces change in male and female attitudes toward women and their role in community life. It also shows that women can be actively involved in community life beyond the immediate confines of their family, which makes them more likely to socialize with other women outside their household. Though this effect could potentially generalize beyond the immediate scope of community life, we do not see any evidence of such an effect. The absence of any effects of the intervention on the gender division of household decision-making or on broader societal attitudes could either be due to effects being confined to activities in which women's involvement is directly prescribed by the program or to the limited duration over which effects are being measured following the intervention. Distinguishing between these two hypotheses will be an important issue that will need to be addressed in future work.

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Table 1. Statistical Balance between Treatment and Control Groups

Variable	Mean Level in Control Group	Mean Level in Treatment Group	Normalized Difference	t-Statistics
Male Respondents				
Number of Households in Village	103.02	109.76	0.07	0.76
Number of People in Household	9.87	9.76	- 0.02	- 0.42
Age of Respondent	43.30	43.80	0.04	1.10
Respondent Speaks Dari as Mother Tongue	0.69	0.70	0.04	0.45
Respondent Received no Formal Education	0.71	0.71	0.01	0.18
Household Has Access to Electricity	0.13	0.15	0.04	0.59
Male Health Worker is Available to Treat Villagers	0.10	0.13	0.12	1.32
Female Health Worker is Available to Treat Villagers	0.08	0.10	0.10	1.07
Main Source of Drinking Water is Unprotected Spring	0.27	0.27	- 0.00	- 0.02
Dispute among Villagers Occurred in Past Year	0.37	0.36	- 0.03	- 0.36
No Problems are Experienced in Meeting Household Food Needs	0.45	0.45	0.02	0.38
Household Borrowed Money in Past Year	0.48	0.47	- 0.02	-0.36
Respondent Reports Attending Meeting of Village Council in Past Year	0.30	0.31	0.03	0.59
Expenditures on Weddings in Past Year (<i>Afghanis</i>)	11,676	10,380	- 0.03	- 0.73
Expenditures on Food in Past Month (<i>Afghanis</i>)	3,644	3,566	- 0.04	- 0.68
Respondent Believes that Women Should be Members of Council	0.41	0.43	0.05	0.92
Views of Women are not Considered in Resolving Disputes	0.51	0.48	- 0.06	- 1.64
Assets	0.00	-0.01	- 0.02	- 0.52
Natural Log of Income	8.67	8.63	- 0.07	- 1.15
Security incident within 5 km of the village between 2004 and start of NSP	0.14	0.12	-0.06	-0.66
Female respondents				
Women own private land	0.3	0.3	-0.01	-0.20
Views of women are not considered in legal cases	0.51	0.48	-0.06	-1.64

Notes: Based on data from the male head-of-household baseline survey.

Table 2: Preferences over Projects

	Female Individual	Male Heads of Household
Drinking water	40.1	29.8
Irrigation	2.7	13.7
Schools	14.7	15.9
Health facilities	16.3	13.7
Roads and bridges	6.2	14.0
Electricity	6.9	6.3
Other	13.1	6.7
Observations	3402	4978

Notes: Percent of respondents who think that the corresponding type of project is the most needed by the community.

Table 3: Functionality of Women’s Council

Variable	Mean in Control	Treatment Effect	Standard Error	Number of Observations	R-squared
A. Female Focus Group Participants					
There exist a village or pan-village women’s council	0.71	-0.016	[0.040]	424	0.66
Women’s council had at least one meeting in the past month	0.06	0.599***	[0.043]	424	0.73
Village women held meeting with district government in past 12 months	0.00	0.042**	[0.016]	424	0.64
Village women held meeting with women from other villages in past 12 months	0.03	0.078***	[0.023]	424	0.67
Summary measure	0.00	0.875***	[0.098]	424	0.69
B. Individual Female Respondents					
There is At Least One Woman in the Village Who is Well-Respected by Both Men and Women	0.37	0.076***	[0.015]	4,225	0.29
C. Individual Male Respondents					
There is At Least One Woman in the Village Who is Well-Respected by Both Men and Women	0.32	0.087***	[0.013]	4,656	0.18

Treatment effect is estimated in the regression, which includes a constant and a dummy variable for villages that have been assigned to the treatment group. Robust standard errors adjusted for clustering at the village-cluster level in brackets. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

Table 4: Attitudes toward Women’s Participation in Village Governance

Variable	Mean in Control	Treatment Effect	Standard Error	Number of Observations	R-squared
A. Female Respondents					
Women Should be Members of Village Council and Participate with Men on Equal Terms in Decision Making	0.26	-0.001	[0.014]	4,234	0.18
Women Should Have No Council and No Role in Village Decision Making	0.11	-0.018**	[0.009]	4,234	0.14
Women Should Participate in the Selection of the Village Headman	0.38	0.029*	[0.016]	3,628	0.23
Summary Measure for female respondents	0.00	0.038**	[0.015]	4,234	0.15
B. Male respondents					
Women Should be Members of Village Council and Participate with Men on Equal Terms in Decision Making	0.16	-0.018*	[0.010]	4,568	0.30
Women Should Have No Council and No Role in Village Decision Making	0.06	-0.025***	[0.008]	4,568	0.09
Women Should Participate in the Selection of the Village Headman	0.38	0.072***	[0.014]	4,577	0.28
Summary Measure for male respondents	0.00	0.073***	[0.020]	4,661	0.26

Treatment effect is estimated in the regression, which includes a constant and a dummy variable for villages that have been assigned to the treatment group. Robust standard errors adjusted for clustering at the village-cluster level in brackets. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

Table 5: Women’s Attitudes toward Village Leaders

Variable	Mean in Control	Treatment Effect	Standard Error	Number of Observations	R-squared
A. Female Respondents					
Respondent is Satisfied or Very Satisfied with Work of Village Leaders	0.76	0.022*	[0.013]	4,127	0.20
Respondent Perceives that Village Decision Makers Act in the Interests of All Villagers	0.47	0.084***	[0.017]	3,996	0.19
Village Leaders Are Perceived as Responsive to Needs of Women	0.56	0.052***	[0.017]	4,214	0.25
Summary Measure	-0.01	0.111***	[0.025]	4,227	0.31
B. Female Focus Group					
Village Leaders Are Perceived as Responsive to Needs of Women	0.55	0.108**	[0.044]	421	0.66

Treatment effect is estimated in the regression, which includes a constant and a dummy variable for villages that have been assigned to the treatment group. Robust standard errors adjusted for clustering at the village-cluster level in brackets. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

Table 6: Socialization and Economic Activity

Variable	Mean in Control	Treatment Effect	Standard Error	Number of Observations	R-squared
A. Female Respondents					
Respondent Socializes with Women Outside Her Household	0.74	0.011	[0.012]	4,221	0.20
Number of Times Respondent Left Compound in Past Month	61.36	1.710	[1.735]	4,200	0.28
Respondent Leaves Compound Alone or with Small Child	0.69	0.031**	[0.014]	4,214	0.18
Respondent Never or Only Sometimes Wears <i>Chadori</i> (Burqa) When Outside Compound	0.79	0.015	[0.015]	4,221	0.30
Women in Village Have a Group or Someone to Go to Discuss or Solve their Problems	0.14	0.075***	[0.009]	4,222	0.22
Summary Measure1	0.00	0.078***	[0.016]	4,229	0.32
B. Income generating Activity					
Respondent Engaged in Income Generating Activity During Past 12 Months	0.42	0.053***	[0.015]	4,214	0.22

Treatment effect is estimated in the regression, which includes a constant and a dummy variable for villages that have been assigned to the treatment group. Robust standard errors adjusted for clustering at the village-cluster level in brackets. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

Table 7: Intra-family Decisions

Variable	Mean in Control	Treatment Effect	Standard Error	Number of Observations	R-squared
Income Earner Has Authority to Decide Use of Income Generated	0.64	0.001	[0.022]	1,625	0.34
Respondent Owns Either Livestock or Poultry, Land, or Jewelry	0.47	0.01	[0.015]	4,228	0.18
Asset Owner Has Full or Partial Control Over Use of All Owned Assets	0.72	-0.007	[0.017]	1,970	0.28
Respondent Wishes to Have Equal Number of Boys and Girls or More Girls Than Boys	0.42	0.023	[0.024]	1,517	0.20
Women Are Consulted or Responsible for Decisions on Purchases of Food, Clothes, and Medicine	0.28	-0.02	[0.013]	4,226	0.28
Women Are Consulted or Responsible for Children's Marriage and Education, Elderly Care, and Procreation	0.37	-0.014	[0.013]	4,185	0.19
Summary Measure	-0.04	-0.009	[0.018]	4,228	0.19

Treatment effect is estimated in the regression, which includes a constant and a dummy variable for villages that have been assigned to the treatment group. Robust standard errors adjusted for clustering at the village-cluster level in brackets. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

Table 8: Women's Status in Broader Society

Variable	Mean in Control	Treatment Effect	Standard Error	Number of Observations	R-squared
A. Female Respondents					
Respondent Believes it is Appropriate for Women to Work in Government	0.92	0.009	[0.008]	4,205	0.12
Respondent Believes it is Appropriate for Women to Work with NGOs	0.71	0.032**	[0.012]	4,205	0.38
Girls Should Be Permitted to Attend School	0.96	0.004	[0.006]	4,220	0.16
Female Family Member Could be Seen by Male Doctor if Female Nurse or Doctor Was Not Available	0.94	0.000	[0.009]	4,222	0.16
Women Should Participate in Local and National Elections	0.98	0.003	[0.005]	4,038	0.14
Women Should Participate in the Selection of the Provincial Governor	0.41	0.027*	[0.015]	2,678	0.31
Summary Measure for Female Respondents	0.00	0.033*	[0.017]	4,231	0.19
B. Male Respondents					
Respondent Believes it is Appropriate for Women to Work in Government	0.86	0.015	[0.010]	4,643	0.10
Respondent Believes it is Appropriate for Women to Work with NGOs	0.68	0.012	[0.012]	4,643	0.26
Girls Should Be Permitted to Attend School	0.94	-0.003	[0.009]	4,661	0.21
Female Family Member Could be Seen by Male Doctor if Female Nurse or Doctor Was Not Available	0.90	-0.004	[0.008]	4,659	0.13
Women Should Participate in Local and National Elections	0.93	0.003	[0.007]	4,652	0.09
Women Should Participate in the Selection of the Provincial Governor	0.63	0.005	[0.013]	4,378	0.22
Summary Measure for Male Respondents	0.00	0.012	[0.016]	4,666	0.17

Treatment effect is estimated in the regression, which includes a constant and a dummy variable for villages that have been assigned to the treatment group. Robust standard errors adjusted for clustering at the village-cluster level in brackets. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

Table 9. Treatment Effect (controlling for measures of economic welfare)

Variable	Treatment Effect	Std. Error	Economic Welfare Measures	N	R-squared
A. Functionality Of Women's Council (Summary Measure)	0.852***	[0.095]	Yes	417	0.72
B. There Is At Least One Woman In The Village Who Is Well-Respected By Both Men And Women (Female Respondents)	0.073***	[0.016]	Yes	3,807	0.31
C. There Is At Least One Woman In The Village Who Is Well-Respected By Both Men And Women (Male Respondents)	0.088***	[0.014]	Yes	4,190	0.20
D. Attitudes Toward Women's Participation In Village Governance (Female Respondents; Summary Measure)	0.035**	[0.016]	Yes	3,816	0.17
E. Attitudes Toward Women's Participation In Village Governance (Male Respondents; Summary Measure)	0.072***	[0.020]	Yes	4,197	0.27
F. Women's Attitudes Toward Village Leaders (Female Respondents; Summary Measure)	0.115***	[0.027]	Yes	3,809	0.33
G. Village Leaders Are Perceived As Responsive To Needs Of Women (Female Focus Group)	0.111**	[0.047]	Yes	414	0.68
H. Socialization And Economic Activity (Female Respondents; Summary Measure)	0.064***	[0.017]	Yes	3,811	0.33
I. Respondent Engaged In Income Generating Activity During Past 12 Months	0.044***	[0.016]	Yes	3,799	0.24
J. Intra-Family Decisions (Female Respondents; Summary Measure)	-0.004	[0.018]	Yes	3,810	0.20
K. Women's Status In Broader Society (Female Respondents)	0.062***	[0.018]	Yes	3,813	0.21
L. Women's Status In Broader Society (Male Respondents)	0.016	[0.017]	Yes	4,200	0.19

Table 10. Treatment Effect, Interaction with Dummy for Completed Women's Project

Variable	Treatment Effect	Std. Error	Women's Project Finished	Std. Error	N	R-squared
A. Female Focus Group Participants						
There exist a village or pan-village women's council	-0.033	[0.041]	0.306**	[0.148]	424	0.67
Women's council had at least one meeting in the past month	0.586***	[0.045]	0.233*	[0.127]	424	0.74
Village women held meeting with district government in past 12 months	0.039**	[0.016]	0.052	[0.093]	424	0.64
Village women held meeting with women from other villages in past 12 months	0.077***	[0.024]	0.014	[0.095]	424	0.67
Summary measure	0.839***	[0.101]	0.619	[0.388]	424	0.70
B. Individual Female Respondents						
There is a Well-Respected Woman	0.069***	[0.016]	0.131***	[0.046]	4,225	0.29
C. Individual Male Respondents						
There is a Well-Respected Woman	0.081***	[0.014]	0.119*	[0.060]	4,656	0.18
D. Attitudes toward Women's Participation in Village Governance (Female Respondents)						
Women Should be Members of Village Council	-0.001	[0.015]	0.001	[0.061]	4,234	0.18
Women Should Have No Council	-0.026***	[0.009]	0.126***	[0.041]	4,234	0.14
Women Should Participate in the Selection of the Village Headman	0.030*	[0.017]	-0.020	[0.088]	3,628	0.23
Summary Measure for female respondents	0.046***	[0.016]	-0.138**	[0.068]	4,234	0.15
E. Attitudes toward Women's Participation in Village Governance (Male respondents)						
Women Should be Members of Village Council	-0.014	[0.011]	-0.079	[0.055]	4,568	0.30
Women Should Have No Council	-0.023***	[0.007]	-0.036	[0.041]	4,568	0.10
Women Should Participate in the Selection of the Village Headman	0.068***	[0.015]	0.078	[0.059]	4,577	0.28
Summary Measure for male respondents	0.072***	[0.020]	0.032	[0.111]	4,661	0.26
F. Women's Attitudes toward Village Leaders (Female Respondents)						
Respondent is Satisfied or Very Satisfied with Work of Village Leaders	0.024*	[0.013]	-0.031	[0.072]	4,127	0.20
Respondent Perceives that Village Decision Makers Act in the Interests of All Villagers	0.088***	[0.018]	-0.063	[0.061]	3,996	0.19
Village Leaders Are Responsive to Needs of Women	0.048***	[0.017]	0.061	[0.081]	4,214	0.25
Summary Measure	0.113***	[0.025]	-0.039	[0.119]	4,227	0.31
G. Women's Attitudes toward Village Leaders (Female Focus Group)						
Village Leaders Are Responsive to Needs of Women	0.109**	[0.045]	-0.027	[0.192]	421	0.66
H. Socialization and Economic Activity (Female Respondents)						
Respondent Socializes with Other Women	0.007	[0.012]	0.066	[0.059]	4,221	0.20
Number of Times Left Compound Past Month	2.108	[1.809]	-6.959	[7.724]	4,200	0.28
Leaves Compound Alone or with Small Child	0.036**	[0.014]	-0.081	[0.059]	4,214	0.18
Respondent Never or Only Sometimes Wears <i>Chadori</i>	0.024	[0.016]	-0.155***	[0.043]	4,221	0.31
Women in Village Have a Group or Someone to Go to Discuss or Solve their Problems	0.074***	[0.010]	0.017	[0.035]	4,222	0.22
Summary Measure	0.083***	[0.017]	-0.097	[0.063]	4,229	0.32
I. Income generating Activity						
Respondent Engaged in Income Generating Activity During Past 12 Months	0.062***	[0.016]	-0.153***	[0.040]	4,214	0.23
J. Intra-family Decisions						
Income Earner Has Authority to Decide Use of Income Generated	0.006	[0.024]	-0.070	[0.073]	1,625	0.34
Respondent Owns Either Livestock or Poultry, Land, or Jewelry	0.005	[0.015]	0.105*	[0.062]	4,228	0.18
Asset Owner Has Full or Partial Control Over Use of All Owned Assets	-0.010	[0.017]	0.057	[0.106]	1,970	0.28
Respondent Wishes to Have Equal Number of Boys and Girls or More Girls Than Boys	0.012	[0.025]	0.198**	[0.094]	1,517	0.21
Women Are Consulted or Responsible for Decisions on Purchases of Food, Clothes, and Medicine	-0.021	[0.013]	0.011	[0.071]	4,226	0.28
Women Are Consulted or Responsible for Children's Marriage and Education, Elderly Care, and Procreation	-0.006	[0.014]	-0.133***	[0.043]	4,185	0.19
Summary Measure	-0.008	[0.019]	-0.027	[0.060]	4,228	0.19

K. Women's Status in Broader Society (Female Respondents)						
Respondent Believes it is Appropriate for Women to Work in Government	0.008	[0.008]	0.019	[0.031]	4,205	0.12
Respondent Believes it is Appropriate for Women to Work with NGOs	0.031**	[0.013]	0.005	[0.049]	4,205	0.38
Girls Should Be Permitted to Attend School	0.005	[0.006]	-0.021	[0.033]	4,220	0.16
Female Family Member Could be Seen by Male Doctor if Female Nurse or Doctor Was Not Available	0.001	[0.009]	-0.019	[0.026]	4,222	0.16
Women Should Participate in Local and National Elections	0.002	[0.005]	0.028	[0.023]	4,038	0.14
Women Should Participate in the Selection of the Provincial Governor	0.028*	[0.016]	-0.010	[0.068]	2,678	0.31
Summary Measure for Female Respondents	0.033*	[0.017]	0.007	[0.093]	4,231	0.19
L. Women's Status in Broader Society (Male Respondents)						
Respondent Believes it is Appropriate for Women to Work in Government	0.014	[0.010]	0.005	[0.032]	4,643	0.10
Respondent Believes it is Appropriate for Women to Work with NGOs	0.013	[0.013]	-0.020	[0.060]	4,643	0.26
Girls Should Be Permitted to Attend School	-0.003	[0.009]	0.003	[0.033]	4,661	0.21
Female Family Member Could be Seen by Male Doctor if Female Nurse or Doctor Was Not Available	-0.004	[0.008]	-0.005	[0.027]	4,659	0.13
Women Should Participate in Local and National Elections	0.003	[0.007]	0.006	[0.028]	4,652	0.09
Women Should Participate in the Selection of the Provincial Governor	0.000	[0.013]	0.109**	[0.055]	4,378	0.22
Summary Measure for Male Respondents	0.010	[0.017]	0.035	[0.051]	4,666	0.17

Table 11. Treatment Effect in Pashtun Regions

Variable	Treatment Effect	Std. Error	Pashtun Non East* Treatment	Std. Error	Pashtun East* Treatment	Std. Error	N	R-squared
A. Functionality Of Women's Council (Summary Measure)	0.861***	[0.136]	-0.171	[0.195]	0.36	[0.294]	424	0.70
B. There Is At Least One Woman In The Village Who Is Well-Respected By Both Men And Women (Female Respondents)	0.062***	[0.020]	0.040	[0.032]	0.024	[0.049]	4,225	0.29
C. There Is At Least One Woman In The Village Who Is Well-Respected By Both Men And Women (Male Respondents)	0.086***	[0.018]	-0.031	[0.034]	0.048	[0.030]	4,656	0.18
D. Attitudes Toward Women's Participation In Village Governance (Female Respondents; Summary Measure)	0.069***	[0.020]	-0.079**	[0.033]	-0.071*	[0.043]	4,234	0.15
E. Attitudes Toward Women's Participation In Village Governance (Male Respondents; Summary Measure)	0.100***	[0.029]	-0.07	[0.044]	-0.067	[0.045]	4,661	0.26
F. Women's Attitudes Toward Village Leaders (Female Respondents; Summary Measure)	0.084***	[0.031]	0.055	[0.055]	0.081	[0.080]	4,227	0.31
G. Village Leaders Are Perceived As Responsive To Needs Of Women (Female Focus Group)	0.069	[0.056]	0.084	[0.116]	0.121	[0.105]	421	0.67
H. Socialization And Economic Activity (Female Respondents; Summary Measure)	0.072***	[0.021]	0.031	[0.039]	-0.011	[0.046]	4,229	0.32
I. Respondent Engaged In Income Generating Activity During Past 12 Months	0.053**	[0.023]	0.002	[0.034]	0.0001	[0.032]	4,214	0.22
J. Intra-Family Decisions (Female Respondents; Summary Measure)	0.012	[0.023]	-0.076*	[0.043]	-0.012	[0.042]	4,228	0.19
K. Women's Status In Broader Society (Female Respondents)	0.035*	[0.021]	-0.014	[0.046]	0.014	[0.040]	4,231	0.19
L. Women's Status In Broader Society (Male Respondents)	0.003	[0.022]	0.087**	[0.035]	-0.065	[0.041]	4,666	0.18

Table 12. Treatment Effect, Interaction with Individual Characteristics

Panel A. Female Owns Land	Treatment Effect	Std. Error	Owns Land	Std. Error	Owns Land* Treatment	Std. Error	N	R-squared
B. There Is a Woman Well-Respected By Both Men And Women (Female Respondents)	0.078***	[0.015]	0.039	[0.044]	-0.038	[0.071]	4,225	0.29
C. There Is a Woman Well-Respected By Both Men And Women (Male Respondents)	0.087***	[0.014]	-0.042	[0.056]	-0.037	[0.079]	4,218	0.18
D. Attitudes Toward Women's Participation In Village Governance (Female Respondents)	0.039**	[0.015]	0.089	[0.067]	-0.022	[0.093]	4,228	0.15
E. Attitudes Toward Women's Participation In Village Governance (Male Respondents)	0.104***	[0.023]	0.093	[0.094]	-0.091	[0.125]	4,224	0.25
F. Women's Attitudes Toward Village Leaders (Female Respondents)	0.118***	[0.024]	0.143*	[0.079]	-0.216*	[0.120]	4,227	0.31
H. Socialization And Economic Activity (Female Respondents)	0.069***	[0.016]	0.011	[0.054]	0.215**	[0.086]	4,228	0.32
I. Respondent Engaged In Income Generating Activity During Past 12 Months	0.057***	[0.015]	0.116**	[0.056]	-0.12	[0.081]	4,213	0.23
J. Intra-Family Decisions (Female Respondents)	-0.007	[0.018]	0.211***	[0.049]	-0.06	[0.078]	4,228	0.19
K. Women's Status In Broader Society (Female Respondents)	0.042**	[0.017]	0.139***	[0.048]	-0.252***	[0.092]	4,228	0.19
L. Women's Status In Broader Society (Male Respondents)	0.030*	[0.018]	0.036	[0.057]	0.007	[0.078]	4,227	0.17
Panel B. Female Has Some Education	Treatment Effect	Std. Error	Education	Std. Error	Education* Treatment	Std. Error	N	R-squared
B. There Is a Woman Well-Respected By Both Men And Women (Female Respondents)	0.073***	[0.016]	0.037	[0.033]	0.01	[0.045]	4,204	0.29
C. There Is a Woman Well-Respected By Both Men And Women (Male Respondents)	0.071***	[0.016]	-0.056*	[0.030]	0.098**	[0.043]	4,200	0.18
D. Attitudes Toward Women's Participation In Village Governance (Female Respondents)	0.042**	[0.017]	0.015	[0.041]	-0.018	[0.053]	4,210	0.15
E. Attitudes Toward Women's Participation In Village Governance (Male Respondents)	0.074***	[0.023]	-0.128***	[0.043]	0.205***	[0.066]	4,206	0.26
F. Women's Attitudes Toward Village Leaders (Female Respondents)	0.105***	[0.028]	0.043	[0.052]	0.027	[0.066]	4,206	0.31
H. Socialization And Economic Activity (Female Respondents)	0.073***	[0.017]	-0.034	[0.034]	0.034	[0.050]	4,207	0.32
I. Respondent Engaged In Income Generating Activity During Past 12 Months	0.060***	[0.017]	0.085**	[0.037]	-0.054	[0.046]	4,194	0.23
J. Intra-Family Decisions (Female Respondents)	-0.01	[0.019]	-0.004	[0.040]	0.02	[0.055]	4,207	0.19
K. Women's Status In Broader Society (Female Respondents)	0.022	[0.018]	0.096**	[0.038]	0.043	[0.043]	4,210	0.19
L. Women's Status In Broader Society (Male Respondents)	0.027	[0.018]	-0.064	[0.046]	0.057	[0.052]	4,209	0.17
Panel B. Age of Respondent	Treatment Effect	Std. Error	Age	Std. Error	Age* Treatment	Std. Error	N	R-squared
B. There Is a Woman Well-Respected By Both Men And Women (Female Respondents)	0.103**	[0.042]	0.001	[0.001]	-0.001	[0.001]	4,217	0.29
C. There Is a Woman Well-Respected By Both Men And Women (Male Respondents)	0.070	[0.046]	-0.002**	[0.001]	0.0004	[0.001]	4,213	0.18
D. Attitudes Toward Women's Participation In Village Governance (Female Respondents)	0.026	[0.048]	-0.0002	[0.001]	0.0004	[0.001]	4,223	0.15
E. Attitudes Toward Women's Participation In Village Governance (Male Respondents)	0.119*	[0.065]	-0.002	[0.001]	-0.0005	[0.002]	4,219	0.25
F. Women's Attitudes Toward Village Leaders (Female Respondents)	0.062	[0.070]	-0.001	[0.001]	0.001	[0.002]	4,219	0.31
H. Socialization And Economic Activity (Female Respondents)	0.158***	[0.052]	0.007***	[0.001]	-0.002*	[0.001]	4,220	0.33
I. Respondent Engaged In Income Generating Activity During Past 12 Months	0.122**	[0.048]	-0.0002	[0.001]	-0.002	[0.001]	4,206	0.23
J. Intra-Family Decisions (Female Respondents)	-0.003	[0.054]	-0.002	[0.001]	-0.0002	[0.001]	4,220	0.19
K. Women's Status In Broader Society (Female Respondents)	0.136**	[0.061]	0.001	[0.001]	-0.003*	[0.002]	4,223	0.19
L. Women's Status In Broader Society (Male Respondents)	0.124**	[0.055]	0.001	[0.001]	-0.003*	[0.001]	4,222	0.18