

Assessment Report: Impact of Vocational trainings on Economic Empowerment of Women

Acknowledgment

EPD would like to thank the Department of State, whose generous support has been invaluable to the organization as well as to our beneficiaries. EPD is responsible for the research component of this project, while AWSDC conducted trainings and other outreach activities. EPD and AWSDC would like to express their sincere gratitude to all who offered their time and commitment to this monitoring and evaluation. We cannot thank enough the study respondents for their time and insightful responses. We acknowledge with thanks Mr. Edrees Omarzad for his overall guidance, encouragement, and vision for this study.

We would like to acknowledge the tremendous effort put in by our team for data collection, data analysis and management. The EPD research team responsible for this monitoring and evaluation study consists of (In alphabetical order): Edrees Omarzad, Farzana Doosti, Madina Sahar, Massiullah, Ruqaiya Tabasum and Shamsia Elham. Farzana Doosti and Ruqaiya Tabasum authored this report.



Introduction

Women are a critical part of every society and contribute to a nation's identity, its economic growth, its social prosperity, and its future. As underscored by the World Economic Forum, "Reducing gender inequality enhances economic productivity and economic growth."¹ Where women are permitted to participate as equals in an economy, they experience increased incomes, improved health, and extended lives.

In Afghanistan, the unusually harsh realities for women restrict their situations and consequently affect their day-to-day quality of life. These circumstances cannot be viewed in isolation from the past decades of occupation and conflict or "from harmful traditional practices that have shaped the current position of women in the family and society."² The recurring violence in Afghanistan has left millions of women and girls displaced and widowed. The influence of common discriminatory practices often make it dangerous for women to seek education, healthcare services, employment, or, in some cases, even to leave their homes and to live in shelter homes.

Widespread poverty, overall insecurity, and harmful traditional practices affect women disproportionately and seriously limit their access to services, opportunities, and resources that are needed for the full development of their human potential and the exercise of their rights.³

In order to help these women with skill development for income generation, we need to help them with access to some of the basics, such as numeracy and literacy; a safe place to produce goods or services; a safe place where women can sell their goods and services and that customers will frequent; and access to finance and other skills to improve women's ability to move up the value chain by increasing product quality. EPD's Skill development training program provided women living in Women Protection Centres (WPC) and women who are affected by violence and are politically, economically, and socially excluded, with vocational skills, marketing techniques and life skills. These women need to overcome poverty, make healthy decisions, and build local networks to advocate for their rights. When women are able to sustain an income, make decisions, and have social networks to support them, they develop the confidence they need to transform their lives, families, and communities. Our program promoted women's social and economic empowerment which is the key to building more peaceful and stable societies.

In this project a total number of 270 beneficiaries were given training in three different areas including tailoring, marketing, and cooking. Among these beneficiaries, 208 beneficiaries belonged to the women protection centers of AWSDC, HAAJR and a few of them were introduced by the Ministry of Women affairs. Apart from the beneficiaries of WPC's, 62 beneficiaries from the community with poor background, also received these business and vocational skills trainings in order to gain access to income-generating activities, that enable them to move towards economic self-sufficiency. All of the trainings were led by local trainers and tailored to local contexts and markets. Prior to vocational training, numeracy training covering fundamental arithmetic skills was offered to participants identified as innumerate as that would help them to run their businesses independently. The beneficiaries of these trainings are now using their skills in their life and are making clothes, embroidering them and also selling them off. For example, the beneficiaries of AWSDC women protection center are selling their products in a shop, rented by AWSDC for their survival in Madina market. The AWSDC believes in the survivability of the initiative that is being started for the upliftment of the women, so each participant receives %60 of the amount that they earn and other %40 is used in buying raw material and maintenance of the equipment's that they work on. All the beneficiaries are free to use the money they earn in the way they wish to, many use them to purchase medicine, food, clothing, or transportation, to pay tuition fees for children, or some invest in starting a small business. Beneficiaries are also encouraged to save a portion of their monthly income, and bank accounts are opened for them to save money. This is a great achievement of this project that the women are becoming economically self-sufficient after receiving the trainings given by EPD.

1 World Economic Forum, 2007, p. 20.

2 MOWA, NAPWA, p 1.

3 Ibid.



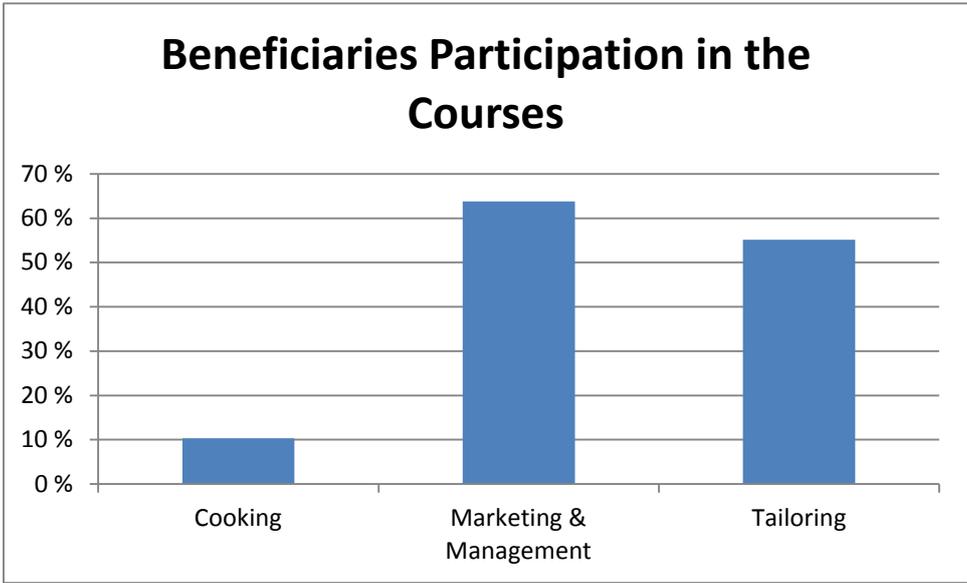
Findings

The main aim of this project was to support marginalized women to earn and save money, improve health and well-being, influence decisions in their home and community, and connect to networks for support. By utilizing skills, knowledge, and resources, they are able to create sustainable change for themselves, their families, and community at large. There were two types of beneficiaries for this project, one were the women from the Women Protection Centres and the other type was women from the low economic background and especially the VAW cases within the community of Dashte-Barchi and the Kalai.Ahmad Khan. The Women protection Centre beneficiaries were trained by the AWSDC as they are running the Women Protection Centre. The beneficiaries selected from the community were the needy women recommended by the Provincial Women Network run by EPD at the grass root level. This PWN is a strong network of influential women at the grass root level, which work towards the upliftment of women, identify the VAW cases in the community and provide them with assistance accordingly. During the evaluation, EPD interviewed both types of these beneficiaries in order to assess the impact of the trainings on the economic stability of these women living in different perspectives.

Number of beneficiaries Interviewed

In this evaluation a total number of 58 beneficiaries were interviewed, which included 26 beneficiaries from the marketing and management course, 21 beneficiaries from the tailoring course and six beneficiaries from the cooking course. Around 11 beneficiaries received training in both tailoring and marketing course. Almost all the beneficiaries of these training were more inclined towards the tailoring and marketing trainings. So most of the beneficiaries interviewed, are from the tailoring and marketing courses. A very fewer beneficiaries showed interest in cooking courses, due to the norms and culture of Afghanistan. Afghan women are more inclined to work in entrepreneurship which are inside home such as tailoring, handicrafts and embroidery rather than working in a restaurant or in a hotel.

Cookery course was arranged by AWSDC, partner organization to this project, for the women who live in their Women Protection Center (WPC's). During this cooking course, the beneficiaries were given trainings on, how to cook different recipes and how to take orders from the customers. AWSDC has recently opened a restaurant as an initiative for economic empowerment of these women. Those beneficiaries of AWSDC shelter homes, who have received the cookery training are currently working in a restaurant run by AWSCD in Madina Market. It is an achievement of this project that the beneficiaries of the cookery training are able to use their skills in this restaurant and also earn a good living. The beneficiaries were very confident about their job and acquired skills through the training. Furthermore, a tailoring center is also available for the beneficiaries of WPC's, where a supervisor coordinates all their work. The beneficiaries from the WPC's sew clothes, embroidery them and then sell them in a shop in Madina Market. AWSDC has rented a shop for the marketing of the products that are prepared by the beneficiaries in the tailoring center. It has developed economic security among the beneficiaries as all of them have personal bank accounts with some savings.



Business Establishment

All of the interviewed beneficiaries in the shelters were doing their entrepreneurships among which 70.5 % started their business directly after receiving these trainings. This percentage is less for the community based beneficiaries, who live out of the shelters (46.3). Financial independence is a vital issue for women in shelters while the other women still culturally are more dependent on their families for financial support. Also shelters provide good facilities and more conducive environment to the women who want to work, than the families. Women who live with their families are less likely to establish the business immediately as the decision of establishing a business also depends on the approval of the family members.

When the interviewees were asked about, what skills they have acquired during the trainings, we received some interesting answers from the beneficiaries. The tailoring beneficiaries gave details on how they have learnt things from basic hand stitching to cutting procedures and making fashionable designs. Beneficiaries also claimed that they have learnt the marketing techniques like how to deal with customers, calculate profit, and make products that are trendy. It is worth mentioning here that at the end of the tailoring course, each participant was provided with a sewing machine with which they can initiate their own small business projects. In the management course, most of the beneficiaries were educated women entrepreneurs. Weak management, lack of skills of marketing and promotion of the products, are the major barriers that hamper the business of women. This course was conducted to train the women on marketing and management techniques for their business. The beneficiaries mentioned that they have learnt techniques like, assessment of the market, using brochure, flyers and other means of advertisement for promotion of the products, reach to more customers,

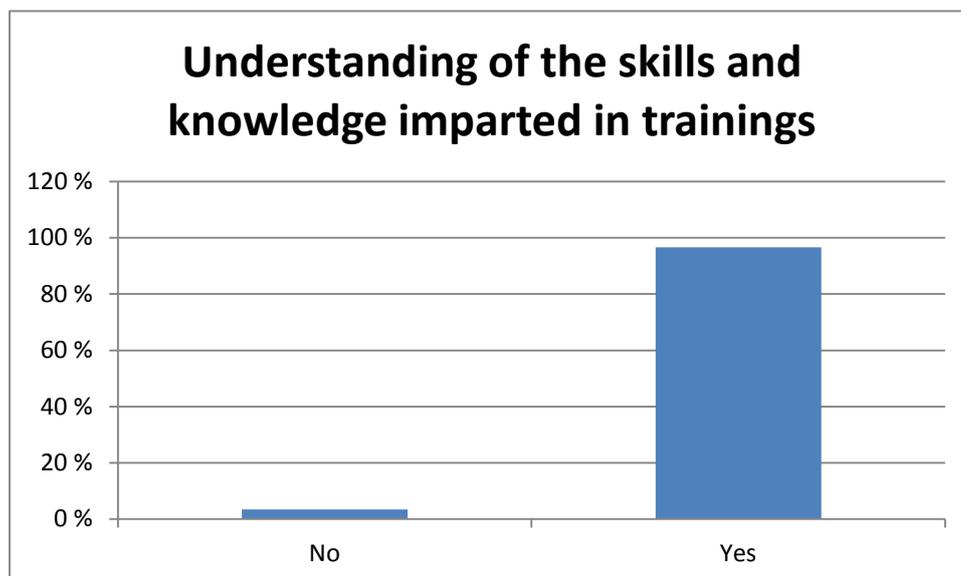


behavior with the customers, time and business management to increase profit and avoid loss, using labels, copy right as means for stopping duplication by other rivals in the market, and many other advanced skills.

The beneficiaries of cookery training stated that they have learnt the preparation of different national and international cuisines and also have learnt how to take orders from the customers.

Understanding of the skills and knowledge imparted in trainings

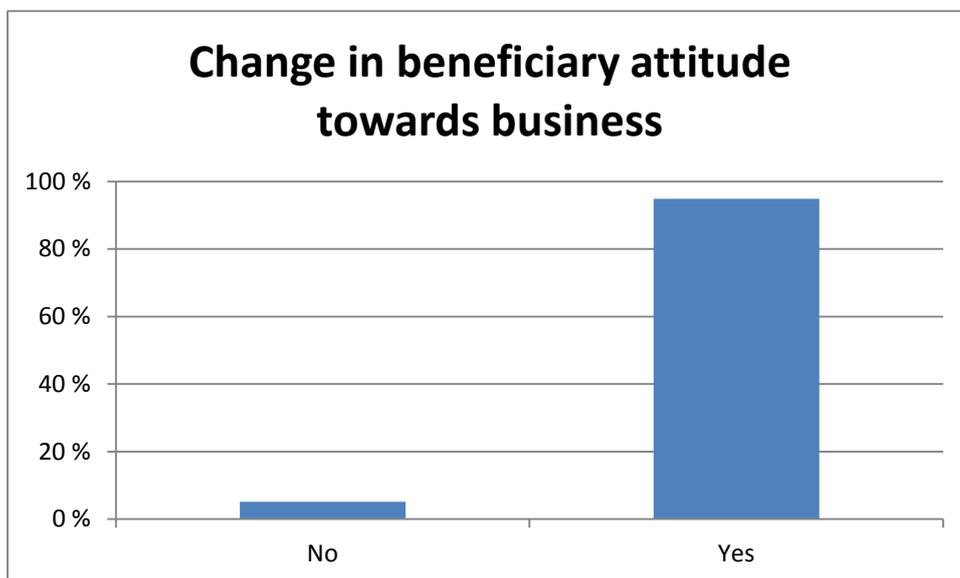
Around %96 of the beneficiaries confirmed, that they have acquired good understanding of the skills and knowledge which was imparted during the training courses. Almost all of them agreed that they are using these acquired skills and knowledge in their own business. The beneficiaries involved in tailoring stated that the acquired skills helped them to design the garments in a better and modern way. Among the community beneficiaries, some of the beneficiaries stated, though they have not succeeded to start their entrepreneurship so far, but the skills acquired through the training helps them to sew good designs for their own family members.



Change in beneficiary attitude towards business

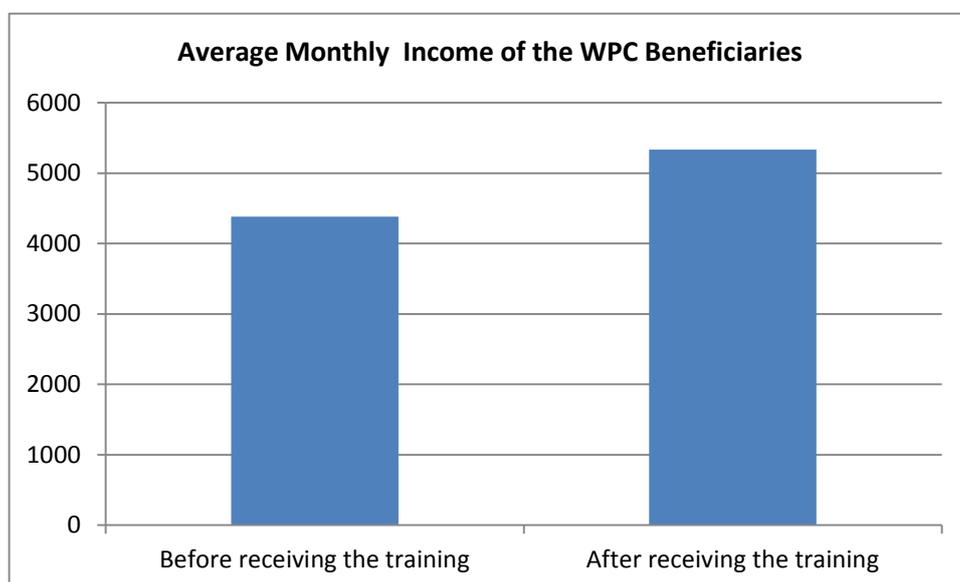
Almost all of the interviewed beneficiaries confirmed that the trainings have changed their attitude toward business and a very few (5.17 %) who were very young said, that the trainings did not help in changing their attitude towards business.

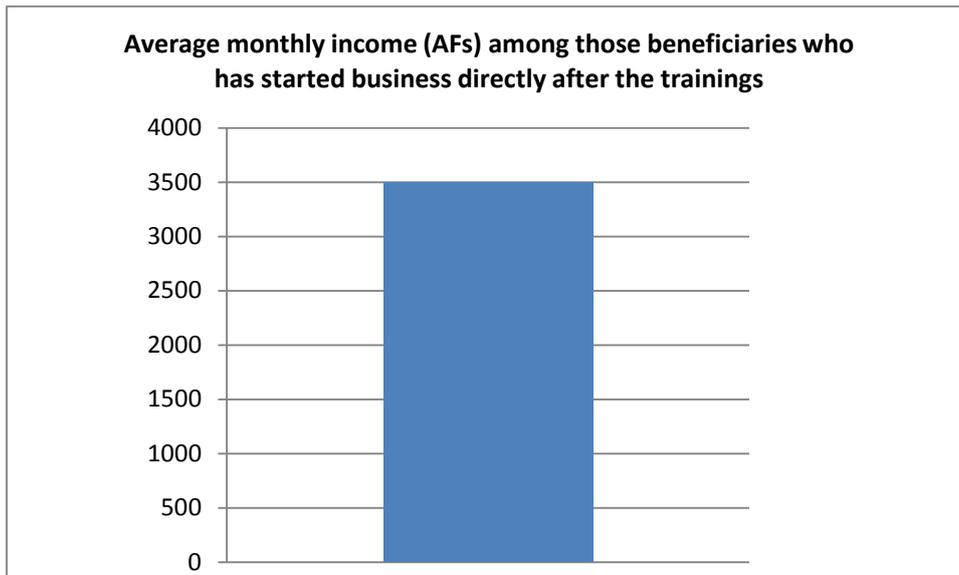
One of the marketing and management course beneficiary stressed, how the course has changed her views and helped her to promote her own carpet business. She emphasized, that after receiving the training, she assesses the market value and checks where she can sell her carpets for higher prices, before selling her products. She also stated that labeling and advertisement is another skill that she has learnt from the training and incorporated in her work. She has also decided to weave a mark on her products as a patent. Some of the beneficiaries mentioned that after receiving the training, they have become selective about choosing raw materials, so as to provide good quality products. Also they have become more careful in dealing with customers to attract their attention and to make permanent customers.



Income generation

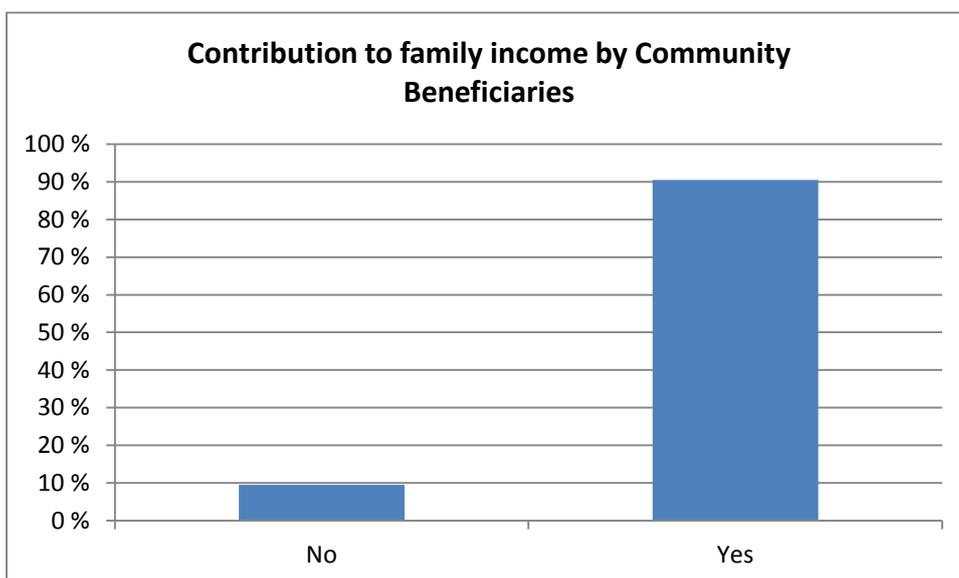
In Kabul, women validate the ability to increase their monthly income after receiving the training from our program, earning an average of 4380 AFS per month before the training reached to 5333 AFS after the training. The generated income especially among those who have recently started their business was surprisingly good, on an average the beneficiaries were earning around 3500 AFS per month even when they had established their business after these trainings. For those who have had their entrepreneurship even before participating in the course, the increase in monthly income after receiving the training was quite significant (averagely 952.7 AFS). However, most of the participants were new to this field and if the same climbing trend remains, the beneficiaries may reach to a better economic stability.





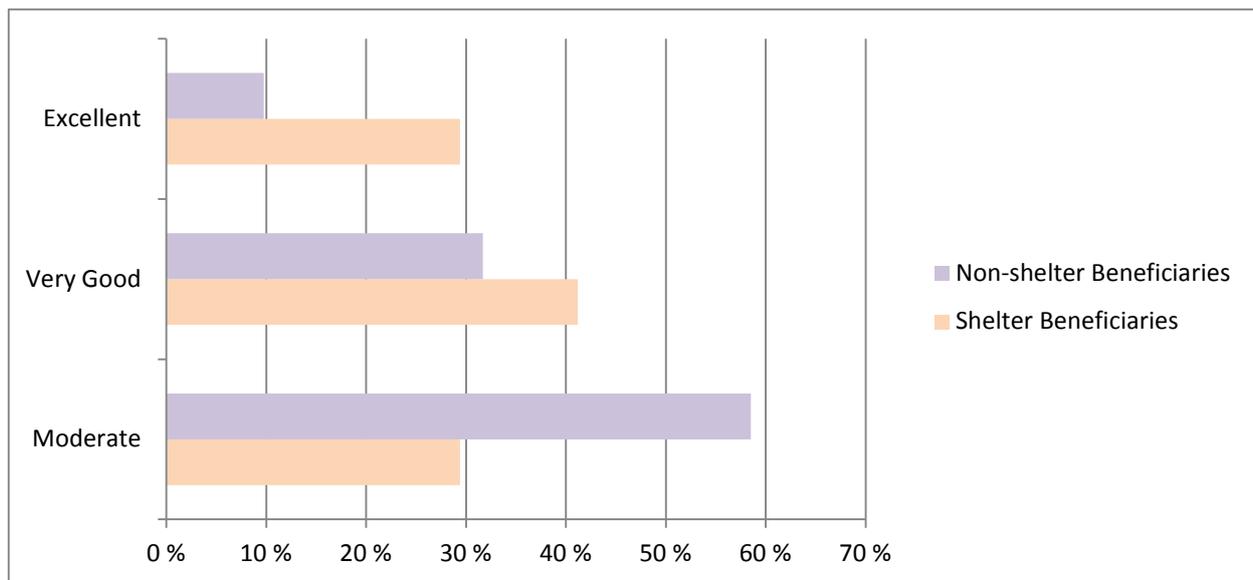
Contribution to family income by Community Beneficiaries

When women earn an income, they reinvest a much higher portion in their families and communities, compared to men. More than 90 % of the community beneficiaries said that they provide financial support to their households. Since the beneficiary in the shelters were abandoned by their families and marginalized by the society, they do not share the profit with others instead they are trying to increase their investment for the sake of financial independence.



Performance Rating by Beneficiaries after receiving the training.

When the participants were asked to rate their performance after receiving the training, more than half of them rated themselves in a moderate level. However the cross tabulation revealed that women in shelters instead of facing a lot of problems have built better confidence and a significant percentage of them expressed, that their entrepreneurship qualities are either excellent or very good.



Challenges

Insecurity, family restriction, improper customs and financial problem were among the most significant problems frequently mentioned by the beneficiaries. The participants mentioned that lack of finance is a main barrier for women to start their business. Women usually are deprived from right to access to family inheritance. Besides, women have limited access to bank loans so fewer women own property and in case of ownership they are not allowed to sell it without family permission. So women financial support remains a main restriction for women to start and manage their entrepreneurships.

The beneficiaries in the shelters especially emphasized on insecurity and threats from their families hindering their work. The shelter beneficiaries stressed that they are too limited in the WPC and do not directly have access to markets. However, the shelter's authorities are cooperating with them in promoting their production and have rented a shop for their products. One of the beneficiaries stated that she has participated in the marketing and management course and has acquired good skills but unfortunately due to security issues, she cannot directly go to market for advertisement, market assessment and promotion of her products.

Illiteracy and lack of awareness regarding rights are the other barrier for women entrepreneurship. Most of community beneficiaries are currently doing business within their own houses but unfortunately usually their contribution remains unpaid to them.

The beneficiaries also mentioned that women have less access to markets due to cultural norms. Additionally, the merchant and market owners usually are less inclined to deal with women which indicates lack of trust on women. Furthermore, the interviewees stated they have problem in delivery of their heavy products such as carpets to the markets and still in this aspect they rely on men especially their family members.

A general complain regarding economic depression in Afghan markets, immigration and lack of customers' interest in buying the products were raised by the interviewees which is a common problem for both men and women.

As per the finding of this evaluation, the skill development training had a great impact on the economic stability of the women which was the prime objective this project. In particular, Women in Protection Centre after receiving these skill development trainings, are able to earn stable income. As the program Beneficiaries, women in WPCs also learn the importance of working together. By working in groups, they benefit from a support system and social networks, especially women working in the tailoring center and the restaurant had realized the importance of working in groups. On the basis of the findings, some of the recommendation are given below:

- Although the training has successfully equipped women with new skills, it did not necessarily help all participants engage in an income-generating activity. Beneficiaries expressed the need for training that goes beyond the learning of a discrete skill.
- Based on the success of this project, it is recommended to extend this project for another year, where the women can extend their business and learn more skills for further enrichment of their business.
- WPC beneficiaries should be supported to have access to markets out of the shelter, so they can promote their products.
- In order to support the women economic independence, financial support in the form of loan, should be given to the beneficiaries for the establishment of the business.
- The duration of the trainings should be increased so beneficiaries have the better understanding of the skills.
- Different types of skill trainings should be conducting, so the women can acquire more skills and also the duration and time of the courses should be increased for the better results in the understanding of the skills.

Annex

Questionnaire for the training Beneficiaries

Beneficiary Name		
Section 1: Women who have established business after the training.		
101	Have you had any business before participating in the business training?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2 If 1 ,go to Section 2
102	Did you establish your own business after receiving the business training?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2 If 2, go to section 3
103	Which type of training did you receive?	<input type="checkbox"/> Tailoring.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing.....2 <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking.....3 <input type="checkbox"/> Other.....4
104	Did the training which you received, help you in establishing your business?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
105	What are some of the specific skills and knowledge that you have gained through the training?	
106	Are you able to apply the gained knowledge and skills in your work?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
107	Did you acquire good understanding of the skills and knowledge which were expected to acquire from the training.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
108	Did that training change your attitude towards business?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2 If 2, go to110
109	If 'Yes' explain with instances to indicate where you have applied the gained knowledge and skills.	
110	If 'No' what are the reasons for not being able to apply the gained knowledge and skills?	
111	Are these trainings good for the business survivability?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
112	Is the training helpful in making more profit from the business?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
113	How many people (men and women) have you employed through your business?	
114	What is the monthly income that you are generating from your current business?	
115	Is this your only source of income	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2

116	Do you contribute any of this amount to the family income?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
117	Please rate yourself on the basis of the performance 'After' attending the business training courses.	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good.....2 <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate.....3 <input type="checkbox"/> Poor.....4 <input type="checkbox"/> Very poor.....5
118	Based on your experience as a woman entrepreneur, what do you think are the challenges that women entrepreneurs face?	
119	What are some of the recommendation that you have, for this kind of training, to make it better?	
Section 2: Women who already had business		
201	Which type of training did you receive?	<input type="checkbox"/> Tailoring.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing.....2 <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking.....3 <input type="checkbox"/> Other.....4
202	Did the training which you received, help you in expansion of your business?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
203	What are some of the specific skills and knowledge that you have gained through the training?	
204	Are you able to apply the gained knowledge and skills in your work?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
205	Did you acquire good understanding of the skills and knowledge which were expected to acquire from the training.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
206	Did that training change your attitude towards business?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2 If 2, go to 208
207	If 'Yes' explain with instances to indicate where you have applied the gained knowledge and skills.	
208	If 'No' what are the reasons for not being able to apply the gained knowledge and skills?	
209	Are these trainings good for the business survivability?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
210	Is the training helpful in making more profit from the business?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
211	What was the monthly income you were generating from your business before participating in the training?	
212	What is the monthly income that you are generating after participating in the training?	
213	How many people (men and women) have you employed through your business after the training?	

214	Is this your only source of income	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
215	Do you contribute any of this amount to the family income?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
216	Please rate yourself on the basis of the performance 'After' attending the business training courses.	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good.....2 <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate.....3 <input type="checkbox"/> Poor.....4 <input type="checkbox"/> Very poor.....5
217	Based on your experience as a woman entrepreneur, what do you think are the challenges that women entrepreneurs face?	
218	What are some of the recommendation that you have, for this kind of training, to make it better?	
Section 3: Women who have no business		
301	What are the main reasons, which has not allowed you to establish your own business after receiving the training?	
302	Which type of training did you receive?	<input type="checkbox"/> Tailoring.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing.....2 <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking.....3 <input type="checkbox"/> Other.....4
303	Do you use the skill and knowledge gained from the training, at your home?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
304	Did you acquire good understanding of the skills and knowledge which were expected to acquire from the training.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
305	Did that training change your attitude towards business?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2 If 2, go to 307
306	If 'Yes' explain with instances to indicate where you have applied the gained knowledge and skills.	
307	If 'No' what are the reasons for not being able to apply the gained knowledge and skills?	
308	Are these trainings good for the business survivability?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
309	Is the training helpful in making more profit from the business?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2
310	Do you think, after receiving the training, you can make good money if you could establish your own business	<input type="checkbox"/> YES.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO.....2

311	Please rate yourself on the basis of the performance 'After' attending the business training courses.	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent.....1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good.....2 <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate.....3 <input type="checkbox"/> Poor.....4 <input type="checkbox"/> Very poor.....5
312	Based on your experience as a woman, what do you think are the challenges that women entrepreneurs face in competing in the market?	
313	What are some of the recommendation that you have, for this kind of training, to make it better?	



Kabul- Afghanistan

admin@epd-afg.org - www.epd-afg.org

EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization dedicated to empowering women and youth at the community and policy levels in Afghanistan. EPD was established in early 2010 by Ms. Nargis Nehan. EPD works to build the capacity of women and youth in order for them to be the front face in presenting their needs in development, peace building and democratic processes of the country. EPD further aims at mass mobilization of women and youth to contribute to overcoming the challenges of instability that Afghanistan is facing. EPD establishes platforms for women and youth to come together, establish networks, build trust and confidence, and strive jointly for transforming Afghanistan into a democratic country free of all forms of violence and discrimination.