

KEY OUTCOME EVALUATION FINDINGS

Journeys of Transformation program to engage men as allies in women's economic empowerment

GUATEMALA



Background

It is increasingly recognized that women's economic empowerment has multiplying positive effects for women, the family, and the community. Women's economic empowerment is vital both to realize women's rights and to achieve broader development goals such as economic growth, poverty reduction, health, education, and well-being (1). Many interventions have focused on reducing barriers to women's economic empowerment, such as facilitating access to financial services, employment and entrepreneurship for women, as well as programs to strengthen women's financial knowledge and soft skills. Nonetheless, several studies have found that restrictive gender norms and attitudes play an important role in women's ability to participate in these interventions and ultimately engage and benefit from economic activities (2). Particularly, it is recognized that men play a key role in limiting women's economic empowerment and some studies have found that programs which focus solely on women can increase intimate partner violence (IPV), although the evidence of the impact of economic interventions on IPV is mixed (3).

However, evidence also shows that when combined with economic empowerment interventions that focus on strengthening livelihoods for women, men and families, gender-transformative approaches that work with small groups of men and women to facilitate critical reflection on gender roles, norms, and power relations between them favor women's economic empowerment and have the potential to reduce IPV (4). As a result, there is increasing focus on complementing women's economic empowerment interventions such as cash transfers, strengthening of business skills or savings groups with gender-transformative programs that engage women together with their male partners.

This brief summarizes the evaluation results from the first implementation of the adapted *Journeys of Transformation (JoT)* program in Guatemala, known in Spanish as *Caminos a la Transformación (CaT)*. JoT actively engages men in critical reflection and hands-on activities in a group education format to promote four main outcomes: 1) women's economic autonomy and participation in income generating activities, 2) more equitable division of domestic and caregiving work, 3) improved communication with partners and more balanced decision-making, and 4) reduction of intimate partner violence perpetrated by men. The adapted JoT curriculum was implemented with men and their female partners who participated in a Village Savings and Loans program called Women Empowered (WE) led by Global Communities in rural and indigenous communities in the municipality of Cuilco, Huehuetenango, Guatemala.

Context

Guatemala has made progress in human development indicators over the last decade, however, it continues to be one of the worst countries for women's and girls' rights in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC):

- In 2019, Guatemala ranked 122 out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Gap (GGG) which measures parity between men and women in economic participation, educational attainment, health, and survival and political empowerment. (5)

- Guatemala has the highest number of women who do not generate their own income in the LAC region (51%), meaning that about half of all women depend on others for their own subsistence (6).
- Twenty-one percent of ever-married/partnered women aged between 15 and 49 in Guatemala have experienced intimate partner violence (7).

In the department of Huehuetenango, 21.9% of ever-married/partnered women aged between 15 and 49 years have experienced intimate partner physical, emotional, or sexual violence (8). The municipality of Cuilco records some of the highest poverty levels of the department, where around 8 out of 10 people are poor, rural poverty levels stand at 81%, and extreme poverty at 17% (9)(10). In 2018, around a quarter of the population in Cuilco were illiterate (23%) and the district reports less female participation in income generation activities than the national average with 86% of women and 34% of men reporting no labor activity (11) (12). The majority of men and women dedicate themselves to agriculture, although this primarily aides their subsistence with only 51% of men and 4% of women reporting agriculture as an income generation activity (13).

Program description

The original *Journeys of Transformation (JoT)* program was created and implemented in Rwanda by CARE Rwanda, RWAMREC, and Equimundo (formerly known as Promundo-US). In 2020, Equimundo and Global Communities conducted a formative study to inform the adaptation of this curriculum to the Guatemalan context. The formative research explored the social norms, as well as the gendered realities and power dynamics at partnership, household, and community levels in two rural communities in Huehuetenango where Global Communities had formed women's saving groups. The methodology and content of *JoT* was adapted and contextualized to create the Guatemalan version of the curriculum (known as *CaT*) which considered priorities expressed by women and men during the formative

research, preferred engagement strategies, and learning approaches.

CaT addresses some of the gendered barriers to women's economic empowerment, namely, restrictive attitudes and norms that sustain inequitable beliefs and behaviors concerning gender relations and harmful or dominant versions of masculinities. The program promotes change at the individual, couple, family, and community levels, prioritizing nine thematic areas through its participatory curriculum: 1) Family visioning and the importance of having shared family goals; 2) understanding gender, power, and identity; 3) Exploring and challenging inequitable power dynamics; 4) sharing domestic and caregiving roles and responsibilities; 5) family budgeting and financial decision-making; 6) support for women's economic empowerment and women's leadership; 7) addressing and preventing intimate partner violence; 8) being gender-equitable role models for children; and 9) learning about sexual health, reproductive rights, and family planning.

The *CaT* manual comprises 13 group learning and discussion sessions. Six of these are implemented with men and women separately and seven involve couples. Led by local male and female facilitators, trained to create safe spaces, and promote critical reflection through discussion and hands-on activities, participants engage in meaningful practical exchanges with same-sex peers as well as with their partners. The domestic violence and family planning sessions are co-facilitated with local experts from public local institutions and Global Communities respectively.

From March to October 2021, *CaT* was implemented in nine communities in the municipality of Cuilco, Department of Huehuetenango, Western Highlands of Guatemala. Women participating in the WE saving groups were invited to take part in *CaT* along with their male partners. One hundred and forty-five couples registered their interest to participate in the program from which 11 groups were formed. Sessions were conducted on a bi-weekly basis, lasting around two hours each and were held in local schools and community halls. Ninety-eight couples completed the program. No stipends, reimbursement, rewards, or other incentives were offered to participants.

Evaluation Methodology

All measurement tools were co-designed by Equimundo and Global Communities in Guatemala, ensuring relevance and cultural appropriateness.



Baseline and Endline Surveys

Surveys covered five thematic areas of research: economic activity, gender norms and attitudes, gendered roles and relationships, key dimensions of health, and relationship quality. Baseline surveys were administered prior to the first session in March 2021; and

endline surveys, in October 2021, after the completion of the 13th session. The local Global Communities Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) team oversaw survey administration using the digital platform Mobenzi.



Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Participatory rural appraisal methodology framed the FGDs, grounding reflection and conversation on a visual representation of a human body, with different body parts representing people's thoughts, actions, and feelings. For example, to prompt discussion around

domestic and care work, participants were directed to think about their hands, and reflect on what they do with them in the household. This approach helped participants identify their daily, lived, and concrete experiences for the different topics covered.



In-depth Interviews (IDIs)

The IDIs were conducted with men and women who had attended more than 75% of the sessions, as well as with those who had abandoned the program before completing four sessions. The interview guide was designed to explore what changes participants

identified in themselves and/or their partners, as well as whether and how the program contributed to those changes. For participants who had abandoned the program, the interview focused on exploring their reasons and barriers to participation.



Participants

The mean age of participants who took part in the evaluation was 44 for men and 39 for women. Twenty-three percent (23%) of men and eleven percent (11%) of women self-identified as belonging to a Mayan indigenous community (Mam ethnic group specifically).

Fifty percent (50%) of the couples reported being married and the other half reported being in free union. Ninety-six percent (96%) reported having children (mean number of children was 4).

TABLE 1:
Number of men and women that participated in the evaluation.

	NUMBER OF MEN	NUMBER OF WOMEN	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
Baseline Survey	88	99	187
Endline Survey	62	63	125
Focus Group Discussions	15	18	33
In-depth Interviews	6	6	12
TOTAL	171	186	357



Data Analysis

Survey data was analyzed using Stata 16. Baseline and endline frequencies were compared, and the significance of the change was evaluated using chi2 tests, t-tests, and regression modeling (bivariate and multivariate) as appropriate. Qualitative data was

analyzed using thematic analysis which involved the systematization of information, coding, and identification of themes in iterative participatory analysis workshops implemented by Equimundo and Global Communities.

Key Results

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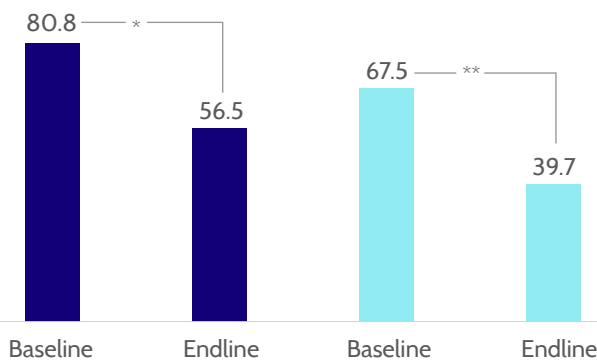


1. Women's economic autonomy and labor participation

Reports of men and women after participating in the program show a significant reduction in their support of traditional norms and attitudes that limit women's economic and labor participation.

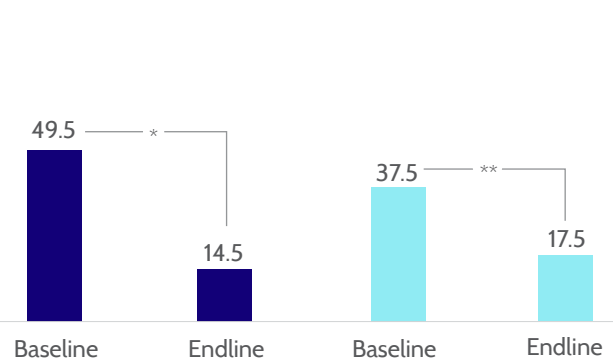
Figures 1 and 2. Percentage of men and women who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

"If there are children in the household, the woman should not work outside of the home"



*Significant Difference (chi2=11.08, p = 0.001)
** Significant Difference (chi2=7.67, p = 0.006)

"Women who work outside of the home cannot also be good wives and mothers"



* Significant Difference (chi2=20.24, p < 0.001)
** Significant Difference (chi2=7.14, p = 0.008)

Men Women

Qualitatively, women reported feeling more support from their partners in their participation in ME savings groups:

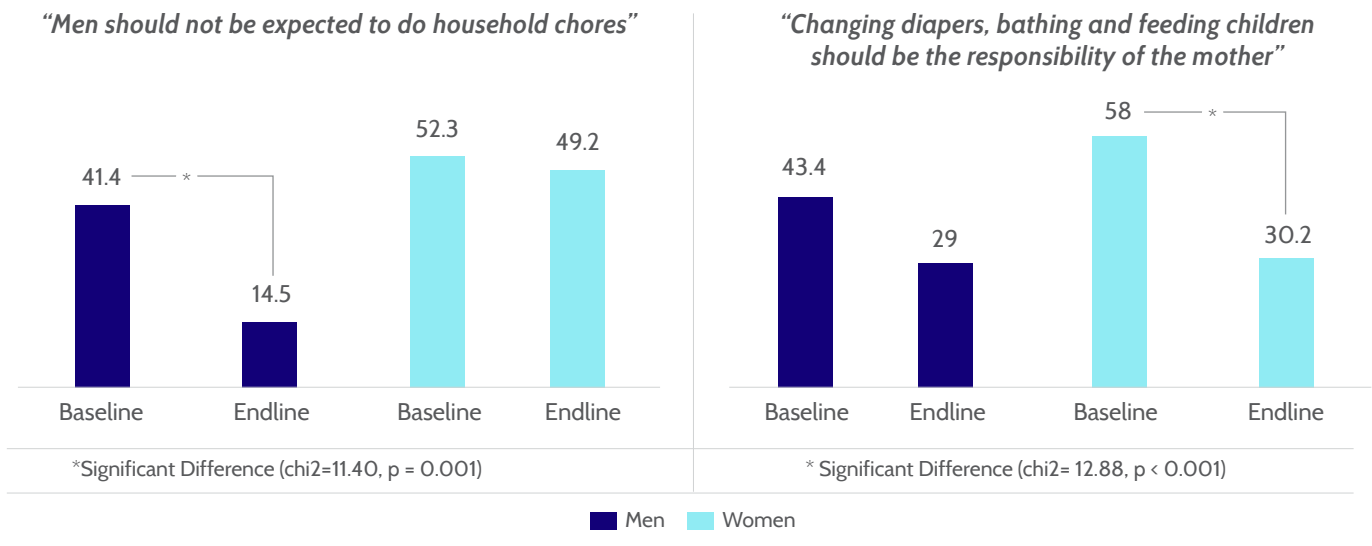
“It is good that they (men) also took the workshops, because before they didn’t know what we (women) were doing (in the WE group), and my partner used to say that it couldn’t have been anything good, that we were wasting our time, but now he supports me in my skills building.” (Woman, ID1)



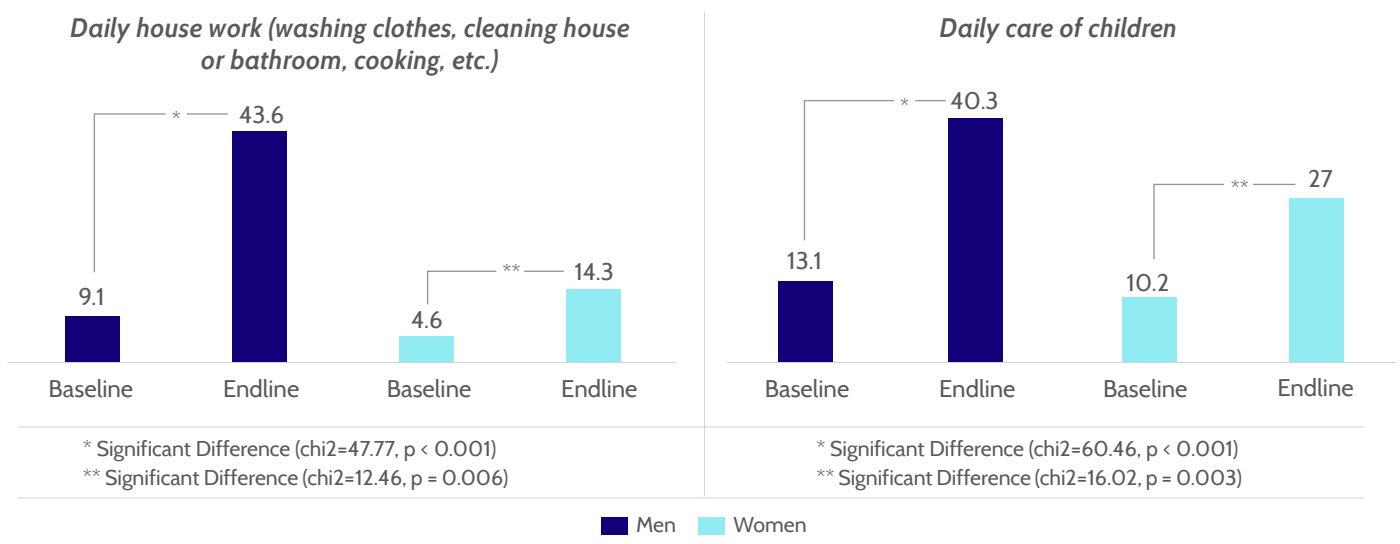
2. Division of domestic and childcare work

After the program, fewer men and women reported support of the idea that men should not be expected to do domestic work, but the decrease was large and significant only in men (Figure 3). While both men and women reported less support of traditional gender norms that assign domestic work and childcare responsibilities to women, this was only significant for women (Figure 4). In practice, both men and women recognized that after participating in the program more men participate equitably in domestic and caregiving work (share the work with women) or are primarily responsible (usually or always) for these tasks themselves (Figures 5 and 6).

Figures 3 and 4. Percentage of men and women that agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:



Figures 5 and 6. Percentage of men and women who report that men participate equitably (share with women) or are primarily responsible (usually or always do themselves) for the following tasks:



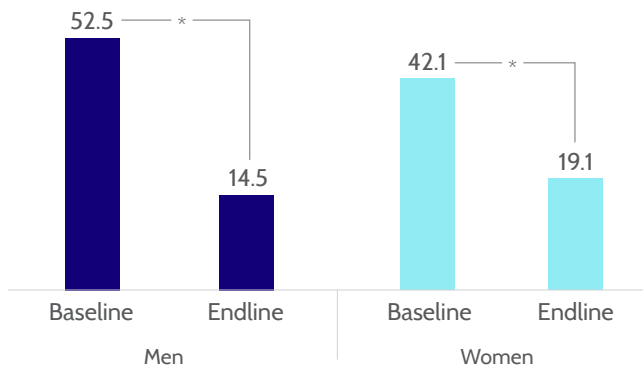


3. Decision-making and communication between partners

Reports by men and women show a significant reduction in the belief that men should make final decisions on family spending (Figure 7). Moreover, more men and women state that they communicate and share their own and their partner's concerns after the program, though the increase is only statistically significant in women (Figure 8). Finally, significantly more men and women expressed feeling comfortable discussing if and when to have sex with their partner after the program (Figure 9).

Figure 7. Percentage of men and women that agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement:

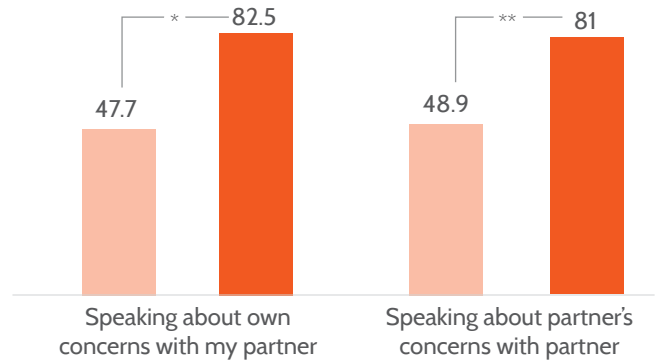
"The man should make the final decision about how family funds are spent"



* Significant Difference (chi2=23.41, p < 0.001)
 ** Significant Difference (chi2=8.86, p = 0.003)

Figure 8. Percentage of women that agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

Couple's communication

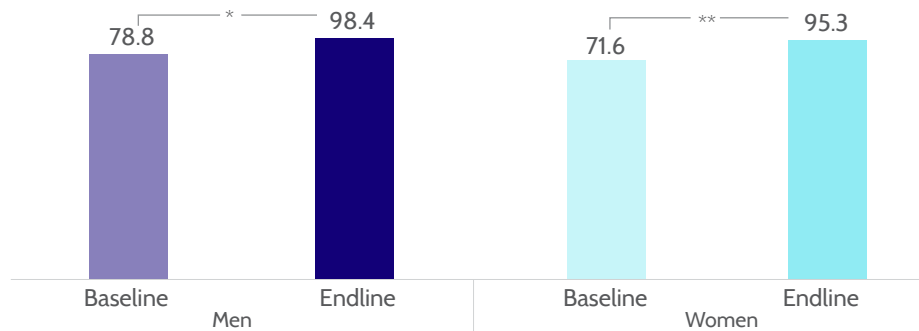


* Significant Difference (chi2=19.37, p < 0.001)
 ** Significant Difference (chi2=17.64, p = 0.001)

■ Baseline
 ■ Endline

Figure 9. Percentage of men and women that agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement:

"Feels comfortable or very comfortable discussing with their partner whether or not to have sex"



* Significant Difference (chi2 =17.32, p= 0.001)

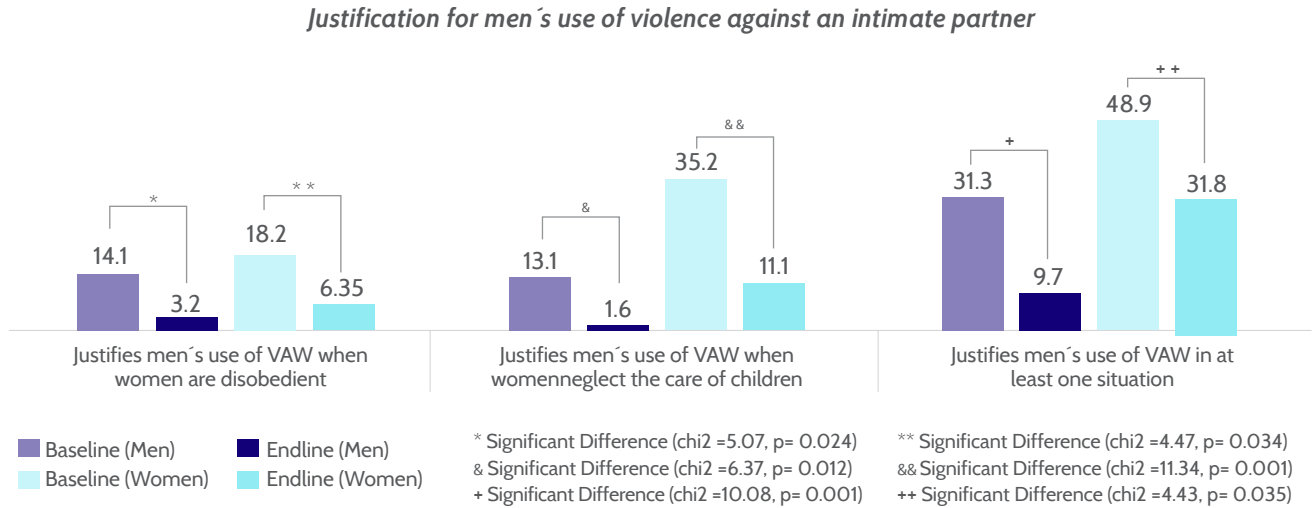
** Significant Difference (chi2 =13.81, p= 0.003)



4. Intimate partner violence

A significant reduction in the acceptance of the use of violence by men against their female partners in different situations was reported by men and women participants after the program. However, the reduction in the justification of intimate partner violence is greater among men than women, which may indicate how women have deeply internalized patriarchal norms that legitimize male authority to punish women who do not fulfill their traditional roles.

Figure 10. Percentage of men and women who agree or strongly agree with men's use of violence against an intimate partner:



Qualitatively, women shared an increased awareness about women's rights and the ability to identify different types of violence, while men expressed increased awareness of the intergenerational cycle of violence and how they wanted to avoid being a violent example for their children:

"He has changed, because now we know that women shouldn't be beaten, and that they (men) should not raise their voices, before we thought everything was ok, because we didn't have workshops, before the man had more worth and the man ordered everything, but now it's not like that, women have rights." (Woman, FGD)

"We have reflected about our children, if we are violent, then they will also be like that; we don't want them to inherit violence." (Man, FGD)

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research

The results indicate that *Journeys of Transformation* can be successfully adapted to other contexts when this is done through a thorough, collaborative, and iterative process that integrates culturally adequate ways of learning and ensures the use of content, activities, and language that resonate with the men and women that it intends to reach. Also, the revisions and adjustments made to the curriculum after testing the adaptation should be guided by practice-based knowledge from facilitators and program staff, as well as participant feedback.

The adaptation must maintain some of the core elements that have been found to influence positive change toward more equitable, caring, and nonviolent gender relations and family well-being. These elements include a gender-transformative approach based on gender and social learning theories (14); a participatory and engaging methodology that encourages critical reflection in a safe, peer group setting over a period of five to six months; a careful selection of facilitators, their thorough training and support to them before

and during program implementation, including on how to provide support and a warm referral to women survivors of violence.

The results presented in this brief validate the *Caminos a la Transformación* manual as a transportable intervention that can help increase support for women's economic empowerment among rural and indigenous men and women in Guatemala. The program showed promising results in shifting gender-related attitudes and behaviors related to men taking responsibility for domestic and caregiving work, reducing their dominance over decision-making, strengthening communication between partners and reducing the justification of IPV.

Policies and interventions intended to promote women's economic empowerment must include gender-transformative processes that target men as they play a key role in either limiting or encouraging women's participation in women's economic empowerment programs. Men's engagement in women's economic empowerment processes also provides an opportunity to promote gender equality beyond women's economic empowerment, including increasing women's decision-making regarding their lives, sexual and reproductive health, improving the quality of communication between partners, and reducing intimate partner violence.

CaT's focus on couple relationships and working together toward their desired vision for their family motivated mutual understanding and fostered more balanced power dynamics between men and women. However, this approach should be adopted with caution and facilitators need to be well trained to avoid favoring 'joint' decision-making over women's autonomy, especially when it comes to women's own resources. It is worth also noting that the program raised awareness and promoted some behavioral changes; however, many participants continued to hold discriminatory gender norms and practices.

The scope of the evaluation did not allow for an analysis of the sustainability of the impacts, therefore future studies could assess whether results are maintained after a year and at longer intervals post intervention. Future implementations could employ a randomized control trial design to identify the extent to which the changes promoted by *CaT* in support of women's participation in economic empowerment programs impact their financial behavior and whether these ultimately benefit from increased participation (in terms of access to and control of the resources they earn). Other studies can also conduct pathways and factorial analyses to identify how *CaT* interacts with and contributes to women's economic empowerment programs.

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