**AMPLIFY CHANGE: SUPPORTING WOMEN’S RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN**

**Oxfam in Afghanistan**

# **Terms of Reference – National Research Consultant – Women’s Economic Empowerment**

**Who we are**

Oxfam is a rights-based organization operating in over 90 countries globally whose Mission is “To achieve a just world without poverty.” Oxfam International is a platform bringing together 20 affiliates. As Oxfam, we determine to change the world by mobilizing the power of people against poverty and thus working together internationally to find lasting solutions to poverty and injustice. We share a common vision, common philosophies and, to a large extent, common working practices. In all we do, Oxfam works with partner organizations and alongside vulnerable women and men to end the injustices that cause poverty.

Oxfam has a long history in Afghanistan, working in the country for over 50 years and supporting the Afghanistan people through its rural and urban development and sustainable livelihood programs with a focus on transforming gender and power relations, as well as delivering humanitarian assistance to people affected by natural disasters and conflict. Oxfam works closely with local partners to support citizens and civil society, particularly women and youth, to engage in governance and political processes to ensure the Government of Afghanistan responds to the needs of all Afghans.

# **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

Amplify Change (AC) – Supporting Women’s Rights in Afghanistan is a five year (2017-2021), 4.81 million CAD project funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and is being implemented in two provinces of Afghanistan, Herat and Balkh. The project aims to support Afghan women and girls to participate more effectively in decision-making about their society by empowering them to access and use their legal rights, and creating an enabling environment that facilitates their participation.

The overall project framework revolves around two key pillars that work together to contribute to the changes the project seeks to achieve.

1. Pillar One engages influencers within the project communities to support women’s rights to be free of violence, build the livelihood skills and capacity of women, and empower women and girls to recognize, exercise, and defend those rights.
2. Pillar Two builds the knowledge and capacity of Afghan CSOs and CSO networks to coordinate and promote the rights and empowerment of women and girls.

**Oxfam in Afghanistan is seeking an experienced and qualified consultant (individual[[1]](#footnote-2)/firm) to undertake research to understand the enabling and impeding factors facing vocational training participants who are pursuing income-generating activities.**

Global literature provides evidence that through greater economic opportunity, women can gain independence. The project aims to support survivors of violence to build their employment skills and their capacity to undertake paid employment along with providing them with access to resources. These efforts through the vocational training activities aim to not only provide them with financial security, but also with a level of autonomy and control over their lives in order to shift power dynamics at the household level which could lead to reduced experiences of violence.

Amplify Change is designed to support women by building their capacity and strengthening their occupational skills through vocational trainings, therefore enabling them to earn an income. The vocational trainings started their operations in the month of February 2020 but were suspended for three months( Mar-May-2020) due to COVID-19. The trainings restarted early June in Herat province and early in May in Balkh provinces. A total of 240 women (40 women in each of the six project districts) participated in tailoring and literacy trainings.

This first cycle of vocational trainings ended in December2020 in Balkh province, and in January 2021 in Herat. The training was eight months in length, at five days a week. By providing vocational training to the girls and women, the project aimed to help them gain independence, earn an income, and gain more status within their household. The vocational trainings aim to economically empower women to start their own businesses, make and sell things from home, or obtain a job. Women who complete the vocational training are provided with equipment and tools to start their business, and supported through mentorship and opportunities to the extent possible.

Participants are already reporting an impact in their lives. Some women entered the vocational training with preliminary skills in tailoring that they are building on quite quickly and started generating an income. They are producing dresses for their family and other village members, and already earning some income. To shift social norms and beliefs on women’s economic rights, the project also provides awareness raising sessions to men boys and influencers to increase their knowledge and support of women’s economic rights and empowerment.

# Purpose of the research

The overall aim of this research is to generate learning about the enabling factors and environment that is needed to support the economic empowerment of vocational training participants, as well as factors impeding on their empowerment. The research will follow up with graduates from the first round of the vocational training program to document their progress on economic activities, including successes and challenges. The research will also document changes in relationships, household and community dynamics, and experiences of gender-based violence for vocational training participants.

The primary research participants will be the vocational skills training participants and their families. This research helps partner organizations and other women-led organizations to design the appropriate approach and activities in future programming in the field of vocational skills training and women entrepreneurs.

The objectives of the research are as follows:

1. Assess the effectiveness of vocational skills trainings on women and girls for the purpose of financial independence.
2. Review strategies, assumptions and barriers of vocational skills training implemented by AC in Herat and Balkh provinces.
3. Identify key lessons learned, collecting success stories, opportunities and challenges from the first round of Vocational skills trainings in AC project target provinces.
4. Examine shifts in power and household dynamics (if any) for vocational training participants.
5. Provide recommendations towards improving the overall implementation of vocational skills trainings and linking women enterprisers to the market and improve women’s accessibility to their economic rights.

**Research Questions**

The following are the proposed research questions, with the possibility to refine these further in consultation with the research consultant:

1. What kinds of changes have vocational training participants experienced in terms of their financial independence, access to jobs and markets, and income generation?
2. To what extent did the women’s tailoring skills and literacy improve as a result of the training? How (if at all) were they applying what they learned about tailoring and literacy to their lives?
3. What are the enabling and impeding factors that affect their economic empowerment? *(e.g. access to markets, family support, mobility rights, distribution of care responsibilities, mentorship, transportation, skills development)*
4. To what extent has there been a shift in attitudes and behaviors of household members within the vocational training participants’ households?
5. What kinds of changes have the vocational training participants experienced in terms of their role within the family?
6. How did COVID-19 affect a) the ability of training graduates to pursue economic activities and b) their safety within the household?
7. What are lessons learned about kinds of economic empowerment and support, including enabling environment, required to increase the financial independence and agency of women survivors of violence?

# **RESEARCH DESIGN**

## PHASE 1: Research planning

1. **Desk review**

The desk review will include:

* Review of related project documents on the vocational trainings and how it relates to other Amplify Change project components.
* Preliminary data collected on vocational training outcomes for participants.
* Rapid scan of best practice literature on women’s economic empowerment programs and their effects on violence against women and girls.

The desk and literature review findings will inform the research study design and data collection tool development.

1. **Inception meeting and report**

Through an inception meeting and subsequent discussions, the research methodology should be developed in a collaborative and inclusive manner with Oxfam staff both in Afghanistan and Canada, and two project partners’ staff (from both Kabul and provinces.

The inception report will include:

* Completed desk and literature review
* Research design including research objective, questions, sampling plan, data collection tools, data collection plan, data analysis plan, validation and sense making approach
* Drafted data collection tools/guides
* Key deliverables, and work plans with timeline
* Outline logistical support needed from Oxfam and partners
* And outline of what will be included in the enumerator/researcher training
* A report outline (table of contents) to ensure that there is shared understanding on what will be included in the final report.

Note: All data collection tools will be shared in English with the inception report. Once they are approved by the Oxfam team and partners, the consultants will translate the tools into Dari and Pashto for field research.

## PHASE 2: Primary data collection

Before initiating the field research, the consultancy will conduct a training with their researchers to provide a thorough overview of the research methodology, approach, ethical considerations, work plan, and logistics in the field. The training content outline should be provided with the inception report. Oxfam and partners will also participate in the training.

The consultant will conduct field research in the target project regions (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Geographic locations of the research**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Province** | **Implementing partner** | **Districts** |
| Balkh  | Afghanistan Civil Society Forum-organization (ACSFo) |  Balkh, Dehdadi, and Khulum |
| Herat  | Afghan Women’s Educational Center (AWEC) | Guzara, Karukh and Enjil |

**Data collection methods**

The primary data collection method in this research is **In Depth Interviews[[2]](#footnote-3)** with a segment of women who completed the vocational training. In each of the six project districts, the consultant will meet with and interview 8-10 women – for a total of 48-60 interviews.

These interviews will document the women’s experiences since participating in the vocational training and the successes and challenges they’ve experienced in pursuing economic activities. Interviews will be recorded to allow for transcription.

Note: All research participants must complete a consent protocol before participating in the research. Also, women must only be surveyed by female enumerators.

Where appropriate, consultants will also conduct **field observations** by accompanying women to their homes to observe their home-based work space, and/or to markets and other spaces where they are selling their goods. For women who obtained jobs since completing the vocational training, consultants may accompany them to their workplace, if permitted. These field observations will support the research objectives by observing various factors within the women’s environment that enable or impede their economic empowerment.

In addition to the In-depth interviews and field observations, the consultants will conduct focus groups and possible key informant interviews, as outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2: Summary of data collection methods**

| **Type of data collection** | **Target Population** | **Description**  | **Quantity** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| In-depth Interviews | Women who graduated from the first round of the vocational training.  | Long interviews using an open-ended, discovery-oriented method, to deeply explore the women’s feelings and perspectives.  | 8 per district(Total of 48) |
| Field observations  |  | Researcher observations of the women’s workspace, household environment, and market where they are selling products.  | 3-4 per district (Total of 24) |
| Focus groups | Family members of women who participated in vocational training (husband, brother, mother-in-law). Each focus group with 2-3 family members.  | 3-4 focus groups per district with family members of the women, to assess how families are responding to the increased economic role of their wives/daughters/sisters.  | 3-4 per district (Total of 24) |
| Key informant interviews  | Employers or individuals who administer access to the market places |  Where appropriate in each district, identify individuals who are facilitating or restricting access to markets for the women beneficiaries. These individuals can be identified by implementing partners, by the participating women, or by the consultants. Maximum two interviews per district.  | 1-2 per district (Total of 12) |
| Case study development | Women graduates of vocation training and their families (who participated in in-depth interviews) | For a total of 1-2 of the women per district, take the data collected from their interviews, key informant interviews, field observations, and focus groups with their families to develop case studies.  | 1-2 per district (total of 12) |

## PHASE 3. Data Analysis

The selected consultancy is responsible for:

* Transcribing all interview and focus group transcripts using the audio recordings
* Using qualitative coding methods to analyze the data according to the research questions
* Triangulate the findings across the methods (interviews, focus groups, observation) and across data sources (women, household members, employers/market coordinators)
* Use of qualitative analysis software such as NVivo, Atlas.ti, Impact Mapper or other similar software is strongly preferred.
* Take the data from up to 12 women (including their family members and employers) to develop case studies.
* Once triangulation and analysis is complete, the evaluator will conduct a short virtual validation session with Oxfam in project team (in Afghanistan and Canada) and partners.

## PHASE 4. Reporting

Once the validation is complete, the consultant will produce a draft report for review by Oxfam project team (in Afghanistan and Canada). Please expect to provide two drafts of the report for review by the Oxfam team and partners, before submitting the final draft (see schedule below). Once the final draft is submitted, the consultant will conduct a final presentation of findings to Oxfam staff and partners, and possibly other affiliated organizations as well.

*Note*: As indicated above, the report should include up to 12 case studies from the research that highlight the varied experiences of women following the vocational trainings.

# **Timeframe**

The assignment must be completed between the time period of 1-May 2021 to 15- Sept-2021.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Deliverable**  | **Timeframe**  |
| 1. Inception Report

*Oxfam and partners will provide feedback on the draft inception report within one week.*  | Draft: May 20thFinal: June 4 |
| 1. Field research
 | Mid-June to Mid-July |
| 1. Validation session with Oxfam Afghanistan and Amplify Change partners
 | Late July  |
| 1. Draft Report(s)

*Oxfam and partners will provide feedback on each draft within one week.*  | First draft: Aug 15th Second draft: August 31st  |
| 1. Final research report with all comments and feedback addressed.
 | Sept 15 2021 |

# **SKILL AND REQUIREMENTS**

1. Demonstrated knowledge and strong background conducting field research (with community members) related to women’s rights and economic empowerment.
2. Excellent knowledge of safe and ethical data collection.
3. Demonstrated experience in undertaking qualitative research including data collection and analysis.
4. Access to recording devise to record the interviews/focus groups with participants.
5. Working experience conducting research in the project regions.
6. Research team includes both male and females who are able to travel to Balkh and Herat provinces.
7. Demonstrated experience doing similar projects and producing reports for non-governmental and/or multi-lateral organizations
8. Excellent qualitative data analysis skills. Experience using qualitative analysis software such as NVivo, Atlas.ti, Impact Mapper or other similar software preferred
9. Strong analytical skills
10. Strong English reading, writing, and communication skills.

# **What to include in your proposal**

* All proposals must be written in English
* The proposal must be submitted in two parts : technical proposal and financial proposal
* The technical proposal must include a narrative description of the methodology; work plan for accomplishing the assignment; description of possible challenges/risks in conducting this research and how to overcome them (including health risks associated with COVID-19).
* Describe relevant experience with at least three completed projects with similar complexity and scope.
* Provide 1-2 samples of previous work
* Provide three references from past projects

**Application Procedure:**

**Applications should include the following:**

* Proposed methodology, work plan, budget and sampling framework.
* Proposal package including previous demonstrated experience on similar consultancies.
* At least three previous references.
* Submit application to jobs.afghanistan@oxfam.org and cc beheshta.rahimy@oxfam.org  no later than February 03, 2021.
* Applications that do not contain the information outlined above will not be considered.
1. If you are an individual applying for this consultancy, please note that in your proposal, you need to demonstrate that you have access to experienced enumerators (male and female) who you can recruit for the survey. Oxfam and our project partners will not be responsible for enumerator recruitment. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. More information on in-depth interviews: <https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/FY39300.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)