ROADS TO AGENCY

EFFECTS OF ENHANCING WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN RURAL ROADS PROJECTS ON WOMEN’S AGENCY

A comparative assessment of rural transport projects in Argentina, Nicaragua, and Peru
ROADS TO AGENCY

EFFECTS OF ENHANCING WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN RURAL ROADS PROJECTS ON WOMEN’S AGENCY

A comparative assessment of rural transport projects in Argentina, Nicaragua, and Peru
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender approach in the implementation of the selected projects</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of gender interventions at different stages of the project cycle</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to increasing women's participation at the implementation stage in selected case studies</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Methodology of case studies</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research questions</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research instruments</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities selection</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the study</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Findings</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of women's participation on agency at the individual, household, and community levels</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling factors and barriers for women's participation in the selected project gender intervention</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges faced by women's participants</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lesson Learned and Recommendations</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to address barriers to participation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to address challenges in program participation</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to enhance women's agency during program participation</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to address sustainability and scale-up of gender approaches</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Discussion and conclusion</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annexes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 1. Methodology of case studies</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 2. Status of gender issues in the three countries studied in this review</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Boxes, Figures, and Tables

Box 1. Conceptual framework to analyze the effects of increasing labor participation of women 16
Box 2. Rationale for addressing gender issues in transport design 21
Box 3. The context of and resources involved in the development of the QCR Initiative 25
Box 4. Modulos Comunitarios de Adoquinados (MCAs) 27
Box 5. Types of training under MEMV 28
Box 6. Micro-enterprises for roads maintenance (Microempresas de Mantenimiento Vial-MEMV) model 28
Box 7. Local Development Windows (Ventanas de Desarrollo Local VDL) 30
Box 8. Findings from women’s participation in VDLs 50
Figure 1. Structure of MCA Board of Directors (IV Roads, AF IV, V Roads) 27
Figure 2. Strategies to foster women’s participation and agency in rural roads work and productive activities 54
Figure 3. Drivers of changes in agency 62
Figure 4. External and internal enablers of agency 63
Figure 5. Education level of woman participants 72
Figure 6. Marital Status of Woman Participants Interviewed 72
Figure 7. Labor force participation by education, 2009 75
Figure 8. Population 15 + years old in the labor force by gender and location, 2009 75
Figure 9. Peru population 15 + years old in the labor force by gender and location, 2009 78
Table 1. Gender issues and approaches in project design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation 20
Table 2. Suggested gender-sensitive monitoring indicators for rural transport projects 22
Table 3. At-a-glance comparison of gender approaches in rural transport project implementation 23
Table 4. Women Centers in the Qom Cultural Route 24
Table 5. Employment in MCA contracts 27
Table 6. Women’s participation in roads work through the MEMV 29
Table 7. Consolidated training under MEMV (2008-2013) 29
Table 8. Questions and topics in interviews and focus groups 34
Table 9. Effects of women’s participation on agency at the individual, household, and community levels 39
Table 10. Enabling factors and barriers for women’s participation in the selected project gender intervention 44
Table 11. Difficulties encountered in women’s participation 48
Table 12. Questions and topics in interviews and focus groups 68
Table 13. Individual interviews and focus groups conducted 69
Table 14. Personal characteristics of women project participants interviewed 72
Table 15. Nicaragua: Level of Education, by gender and location, 2009 75
Table 16. Peru: Level of Education, by gender and location, 2012 77
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Abbreviation/Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APAFAS</td>
<td>Asociaciones de Padres de Familia de la Escuela Pública</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRTP</td>
<td>Peru Decentralized Rural Transport Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPP</td>
<td>Indigenous People’s Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>Modulos Comunitarios de Adoquinados (community-run modules for laying cobblestones)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMV</td>
<td>Microempresas de Mantenimiento Vial (roads maintenance microenterprises)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDES</td>
<td>Ministerio de Desarrollo e Inclusión Social (Peru)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIMPV</td>
<td>Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables (Peru)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QCR</td>
<td>Qom Culture Route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VDL</td>
<td>Ventana de Desarrollo Local (Local Development Window)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAW</td>
<td>Violence against women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDR</td>
<td>World Development Report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The report is the result of an initiative led by the Transport and ICT Global Practice to capture the impact of many years of mainstreaming gender issues in road operations in Latin America and the Caribbean, and was led by the TTL's of the projects highlighted in this report: Stephen Muzira (formerly TTL for Nicaragua, Senior Transport Engineer, GTIDR), Maria Margarita Núñez (formerly TTL for Peru, Senior Transport Engineer, GTIDR) and Veronica Raffo (TTL for Argentina, Senior Infrastructure Specialist, GTIDR). Having promoted gender issues and working closely with the communities benefited through these projects, these TTLs saw an opportunity to work with the Poverty GP to support analytical work that demonstrates how the transport sector can contribute to gender equality.

The team gratefully acknowledges the Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality (UFGE) that largely funded the research project, including the qualitative data collection and writing the country reports in Nicaragua, and Peru, and the comparison report. The Argentina Norte Grande Road Infrastructure (2011-2016) project funded the qualitative data collection and analysis for the gender intervention in this country. The Central America Gender Mainstreaming Project partially covered the costs of the Nicaragua case study, the development of the methodology and instruments of the overall comparison report as well as the publishing of the Comparison Report and the three accompanying country notes.

The report was authored by Ursula Casabonne (Consultant, GSURR), Bexi Jiménez (Consultant, GTIDR), and Miriam Müller (Research Analyst, GPVDR).

As a comparison report, it builds on three country case studies which built on the summary reports of the fieldwork (authored by Fabiana Menna for Argentina), Elizabeth Dasso (for Peru) and Nadine Lacayo Renner (Nicaragua). The fieldwork was conducted by the following teams: Nadine Lacayo Renner (Lead Researcher), Nelly Miranda, Martha Jaen and Victor Potosme in Nicaragua; Fabiana Menna (Lead Researcher) in Argentina; and Elizabeth Dasso (Lead Researcher), Rosa Flores (Research Coordinator), Gloria Ríos Espinoza (Research Coordinator), Carmen Valencia (research assistant), Aremy Luque De la Riva (Research Assistant), Raquel Condori Quiñones (Research Assistant), Lucía Bellido Rota (Research Assistant), Rosario Soto (Research Assistant) in Peru.

The team is thankful for the valuable feedback and comments during the preparation, implementation and completion of this report received from Maria Marcela Silva (Lead Transport Sepecialist, GTIDR), Elizaveta Perova (Economist, GPVDR), Sara Hause van Wie (Consultant, GPVDR), Julian Lampietti (Program Leader, LCC7/C), Santiago Scialabba (Program Assistant, LCC7/C), and Andrea Monje (IADB, formerly Consul-
tant GTIDR). We would also like to thank our peer reviewers Julie Babinard (Senior Transport Specialist, GTIDR), Luz Caballero (Consultant, GEEES), Lucia Hanmer (Lead Economist, GCGDR), Maria Beatriz Orlando (Senior Social Development Specialist, GSURR) and Jennifer Solotaroff (Senior Social Development Specialist, GSURR).

The team would like to thank Aurelio Menendez (Practice Manager, GTIDR) and Louise J. Cord (Practice Manager, GPVDR) for their support, enthusiasm and guidance to this work, and Jesko S. Hentschel (Country Director, Argentina), J. Humberto López (Country Director, Nicaragua), and Alberto Rodriguez (Country Director, Peru) for valuing the relevance of this analytical work in informing dialogue and operations. We would also like to recognize the governments of Argentina, Nicaragua, and Peru for their leadership in taking explicit measures to increase women’s voice, participation, and economic empowerment in the transport sector.

Last but not least, this work would not have been possible without the constant and impeccable support from Aracelly Woodall (Senior Program Assistant, GTIDR), Licette Moncayo (Program Assistant, GTIDR), Claudia Nin (Program Assistant, LCC7), Mayela Murillo (Program Assistant, LCCNI), Jose Zuniga (Consultant, LCCCN) and Bernarda Erazo (Program Assistant, GPVDR).
Rationale

Building and rehabilitating rural roads has enormous economic and social benefits to the poor in terms of increased agricultural production, lower input and transport costs, increased school enrollment, increased access to health and other services. In addition, rural roads construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation are an excellent employment and income-generating opportunity for the local population. A less studied, but potentially quite transformative benefit is the impact of employing women in roads work and ancillary productive activities connected to the newly rehabilitated roads.

This study looks at the impact of women's employment in roads work and ancillary livelihood interventions in rural transport projects in Argentina, Nicaragua, and Peru on women's agency — defined as 'the ability to make choices and transform these choices into desired outcomes' (World Bank 2012). Agency is expressed in many ways: control over resources (measured by the ability to earn and control income), ability to move freely, ability to have voice in society and influencing policy, decision over family formation, freedom from the risk of violence, control over one’s future, and the ability to execute plans for personal and professional development (World Bank 2012).

Conceptual Frameworks

WDR 2012 Framework

For the purposes of analyzing the project activities and approaches in rural transport projects that affected women's agency, we use the World Development Report 2012 (WDR 2012) on Gender Equality and Development and the framework proposed by Vakis and Perova (2013). The WDR 2012 provides a valuable framework for understanding the challenges and opportunities for advancing towards gender equality. It highlights key outcome areas: endowments (inequalities related to education, health and/or physical assets), economic opportunities (inequalities related to jobs, land, agricultural production, technology, or market access), and agency. The framework underscores the fact that disparities are driven by multiple constraints that arise in four types of mechanisms: formal state institutions (laws, regulatory frameworks, and mechanisms for the delivery of services that the state provides such as judicial services, police services, basic infrastructure), markets (including the markets for labor, credit, land, and goods which determine the returns to household decisions and investments), informal institutions (gender roles, beliefs, social norms, and social networks which affect household bargaining in many ways), and households (who make decisions about how many children to have and...
when to have them, how much to spend on education and health for daughters and sons, how to allocate different tasks (inside and outside the household), and other matters that determine gender outcomes). The constraints are most severe among women who face other disadvantages, such as being a member of an ethnic minority, having a disability, or being poor. The framework graph shows interconnected gears to represent how changes in one or more dimensions propel changes and moves the household gear. The framework identifies what problem needs to be solved and whether interventions should target markets, formal institutions, informal institutions, or some combination of the three.

**Internal and external aspects of agency**

We complement our analysis with the conceptual framework proposed by Perova and Vakis in their 2013 report *Improving Gender and Development Outcomes through Agency*. The authors identified two aspects or enablers of agency:

- **Internal aspect:** The internal motivation to make a choice, the willingness to act upon one’s desires.
- **External aspect:** Measures to overcome exogenous constraints (external, or context-related).

The framework is useful for understanding the personal and emotional experiences by individuals. In this regard, it lends itself for the type of qualitative and subjective exploration of what enables agency and how it can be enhanced. The authors postulate that in order to successfully improve agency, both of its components—internal and external—should be addressed. This may happen through a single intervention aimed at both components or through a combination of interventions and/or enhanced external factors that complement each other.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Through semi-structured interviews with women participants in rural roads works/projects, their family members, and with key community informants, the study attempted to uncover agency effects of women’s participation in rural roads work and productive activities in areas where roads have been rehabilitated, in addition to enablers and barriers to women’s participation, and any other positive and negative effects of women’s participation. Qualitative research methodologies were employed to understand women’s per-

---

2 A small number of focus groups were also conducted to validate the findings from the semi-structured individual interviews.
sonal experiences of such an intangible and complex phenomenon that is agency.

PROJECT APPROACHES

The study selected the following three projects based on: (i) demand and support conveyed by the World Bank’s Country Management Unit in each country and implementing agency, (ii) existence of ongoing and pipeline rural transport projects that could directly incorporate study recommendations; and (iii) different approaches taken in incorporating women’s participation in roads work:

- Argentina Norte Grande Road Infrastructure Project (2011-2016)
- Nicaragua Fourth and Fifth rural roads projects (2006-2017)
- Peru Decentralized Rural Transport Project (2007-2013)

The selected projects took different approaches for fostering women’s participation in rural roads work and productive activities connected to the newly rehabilitated roads. The projects in Nicaragua and Peru increased women’s participation in road construction and maintenance through community-run roads works organizations and micro-enterprises for roads maintenance, respectively. The projects in Argentina and Peru include activities to enhance women’s local livelihoods activities in areas where roads have been rehabilitated. Furthermore, the approaches to foster women’s participation differed in terms of whether or not they included explicit measures to recruit women, whether or not they promoted women in decision-making positions, e.g. roads committees, production associations, and in terms of the number of direct women beneficiaries reached.

ENABLING AND CONSTRAINING FACTORS OF WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION

The study looked at factors that enable and constrain women’s participation in roads work and ancillary productive activities, and challenges faced by women during program participation. In all countries, the most cited factors that encouraged women’s participation in roads work and ancillary productive activities was economic need and their desire to make a contribution to the community. In the case of Argentina and Nicaragua, women participants said they received encouragement from their spouses and family members to apply for the job and in support in doing household work. Despite some slight resistance from women’s husbands in Nicaragua, they felt that the work opportunity was not to be missed. Women roads work participants in Peru said they also felt motivated to work in roads maintenance because they knew and respected other women who did this work. Furthermore, women in Argentina and Peru were also heartened to apply because of their previous experience of participating in social organizations. Lastly in Peru, women participants said they felt confident they could undertake roads work tasks because it was similar to their farm work. In Argentina, the involvement in the handicraft association was a natural extension of the handicraft work women had been doing previously in their homes. Key barriers for women’s participation in roads work and productive activities was the inability of finding childcare as reported by women in Nicaragua and Peru. In Argentina and Nicaragua, women interviewed that did not participate, often cited lack of information and perception of bias in selection process about the work opportunity.

Women participants in roads work and ancillary livelihood activities also mentioned several challenges during program participation. Among the key challenges mentioned by women participants was shouldering the double-burden resulting of work outside the home and the bulk of household responsibilities, as well as hard work conditions in the case of Nicaragua and Peru. In Peru, many women roads work participants reported experiencing harsh treatment from their husband, including spousal violence. Husbands complained about their wives’ extended time outside the home and some felt envious of their wives’ higher earnings. In Argentina and Peru, several women participants in handicraft associations and roads works, respectively, were criticized by community members for their participation. In Argentina, several women referred to the difficulty to communicate in Spanish as the main barrier for their participation, which highlights the cumulative disadvantages of gender and ethnicity that poses strong and compounding constraints on women’s agency.

In Nicaragua, women expressed their frustration for the short length of work opportunity and the gender-segregation of roads work tasks. In the case of Argentina, male community members were at odds with women taking on roles related to their leadership within women’s association around the recognition of the indigenous language and culture.

3 A recent multi-country analysis of data in Latin America and African countries shows that the interaction between being female and belonging to a minority group (defined as native speakers of a minority language within the country) has a compounding effect on educational attainment (Tas and others 2013).
AGENCY EFFECTS OF WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION

The overarching conclusion from the study is that women’s integration into rural roads projects enhances their agency, thus projects should capitalize on that. We apply the WDR 2012 conceptual framework to understand how project activities to integrate women in rural roads works and ancillary activities had an impact on key determinants of gender outcomes (functioning of markets, formal and informal institutions, and households), which in turn affected the three dimensions of gender equality: endowments, economic opportunities, and agency (Figure 3). With regards to markets, the projects opened up new employment and income generating opportunities for women through quotas, targets, recruiting strategies, and formation of handicraft associations. In Nicaragua and Peru the strong economic need of household and the substantial higher wage of roads work jobs compared to similar local jobs, provided a strong incentive for women to participate in roads work. Women’s entry into non-traditional market work in Nicaragua and Peru, and women’s participation in handicraft association in Argentina challenges prevailing social norms (informal institutions) on women’s roles, abilities and participation in public spheres. The projects were also instrumental in broadening women’s networks through their participation in the formal labor market, in community-run roads work organizations (Nicaragua) and microenterprises (Peru) and handicraft associations (Argentina), and participants’ greater physical mobility. Social networks give women increased access to peers, social support and information. In addition, women’s income and control over their income had an impact on their bargaining power within the household, especially in Argentina and Nicaragua. Husbands felt more respect for their wives and valued them more when they became income earners. In Peru, women roads works participants reported increased incidence of domestic violence, which demands up-front attention when designing programs that in-

### AT-A-GLANCE TABLE: APPROACHES TO FOSTER WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN ROADS WORK AND ANCILLARY PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES AND KEY STUDY FINDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project country</th>
<th>Approach to foster women’s participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Argentina Norte Grande Road Infrastructure Project (2011-2016)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Productive activities (320 women direct beneficiaries)</strong>&lt;br&gt;• The construction and/or rehabilitation of 4 craftswomen community centers along the newly paved road (there will be a total of 7 craftswomen community centers at the end of the project along the QCR)&lt;br&gt;• Formation of handicraft associations and training of women in organizational and productive capacities and life skills, and mentoring activities.&lt;br&gt;• Creation of a network of the 7 associations along the newly rehabilitated road. Conducting program of exchanges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nicaragua Fourth and Fifth rural roads projects (2006-2017)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Roads work (1,413 women direct beneficiaries)</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Promotion of women’s employment in roads work within the community-run roads works organizations through loose targets.&lt;br&gt;• Promotion of women in management positions in community-run roads work organizations through loose targets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peru Decentralized Rural Transport Project (2007-2013)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Roads work (429 women direct beneficiaries)</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Explicit promotion of women’s employment in roads work microenterprises through targets, hiring practices and outreach efforts&lt;br&gt;• Target/quota of 20% women in Roads Committees that undertake and contract out roads work.&lt;br&gt;• Skills training of women in tools for roads construction and management.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Productive activities</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Promotion of women’s participation in productive initiatives.&lt;br&gt;• Women had to account for at least 20 percent of the executive committee of the organizations promoted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In turn, these determinants had an effect on three dimensions of gender equality outcomes, as follows:

- Technical, soft and job training increased women’s educational **endowments**.
- Access to jobs and income, increased women’s **economic opportunities**, and
- A combination of project interventions increased women’s **agency**, analyzed using Perova and Vakis (2013) framework.

The next figure presents the key external and internal aspects or enablers of agency following Perova and Vakis (2013) framework that emerged from the qualitative research for this study. Women participants in roads work and rural productive activities reported increased self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-confidence, decision-making capacity, leadership and assertiveness, as a result conquering new skills and know-how, and participating in public spheres of community engagement. The opportunity to venture into new spheres and perform non-traditional work, gave them confidence in their own capacities and helped them envision a better future for themselves (and their families) and take control over their own future. Networking, socializa-

crease women’s economic empowerment especially in countries that already have a high incidence of domestic violence.
tion, and group formation activities increased learning and boosted women’s morale and self-assurance. Furthermore, the study shows that women’s increased income and their control over their own income enhanced women’s agency, which had impacts on intra-household gender power relations.

The study shows how external barriers limiting women’s agency can (slowly) be deconstructed by proactive measures focused on increasing women’s participation in the public sphere (work or community participation) and their taking on non-traditional roles, such as working in roads construction and maintenance. While husbands and community members might have had initial doubts, concerns, or even resistance to these new roles, the projects offered a scenario where women stepped into non-traditional roles such as workers in roads maintenance and public sphere such as members of (handicraft) associations. Seeing women perform and perform well, challenged traditional gender stereotypes. While everyone might not have immediately agreed to such new roles, initiatives such as the ones studied in this report are a small step in changing gender norms and increasing gender equality.

On the other hand, community and husbands’ resistance – sometimes expressed in the form of violence as in some cases in Peru – also highlights how external constraints to women’s agency have to be addressed with additional and complimentary interventions. Project design should include measures to address women-specific barriers to participate, such as villagers and husbands’ resistance to women’s work in male-dominated trades through community outreach and sensitization, as well as gender-specific lifecycle demands such as providing child care facilities that are culturally sensitive and offering flexible working hours to help balance domestic responsibilities and employment activities.

Lastly, given the time-bound nature of rural roads employment, project design should at the outset include activities that capitalize on women’s enhanced agency through promoting cross-institutional linkages to complementary programs, e.g. agricultural extension, rural financial services, and business development skills.

LESSONS LEARNED

The report proposes 16 lessons learned from the project case studies grouped into four areas: (i) those that address barriers to participation, (ii) those that address challenges in program participation, (iii) those that enhance women’s agency during program participation; and (iv) those that increase sustainability and scale-up of gender approaches (see table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL ENABLERS OF AGENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXTERNAL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non-traditional job opportunity and income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technical and soft skills and on the job training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change of social norms on women’s roles, capacities all countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Networking, socialization, group formation, mentorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity to exercise leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERNAL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased control over income, autonomy, and independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem, ‘can do feeling’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased decision-making power within the household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased voice in public spheres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased aspirations for personal development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roads to Agency
### Strategies to foster women’s participation and agency in rural roads work and productive activities

#### Strategies to address barriers to participation
- Deploy a variety of recruitment strategies
- Child care provision and part-time/flexible work
- Community outreach and awareness/sensitization campaigns
- Affirmative action measures

#### Strategies to address challenges in program participation
- Alleviate harshness of working conditions
- Sensitize construction unit staff and contractors
- Change operational manual to enhance gender equality in assignment of tasks
- Incorporate domestic violence sensitivity up front when incorporating women in roads works

#### Strategies to enhance women’s agency during program participation
- Combine technical and life skills/language training
- Leadership training and open opportunities to women to exercise leadership
- Development of group formation and mentorship interventions
- Disseminate role models
- Disseminate the community benefits of participating in roads work and associative activities
- Open savings account

#### Strategies to increase sustainability and scale-up of gender approaches
- Introduce measures to institutionalize gender in roads projects, e.g. changes in operational manuals and gender quotas
- Introduce a long-term perspective in initiatives to empower women
- Develop graduation strategies to improve participants’ chances of obtaining employment after they exit from the rural roads program
- Evidence-based advocacy
Infrastructure projects, and more specifically, roads construction and maintenance are one of the core operations of the World Bank. Traditionally, infrastructure sectors have been viewed as gender-neutral by many actors, usually related to the assumption that roads (for instance) benefit all. In recent years, emerging research has uncovered important gender differences in transport needs owing to different social and economic roles and responsibilities of men and women, which has prompted policy makers and development practitioners to introduce a gender-lens in the design of transport projects.

In addition, gender mainstreaming efforts in Bank transport projects have focused on women’s participation in construction, rehabilitation, maintenance, and management of transport infrastructure. These opportunities offer unprecedented income generation opportunities for women and can contribute to challenge traditional gender roles in a male-dominated sector, can increase women’s agency by expanding their life choices and their capacity to better support their families and more actively participate in communities and societies.

However, despite the increase of gender mainstreaming efforts in transport projects little is known about the effects of these interventions on women’s agency defined as ‘the ability to make effective choices and transform these choices into desired outcomes’ (World Bank 2012, Box 1). This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap. The study looks at the effects of women’s participation in roads construction and maintenance and rural economy promotion activities on women’s agency, which has recently become a focus of study at the World Bank. Through individual interviews and focus groups the study assesses the effects of women-targeted interventions in three rural transport projects in Argentina, Nicaragua, and Peru. By focusing on agency, the study sheds light on effects of gender mainstreaming interventions that have more lasting effects on gender equality given the catalytic value of agency on other gender outcomes such as economic opportunities and endowments. The perceptions and attitude changes among men and women that are an integral part of agency certainly would represent lasting effects. Exhibiting the agency effects of Bank’s interventions can take the institution beyond “checking boxes” when it comes to mainstreaming gender in Bank operations and can show concrete development outcomes.

For the purposes of analyzing the project activities and approaches in rural transport projects that affected women’s agency, we use two conceptual frameworks:

**World Development Report 2012 (WDR 2012)**

The first conceptual framework employed is the WDR 2012 on Gender Equality and Development that helps explain the processes that lead to gender equality and identifies policy areas and policy instruments. The WDR identifies three **dimensions of gender equality: endowments** (inequalities related to education, health and/or physical assets) and **economic opportunities** (inequalities related to jobs, land, and agricultural production, technology, or market access), and **agency**. Agency can be understood as women’s ability to make choices they value and to act on those choices. The WDR defines agency as the “process through which women and men use their endowments and take advantage of economic opportunities to achieve desired outcomes”. In this regard, women’s agency is not only a dimension of gender equality in itself, but additionally, it functions as a catalyzer with regards to other dimensions of gender equality. Given its complexity, agency is inherently difficult to measure (World Bank 2014). For cross-country comparisons, the common approach used to measure agency is to use data on what people say they do in different domains of life. Such actions are called ‘expressions of agency’. WDR 2012 focused on five of its ‘expressions’: women’s access to and control over resources; freedom of movement; freedom from the risk of violence; decision making over family formation; and having voice in society and influencing policy.

The WDR 2012 offers a framework for diagnosing and addressing gender-specific constraints. The framework posits that in choosing and designing policies to address the gender gaps of concern, it is necessary to target the **determinants** of the gender gaps of concern, not just the outcomes. The framework identifies four sets of determinants: formal state institutions, markets, informal institutions and households, specifically:

- **Markets**: pertain to the incentives that are largely influenced by markets (including the markets for labor, credit, land, and goods), which determine the returns to household decisions and investments. For example, gender-constraints in markets are seen in the higher proportions of women than men working in the informal economy, gender segregation in occupations, discrimination of women in formal credit markets related to institutional requirements and the type of productive activities in which women predominate.

- **Formal institutions**: pertain to all aspects of the functioning of the state, including laws, regulatory frameworks, and mechanisms for the delivery of services that the state provides (such as judicial services, police services, basic infrastructure, health, and education). Laws and regulations can constrain women’s agency and opportunities as when women and men have different ownership rights, or when restrictions are placed on hours and sectors of work for women but not for men. Where credit and labor markets already discriminate, such unequal laws and regulations can accentuate the problem. Unequal treatment may also manifest itself more indirectly through biased service delivery, as is the case for agriculture extension services.

- **Informal social institutions**: consist of the mechanisms, rules, and procedures that shape social interactions but do not pertain to the functioning of the state, such as gender roles, beliefs, social norms, and social networks. Gender roles provide guides to normative behaviors for each sex within certain social contexts. Roles gain power as they are learned through socialization, elaborated in cultural products, and enacted in daily life. The repeated experience of performing gender roles affects widely shared beliefs about men’s and women’s attributes and one’s own sense of identity. Social norms refer to patterns of behavior that flow from socially shared beliefs and are enforced by informal social sanctions. These can affect household bargaining in many ways: they set limits on what can be bargained about; they can be a determinant of or constraint to bargaining power; they can affect how bargaining is conducted; and they themselves can be subject to bargaining and can change. Social networks refer to the system of social relationships and bonds of cooperation for mutual benefit that shape one’s opportunities, information, social norms, and perceptions.

- **Households**: Households make decisions about how many children to have and when to have them, how much to spend on education and health for daughters and sons, how to allocate different tasks (inside and outside the household), and other matters that determine gender outcomes. These choices are made on the basis of the preferences, decision-making (or bargaining) power, and incentives and constraints of different household members. Preferences can be innate or shaped by gender roles, social norms, and social networks. And they may be shared by or differ across individuals within
Box 1. Conceptual framework to analyze the effects of increasing labor participation of women in rural roads projects on women’s agency (cont.)

the household. For instance, evaluations of transfer programs, such as pensions and conditional cash transfers, show that spending decisions differ depending on whether money is given to women or men within the household, suggesting differences in men’s and women’s preferences. Bargaining capacity is determined by two distinct sources of individual power: economic and social. Economic bargaining power depends primarily on the wealth and assets each individual controls and his or her contribution to total household income, while social bargaining power results primarily from formal and informal institutions. For instance, a woman’s capacity to decide how to allocate her time across various activities in and outside the household may be weakened by her lack of asset ownership (low economic bargaining power) or by strong social proscriptions against female work outside the home (low social bargaining power) (World Bank 2012).

The constraints are most severe among women who face other disadvantages, such as being a member of an ethnic minority, having a disability, or being poor.

The framework graph shows interconnected gears to represent how changes in one or more dimensions propel changes and moves the household gear. The combined movement of these gears ultimately triggers the turning of the gear representing gender outcomes, thus increasing gender equality. As the framework suggests, the subcomponents of equality also interact. The graph also suggests movement going in the opposite direction—that is, with the gender equality gear moving those representing households, markets, and institutions and ultimately generating higher economic growth. In this setting, market and institutional constraints can be thought of as wedges that prevent one or more gears from turning, thereby weakening both directions of the two-way relationship between economic growth and gender equality.

Internal and external aspects of agency

We complement our analysis with the conceptual framework proposed by Perova and Vakis in their report Improving Gender and Development Outcomes through Agency (2013). The authors identify two aspects or enablers of agency:

- Internal aspect: The internal motivation to make a choice, the willingness to act upon one’s desires.
- External aspect: Measures to overcome exogenous constraints (external, or context-related).

The framework is useful for understanding the personal and emotional experiences by individuals. In this regard, it lends itself for the type of qualitative and subjective exploration of what enables agency and how it can be enhanced. The authors postulate that in order to successfully improve agency, both of its components-internal and external-should be addressed. This may happen through a single intervention aimed at both components or through a combination of interventions and or/ enhanced external factors that complement each other.
In this respect, the study has three main objectives:

- To provide fresh evidence and build awareness about the effects of gender-targeted activities in rural transport projects among policy makers to help garner support from key local stakeholders, which may fear resistance and backlash of dominant groups at the local level. Understanding mechanisms behind impacts is important for scaling up and replicating gender approaches in other interventions and programs.
- To incorporate lessons learned of gender-targeted activities in the design of rural transport projects.
- To provide guidelines and recommendations on how to improve gender-targeted activities in the implementation of transport projects.

Following this introduction, the report is structured as follows: The second section describes the gender dimensions and agency-enhancing approaches in transport projects and the gender approaches in project implementation in the selected case studies. The third section provides a summary of the methodology of the study. The fourth section describes the key findings of the qualitative research. The fifth section presents the lessons learned to inform future rural transport interventions. The sixth section provides concluding remarks.
Gender Approach in the Implementation of the Selected Projects

This section provides an overview of integrating gender issues in transport projects before describing the approach taken by the selected project case studies in fostering women’s participation in project implementation.

Overview of Gender Interventions at Different Stages of the Project Cycle

Gender issues in transport projects can be consistently integrated throughout the project cycle. Concrete entry-points lend themselves at different stages: preparation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Table 1 presents an overview of gender issues in transport projects and corresponding measures to address them at different stages of transport projects in a meaningful and effective way. Gender-enhancing measures for project implementation are highlighted in green below.

Preparation

Project staffing and awareness. The transport sector staff are very often mostly focused on delivering outputs for the projects as a whole and often do not pay attention to gender-differences in transport use and needs due to lack of gender-sensitive awareness and training. Projects should thus include gender-sensitive experts in design and review teams to ensure that both women and men are equally consulted. In addition, it is recommended to structure capacity-building opportunities for project stakeholders (team members and other partners) to promote ownership and commitment to the objectives of gender equity in rural infrastructure as a matter of development effectiveness.

Project design. Conventional rural transport planning has focused on road networks and long-distance transport of produce, which has sometimes led to the neglect of transport solutions for rural women who lack access to motorized transport and travel on feeder roads and tracks on foot or use intermediate means of transport such as donkey carts and bicycles. Therefore, the different roles of women and men need to be understood and recognized in order to adequately plan and design the spatial and temporal characteristics of the transport modes that both women and men depend on for their travel to undertake economic, domestic and social activities (Box 2). Project experience has shown that including women in stakeholder consultations for the planning of transport systems often provides practical insights that can improve access and safety. The majority of the constraints and unmet needs that women face are not typically captured in standardized household surveys in which male heads of households generally provide the answers. Therefore, it is important to conduct more open-ended individual or group interviews for women. Data on user needs and access constraints should be gender-disaggregated and collected through routine transport project monitoring and evaluation processes.
### Table 1. Gender Issues and Approaches in Project Design, Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Monitoring and Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender issues in transport</strong></td>
<td>• Project staffing and awareness: Transport projects teams are focused on delivering outputs, on the project as a whole, and often, don’t pay attention to gender-differentiated needs/design.</td>
<td>• Labor participation: Women are often not employed in roads work because it is not seen as appropriate for women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Transport design: Women’s transport specific mobility patterns and preferences, and security related issues may not be included; women are not consulted in project design.</td>
<td>• Management of services: Women are not included in decision-making processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Data collection: Gender disaggregated and gender-relevant statistics are not collected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measures to address gender issues</strong></td>
<td>• Client awareness: Enhance client awareness and management capacity: e.g. gender awareness training, gender focal points, gender specialists in project team.</td>
<td><strong>Agency-enhancing measures:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consultations with women and men: Include a gender-sensitive approach in design through consultations with women.</td>
<td>• Management of services: Enhance women’s leadership skills and participation in Roads Maintenance Committees and similar decision-making committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Labor force participation: (i) Consider a gender approach in dissemination and recruitment practices; (ii) Promote inclusive information sharing that enhances women’s understanding of their rights and opportunities; (iii) establish quotas; (iii) revise hiring criteria and practices; (iv) measures to alleviate binding constraint to women’s participation (i.e. child care provision; flexible working arrangements).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Training, mentorship and group formation: (i) provide training in technical skills and soft skills; (ii) establish group formation and peer-to-peer training/ support so woman share information and inspire each other.</td>
<td>• Gender-sensitive M&amp;E: Incorporate gender-sensitive indicators and gender dimensions in monitoring and evaluation systems and procedural manuals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implementation

Agency-enhancing measures

Management of services. Women rarely have an equal voice in the planning and decision making for rural infrastructure. Men also participate predominantly in community meetings at which decisions are made on the selection of priorities for, and on the location of, infrastructure investments. Measures need to be taken to increase women’s participation and leadership skills in the management of the infrastructure services, such as road maintenance committees. Such participation is often an opportunity for improving women’s agency. It provides an opportunity for women to exercise their leadership and decision-making capabilities.

Labor force participation. The construction and maintenance of rural infrastructure generate a significant demand for labor and therefore provide significant opportunities for employment and income creation for the rural population. However, women face numerous constraints to participate in roads work: cultural norms about women engaging in certain tasks and jobs such as road construction, and men’s perceptions that women cannot handle certain “heavy tasks” or equipment such as chain saws and driving machinery even though women often are used to doing heavy work elsewhere, particularly in agriculture.

Women’s participation in construction, rehabilitation, maintenance, supervision and monitoring of rural roads can provide income-generating opportunities, and challenge gender norms regarding women’s acceptable employment. To increase the number of women in such jobs, contractors can include specific clauses on a required percentage of women employees and efforts should be made to inform women of the possibilities open to them and provision made for appropriate training. Furthermore, in some cases, account need to be taken of the organization of work and the specific constraints on women, notably childcare.

Training, mentorship and group formation. Life skills training are designed to teach a broad set of social and behavioral skills, such as decision-making (e.g. critical and creative thinking, and problem solving); community living (e.g. effective communication, resisting peer pressure, building healthy relationships, and conflict resolution); and personal awareness and management (self-awareness, self-esteem, managing emotions, assertiveness, stress management, and sexual and reproductive health behaviors and attitudes). Life skills training can empower women to think critically about how gender norms govern their interactions with others and affect their behaviors.

Numerous studies find that women’s participation in networks and groups/associations has enhanced women’s agency, building their organizational skills, self-esteem and self-confidence through working collectively to influence change in their communities. Women report that their gains in agency often surpass the economic benefits obtained from group action (World Bank 2009: 65) Mentorship programs can motivate women. Mentoring has been shown to lead to the development of coping skills and an increased willingness to challenge oneself and attempt new experiences (Campbell and others 2012). Mentors can also serve as role models who help grow women’s aspirations and provide them with active reinforcement to overcome gender bias in labor markets.

BOX 2. RATIONALE FOR ADDRESSING GENDER ISSUES IN TRANSPORT DESIGN

- Women have disproportionate share of household transport burdens (Blackden 2003; Blackden and Wodon 2006; Quisumbing 2003; Priyanthi and Porter 2002).
- Women have more limited access to available means of transport (Venter and others 2007; Odufuwa 2007; Srinivasan 2002).
- Men and women have different travel patterns and trip purposes (Anand and Tiwari 2006; Odufuwa 2005; Abidemi 2002; Rosenbloom 1995; Malmberg-Calvo 1994; Hanson and Hanson 1980).
- Women spend more on transport (Kamuhanda and Schmidt 2009; Srinavasan 2002).
- Quality, safety, and security concerns (Okoko 2007).
## Table 2. Suggested Gender-Sensitive Monitoring Indicators for Rural Transport Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Suggested indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>• Direct project beneficiaries—(number), of which (percentage) are female.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport design</td>
<td>• Consultations: Number of women and men in all stakeholder and road user consultation groups and decision-making forums.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality/Usefulness</td>
<td>• Time savings: Travel time for men and women to essential services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improved affordability: percentage of income spent by women and men on transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased security: reduced incidence of harassment, crime and rape on streets, on transport and in transit points; reduced male and female pedestrian accident rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Satisfaction levels among community members with quality and usefulness of infrastructure constructed, disaggregated by gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures to alleviate binding constraint to women’s participation in rural works</td>
<td>• Availability and utility of flexible working arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Child care provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency-enhancing interventions</td>
<td>• Management of services:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Number of women and men trained and participating in and leading road committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Labor participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Number of women laborers and supervisors recruited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Increased women’s and men’s income from transport employment and enterprises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Leadership:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Participation in leadership training/coaching for women’s participants of rural roads committees and other governance/decision-making bodies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Training and group formation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Participation in training in specific construction, business development skills, and soft skills disaggregated by gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Targeted clients who are members of an association—female (number).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Internal dimension of agency (qualitative analysis): Self-esteem, self-efficacy, aspirations, control over one’s future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Do women and men perceive that women are becoming more empowered, more confident in their own skills, decision-making capacity? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Do women perceive that they now have greater self-respect? Why? How does this relate to men’s perceptions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Do women feel greater self-esteem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Do women feel more confidence and prepared to pursue their future plans?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Bargaining power within the household</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Do women/men perceive that they now have greater economic autonomy? Do women feel that having income and control over their income they can make decisions and that they can act so that those decisions occur in the household? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Are changes taking place in the way in which decisions are made in the household, and what is the perceived impact of this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Do women make decisions independently of men in their household? What sorts of decisions are made independently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Have there been any changes in the marital relationship? Has women’s work participation created conflict in the household?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Monitoring and Evaluation**

Gender issues should be incorporated in the systems to monitor the implementation of rural transport projects through sex-disaggregated beneficiary data and relevant measures of gender equality integrated into the baselines and other routine transport monitoring and evaluation processes (Table 2). This is expressed in many ways: control over resources (measured by the ability to earn and control income), ability to move freely, ability to have voice in society and influencing policy, decision over family formation, freedom from the risk of violence, control over one’s future, and the ability to execute plans for personal and professional development.

**APPROACH TO INCREASING WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION AT THE IMPLEMENTATION STAGE IN SELECTED CASE STUDIES**

The following section describes the approach taken by the three different project case studies to increase women’s participation in roads work and/or productive activities in areas where roads have been rehabilitated. Hence, the report’s focus is on the gender mainstreaming activities at the project implementation stage. Annex 2 provides a summary of the status of key gender issues in the three countries that are part of this review.

All of the projects studied aimed to enhance women’s economic empowerment through increasing women’s participation in roads work and productive activities connected to the newly rehabilitated roads activities, but had different approaches. The projects in Nicaragua and Peru increased women’s participation in road construction and maintenance through community-run roads works organizations and micro-enterprises for roads maintenance, respectively. The projects in Argentina and Peru include activities to enhance women’s local livelihoods activities in areas where roads have been rehabilitated. Furthermore, the approaches to foster women’s participation differed in terms of whether or not they included explicit measures to recruit women, whether or not they promoted women in decision-making positions e.g. roads committees, production associations, and in terms of the number of direct women beneficiaries reached (see Table 3 below).

**Argentina Norte Grande Road Infrastructure Project (2011-2016)**

The Argentina Norte Grande Road Infrastructure Project (2010-2016) aims to reduce transport costs for users of provincial roads along selected corridors of the Norte Grande provinces, through the improvement of the quality of roads and the introduction of improved road asset management tools and methods. The Norte Grande Region is one of the most marginalized, underdeveloped, and poor regions in Argentina. There are about 50,000 people, who recognize themselves as IPs in Norte Grande Region.

The ‘Qom Culture Route’ (QCR) initiative was designed as part of the Indigenous People’s Plan (IPP) to promote the

**TABLE 3. AT-A-GLANCE COMPARISON OF GENDER APPROACHES IN RURAL TRANSPORT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Type of intervention Women’s participation in:</th>
<th>Explicit measures to recruit women</th>
<th>Promotion of women in decision-making positions</th>
<th>Inclusion of additional agency-enhancing activities</th>
<th>No. of direct women beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Roads work [✓]</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>Roads work [✓]</td>
<td></td>
<td>[✓]</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Roads work [✓]</td>
<td>[✓]</td>
<td>[✓]</td>
<td>[✓]</td>
<td>429c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: a Refers to activities that seek to actively recruit women and promote women’s employment in roads work or productive activities linked to revitalizing the rural economy where the roads have been built or rehabilitated; b Refers to activities that seek to develop women’s decision-making capacity, enhance their confidence and self-esteem, and increase awareness of their rights. c The number refers only to women participants in rural roads construction and maintenance, not women participation in ancillary productive activities.
The construction and/or rehabilitation of 4 craftswomen community centers: i.e. buildings along a provincial road paved under the project, in which altogether 300 indigenous women participate in cooperative activities. There will be 7 craftswomen community centers at the end of the project along the QCR.

- Training of women in technical, organizational, productive, and life skills, specifically: (i) skills training of women artisans in: the management of rotating funds, the development and marketing of products, entrepreneurial skills sewing and selling strategies; (ii) capacity building of women to form a network of associations that integrates the 7 centers, to give greater visibility to all Qom women; (iii) training workshops with indigenous women to develop the community tourism development strategy (i.e. cultural heritage sites, environmental protection actions, road safety awareness campaigns in indigenous languages led by indigenous women); and (iv) family planning workshops in Qom language for indigenous women.

- Mentorship and group formation to enhance women’s agency: Programs were organized for older women to mentor and teach younger QOM women handicraft techniques. The associations themselves provided a physical ‘safe space’ for women to socialize, exchange knowledge, work together, learn about their rights, etc.

- Creating a network of associations along Route 3: the

---

**TABLE 4. WOMEN CENTERS IN THE QOM CULTURAL ROUTE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name in Qom language</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Year of formation</th>
<th>Number of women members</th>
<th>Number of coordinators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QOCHIIQ’LAE’</td>
<td>Presidencia Roca</td>
<td>Handicrafts, appreciation of history and Qom language</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIOC LAASAT</td>
<td>Pampa Chica</td>
<td>Sewing, dancing and music</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TACAI LAPA’</td>
<td>Cuarta Legua</td>
<td>Crafts, sewing and Qom language</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIGUÑEC LAE’</td>
<td>Pampa Grande</td>
<td>Intercultural and bilingual education, health, sewing, crafts, Qom dances</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QOMLASHEPI</td>
<td>Fortín La Valle</td>
<td>Crafts</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONATAXANAXAIPI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAATAQA’</td>
<td>Villa Río Bermejito</td>
<td>Crafts, health, sewing, Qom dances</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELE’IPATA’AC</td>
<td>El Espinillo</td>
<td>Crafts, wildlife watching</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>320</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fabiana Menna, 2014. QCR qualitative study on the impact of women’s participation in women’s handicraft associations and women’s agency, unpublished.

Provincial Route 3 in the Province of Chaco as a tourist and cultural corridor, centered on valuing the Qom culture with a focus on women’s economic empowerment (See Box 3 on the context of and the resources involved in the development of the QCR). Specifically the QCR initiative included two activities. The first was the rehabilitation of the Route 3 gravel access roads to indigenous communities and the production of bilingual road signs showing indigenous communities’ historical sites and cultural–ethnic sites of interest. The second aimed to enhance and amplify associative processes through women’s centers in Espinillo, Fortín Lavalle, Pampa Grande, Pampa Chica, Cuarta Legua, Presidencia Roca and Villa Río Bermejito. This included:

- The construction and/or rehabilitation of 4 craftswomen community centers: i.e. buildings along a provincial road paved under the project, in which altogether 300 indigenous women participate in cooperative activities. There
**What is the context of how the attention to gender emerged in the IPP of the Argentina Norte Grande Road Infrastructure Project (2011-2016)?**

The World Bank worked with specific champions both within the federal government (executing agency), and in the provincial road agency in Chaco (within the federal government (executing agency), and in the provincial road agency in Chaco) on designing gender-specific consultation and communication tools as part of the social management framework (including the preparation of the IP Plan for the road in Chaco). The Bank team relied on gender experts (both external consultants and internal bank staff) when working on these tools. In addition, the team included specific gender-based indicators in M&E framework and in the design of an Impact Evaluation Study (currently ongoing) with technical support of Bank gender and M&E experts. Furthermore, the bidding documents required the contractors to hire a social and indigenous people’s specialist with strong gender background to manage and supervise the social management plan. The Bank carried out training sessions for the federal government program implementation unit and provincial road agencies social specialists on social management (including gender and IP perspectives). During project execution the consultations were carried out and a communication plan was implemented. As part of this work, the indigenous women requested specific support, i.e. family planning workshops first, then road safety awareness campaigns in their language for indigenous schools in the area of intervention. For these activities, the Madres Cuidadoras de la Cultura Qom (Mother Caretakers of the Qom Culture) were actively involved (as per their own request) in the preparation of the Road Safety awareness/education campaigns, and in delivering the awareness workshops in these schools). These women also actively participated in the preparation of environmental protection actions (identification of local fauna and flora for a baseline study that was carried out as mitigation measure against risks of deforestation) and the identification of cultural heritage sites to be included in the signs along the road being paved. As part of these activities, Madres Cuidadoras de la Cultura Qom requested support to strengthen their association, and entrepreneurial skills, which is how the QCR initiative emerged. To design, supervise, and potentiate these activities, the Bank team contracted a local Indigenous Peoples and gender specialist, who is the director of an NGO based in Northern Argentina (Fundación Gran Chaco) that is actively involved in social and environmental issues in the Chaco Ecoregion. The Bank’s partnership with the NGOs active in the region was a key ingredient to ensure sustainability and successful launching of the initiative.

**What resources were allocated for the QCR initiatives?**

- **Project preparation:** The Bank hired a gender expert during consultations and in the design of social management manuals (both within Bank team, and in the Government of Argentina team)
- **Implementation:**
  - Construction costs of gravel access to schools and women handicraft centers (approximately US$ 80,000)
  - Construction costs of women community centers (approximately US$ 50,000)
  - Workshops/mentoring sessions/training sessions: (approximately US$ 25,000)
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
  - World Bank supervision costs on the Bank side (consultant fees, field work and travel costs for anthropologist/gender and Indigenous Peoples specialist, including research assistants that participated in the qualitative study) and supervision costs borne by the Government (both federal and provincial government) and supervision costs by social specialists in the contractors’ teams (two contractors participated in this sub-project).
  - Impact Evaluation study costs, (approximately US$ 216,000).
program conducted exchanges aiming to forge links and integrate the 7 handicraft associations to give greater visibility to all Qom women (Table 4). These activities also aimed to strengthen the collective identity, empowering women in their role of custodians of the Qom culture. The visibility of women’s organizations is a key aspect for the development of the QCR not only to the general public and tourists, but also for women themselves within the community. These centers aim to legitimize the place of women in the community, stimulating the desire to associate in addition to facilitating the production and marketing of handicrafts.

Thus, through the above-mentioned activities the QCR Initiative aimed to enhance women’s agency through two mechanisms. The first mechanism is income generation through sale of handicrafts. Women’s control of income could have impacts on gender dynamics within the household and women’s agency at individual, household and community level. Second, the promotion of Qom cultural identity and protection of cultural heritage through the development of artistic productions will increase women’s role in the development of their community. Women are the ones who carry out the transmission of cultural values in the Qom community through educating their children, and the promotion of artistic production.

Nicaragua Fourth and Fifth rural roads projects (2006-2017)

The “Fourth Roads Rehabilitation and Maintenance Project” approved in May 2006, and the “Rural Roads Infrastructure Improvement Project” referred to as the Fifth Roads Project, approved in December 2011 aim to improving the access of the rural population living to markets and social and administrative services and supporting generation of short-term employment opportunities for the rural population living in the project areas. The projects promoted women’s participation in community-run modules for laying cobblestones, known in Spanish as Modulos Comunitarios de Adoquinados (MCAs) that perform road upgrading tasks (Box 4). Women have been recruited to serve as presidents of the MCAs, supervise the works, and act as treasurers, traffic controllers, pavement joint fillers mostly. Women’s participation in total has been increasing from 10 percent in the original

Formation of MCAs is based on the selection of local labor, for which MTI works closely with the mayors of each municipality, convening with the community and using records of the unemployed in the area and in the communities surrounding the location where the work is to be performed. The municipality must make an announcement to the community to fill the Occupational Sheets, in order to assess availability of the existing workforce. The people selected to form the Board, with the support of the Municipality and MTI will then constitute a Board of Directors to serve as representative of the module for construction of pavement in their municipality. The Board then subcontracts the remaining workers who are going to be part of the MCA.

Peru Decentralized Rural Transport Project (2007-2013)

The Peru Decentralized Rural Transport Project (DRTP) (2007-2013) is the third project in a series of rural transport projects designed to improve and maintain rural roads, reducing transportation costs for local inhabitants and ultimately promoting the development of Peru’s poorest communities. In terms of project implementation, the project promotes the participation of women in: (i) roads work through their roads committees and roads maintenance microenterprises (Microempresas de Mantenimiento Vial –MEMV), (ii) rural productive activities through the ‘Local Development Window’ (Ventana de Desarrollo Local – VDL).
MCAs are local entities formed under the leadership of local mayors with each MCA staffed by a board of 5 directors (with the president of each MCA as the legal representative) to perform a specific road upgrading task. MCAs join together and use economies of scale to contract an earthworks contractor and a cobblestones supplier. Individually, each MCA hires its own local labor in order to construct a specified stretch of road. The MCA personnel receive technical support and training from MTI from inception, and have an MTI supervisor and promoter accompanying them throughout the implementation process. Cobblestones are concrete-like paving blocks that are precast in an offsite factory location with the raw materials being cement, fine aggregates, coarse aggregates, filler and water. The MCAs have generated employment opportunities in the short term, contributing towards technology transfer, building technical skills, and creating a sense of community and ownership for the roads (Muzira and Hernandez de Diaz 2013).

The current project, Additional Financing of the Fifth Rural Roads Infrastructure Improvement Project (AF V) continues implementation of the MCA model in rural roads in Nicaragua. Moreover, it will pilot a results-based minor routine maintenance targeting a total of 75 km on the cobblestones roads by converting MCA members into small micro-enterprises aimed at making the MCA model more sustainable.

### Table 5. Employment in MCA Contracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>No. MCAs</th>
<th>Board Member</th>
<th>Total Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Men No.</td>
<td>Women No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Roads</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Additional</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V Roads</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>316</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UCP/MTI.
Box 5. Types of Training Under MCAs

MCAs are local entities formed under the leadership of local mayors with each MCA staffed by a board of 5 directors (with the president of each MCA as the legal representative) to perform a specific road upgrading task. MCAs join together and use economies of scale to contract an earthworks contractor and a cobblestones supplier. Individually, each MCA hires its own local labor in order to construct a specified stretch of road. The MCA personnel receive technical support and training from MTI from inception, and have an MTI supervisor and promoter accompanying them throughout the implementation process. Cobblestones are concrete-like paving blocks that are precast in an offsite factory location with the raw materials being cement, fine aggregates, coarse aggregates, filler and water. The MCAs have generated employment opportunities in the short term, contributing towards technology transfer, building technical skills, and creating a sense of community and ownership for the roads (Muzira and Hernandez de Diaz 2013).

The current project, Additional Financing of the Fifth Rural Roads Infrastructure Improvement Project (AF V) continues implementation of the MCA model in rural roads in Nicaragua. Moreover, it will pilot a results-based minor routine maintenance targeting a total of 75 km on the cobblestones roads by converting MCA members into small micro-enterprises aimed at making the MCA model more sustainable.

Box 6. Micro-enterprises for roads maintenance
(Microempresas de Mantenimiento Vial-MEMV) model

Goal
The goal of the micro-enterprise-based road maintenance model is to generate employment for poor men and women from rural communities living alongside the rehabilitated roads and thus ensure the benefits from improved access (following road rehabilitation) goes to the local community. The program also provides incentives for the most advanced micro-enterprises to diversify outside of the road sector.

Payment and Incentive Mechanisms
Micro-enterprise contractors (with 10–16 employees) received annual performance-based contracts. Micro-enterprises receive a fixed sum payment each month if performance indicators set in the contract have been met. Initially, payment was uniform for maintenance on all types of roads, but gradually roads were classified according to road conditions, traffic load, geographic location, and climate impact. Micro-enterprises are now required to submit at the end of each month brief reports of types of maintenance activities implemented, expenditures incurred and amount of materials used.

The pressure of local municipalities and other members of their communities -- their next door neighbors -- is one of the main driving forces for micro-enterprises to comply with the level of service required. The employees of micro-enterprises are members of the local communities living along the roads they maintain.

The other driving force is a possibility to renew their contract for another year without bidding subject to continuing compliance with the performance indicators set in the contract.

Supervision
Monitoring and supervision of micro-enterprises is regularly done by Technical Assistants. In addition to supervision, their other responsibilities are to collect the data on road condition, to provide social assistance (dealing with gender and co-financing issues, and teaching employees of micro-enterprises to read and write). Roughly, one technical assistant is responsible for 6-7 micro-enterprises. (35 of 87 Technical Assistants are involved in supervision). In addition, the Provincial Road Institutes sometimes undertake site inspections to verify the work done by the Technical Assistants and micro-enterprises.

Box 5. Types of training under MCA

MCAs are local entities formed under the leadership of local mayors with each MCA staffed by a board of 5 directors (with the president of each MCA as the legal representative) to perform a specific road upgrading task. MCAs join together and use economies of scale to contract an earthworks contractor and a cobblestones supplier. Individually, each MCA hires its own local labor in order to construct a specified stretch of road. The MCA personnel receive technical support and training from MTI from inception, and have an MTI supervisor and promoter accompanying them throughout the implementation process. Cobblestones are concrete-like paving blocks that are precast in an offsite factory location with the raw materials being cement, fine aggregates, coarse aggregates, filler and water. The MCAs have generated employment opportunities in the short term, contributing towards technology transfer, building technical skills, and creating a sense of community and ownership for the roads (Muzira and Hernandez de Diaz 2013).

The current project, Additional Financing of the Fifth Rural Roads Infrastructure Improvement Project (AF V) continues implementation of the MCA model in rural roads in Nicaragua. Moreover, it will pilot a results-based minor routine maintenance targeting a total of 75 km on the cobblestones roads by converting MCA members into small micro-enterprises aimed at making the MCA model more sustainable.

Women’s participation in roads work

In terms of roads work, the project implemented a series of measures to promote the participation of women in road rehabilitation, including:

- The inclusion of at least 20 percent of women in the Road Committees, integrated by villagers. Road Committees undertake and contract out maintenance in the local area. Specifically, Road Committees approved operations, assigned tasks, paid wages and organized contributions of labor. The committees involved traditional community groups, including women’s groups, to ensure that the transport needs of all community members are met.
- Promotion of women’s employment in MEMV through targets (10 percent), hiring practices, and outreach efforts (Box 6 explains the MEMV model in Peru). In terms of hiring practices, for example, the projects prioritized female-headed households, reducing the weight given to education level in determining membership, recognizing previous experience in specific tasks needed for road maintenance rather than in actual road building, and classifying women’s management of households as managerial experience.
- Skills training of women in tools for road management (Box 5).

The DRTP created jobs for 429 women, who participated in 184 roads construction and maintenance micro-enterprises distributed across the country (Table 6). Women also held

| TABLE 6. WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN ROADS WORK THROUGH THE MEMV |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                 | Departments     | Rural Roads   | Total           | Members of MEMV | Presidents       | Legal           |                 |
|                 | Provinces       | (Km)          | number of MEMV  | M W % W         | M W % W         | Representatives | M W % W         |
| Rural Roads I&II| 116             | 11,641        | 573            | 2786 1010 27%   | 357 8 2%         | 201 7 3%        |
| DRTP            | 27              | 3,595         | 184            | 964 429 31%     | 86 6 7%         | 87 5 5%         |
| Other sources   | 0               | 1,630         | 100            | 412 148 26%     | 49 4 8%         | 46 1 2%         |
| TOTAL           | 143             | 16,866        | 857            | 4162 1587 28%   | 492 18 4%       | 334 13 4%       |


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 7. CONSOLIDATED TRAINING UNDER MEMV (2008-2013)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YEAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What are VDLs?

The Local Development Window (VDL, for its Spanish acronym) was first piloted in the Peru Rural Roads II project. The idea for this intervention originated from the findings of the impact evaluations of the Peru Rural Roads I project, which found that the roads project did not have meaningfully increased economic opportunities for rural communities (Instituto Cuanto 2000, GRADE 2006). An additional catalyst was needed in order for these production opportunities to be acted on.

The VDL intervention aims to complement the investments in road improvements with economic generation opportunities along the newly rehabilitated roads. VDL is a mechanism, managed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), through which productive initiatives are identified and prioritized. The VDL component contributed to the rural economic development of 28 provinces in the following two ways: first, it assisted small associations of rural producers in developing 52 business plans, helping 46 of them obtain funding from various sources (mostly local governments) and providing assistance in their implementation; and secondly, it worked to strengthen the public sector’s involvement in rural development, by (i) assisting municipalities in the preparation of 30 local development plans; (ii) helping develop and approve 60 rural development resolutions; (iii) and, most importantly, by convincing local governments to adopt many of their objectives and strategies. This approach to territorial development was unique in Peru, since it focused on demonstrating to public institutions the benefits of supporting rural producers and strengthening them so they can continue and expand these efforts in the future.

The VDLs helps to strengthen both the municipalities and local stakeholders in defining territorial development strategies and plans, and identifying potential production activity sponsors. The executing agencies of the VDLs were selected on a competitive basis from among private operators and NGOs. The projects were aligned to the interests and aspirations of the stakeholders and to the potential products in the area.

Example of VDL-sponsored livelihood project where women participated

*Fish Farms in Sauce, San Martín Department.* The community of Sauce (San Martín Department) used the VDL to identify the start-up financial resources necessary for the development of tilapia fish farms. Road access between Sauce Lake and the provincial market of Tarapoto prevented the community from taking advantage of the economic potential of the lake. In addition to road rehabilitation, which reduced the average time necessary to reach Tarapoto from six to two hours, approximately 61 families benefited from the project, with female participation estimated at approximately 40 percent. The project also led to the creation of a cooperative composed of an Artisanal Fishermen’s Committee and a Women’s Committee, which assumes tasks related to product sales and coordination with the Municipality of Sauce.

managerial positions within the microenterprises in DRTP. A total of 11 women representing 6 percent of the total filled managerial positions (Presidents and Legal Representatives in MEMV’s). Between 2008 and 2012, the project trained around 4,330 women in different events, representing around 20 percent of total participants (Table 7).

**Women’s participation in rural productive activities through Local Development Windows (Ventanas de Desarrollo Local VDL)**

Women were also encouraged to become more involved in the VDLs, either by joining the staffs or by submitting projects. In all initiatives promoted, women had to account for at least 20 percent of the executive committee. VDLs were implemented in 28 provinces and involved an effort to develop commodity sales strategies through the provision of technical assistance, aiming to increase income-generation activities in an effort to reduce poverty in rural areas (Box 7 provides a more detailed description of VDLs). Between 2008 and 2012, 90 productive organizations, and a total of 2,250 rural households benefited directly from the VDL component. On average 24 percent of the managerial positions of these organizations were held by women (100 women in total). The majority of women’s managerial positions were treasurers. Around 35 percent of people that received technical and managerial training under the VDL were women.
METHODOLOGY OF CASE STUDIES

Qualitative research methodologies were chosen for this study for its ability of providing rich textual descriptions of intangible factors such as agency, social norms, and gender roles. The use of open-ended questions and probing gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses, as quantitative methods do. In addition, open-ended questions have the ability to evoke responses that are meaningful and culturally salient to the participant, unanticipated by the researcher, and rich and explanatory in nature. Qualitative analysis attempts to identify trends, statements that are similar across different research participants. Another added advantage of using qualitative methods is the speed of data collection, given that the sample size is much smaller, which also brings down the cost of data collection. This section provides a summary of the study methodology. Annex 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology, including details on sampling and fieldwork.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aimed to assess whether and how women’s agency was affected by women’s participation in rural roads construction maintenance and ancillary rural productive activities in areas where roads have been rehabilitated.

The main questions analyzed in the study were:

- **Enablers and barriers for women’s participation:** What have been barriers/constraints and facilitators of involving women into such activities at the individual, household, and community level?
- **Positive and negative effects of women’s participation:** What have been potential positive and negative effects of such involvement at the individual, household, and community level?
- **Agency effects of women’s participation:** How have the gender related activities incorporated into the rural transportation project affected agency? Has the inclusion of women in activities that are traditionally carried out by men and the access to income generation led to effects on aspirations and life plans, perceptions of gender roles, decision-making capacity within the household, and decision-making capacity, voice and representation outside their household.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

A guiding principle of this research was to learn from individuals’ experiences and interpretations of their own reality. Thus, the study relied on qualitative data collection which allows for capturing individual experiences in terms of aspirations, self-esteem, behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions,
### Table 8. Questions and Topics in Interviews and Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection method</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Semi structured interviews with women rural roads project participants | • Identify the factors that facilitated the participation of women in rural roads works and ancillary livelihood activities.  
• Find out about the social, cultural, physical, economic barriers that women experienced during their participation in rural roads works and ancillary livelihood activities; i.e. conflict in the home, gender based violence, domestic violence, negative view of community of women working.  
• Identify the positive contribution of the inclusion of women in rural roads works and ancillary livelihood activities; i.e. income, control over income, increase in knowledge and know-how, improved self-esteem, networking with other women redistribution of household chores, strengthening capacity for action and decision-making, increased empowerment, enhanced aspirations for personal development, strengthened marital relationship, strengthened bargaining power within the household, and decision-making power in the community.  
• Find out about women’s aspirations and how they are taking action over their goals. How did women take advantage of the learning opportunities during the work experience? How have their aspirations/dreams changed since they began participating? |
| Semi structured interviews with partners and other family members of women rural roads project participants | • Explore thoughts/feelings about wife’s/mother’s participation in roads works and ancillary livelihoods activities.  
• Identify enabling factors for wife’s/mother’s participation in roads works and ancillary livelihoods activities.  
• Understand decision-making process around participation.  
• Find out about perception of problems arising during wife’s/mother’s engagement (reaction of other community members, difficulties faced during work etc.)  
• Identify positive or negative changes in the household due to her participation in rural roads and ancillary livelihood activities from the perspective of other household members (changes in their partner/mother, changes in the marital relations, redistribution of household chores, increased income, conflicts etc.)  
• Explore process after completion of wife’s/mother’s participation in rural roads works and ancillary livelihood activities (approval of other household members for future similar engagements etc.) |
| Semi structured with women non-participants | • Find out why women did not participate in rural works or ancillary activities (e.g. lack of information, caring for children, husband did not let her, not interested, work is too far away, etc.)  
• Find out whether women would be interested in participating in similar work, activities.  
• Find out about women’s aspirations.  
• Understand gender roles and stereotypes shared by informants and prevalent in the community  
• What are the effects of the roads newly constructed or rehabilitated for herself, her family, the community? |
| Key informant interviews | • Understand the context of the communities where women who participated live:  
  - What are the social and economic conditions in the community and in the households and how do they influence/condition the participation of women?  
  - What are the opportunities (jobs, income, other, offered to women that integrated in rural roads works and ancillary livelihood activities?  
  - Listen to the opinion of key local actors of the factors that enables or constrained the participation of women in project activities.  
  - What are the reasons why women participated in rural roads works and ancillary livelihood activities?  
  - What factors influenced positively for women to participate in rural roads works and ancillary livelihoods activities?  
  - What changes have women participants experienced as a result of their participation in rural roads works and ancillary livelihoods activities?  
  - What suggestions and recommendations do the informants have to improve women’s experience?  
  - What are the impacts of the rural roads rehabilitation/construction? |
intra-household and community-level dynamics, contextual factors and their interactions with women’s and men’s decisions.

The following instruments were applied for this study (Table 8):

- **Semi structured interviews** were conducted with women participants in the specific intervention, their partners, their children, women who did not participate as well as their partners.
- **Focus group discussions** were also conducted to validate the findings from the semi-structured individual interviews.
- **Key informant interviews** with community leaders.

**COMMUNITIES SELECTION**

In each country, the research team jointly with the local project teams identified the communities to conduct data collection, based on the overall goal to include communities that were ‘different’ one from the other in terms of socio-economic situations, stage at which they had been included into the roads project, level of female engagement within the communities roads works in order to represent a possibly wide range of realities. In Argentina, three women community centers were selected in three communities, Pampa Grande, El Espinillo and Fortín Lavalle. In Nicaragua, three road sections communities were selected: Granada – Malacatoya, Rivas – Veracruz and Moyogalpa – La Flor. In Peru, the project had a national scope, intervening in 21 out of the 27 departments. The selected communities are located in three departmental areas, Cajamarca in the northern highland, Arequipa in coastal southern highlands and Puno in the southern highland.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The methodology used in the country studies has the following main limitations that should be accounted for when interpreting the findings:

- **Potential selection bias:** Program participants selected for interviews and focus group were not randomly assigned. This was a reasonable procedure as implementing agencies had access to workers’ contacts and facilitated access to communities. In addition, communities that benefited from the project might be different from other more isolated communities in terms of gender norms and socio economic status and consequently the effects of the intervention could differ.
- **Focus on gender-targeted interventions in project implementation activities:** The study is not a systematic review of gender issues in the project. It is focused only around project implementation activities related to women’s participation in actual road works or ancillary activities related to revitalizing the local economy. The assessment thus excludes gender issues in project design and monitoring and evaluation.
- **Quantification of findings is not the scope of this study:** The study used qualitative methods to uncover the effects of interventions on women’s agency, i.e. self-esteem, confidence, decision-making power, control over own income, etc. Qualitative analysis allows identifying key issues but does not allow quantifying the extent to which any of the identified issues applies to the larger population.
FINDINGS

This section describes the findings from the qualitative research that is mainly based on individual interviews and a smaller number of focus groups with women program participants and family members, women that did not participate in rural roads schemes and key community informants. The findings are structured in three groups: (i) effects of women’s participation in rural schemes at the individual, household and community level; (ii) enabling factors and barriers for women’s participation; and (iii) challenges faced by women participants in rural schemes. The first and second area describe some implementation-related challenges that require more gender-sensitive approaches to be taken and the third area delves more on the agency-related effects of the program, especially when describing the individual-level effects.

EFFECTS OF WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION ON AGENCY AT THE INDIVIDUAL, HOUSEHOLD, AND COMMUNITY LEVELS

Women’s participation in roads work and rural productive activities had multiple effects on agency at the individual, household, and community level that varied depending on the project. At the individual level, women experienced increased income, building of networks of non-family peers, the acquisition of skills and know-how, enhanced confidence and capacity to aspire, pride of making a contribution to the community, and leadership skills. At the household level, women and family members reported a redistribution of household chores from women to spouses and other family members, greater feeling of wellbeing of family members due to women participants’ increased contentment, and strengthened marital relationship. At the community level, interviewees reported that the new roads brought many economic and social benefits and a shift in perception of gender norms (Table 9).

Individual level

**Increased income and control over their income.** In all three case studies, participants expressed that a key benefit of their participation in roads work and productive activities was the increased income, which helped improve their households living conditions. Beyond the pure economic benefit, the majority of women also explicitly said that having their own money made them happier, more independent, allowed them to be more assertive, and feel more secure and confident. In Argentina, income generation was the most prominently mentioned positive change referred to by women but its impact is yet to be realized since the revitalization of the tourism industry is slowly starting. Even though handicraft sales have increased, women have not been able to sell the total volume...
of monthly production. However, women QCR participants are very optimistic regarding the future and their businesses.

“Yes, I worked in a group with other women. I liked that we support each other. There were some problems, like in any work place, but we could solve them and we helped each other”
Woman MCA participant, Moyogalpa-Nicaragua, 36 years

“I liked it very much because I used to bring my own money to the household and I did not depend on him. I could buy what I wanted, that is what I liked the most. Feeling fulfilled as a woman”
Woman MCA participant, Moyogalpa-Nicaragua, 36 years

“I improved my income, my children don’t lack anything and I even bought a house. Thanks to the work in PROVIA, I fulfilled my dream of owning a house”
Woman MEMV participant, Azángaro, Puno, 32 years

“With my first salary of 900 soles, I bought things for my son, clothes, and things for the house. Now I have to save money so that if my son gets sick, I have where to get money. I am saving in the Bank, and my husband is also saving. We have plans to buy a house in the city of Arequipa with both our income”
Woman MEMV participant, Arequipa, 22 years

In all countries, female participants stated that they had control over their income. The majority of participants said they spend their income on food, clothes and school utensils for their children. At the same time, some women in Argentina and Peru expressed interest in investing their income to start entrepreneurial activities and thus using this first change in incomes to provide a longer-term change for themselves and their families.

The interest and motivation to leave their houses and thus the domestic sphere is the first step to generate an income but has broader effects beyond just income generation. As one woman puts it “iba a seguir estancada” (I would have stayed stuck), clearly showing the sensation of paralysis and immobility which she was able to overcome thanks to her affiliation to the association. The participants in all three country studies refer to a multitude of non-monetary positive changes due to their participation in the projects.

**Building networks and socializing with other women.**
In Argentina and Nicaragua, women said that another benefit of participating in handicraft associations and roads work, respectively, was building networks and socializing with other women. In Argentina, the association opens up a ‘safe’ space where women can share experiences with other women, and support each other. In Nicaragua, women rural roads participants said that a positive aspect of their participation

### Table 9. Effects of Women’s Participation on Agency at the Individual, Household, and Community Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Nicaragua</th>
<th>Peru</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased income and control over their income</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building networks and socializing with other women</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition of skills and know-how</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased self-esteem</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced confidence, independent and capacity to aspire</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride of making a contribution to the community</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills and participation of women in the public sphere</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redistribution of house chores to other family members</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater wellbeing of family members</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthened marital relationship/acquired from spouse</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased access to markets, services, and connectivity</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift in perception of gender norms</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Effects of women’s participation on agency at the individual, household, and community levels.
in roads works was meeting other women. Some emphasize the pure pleasure of socializing. Others pointed at the learning process stimulated by being with other women. Women said they felt more empowered by the group experience and by the expressed solidarity with other women. In Argentina, QCR participants mention that they had learned a lot from the exchange with other community associations. This has been a direct outcome of the QCR, which aims to establish links, sharing of experiences, and learning between different women’s associations.

“You can grow up as a person, get more communication skills, learn how to listen to others and to socialize with people, because perhaps there were people in the communities that we did not know before, and with this project, we met them and we socialize even more…”
Woman MCA participant Malacatoya-Nicaragua, 21 years

“The sale of handicrafts allows me to buy school supplies for my some. I spend the rest of the money buying groceries”
Woman participant in QCR, Fortín Lavalle, Argentina, 27 years

“What I liked is that I learned many things from the coexistence with other people. Each time we met, we had a lot of fun. I liked it because we had the opportunity to know other places and people that are not from here to whom we conveyed our experience. When other people are interested in our topics, it’s like it lifts our spirit and generates an enthusiasm that is hard to explain. It’s something that that helps you move on”
Woman QCR participant, Pampa Grande, 48 years

**Acquisition of skills and know-how.** In all countries, women said that one of the most significant benefits from participating in roads work and other productive activities was the attainment of technical skills and know-how. Exposure to new tasks, learning on the job as well as technical assistance was very much valued by all women participants. Women in Pampa Grande Argentina said that their participation in the handicraft association had sparked their interest in getting more training. Some women said they had even gone back to school to obtain teaching and nursing licenses. The women’s handicraft association in Pampa Grande is the most well-established of the ones along the QCR. It has trained women in handicrafts production, awareness on health, indigenous law, and women’s rights.

“My working has been a huge help, we’ve increased our income. I didn’t use to leave the house. If I wouldn’t have participated in the associations, I don’t know what I would have done with my life, I would have stayed stuck. Now, I participate. My life is different, I move. If I need something, I get out, I can obtain information, I can train other people. Because of this experience I can now do things that before I wouldn’t otherwise have imagined I was going to be able to do”
Woman QCR participant, Pampa Grande, 48 years

“I like participating to learn women’s rights. Before I was embarrassed, but not anymore, I am encouraged to speak up. When people ask questions, I answer them”
Woman QCR participant, El Espinillo-Argentina, 42 years

**Increased self-esteem.** In all three countries, women said they have higher self-esteem due to their participation in roads work and productive activities. They vividly describe how the experience to be able to doing something that they had not done before showed them they can trust their capabilities and increased their self-confidence. In Argentina, women’s exposure through the QCR to tourists and technical staff from the government helped them overcome their lack of confidence. Women QCR participants also highlight overwhelmingly how the associative process and the access to QCR had increased their self-esteem, their self-confidence and their expectations towards the future. The participants claim to be happier, more satisfied, more independent, and proud of being a member of the association. They refer to feeling more empowered and better equipped to face challenges and achieve goals in life – mostly given the skills they acquired but also due to the support of the group.

“I feel more independent, I value myself more because what I am doing makes me so happy, it makes me so happy because I know how to do it well.”
Woman participant in QCR, El Espinillo, 21 years

“When I started, my mind open up, and it helped me to realize that I could continue my studies. That is why I finished secondary education and I am moving on to tertiary”
Woman participant in QCR, Pampa Grande, 48 years

“I feel strengthened; I am capable of some things. That is what I was looking for. Before we thought we weren’t capable, but now we are after so many things that we’ve done.”
We felt capable of doing things by ourselves”
Woman participant in QCR, Pampa Grande, 33 years

**Enhanced confidence and capacity to aspire.** In all countries, women said they felt happier, more confidence, independent, better equipped to face challenges, and achieve goals in their life. In Nicaragua, many women said they felt proud of their work in MCAs. This feeling partially results from their conviction that the job performed was meaningful and important to their community. Women said they felt greater respect by community members as a result.

“I felt more confidence because I saw the results of my work as chief and received the praise of engineers”
Woman MEMV participant, Arequipa-Peru, 46 years

“The experience helped me to value myself. It also helped to know that women can work in men’s jobs earning a salary”
Woman MEMV participant, Chucuito-Peru, 25 years

“This works really strengthened my self-esteem, I can now move on, not only in that job, but also in other tasks”
Woman MCA participant, El Ñámbaro-Nicaragua, 43 years

Furthermore, the study showed that women’s exposure to work opportunities, new skills, and the realization that “they can do it” had a positive impact on their aspirations. In Nicaragua, for instance, participants said they had a new found belief of their capacity of achieving their goals. Women also said that seeing female engineers leading roads works inspired them to continue learning new skills. In Peru, women roads work participants said that the technical and soft skills training, as well as their work experience in the MEMV had a significant impact on their self-esteem and confidence. In addition, women said they felt more confident in relating to other people including authorities. In Peru, women reported gaining more respect from family members, particularly their children.

In Argentina, in the community of Pampa Grande, women referred strongly to the association which has incentivized them to search for more training and capacity building opportunities. Thus, several of them decided to go back to school so nowadays some of them are serving as indigenous teachers and nurses. These women are now able to rely on a stable income. Participants from the more recent associations in El Espinillo and Fortín Lavalle, expressed interest in learning more and growing intellectually and referred to the associative experience as helping them to overcome their shyness and for them to feel capable and prepared to engage in new learning. This new confidence helped them engage with other people and authorities as mentioned by several key informants.

**Pride of making a contribution to the community.** In Argentina and Nicaragua, women said they felt pride of making a contribution to their community in terms of cultural revitalization and rural connectivity.

**Leadership skills.** In Argentina and Peru, women said that their involvement in handicraft associations and roads work, respectively, helped them attain leadership skills and more confidence to speak in public. In Argentina, women QCR participants showed enthusiasm in increased political participation and many said they were planning to actively participate in the October 2014 municipal elections. The life skills training around citizenship and rights awareness seems to have contributed to this newly-found interest. In Puno-Peru women interviewed for the study expressed increased interest in getting involved in local politics based on their positive MEMV work experience. The effect of rural roads program participation on political participation was also raised in an impact evaluation of the Peru Rural Roads II project (Remy 2008).

“I would like to participate in politics, I would like to be city councilor or an advisor to support the population, request for computers, school supplies, to find support for the poor that have more children and elderly people”
Woman MEMV participant, Chucuito-Peru, 47 years

**Household**

**Redistribution of house chores to other family members.** In Argentina and Nicaragua, women said their spouses and other family members were helping out more with households chores. However, a gender division in the types of tasks still remains in both cases. In Argentina, women and men already share a lot of the household work burden. While a gender division between housework remains, men now are assuming some new roles to facilitate the work of women: childcare, shopping and preparing meals are typically male occupation duties in the absence of women. Other tasks like washing clothes or taking care of the sick remain an exclusively female domain and are sometimes taken on by daughters, mothers or mothers in law.

**Enhanced wellbeing of family members.** In Argentina and Nicaragua, spouses and other family members reported
feeling happier as a result of their wives feeling happier, more confident, and empowered. In Nicaragua, husbands reported that they felt inspired by seeing their wives face new challenges and perform well. Beyond the changes at the emotional level, most partners also appreciated the increased household income as a result of their wives’ work.

**Strengthened marital relationship.** In Nicaragua, women and their spouses said that women’s participation in roads work had contributed to a stronger marital relationship. The interviewees attributed this to the fact that husbands are valuing their wives more for what they achieved. Additionally, they realized that jointly contributing to the well-being of the household strengthens their sense of unity as a family. Several other interviewees highlight mutual support and a joint vision for their family as results of the involvement of women in roads work.

“Our relationship became stronger; we were more connected than ever, sharing new experiences. I told her my stories from work and she told me hers”.
MCA woman participant, Moyogalpa-Nicaragua, 29 years

**Community**

**Increased access to markets, services, and connectivity.** In Argentina and Nicaragua interviewees said that the new roads had greatly facilitated increased access to markets and services and improved connectivity to other towns. In Argentina, women said that the Route 3 had facilitated the commercialization of the handicraft products because of an increase in tourism. Even though the changes perceived are still not that strong given that the intervention started a few years ago, a lot of optimism is shared by participants that very positive changes will come. Route 3 has also greatly improved accessibility of health services where now patients can be much easier and better treated, and extremely critical medical cases can receive quicker attention. Furthermore, both students and teachers can mobilize themselves easier, which increases school attendance. On the downside, several interviewees mentioned an increase in accidents despite the provision of roads safety training. In Nicaragua, men interviewed mentioned that the rehabilitated roads had contributed to an improvement in the commercialization of the community’s agricultural products and increased tourism. Women, on the other hand, appreciat-
ed the improved access to health and education services. The road ensures that emergency cases can be transported now, and that 24 hour services which are often only available in nearby larger towns, can be accessed if need be. In Nicaragua participants also stated that children’s school attendance had improved and communities had greater access to health services.

“[The road] was a huge benefit because before, when I studied in Villa Bermejito y had to travel from Fortin Lavalle. In rainy days the route was covered in mud, buses or motorcycles couldn’t go through because of the bad conditions. When my grandparents would go to sell handicrafts sometime it would take them 3 hours to arrive to Castelli” Woman QCR participant, Fortin Lavalle, 21 years

“Health is one of the most important things, because in the winter it’s very difficult to go to Granada. If someone gets sick, the situation becomes complicated. And if any pregnant woman is about to give birth it was even more complicated. About 3 years ago, the lake overflowed and if a vehicle passed by there the engine was going to be damaged, therefore they did not take that way, and they even used motor boats in the streets. (…) It is easier for the vehicles with people that go to the hospital. The health care center here does not have any doctor available 24 hours, I think just at 8am and they did not have a lot of capacity, for example if someone wants to have a child here, they simply cannot. They just fix some injuries, only basic nursery stuff” Woman MCA participant, Malacatoya- Nicaragua, 20 years

Connectivity to information and other communities. Interviewees in Nicaragua and Argentina also shared their positive perception of the end to previous isolation. With the new and improved roads other communities and information can be better reached. Tourism is another potential source of income generation that is leveraged by the new road according to several participants.

Shift in perception of gender norms. In Nicaragua, women’s involvement has shown some effect on a shift of perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes. Women working in MCAs reported feeling greater respect, recognition and acceptance by others. On the other hand, it has to be emphasized that gender roles and stereotypes are a product formed by history and culture and an incredible amount of individual
and social experiences contribute to forming those. In that context, one should not have overly ambitious expectations towards the change potentially provoked by such short term interventions.

A key informant, trainer for the weavers in Puno and member of the NGO MMR confirms this mechanism of how the participants overcame their own doubts and hesitations: “Before they were afraid to attend any training space, first because of their own culture, on the other because their partners prevented them from doing so, because they were living in remote areas. But they were able to overcome all these barriers and today they are quite empowered, they have experienced personal growth and they have contributed economically to their households.”

Box 8 describes the challenges as well as the effects on women’s agency resulting from women’s participation in the Rural Development Windows as part of the Peru rural roads project.

ENABLING FACTORS AND BARRIERS FOR WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN THE SELECTED PROJECT GENDER INTERVENTION

Women participants reported the factors that prompted them to participate in roads work and/or livelihoods activities connected to the rehabilitated roads, which included: economic necessity; support from family, peers, and community members; their motivation of making a contribution to their community, and having been exposed to comparable work experience and social organizations. Women interviewed that did not participate in the program said that the key deterring factors included: lack of information/ not having been invited, lack of confidence, and inability of finding childcare (Table 10).

Enabling factors for participating

Economic necessity and prospective income. One of the most important factors that prompted women in project areas to participate in rural roads and productive activities was economic necessity and the prospective income. This proved to be a strong if not the central motivating factor in all three countries. In Argentina, women and their partners reported that a key motivator behind women’s participation to join the QCR project activities was the potential to commercialize their handicraft products, the main economic activity among women before joining the QCR, which oftentimes they exercised since very early ages. In Nicaragua, given the short nature of employment, women participants framed their interest in earning money in terms of addressing a specific family need including the improvements in housing, paying debts or buying clothes or other necessities for their children. In Peru, roads work under the MEMV was much better remunerated than comparable work women could find. Farm work paid approximately 300 soles (USD 100) per month, while the road work paid a minimum of 900 soles (USD 300) per month. Particularly in communities that were poorer and where wage labor opportunities were scarce, such as Chucuito and Azángaro, road maintenance work was perceived to be a great opportunity for both men and women.

“Working at the farm as day laborer is similar to the type of work in the MEMV because in the farm, we shovel, we sweep, etc. In the MEMV, they pay monthly and it’s a secure job but in the farm sometimes there is no work.”
Woman MEMV participant, Arequipa-Peru, 46 years

“I had never worked earning a salary. I was poor, my husband had abandoned me. I am mother and father to my kids. Before, women were marginalized and humiliated. They didn’t know how to go anywhere, so they stayed at home raising children and taking care of animals. I never had any training nor participated in any social organization nor attended talks. Before my life was sad, I didn’t know how to properly talk, I didn’t know about money.”
Woman MEMV participant, Puno-Peru, 45 years

In Peru, women MEMV participants also expressed their motivation to improve and change their living conditions in the medium or long term, to be able to manage income, and make future investments. Several women in the high jungle of Cajamarca talked about their plans to acquire land for growing coffee and cacao or to be able to contract workers to work on their crops. Also, several women in communities of Islay, Caylloma, Arequipa and Puno were saving to buy a home, particularly one in the capital of the province so this housing option could be used by their children while studying there. Many women in Peru refer to the MEMV experience as having created the necessary motivation to invest their money. In all country studies, women participants said that their work provided an opportunity to invest in their children’s future.
Support from husbands and from other family members. A key enabler of women’s participation in productive activities was the support from husbands and family members. Oftentimes such support is linked to the absence of alternative income generating opportunities in the communities. Particularly in Argentina and Nicaragua - and to some extent in Peru - men regarded participation of their partners in roads work as a rare and precious opportunity, which women should take advantage of.

In Nicaragua both women MCA participants and their partners said candidly that husbands had initial hesitation about their wives joining MCA roads work. These concerns were linked to traditional gender roles, i.e. the conviction that men should be the sole providers for the family. Furthermore, women’s care duties at home were a major argument against participation for quite a few women participants who shared their initial convictions regarding ‘good’ care of a child – which they were convinced should not be provided by a person other than the mother herself. Others also express their discontent with the heavy tasks to be performed by their wives, reiterating concepts of female fragility which their wives were able to proof wrong by their participation. Finally, hesitation about women’s presence in public spaces was raised and specifically the fear of other men approaching their partners inappropriately while at work. However, despite their initial hesitation, the vast majority of male partners ended up supporting their wives’ participation in roads work.

Like every Nicaraguan, I was very machista. I thought that the wife should stay at home, even if I met my wife when we worked together. I thought that she should stay at home. Now my viewpoint has changed 180 degrees. Now, I think it is something positive for her to have a job and generate income for the household”
Nicaragua, husband of MCA woman participant

“I am very proud of my mom. Not only is she President of the organization but she also works in the women’s group, leads it and motivates women. I admire my mom. Without being a professional, she works earning income and in that way, she helps us, her children. She is always supporting us in anything. That makes me very happy”
Daughter of MEMV worker, Puno

“What I like about this experience is that she earns 900 soles, which is more than minimum wage, and with this money she supports me in my studies, she gives me money to live here in the city of San Ignacio, and with that money she also supports herself.”
Son of MEMV worker, San Ignacio, Cajamarca

Overall, the economic needs were the reason mentioned by partners as the main factor that triggered a change in their attitudes towards their wives’ engagement in roads works. The economic situation of the family was perceived

---

**Table 10. Enabling Factors and Barriers for Women’s Participation in the Selected Project Gender Intervention**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Nicaragua</th>
<th>Peru</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enabling factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic necessity and prospective income</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from family members/spouse</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community support and peer admiration</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a contribution to their community</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparable previous work experience and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in social organizations</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling unprepared for the tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of capacity (and self-esteem) to communicate in Spanish</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to find childcare</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of information about the opportunity/not having been invited</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The country check marks reflect the main themes that emerged from the individual interviews in each of the country case studies.
to be so hard that convictions about traditional gender roles – reflected in all the different arguments against women’s participation – suddenly lost their fundamental power in organizing family life. This shows how traditional gender roles do not hold as strongly when there is strong economic need.

The experience showed that once such a change in gender roles was initiated, partners were open to the learning experience. They very extensively elaborated on the positive changes they perceived due to the work experience of their wives: Besides the expected and much needed increase in income, partners refer to their wives’ increased self-esteem, confidence, decision-making capacity, knowledge and technical skills. Interestingly, family support and ties also seemed to be strengthened given the experience.

Furthermore, the support of the immediate family (beyond the partner) emerges very prominently in interviews of women who participate in rural roads work and productive activities. In Nicaragua, female family members, such as participants’ mothers, mothers-in-law, and older daughters, helped to take care of children. In Argentina, participants’ husbands also took on child care responsibilities in addition to other family members. In the Qom culture, raising children is a duty of the extended family system, thus shared among the group, composed of several couples and their children. In Peru, children interviewed for this study expressed admiration for their mothers and the work they were taking on. MEMV women workers also expressed how important such support was to them and that the future of their children was at the core of their engagement.

Community support and peer admiration. Women in Nicaragua and Peru said they received community and peer support to participate in paid work. In Nicaragua, women reported that they experienced emotional and moral support from neighbors and relatives. Somewomen also mentioned that they received help by community members in household tasks to alleviate some of the double burden resulting from simultaneous care and paid work. Community members also expressed their gratitude to women engaged in road works because of the significant contribution they were making to the community.

In Peru, women MEMV participants said that a key motivator to applying to MEMV roads work was that they knew and admired other women who participated in roads maintenance work. Several women reported they had consulted women who had worked in roads’ maintenance to get a better idea of working conditions and tasks.

“I knew women that worked in roads maintenance and I admired them for being fighters, to prosper and get ahead”  Woman MEMV participant, Arequipa, 22 years old

Making a contribution to their community. In all three country case studies, a key motivating factor to participate in rural roads projects was that they were making a contribution to their community. In the case of Nicaragua and Peru, women felt gratified by their work in building and rehabilitating roads. In Argentina, some women who participated indicated as main objective of their participation the desire to keep the Qom traditions and culture alive and to teach the younger generation in those. Handicraft production is an essential part of the overall recovery and rescue of the Qom tradition and culture. At the same time, other activities related to the language and indigenous cosmology also contribute to this rescue. One of the groups interviewed for the case study (the one of Pampa Grande), for example, has focused mainly on generating work in the areas of traditional dances, songs and Qom cosmology.

“My motivation is that I always liked to contribute – be it with or without salary – to the progress of the community. And it is something very beautiful to be saying: “I participated in this””  Woman MCA participant, Malacatoya -Nicaragua, 49 years

“When we started last year in November, my objective was to learn more and to teach the younger to not lose the traditions”  Woman QCR participant, Fortín Lavalle, Argentina, 31 years

Prior work experience. In Peru, several MEMV women workers emphasized that their previous work experience prepared them well and gave them confidence to participate in roads maintenance work. They refer specifically to the heavy tasks they had to take on prior to the MEMVs – mostly working in the farm, which made working condition in the MEMV manageable and gave them confidence. In the Argentina case, the involvement in the QCR was a natural extension of the work women had been doing previously.

“Since I was a little girl, I worked in the farm, pushing carts. For me roads work was easy”  Woman MEMV participant, Arequipa-Peru, 26 years
“Having worked in the farm, helped me a lot since I already knew how to use the shovel, the pickax, and the machete”
Woman MEMV participant, Cajamarca-Peru, 26 years

“I form part of a ronda campesina, the majority of women that work in MEMVs are members of the rondas. I was influenced by members of the rondas to participate in the MEMV and they also advised and guided me to work and be honest people”
Woman MEMV participant, Cajamarca-Peru, 23 years

“I was part of the APAFA. This influenced my decision to work in roads maintenance because it also benefits the community”
Woman MEMV participant, Caylloma, Arequipa, 37 years old

Participation in social organizations. In Argentina and Peru, women’s participation and exposure to other social organizations motivated women to join the QCR and MEMV, respectively. In Argentina, most women were already part of the women’s associations before the association joined the QCR initiative. The interviewees expressed how important the learning process in a safe space with other women has been for them – even before their group joined the QCR. In Peru, women MEMV workers also indicated that their prior participation in social organizations was an important enabling factor for women to feel confident in participating in the MEMVs. In Arequipa and Puno women were involved in three types of organizations: mothers’ clubs (group of community women), Vaso de Leche (committees sponsored by municipalities to receive, prepare and distribute milk and oats to the vulnerable population) as well as APAFAS (Asociaciones de Padres de Familia de la Escuela Pública - Associations of Parents of public school, to improve the quality of education). In Cajamarca, women were members of the Rondas Femeninas (Women’s groups that emerged in rural areas in the late 80’s for self-defense against guerilla groups and to fill a void in the administration of justice).

Barriers to participation

Feeling unprepared for the tasks. In Nicaragua and Peru, some women participants in roads works said they had fears and doubts about engaging in road works because they felt unprepared and unqualified for the new tasks ahead. For most of the participants in these two country case studies, this was
the first paid job in their lives – and furthermore, the tasks they were going to perform to some seemed intimidating initially. However, these hesitations did not keep them from applying to roads maintenance jobs. This was not true for Argentina, as here, the women continued exercising the tasks they were used to doing before the intervention (producing handicrafts). At the same time, it is worth noting that the only interviewees that expressed doubts and fears of failure in Argentina were women coordinators as this task required a bigger responsibility and the capacity of managing people and administering financial resources. Therefore, specific technical assistance for these more administrative tasks is important.

“When I found out about the roads work job opportunity, I got nervous of being surrounded by men, I was afraid of making mistakes of being scolded and telling me ‘this is not how it is’. I was afraid that they would tell me that it is better for me to leave”
Woman MCA participant, Los Ángeles- Nicaragua, 43 years.

Language barriers. In the case of Argentina, a few women referred to the difficulty to communicate in Spanish as the main barrier for their participation, especially when asked to communicate in public. It should be noted that 19 out of 24 women QCR participants interviewed in the study had not finished primary education, so some of the participants are basically functional illiterates. At the same time, one of the main achievements resulting from their participation in the association is the improvement in communicating in Spanish according to a large group of participants. The issue of the language barrier and low level of education of Qom women highlights the cumulative disadvantages of gender and ethnicity, which poses stronger constraints on women’s agency.

Lack of information and perception of bias in selection process. An important barrier for participation in Argentina and Nicaragua was the lack of information about the job opportunity and selection criteria. In Nicaragua, women interviewed that had not applied to the MCA said that they had not applied because they were unaware of the job opportunity. Other women also said that they had not applied to MCA roads work jobs because they felt they had little chances in being recruited as they felt they were not ‘well connected’. Similarly, in Argentina, two-thirds of women interviewed that did not participate in the QCR women associations, said that the key reason for not joining was that they had not received information about joining nor were they invited to join. In Argentina, the problem of incorporating more women into handicraft associations is related to insufficient market potential to absorb more products. Handicraft associations plan to slowly incorporate new members as they have more options to commercialize their products. At present, more young women are becoming members to support the renovation process after the departure of some key members. Key informants also indicated that political issues sometimes divided the communities, which posed problems for new members to participate in handicraft associations.

Inability to find childcare. In Nicaragua and Peru, women reported that the inability of finding child care was the main constraint for not applying to roads work jobs. While – as mentioned before – this had posed challenges to many women that ended up joining the roads works, in some cases women were simply not able to resolve this issue with the help of family members or neighbors.

Overall, it is noteworthy that women from the three country case studies who had not participated in the rural roads initiatives highlighted how much they had wished they could have also benefited from such opportunities.

CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN PARTICIPANTS

Women that participated in roads work and other productive activities reported experiencing a variety of challenges arising from their own low self-confidence, from managing the double work load, resistance from husbands harsh working conditions, and gender discrimination in the types of tasks assigned to them (Table 11). This section describes in greater detail the challenges faced by women participants.

At the individual level

Lack of confidence and fears of working alongside men. In Peru, female MEMV participants reported feeling apprehensive of working alongside men. Particularly in Cajamarca, women said they feared being criticized by men. Also in the other departments, women referred to feeling intimidated, which shows how much gender stereotypes and machismo have been internalized by women themselves and the mechanisms of how these affect their self-esteem and trust in their own capabilities. However, after being exposed to roads work and working alongside men, women MEM participants realized they were able to fulfill their job responsibilities and tasks and gained self-confidence.
“I thought that perhaps male co-workers would think that as a woman, I couldn’t perform like them. I also thought that I could be fired because I couldn’t perform like male workers. I had this fear for one month”
Woman MEMV participant, Arequipa-Peru, 28 years

In the household

Resistance from husbands, domestic violence. Peru was the only case study where several women engaged in roads work reported experiencing harsh treatment from their husband. While some husbands highlight the positive benefits of their wives’ participation, others heavily complained about their wives’ extended time outside the home, neglect of the children and about them not being able to perform housework as before.

Some men also said they felt envious of their wives’ higher earnings. In Argentina, key informants highlighted that husbands actually did show some resistance to women’s involvement in the associations, while this was not mentioned by participants themselves. The main critique raised by these men—according to key informants—relates to women having to leave their houses to engage in the associations and generally their increased mobility and travel activity to other communities. In any case, this resistance did not seem to pose a barrier to women’s participation nor cause serious problems for the participants according to their own accounts.

Table 11. Difficulties encountered in women’s participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Nicaragua</th>
<th>Peru</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the individual level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence and fears of working alongside men</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double burden, managing work and family care responsibilities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance from husbands, domestic violence</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the workplace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard work conditions</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short length of work opportunity</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-specific segregation of tasks</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the community</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tension and resistance from community members</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Not mentioned by participant or spouses. Finding comes from key informant interviews.

“I thought that perhaps male co-workers would think that as a woman, I couldn’t perform like them. I also thought that I could be fired because I couldn’t perform like male workers. I had this fear for one month”
Woman MEMV participant, Arequipa-Peru, 28 years

“Sometimes my husband would yell at me for arriving home at 7pm. He would say ‘What are you doing coming after dark, you need to arrive home before sunset.’”
Woman MEMV participant, Chucuito- Puno, 32 years

“Before, when I participated [in roads work] he would mistreat me, he would yell at me and hit me, all because he was jealous of not knowing what I was up to, but now he doesn’t do that because I just disregard him and I just continue. I tell him that I have to go to work. Now there are no beatings. My children are also older and they don’t let him hit me, they tell him: ‘Dad, let mom go to work so that she can help since you are not working’”
Woman MEMV participant, Chucuito- Puno, 47 years

“All the house work that she was no longer able to do because she had to go out to work, I had to shoulder it, which caused a lot of problems. Yes, there were strong quarrels because she made the decision of going out to work for a number of days without coming to an agreement beforehand and there is a responsibility of watching the children”
Husband of woman MEMV participant, Caylloma-Arequipa-Peru, 38 years

“I think it’s good that my wife works because it is an easy work (as a watch guard). I see her motivated, happy, she feels useful in life, that she is doing something well, and it also helps our marital relationship.”
Husband of woman MEMV participant, Arequipa- Peru, 29 years.
In Peru, situations of domestic violence also emerged during interviews, most strongly in Arequipa and Puno. The majority of women who suffered such abuse chose to endure it and convince their husbands of the importance of the additional income received through their work. Domestic violence is a significant problem in Peru – according to DHS data, 39.5 percent of women ever married or in union aged 15-49 suffered physical or sexual violence within their lifetime and 14.9 percent during the past 12 months (DHS 2007).

Nicaragua was the only case study where the issue of husbands’ resistance was barely mentioned and only with regards to initial hesitations which was quickly overcome by the understanding that an additional income would be extremely beneficial to the family.

However, it is worth mentioning that even here – while informants express overall support - it becomes obvious that there are certain power dynamics in place according to which the husbands play a significant role in taking decisions for their wives and for the family. The concept of male ‘permission’ to women’s engagement in work outside the home is very present and should be taken into account in terms of program design.

**Double burden, managing work and family care responsibilities.** In Nicaragua and Peru, women roads work participants reported that they found it difficult to manage the double burden resulting from work outside the home and household work. Women said they woke up very early in the morning and went to bed late at night to ensure food was prepared, the school tasks of their children completed, sick family members taken care of and laundry done as well as the house cleaned. Even though women said they received some support from female family members (mothers, daughters, mothers-in-law) and neighbors, child care, in particular, was an issue that presented difficult to reconcile with work, especially when children got sick.

“We had to be at 7am in the road. I used to get up in general at 4.30am to leave the food ready for my kids and leave them to my mother. We spent the whole day in the road, diverting cars. Then, we used to leave at 5.30pm and we had to walk to our community for about 2km. I arrived at home and I had to prepare the meal to my children and take care of them during the rest of the day. The next day I had to go through the same process”
MCA woman participant, La Flor-Nicaragua, 27 years

“I wake up at 3 or 4am. I start cooking, take care of the animals, get my daughter ready for school. I leave home at 6:30am and return from work at 5 or sometimes at 6pm. I don’t rest. I feed my animals, prepare dinner, and that is the routine every day”
MEMV woman participant, Puno-Peru, 45 years

At the workplace

**Hard work conditions.** In Nicaragua and Peru, women roads work participants said they perceived the working conditions to be harsh, mostly due to the exposure to the sun. In Peru, road maintenance work is mainly done during the dry season, with long hours of sunshine and only very little rainfall. Distances can be long between the women’s residences and location of work. Sometimes they have to walk a few hours, leaving their houses at 4 o’clock in the morning to be able to get to work on time. At work, the conditions involve heavy work; loading trucks, sometimes at a distance and carrying construction/maintenance materials such as stones etc. Similarly, in Nicaragua, almost all participants emphasize that they perceived the working conditions as rather hard, mostly due to the exposure to the sun. However, participants also underline that they were willing to take that burden and that they did not bother too much about it.

“Right now we are working in the road section Caminoca-Achaya. The work is very heavy and hard. Sometimes we need to fill up 10 wheelbarrows. My hands are bursted and blistered”
MEMV woman participant, Puno Peru, 45 years

**Short length of work opportunity.** An issue that was only raised in Nicaragua by the majority of women MCA participants interviewed for the study, was their feeling of frustration about the roads work opportunity being such short-term (6 months). The workers, after their 6 months of engagement, need to revert to previous levels of income. Former roads workers either work in agriculture again, or just at home, or in informal and irregular jobs such as cleaning or washing clothes for others. Several participants expressed strong interest in being called again for roads maintenance work. Generally, the participants are appreciative of the roads work opportunity and said they hoped similar opportunities will open to them.

**Gender-specific segregation of tasks.** Another negative issue that emerged only in the Nicaragua study, was the feel-
As mentioned in section 3, the field work in Peru also included individual interviews with female beneficiaries of the Rural Development Windows (Ventanas de Desarrollo Local – VDL). Given the very limited number of VDL women participants interviewed, the findings of this intervention is presented separately in the form of a brief overview.

The women interviewed as members of the productive projects promoted by the VDLs, were rural and poor, mostly Quechua and Aymara women from communities in the departments of Arequipa and Puno. Ten were interviewed in total, out of which four belonged to an association of organic farmers and six to a group of women weavers. Both groups received technical assistance and training to develop business plans, as well as targeted support offered by the project.

**Motivators to participation**

Previous work experience significantly contributed to women’s participation in the VDL. The concept of the VDL was building on prior work engagement as the main purpose was not to establish completely new jobs but rather improving ongoing efforts.

The group of agricultural producers was motivated to engage in the VDLs to improve their health situation, learn about and improve their nutrition and produce healthier food. On the other hand, for the group of weavers, the main motivation was to learn about design and weaving techniques, as well as issues related to the marketing and commercialization of their products in new markets such as Arequipa and Lima. In both groups, training was possibly the main interest of women before joining, related to improving their products for sale and achieving higher revenue.

As in all other beneficiary groups interviewed for this study, the potential to increase their income was also a major motivator for VDL participants. Their first additional income encouraged the VDL women to an even more active participation according to their testimonies. The weavers reported an increase in their income of up to 40 percent from before the VDL intervention. The agricultural producers said they achieved an increase between 10 percent and 15 percent after having participated in VDLs.

**Challenges encountered**

While working in this initiative, women were exposed to similar difficulties as MEMV participants. The group of weavers referred to their partners not supporting them in their activities. This resistance seemed to be due to husbands’ opposition to women leaving their house and attend meetings with other women. This again, is another expression of the controlling behavior which is central to machismo culture and which in some cases was exacerbated by physical and psychological violence against women according to the testimonies shared by key informants.

Interestingly though, a very different situation was described by the second group, the women farmers of organic products. These women reported no conflicts with their husbands or situations of domestic violence. Agricultural production was rather viewed as extending the family activities and was not understood as a challenge to men’s dominating role within the household. Women farmers reported that they worked jointly with their husbands and even resorted to their older children to help in the cultivation of vegetables. On the other hand, the organization of weavers was introduced as a women’s organization, and therefore was perceived as a challenge to the ‘order in place’ in the eyes of partners.

However, the problems faced by agricultural producers were related to criticism from some of the residents of the community, specifically from those farmers using pesticides in agriculture. These negative comments seem to be routed much more in market competition issues than in questioning women’s role in farming or productive activities. The groups of weavers were also criticized by community members – but in that case, the criticism focused around women becoming members of an organization and taking on more public roles and responsibilities, while public space was understood to be exclusively male.
Finally, similar to the MEMV members, VDL participants also reported that they had to fulfill extremely long work days as they could not delegate the care and domestic work to anyone else, thus the work hours in VDLs were being added to their regular work day.

“I suffered a lot of abuse from my ex-husband. He told me, ‘you’re a vagabond, a slut, I am sure you go to see your lovers’... At the time I was hurt, but not anymore. For me, a new life began and I’m fine now.”

Woman participant of VDL, Puno

**Positive effects of the VDLs**

Women participants emphasized that their increased ability to manage their own income and their enhanced leadership skills were key positive outcomes of their participation in VDLs. They also referred to changes at the personal level such as increased self-confidence, ability to express their ideas, and interact with people including local authorities.

Besides social barriers, women VDL participants had to overcome their own fears of not being sufficiently prepared and general doubts in their own capacities. The VDL suddenly placed them in the public sphere and required them to take on new challenges and confront new and unfamiliar situations. The work-related challenges led to insecurity with respect to their abilities. However, women interviewed emphasized that with the group effort and the support of other women, they were able to overcome this fear.

Some of the women interviewed referred to political aspirations as a result from their increasingly public role experienced through the VDLs. The group of weavers in particular showed enthusiasm in political participation and several of their members are planning to actively participate in the upcoming October 2014 municipal elections. They referred directly to trainings and workshops around citizenship and rights awareness as having contributed to this projection.

Similar to MEMV participants, the importance of meetings and ‘safe spaces’ provided for learning and sharing from other women producers and professionals has shown to be a very significant factor for the participants. VDL participants appreciated learning from other women.

“The suffering due to exclusion from certain types of jobs perceived to be men’s jobs, especially from placing cobblestones. Women are given tasks that are considered ‘lighter’ work such as administrative tasks or roads signaling etc. Several women express their willingness to be given heavier tasks and the right to choose the types of tasks they do. Women’s discontent with this situation is due to the fact that they are convinced that given adequate training opportunities they would be well-prepared to handle this work since it requires comparable physical strength to the agricultural work they have done before.

“I would like to see more opportunities available for women to be able to further develop themselves as women. Because we have been assigned the role of housewives and mothers, and we have to show to men, to the husbands, that we can also do the work they do”

Woman MCA participant, La Flor-Nicaragua, 20 years

**In the community**

**Criticism and resistance from community members.** In Argentina and Peru, women participants in handicraft associations and roads works, respectively, experienced resistance from community members. In Peru, women participants were openly criticized by community members for engaging in what they considered to be men’s work and for taking on managerial positions in the MEMV. In Argentina, women have not only entered more and more the formal education sphere, but have also been leading the process around the
recognition of the indigenous language and culture – particularly in one of the selected communities, Pampa Grande. While men have actively participated in these processes, the main impulses came from the association of women. Women have played a key role in occupying this public space that involves negotiating with the government and public servants. Male community members were at odds with women taking on roles related to their leadership within women’s association around the recognition of the indigenous language and culture. This has caused some tensions in the community as women have entered traditionally male public spheres. Traditionally, it was the male domain to protect the group against the “whites” and act as messengers. Men were responsible for communication with state representatives. Interestingly, this shows that while women’s economic empowerment does not necessarily lead to male resistance in a context of economic necessity, women’s greater voice and civic participation has not been welcomed by men in the community.

“My husband’s family felt my participation in roads work was bad. They said I was wasting my time and not doing the things I need to do in the house. My neighbors were very jealous of my work, and male community authorities were also spiteful of my participation as President of the MEMV. I responded ‘if you want to participate, go on and participate, I will do the same, and we will see who wins the bidding process. Let’s participate because we are all free’”
MEMV woman participate, Chucuito, Puno-Peru, 45 years

“Some men are envious and they tell me ‘you will have an affair with the engineers’ But I don’t pay attention to those evil comments, I work legally”
MEMV woman participant, Azángaro, Puno-Peru, 45 years
LESSON LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reflecting on the study findings, this section identifies key lessons learned and strategies (Figure 4) to address:

• barriers to participation;
• address challenges in program participation;
• enhance women’s agency during program participation; and
• increase sustainability and scale-up gender approaches.

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Lesson learned #1: It takes multiple strategies to recruit women participants

The recruitment strategy adopted in rural roads projects itself can aid or inhibit women’s participation. Recruitment procedures which claim to be gender neutral (favoring neither male nor female workers) assume that men and women would respond in the same way. Yet, women are usually not as physically mobile as men, do not frequent administrative centers equally, and thus are unlikely to obtain information made available only at village or district centers or at construction sites. They cannot rely solely on their husbands, fathers or other male relatives to pass on information because those may not be in favor of women taking up paid work or working alongside men in construction. Recruitment that is done on the same day as the start of construction work does not give women the chance to negotiate their participation with husbands or fathers if needed or to re-organize their household tasks (Dejardin 1996).

For this reason it is important that the recruitment strategy is gender-sensitive. This is a lesson learned particularly in the case of Nicaragua, where women interviewed that did not participate said they had not done so because of lack of information or the perception of bias in selection of new recruits. There are a variety of recruitment tactics—including through community leaders, using fliers, radio, and information seminars. Each tactic has pros and cons in terms of time and costs and ability to reach the most women. There are also important implications about which women will be reached and who will not be reached with each strategy. For example, if recruitment is done through fliers, illiterate women may not be reached. Women with low self-esteem may be able to read a flier but not feel that they themselves are eligible for such a program. If recruitment is done through community leaders important leadership buy-in may be gained, but women who are unknown or seen as unfit by the leaders may be excluded,
even if these women would match the profile searched for. Including women in social mobilization teams and information campaigns could also be devised. Women who currently participate in roads work or other productive activities can share their experience with potential new recruits. Therefore, a multi-pronged recruitment strategy is needed to recruit women in work and rural productive activities.

In making recruitment more gender sensitive, a program usually has to deal with local administrative structures and practices, and with local norms and traditions. The Rwanda Special Public Works Program - Prefecture of Gitarama (1980-1986) provides a good example of gender mainstreaming in recruitment practices. For years, recruitment was undertaken by the mayor who preferred men, those who paid taxes and members of the political party. The project team commissioned a study by a local sociologist that provided recommendations to improve women’s employment in public works project in Rwanda (Correze 1989). The study led to the design and experimentation of new recruitment methods. The mayor initially resisted but was finally persuaded to adopt the new recruitment methods, which involved massive publicity, involving multiple channels of communication, on the recruitment procedures and a clear message that women are welcome.

Lesson learned #2: Consider child care provision and part-time/flexible work to address key binding constraints of women’s participation in productive activities

One of the main negative effects reviewed in this study is the overly strong burdens that work outside the home put on women – particularly those with child care duties. Their work days increase significantly and it shows that while other female family members were supporting them by temporarily caring for their children, many of their domestic tasks could not be delegated to anyone - and men were not ready to reshuffle tasks within the household given the new family-respective assignments of remunerated work. Thus, for future
implementation of similar projects it should be kept in mind that child care is an issue that might need to be addressed. Project activities can include the provision of on-site child care facilities, preferably run by senior women experienced in child care and paid as workers under the program. India’s Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) implemented such a measure, and evidence suggests that women’s participation in the program was as high as 40 percent even without a quota (Subbarao 2003). Other program measures that can be considered are flexible scheduling, piece-rate wages, and part-time work to allow women to combine work and family care/household responsibilities. These options are ideally explored through consultations with female beneficiaries, for example, as part of community outreach efforts. The works/tasks under the public works components under Kenya’s Youth Empowerment Project (2010-2016) are scheduled in a flexible manner so that women can still tend their daily domestic duties. Specifically, tasks were scheduled to be completed in 5 hours’ time (from 7 to 12 am) which allows for other activities in the afternoon (Subbarao and others 2010, Government of Kenya 2010).

Lesson learned #3: Develop community outreach, awareness and sensitization campaigns to reduce spouses and community resistance and women’s double burden

In Nicaragua and Peru, women experienced a lot of criticism and resistance from husbands, family and community members for participating in roads work. Thus, a lesson learned from the study is the need to develop community outreach, awareness and sensitization campaigns directed towards men aimed to change gender norms regarding women’s participation in roads work and to alleviate women’s double burden. Community outreach activities can encompass a range of interventions and approaches, including: community meetings; training or sensitization sessions with traditional authorities, community or religious leaders; street theatre and other cultural activities and demonstrations (see Lesson Learned #7 for other approaches targeting violence against women (VAW). It would be interesting to build on the finding from Nicaragua, where partners elaborated on their initial hesitations which they then overcame to fully support their wives in their participation. While the argument of economic needs seems to be the main factor behind that change in attitudes, additional research to dig deeper in such changes of attitudes towards gender roles and division of labor within the household, would be important to inform program design on how to effectively address one of the main barriers to women’s involvement according to that research.

Lesson learned #4: Develop and implement affirmative action measures

A key lesson learned was that affirmative action measures and related measures were critical to increase women’s employment in rural roads projects as seen in the case of the MEMVs in Peru. Given the context and specific project arrangements, the following are some affirmative action measures that can be included in rural roads projects:

- Set a quota at the recruitment stage for a minimum percentage of women in the program. Monitor them regularly and apply sanctions to contractors who fail to deliver these contracted “social deliverables”. However, it must not be assumed that the existence of a quota will of itself necessarily encourage women’s participation in the absence of other measures undertaken simultaneously.
- Integrate a gender component in the training of contractors, and stress the principles of gender equality in access to jobs and in wage levels.
- Ensure that productivity norms in the contracts recognize women’s capabilities, such as women’s experience in participating in social organizations, and managing their household.
- Encourage women entrepreneurs to participate in training and tendering.
- Include requirements in performance contract for activities that promote women empowerment (increasing number of women in roads work staff and managerial positions).

STRAATEGIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES IN PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Lesson learned #5: Find ways to alleviate working conditions

In Nicaragua and Peru, participants commented about the harsh working conditions in roads work, mostly due to the exposure to the sun. The project team needs to devise ways to alleviate the harshness of work conditions through, for example, covered rest areas (for protection against the sun), the provision of large straw hats, drinking water to ensure workers are not dehydrated on the job, and include rest periods...
during the work day and separate toilet facilities for men and women at worksites. These initiatives would benefit both men and women workers in the projects.

**Lessons learned #6: Address gender-segregation of tasks by sensitizing construction unit staff and changing operational manual to expand options for women to perform a variety of tasks**

In Nicaragua, women roads works participants complained that they were excluded from performing tasks that were deemed not appropriate – or ‘too heavy’ - for women. In the view of the project’s task team this explained the low rate of women’s participation in rural roads maintenance. This issue highlights some important lessons. First, the project should maximize women’s employment in jobs that are deemed more appropriate for women, but without precluding future entry into new areas of work. Second, program implementers and technicians often set limits to women’s operations on the basis of their own perceptions and reservations which women themselves do not hold or would readily put aside. Project staff should therefore leave to women the choice of which operation to undertake. In this regard, the roads project operations manual should be carefully reviewed and modified in order to open up opportunities for women to perform a variety of tasks. In addition, gender sensitization training can be provided to roads construction management and staff. Third, social norms concerning the gender division of labor are not as rigid as one might assume. The numbers of women in non-traditional, male-dominated operations are not always impressive. However, it is a fact that there are women in tasks never before imagined and that some projects have made considerable progress, the first step being the most difficult to achieve.

**Lesson learned #7: Understand and incorporate domestic violence sensitivity up front when designing programs that generate women’s employment and/or income**

While the empirical evidence on the relationship between economic empowerment and domestic violence is mixed and economic empowerment can actually be essential in increasing women’s exit options out of abusive relationships (Perova, Reynolds, Muller 2013), the qualitative findings of the Peru rural roads project emphasize the importance of understanding local culture and social norms in implementing development policies. Without such understanding, policies to empower women might end up disempowering them. It is thus crucial that programs and policies that generate women’s employment or transfer cash or other in-kind assets or assistance understand how their programs could affect intra-household dynamics. In contexts where women empowerment programs may increase domestic violence, project design could incorporate the following interventions that are suggested by the recently published Violence Against Women’s Resource Guide:

**Interventions targeting women’s participants**

- Include modules on VAW prevention, conflict resolution strategies, negotiation skills, empowerment training, etc., within life skills training. Raise women’s awareness about their rights, including the right to a life free of violence. Ensure the information is delivered in a format that is easy to understand and culturally appropriate. At project check-in sites, after checking whether it is safe for participants, provide women and girls with information on available services and resources for survivors of VAWG.
- Promote mentorship and strategies to raise women’s self-esteem and self-confidence through peer networks, as improved self-esteem and social support can protect against intimate partner violence.
- Establish feedback and grievance mechanisms for project participants.

participants. This helps to ensure that participants have a voice in the ongoing implementation of the project, rather than just being passive beneficiaries. Such an avenue is important for learning about what works well, but is especially key for documenting any “backlash” effects. A common approach is to provide a point of contact, such as a social worker, who is trained to manage grievances and who can also support survivors through referrals for shelters, legal action, and other services. If these services are not available, supporting and coordinating with partners who can mobilize to put said services in place is essential.

- Explore secure methods of transferring cash to women such as directly transferring funds to women’s personal bank accounts. If possible, assist women with acquiring the proper identification required for opening an account and work with banks to facilitate the process. Make use of mobile banking and other technology-based options that are often more accessible for women living in remote or rural areas.

Interventions targeting community members and male partners

- Explain the program to community leaders and key members of the community (both men and women) in order to garner their support, and be sensitive to cultural norms to avoid negative repercussions of women’s employment and training (Box 9). For example in a World Bank-funded Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) program implemented by the International Rescue Committee project included a prevention of VAW component. This consisted of Gender Dialogue Groups (GDG), in which participants discussed the characteristics of successful households and learned about healthy relationships and conflict resolution. Both men and women were randomly selected into two groups: the VSLA alone or the VSLA with an eight-session Gender Dialogue Group. Although not statistically significant, an impact evaluation found that the combination of GDGs and VSLAs reduced the incidence of VAW. Women also experienced increased empowerment, financial autonomy, and reported more equitable gender attitudes and household decision-making. Overall, GDGs were found to be an acceptable method for involving men and women to improve shared decision-making, communication, mutual respect, and gender norms, while simultaneously offering economic benefits to the woman and her household (Hossain and others 2010).

- Engage with men to garner community support for programs targeting women. Involving men, particularly community leaders, in programming can help to avoid potential negative repercussions in household dynamics. In certain patriarchal societies where women require permission from husbands or fathers, involving men will likely improve their participation.

In addition, projects staff concerns with sexual harassment and VAW in the workplace, it is recommended that projects include VAW training and sensitization to key project staff and volunteers, particularly those who come into direct contact with project beneficiaries. Establish codes of conduct for project personnel that include prevention of all forms of VAWG in the workplace and within the project. In addition to receiving training on preventing and responding to VAWG and on the expected behavior, staff should be required to formally sign the code of conduct and abide by its rules during the course of their engagement with the project.

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE WOMEN’S AGENCY DURING PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Lesson learned #8: Combine technical and life skills training

In Argentina and Peru, women participants reported benefiting from technical and life skills training opportunities as it enabled them to take on more challenging and better paid functions, achieve greater self-confidence and self-esteem, and in some cases establish their own construction enterprises and become sub-contractors for maintenance works. Project activities should therefore provide both types of training opportunities for women workers so that increased take-up of opportunities can be granted.

Lesson learned #9: Provide leadership training and open opportunities for women to exercise leadership

All projects reviewed in this study opened up opportunities for women to exercise their management and leadership skills. In the case of Nicaragua and Peru, the projects provided rural women with training and skills to take on supervisory and managerial functions. In the case of Peru, women were able to establish their own roads maintenance micro-enterprises

Roads to Agency
and become sub-contractors for maintenance works. In the case of Argentina, women were able to exercise their leadership skills within their community through their membership in QCR associations. These are invaluable experiences that expand women’s agency and have the potential to change community gender norms as women have more presence in the public sphere and decision-making fora.

**Lesson learned #10: Develop group formation and mentorship activities to enhance agency**

In rural context, women are often more socially isolated than men, which is why mobilizing women into groups, such as in the case of the QCR in Argentina, proved to be the cornerstone of enhancing agency. The QCR women handicraft associations provided pathways for women to connect and organize, and together marshal the courage to try out new ways to better their lives. Associations have helped raise women’s awareness, aspirations and interest in investing in their assets and capabilities. Therefore, rural transport projects should consider creating a ‘safe space’, or providing a place where woman can gather regularly (at least weakly) to meet peers, consult with mentors, acquire skills, and deal with personal problems.

Mentoring may be an effective program component within rural roads projects. Buvinic and others (2013) considers mentoring to be high potential intervention in projects that enhance women’s empowerment although there is little rigorous information in their impact. Mentors can fulfill a variety of roles: Mentors can act as advisors by sharing their knowledge and experience with mentees, and provide advice on employment, business start-up, as well as other issues affecting women’s development. Mentors can be role models by demonstrating appropriate and positive behavioral choices. Mentors can follow-up with women in their daily lives to motivate and guide them in making good choices. Mentors can also be resource helpers; they can refer mentees to services (e.g. business advisory services, education and training opportunities, health services, etc). Equipped with the appropriate training and capacity-building, mentors can serve as educators.

**Lesson learned #11: Disseminate examples of women role models in roads work and other traditionally male jobs**

Women need female models to follow, notably in traditionally male dominated jobs, and women’s talents need to be
disseminated so that other women can see them. This is one of the lessons of the Peru case study. Peer admiration was a key enabling factor for women’s participation in MEMV roads work. In addition, MEMV female workers felt inspired by female engineers leading road works to continue learning new skills. Implementation agencies could make more visible experiences of those women already working in rural road projects—for example: collecting and sharing their successful stories, displaying photos of women performing roads work, and highlighting the number and percentage of women working in the sector.

Lesson learned #12: Disseminate the community benefits of labor participation in roads work and associative activities

Besides the common benefits of having a job, like a salary, the Argentina and Nicaragua case studies revealed that women seem to value jobs in which they can contribute to their community. This was a key enabling factor for participating in the handicraft associations and roads work, in Argentina and Nicaragua, respectively. By emphasizing the community benefits of rural road projects, women might find those type of jobs even more attractive given the changes their contribution can bring to their communities. Moreover, in the case of indigenous women in Argentina, the benefits of participating in an association appear as a definitive self-esteem booster.

Lesson learned #13: Provide support for women to open savings accounts

The study findings make clear that women’s income generation as a result of their participation in rural roads employment, and their control over their income, contributed to increased agency. To bolster the effects of increased control of income on women’s agency, the projects should provide support for women to open savings account, which has been identified as a proven intervention to increase women’s empowerment in the recent flagship report A Roadmap For Promoting Women’s Economic Empowerment (Buvinic and others 2013). In India’s Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) positive changes in women’s status appear to be especially linked to women’s access to MGNREGS income through their own bank accounts (Holmes and Jones 2011).

STRAATEGIES TO ADDRESS SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALE-UP OF GENDER APPROACHES

Lesson learned #14: Introduce measures to institutionalize the participation of women in roads staffing and in managerial positions through for example changes in operational manual introduction of female quotas

Projects should introduce measures to institutionalize the participation of women in roads staffing and managerial gender in managerial positions aimed to counter the risks affecting continuity of women’s increased participation in roads work, once the project ends. The Peru Decentralized Rural Transport Project (DRTP) (2007-2013) offers an example of how gender approaches can be tried, tested, and institutionalized into rural roads operations. The lessons learned of gender inclusion in Peru Rural Roads I and II where incorporated into a gender action plan for subsequent rural roads operations, which also resulted in modifying the projects’ operational manual to enhance women’s participation in the rural roads scheme. Also, if legally feasible, female quotas in roads work staffing and managerial positions can be introduced as more long-term incentive to increase women’s participation in construction, rehabilitation, maintenance, and management of transport infrastructure.

Lesson learned #15: Gender interventions that seek to enhance women’s agency and empowerment should have a long-term perspective

Rural infrastructure projects that have a gender-focused intervention designed to enhance women’s agency and empowerment should be designed in such a manner that brings in the long term perspective, as part of how you design that intervention in and of itself. Instead of focusing on women’s participation during project implementation only, equipping women with tools to develop longer term initiatives (economic, political etc.) will sustain changes in terms of empowerment and agency in a much more effective way. That is a lesson from the QCR Initiative in Argentina. The project investment in the handicraft centers and capacity building of women handicraft associations aims to contribute to long-term economic opportunities for women, and thus benefits will go beyond the life of the project. In Peru too, the MEMV model (as explained in Box 4) was designed to create job
opportunities with a long-term and self-sustaining perspective. An important feature of the MEMV program is that the program provides incentives for the micro-entrepreneurs to keep some of the profits and invest them in other economic activities diversifying their potential sources of income. Thus, MEMVs not only manage the routine maintenance activities but also use the training opportunities to create new economic activities for themselves.

**Lessons learned #16: Develop graduation strategies to improve participants’ chances of obtaining employment after exiting from the rural roads program**

Projects can also devise graduation strategies for participants such as providing women with training on financial literacy, job search, and business development skills and access to credit to improve participants’ chances of obtaining permanent employment or of becoming self-employed once they exit the program. This is a lesson learned from the rural roads project in Nicaragua where women workers said they were frustrated that the roads maintenance and construction job was short term and temporary. The interviews with Nicaragua MCA participants revealed that women use their salary to pay back debt, repair or improve their house, buy specific things for their kids – but not for longer term investments. Supporting women in making longer-term, potentially productive investments could be one option to extend the positive effect from their participation further. The new pilot that will be implemented under the Additional Financing of the 5th Rural Roads Improvement Project plans to expand women’s work opportunities beyond only roads maintenance and construction by incorporating women into micro-enterprises to enhance long-term job prospects of women.

**Lesson learned #17: Build the evidence base on the benefits of women’s participation in rural roads and rural development schemes for advocacy with key stakeholders**

Finally, studies like this help to build the evidence base for advocacy with key stakeholders. Rural transport projects can include light quantitative and/or qualitative studies as part of project activities to assess the impact of women’s participation in roads works and productive activities linked to rural economy revitalization. This evidence would inform government and development institutions to scale-up or replicate women’s agency enhancing strategies in rural transport projects.
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The overarching conclusion from the study is that women’s integration into rural roads projects enhances their agency, thus projects should capitalize on that. We apply the WDR 2012 framework to understand how project activities to integrate women in rural roads works and ancillary activities had an impact on key determinants of gender outcomes (functioning of markets, formal and informal institutions, and households), which in turn affected the three dimensions of gender equality: endowments, economic opportunities, and agency (Figure 3).

With regards to markets, the projects opened up new employment and income generating opportunities for women through quotas, targets, recruiting strategies, and formation of handicraft associations. In Nicaragua and Peru the strong economic need of household and the substantial higher wage of roads work jobs compared to similar local jobs, provided a strong incentive for women to participate in roads work. Women’s entry into non-traditional market work in Nicaragua and Peru, and women’s participation in handicraft association in Argentina challenges prevailing social norms (informal institutions) on women’s roles, abilities and participation in public spheres. The projects were also instrumental in broadening women’s networks through their participation in the formal labor market, in community-run roads work organizations (Nicaragua) and microenterprises (Peru) and handicraft associations (Argentina), and participants’ greater physical mobility. Social network give women increased access to peers, social support and information. In addition, women’s income and control over their income had an impact on their bargaining power within the household, especially in Argentina and Nicaragua. Husbands felt more respect for their wives and valued them more when they became income earners. In Peru, women roads works participants reported increased incidence of domestic violence, which demands up-front attention when designing programs that increase women’s economic empowerment especially in countries that already have a high incidence of domestic violence.

In turn, these determinants had the three dimensions of gender equality outcomes, as follows:

- Technical, soft and job training increased women’s educational endowments.
- Access to jobs and income, increased women’s economic opportunities, and
- A combination of project interventions increased women’s agency, which we analyze below using Perova and Vakis framework.

Perova and Vakis (2013) identify two aspects of agency: the internal aspect (i.e. the internal motivation to make a choice or the willingness to act upon one’s desires) and the external aspect (measures to overcome exogenous constraints (external, or context-related). Figure 4 presents the key external and internal aspects or enablers of agency that emerged from the qualitative research for this study. Women par-
participants in roads work and rural productive activities reported increased self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-confidence, decision-making capacity, leadership and assertiveness, as a result of conquering new skills and know-how, and participating in public spheres of community engagement. The opportunity to venture into new spheres and non-traditional roles and performing new tasks, gave them confidence in their own capacities helped them envision a better future for themselves (and their families) and take control over their own future. Networking, socialization, and group formation activities increased learning and boosted women’s morale and self-assurance. Furthermore, the study shows that women’s increased income and their control over their own income enhanced women’s agency, which had impacts on intra-household gender power relations.

The study shows how external barriers limiting women’s agency can (slowly) be deconstructed by proactive measures focused on increasing women’s participation in the public sphere (work or community participation) and their taking on non-traditional roles, such as working in roads construction and maintenance. While husbands and community members might have had initial doubts, concerns, or even resistance to these new roles, the projects offered...
a scenario where women stepped into non-traditional roles such as workers in roads maintenance and public sphere such as members of (handicraft) associations. Seeing women perform and perform well, challenged traditional gender stereotypes. While everyone might not have immediately agreed to such new roles, initiatives such as the ones studied in this report are a small step in changing gender norms and increasing gender equality.

On the other hand, community and husbands’ resistance – sometimes expressed in the form of violence as in some cases in Peru – also highlights how external constraints to women’s agency have to be addressed with additional and complimentary interventions. Project design should include measures to address women-specific barriers to participate, such as villagers and husbands’ resistance to women’s work in male-dominated trades through community outreach and sensitization, as well as gender-specific lifecycle demands such as providing child care facilities that are culturally sensitive and offering flexible working hours to help balance domestic responsibilities and employment activities.

Lastly, given the time-bound nature of rural roads employment, project design should at the outset include activities that capitalize on women’s enhanced agency through promoting cross-institutional linkages to complementary programs, e.g. agricultural extension, rural financial services, and business development skills.

While this study has helped to uncover some of the agency-enhancing effects of women’s participation in roads work and ancillary activities, quantitative data collection and analysis is recommended to uncover the magnitude of changes in women’s agency using proxy measures of agency.


CEPAL Gender Observatory 2012, Santiago, Chile.


Cools, Sara, and Andreas Kotsadam, 2014. Resources and domestic violence in Sub-Saharan Africa Center of Equality, Social Organization, and Performance (ESOP) at the Department of Economics at the University of Oslo, Norway


Hossain, M., Zimmerman, C., Kiss, L., and Watts, C. 2010. Violence against women and men in Cote D’Ivoire: a cluster...
randomized controlled trial to assess the impact of the ‘Men and Women in Partnership’ intervention on the reduction of violence against women and girls in rural Cote d’Ivoire – results from a community survey. London, UK: London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.


Perova, Elizaveta; Reynolds, Sarah and Muller, Miriam 2013: Towards a More Comprehensive Domestic Violence Policy in Brazil. Washington DC.


World Bank 2012. Mainstreaming Gender in Road Transport: Operational Guidance For World Bank Staff, Washington DC.


World Bank, 2009, Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook, Washington DC.


RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aimed to assess whether and how women’s agency was affected by women’s participation in rural roads construction maintenance and ancillary rural productive activities in areas where roads have been rehabilitated.

The main questions analyzed in the study were:

- Enablers and barriers for women’s participation: What have been barriers/constraints and facilitators of involving women into such activities at the individual, household, and community level?
- Positive and negative effects of women’s participation: What have been potential positive and negative effects of such involvement at the individual, household, and community level?
- Agency effects of women’s participation: How have the gender related activities incorporated into the rural roads project affected agency? Has the inclusion of women in activities that are traditionally carried out by men and the access to income generation led to effects on aspirations, self-esteem, behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, intra-household and community-level dynamics, contextual factors and their interactions with women’s and men’s decisions (Table 2).

Research instruments

A guiding principle of this research was to learn from individuals’ experiences and interpretations of their own reality. Thus, the study relied on qualitative data collection which allows for capturing individual experiences in terms of aspirations, self-esteem, behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, intra-household and community-level dynamics, contextual factors and their interactions with women’s and men’s decisions (Table 2).

The following instruments were applied for this study:

- Semi structured interviews were conducted with women participants in the specific intervention, their partners, their children, women who did not participate as well as their partners. Individual interviews were the predominant research instrument given that those allow for informants to very openly share benefits and difficulties encountered during the experience from a personal perspective in a secure environment. This instrument seems particularly appropriate when collecting sensitive information and personal histories.
- Focus group discussions were also conducted to validate the findings from the semi-structured individual interviews. Key informant interviews with community members.

The research instruments for each informant group were developed for Nicaragua first. Following that, the Nicaragua instruments were adapted, piloted and adjusted for both other settings (Peru and Argentina). This way, consistency as well as contextual meaningfulness could be established.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Selection of case studies

Three rural transport projects were selected in Argentina, Nicaragua, and Peru, whose combined characteristics can generate a representative mix of recommendations that can help to improve targeted activities to promote women’s agency and economic empowerment. The criteria for selecting the projects included:

- Explicit demand and support conveyed by the Bank’s Country Management Unit in each country and implementing agency;
- Existence of ongoing and pipeline operations in the country on rural transport that could directly incorporate study recommendations; and
- Different approaches taken in incorporating women’s participation in roads work and rural productive activities linked to rural roads built and rehabilitated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection method</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Semi structured interviews with women rural roads project participants | • Identify the factors that facilitated the participation of women in rural roads works and ancillary livelihood activities.  
• Find out about the social, cultural, physical, economic barriers that women experienced during their participation in rural roads works and ancillary livelihood activities; i.e. conflict in the home, gender based violence, domestic violence, negative view of community of women working.  
• Identify the positive contribution of the inclusion of women in rural roads works and ancillary livelihood activities; i.e. income, control over income, increase in knowledge and know-how, improved self-esteem, networking with other women redistribution of household chores, strengthening capacity for action and decision-making, increased empowerment, enhanced aspirations for personal development, strengthened marital relationship, strengthened bargaining power within the household, and decision-making power in the community.  
• Find out about women's aspirations and how they are taking action over their goals. How did women take advantage of the learning opportunities during the work experience? How have their aspirations/ dreams changed since they began participating? |
| Semi structured interviews with partners and other family members of women rural roads project participants | • Explore thoughts/feelings about wife’s/ mother’s participation in roads works and ancillary livelihoods activities.  
• Identify enabling factors for wife’s/mother’s participation in roads works and ancillary livelihoods activities.  
• Understand decision-making process around participation.  
• Find out about perception of problems arising during wife’s/ mother’s engagement (reaction of other community members, difficulties faced during work etc.)  
• Identify positive or negative changes in the household due to her participation in rural roads and ancillary livelihood activities from the perspective of other household members (changes in their partner/mother, changes in the marital relations, redistribution of household chores, increased income, conflicts etc.).  
• Explore process after completion of wife’s/ mother’s participation in rural roads works and ancillary livelihood activities (approval of other household members for future similar engagements etc.) |
| Semi structured with women non-participants | • Find out why women did not participate in rural works or ancillary activities (e.g. lack of information, caring for children, husband did not let her, not interested, work is too far away, etc).  
• Find out whether women would be interested in participating in similar work, activities.  
• Find out about women’s aspirations.  
• Understand gender roles and stereotypes shared by informants and prevalent in the community  
• What are the effects of the roads newly constructed or rehabilitated for herself, her family, the community? |
| Key informant interviews | • Understand the context of the communities where women who participated live:  
- What are the social and economic conditions in the community and in the households and how do they influence/condition the participation of women?  
- What are the opportunities (jobs, income, other, offered to women that integrated in rural roads works and ancillary livelihood activities?  
• Listen to the opinion of key local actors of the factors that enables or constrained the participation of women in project activities.  
- What are the reasons why women participated in rural roads works and ancillary livelihood activities?  
- What factors influenced positively for women to participate in rural roads works and ancillary livelihoods activities?  
- What changes have women participants experienced as a result of their participation in rural roads works and ancillary livelihoods activities?  
- What suggestions and recommendations do the informants have to improve women’s experience?  
- What are the impacts of the rural roads rehabilitation/ construction? |
### TABLE 13. INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS CONDUCTED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Argentina QCR Initiative</th>
<th>Nicaragua MCA</th>
<th>Peru MEMV</th>
<th>PERU VDL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>For each community (3 communities in total): • 8 women participants of the women centers</td>
<td>For each community (3 communities in total): • 7 women participants of MCAs</td>
<td>For each community (3 communities in total): • 7 women participants of MEMVs</td>
<td>• 6 women participants of VDL in Puno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2 women not participants of women centers</td>
<td>• 3 women not participants of MCAs</td>
<td>• 6 women not participants of MEMVs</td>
<td>• 4 women participants in VDL Arequipa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2 men, partners of women participants of women centers</td>
<td>• 3 men, partners of women participants in MCAs</td>
<td>• 3 men, partners of women participants in MEMVs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2 men not partners of women participants of women centers</td>
<td>• 2 men not partners of women participants in MCAs</td>
<td>• 4 men not partners of women participants in MEMVs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 3 children of women working in MCAs</td>
<td>• 3 children of women working in MEMVs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL: 42</td>
<td>TOTAL: 54</td>
<td>TOTAL: 69</td>
<td>• 6 women participants of VDL in Puno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>For each community (3 communities in total): • 1 women participants of women centers</td>
<td>For each community (3 communities in total): • 1 women participants of MCAs</td>
<td>For each community (3 communities in total): • 1 women participants of MEMVs</td>
<td>• 4 women participants of VDL in Puno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1 women not participants of MCAs</td>
<td>• 1 women not participants of MEMVs</td>
<td>• 2 key informants, Arequipa intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL: 3 (6-10 participants each)</td>
<td>TOTAL: 6 (4-6 participants each)</td>
<td>TOTAL: 6 (4-6 participants each)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key informant interviews</td>
<td>• 6 key informants</td>
<td>• 17 key informants</td>
<td>• 15 key informants</td>
<td>• 4 key informants, Puno intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of communities</td>
<td>• Pampa Grande</td>
<td>• Malacatoya, Granada</td>
<td>• Arequipa</td>
<td>• Arequipa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• El Espinillo</td>
<td>• Moyogalpa, La Flor</td>
<td>• Cajamarca</td>
<td>• Puno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fortín Lavalle</td>
<td>• Rivas, Veracruz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roads to Agency
Communities selection

In each country, the research teams jointly with the local project teams identified the communities to conduct data collection, based on the overall goal to include communities that were ‘different’ one from the other in terms of socioeconomic situations, stage at which they had been included into the roads project, level of female engagement within the communities roads works in order to represent a possibly wide range of realities.

In Argentina, three women community centers that are part of the Qom Culture Route (QCR) initiative were selected in three communities, Pampa Grande, El Espinillo and Fortín Lavalle. The rationale for the sample selection takes into account the existing organizational process of each center in order to establish good comparisons that capture the different experiences and problems encountered: the Pampa Grande association, formed 20 years ago, has actively participated in the design and implementation of the Indigenous Peoples Plan (IPP) prepared for the works carried out under the Norte Grande Road Infrastructure Project in Provincial Route No. 3 in the Province of Chaco (Route No. 3); a second group of El Espinillo, formed 3 years ago from a crafts development project in the municipality; and the last group of Fortín Lavalle, with less than a year of creation is the ones which most benefited of the road construction intervention.

In Nicaragua, three road sections communities were selected: Granada – Malacatoya, Rivas – Veracruz and Moyogalpa – La Flor. These communities were selected taking into account the percentage of women participating and the round of financing/project that each road section belonged to. For the study, only road segments from the Fourth Roads Rehabilitation and Maintenance Project (referred as the 4th Roads Project) and Rural Roads Infrastructure Improvement Project (referred as the 5th Roads Project) were considered. The reason for this was that during the Fourth Project only indirect encouragement took place to incentive women’s participation in roads works, while under the 5th Roads Project the Ministry of Transport and Industry started to explicitly encourage women’s participation. The selection of the different segments aimed at representing a wide share of levels of women’s participation in roads works.10

In Peru, the project had a national scope, intervening in 21 out of the 27 departments. The selected communities are located in three departmental areas, Cajamarca in the northern highland, Arequipa in coastal southern highlands and Puno in the southern highland. Within these three departments, seven provinces were chosen for the study; two in Cajamarca and Puno and three in Arequipa. These departments were also selected based on the percentage of women’s participation in the MEMVs. Arequipa and Puno are the second and third departments with the highest percentage of women (45 and 44 percent respectively); while Cajamarca was the only one with the exact minimum percentage as indicated per quota.11

Sampling and participants’ recruitment

The study relied on relatively small samples selected purposefully. The sample size was determined by aiming at a realistic number of participants given the total potential number of informants for each community and aimed at ensuring comparability between the three case studies. In typical case sampling participants are recruited according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question. Typical cases are those close to the issue who possess characteristics of interest and are likely to share what they know (Patton 2002).

Participant groups were defined by the need to complement information from beneficiaries, those that are not beneficiaries, as well as their partners given the strong focus on gender norms and intra-household dynamics potentially affected by the intervention involved in the study. Within groups, efforts were made to include a range of different type of informants, due to the extent possible given the small sample to choose from and given the need to adapt to recruitment support by intermediates such as for instance the project implementing agency in the case of Nicaragua and Peru or the women’s associations themselves in Argentina.

Research teams and ensuring methodological consistency

The research was conducted in three different countries, using communities selection and sampling has been achieved (50 percent). On the other hand, Rivas – Veracruz (also from the 5th roads project) was selected because the percentage of women participating (27 percent) was around the average of all the roads sections under the 5th project. Finally, Moyogalpa – La Flor was selected as a representative case from the 4th roads project with a percentage of women participation of 14 percent (very close to the average women participation).11

The Gender Action Plan included a 10 percent gender quota in the routine maintenance microenterprises, measures to promote women’s participation in the Local Development Window (Ventanas de Desarrollo - VDL), and training sessions and workshops for the women and men benefiting from these two programs in order to facilitate women’s inclusion and ensure the respectful interaction between genders. (DRTP ICR, 2014)
ing the same data collection instruments and the same set of questions for the respective categories of informants. This permitted a multi-country assessment of similarities, differences and emerging patterns.

The local research teams in each country consisted of lead researchers with extensive country knowledge and experience in collecting and analyzing qualitative data. The central research team organized workshops with each individual country team to ensure understanding of the overall research purpose, qualitative instruments, as well as quality criteria to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative data collection. Furthermore, the workshops aimed to facilitate a discussion of research instruments with the local team conducting the qualitative data collection to ensure local appropriateness in terms of language, context, and project specificity.

Fieldwork

In Nicaragua, fieldwork started early March 2014 and was completed by end April 2014 for the communities Malacatoya - Granada, Moyogalpa - La Flor and Veracruz Rivas- Veracruz. The program for the fieldwork was arranged with the support of technical staff from the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure who advised on the communities to be included in the study, facilitated access to the study participants, and supported the logistics and organization of focus groups. Qualitative data collection was carried out by a team comprised by a research coordinator, a senior researcher, and two research assistants.

In Argentina, fieldwork started in May 2014 and was completed by the end of June 2014 in the departments of General Güemes and Libertador General San Martín in the Province of Chaco. The selection process was participatory, several meetings were held to explain the research objectives. Women from the selected communities proposed themselves to be part of the study and advised and informed other women of the community that were not part of the women centers to participate as well.

In Peru, fieldwork started early June 2014 and was completed by early July 2014 in the departments of Arequipa, Cajamarca, and Puno. The communities that were visited within each province were selected with the help of the Provincial Roads Institutes (Institutos Viales Provinciales), who also provided information on where to locate the board members of the microenterprises and the VDLs in each community. The data collection team comprised of a research coordinator, one fieldwork coordinator, two research assistants that conducted the qualitative interviews and three research assistants for the quantitative survey12. In total, the team visited 44 communities for a total of 93 semi structured interviews.

Data processing and analysis

All interviews were recorded, transcribed and then organized in an excel sheet which has been organized prior to data collection according to a deductive definition of key themes and categories. This aimed to ensure better confidence and trustworthiness of the data. Particularly in the case of a multi-country study, proper and reproducible data organization is extremely important so that anyone using the data at any point could follow or validate the analysis process. In addition to the pre-defined deductive themes and categories, each country team added themes that had emerged from their particular data. The analysis was done based on these organized data sheets with key themes and categories. too much details for the main text

Key characteristics of female project participants interviewed for the study

Figures 5 and 6 and Table 13 present some key characteristics of the female project participants interviewed in this study. In terms of education level, Figure 1 shows that women QCR participants in Argentina have lower education level than female rural roads participants in Nicaragua and Peru. Two thirds of QCR participants interviewed had completed or had some primary education. In contrast, in Peru and Nicaragua the majority of women rural roads participants had secondary and even tertiary education as in Nicaragua MCA participants. In terms of marital status, two thirds of Argentina QCR participants interviewed are married, whereas half of women MCA participants in Nicaragua and Peru are married and the rest are single mothers or widowed. Argentina QCR participants had on average four children, while Nicaragua MCA and Peru MEMV participants had on average two and three children, respectively.

12 Peru was the only country study that conducted a quantitative survey that attempted to display various aspects of agency of women MEMV participants and non-participants (60 women per survey). The survey was conducted in Arequipa (Caylloma Valley and Islay), Cajamarca (Jaén and San Ignacio) and Puno (Azángaro and Chuqui-Itu). Results of the quantitative survey are not presented in this report because they were not deemed to provide sound conclusions in terms of the effect of the intervention on women’s agency.
### Table 14. Personal Characteristics of Women Project Participants Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women participants</th>
<th>Average Children per Women</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina QCR participants</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua MCA participants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru MEMV participant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru VDL participants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5: Education Level of Woman Participants**

**Figure 6: Marital Status of Woman Participants Interviewed**
Argentina has made great strides toward gender equality over the past three decades. Although it is among the leaders in Latin America in some gender indicators, such as political participation at the national level, and basic education in terms of literacy and primary school enrollment, the country compares less favorably to its upper-middle-income countries cohort in key areas, including teenage pregnancy and maternal mortality rates. This annex examines the status of gender issues in Argentina from the framework of the World Development Report (WDR) 2012: Gender Equality and Development. That report identified three key dimensions of gender equality outcomes: (a) endowments (education and health); (b) economic opportunities, and (c) agency that are closely related and mutually reinforcing. Gender equality across all three of these dimensions is important for reducing poverty, promoting equity, and enhancing overall growth and productivity of current as well as future generations.

Gender equality in endowments

**Education.** Consistent with most Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries, the gender gap in education increases as the level of education rises. Where there is virtual gender parity in terms of primary school enrollment rates (female-to-male ratio: 0.98, 2011), boys face challenges in post-primary education retention. The ratio of female-to-male enrollment in secondary and education shows a gap favoring girls (1.11 and 1.56 respectively, 2011).

**Sexual and reproductive health.** There has been some backsliding in maternal health indicators over the last decade, but most recent data show again a positive trend. Contraceptive use in Argentina is above the LAC average (78.3 percent versus 75 percent, 2005). While the percentage of births attended by skilled health staff has dropped from 99.4 percent in 2007 to 94.9 percent in 2010, it improved again in 2011 (97.4 percent). This puts Argentina now slightly above the average for upper-middle-income (UMC) countries (96.6 percent, 2010) and significantly above LAC average (89 percent). Similarly, the maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births) suffered a significant increase in the 2000s but has now dropped again to a level significantly below the LAC average (69 versus 85, 2013). The nature and severity of problems facing Argentine women vary substantially in different geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic groups, especially with respect to maternal mortality. For example, in Jujuy, there are 165 deaths per 100,000 live births because of maternal-related causes, while the count for the city of Buenos Aires is only 18.4.

**Male health outcomes.** Compared to women, men face less positive health outcomes, especially for life expectancy, non-communicable diseases, accidents, and injuries (including suicide and violence).

Gender equality in economic opportunities

**Labor force participation.** Female labor force participation 2003-2013 declined slightly, from 64.6 percent to 63.9 percent. Women are more likely to be engaged in informal work compared to men (40.2 versus 34.5 percent, 2013). The gender gap in unemployment is particularly large for youth (24.0 percent for girls compared to 18.0 percent for boys, 2013).

**Gender wage gap.** The gender wage gap has been closing over the past decade (females made only 78 percent of the average male’s earnings in 2010, up from 2000, when females made 72 percent of male earnings). At the same time, women comprise the majority of the Argentine adult population having no income of their own (22.8 percent of women versus 9.7 percent of men).

Gender equality in agency

**Political participation.** Women in Argentina hold 37.4 percent of national political office.

---

13 If not mentioned specifically otherwise – data used in this paragraph stem from The World Bank: World Development Indicators
14 World Bank Country Partnership Strategy For The Argentine Republic for the Period FY15-18
15 Fernando Lavadenz, Julie Ruel-Bergeron, and Alejandra Leytón. Health Promotion: Talking About Gender Equality, What Can We Do For Men in Argentina? (En Breve, forthcoming).
16 CEPAL Gender Observatory 2012, data for urban areas only
cent (2012) of the seats in Parliament, far above the LAC and UMC averages (24.5 percent, 2012 and 21.9 percent, 2012, respectively). However, female representation is much lower at the local level, as only 10.2 percent of mayors are female (CEPAL 2012).

**Gender-based violence.** In Argentina, 20 percent of couples experience violence within the home (2008). Disturbingly, 42 percent of female murder victims were killed by their intimate partners and 37 percent of women that have been beaten by their partners endure this situation for 20 years or more.

**Teenage pregnancy.** The adolescent fertility rate for females ages 15-19 has declined slowly but steadily: while in 2000 it stood at 64.3 births per 1,000 women, it declined to 54.3 in 2012, far below the LAC average (68.01) but still far above the UMC average (31.2). Substantial disparities can be observed across socioeconomic groups and provinces: While on average 16 percent of all live births occur to females under the age of 20, Chaco has the highest rate of all provinces for 15-19-year-old mothers, at 22.8 percent of all live births, and the northeast region has the highest rate overall (22 percent) (OPS 2011).

**NICARAGUA: STATUS OF GENDER ISSUES**

Nicaragua has good legal foundations for the various levers of gender equality – building human capital, access to economic resources, participation in society and protection. Public policies are helping to raise girls’ and women’s access to education, health care, credit, land and other productive resources. However, in terms of outcomes, results are mixed. On the one hand, significant progress has been made on education and incomes. While on the other hand, Nicaragua remains challenged by very high levels of gender-based violence and teenage pregnancy, combined with exceptionally low levels of female labor force participation and high levels of unemployment among the most vulnerable – young, uneducated women.

**Legal foundations for gender equality.** The Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua grants equal civil rights to all citizens and prohibits gender-based discrimination. Electoral laws call for a gender-balanced representation in Parliament. Nicaragua scores well on laws and regulations affecting women’s prospects as entrepreneurs and employees. There are no legal inequalities in terms of accessing institutions and property and Nicaragua has laws mandating equal pay and protecting maternity benefits, and provides publically-financed, mandatory primary education. Interestingly, the minimum legal age for marriage (with parental authorization) is only 14 years for women and 15 years for men. Most recently, Nicaragua passed a new Law on Violence against Women (February 22, 2012) that mandates punishment for different types of violence, defines habitual abuse as a separate offense and makes mediation inadmissible in cases of violence. The Government has a strong gender policy which has been internalized in most ministries striving to ensure women’s access to public and private services. Nevertheless, the institutional framework needs further strengthening, in particular on the judicial side, to ensure that women’s rights are fully protected in practice.

**Political and economic representation.** Political participation of women is very high in Nicaragua when compared to the region, same income level countries and the world. At the National Assembly, 20.7 percent of parliamentarians are women (2010), compared to 17.6 percent on average in the world and 13.9 percent for same income level countries. Today, Nicaragua has the highest number of women holding ministerial positions in its history (55 percent, 2010) and at the same time the country has the highest share of female Ministers in the region (ECLAC). At the local level, women’s voice and political participation is notably lower though: Only 24% of city councilors are female (CEPAL. 2011). The share of women in managerial positions in firms at 41 percent in 2006 was relatively high compared with other low-income countries (27 percent), while in 2010 Nicaraguan women participated in the ownership of 62 percent of all firms, also very high when compared to other countries in Latin America. Finally, according to recent market information provided by the industry (Mix Market, 2011), the majority – 65 percent – of microcredit recipients are women.

**Education, employment and incomes.** Over the last decade, women in Central America have not only closed the
Roads to Agency

...education gap, but in the case of Nicaragua, they are also ahead of men. In 2009\textsuperscript{20}, Nicaraguan women had achieved 20 percent higher educational attainments than men. These improvements have been driven by rising attendance and higher primary completion rates for girls. The latter was 82 percent in 2010 for women, compared to 68 percent for boys. There are stark differences in levels of education between rural and urban settings for both men and women. In rural areas 59 percent of women and 61 percent of men had incomplete primary education, compared to 28 percent and 25 percent, respectively for urban areas (Table 15).

While girls outperform boys at all levels of education, women continue to face difficulties in translating these better education outcomes into labor market outcomes. Women’s labor force participation still remains as low – at 49 percent in 2011 – as a decade ago. As shown in Figure 7, education is an important driver, with participation flat for women with less than 6 years of education but rising sharply thereafter. Further there are sharp differences in female labor force participation between rural and urban areas, 32 and 51 percent, respectively (Figure 8).

Meanwhile, recent reductions in poverty in Nicaragua between 2005 and 2009 have been concentrated in low-income, informal work in which women are even more likely

---

**TABLE 15. NICARAGUA: LEVEL OF EDUCATION, BY GENDER AND LOCATION, 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th></th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete primary or less</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete primary or incomplete secondary</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary complete or incomplete tertiary</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still in school</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary complete</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


---

**FIGURE 7: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION BY EDUCATION, 2009**

**FIGURE 8: POPULATION 15+ YEARS OLD IN THE LABOR FORCE BY GENDER AND LOCATION, 2009**


---

\textsuperscript{20} The most recent living standards measurement survey in Nicaragua was 2009.
to be employed. Consumption in the growing number of female-headed households still remains around 10 percent lower than that for households headed by men. While unemployment rates are similar by gender, they are 20 percent higher for younger, less educated women than the national rate. Finally, Chart 8 shows that just 32 percent of women living in rural areas are in the labor force, in comparison to 51 percent of women in urban areas and 91 percent of women in rural areas.

Health and civil protection. Among Nicaraguan women, fertility levels have been falling, while progress in reducing the comparatively very high levels of maternal mortality has been moderate. Institutional advances have been broadening access to maternal health services, including the Government 2007 policy of free public healthcare, development of the family and community health services model and public support for Nicaragua’s famous casas maternas21.

Contraceptive prevalence rate is moderately high, at 72 percent, well above the average for countries with similar income levels, 43 percent. The fraction of births attended by skilled health staff at 73.7% in 2007 was below the regional average of 85.7% (2000). However, this coverage shows a strong variation by income quintiles: while 95 percent of all deliveries in the richest quintile were attended by a trained doctor, the percentage drops to 56 percent among poor women. Related to that, at 100 deaths per 100,000 live births (2013), maternal mortality continues higher than regional averages of 80. Meanwhile, teenage pregnancy is very high in Nicaragua. At 100.8 (births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 19) in 2012, the adolescent fertility rate remains nearly twice as high as the LMI countries’ average of 46.8. Also, gender-based violence is a serious problem in Nicaragua.

Gender-based violence is still a serious problem in Nicaragua. The Demographic and Health Survey (DHS 1997/98) revealed that 28 percent of women who were or had been once married had been physically abused by their partner at least once, and 10 percent had been sexually abused (DHS Report 2002). In 2011, there were at least 82 deaths from gender violence and 25,600 complaints of violations against women. In 2007, the National Commission on Violence against Women, Children and Young Persons for which the Nicaraguan Institute for Women serves as executive secretariat was established, to address that problem.

Given the gradual progress on other fronts, the Government has identified three key challenges for the future: adolescent fertility, early childhood education and gender-based violence. Given the correlations between teenage pregnancy and maternal mortality, lower education achievement and poor labor market outcomes, improving early reproductive health among women in Nicaragua has the potential to be a key driver in gender outcomes. Meanwhile, the Government’s new strategy on early childhood education has the potential to provide childcare solutions to more rural families for whom this service is scarce. Finally gender-based violence remains a problem as evidenced by comparatively high homicide rates for women. The authorities have just passed a new law with broad public support that should provide a boost to ongoing efforts by civil society and the security forces to address this issue.

PERU: STATUS OF GENDER ISSUES

Institutional framework for gender equality. The government of Peru has taken steps to strengthen the legal and institutional framework aiming to protect and promote women’s rights and gender equality. The Constitution of Peru upholds the principle of equality between men and women, and the law prohibits discrimination against women with regard to marriage, divorce, inheritance and property rights. Gender equality is also included in the national development plan - Plan Bicentenario: El Peru hacia 2021.

Two ministries have a special focus on gender equality: Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables (MIMPV) and Ministerio de Desarrollo e Inclusión Social (MIDES). MIMPV focuses on promoting gender equality, supporting gender mainstreaming in other governmental structures and programs aimed at reducing violence against women. MIDES strategy, Incluir para Crecer, approved in 2013 includes gender equality as a cross-cutting element.

Education and labor market participation. In education, levels for women and girls have increased to the point that girls and boys have almost equal enrollment rates in primary and secondary education (98.7 and 96.4 respectively, 2012).
In tertiary education, a slight gap in favor of girls can be observed (1.09 female to male education enrollment ratio, 2010). Even though the gender-gap in adult literacy rates has narrowed over the last three decades - women still lag behind: While 97 percent of adult men are literate, only 90 percent of adult women are (2012). However, the returns to education seem to be low and the opportunity costs of education seem relatively high for women. Thus, girls’ advancements in education don’t translate into the labor market where men still predominate clearly. Even though women’s labor force participation has increased to 64.5 percent (in 2012, which compares to 82.2 percent for men), women still face a higher probability than men of being unemployed (4.0 percent vs. 3.0 percent, 2012) especially when they are young: between 15 and 24 years of age, women’s unemployment in 2008 was 10.7 percent vs. 7.7 percent for men. Women are also much more likely to be engaged in informal work (66.7 versus 52.7 percent, 2012) and they continue to earn less on average than men. Even when controlling for differences in educational levels and age, men’s wages in Peru are 18.3 percent higher than women’s (19.4 if controlling for age and education). Gender wage gaps are highest among the most educated groups.

Peru lags behind if compared to regional averages. Peru has relatively higher rates of maternal deaths, 89 of 100,000 live births, compared to the LAC average of 85 of 100,000 births in 2013). Rural women who live in poverty conditions and with a low educational level have a much higher risk of maternal death.

**Political participation.** Women’s political participation and representation has increased over the last decades to the point that now it is slightly higher than the average in LAC with women holding 21.5 percent of the seats in the national parliament (as compared to 24.8 percent in the LAC average in 2012). At the local level political representation of women is much lower though with only 3.9 percent of mayors being female (2013, CEPAL Gender Observatory).

**Violence against women.** One of the most serious concerns in terms of the gender situation in the country is the high rates of violence against women. Data from a WHO multi-country study on violence against women (2005) show that 51 percent of ever-partnered women in Lima and 69 percent in Cusco had experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner. According to the same study, one in 10 women over 15 years of age had experienced sexual violence by a non-partner. In 2012, the law 26260 on domestic violence was modified to widen the definition of violencia familiar to include direct and indirect violent actions, also patrimonial and economic violence.

**Gender intersections with rural and indigenous variables.** Rural and indigenous In Peru, gender intersects with other social variables. Outcomes for Peruvian women and men in terms of labor markets, education and health are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete primary or less</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete primary or incomplete secondary</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary complete or incomplete tertiary</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still in school</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary complete</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Sample: 15 years old or older. Source: Peru Living Standards Measurement Survey 2012.

Table 16. Peru: Level of Education, by Gender and Location, 2012

---

22 World Bank 2005.  
23 Informal=salaried workers in small firms, non-professional self-employed and zero-income workers  
24 All labor related data in this box stem from SEDLAC Database.  
heavily influenced by their ethnic as well as geographic background. Thus, when analyzing the status of gender issues in Peru, considering ethnicity and location (in addition to age, life-cycle and family status) is very important. As observed in other Latin American countries with large indigenous populations, there are remarkable differences between rural and urban areas and between indigenous and non-indigenous populations in Peru, with rural indigenous women being generally more disadvantaged in all dimensions. Being indigenous increases the probability of being poor, even controlling for other observable characteristics (World Bank Peru Poverty Assessment 2005). Generally, indigenous households are underrepresented in the richest strata and have less access to public and private goods and services (Hall and Patrinos 2005).

Besides ethnicity, rural or urban background has a decisive influence on women’s and men’s opportunities in Peru. As Table 16 shows, women in rural areas face enormous disadvantages in terms of education as opposed to women in urban areas and men. Women in rural areas have slightly higher labor force participation (73 percent) than women in urban areas (62 percent) primarily engaged in farm work and informal activities (Figure 9).

26 In Peru in 2001, while 32 percent of the population had an indigenous mother tongue, 41 percent self-identified as indigenous (Hall and Patrinos 2005).