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# I'm Prepared: Equality for Refugee Women in the Return and Reintegration Context

Institute for  
Sustainable Futures

## Year 2 Learning Report

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## I'm Prepared: Equality for Refugee Women in the Return and Reintegration Context

is supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Gender Action Platform, and implemented by Act for Peace, Organisation for the Rehabilitation of Elangai/Eelam Refugees (OfERR), the Border Consortium (TBC) and Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney (ISF).

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### About the authors

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We utilise a unique combination of skills and perspectives to offer long term sustainable solutions that protect and enhance the environment, human wellbeing and social equity.

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*Cover: Focus Group Discussion with women participating in I'm Prepared program during Mid-Term Learning exchange between Act for Peace, TBC, OfERR and ISF in Thailand, March 2019. (Photo credit: T. Megaw)*

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# 1 Introduction

This document provides learnings from Year 2 research activities of the project “I’m Prepared: Equality of Refugee Women in the Return and Reintegration Context” (I’m Prepared) funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s (DFAT) Gender Action Platform. I’m Prepared is implemented in India and Thailand contexts, where encamped refugees prepare to return home and from where the participants of this research are located, and the reintegration contexts of north-east Sri Lanka and Kayah State, Myanmar. The research learnings relate to gender equality and women’s empowerment and changes that have taken place between Year 1 and Year 2 of the I’m Prepared Project.

The report has been prepared by the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney (ISF), who has been leading research activities in partnership with Act for Peace, Organisation for the Rehabilitation of Elangai/Eelam Refugees (OfERR) and the Thailand Border Consortium (TBC).

This report is a culmination of a series of activities to support research which commenced in March 2019 and has continued up until preparing this report inclusive of: design of research tools; researcher training; data collection; collation and analysis carried out by TBC, OfERR, and ISF.

This report is primarily intended to be of use to I’m Prepared implementing partners as well as key stakeholders engaged in work with Tamil and Karenni refugees. This year’s research aims to provide learnings to support the ongoing implementation of the project to ensure best outcomes for refugees are met. The report may also be of interest to stakeholders beyond the I’m Prepared Project working with refugees. The research will be an important resource to use in national and international level advocacy about ways to better support women’s empowerment in return and reintegration programs.

As described in the research approach, the research seeks to learn about women’s experience of the I’m Prepared Project and the extent to which the goal of gender equality and women’s empowerment is achieved. The research provides a longitudinal study of a sample group of project participants to learn about the experience of the I’m Prepared Project and extent to which higher level project objectives have been realised.

The report is structured:

Section 2: Background to the I’m Prepared Project

Section 3: Overview of the research approach

Section 4: Context information about the research location and participants

Section 5: Research findings

The report also includes detailed analysis of interview responses for Thailand and India in attachments (separate documents) to this report.

## 2 Background to I'm Prepared Project

This section provides a brief overview of the I'm Prepared Project, especially for audiences of this report beyond the organisations implementing the Project. The section details the objectives of the Project, key elements of the theory of change and types of activities included in the Project. The rationale, where the Project is implemented and organisations implementing is also provided.

As noted in the Project Design<sup>1</sup>:

*The Project pioneers a refugee-led approach, using protection preparedness methods, to strengthen women's resilience and gender equality in the return and reintegration process for Tamil and Karenni refugees while developing evidence-based guidance to help women prepare for safe, dignified voluntary repatriation.*

This Project builds from Act for Peace's partnership and decades of work experience with OfERR in Sri Lanka and India, and TBC in Thailand to strengthen the preparedness of refugees, increase self-reliance and promote gender equality approaches in return.

After over thirty years of conflict, indigenous Karenni refugees from Kayah state in Myanmar now residing in refugee camps inside Thailand are preparing themselves for potential return. Similarly, Tamil refugees who fled the civil war in Sri Lanka are now, after nearly three decades, preparing to return from Tamil Nadu in India to their homeland.

The experience of Act for Peace and its partners indicates that often women's empowerment status diminishes during the return process, as women refugees become increasingly dependent on family members to survive. Within refugee return and reintegration praxis, community-led preparedness is rarely a priority focus and the capacity and desire of women to play a central role in decision making within the family and community is very limited often due to patriarchal norms. However, when refugee and returnee women are able to help drive these processes, they enhance their knowledge and preparedness for decision making, an experience that can build confidence individually and collectively across a camp population.

This Project applies an innovative model<sup>2</sup> for return and reintegration based on coordinated activities between host country and home country, empowering women to manage the challenges they are likely to face in the reintegration process and strengthening community-based livelihood support systems. The Project mobilises resources and existing support mechanisms and systems in order to strengthen women-led networks and to boost community-driven support for female returnees to improve their protection capacity and enhance their livelihood opportunities.

The Project theory of change has three pathways to influence change and associated objectives<sup>3</sup>:

**KNOWLEDGE:** Increased preparedness and capacity to make informed decisions regarding safe, dignified and voluntary return and reintegration for Karenni refugee women in Thailand and Tamil refugee women in India.

**ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:** Refugee and returnee women have increased participation in sustainable livelihood and income development initiatives during return and when they are integrating in their respective country

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Act for Peace, "I'm Prepared" proposal to the Gender Action Platform (GAP) grant 2016.

<sup>2</sup> This innovative model was first trialled in the Sri Lanka Refugee Return and Reintegration Project (SLRRRP) in India and Sri Lanka commencing in July 2016, and continuing currently under SLRRRP Phase II. "I'm Prepared" has provided the opportunity to expand the pilot of the model into the Thailand-Myanmar while tailoring it to that context based on the expertise of The Border Consortium.

<sup>3</sup> See Annex 1 for more details about the theory of change and pathways to influence change. \

**LEADERSHIP:** Karenni and Tamil refugee and returnee women have increased leadership and influence in the decision-making, design and delivery of return and reintegration programming both in camp settings and in areas of return

Within these pathways to influence change types of activities include trainings; establishing groups in locations of return/reintegration (welcome groups and economic empowerment groups); information and experience sharing between refugee communities and those in return/reintegration communities; support for referral services; and advocacy and influence to decision makers.

In addition to the implementation focused outcomes, a fourth outcome is focused on research and learning to inform ongoing programming. This research report sits within this Outcome 4, and contributes to the evidence base of the project.

**EVIDENCE BASE:** Return & reintegration stakeholders have a strong evidence base for effective planning & preparedness programming.

The long-term outcome of the project is: Increase and strengthen women's resilience and gender equality in the return and reintegration process (in Thailand/Burma and India/Sri Lanka context)

The Project contributes to the three DFAT program-wide GAP objectives:

**Objective 1:** Contributed to enhancing gender equality outcomes in developing countries through the delivery of innovative or transformational NGO projects that reduce violence against women, increase women's economic opportunities and improve leadership for and by women through collective action.

**Objective 2:** Contributed to enhancing gender equality outcomes in developing countries through shared learning on good gender equality practice and lessons from trialling new approaches with GAP NGOs and the broader ANCP.

**Objective 3:** Contributed to enhancing gender equality outcomes in developing countries through increased collaboration on gender equality development challenges, including between NGOs and DFAT bilateral and regional programs.

# 3 Overview of the research approach

## 3.1 Purpose and scope of the research

The research (within Objective 4) seeks to:

- learn about the return and reintegration experiences of women and men in the 'I'm Prepared' Project, and provide Project partners with an in-depth understanding of what gender equality and women's empowerment changes are taking place and how/why these changes have happened.
- provide opportunities for learning and reflection for Project partners and Project participants, in order to identify strengths that can be built upon as well as areas for improvement, within years 2 and 3 of the Project.
- provide an evidence-base that can be used to strengthen return and reintegration programs aiming to achieve women's empowerment in other country contexts<sup>4</sup>.

The research is conducted over the three years of the Project and provides different types of learning which will inform the Project.

- Year 1 research conducted in 2018 provided a baseline of locally informed understandings of gender relations (practical and strategic needs, gender roles, and access and control of resources) and decision-making about return / reintegration.
- Year 2 research conducted in 2019 (contained in this analysis report) provides an assessment of changes to gender relations (practical and strategic needs, gender roles, and access and control of resources) and decision-making about return / reintegration and contribution of program interventions as well as other factors to influencing any changes experienced within different project locations (Thailand and India).
- Year 3 research to be conducted in 2020 will provide an assessment of gender changes and decision-making about return/reintegration and contribution of program interventions as well as other factors to influencing any changes experience within different project locations. Year 3 will have an increased focus on return/reintegration experiences

A sample group of project participants was selected in year 1, and they have been invited to participate in the research in Years 2 and 3. The longitudinal study of same women and men in household units aims to reveal the trajectory of change and lived experiences of participants within the project. The yearly 'snap shots' of experience will provide a means of assessing the extent to which gender equality and women's empowerment is experienced for different types of men and women.

Research that includes men and women ('a family unit'), means that multiple perspectives of women's empowerment and changes in power dynamics and gender relations are revealed. The research will explore local and culturally appropriate meanings of equality for men and women.

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<sup>4</sup> The research therefore aligns closely with the DFAT GAP objective 2 "Contributed to enhancing gender equality outcomes in developing countries through shared learning on good gender equality practice and lessons from trialling new approaches with GAP NGOs and the broader ANCP" and DFAT GAP Objective 3 "Contributed to enhancing gender equality outcomes in developing countries through increased collaboration on gender equality development challenges, including between NGOs and DFAT bilateral and regional programs."

## 3.2 Research questions

The life-of-project research questions are adapted for Year 2.

Life of Project Research Questions	Year 2 Research Questions
1. What are women and men's experience of change in the fulfilment of practical and strategic needs of women in the project areas?	What are women's experience of <i>change</i> in the fulfilment of their practical and strategic needs in the project areas? <sup>5</sup>
2. What mechanisms within the theory of change (program interventions) influence change and what is the similarity / difference within and across country contexts?	What <i>mechanisms</i> within the theory of change (program interventions) influence change and what is the similarity / difference within and across country contexts?
3. What impact do gender changes have on women and men's decision making in return / reintegration?	What impact does changes to gender equality and women's empowerment have on women's and men's' decision making in return / reintegration (since Year 1)?
4. What learning can be generated from the projects to inform livelihood projects for women's empowerment and resettlement in other contexts?	What learning from Year 2 research can inform ongoing project implementation?

## 3.3 Analytical framework

Because the Project aims to promote and bring about gender equality, we have used the Moser Framework<sup>6</sup> to guide gender analysis. The Moser Framework helps us to understand the different needs and interests of women and how development programs may be able to meet these. The Moser Framework divides women's needs into two categories; 'practical needs' and 'strategic needs.'

- *Practical needs* are needs that help women to have easier lives, for example, access to goods or services (water, food, health care), safety and protection.
- *Strategic needs* are those that will help women to become more equal with men and to share equal power with men in the household, community and society they live in.

The women's empowerment changes that the research will explore will link to the Project outcomes of 'I'm Prepared', so may include:

- Women's increased preparedness and capacity to make informed decisions;
- Women's increased participation in sustainable livelihood and income development initiatives; and
- Women's increased leadership and influence in decision-making.

In Year 2, we analyse changes in these elements of the Moser Framework:

- Practical and strategic needs
- Gender roles (community, leadership and livelihood roles)
- Access and decision-making regarding income

<sup>5</sup> In year 2 comparison / analysis between men and women was not carried out since change from year 1 and 2 was mixed for women, also due to budget constraints. Comparison between men and women in year 3 will be carried out to assess extent of gender equality

<sup>6</sup> Moser, C.OsN (1993). Gender Planning and Development: theory, practice and training, Routledge, London and New York.



The research also employs a realist evaluation approach which is relevant to identify what change has resulted from participation in I'm Prepared activities. Realist evaluators aim to identify the underlying generative mechanisms that explain how the change outcomes were caused, and the influence of context. In this research, we consider the links between context (who participated in I'm Prepared activities, and the broader political, social and economic context for refugees), mechanisms of change (program interventions) and outcomes (changes in gender equality and stated outcomes resulting from participating in I'm Prepared activities).

### 3.4 Relevance of research to GAP multi-year outcome indicators

This research also seeks to gather learnings relevant to the GAP multi-year outcome indicators defined for the I'm Prepared Project. Whilst not all outcome indicators are measured through the research, key indicators relevant to gender equality, women's empowerment and the return and reintegration process are captured in the research findings. Where data is not able to be collected specific to indicators, proxy indicators or data relevant to gender equality/women's empowerment is provided. Particular care was taken to ensure appropriate indicators of outcome measures are included in the research findings and comparison of baseline to multi-year targets will be presented in this year 2 research report, and in the year 3 research report.

### 3.5 Research methods

#### 3.5.1 Structured interviews

Structured interviews were used as the primary research method for Year 2 research and an interview guide was prepared in collaboration between ISF, TBC, OfERR, and Act for Peace. The same interview guide was used in both Thailand and India. The interview includes 41% qualitative questions and 59% quantitative questions. Informed by the Moser Framework, questions explored gender roles, access and decision-making about income and practical and strategic needs of women in line with focus of the I'm Prepared Project and lives of the women and men in refugee camps in India and Thailand. Practical needs relate to access to services; information; safety and protection; and income. Strategic needs relate to control; leadership; and choice to influence decisions that affects one's life.

#### 3.5.2 Researcher training and piloting of the interview guide

The draft interview guide for Year 2 was developed by ISF, based on questions from the Year 1 interview guide and new questions regarding program interventions. This interview guide was then workshopped and contextualised to the local context in Thailand and India during 4-day Researcher Trainings facilitated by ISF.

The Thailand training on 18-21 March 2019 was attended by 12 females from KNWO and 2 males from KNRC, as well as 1 TBC staff member and 1 consultant. The India training on 9-12 July 2019 was attended by 9 female and 9 male OfERR staff and volunteers, as well as additional support staff from OfERR. The Act for Peace partner focal point in India attended part of the training. Prior to the training, on 8 July, the OfERR researchers who were involved in Year 1 shared about their experience and learnings from the research process with OfERR staff who were attending the training for the first time in Year 2.

#### 3.5.3 Sampling and data collection

During March-April 2019 in Thailand and July-August 2019 in India, interviews with refugee women were carried out with those who had been interviewed in 2018 and who had participated in I'm Prepared activities. Men from the same households were interviewed, who had also been interviewed in 2018.

Women who had returned to Myanmar were not included in the research sample, as there were not sufficient numbers. Similarly, women who had returned to Sri Lanka were not included in the research sample. While there were several households involved in the Year 1 baseline research who had returned to Sri Lanka during Year 1 of the I'm Prepared project, they are in the process of resettling and had not yet experienced participation in I'm Prepared activities in Sri Lanka. The research in Year 3 will focus on experiences of women who have returned and women's empowerment and gender equality in the return process.

Figure 1 shows Year 2 female research participants in Thailand (total n=25). 50 women participated in the research in Year 1, though not all participated in I'm Prepared activities. A sample of women who participated in I'm Prepared activities was decided for Year 2. Out of the total 25 women interviewed, 23 had participated in the protection training, 12 in gender training and 11 in livelihood training. 1 woman interviewed did not participate in any training.

**Figure 1: Thailand research participants**

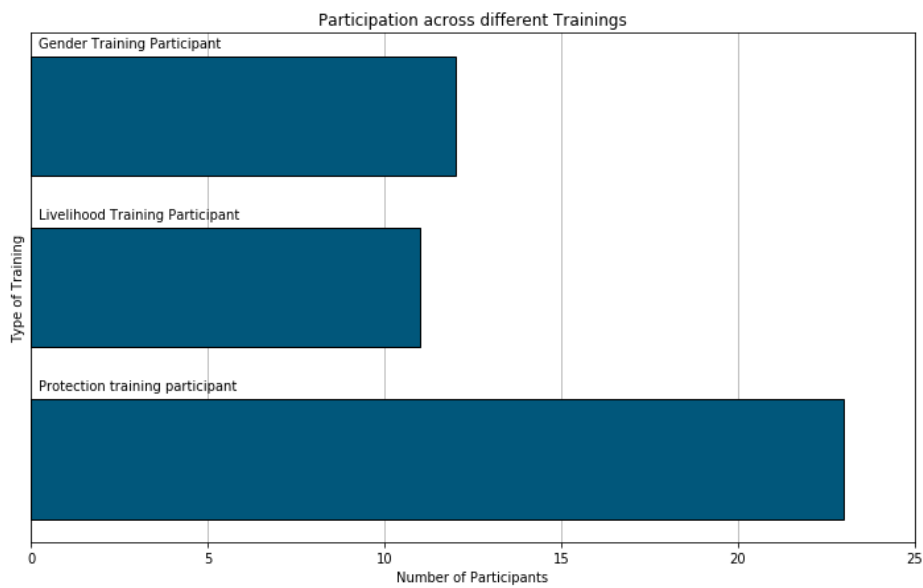
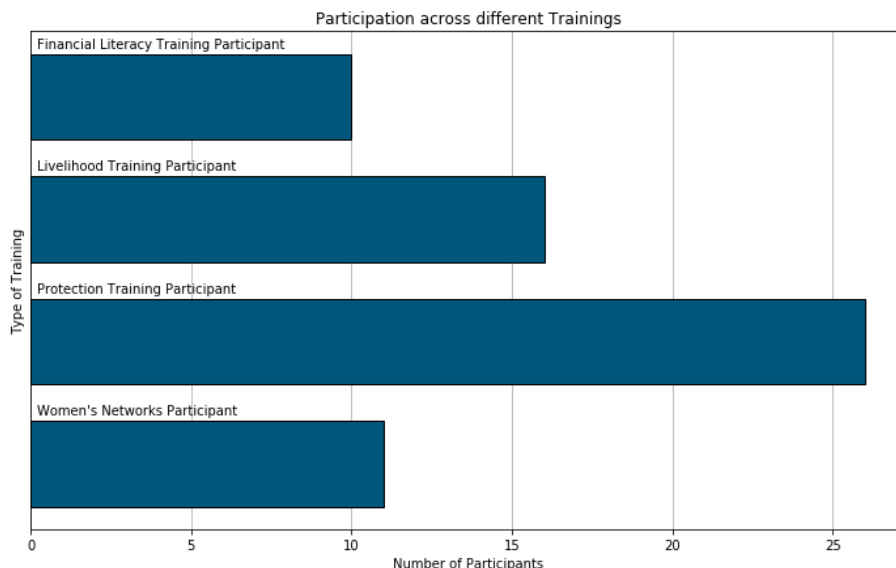


Figure 2 shows female research participants in India (total n=28). In Year 1 50 women participated in the research. Of those that attended at least one training, a sample of 28 women was chosen. Out of the total 28 women interviewed, 26 had participated in the protection training, 16 in livelihood training, 11 in women's networks and 10 in financial literacy training.

**Figure 2: India research participants**



### **3.5.4 Data collection process**

At the start of the interview researchers provided information about the three-year research project and obtained consent from the refugees for their participation. Interviews were scheduled with participants, at a time and place convenient to them. Research participants are included in the data where both a woman and man within a household both consented to participate in the research.

Each interview generally took approximately 1 hour, conducted by one interviewer and one note taker who recorded responses on a printed (translated into local language) interview form / notetaker booklet. Women and men were interviewed separately from one another in a private setting.

### **3.5.5 Data collation**

A collation template (excel spreadsheet) was prepared by ISF and orientation provided to OfERR and TBC who then tested it. Based on feedback the template was slightly refined. Collation of survey responses was prepared by OfERR and TBC. In order to ensure a streamlined process, within each country context translation was carried out as part of the collation, ie. the collation template was prepared only in English, with responses translated as part of entering data into the collation template.

### **3.5.6 Data analysis**

ISF conducted both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data, in line with the interview questions and broader research questions. The analysis compared experiences of gender equality and women's empowerment between Year 1 and Year 2, in terms of change to practical and strategic needs of women being met. The analysis involved experiences of participation in I'm Prepared activities, and learning about the influence of participation in those activities to the gender equality changes.

### **3.5.7 Ethics**

Ethical research was a key component of the proposed research agreed between ISF and Act for Peace and has been a core practice implemented by ISF, TBC and OfERR. During researcher training, the topic of ethical research was included and principles of ethical research (beneficence, respect, justice, research merit and integrity) were introduced and contextualised by the local researchers. Local researchers identified the potential risk of triggering reactions to sensitive topics raised, and ensured questions did not direct responses in this direction, as well as being prepared to refer participants to support services (counselling) if the need arose. Ethical conduct of research was piloted and based on this experience and reflections, ethics protocols refined. An information sheet was prepared and translated to local language, a script to gain verbal informed consent from research participants was also prepared and read out at the start of interviews. Documentation of verbal consent was completed by local researchers which was collated and recorded as part of the collation process. Each entry of interview responses also included checking and recording that informed consent was documented by interviewers.

Records and storage of interview data have ensured the privacy of research participants. Data has been de-identified at the earliest point using a filing system which replaces participants' names with identification codes. The list of research participants and codes is kept separately to the interview responses, and is used to identify and interview again the same individuals in Years 2 and 3 of the Project as part of the longitudinal study.

### **3.5.8 Limitations**

It is helpful to note limitations of the research to inform interpretation of the research findings, and describe how these were mitigated to the extent possible.

Translation of key concepts relevant to the I'm Prepared Project from English to local language was a challenge in the researcher training, defining the interview guide questions and also in translation of interview responses to English. In Thailand, local researchers had the added challenge of translating concepts/ interview questions from Burmese to relevant subdialects (Kayaw) used in the camps. The researcher training and piloting of the interview guide sought to mitigate these challenges and importantly detailed reflection on the interview guide questions and key words was important to define local meanings. In collating interview responses, translation to English also posed risks, and it is important to recognise that local meanings may have been lost in translation/collation processes. In Thailand, notetaking may have resulted in summarising of actual interview responses as data presented in the collation process is brief. In India, more verbatim responses were noted and translation was completed by an experienced researcher familiar with OfERR's context.

Data collection was carried out by in-country partners, after orientation and training by ISF. Some of the researchers who carried out data collection in 2018 continued as researchers in the data collection process in 2019. Others had left the organisations or were not available to take part for other reasons, so TBC and OfERR recruited new researchers. Thus, the experience of the group of in-country researchers was fairly limited, which may have impacted the rigour of the data collection process. Nonetheless training refugees as researchers and as primary data collectors is a valuable component of the project, to build capacity and provide maximum learning opportunities.

The availability of research participants was an issue that resulted in a smaller sample size in Year 2. Some research participants were no longer in the refugee camps or had not participated in I'm Prepared activities since taking part in the interview in Year 1. Since the intent of the research was to learn about experience in the Project, those women who had not participated in project activities were not included in the sample.

It is important to recognise that the sample size is not inclusive of marginalised groups as intended. The research sought to include people living with disability (PWD), however at the time of the baseline survey in Year 1 only one of the in-country partners had protocols for selecting PWD to participate. In Thailand, only one household identified as having a person with a disability was recorded by researchers. This is too small to disaggregate data meaningfully and compare experience of these research participant with others. In India, very few PWD have decided to return to Sri Lanka, due to (i) the provision of support for PWD who remain in the camp, (ii) insufficient understanding of disability inclusion in Year 1 of the project. Since I'm Prepared focuses on those refugees interested in returning to Sri Lanka, this led to very small numbers of PWD included in the project in Year 1. While Act for Peace has worked intensively with the in-country partner regarding disability inclusion within the I'm Prepared project, since the research cohort was decided in Year 1 in line with longitudinal research design, PWD are not included in the research.

The research focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment primarily inside the home (intra-household) and includes interviews with a woman and a man from one household. This has meant that experiences of women living in female-headed households (single women, sexual minorities and widows) were outside of the scope of the research.

## 4 Context information about the research location and participants

In Thailand the research was carried out in the two refugee camps where the I'm Prepared activities are being implemented: Ban Nai Soi Camp (Site 1) Muang District, Mae Hong Son and Ban Mae Surin Camp (Site 2) Khun Yuam District, Mae Hong Son.

Likewise, in India data was collected within 14 camps from the 107 camps where the I'm Prepared activities are being implemented Tamil Nadu.

25 households in Thailand and 28 households in India participated in the research.

### 4.1 Thailand-Myanmar context

*Adapted from TBC Year 2 Gender Action Platform Project Plan*

#### General

At the conclusion of April 2018, a total of 93,382 refugees from Myanmar remained in nine refugee camps along the Thailand/Myanmar border, with restricted mobility and minimal official means of gaining employment or income. The population total of the two project camps, Ban Mai Nai Soi (BMNS) and Ban Mae Surin (BMS) was 11,973 (49.5% female and approximately 55% over 18 years of age). Hence, the refugees continue largely to be dependent on external aid for food, shelter, protection and essential services. The Border Consortium (TBC) has been the sole organisation providing food assistance and shelter to Burmese refugees, in these nine refugee camps, since the first arrivals in 1984. TBC's more than 30 years of collaboration with refugee camp management has built trust and mutual understanding between the organisation and the refugees, making it possible to continue facilitation of community cooperation and engagement in the context of decreasing NGO presence and services. Refugee returns to Myanmar are significantly lower than anticipated.

#### Implications for the Project Design from Context Changes

There were delays to the implementation of GAP Project activities resulting primarily from changes in personnel within TBC and the time required to negotiate sub-grants with the Karenni National Women's Organisation (KNWO) and the Karenni Refugee Repatriation and Reconstruction Working Group (KnRRRWG).

The Governments of Myanmar and Thailand, UNHCR and the respective ethnic armed organisations all agree that conditions in the South East are not yet conducive to large scale refugee return. The peace process has not yet addressed the causes of conflict and displacement or the withdrawal of troops from contested areas (which are also potential areas of return). As a result, the number of returnees has been less than initially anticipated which has necessitated modifications in women's empowerment groups and the formation of the community economic development forum. Nevertheless, the project design, which is based on the theory of change, remains largely intact. In particular, TBC has responded by broadening the focus on preparedness for return and reintegration so that it includes host communities in Kayah State and not just refugees and returnees.

## 4.2 India-Sri Lanka context

*Adapted from Annual Update OfERR May-June 2019 for I'm Prepared Project*

Refugees in India are in a unique situation, since India and Sri Lanka governments have made different statements about their return. The Government of Sri Lanka has said that it is happy to have refugees return. The Government of India has not made any statement requesting the refugees to return. Refugees want a bilateral decision between the two government so that the transition process may be smooth. Having lived in India for more than two decades, the refugee population are frustrated with the protracted situation. For some, taking a boat illegally to Australia was one option to get out of the refugee context. OfERR and OfERR Ceylon have been working together with Act for Peace to make a tangible change to this situation. Preparing refugees to make an informed decision and upon arrival to ensure a proper integration plan is what OfERR and OfERR Ceylon are working on.

Integration is challenged by the economic situation in Sri Lanka. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka commissioned a framework for economic development in the northern province, yet the framework observed that the post war reconciliation strategies have not met the expected level of holistic success and sustainable level of economic growth. The reasons identified are, lack of proper reconstruction strategies for the northern economy, insufficient investment for technology transference and continuing fragility of population coming out of war which is a barrier for their participation in development.

The political scenario is ever changing which also challenges return and reintegration. The upcoming Presidential elections in Sri Lanka is cause for concern due to its unpredictable nature. A change in government could mean change in policy and particularly resettlement policy of the government. If a package is announced by the Government of Sri Lanka there are better chances of return from India. The situation in India is different given the enormity of the country with varied issues and the Sri Lankan refugee issue in that context. The sudden demise of the former External Affairs Minister was a loss to the voluntary repatriation process. However all hope is not lost since the current External Affairs Minister is willing to work with the Government of Sri Lanka on return and so is the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka.

OfERR and OfERR Ceylon continue to work on both side of Palk Strait to ensure that refugees can return in safety and with dignity.

### Recent events

The I'm Prepared project focused on Tamil refugees who had registered for the ferry service and had an intention to return to Sri Lanka in the future. The ferry service for repatriation of refugees has not happened as anticipated. Further the unstable political situation in 2018 and poor security situation in 2019 led to reduced returns in the reporting period.

On Easter Sunday 21 April 2019 there was a series of coordinated bombings of churches and luxury hotels in Colombo, Negombo and Batticaloa. 320 people were killed in the attacks.<sup>7</sup> These bombings resulted in an increased security presence across Sri Lanka and in Tamil Nadu, India, and a temporary halt in incremental refugee returns, which resumed recently.

<sup>7</sup> 'Sri Lanka bombings: Islamic State claims responsibility for attacks', The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/23/sri-lanka-bombings-first-burials-take-place-on-day-of-mourning>, accessed 17 September 2019.

## 5 Research Findings

This section provides a summary response to the research questions as outlined in Section 3.2 above. Since the research has been carried out in different country contexts (Thailand and India), and the findings are to inform ongoing programming in each country by TBC and OfERR, findings are presented per country, to offer specific insights and best contribution to country level programming. A brief summary comparing findings in Thailand and India are offered in conclusion to support the overall I'm Prepared Project.

Findings have been written in brief and in plain English to maximise engagement by multiple audiences and assist with translation of key research findings.

Detailed analysis of interview responses is provided in separate attachments to this report. The intent of providing detailed analysis is to share transparent findings with Project partners, and to maximise their engagement in the research findings and use within implementation of I'm Prepared.

### 5.1 Thailand

Research Questions:

***What are women and men's experience of change in the fulfilment of practical and strategic needs of women in the project areas?***

***What mechanisms within the theory of change (program interventions) influence change?***

*Response to this research question is presented in line with the sections of the interview guide which are relevant to practical and strategic needs of women, gender roles and access and decision-making related to income.*

#### **Practical needs of access to information and services**

Increased access to information and access to services is an indicator of practical needs being met, in order to improve living conditions and wellbeing.

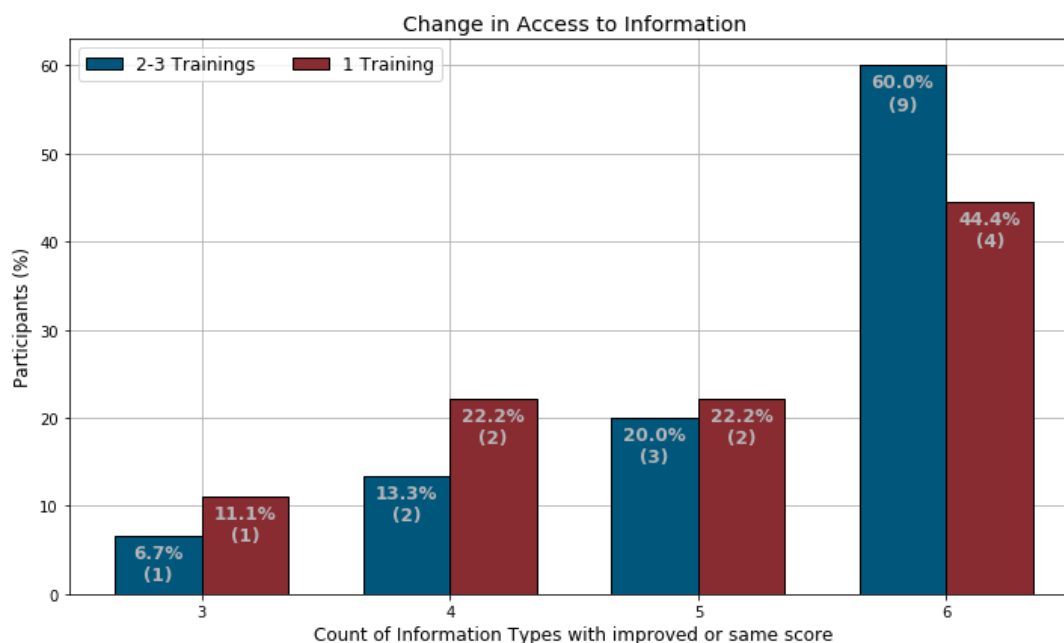
Women in Thailand reported positive changes in access to the 6 types of **information**<sup>8</sup> included in the interview guide. The largest increase in access to information was about the 'peace process and political situation in Myanmar' (56%) and 'duration of support to refugees from donors' (64%).

The research found women who completed more trainings are more likely to maintain or improve access to more types of information. Figure 3 below shows that for women who had completed only 1 training, 44.4% (4) had better or the same access to all 6 types of information. While out of the women who had completed 2-3 trainings, 60% (9) had better or the same access to 6 types of information.

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<sup>8</sup> The types of information are: "Resettlement to third country", "Peace process and political situation in Myanmar", "Duration of support to refugees from donors", "Return and reintegration planning from Karenni leaders", "Thai government policy towards refugees", and "Voluntary repatriation".

**Figure 3: Thailand - Increase in access to types of information depending on participation**



The majority of women reported that they have the same or better access to 3-4 out of 5 types of **services**<sup>9</sup>. Women reported no change in access to rations and food support. For access to shelter related support, 76% women reported decreased access and 24% report no change.

In line with findings regarding access to information, our analysis shows women who completed more trainings were more likely to maintain or improve access to more types of services. Not surprisingly, women who completed livelihood training of I'm Prepared, reported they had improved access to livelihood training in 2019, and those women who did not participate reported worse access.

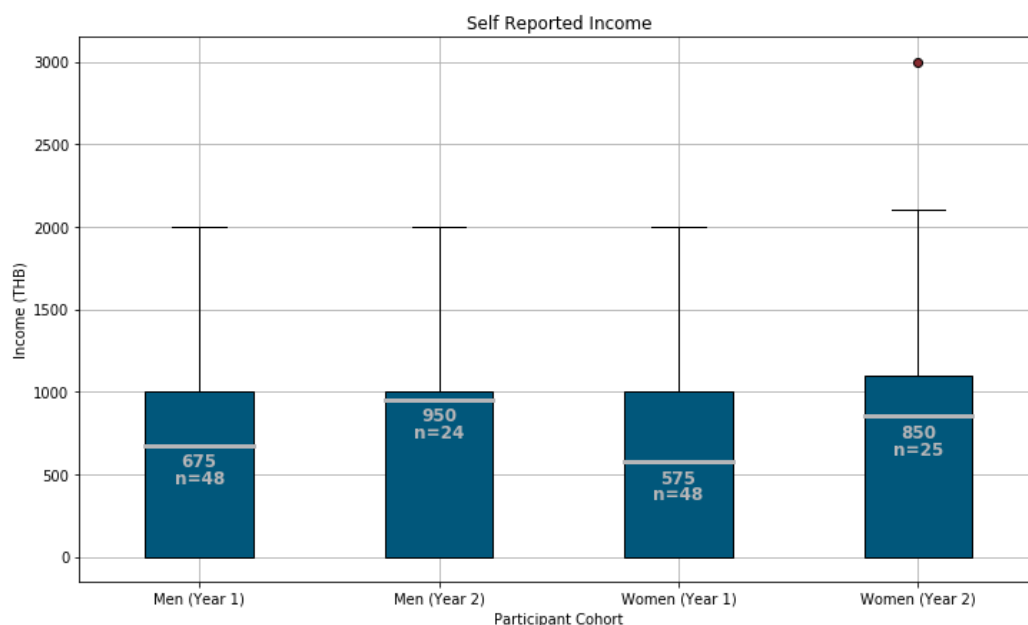
#### Access and decision-making related to income

Increases in **women's income** is an indication of economic empowerment. Figure 4 below shows a positive change in both men and women's income, and similar levels of income between both groups.

<sup>9</sup> The types of services are: "Counselling", "Health and education services", "Justice and legal services", "Rations/food support", "Livelihoods training", and "Shelter related support".



**Figure 4: Thailand - Income of men and women**



Equal decision-making and **control of resources** in an indicator of strategic needs being fulfilled. In 2018 a common response from women was that ‘women decided how money is spent’ (n=9), while in 2019 the responses from these same women shifted to ‘both men and women together decided how money is spent’.

### Livelihoods

Increased confidence in **livelihood skills and opportunities** is an indicator of empowerment. Our analysis found a greater decrease (26.1%) than increase (17.4%) in ‘confidence in livelihood skills’, while 43.5% had no change. There was also a greater decrease (36.4%) than increase (18.2%) in ‘confidence in livelihood opportunities’, while 54.6% had no change.

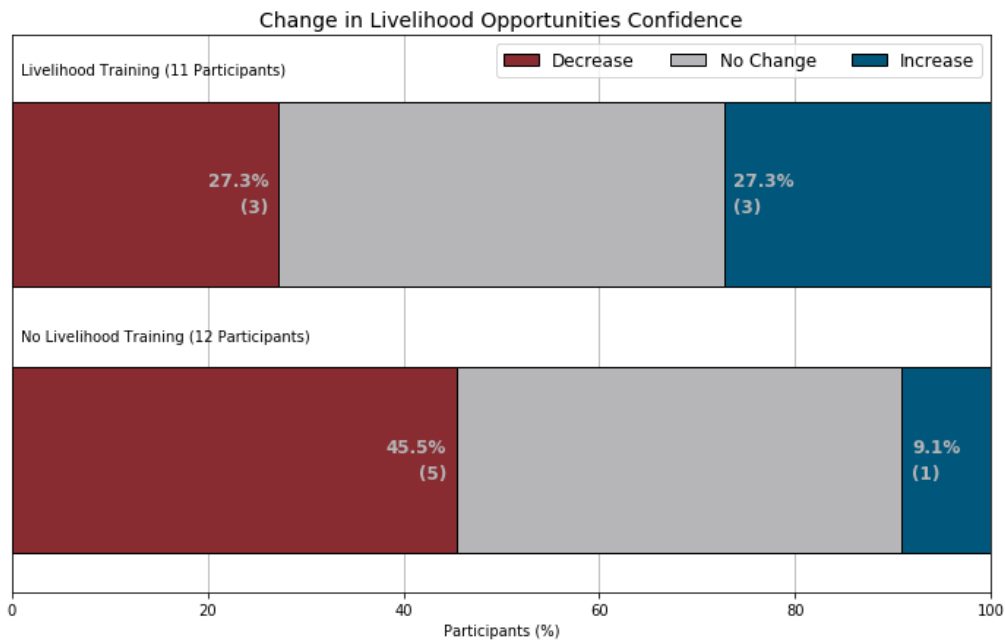
Related to lack of confidence in livelihood skills, women commonly expressed concerns about their older age preventing them from working, lack of land and capital and lack of skills that can be applied in Myanmar.

By comparing women who participated in the livelihood training with those that didn’t, the quantitative findings did not show a change in confidence in livelihood skills that can be attributed to participation in **livelihood training**. However, the 9 women who completed the livelihood training responded that the training was useful and 7 of these women had applied the new learnings. In the qualitative responses, the women described practical learnings they had gained such as making soap bars or soap liquid, and growing a kitchen garden and bean sprouts.

For those women who completed the livelihood training, Figure 5 below shows the same increase (27.3%) and decrease (27.3%) in confidence in livelihood opportunities. 45.4% stayed the same. For those who didn’t participate in the livelihood training, there was a 9.1% increase, a larger decrease of 45.5% and 45.4% stayed the same for confidence in livelihood opportunities.

Change in confidence in livelihood opportunities in the year 2 research can be understood in relation to year 1 baseline findings: 10% of female refugees said their confidence in livelihood skills was ‘very confident’ and 39% said their confidence was ‘in the middle’. The majority of females (51%) said they were ‘not at all confident’.

**Figure 5: Thailand - Change in confidence with livelihood skills/knowledge depending on participation**



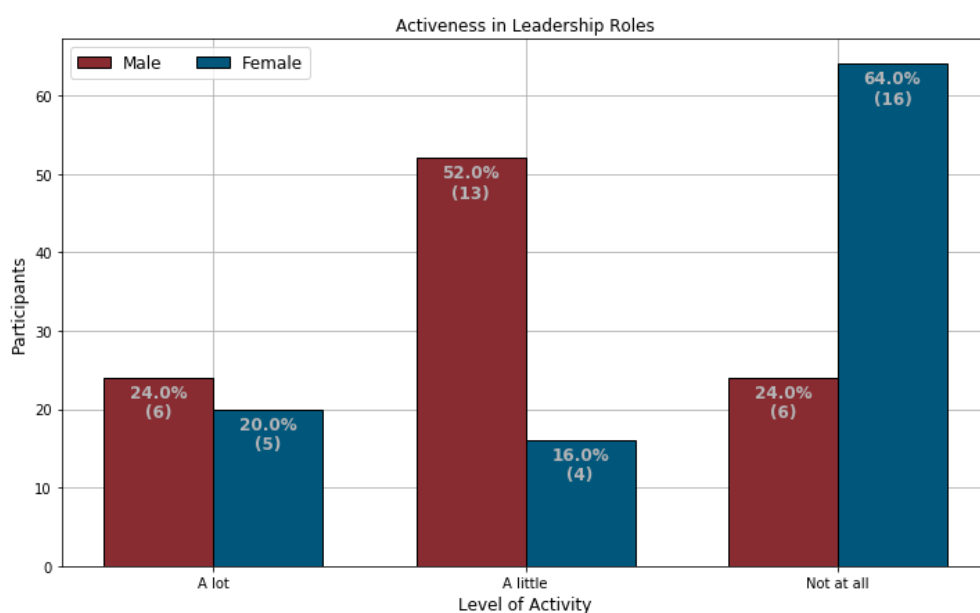
### Gender Roles

Changes in gender roles, with women being more active in community and leadership roles and economic activities, is an indicator of empowerment.

In 2018 and 2019, there were similar levels of activeness of women and men in **social/cultural community activities**.

The 2018 gender baseline did not capture activeness in **leadership activities** so does not provide a point of comparison for this year 2 Learning Report. Figure 6 below shows that in 2019, the majority of women (64%) were not active at all in leadership roles, compared to 24% of men who are not active at all. This indicates inequality and strong difference in gender roles.

**Figure 6: Thailand - Activeness in leadership roles**



In 2018, 9 women and 9 men described economic activities for wages outside the refugee camps, and 5 women and 2 men did sewing/weaving. In 2019, the survey indicated women are

slightly less active in **livelihood or economic activities** than men. Of concern, 40% women and 32% men responded they were not at all active in livelihood or economic activities.

### **Safety, Justice and Dignity**

Women's experiences of safety, justice and dignity are an indicator of practical needs and empowerment changes.

7 below changes in women's ratings of their sense of safety (very safe, in the middle, not safe at all), justice (experience a high level of justice, in the middle, no experience of justice) and dignity (treated with high level of dignity, in the middle, treated with no dignity).

Our year 2 analysis found 44% women increased their rating of **experience of safety** and 36% stayed the same. Reasons given by women for rating their situation as 'very safe' included safety provided by camp security, camp leaders and section leaders and community-based organisations. 20% of women decreased their rating of safety. Of those women who participated in protection training, a lower portion (11%) decreased in their rating of safety, than the overall group (20%).

Year 2 research findings should be viewed in line with the baseline findings. In 2018, 2% of women said they are 'not safe at all', 71% of women rated their safety 'in the middle' and 27% women said they are 'very safe'.

Our year 2 analysis found 37.5% women increased their rating of **justice** and 50% stayed the same. 12.5% women decreased their rating of justice.

Again Year 2 findings can be understood in relation to the baseline findings from 2018. 12% of women said they have 'no experience of justice', 67% of women said their experience of justice is 'in the middle' and 21% of women said they 'experience a high level of justice'.

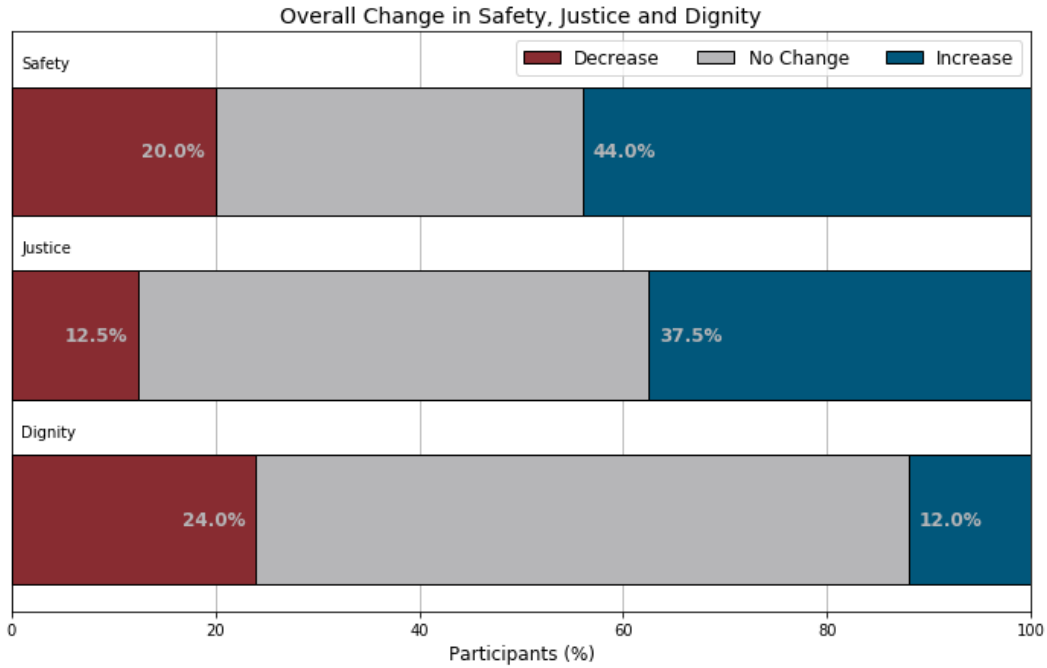
In our analysis we compared women who participated in 1 or in 2-3 trainings to see the influence of trainings on the experience of justice, and found there was no clear trend.

Reasons given by women for rating their experience of 'a high level of justice' include no discrimination, women and children have more rights, distribution of rations is done fairly and there are mediation processes followed.

Our year 2 analysis in 2019 found 24% decreased their rating of **dignity** and 64% stayed the same. Reasons given by the largest group of women who rated their experience of dignity 'in the middle' included being illiterate, suffering discrimination based on their nationality, not being allowed to work outside the camp.

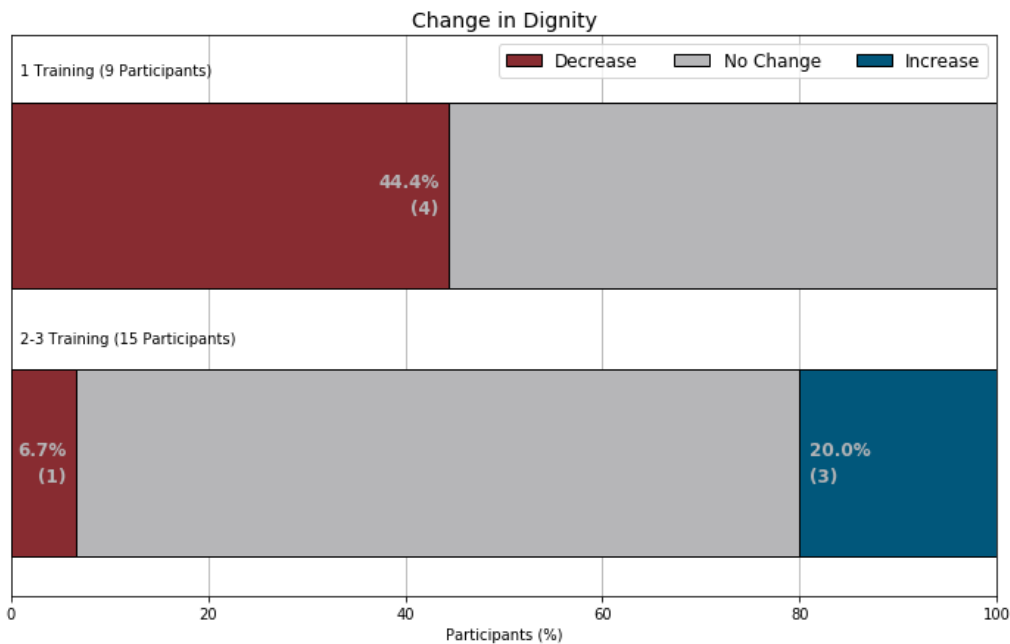
In 2018, 11% of women said they were treated with no dignity, 62% of women said their experience of dignity was 'in the middle' and 27% said they were treated with a high level of dignity.

**Figure 7: Thailand - Change in Safety, Justice and Dignity**



12% of women increased their rating of dignity. Figure 8 below shows of those women who participated in 2-3 trainings, there is a greater increase in experience of dignity than those women who did Protection Training alone.

**Figure 8: Thailand - Rating of dignity depending on participation**



**Decision-making about the future**

Increased confidence in **decision-making about the future** is an indicator of empowerment.

The research found changes in responses about where women plan to live in the future (keeping in mind the 2019 sample is a smaller subset of the women surveyed in 2018).

- In 2018, 22% women responded they would stay in the camps, while in 2019 this number increased to 40% women.

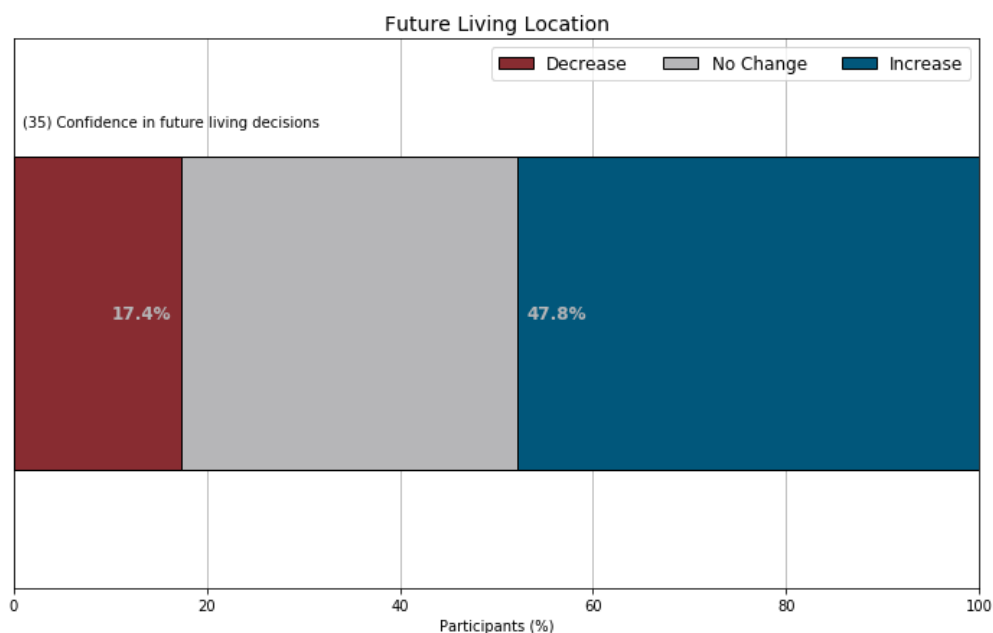
- In 2018, 34% women responded they would live in a third country, while in 2019 a similar proportion, 36% women gave that response.
- In 2018, 20% women responded they would live in Myanmar in the future, while in 2019 no women responded they would live in Myanmar.
- Comparing 2018 to 2019 responses, there was a similar proportion of women who said they didn't know/hadn't decided.

Related to the I'm Prepared objective for women to be empowered to make informed decisions about return / reintegration, both in 2018 and 2019, the majority of women reported that both men and women together made the **decision about where they live in the future**.

Women were asked to rate their **confidence in their decision where to live in the future** as 1 (high confidence), 2 (in the middle) or 3 (no confidence at all). Figure 9 below shows an increase of 47.8% of women's confidence and 34.8% stayed the same. This is interesting given the shift in responses of women deciding they would stay in the camps rather than return to Myanmar.

Change in confidence in decisions where to live in the future in the year 2 research can be understood in relation to year 1 baseline findings: 50% of female refugees responded their feeling of confidence/being prepared was in the middle. 26% were not at all confident and 14% were very confident. 10% did not answer the question.

**Figure 9: Thailand - Confidence in future living decision**



In 2019 women described a diverse range of actions to achieve their decision for the future, similar to the actions described in 2018. Women described drawing on support in making the decision from family, UNHCR, and leaders.

Research Question:

***What impact does changes to gender equality and women's empowerment have on women's and men's' decision making in return / reintegration (since Year 1)?***

Women's access to 6 types of information included in the interview guide increased which may support women to make an informed decision about return / reintegration. The largest increase in access to information was about the 'peace process and political situation in Myanmar' (56%) and 'duration of support to refugees from donors' (64%).

Women reported applying learnings from the protection training for their preparedness, the most common responses were: starting to save money, accessing assistance, and teaching family members how to protect themselves.

Women reported the same or better access to 3-4 out of 5 types of services, which is indicative of positive changes in gender equality and may inform decisions about return / reintegration. This was particularly the case for justice and legal services, counselling and livelihoods training.

Year 2 findings indicates positive changes in women's economic empowerment which may have a positive impact on women's decision making in return / reintegration. Our year 2 analysis found positive change in both men's and women's incomes, and similar levels of income between both groups. In 2018 a common response from women was that 'women decided how money is spent' (n=9), while in 2019 the responses from these same women shifted to 'both men and women together in their households decided how money is spent'.

Though Year 2 findings indicated positive trends in relation to women increasing income levels and women having a role in decision-making about how money is spent, women's confidence in livelihood skills and opportunities did not change, which may influence women's decision-making about return / reintegration. Our analysis found a greater decrease (26.1%) than increase (17.4%) in 'confidence in livelihood skills', while 43.5% had no change. There was also a greater decrease (36.4%) than increase (18.2%) in 'confidence in livelihood opportunities', while 54.6% had no change. Also, of concern, 40% women responded they were not at all active in livelihood or economic activities.

Gendered roles and division of labour may also influence women's decision-making about return / reintegration. Women and men's activeness in social/cultural community activities was similar and there was no indication of change between 2018 and 2019. The 2018 gender baseline did not capture activeness in leadership activities so does not provide a point of comparison for this year 2 Learning Report. In the year 2 interviews, the majority of women (64%) reported they were not active at all in leadership roles, compared to 24% of men who are not active at all. This lack of equality in leadership roles may have an impact on women's role in making decisions about return/ reintegration.

Rating of sense of safety, dignity, justice in 2019 indicate an overall trend towards improvement in women's empowerment, which may have a positive impact on decision-making about return / reintegration. Our year 2 analysis found: 44% women increased their rating of experience of safety and 36% stayed the same; 37.5% increase their rating of justice and 50% stayed the same; 24% decreased their rating of dignity, 64% stayed the same and 12% increased their rating of dignity. Women gave a range of reasons for their experiences which were similar to those provided in 2018 as already noted above under each finding for safety, dignity and justice.

Year 2 research findings which directly relate to return / reintegration indicate an increase of 47.8% in women's confidence in their decision where to live in the future and 34.8% stayed the same. Interestingly, there was a shift in responses of women deciding they would stay in the camps rather than return to Myanmar. The findings also indicate that women are involved in decision-making about return / reintegration, together with other household members.

The analysis of Year 2 findings compared to the gender baseline found mixed results. While there was positive change in practical needs of women being met, strategic needs such as livelihood skills and opportunities and activeness in leadership roles showed little change.

Women reported the trainings they completed were valuable and were able to apply their learnings from the trainings. Gender training supported women's awareness and empowerment at the household level and livelihood training supported women's livelihood activities in the camps. Women identified key learnings from protection training relevant to informed decision-making about return / reintegration to Myanmar.

Research Question:

***What learning from Year 2 research can inform ongoing project implementation?***

*Response to this research question is presented in line with the theory of change of the I'm Prepared Project and more specifically the objectives related to Knowledge; Economic empowerment and Leadership, as well as consideration for the long-term (goal) outcome.*

**Knowledge**

Objective 1 of I'm Prepared Project relates to 'knowledge and preparedness in camps'.

- The year 2 research findings indicate that women who participated in more trainings (2-3 trainings) are more likely to maintain or improve access to more types of information and services. This finding indicates the value of complementary trainings and investment in a cohort of project participants.
- Interview responses to 'key learnings' for the protection training demonstrated a strong recall of the training activities, though not tangible preparedness outcomes. Responses to how the 'learning have been applied' indicate the tangible benefit of the training. The responses raise questions<sup>10</sup>, whether the research participants did not have a deep understanding of the training content or the response was in line with the question asked in context. Continued protection training may be a consideration for ongoing implementation to ensure current knowledge is reinforced.
- Year 2 research identified an increase (47%) in sense of confidence/preparation about decision about where women will live in the future which indicates positive change and the program should continue efforts to sustain this change.

**Economic Empowerment**

Objective 2 relates to 'enabling environment and economic empowerment for return'.

- The research findings provided a mixed picture in terms of the value of livelihood training, suggesting that further investigation and as appropriate a review and revision of the approach may be beneficial. Whilst those that participated in the training expressed value in the training and described key learnings from participation in livelihood training, there was no difference in confidence levels for those that participated or didn't. Research findings indicate that participation in livelihood training did not result in an overall increased confidence in skills or opportunities.
- There is a relatively high number of women (40%) who are not active in livelihood activities, compared to 32% of male research participants. Slightly more men than women engaged in livelihood activities demonstrates gender inequality. Restrictions for mobility outside the camps and limited internal markets are constraints for refugee women and men and have longer term implications for economic empowerment for return / reintegration. This issue is beyond the scope of the project but should be acknowledged to make sense of the research findings.

**Leadership**

Objective 3 relates to 'social and political empowerment'.

- The same as year 1 research, current year 2 findings highlight there is a lack of women's presence in leadership roles with 64% not at all active. In order to change

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<sup>10</sup> This is especially the case, since the responses in Thailand and India were very different.

gender norms, gender training could be targeted at men together with women. Women also need opportunities to develop leadership skills and this may be an area for future support in the future.

- Women did not equally share learnings from the training they participated in with family, immediate neighbours and others in the camp. This limits the reach of the project and diffusion of knowledge for social, economic and political empowerment. The Project may consider ways to strengthen women's ability and interest to share learnings, to maximise project impact. This finding can also be compared to India, where women were more likely to share widely learnings from training they participated in. There may be opportunity for TBC to learn from OfERR's experience in extending reach of project trainings and increased diffusion of knowledge through project participants, and as culturally and contextually relevant employ any lessons learned.
- Gender training focused on empowering women in the household, and did not include engaging men in gender equality concerns and or the broader enabling environment for women's empowerment. Recognising women's limited leadership role as evidenced by the research findings, this may be an area for future focus.

#### **Return and reintegration - Long term outcome (goal)**

- There is a decrease in access to shelter-related support (76%), which may have an impact of women's wellbeing.
- In year 2 there were changes in Thailand with more women identifying the camp as a place to live in the future, compared to 2018. In 2018, 20% identified Myanmar as intended place to live, in 2019, no women responded they intended to live in Myanmar. The political situation in Myanmar, lack of land and being informed by leaders were some reasons why to stay in refugee camps in Thailand. This finding has significant implications for the project theory of change and intended project outcomes in the Thailand-Myanmar context.



## 5.2 India

Research Questions:

***What are women and men's experience of change in the fulfilment of practical and strategic needs of women in the project areas?***

***What mechanisms within the theory of change (program interventions) influence change?***

*Response to these research questions are presented in line with the sections of the interview guide which are relevant to practical and strategic needs of women, gender roles and access and decision-making related to income.*

### **Practical needs: access to information and services**

Increased access to information and access to services is an indicator of practical needs being met, in order to improve living conditions and wellbeing.

Women reported positive changes in access to all 6 types of **information**<sup>11</sup>, except 'livelihood opportunities in Sri Lanka' which remained unchanged.

Women interviewed took part in protection training (which aims to provide women with information relevant to voluntary return), and some of the main learnings they reported were: the importance of documents and how to obtain/correct them; how to approach government officers; and how to handle problems in preparation for and when returning to Sri Lanka.

Increased access to information correlates with participation in protection training.

Women provided mixed responses regarding access to 5 types of **services**<sup>12</sup>. On average, access to 'counselling' and 'livelihood training' increased from year 1 to 2, while access to 'documentation for citizenship', 'access to return information' and 'travel documents' decreased.

Not surprisingly, women who participated in livelihood training of I'm Prepared, reported they had improved access to livelihood training in 2019, while those women who did not participate in the training had worse access. Of interest, those that took part in financial literacy training, rated that they had slightly improved access to livelihood training. Access to livelihood training did not change for women who participated in the women's networks.

### **Access and decision-making related to income**

Women who participated in **financial literacy** training described a diverse range of learnings including how to gain profits; how to make investments; and how to overcome barriers in business and methods of approaching customers. They applied the learnings to different types of businesses such as growing vegetables; raising cattle; tailoring; food preparation; and running a small shop. They also and shared the learnings with others.

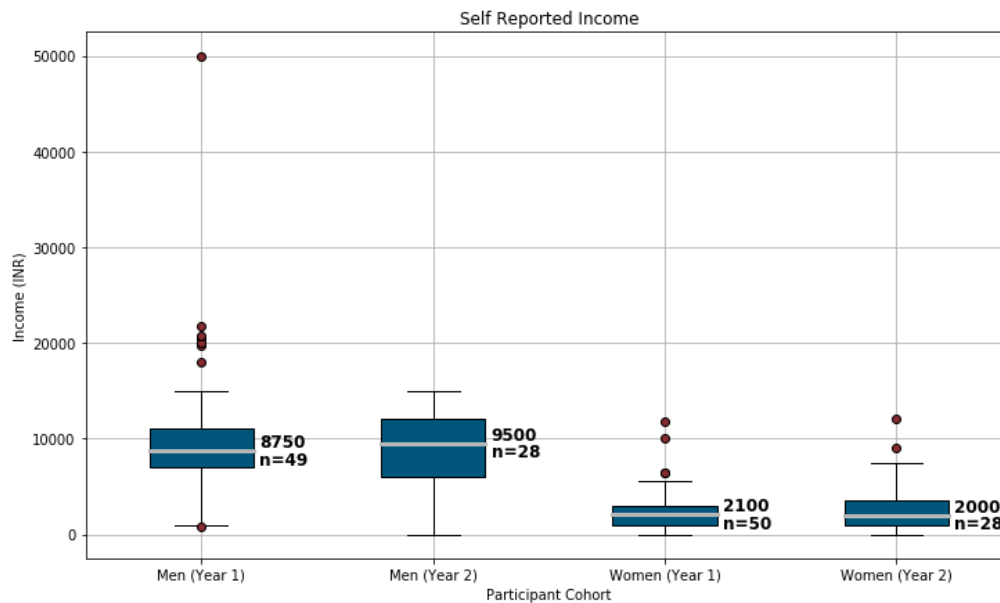
Increases in **women's income** would be an indication of economic empowerment. Figure 10 below shows the average income for women and men did not change between 2018 and 2019. There remains a large gender difference in 2019, with men earning a median income of 9500 INR and women earning 2000 INR monthly.

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<sup>11</sup> Types of information are: livelihood opportunities in Sri Lanka; support from the government of Sri Lanka on return; Political and economic situation in Sri Lanka; security situation in Sri Lanka; documentation to support citizenship in Sri Lanka; ferry service to Sri Lanka.

<sup>12</sup> Types of services are: counselling; documentation for citizenship; access to return and reintegration information; travel documents and expenditure for flights; livelihoods training.

**Figure 10: India - Income of Men and Women**



Equal decision-making and **control of resources** in an indicator of strategic needs being fulfilled. Our year 2 analysis showed a shift in responses from women. For instance, in 2018 a common response from women (n=7) was that ‘women decided separately how money is spent’, while in 2019 the response from these same women shifted to ‘both women and men together shared decision-making about how money is spent’.

### Livelihoods

Increased confidence in **livelihood skills and opportunities** is an indicator of empowerment. Overall, between 2018 and 2019 less women had their confidence improved, than those that had their confidence decreased, although the largest proportion had no change at all. Although our analysis of the closed question rating (quantitative measure) showed on average little positive change, open question results (qualitative measure) highlight women described changes resulting from participation in trainings and accessing support. 14 women who rated themselves as ‘very confident’ in livelihood skills described a diverse range of skills they have learned. 10 women are ‘very confident’ in livelihood opportunities in Sri Lanka due to the support they have and their skills that can be applied to livelihoods there if they return.

As Figure 11 below shows, those women who completed financial literacy training had an improved score on average in confidence in skills and opportunities for livelihood.

**Figure 11: India - Confidence in livelihood skills & opportunities related to financial literacy training**

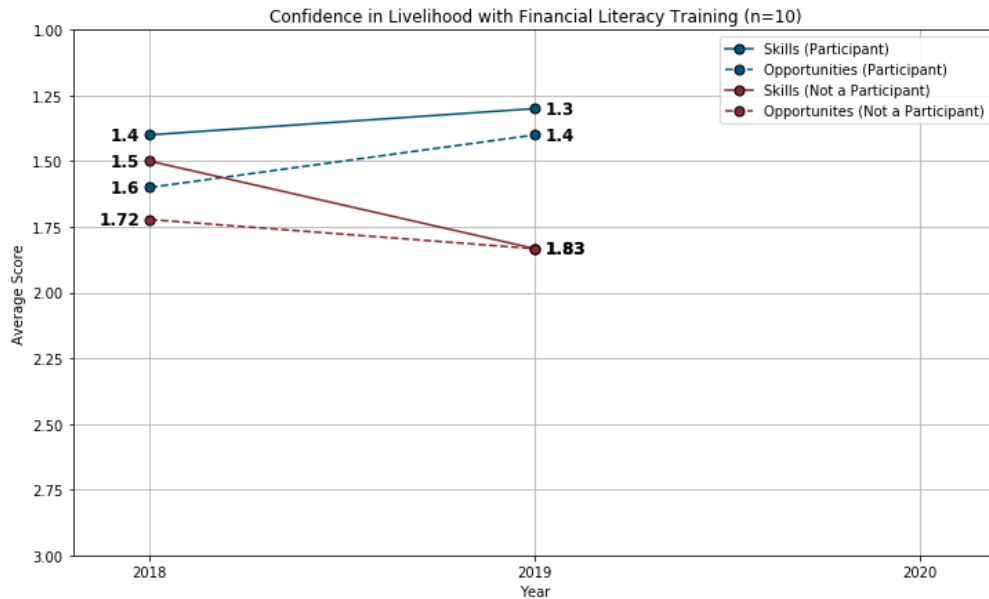
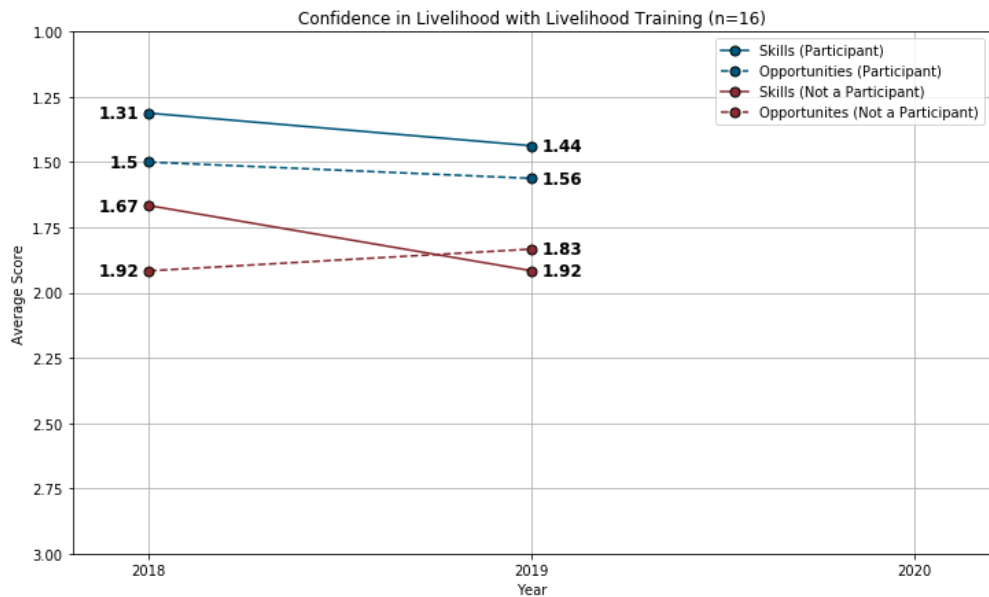


Figure 12 shows that women who completed livelihood training, had little change in skills and opportunities for livelihoods.

**Figure 12: India - Confidence in livelihood skills & opportunities related to livelihood training**



However, of the 16 women who participated in the livelihood training all found the training valuable and described a diverse range of learnings and ways they had applied the learnings. 13 of the women shared their learnings to different groups: within family; with immediate neighbours and others in the camp.

### Gender Roles

Changes in gender roles, with women being more active in community and leadership roles and economic activities, is an indicator of empowerment.

In both 2018 and 2019, there is similar activeness of women and men in **social/cultural community activities**.

The 2018 gender baseline did not capture activeness in **leadership activities** so does not provide a point of comparison for this year 2 Learning Report. In 2019 activeness in leadership activities is quite similar between women and men. 25.7% women reported they were a little

involved in leadership roles compared to 28.6% men. 39.3% women reported they were a lot involved compared to 42.9% men.

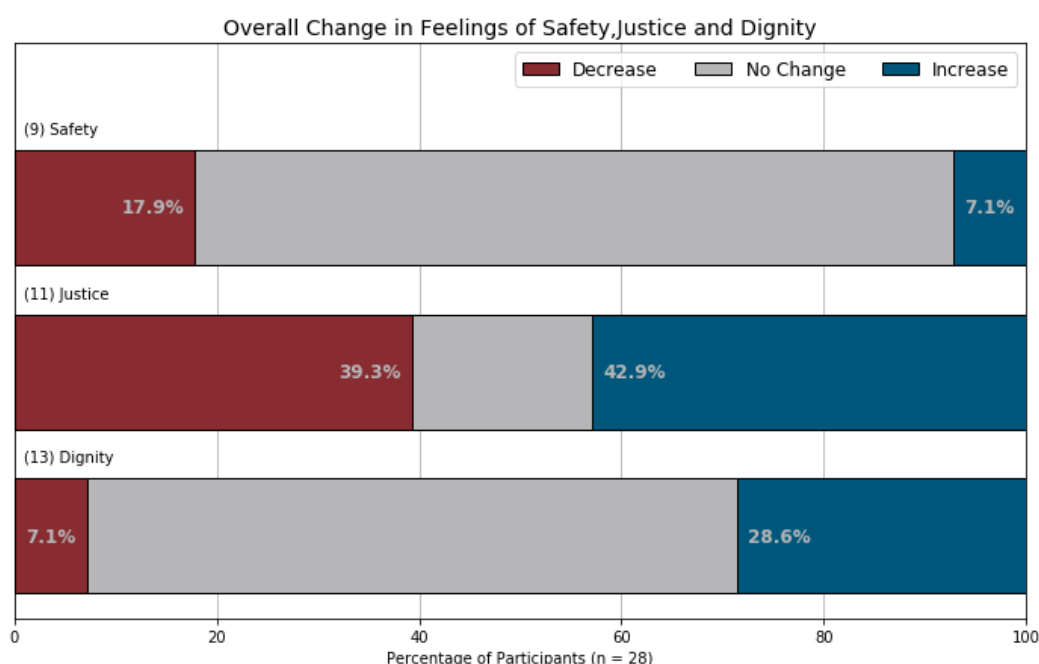
In 2018, some women described **livelihood activities** at home and some described productive work outside for wages. In 2019, the survey indicated that activeness in livelihood or economic activities is slightly stronger for women than men, with all women being a little or a lot active.

Results are inconclusive about whether changes in gender roles have taken place.

### Safety, Justice and Dignity

Women’s experiences of safety, justice and dignity are an indicator of practical needs and empowerment changes. Figure 13 below shows changes in women’s ratings of their sense of safety (very safe, in the middle, not safe at all), justice (experience a high level of justice, in the middle, no experience of justice) and dignity (treated with high level of dignity, in the middle, treated with no dignity).

**Figure 13: India - Change in Safety, Justice and Dignity**



The year 2 research showed there was a slight decrease (17.9%) in women’s perception of **safety**. Women gave a diverse range of reasons for rating their safety ‘in the middle’, related to concerns about incidents happening if they stayed at home alone or went outside the camp, and lack of consistent legal rights. The reasons women gave for rating their situation as ‘very safe’ were also diverse, including the protection of the police, economic and social support, support from their family and camp community, and their education/training.

Year 2 research findings should be viewed in line with the baseline findings. In 2018, 34% of female refugees rated their safety ‘in the middle’ and 64% said they are ‘very safe’.

Changes in perception of **justice** in 2019 were varied, with 42.9% of women recording a better sense of justice and 39.3% a worse sense of justice.

Year 2 research findings should also be viewed in line with the baseline findings. In 2018, 44% of females said they ‘experience a high level of justice’ and 36% rated their justice as ‘in the middle’. Only 14% said they had no experience of justice.

Recognising this large variation in ratings of justice, we undertook more detailed analysis to explore why the changed rating in perceptions of justice may have happened relating to participation in I’m Prepared activities. There does not appear to be a strong correlation between the number of trainings each woman participated in and whether they experienced an

increase or decrease in their sense of justice. Our year 2 analysis found women who participated in financial literacy and livelihood training had increased ratings of justice, compared to women who did not participate. For these two groups of women, their starting ratings of justice in year 1 had been the same. In contrast, our year 2 analysis found women who participated in the women's network rated their sense of justice worse. Their starting ratings of justice had been almost the same, for those who participated and those who did not participate.

Reasons given by women for rating their experience of justice 'not at all' were related to unresolved conflicts in the household and in the camp. While reasons for rating their experience 'in the middle' included the perception that those who are influential and have more money have more access to justice. Women who responded they experience a 'high level of justice' said there has been intervention by police, government officers and family members to obtain justice and they feel satisfied they will be listened to.

Our year 2 analysis showed a 28.6% increase in women experiences of **dignity**. There were diverse personal reasons for experiencing dignity 'in the middle', and reasons for experiencing 'a high level of dignity' included good social relations, trust respect, and positive behaviour with others.

The year 1 research defines the baseline from which the change can be compared. In 2018, 64% of female refugees said they were 'treated with high level of dignity' and 32% said they rated their dignity as 'in the middle'.

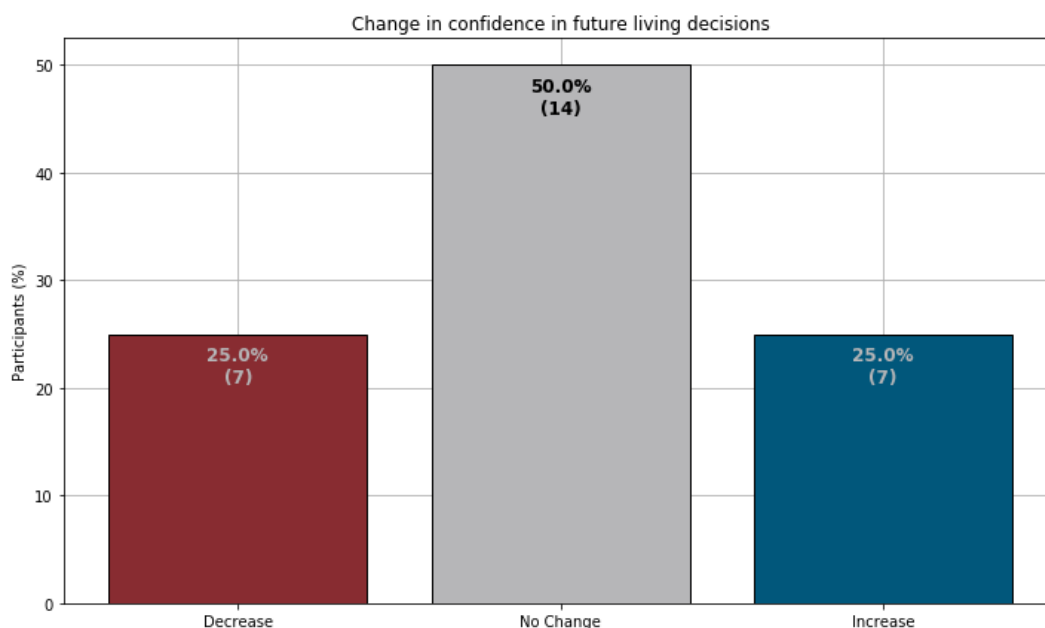
### **Decision-making about the future**

Increased confidence in **decision-making about the future** is an indicator of empowerment.

The decision around where to live in the future and reasons women provide about their decision are similar between 2018 and 2019, with the majority describing their plans to return to Sri Lanka. In 2018, majority of female refugees (80%) said both males and females made the decision about where they live in future together. 8% said they made the decision, 10% said males made the decision. 2% did not respond. In 2019, women's responses indicated they were involved in the decision-making, with little changes reported about the process of decision-making in their household.

Women were asked to rate their confidence in their decision where to live in the future as 1 (High confidence), 2 (In the middle) or 3 (No confidence at all). Between 2018 and 2019, an equal proportion of women (25%) had an increase or decrease of confidence, although the largest proportion (50%) had no change at all.

**Figure 14: India - Confidence in future living decision**



Our year 2 analysis found participants in livelihood training had slightly increased ratings for confidence in decision-making about the future, compared to women who did not participate. Women who did not participate already had lower average ratings of confidence during interviews in year 1 and in year 2 their confidence ratings decreased.

For participants in financial literacy training, women's ratings stayed almost the same between year 1 and year 2 for confidence in decision-making. On average, women who did not participate already had lower average ratings of confidence during interviews in year 1 and in year 2 their average ratings stayed the same.

For participants in women's networks, women's ratings stayed almost the same between year 1 and year 2 for confidence in decision-making. Those who participated and those who did not participate began with the same confidence ratings.

In 2019 women described a diverse range of actions to achieve their decision for the future, similar to the actions described in 2018. There was similar support provided in making the decision ranked in order from family, the woman herself, livelihood opportunities, UNHCR and leaders.

Research Question:

***What impact does changes to gender equality and women's empowerment have on women's and men's' decision making in return / reintegration (since Year 1)?***

Women's access to information increased, particularly related to 'Government of Sri Lanka support on return', 'Political and economic situation in Sri Lanka' and 'Ferry service to Sri Lanka'. This may have positive impact on women's informed decision-making about return.

There was no change in access to information about livelihood opportunities in Sri Lanka. When asked about their confidence in livelihood skills and opportunities, some women expressed uncertainty about the appropriateness of their skills and the actual opportunities in Sri Lanka. This may affect women's decision-making about return.

Women's access to counselling and livelihood training services increased in 2019, which may have a positive impact on women's empowerment and inform decisions about return / reintegration. A key learning from livelihood trainings was 'job opportunities in Sri Lanka'.

In 2018 there was inequality in incomes of women and men and in 2019 this inequality persisted. The low financial independence of women relative to men may influence women's empowerment and decision-making about return.

Women's sense of justice as recorded through the research interviews may have an impact on women's empowerment and decision-making about return. In 2018 there was a difference within households for women and men's experiences of justice. 44% of women rated they 'experience a high level of justice' and 36% rated their justice as 'in the middle'. 14% said they had 'no experience of justice'. High levels of justice related the role of government officials to address any issues, and role of family and family support. Reasons for rating of 'not at all' related to no justice from officials and lack of support from within the camp. Changes in perception of justice in 2019 were varied, with 42.9% of women recording a better sense of justice and 39.3% a worse sense of justice.

The research found women and men have similar experience in gender roles (social/cultural community activities; leadership activities; and livelihood activities) which may influence roles about decision making in return / reintegration. This is especially the case in leadership activities. In 2019 activeness in leadership activities is quite similar between men and women. 25.7% women reported they were a little involved in leadership roles and 39.3% reported they were a lot involved. In 2019, the survey indicated that activeness in livelihood or economic activities is slightly stronger for women than men, with all women being a little or a lot active.

The decision around where to live in the future and reasons women provide about their decision are similar between 2018 and 2019, with the majority describing their plans to return to Sri Lanka. In 2019, women's responses indicated they were involved in the decision-making, with little changes reported about the process of decision-making in their household between 2018 and 2019.

Overall, the research found no evidence of structural changes in gender equality and women's empowerment since Year 1, although women research participants reported the trainings they completed were valuable and they were able to apply learnings to improve their life situation. Women identified key learnings from the protection, livelihood and financial literacy training relevant to return/re integration to Sri Lanka. The women's network has supported women's empowerment in the camps, more particularly in relation to interactions with officials.

Research Question:

***What learning from Year 2 research can inform ongoing project implementation?***

*Response to this research question is presented in line with the theory of change of the I'm Prepared Project and more specifically the objectives related to Knowledge; Economic empowerment and Leadership, as well as consideration for the long-term (goal) outcome.*

**Knowledge**

Objective 1 of I'm Prepared Project relates to 'knowledge and preparedness in camps.'

- The research identified that women who participate in I'm Prepared activities (protection, livelihood and financial literacy) share what they learn within their families, with immediate neighbours, others in the camp, though less so with camp leaders. This highlights the potential positive reach and diffusion of knowledge beyond project participants. This finding highlights the broad contribution of the project beyond the project boundaries. Utilising women as means to increase knowledge is a positive aspect of current programming and should be promoted in ongoing project implementation.

**Economic Empowerment**

Objective 2 relates to 'enabling environment and economic empowerment for return'.

- The research identified that financial literacy training is valuable and has proven to contribute to positive change in women's lives. Findings which illustrate the value of this training include:

- Women who participated in financial literacy training identified that they had increased access to livelihood training and identified the practical nature of the training to business activities.
- Women who participated in financial literacy training rated an increased sense of justice, compared to those women who didn't participate in the training.
- Financial support was identified as the most common 'further support needed' for women who attended both livelihood and financial literacy training. This may be an area to further investigate with women participants.
- The research identified that confidence levels to apply skills and opportunities in Sri Lanka are mixed. Women expressed uncertainty on how to apply their knowledge and skills in Sri Lanka, this was evident across those women who described themselves as 'very confident', 'in the middle' and also those 'not confident at all'. This indicates the need for increased awareness raising and knowledge about the situation in Sri Lanka.

## Leadership

Objective 3 relates to 'social and political empowerment'.

- The research identified that women who participated in the women's network had a lower sense of justice after participating in the network, compared to before they started (comparing 2018 – 2019 interview responses). The research has not identified definitive reasons why this may be the case. One explanation might be that through the network women have become more aware about their position and/or issues in the camps, and are becoming more active in dealing with officials and other actors<sup>13</sup>, and whilst becoming more aware and active, overall sense of justice has decreased. The extent to which there is an enabling environment for women's action is not known from the research findings. Further support to women in the network as well as engagement with other stakeholders (officials) may be required to strengthen sense of justice.
- The research identified that women shared learnings from the women's network slightly less with families than they shared with others in the camp and immediate neighbours. This potentially has implications for men's role in women's empowerment. Ensuring men's participation in gender equality and women's empowerment is equally important as women's participation.

## Return and reintegration - Long term outcome (goal)

- Women who participated in the I'm Prepared trainings valued the trainings and gained a diverse range of learnings from the trainings. The diversity of learnings gained may indicate the diverse range of women's needs and interests in the camps. It is valuable that the activities have supported diverse learnings, and the project implementation and achievement of project goals should be appreciated within this context.
- Comparing interview responses over the two years often women who did not participate in I'm Prepared activities had lower baseline scores<sup>14</sup> than those that went on to participate in the activities.<sup>15</sup> This may indicate a potential positive bias to participate for those women who have more confidence, sense of safety/dignity/justice. This finding was evident for livelihood training and financial literacy training and also for the women's network. Those women who didn't participate in the women's network had a lower sense of justice than those that did participate (at baseline – prior to participation in the network). Efforts to reach out to those that don't participate in OfERR activities may be an area for future consideration as part of the principle of 'leave no one behind' which is important to the work of OfERR.

<sup>13</sup> These types of actions were identified by women in the interview – learnings from the training and how trainings have been applied.

<sup>14</sup> Baseline scores relate to confidence and also ratings of safety, dignity, justice

<sup>15</sup> Livelihood, financial literacy and the women's network



## 5.3 Summary: I'm Prepared Project

This section provides summary reflections on the research findings for the I'm Prepared Project. The purpose of this research was not to provide a country comparison, since that is not helpful to inform local programming and inappropriate to compare research findings across different country contexts. Nonetheless, summary comments are helpful to distinguish the unique contexts for refugees in Thailand and India and, importantly to ensure that these unique contexts are and should be considered as part of Project implementation.

In both country contexts, the research identified that women who participated in trainings valued the training. Learning outcomes have been applied, and most particularly in India and to a lesser extent in Thailand, learnings have been shared with family, immediate neighbours and others in the camps.

Across the two country contexts there were mixed findings related to changes in women's practical and strategic needs and participation in I'm Prepared activities. Year 2 findings highlight the value of using both direct qualitative questions and quantitative analysis of yearly interview responses to assess progress of the Project. The qualitative data highlights the gains achieved through the training as described by the women themselves. Whereas the quantitative data, comparing yearly interview responses, shows a more mixed picture about changes in gender equality and women's empowerment. There is a clear link between participation in trainings and changes in women's lives in some areas, and it is not evident in other areas. The findings in Thailand indicate that women who participated in more trainings are more likely to have the same or increased access to information and services. This was not the case in India. In India participation in protection training, correlates with increased access to information.

In relation to practical needs, there has been a greater increase to access to information in Thailand. Similarly, there was an increase in access to information in India though to a lesser extent. Changes in access to services was more varied across both countries. Decrease in access to services was more evident, in India related to 'travel document and expenditure for flights' and in Thailand, 'shelter related support'. Both these services are beyond the scope of this project but highlight the broader constraining context for refugee protection and gender equality in which I'm Prepared is implemented.

In relation to strategic needs, particularly roles and responsibilities and access to resources, there was variation but no substantive change to research findings from year 1 to 2. The different research findings in India and Thailand highlight the unique country contexts and different gendered relations. Women and men share similar roles and responsibilities in India, compared to Thailand where women have a less active role in leadership compared to men. From 2018 to 2019, income levels slightly increased in Thailand, whilst in India they remained the same (for both women and men). In India women have less income than men, which may impact women's empowerment.

Similar to year 1, the research identified experiences of safety, dignity and justice were different across the two country contexts and also patterns of change from 2018 to 2019 were different in the two country contexts. Increased ratings of safety and justice were expressed in Thailand. In India there was both strong increase and decrease to feelings of justice. The qualitative data identified that reasons for ratings of safety, dignity and justice were similar in both year 1 and year 2 of the research. In India there was a link between increased ratings of justice and participation in livelihood and financial literacy training, whilst those women who participated in the women's network had a decreased rating of justice, compared to those women who didn't participate in the network. This may be due to raised awareness and activism of women in the network.

Women and men are both involved in decisions about where to live in the future, which is similar to the year 1 findings, with only slight variation in responses. 'Confidence in future living decisions' varied in India, for the majority (50%) of women interviewed there was no change

whilst equal amounts (25%) expressed decreased or increased ratings. In Thailand, women's confidence in future living decisions increased by 47.8%.

Research findings highlight the broader context in which I'm Prepared Project is implemented. Whilst there was no change in India in relation to where to live in the future, there were changes in Thailand with more women identifying the camp as a place to live in the future, compared to 2018. In 2018, 20% identified Myanmar as intended place to live, in 2019, no women responded they intended to live in Myanmar. This finding has significant implications for the project theory of change and intended project outcomes in the Thailand-Myanmar context. Whereas in the India-Sri Lanka context, increased access to information about ferry services and also government of Sri Lanka support on return is indicative of refugees' preparation for potential start-up of ferry services for voluntary return (See context in Section 4 of this report).

## 6 Detailed Analysis

For detailed analysis of interview responses for Thailand and India, see attachments (separate reports) to this report.

# 7 Annex 1- Program Logic for 'I'm Prepared' Equality for Refugee Women in Return & Reintegration Process

See next page.