IMPACT OF CIIP ON WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

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A qualitative inquiry

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A qualitative inquiry

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### List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIIP</td>
<td>Community Infrastructure Improvement Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFATD</td>
<td>Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
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<td>IGA</td>
<td>Income-generating Activity</td>
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<td>IMLT</td>
<td>Impact Measurement and Learning Team</td>
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<td>LRSP</td>
<td>Long Range Strategic Plan</td>
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<td>MFI</td>
<td>Microfinance Institution</td>
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<td>CNIC</td>
<td>Computerized National Identity Card</td>
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<td>RMT</td>
<td>Road Maintenance Team</td>
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<td>SHG</td>
<td>Self-help Group</td>
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<td>SSI</td>
<td>Strategic Impact Inquiry</td>
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<tr>
<td>WDR</td>
<td>World Development Report</td>
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<td>WEF</td>
<td>World Economic Forum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. WHAT IS WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. IMPACT OF CIIP ON WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Infrastructure Improvement Program (CIIP) was initiated in May 2010, with the goal of improving the socio-economic status of marginalized Pakistani women in nine districts of Sindh and Punjab provinces of Pakistan. It was a 15.3 million CAD project funded by Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD). CIIP hired disadvantaged women as road maintenance workers for a period of two-year rotating cycle. These women received fortnightly wages and life skills trainings to enable them to be economically and socially empowered. A portion of their earnings was sided as mandatory savings which was paid to them at the end of the employment for initiating income generating activities. These women were also linked to microfinance institutions and private sector companies for financial inclusion and development of inclusive value chains.

This study aims to assess the impacts of CIIP on women empowerment. This research objective is investigated using research questions pertaining to the perceptions of these women regarding the most significant changes in their lives. The self-report data is then analyzed to investigate how these changes relate to the indicators of empowerment. Structural indicators to empowerment like domestic decision-making and influence are also studied along with any changes that have been brought about in reference to gender equity, workload and division of labor within the household. At the end, the research also studies any collective actions that these women have taken to influence wider structural concepts like social/political inclusion.

The research was conducted using qualitative instruments such as in-depth interviews and FGDs. The sample consisted of 160 RMT women from 4 districts, selected using purposive sampling. The primary research was supported with secondary research involving review of global literature, primarily for defining important concepts and demarking the indicators for empowerment. Previous project reports and earlier researchers on CIIP were also analyzed.

The indicators for empowerment were developed using literature and certain indicators were added on contextual grounds after thematic analysis of the primary data. These indicators covered three major themes: agency, structure and relations and included:

1. Self-confidence, self-esteem and self-image
2. Mobility
3. Household decision-making and influence
4. Employment and economic independence
5. Saving and spending habits
6. Market accessibility
7. Health and education (human capital)
8. Coalition habits and collective identity/action
9. Marriage rules and roles
10. Notions of citizenship and political representation
All ten of these indicators were analyzed and the changes were attributed to relevant interventions. The notions of the men of the area were captured using FGDs and a diverse range of responses were recorded.

In the end, the limitations of the project are highlighted and potential implications are discussed.
1. INTRODUCTION

Background

The nature of women’s socio-economic exclusion is complex, contextual and deeply rooted in social and cultural institutions. Women have remained subject to discrimination, segregation and violence of various kinds across the world. Conditions are poorer for women who are born in a male-dominated, patriarchal society like Pakistan where they are institutionally marginalized through cultural norms and misinterpretation of religion, inextricably linked with economic deprivation, social exclusion, and denial of rights.

With the goal of improving the socio-economic status of marginalized Pakistani women, the Community Infrastructure Improvement Project (CIIP) was implemented in nine districts of Sindh and Punjab provinces of Pakistan from May 2010 to April 2015. CIIP was a 15.2-million CAD project funded by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development (DFATD). The Project hired disadvantaged rural women as road maintenance workers for a period of two-year rotating cycle. During their employment on roads, women received fortnightly wages and life skills’ training from the Project to become economically and socially empowered. In the end, women were supported to start income-generating activities using their mandatory savings in the bank. Women were also linked to microfinance institutions and private sector companies for financial inclusion and development of inclusive value-chains respectively.

CIIP was a women’s economic empowerment project but it also built on CARE’s work in health and education sectors, which are critical to ensuring that women have the capacity to be economically active and socially empowered. The Project selected maintenance of rural earthen roads as entry point for its intervention but the ultimate outcome of the Project was to improve socio-economic status of 3750 rural women who would participate in road maintenance work and would receive training on health, human/gender rights, and basic business management. Women were expected to be more mobile, self-confident, and collaborative at the end of their employment with CIIP.

According to Project’s Logic Model, following were the expected intermediate outcomes:

1. Improved year-round use of maintained rural roads by light traffic
2. Increased and diversified income base for poor rural women through participation in income generating activities
3. Increased ability to plan and monitor gender-responsive community-based development initiatives at local government and community level

The immediate Project outcomes were expected to be:

1. Improved rural roads and community Infrastructure
2. Increased employment opportunities for local women through participation in the maintenance of rural earthen roads and community infrastructure
3. Improved capacity among poor rural women to start income generating activities
4. Increased support from local government institutions and CBOs for women engaged in maintenance work and entrepreneurial activities

CIIP intended to take an all-inclusive approach around women’s economic empowerment by providing means of economic development along with building their skills in other areas that could help them attain a better social standing through increased knowledge around gender and social issues. The women were thus positioned to enhance their economic as well as social status through employment as Road Maintenance Team (RMT) workers. It was expected that along with empowering the direct beneficiaries socially and economically, linkages would also be built with district administration, tehsil/taluka¹, union councils² (UCs), local government officials, community-based organizations (CBOs), micro-credit institutions, private sector organizations, skills training centers and other relevant institutions.

The Project has made some valuable achievements in terms of improving the lives of poor women however we still need to ask important questions regarding its impacts on women empowerment. These questions are:

- Does CIIP add up to an impact on women’s empowerment in the intervened areas?
- Has CIIP affected the underlying causes of women’s poverty and repression?
- Does CIIP take into account the community and structural factors and potential conflict resulted by women’s changing roles?

With monetary prosperity comes responsibility and empowerment but the social and domestic responses to these changes are not unidirectional. The power associated to the economic progress might bring positive changes in social and domestic behaviors towards these women; it might also bring negative changes like envy, resistance towards power control and might also result into potential conflict. The current research study aims to investigate the multi-faceted impacts of endeavors related to women empowerment in a male-dominated cultural setting. The study was designed to gain the perspectives of women once they have experienced in their lives, attitudes, behavior, and relations by participating in the Project. It was also recognized that the perceptions and responses of male members regarding women’s empowerment were equally important therefore men’s perceptions were also included in the study.

¹ A, Taluka, also known as tehsil or taksil, is an administrative division in Pakistan and some other states of South Asia. It is an area of land with a city or town that serves as its administrative center, with possible additional towns, and usually a number of villages.
² A sherwan or union council in Pakistan is an elected local government body consisting of 21 councilors, and headed by a nazim (which is equivalent to a mayor) and a naib nazim (deputy). Union councils are the fifth tier of government in Pakistan and are also known as village councils in rural areas.
Research Objective

To study CIIP’s impact on women’s empowerment

Research Questions

1. What are women’s perceptions about the most significant changes in their lives and how it relates to the indicators of empowerment?^3^?
2. What has been the impact of CIIP on women’s cognitive and behavioral learning?
3. What has been the impact of CIIP on women’s economic empowerment?
4. What type of collective actions have women taken to influence wider social issues within the community?
5. What are the men’s reactions to women’s non-traditional work and economic empowerment?

Methodology:

In order to study the impact of CIIP on women empowerment, data was collected through following methods:

1. Field Research in four Project districts:
   160 RMT women were selected through Quota sampling from 4 districts (Multan and Rajanpur in Punjab and Mirpurkhas and Qambar Shahdad Kot in Sindh Province) for in-depth qualitative interviews. The RMT women in the selected districts were sampled phase-wise (20 women from each of the first four phases/batches of RMTs). In order to obtain the male response to change in women’s status, eight FGDs (two in each district) was conducted with male members of the communities.

2. Review of Global Literature:
   Global researches and literature about women’s empowerment were examined. These included relevant books, scholarly articles, databases, and national and international development reports.

3. Review of Project reports:
   Project’s annual, semi-annual, and quarterly reports published by CARE and partner organizations were reviewed for evidences.

4. Analysis of Earlier Researches on CIIP:
   The current study also builds on earlier qualitative and quantitative researches on the Project. These studies include:
   - Early Impact Assessment of the Community Infrastructure Improvement Project (2012)
   - Benefit Cost Analysis of the Community Infrastructure Improvement Project (2013)
   - Social Return on Investment (SROI) Study (2014)
   - DFATD’s monitoring reports

^3^ The indicators of empowerment used in this study are the 23 dimensions of empowerment identified by CARE’s Impact Measurement and Learning Team (IMLT) in their SSI study (2005). These have been described in detail in the next chapter.
Time Constraints

The initial schedule for research covered four to five months in which the study was to be designed, oriented to the partners’ staff, implemented, analyzed, and documented. The timetable seemed too challenging therefore it was extended for one month from March to April 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of research design</td>
<td>Sept 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision of research design</td>
<td>Oct 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orientation to partners’ staff and enumerators</td>
<td>Oct 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field research</td>
<td>Nov-Dec 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>Jan 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Jan-Feb 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of final report</td>
<td>March-Apr 2015</td>
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2. WHAT IS WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT?

According to World Development Report 2000/01, there are various dimensions to poverty; however, the common elements that underlie poor people’s marginalization across diverse social, political, and economic settings are voicelessness and powerlessness. The report also establishes that unequal power relations restrain poor people’s ability to influence, decide, or negotiate for themselves with the powerful groups including governments and civil society. The poor and powerless are dependent on others for their subsistence; and their rights to dignity, respect, and collective identity is often denied. The powerlessness of the poor people is closely connected to inequality in the economic, social, and institutional spheres. The institutions of the state appear to be ineffectively addressing poverty especially the poor women who are more powerless and vulnerable than men (WDR 2000/01).

Since the 1970s feminists have used the term ‘women’s empowerment’ to describe a struggle for women’s equality that involves transformation of social, economic, and political structures (Mohanty 1991). The idea of women’s empowerment has gained increased attention in international development in the past few decades. There has been multitude of conceptual and empirical work revolving around nature and working of women’s empowerment and the kinds of impacts it can have on the lives of women and other stakeholders (Kabeer 1999, Narayan 2001). The basic assumption behind all women’s economic empowerment studies and efforts is that women are almost globally marginalized and powerless in one form or the other.

Along with the international recognition of development of empowerment came movements and programs aimed at economic empowerment of poor women. Much attention and programming, with various perspectives and definitions have been linked with women’s empowerment. Initially, income-generating programs and projects lied at the core of women’s empowerment endeavors. These programs resulted in ‘unexpected’ outcomes in the form of increased self-worth and improved decision-making for women in household and other arenas. Currently, basic objectives behind empowerment programs are to increase a women’s ability to “generate choices and exercise bargaining power as well as develop a sense of self-worth, a belief in one’s ability to secure desired changes, and the right to control one’s life” (UNIFEM 2000).

Depending on the nature of program and the socio-cultural context of power relations, the definitions and measurement of empowerment varies. The literature examining women’s economic empowerment reveals that empowerment can happen on economic, socio-cultural, familial/interpersonal, political, and psychological realms (Malhotra et al. 2002).
Defining Women’s Empowerment

Deepa Narayan⁴ defines empowerment as “the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable the institutions that affect their lives” (Narayan 2001). This definition recognizes empowerment as a process of building capabilities and not simply the quantifiable results visible in most women empowerment frameworks to date.

A review of definitions of empowerment reflects both variety and commonality in themes. Most definitions focus on issues of gaining power and control over decisions and resources that determine one’s social status, the choices one can make, and the quality of one’s life. Most definitions also take into account structural inequalities that affect entire social groups rather than focus only on individual characteristics.

Rubina Saigol describes women’s empowerment as a complex, evolving, and context-dependent concept that has been continually defined, redefined, and clarified (Saigol 2011). Over the decades women’s empowerment has been linked with gender equity and equality, and the structural transformation of society through social, political, and economic reforms related to women’s health, education, labor, ownership and decision-making rights, access to resources, and control over bodies and reproduction. In her study “Women’s Empowerment in Pakistan: A Scoping Study,” Saigol suggests that empowerment must also be understood through women’s own perceptions and lives, and not as the “imposition of an urban middle-class notion of rural women occupying a culturally different space” (ibid).

The World Economic Forum defines women’s empowerment as follows:

_The past three decades have witnessed a steadily increasing awareness of the need to empower women through measures to increase social, economic and political equity, and broader access to fundamental human rights, improvement in nutrition, basic health, and education_ (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi 2005).

WEF’s definition incorporates social empowerment through access to health, education, and nutrition and also includes the idea of fundamental human rights through economic and political equity.

One of the most comprehensive and frequently cited definitions of empowerment comes from a study by Kabeer (1999), which states that empowerment is “the expansion of people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them; a process that entails thinking outside the system and challenging the status quo, where people can make choices from the vantage point of real alternatives without punishingly high costs.”

Researchers agree that there is neither an agreed-upon definition nor a single model for measuring empowerment. A development activist cited by Batiawala (1993) maintains: “I like the term empowerment because no one has defined it clearly yet; so it gives us a breathing space to work it out in action terms before we have to pin ourselves down to what it means.” However in order to evaluate the empowerment efforts we make, we need to devise indicators and clarify at the outset how we use in our studies.

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⁴ Dr. Deepa Narayan is an independent international poverty, gender and development advisor and writer with over 25 years of experience working at the World Bank, the UN, and NGOs. Until 2008, she served as Senior Advisor in the Vice President’s office of the Poverty Reduction Group of the World Bank.
CARE and Women’s Empowerment

Women’s empowerment is a key component of CARE’s work. At CARE, economic empowerment projects aim to provide women and other marginalized groups with enhanced life-skills and vocational training opportunities, improve legal and regulatory protection of resources, workplace wage equity, and domestic worker rights, and promote gender敏感的 land rights and tenancy act reform.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CARE’s work with women</th>
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<tr>
<td>We stand in solidarity with poor and marginalized people, and support their efforts to take control of their own lives and fulfil their rights, responsibilities and aspirations. We ensure that the key participants and organizations representing affected people are partners in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of our programs.</td>
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<td>(CARE’s First Programming Principle – Promoting Empowerment)</td>
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| In our programs and offices, we address discrimination and the denial of rights based on sex, race, nationality, ethnicity, class, religion, age, physical ability, caste, opinion or sexual orientation. |
| (CARE’s Fifth Programming Principle -Address Discrimination) |

CARE recognizes that in our societies and organizational cultures, biased stereotypes and social norms prevent women and men from exercising their free choice and from taking full and equal advantage of opportunities for individual development, contribution and reward.

CARE will improve the ability of men and women to work creatively and effectively in the organization and in communities in the developing world by increasing awareness of gender inequalities and, by working with women and men to change the conditions that create and maintain them.

(CARE USA’s Revised Gender Policy)

CARE will hold all its staff members accountable for achieving measurable progress toward a situation where all people have equal opportunities, rights and access to power and resources.

(CARE’s Revised Diversity Policy)
CARE International provides a definition of empowerment that encompasses three dimensions: **agency (individuals)**, **structures**, and **relationships**. According to CARE:

**Individuals must gain power to change and effect change; structures that dictate social, economic, and political power-holding must be altered; and human relationships must be created or modified to support change** (CARE, “Women’s Empowerment”).

**Indicators of Women’s Empowerment**

Building on Giddens model of power (Giddens 1984), CARE’s Impact Measurement and Learning Team (IMLT) identified 23 ‘evidence categories’ (Table 2.1) for researchers to consider when assessing women’s empowerment and categorized these as agency-based, structural or relational.

According to CARE’s IMLT team first question about impacts on women empowerment is: **What evidences are there that CARE’s programs**

- Support the expansion of women’s capabilities to identify, pursue, and achieve their basic needs and rights? **(Agency)**
- Promote a more responsive and equitable enabling environment, as embodied in cultural constructs, legal and policy frameworks, economic and market forces, and bureaucratic and organizational reforms? **(Structure)**
- Promote more independent and accountable relationships between women and the key people and institutions they engage with in pursuit of their needs? **(Relational)**

The above questions raised and the dimensions identified by CARE’s IMLT team have been addressed in this study’s design that seeks to understand CIIP’s impact on women’s empowerment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Dimensions of women’s empowerment suggested by CARE’s IMLT</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Agency</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Legal/ rights awareness</td>
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<td>3. Information/skills</td>
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<td>5. Employment/control of labor</td>
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<td>6. Mobility in public space</td>
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<td>7. Decision-making and influence in household finance and child-rearing</td>
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<td>8. Group membership/ activism</td>
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<td>9. Material assets owned</td>
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<td><strong>10. Body health/Integrity</strong></td>
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**CARE’s Approach to Women’s Empowerment in Pakistan**

CARE’s vision in Pakistan reflects the organization’s global vision, in that:

“We seek a Pakistan of hope, tolerance, and social justice where poverty has been overcome and, people live in dignity and security. CARE will be a force and a partner of choice in a movement dedicated to ending poverty. We will be known for our unshakable commitment to the dignity of people in Pakistan.”

CARE seeks to achieve this vision by:

“Empowering marginalized women to address power imbalances at the household, community and institutional levels. CARE will engage with partners to promote self-help and influence public opinion and practice by bringing together wisdom based on sound analysis and field practices.”

The overall goal of CARE’s fifteen year 2011-2026 strategy in Pakistan is that:

“28 million marginalized women in Pakistan are making choices that reduce vulnerability and impact their lives positively. These women will have control over productive assets and exercise their rights in formal and informal decision-making process at all levels.”

In its Long Term Strategic Plan (LRSP) for Pakistan, CARE International in Pakistan recognizes that ‘women and girls suffer disproportionately from poverty therefore CARE places special emphasis on working with women and girls to create permanent social change. Empowered and equipped with the proper resources, women are instrumental in overcoming poverty. In Pakistan, CARE’s goal focuses on nearly two-thirds of all poor marginalized women, with the ambition of driving macro level change... and the assumption of a sufficient degree of socio-economic and political stability to support the work of CARE and its partners.’

CARE’s impact group is women and girls who are marginalized on following three grounds:

- **Politically Marginalized:** Women who are excluded from or have limited participation in decision-making and access to justice
- **Economically Marginalized:** Women, whose labor is unrecognized and who are excluded from the workforce, who have limited access and control over productive assets, and whose livelihoods are highly vulnerable to disasters
- **Socially Marginalized:** Women whose freedoms and rights are restricted by gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, and disability

The study will analyze CIIP’s role on economic, social, and political level as devised by CARE’s LRSP and development researchers.
3. IMPACT OF CIIP ON WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

What is CIIP’s impact on women’s empowerment? This question was directly investigated in four of Project districts (Multan and Rajanpur (Punjab), and Qambar Shahdadkot, and Mirpurskhas (Sindh)) with special emphasis on including the voice of women who were involved in the project as road maintenance workers and the opinions of community men who were directly or indirectly affected. Project reports, evaluation studies, and previous case-studies were also reviewed and analyzed. Evidences were collected about CIIP’s impacts on certain aspects of women’s empowerment.

Impacts of CIIP on Women’s Empowerment –women’s responses

1. Self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-image

This is an area where CIIP has stimulated substantial change. CIIP involved rural women in road maintenance work as the first step of empowerment process. Although roadwork was an entry-point for the overall intervention, the two-year period of road maintenance played a major role in boosting self-confidence of rural women who had never been engaged in a task as ‘new’ and challenging as that.\(^6\) Coming of women on roads was initially resisted heavily by community members especially men.\(^7\) Maintenance or construction of roads was considered as ‘men’s job’ therefore many women were also hesitant to take up the non-traditional task which was not acceptable by their village members. However once initiated, road maintenance work served as a major stimulus for enhancing women’s confidence and self-image as they were able to accomplish something they were traditionally considered ineligible for.

Women were of the opinion that the roadwork had a major role in building their confidence and reducing their fears and shyness. Women described how they were ridiculed by their relatives and community members in the beginning of their work and how attitudes turned from negative to positive as a result of their determination, accomplishments and increased earnings. RMT women in all four districts reported that regular and increased income from CIIP and financial independence due to regular employment elevated their spirits and they felt that they were more respected by their family and community members.

\(^6\) Majority women had been engaged in some kind of employment such as seasonal (field) labor, domestic service, handicrafts, and other traditional jobs for women however the cultural conservatism didn’t allow them to work on roads. This conservativism was more restrictive in Punjab than in Sindh.

\(^7\) Most men in all Project districts were of the opinion that working of women in agricultural fields was (culturally) acceptable but coming of women on roads was inappropriate. There were rumors in Punjab province about genuineness of the Project and people had reservations about safety and security of women.
Apart from roadwork and improved income, CIIP’s life skills training also had profound impacts on personalities of women. Women, who had been affected by domestic violence, forced, early, or exchange marriages and other forms of social injustices, reported change in their own attitudes. RMT women were also observed to be more articulate and eloquent when compared to rural women who had not received assistance from CIIP.

Confidence and self-esteem are subjective and relative concepts therefore the research team probed women themselves to come up with their own indicators of these phenomena. Women in all four districts linked self-confidence to their mobility in public spaces, reduced fears and inhibition, increased interaction with stranger men, and ability to own and operate mobile phones.

While there are differences in the levels of perceived self-confidence and self-esteem in each woman, all women respondents reported at least some level of improvement; quite a few women reported that there was only little increase in their self-confidence. Women’s self-assurance and their perception of themselves as confident and empowered is also an important positive impact of the project.

“Before CIIP, I hesitated to face my relatives; they too gave little importance to me because I was poor. I was not invited to marriage ceremonies because I was not able to buy wedding gifts. I felt unhappy and isolated. Now my relatives give me more respect and importance. I feel respectable and independent.”

Faiz Mai (Multan)

“I could not speak confidently before –especially when men were around; I would feel nervous, hide my face, keep my head down, and stay quiet. I am confident now. I do not hide my face any more. I visit Takhleeq Foundation’s office. I talk on mobile phone. I am talking comfortably to you (interviewer) too today; you see my confidence for yourself.”

Khair Nisa (Mirpurkhas)
“There were many fears before – fear of going out, fear of talking to a man. But I can go anywhere and can speak to anyone now. I talk to the landlord about our rights because I have understood that we are human beings like the resourceful people; what should I be afraid of then? I am no more fearful of going to public places. I go to market alone. When a family member gets sick, I take him/her to a doctor.”

Talchi (Mirpurkhas)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes</th>
<th>To what change is attributed?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Increased interaction with strangers (especially men)</td>
<td>Roadwork, project meetings, interaction with project staff, community mobilization, IGAs, exposure visits, market visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased mobility</td>
<td>Roadwork, life-skill training, project meetings, IGAs/market visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced shyness and fears</td>
<td>Roadwork, life-skill training, project meetings, increased interaction and exposure, economic betterment, accomplishment, recognition, appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of being more respected/respectable</td>
<td>Employment, increased and regular income, respectable and “novel” work, change in community reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling less dependent on others</td>
<td>Regular employment, Increased and regular income, savings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of identity (individual and group)</td>
<td>Employment, life-skill training, self-help groups, accomplishment, recognition, appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in their abilities as women</td>
<td>Roadwork, gender and human rights training, accomplishment, recognition, appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased use of mobile phones</td>
<td>Mobile banking, basic literacy and numeracy training</td>
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</table>
The project team that had been part of community mobilization and campaigning report that RMT women have become more vocal and expressive as compared to before. According to a staff member there was acute lack of confidence among women when they were being selected as RMTs. However one can visibly observe the transformation in self-confidence of these women. Initially women were not ready to converse to men; they would cover their faces during meetings. “Now the same women greet us confidently and communicate their accomplishments and challenges to us enthusiastically during our field visits,” reported one of CIIP staff members.

2. Mobility

Females’ mobility was identified as an issue in both Sindh and Punjab. Women related the issue of mobility with lack of confidence to interact with strangers and men, fear of traveling unaccompanied (especially by a man), transport impediments, traditional hindrances related to females’ mobility, restrictions from family, and dependence on men for day-to-day provisions.

RMT Women reported that they received freedom and confidence of movement after their employment in CIIP. Most women said that earlier there were restrictions and/or inhibitions which confined them to home and village however increased mobility opportunities provided by CIIP benefitted them both in terms of loosening family restraints and overcoming personal inhibitions.

Research shows that women’s mobility constraints limited their information of what was going on in the community and of the available economic opportunities and means of transportation. Women believed that increased mobility had opened avenues of information and opportunities to them from which they had been barred because of movement limitations. CIIP’s experience with the rural communities has shown how important it is for empowerment projects to take mobility constraints of women into consideration in defining the objectives and strategies of the activities intended to include women.

“I would not travel to city before CIIP. I wondered how I would converse with people who lived there. When I started working, I would travel to city to withdraw my wages from Telenor’s office. I began interacting with people. I also started shopping. I received much happiness buying groceries and clothes for my children and myself. I had never bought apparels of my own choice before. Now I go to city every month for shopping. I also go to hospital and bank.”

Rubina (Qamber Shahdad Kot)

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8 Travel and mobility are gendered issues in Pakistan. There are various restrictions on females’ mobility across sub-cultures, social classes, and rural-urban divide. These restrictions suggest that in rural areas girls are less likely to attend schools outside their villages and women are less likely to participate in income-generating activities outside their homes. In general, restrictions on women’s mobility are rooted in the cultural discourse of Purdah, or the concept of the segregation of sexes. These restrictions may also reflect women’s own fears and inhibitions related to gender and sexual harassment and other social and cultural issues. Mobility, therefore, is not just related to geographic distance, but associated with crossing social boundaries and the risks or fears that that involves.
The women respondents also ascribed their increased mobility to improved roads which they had paved themselves. After their involvement in CIIP, women gained access to market, income-earning opportunities, services, information sources, prices, rights, and cultural diversity. It was observed that overriding mobility constraints was both cause and effect of women’s empowerment. Many women expressed changed notions about gender roles and stereotypes when they were experienced the world outside their homes and villages.

However, during the study it was also observed that not all RMT women had become equally mobile. In Punjab, few women reported that they depended on their husbands and sons for wage withdrawal from Easypaisa\(^9\) franchise. Women who were engaged in group businesses reported that not all of them paid frequent visits to the market. Some RMT women relied on their group leaders for business purchases from adjacent towns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recurrent themes (indicators) related to mobility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Changes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Visits to hospitals/health centers/physicians</td>
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<td>Market/exposure visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visits to the bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
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<td>Visits to Telenor franchise</td>
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\(^{9}\) Easypaisa is Telenor’s branchless banking service which allows easy access to financial transactions across Pakistan.
3. Household decision-making and influence

How far are women involved in household decision-making? What are the major areas for women’s decision-making within household? Where is the female’s decision final? To what extent CIIP has improved women’s influence, autonomy, and empowerment within household? These questions are directly related to CIIP’s PMF indicators and were put directly to women during each interview.

The dynamics of women’s household status and decision-making varied case to case. Decision-making roles and influence heavily depended on women’s age, marital status, relationship, and personal characteristics. However some common themes still emerged in the research.

Women considered themselves to have gained more importance and influence in family after their involvement in CIIP. Majority women reported that they participated or were “included” in household decisions after their improved economic status however in some cases men still had the final word. In cases of married women, husbands were key decision makers but many women said that they were consulted for ‘important’ decisions such as children’s marriages. Some of the widows who still lived with their in-laws reported that their brother-in-law, father-in-law, or mother-in-law influenced their decisions related to childrearing and control of assets. Widows who lived with their parents or sons reported that their parents (especially father), brothers, and sons sometimes influenced their decisions. However after their employment in CIIP majority women had been able to have increased decision-making capacity especially regarding household expenditures, buying of accessories, jewelry, livestock, children’s marriages, and buying/selling of household assets. Women also reported to have gained more influence than before on children’s health and education.

In Punjab, majority of the married women reported that they were being included in decision-making by their husbands. Widows said that they made decisions but sought advice from sons or brothers. Some women said that they made most decisions related to daily household expenses, education, health, and children’s marriages. Some women had recently resolved serious disputes between family members (especially brothers) and relatives. Few married women however reported that despite their improved economic status, major household decisions were taken by their husbands or other male members of their husbands’ households. Overall, women perceived an enhanced position within family and greater influence in decision-making at household level.

In Sindh too majority women reported that they took decisions in mutual consultation with their husbands, children, parents, and/or in-laws. Women reported to have had more say in children’s marriages especially bride selection for their sons; while decisions for daughters’ marriages were mostly controlled by fathers with consultation of wives. Women also reported to have gained increased decision-making and influence in household finance including buying and selling of assets and livestock.

Women’s influence on their son’s marriages (in all districts) was partly due to traditional factors which provide the choice of bride to the mother. Women’s improved decision-making in household finance, daughter’s marriage and children’s health and education was found to be an impact of improved economic status through CIIP intervention. All women might not have become major decision-makers in their
households however their influence and participation in household decision-making has positively increased.

“My husband Somar makes most household decisions: where to go, whose invitation to accept, who to work for? He also makes decisions related to children’s marriages. But he takes my consent. When I was working on roads, I for the first time bought some jewelry for my daughter and a goat for the household—it was my decision.”

Gulzadi (Mirpurkhas)

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<tr>
<th>Recurrent themes (indicators) related to decision-making and household influence</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Changes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Household finances/expenditures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buying/selling of accessories and assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Childrearing/health and education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s marriages</td>
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<td>Decisions regarding social interaction and mobility</td>
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<td>Decisions regarding employment and control of income</td>
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4. Employment and economic independence

One of the most important Project PMF indicators was increased and diversified income base for poor rural women through participation in income-generating activities.\(^\text{10}\)

Although most women were already engaged in some kind of paid work before their employment in CIIP, female labor was concentrated in few low-paid occupations over which they had little or no control. Not According to Project’s database record, majority women had been involved in daily wage and seasonal labor irregularly before CIIP intervention.\(^\text{11}\) A small fraction of women were unemployed. CIIP created increased and diversified employment opportunities for women through its road maintenance, mandatory savings and business development components.\(^\text{12}\)

Women in both Sindh and Punjab reported improved economic conditions from regular and increased wages and business development initiatives introduced by CIIP. Women reported enhanced earning capacity and improved control of their labor and income than before. Improved economic status of women for an extended period of two years of roadwork had enhanced their social status. Women felt motivated about their careers and they did not want to return to the old conditions of destitute and dependence on others. Women also reported to have developed skills and confidence for performing non-traditional tasks. This enabled them to be more willing to invest in independent and innovative businesses and not rely solely on intermittent seasonal labor or men’s income for their livelihood.

RMT women in both provinces mainly invested their savings in grocery shops\(^\text{1}\), apparel shops, multi-product stores, livestock-rearing and milking, dairy business, kitchen-gardening, vegetable-selling, straw-weaving, door-to-door sales, beauty salons, tailoring, and handicrafts. Few women started unique business such as selling of lubricant oil, tenting/catering services, poultry and fish farming, puncture shops, transport services, and contracting of lands for farming. Some RMT women invested their savings together into group businesses because they believed that they could maximize their profits and share the risks of failure through joint investments. A small number of women had also started multiple businesses simultaneously.

The strategy for diversification of income was advantageous to women in terms of profitable and sustainable income generation. Women agreed that earlier they depended on meagre and irregular income however regular employment and entrepreneurial activities had enhanced their earnings and strengthened their purchasing power.

As women become major economic contributors in their households, they owned material assets and gained increased control over their income and spending. However few women also reported that their

\(^{10}\) CIIP strategically involved women in road maintenance to ensure their regular labor participation for two years and strengthen their capacity for sustainable income generation. A portion of women’s savings were sent to their mandatory saving accounts which were to be released at the end of their employment. Women were expected to invest their savings in starting up small-scale businesses. During their employment as RMTs, all women received basic business management training. Women were introduced to distinction between traditional and non-traditional businesses, how to start and run an enterprise while maintain the expense, income, and profit records.

\(^{11}\) Women earned between PKR 50-150 (0.6- 1.8 CAD) daily from manual and seasonal field labor depending on availability of work and the number of working hours.

\(^{12}\) According to Project’s monitoring and progress reports, about 90 percent women have invested their savings in various income-generating activities and their average monthly profits range between PKR 4500 to 6000 (55-74 CAD).
income and economic activities were influenced by their husbands and/or sons. In one or two cases male family members were reported to have taken money away from women for personal spending but no serious incident of threat or violence was reported.

Women’s control over their families’ livestock had increased. However in few cases the control depended on the size of the animal. Some women claimed to have had control over small animals such as sheep, goats, and poultry, while sale and purchase of larger animals such as cows, oxen, and camels were influenced by men. Few women still claimed that they had gained complete control over the transactions related to large animals, especially the ones they purchased from their own savings.
5. Saving and spending habits

The Project supported women to set long-term goals to get out of debt and be financially independent through mandatory savings and enterprise development components. Women in all districts reported that their spending and saving patterns had changed after two-year training.

In addition to assisting women build savings for future investments, the mandatory saving component of the Project helped them better understand their spending habits and build new financial habits to become better planners and money savers. Women had invested their savings in permanent income sources and had started spending more on their children’s education and well-being. Women who had children of school-going age had put their children in schools and were able to pay for family’s health, livelihood and maintenance.

Apart from financial factors related to savings, the saving component of the Project considerably promoted women’s empowerment. This provided many women the first opportunity to own an asset. Women felt more secure than before as they saved regularly. Some women said that they saved by reducing their household expenses and were able to pay for their children’s education. Women also felt secure because
they had enough money for emergencies and unforeseen situations. They felt powerful because they had savings in hand to respond to social and economic opportunities.

Formation of self-help groups (SHGs)\textsuperscript{13} also played important role in inculcating saving habits among women. Women reported that this had helped them in saving on household level also. Savings groups stabilized women’s livelihood by providing important financial services and also had a powerful social impact on their lives. Women expressed pleasure in being part of a group. Women said that SHGs provided them the support they needed to secure their futures. Women were inspired to earn more, save more, provide for their families, send their children to school, own assets, repair their homes, take control of their lives, and secure their futures.

“I saved some money from my wages and bought a goat (for milking). Then I saved more and bought a television for my children. From my mandatory savings, I have opened up an oil shop. Savings can make a lot of difference—you can make a lot out of it.

Shamshad (Multan)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recurrent themes (indicators) related to savings and spending habits</th>
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<td><strong>Changes</strong></td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased and regular savings</td>
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<td>Saving habits</td>
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<td>Better spending habits</td>
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6. Market accessibility (goods/credit)

According to United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), ‘rural women and men produce and add value to goods that they trade in local and export markets either as

\textsuperscript{13} A self-help group (SHG) is a village-based financial intermediary committee usually composed of 10–20 local members. Members of a SHG make small regular savings contributions over a few months until there is enough capital in the group to begin lending to group members for business and emergencies.
farmers, wage workers, or as processors or vendors along different value chains. However, they face difficulties accessing and competing in markets. Rural women often lack timely market information, face challenges in negotiating prices, and have difficulty physically accessing markets due to limited transport opportunities and restrictions on their mobility.’

CIIP manifestly supported women’s economic empowerment through increasing rural women’s access to markets, credit, and goods. This was done by encouraging females’ mobility, supporting women in establishing their own businesses and linking women to market players including buyers, wholesalers and traders. Development of value-chains in fishery, poultry business, handicrafts and dairy products also helped in increasing women’s placement and inclusion in the market. Women who established enterprises were linked to buyers and wholesalers and most women paid frequent visits to market for sales and purchases which, according to women, was not the case before. The Project worked closely with private sector partners for women’s financial inclusion and enterprise and value-chain development.

Women were of the opinion that their access to market was increased as a result of better paved roads, increased visits to urban centers, enhanced social interaction and rapport-building, reduced inhibitions, better economic conditions, business sales and purchases.

“I pay regular visit to Qamber Shahdadkot city to purchase goods for my grocery shop. I have developed good business terms with wholesalers. Knowing that I can pay back, they have also started giving goods on credit. I have also developed good rapport with a group of jewelers in the city. I buy gold on discounted rates from them. Other village women prefer to take me along to city to buy fine quality gold accessories in low prices.”

(Zubaida, Qamber Shahdadkot)

The process of economic empowerment of rural women was also supported through women’s inclusion in financial markets. Women were linked to microfinance institutions and were facilitated to use branchless banking products and microcredit. Service providers made adaptations to microfinance services and transaction costs to meet the needs of RMT women and other low-income groups. Women also received training on usage of mobile phones, functional literacy and mobile bank accounts. Women felt more encouraged to use mobile technology for accessing information on market trends.
7. Health and Education (Human Capital)

Researchers working in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America have consistently established that families benefit when women are in a stronger socio-economic position (Quisumbing, 2003). When women have more influence in their families’ economic decisions, their children are better fed (Smith et al., 2003) and their families allocate more of their income to food (Doss, 2006; Thomas, 1997), to health (Thomas, 1997), to education (Doss, 2006; Thomas, 1997) and to children’s clothing (Quisumbing and Maluccio, 2000). Researches also reveal that women tend to spend more on health, education and wellbeing of their families. Increased income controlled by women gives them self-confidence, which helps them obtain a voice and vote in household decisions such as domestic well-being decisions. For instance, women tend to spend income for more equitable decisions about sons and daughters’ diet, education and health (Negash, 2006).

During their employment as road maintenance workers RMT women received training on basic health, hygiene and nutrition. As a result, during interviews, women exhibited enhanced understanding about the importance of personal, domestic and environmental cleanliness, pure drinking water, safe sanitation practices, precautions to prevent from ordinary wounding and its treatment, basic principles of hygiene, and harms and diseases related to open defecation, and child nutrition.

Women reported that they ensured better nutrition and cleanliness of themselves, their children and surroundings and also mobilized their community members about health care, sanitation, nutrition and family planning. Few RMT women, who had started working as volunteers and/or salaried hygiene promoters for development organizations, reported that there had been a decrease in skin diseases and stomach infections in their families and villages due to their improved knowledge about cleanliness and

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**Recurrent themes (indicators) related to Market Accessibility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes</th>
<th>To what change is attributed?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased access to markets</td>
<td>Partnering with the private sector (including MFIs and insurance companies), linking women with market operators (wholesalers and traders), value-chains, business skills and financial capability training, increased mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced gender-based barriers in business environment</td>
<td>Improved working conditions for women, increased business opportunities for women, inclusion of women in community relations, community mobilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced negotiation skills</td>
<td>Increased confidence, life-skills training</td>
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increased use of boiled drinking water. “It was only after the rapid reduction in children’s skin diseases that I gained acceptance as a health mobilizer in my community,” said a respondent in Sindh province.

Most RMT women reported that they boiled drinking water on daily basis in their households and usage of soap had become a mandatory part of their sanitation practices. Women reported improved dietary practices as a result of health training.

Case Study: Educate a woman, educate a village

Forty years old Shamshad Mai lives in Village Shah Nawazpur in Rajanpur district, Punjab. Shamshad graduated from CIIP in the year 2013 after completion of her life-skills training and two-year roadwork.

With her expanded knowledge on the subject of healthcare, Shamshad started mobilizing her community members voluntarily by raising their awareness regarding health, hygiene and sanitation practices. In October 2013 a team from Muslim Aid Pakistan (a UK-based development organization) visited their village. Shamshad met the team who found her an ideal candidate for teaching health and hygiene habits to the rural community. They hired Shamshad as a Hygiene Promoter for their WASH project in which she had to conduct sanitation awareness sessions in forty communities for rural women and girls. The villages covered Basti Khokar, Basti Chor, Basti Rustam Laghari and Basti Shahnawaz Pur in District Rajanpur. During her nine-month contract with Muslim Aid Shamshad conducted health awareness training sessions in all these communities and received monthly salary. “My self-confidence rose with every session that I delivered. I also felt happy that I was helping people in making their lives better,” said Shamshad.

According to feedback received from Shamshad’s community members, she has been influential in creating awareness related to health and hygiene practices which they now implement in their homes and communities. Shamshad received another offer to work as a community resource person (CRP) for another project by Muslim Aid which she was thinking of accepting at the time of interview. Shamshad aims to continue to work with development organizations as and when offered a job.
According to Project Performance Monitoring, more than 1500 RMT women built latrines in their houses on self-help basis. Earlier households used open field latrines due to absence of toilets in households. Some of these women were interviewed who reported that after receiving health and hygiene training they felt further need for cleanliness and better sanitation. In a previous study about Project’s ‘wider impacts’, women had said that they were also concerned that their daughters were growing up and it was inappropriate for them to use open latrines out in the fields but they could not afford to construct latrines with their limited and irregular income. It was also troublesome especially during the rains because fields became muddy and there was no drainage channel so there used to be a lot of odor too. Few of them used their relatives’ latrines. Women reported that several other households that did not receive CIIP’s assistance were inspired and built latrines in their homes.

“Earlier I lacked resources so I never thought about constructing a latrine. There was also a lot of emphasis on sanitation practices in our hygiene training. During our training we learnt how to construct low-cost latrines. Later I started saving from my wages from roadwork and built a latrine for my family way before receiving my mandatory savings from the Project.”

Horki (Mirpurkhas)

Women reported that they were more aware about prevalent diseases in their areas and risks and treatments associated to those diseases. Majority women reported that they had become aware that fewer numbers of children could contribute to better economic conditions and healthier lives for mother and children and that child-marriage also had negative effects on young girls’ health. Better economic conditions, increased female mobility and access to hospitals and health centers due to improved roads also had positive impacts on overall health conditions.

In Project’s baseline survey it had been recorded that women spent their income and savings on health as a second major category. Since RMT women worked outside their homes, they were exposed to higher health risks but there was no safety net program suitable to their needs and income. CIIP partnered with a private health insurance company which developed an affordable health insurance service tailored to the needs of low-income women. However all women did not display strong understanding of health insurance card usage when interviewed. Some women also reported that they had never used health insurance card.
The ones who had used the service were of the opinion that it was a ‘good service’ which benefitted them in the times of crisis and they also wanted their children and other family members to get this service.

In addition to health, the Project has made significant impact in terms of education attainment in the rural areas. CIIP’s training program was designed to provide education to these women who had never attended schools and for the most part lacked literacy and numeracy skills. Barriers related to literacy and numeracy also restricted women from usage of mobile phone technology and formal business record-keeping. Apart from health, business and human rights training, women received financial education and literacy and numeracy training from CIIP. As a result women reported enhanced literacy, numeracy, and record-keeping skills. Majority women had learnt how to read and write their names. Women also reported to be able to read and write numbers from ranging from 1 to 10/50/100/ and operate mobile phones for communication and information access. Women were also using record-keeping ledgers to record their business transactions. One of the Field Social Organizers (FSO) in Multan said, “For women to recognize their names in the attendance register, we highlighted each name in a distinct color for each RMT member. They would leave their thumb impression against their names each day. Then they began to recognize their names and we stopped using highlighters. They would find their names and leave fingerprints to mark attendance. And now (by the end of their employment) they have started marking their signatures by writing their names in the register.”

When inquired about child education, virtually all women agreed that they had enrolled non-school going children to schools and were spending more on their children’s education. Women also emphasized that they had realized that a female child’s education was as important as a male child’s education therefore they had also enrolled their daughters to schools along with their sons. Despite the fact the landlords in the rural areas do not promote education for the most part and despite the fact there is market demand for manual labor instead of formal education in close vicinities of these areas, there has been a significant increase in number of school enrollments in CIIP areas.\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{quote}
I was delighted when I received my first wages. My children were happier as I bought everything that I had always wanted to buy for them; I admitted all four of them to school while earlier only two were enrolled (because I could not afford the expenses). I felt strong for the first time in my life.

Naseem Bibi (Multan)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} According to Fourth Annual Progress Report of the Project, 1564 children (previously employed in child labor activities) are enrolled in schools (Data from Punjab)
8. Coalition habits and collective identity/action

There is an underlying assumption that when individuals join together to take collective actions towards overcoming obstacles and attaining social change, individual and collective empowerment can result. With the same assumption women were organized into road maintenance teams (RMTs) first and later into self-help groups.

Women’s new collective identity as ‘RMTs’ was very important for their self-confidence and self-esteem and the formation of self-help groups in which they struggled to work cooperatively rather than in competition. Women worked on road maintenance as part of teams for two years and gained membership of SHGs to build on the solidarity and mutual support system developed over the two years of team work on road maintenance.
Women reported that in the beginning of their employment they faced strong resistance and negative reaction from community—especially male members. However it was the mutual support and solidarity of RMT members through which they were able to overcome all external difficulties and personal inhibitions related to undertaking a non-traditional job that violated local norms about gender roles. Women told that working together on roads, regular group interactions, mutual support and aid, and receiving combined training helped them build trust in each other and further encouraged them to form self-help groups because they did not want to return to the old conditions of destitute and supportless life.

The formation of self-help groups further encouraged the RMT women to invest in group businesses. A number of women in all districts reported that they had started various kinds of group businesses which helped them to maximize profits and share the risk of failure. Women also combined their unique individual strengths in a group business. Group businesses have been started mostly by the members of the same self-group in the selected districts. The respondents reported that they started group business because they did not have sufficient capital to invest individually. Women take collective loans for their group businesses from the self-help group and return it with pre-defined terms and conditions. Women told that having a group business could be a support to all of them and each could be a support to other members. Also in a group business they can make bigger investments and hence can make larger profits.

Group business also helps women to counter mobility issues. They travel to city together for purchases and sales. Women reported that mobility in groups reduces the chances of family conflicts. One of the members of a self-help group in Mirpurkhas said, “Some men would not appreciate that their women should travel alone to city for purchase of goods but if we go together they would be not concerned.”

So far, as it was noted and reported, self-help groups were operating mainly as collective finance and enterprise units for savings and loans, group credit, collective income generation and joint farming. In future these groups can facilitate the formation of social capital and mobilization and can function as community development, human rights, social protection and capacity development groups.

| Recurrent themes (indicators) related to alliance habits and collective identity/action |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Changes                         | To what change is attributed?   |
| Collective identity/action       | Formation of road maintenance teams, pride in RMT membership, formation of SHGs, collective income generation, joint training sessions, life-skills training |
| Solidarity and cohesion/coalition and alliance habits | Group formation, Mutual support and aid, pride in RMT membership, increased interaction, teamwork |
| Trust-building                  | Group formation, mutual support and aid, increased interaction, teamwork |
9. **Marriage rules and roles**

In many parts of the world including Pakistan, the right to exercise choice in one’s own marriage is denied to many individuals, especially women. Not only that many women and some men enter into forced marriages in the region, a significant number of these marriages are child marriages. Despite the fact that marriage patterns vary across space, time and groups in the country, fifty percent of Pakistani women still get married before the age of 19 and give birth to their first child by the age of 21.\(^{15}\) Studies reveal that in some rural areas of Pakistan the average age for marriage is 13.\(^{16}\)

Child and early-age marriages are widely practiced in the rural areas of Pakistan including the Project areas. During the life skills training the RMT women were delivered sessions about human and gender rights which included information regarding legal age for marriage. As a result of these trainings women were expected to be sensitized towards basic human and women’s rights. Several of the RMT women in Sindh and Punjab Provinces have been involved in preventing or postponing early marriages in their villages in significant numbers. It is important to consider that early-age marriage is embedded deeply in cultural norms of the people who practice it and is rather institutionalized in the rural areas; it is not expected or tolerated of a village woman to interfere in someone else’s child’s marriage affairs let alone stopping one.

During the interviews several women said that they regretted having married their daughters at an age when they were still supposed to be going to school. Those women who had unmarried girls expressed strong commitment against their early marriages. Some women also reported to have prevented child marriages in their families, relatives, and neighborhoods by visiting children’s parents and convincing them about the illegal status of child marriages and harms related to it.

> “I had married my daughter off when she was fourteen and now I regret my decision because I have realized that she was too young to become a wife and a mother. I cannot change that reality however I try to convince others not to marry their children at an early age. My neighbors were marrying their twelve-year old daughter recently. I spoke to her parents and insisted that she was too young to bear out marital responsibilities. Her father understood and postponed her marriage.”

Kalsoom Bibi (Multan)


\(^{16}\) ibid
While the total number of stopping early marriages is not certain for Sindh, according to monitoring staff in Punjab, 76 such cases have been reported in Punjab in which RMT women were involved in preventing or postponing early marriages within and outside their families.

Apart from early marriages, other forms of marriages which are part of kinship systems in the Project areas (and across Pakistan) are the Watta Satta\(^\text{17}\) (a bride for a bride) tradition and the vani\(^\text{18}\) system. A number of RMT women had been given in watta satta marriages in exchange for their brothers’, cousins’, uncles’ and in some cases fathers’ brides (before CIIP). Women who were in exchange marriages suffered greater threats of domestic disharmony and abuse at the hands of their husbands and in-laws in return for the strife caused at the other end of the exchange. One or two women also reported to have been divorced after the divorce of the other watta satta couple. Similarly few women also reported to have been forced into marriage to settle a dispute with an allegation of murder between two families as vani. Few RMT women reported that they raised voice against watta satta marriages which are commonplace in their families and were able to prevent them from happening. Women also said that it was a bigger challenge for them to oppose vani marriages because most decisions related to vani are taken in the local panchayat where women have no representation.

“She was commonly practiced in my family and by my relatives. Recently one such marriage was about to take place among my cousins. There were also a lot of conflicts revolving the marriage. I arbitrated and solved the problem and also prevented the happening of watta satta.”

Sughra Mai (Rajanpur)

While women were sensitized about these practices during gender and human rights training and while they reported an overall improvement in decision-making about their children’s marriages and overall

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\(^{17}\) Watta satta is the exchange of brides between two families, be it for a pair of siblings, cousins or any other familial ties that can exist between a male and female. Herein, the daughter of one house is offered in return for a daughter of another, regardless of whether they agree to the marriage or not. These marriages usually occur among blood relatives or within the same village or community, often leading to problems associated with intermarriage and consanguinity. Watta satta establishes the shadow of mutual threat across the marriages. A husband who ‘mistreats’ his wife in this arrangement can expect his brother-in-law to retaliate in-kind against his sister. Watta satta is cited as a cause of low domestic violence in some families, and extreme levels of reciprocal domestic violence in some families of Pakistan.

\(^{18}\) In a vani marriage, a young girl is given in marriage to a family member of a slain person to ‘compensate’ the murder of the slain person. Usually these girls are very badly treated in their new family.
decline in domestic violence (as a result of economic empowerment), traditional marriage rules such as child marriages, watta satta and vani stay as strong threats to women’s empowerment in these areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recurrent themes (indicators) related to marriage rules and roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Changes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stopping/postponing of child-marriages in significant numbers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased awareness of marriage rules and activism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stopping/awareness of watta satta tradition</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**10. Notions of citizenship and political representation**

Throughout Pakistan, women’s equality is customarily understated in and decision-making and access to rights and resources on household, community and institutional levels. There are even more challenges for marginalized women who live in most underprivileged rural communities.

During their two year involvement in CIIP, RMT women received training on gender and human rights. The training modules also included sessions about women’s leadership, political awareness starting from basic registration laws and citizenship rights. When inquired about political awareness and participation, women displayed enhanced awareness about citizenship and political rights –registration, participation, representation, and leadership.

Respondents in all districts reported that they had started registering the births and marriages of their children. Women, who earlier lacked Computerized National Identity Cards (CNIC), had registered themselves in NADRA\(^{19}\) offices and received CNICs. Those who were not earlier registered as voters had registered themselves in the Election Commission of Pakistan. Women in all districts reported that they had started casting votes during elections. Many women reported that they cast a vote for the first time during the General Elections 2013.

\(^{19}\) The National Database and Registration Authority, Pakistan (NADRA) regulates government databases and statistically manages the sensitive registration database of all the national citizens of the Pakistan. It is responsible for issuing the computerized national identity cards to the citizens of Pakistan.
Women unanimously established that they believed in equal participation of women in politics. RMT women in Sindh idealized Benazir Bhutto\(^{20}\) as a leader and role model in politics. Women in Punjab also emphasized that women should participate in politics because “only women could best understand problems and challenges faced by women.” Most women also highlighted the notion that if women could work on roads, they could also participate in elections.

“Earlier the landlords used to tell us who to vote for. But last time I voted for the candidate of my choice. Women should necessarily participate in politics because women’s problems can be better understood by a woman representative. Our Benazir Bhutto was also in politics and she is our pride.”

Raheema (Qamber Shahdadkot)

In both Sindh and Punjab province, following the government’s announcement to conduct Local Bodies’ elections (suspended in 2009 and postponed until 2015), fourteen former RMT women have filed their nomination papers for various offices and have started their election campaigns. Some of these women were also interviewed as part of research sample. Women felt confident about their leadership skills and felt motivated by the support extended to them by fellow RMT members and other community men and women in their campaigns. These women, who were once excluded, are not only making more decision in their household, but are now engaging at formal politics in their community are seen as role models by other women. However, while women (election candidates) stressed more on fair allocation of resources as a major responsibility of a leader/representative, they expressed little awareness about policies and their roles and functions as a public representative.

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\(^{20}\) Benazir Bhutto was the 11th Prime Minister of Pakistan, serving two non-consecutive terms in 1988–90 and then 1993–96. She became the first woman to be elected as the head of an Islamic state’s government; she also remains Pakistan’s only female prime minister. Benazir was from Sindhi origin.
Male reaction to CIIP – focus group discussions with men

The research put an obvious and intended focus on women – their perceptions, their dreams, their abilities, and their experiences with CIIP and relationships and institutions that influence their lives. One of the most important messages is that sustainable empowerment for women, requires more and genuine efforts to understand and support change among men who are integral to the lives of women. Women in all districts emphasized heavily on the importance of men in their lives and their influence on their decisions.

In order to understand how men were engaged in CIIP and how they reacted to Project and its outcomes, 8 focus group discussions (2 in each selected district) were conducted with the community men. The FGD participants included RMT women’s male family members – brothers, fathers, husbands, brothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, sons, cousins, and other close and distant relatives. Men whose female relatives had not participated in CIIP were also involved. In Sindh, landlords and community religious leaders also participated in the group discussions.

Findings in Punjab

In Punjab the FGD participants said that there was a lot of resistance in the community when the Project was first introduced by the UC Secretary. Some male members totally precluded the idea of women coming out on roads because of its cultural “inappropriateness.” Women who accepted to work on roads were criticized and those men were also condemned who favored the Project and allowed “their” women to go out on roads. Men told that most of them did not agree to let women of their family work on roads but when they witnessed the improvement in the lives of the ones who were participating, they changed their opinions and let their female relatives participate too. Men said that they had realized that “one should not be ashamed of hard work,” and that they were convinced that women were capable of working like men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes</th>
<th>To what change is attributed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased identification and registration (birth, marriage, voter)</td>
<td>Gender and human rights training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased voter turnout</td>
<td>Gender and human rights training, increased mobility, increased civil awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced motivation about women’s political participation</td>
<td>Gender and human rights training, sense of achievement, increased civil awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filing of nomination papers for Local Bodies’ Elections</td>
<td>Gender and human rights training, increased civil awareness, increased motivation and self-confidence</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Recurrent themes (indicators) related to notions of citizenship and political representation
Impact of CIIP on Women’s Empowerment

Participants agreed that CIIP was a “good” project because it brought about visible changes in women and their families on social and economic levels: “There have been positive changes in women. They dress up better; they take care of their cleanliness; they keep their houses and children clean.” Men agreed that women’s personalities had changed for better and they interacted with people well. The participants also said that improved roads had also eased community’s access to places where it was earlier hard to travel.

FGD participants stated that there were no serious conflicts caused by CIIP intervention because all women worked on roads with support from their families: “Few people created problems because they were not in the favor of the Project. But when they saw good changes in the lives of women they realized that CIIP was a good project and stopped opposing.”

Majority of the participants admired women’s efforts and hard work: “These women worked too hard on roads in all seasons. They transformed the lives of their families – first through their wages and then through their savings; they started businesses and are still running them.” Men agreed that it was for the first time that the community women had been engaged in the kind of businesses they had started and that before CIIP, women had never received such opportunity through which they could improve their lives. Men also said that they several day-to-day items were available in women’s shops for which they earlier had to travel to the cities.

Men whose female relatives worked in latter phases told that they happily allowed women to work because such work had already taken place and they were aware of its benefits. Men also expressed admiration for women who did not have male family members to support them and they engaged in a difficult work to their bread and butter.

Findings in Sindh

In Sindh too FGDs were conducted with male relatives of RMT women; few landlords and Pesh Imam (religious/prayer leaders) also participated in the discussions.

According to the overall findings from Sindh, CIIP was a “good” project because it enhanced women’s self-confidence and economic status. Men reported that initially they were hesitant with the idea of women maintaining the roads: “We were not against the Project but the idea of working of women on roads sounded strange.”

Men who allowed their female relatives to participate in the Project reported that they faced some strong reactions from the community: “People said that we had become be-ghairat 21 because we were ready to allow our women to work on roads to sit back home and enjoy at their expenses.” Men said that most of them allowed women to work because their family sizes were huge and economic conditions were weak and they needed financial support from another family member. However they only permitted women to work on the condition that they would work within the premises of their own villages and not on a road that falls in another village. Later this notion also changed when men saw women from other villages.

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21 Ghairat is an Urdu word (borrowed from Persian) that usually means honor or pride. There is no universal definition of ghairat, it roughly means the sense of belonging or entitlement to certain customs. If a person goes against those customs, he/she is considered to have defiled ghairat and have become be-ghairat (one without ghairat). This concept is a key element of Pakistani society and people generally are quite touchy about their ghairat.
coming to their villages for road maintenance. Men also reported that initially when women worked on roads, they would appoint a male relative to keep a watch so that women were not harassed by the pedestrians.

“We were shocked to hear that women would work on roads and we would sit back at home and watch. This was a matter of our ghairat (honor). Some community members tried to convince us that this project would benefit the poor and widows who needed work for their livelihood. Although we felt extreme displeasure in our hearts but we kept silent because poor women’s living depended on this work.”

“We suppose we ate raw radish along with its leaves; and because of the benefits of the radish we ignored its sharp taste. Although it was a good project, it broke our centuries-old tradition that women would not come out to work on roads. This was a blow on our honor however we admit that the women worked very hard and their families prospered.”

FGD participants in Qamber Shahdatkot, Sindh

Most men in Sindh agreed that women had changed for better and kept themselves and the surroundings clean. Men reported that whatever women learnt from training, they passed on to other women. Men also agreed that women spent money at the right places; they saved; they also helped other women and men in time of need by loaning. Men agreed that by the end of the Project majority of the people were convinced about the benefits of the Project. However few men expressed adverse feelings by saying that the Project should have been given to men instead of women: “If they were so sympathetic towards women, why they made them work on roads in extreme heat and cold?” asked an FGD participant in Mirpurkhas, Sindh.

When inquired about gender roles and changes in roles men responded that although they were convinced that women were capable of working outside their homes in times of need, they (men) would still not carry out domestic, “female-only” chores. Men still believed that household work—such as cooking, washing and cleaning—was females’ domain and only they should do such tasks.

C- Limitations

- Women’s perceptions of empowerment may not necessarily change her traditional role. It was observed that women’s traditional subordination was not challenged in all Project areas. Men still believed that they were the ones who had the right to allow or disallow women from working on roads and that males’ domain was separate from females’ domain. Women’s increased income-generating activities have also increased their labor. When women were working on roads, they were also responsible for cooking, care-giving and other domestic chores. In some cases women too expressed internalized patriarchal notions. Effective and sustainable Empowerment can only be ensured through institutionalization of empowerment in families and communities.
Nearly all women reported that most important community decisions were made in the local *panchayats*\(^{22}\) of which they had never been a part. Women said that despite their representation and participation in the formal politics, panchayats were only attended by men and men made all decisions regarding settling of disputes. Only few elderly women reported that they attended the panchayats because they were the family heads and/or there was no male member for representation.

It was observed that few women’s businesses and livestock were damaged in the last flood storms in Punjab. Since these women live in flood-prone areas, their businesses should be insured. Lack of insurance can pose serious threats to the sustainability of businesses the in rural areas predisposed to emergencies.

Selection of a certain fragment of population delimits the impacts of an intervention as it is beyond control to provide similar assistance to entire population. Social dissonance and conflicts caused due to change of roles and status of a few are unavoidable at times. Feeling of being left out may also cause resentments among other women. To address this issue, conflict management training should be given to the beneficiaries so they could better deal with the potential conflicts triggered by changed social roles and statuses of a certain segment of the population.

It was also observed that most women perpetuate the complex social mechanisms which oppress women. It cannot be assumed that given access to power and resources, women will use it more fairly than men. Rather than simply taking women as vulnerable groups and doing individual empowerment, there is a need to change cultural stereotypes and social attitudes that effect women’s ability to be empowered.

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\(^{22}\)The Panchayat is a South Asian political system. It is the oldest system of local government in the subcontinent. The word "panchayat" literally means "assembly" (ayat) of five (panch) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community. However, there are different forms of assemblies. Traditionally, these assemblies settle disputes between individuals, families and villages.
4- CONCLUSIONS

Investigations and analysis regarding the fulfillments of immediate and interim objectives and more deeply enrooted impacts of CIIP have revealed positive results. According to the indicators of empowerment developed by CARE, CIIP interventions have resulted into increased political, social and economic empowerment of women. As these indicators were further broken down into individual and social domains, the analysis also reveals that a good deal of progress has taken place as far as individual agency and relations are concerned. However, there is still a long way to go as far as structural changes are concerned. One important reason is that during this intervention, we treated women as one group. However, during social interactions, individual variables are not the sole determinants of how interactions will be shaped. Attitudes and behaviors of others, social structures, gender roles, cultural norms and other situational variables are also important. It is to be understood that social interventions may cast deeply enrooted and long lasting multiplier effects that might and might not be intended. It is imperative to the sustainability of any intervention that the changes brought about by it are institutionalized and potential conflicts are foreseen and addressed.
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